

Plattsburgh International Airport breaks ground on terminal: Taking Up Position as "Montreal's U.S. Airport"

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In 1995, Plattsburgh Air Force Base in Plattsburgh, N.Y. was officially closed, leaving the 5000 acre facility with an uncertain future. Just ten years later, it has become an economic success story and a profitable air industrial park known as Plattsburgh International Airport.

Today (August 16, 2005), that rapid evolution from air force to airport took its final historic step as ground was broken for the construction of more than \$20 million (U.S.) worth of new facilities, including a much anticipated passenger terminal. Already a fully operating industrial airport with several aviation tenants and a number of other companies on site, Plattsburgh International will now be fully ready for passenger operations by 2007. It is being recognized as "MONTREAL'S U.S. AIRPORT" based on its strategic location just one hour south of downtown Montreal, conveniently accessible for the 3.5 million people and extensive aerospace sector in metropolitan Montreal.

It will also serve nearby Lake Placid, the two time site of the Winter Olympics and a world renowned resort just 45 minutes away.

Its tenants already include Pratt & Whitney Canada's U.S. operations, including jet engine development and testing, and the first of two U.S. Department of Homeland Security air centers along the U.S.-Canadian border.

The 31,620 square foot, two story terminal has been designed to accommodate all types of aircraft, and will include a jet bridge. It will also be easily expandable, with almost unlimited free parking for cars. It is being constructed with no borrowing or debt, thanks to \$20 million (U.S.) provided by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Congress, who see the opportunity for development of a successful new airport at the former base.

Among leaders in Washington who have actively supported the airport's development are Congressmen John McHugh and John Sweeney and U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton.

Plattsburgh International Airport is located directly off Interstate 87 with its own interchange. It also offers major multimodal opportunities for manufacturing, cargo handling and distribution, including a direct spur and new railyard tied to the main Canadian Pacific Railway line from New York City to Montreal. In addition, it has direct highway and rail links to the Port of Montreal just one hour north.

Plattsburgh Air Force Base was a jewel of the U.S. Air Force, which was modernizing its facilities right up until its unexpected closure by the U.S. Base Realignment and Closure Commission as part of post-Cold War downsizing of the U. S. military. It features massive and flexible aviation assets, including a 12,000 foot runway, a 12 million square foot concrete ramp for aircraft parking and staging, and 1.5 million square feet of aviation related building space.

Thanks to its proximity to Montreal and its location on the main transportation connections between Quebec and New York, the former base has become what many consider to be the first private sector redevelopment success story among U.S. bases closed in the 1990's. The total 5000 acre site now hosts more than 80 tenants employing more people than were employed there by the Air Force.

Most of the commercial and industrial tenants are U.S. divisions of Canadian based companies, taking advantage of Plattsburgh's status as "Montreal's U.S. corporate suburb". More than 200 Canadian companies now have some type of U.S. location in the Plattsburgh area, generating an annual economic impact of more than \$1.4 billion (U.S.) for the small but prospering community. This year, Plattsburgh was ranked among the Top 5 Small Communities in America for economic development by Site Selection Magazine for the fifth year in a row.

Today's passenger terminal groundbreaking was attended by federal, state and regional leaders, as well as by a number of aviation and aerospace representatives from Quebec, showing interest in the future opportunities inherent in such a massive and flexible multi-modal airport just over the border from Montreal.

When the terminal is complete in 2007, the nearby Clinton County Airport in Plattsburgh will be closed. Plattsburgh International will then be fully open for airlines and charters looking to tap the Montreal market from the U. S. side of the border, as well as the untapped potential of nearby Lake Placid.

In the meantime, Plattsburgh International is already open and available for other aviation and aerospace operations, including aircraft maintenance and manufacturing, cargo and distribution, testing and other activities. These and other air related operations will be further supported by the planned establishment of Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute, an FAA Part 147 Airframe & Power Plant school, at the airport by 2007.

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