

Retired pilots and flight attendants upset with City's actions on two fronts

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In his bid to become mayor, councillor Kerry Diotte says the cost to clean up the soil for redevelopment at the City Centre Airport once it's closed will be too much. Something retired and well-respected pilot Terry Champion, who went from flying B-25 bombers to commercial airliners out of the downtown airport, agrees with. Champion says there's an underground sea of contamination to deal with. "The cost of removing the contamination in the soil in these hundreds of acres is going to be fantastic," exclaimed Champion. "And I'm convinced that the city tax payers are going to have to pay that, because the developers wouldn't be able to afford to pay that and have a profitable development. So I think the city tax payer is going to get quite the bill at some point." Champion says during the Second World War workers at the airport would combine toxic waste in large barrels, and then spray it onto the grass as weed control, because at the time that was considered "the appropriate thing to do." He points out there are numerous service station sites sitting vacant around the city, because the owners can't afford the expense of remediating the soil at an average cost of between \$1 million and \$2 million a site ... now times that by about 144 acres.



"Roy Reaville (left), Marian Swan-Leschiutta, and Terry Champion (right)"

Roy Reaville, a pilot who flew for 40 years and retired flying 737's in 1994, believes the city is making a big mistake by shutting down the airport.



"It's sad," said a disheartened Reaville. "It's tearing the heart out of this city as far as I'm concerned. The city's got to have transportation and air seems to be your major transportation nowadays. We're moving more to air than we are to ground transportation and to bring business in they need airplanes in. That's why I think a lot of stuff has moved to Calgary now, because we're

making them go to the International and they'd just as soon come here."

So, with the airport set to close down at the end of November, and the city refusing to provide the Alberta Aviation Museum with the extra room it needs for its Boeing 737 to sit on the extra thick concrete outside, so it doesn't sink into the ground, the plane will be flown to another airport for storage; possibly in Villeneuve.

Something Marian Garbencius, a retired flight attendant with 39 years on the job, finds completely reprehensible.

"Those people that sit on city council; they seem to cater to the elite," remarked Garbencius.

"People who have a lot of money who can afford to go to the hockey games and not something as reasonable as coming to a museum with the family and spending a few hours. I am so sad and choked up about that that I can hardly speak. I don't know what's the matter with those people on city council? Sometimes I think they sit with their head in the sand."



One of most accomplished, trail-blazing female pilots in the world is also upset with the city's refusal to give the Alberta Aviation Museum enough room to keep its 737 on display once the City Centre Airport closes down.

Back in 1973, Rosella Bjornson became the "first" woman in North America to be hired as a "1st" officer by a major airline as she worked her way up the ranks.

This after growing up sitting beside her dad in his Cessna 170; telling him she wanted to be a pilot herself one day — something she then excelled at.

"I was a captain on the Boeing 737 with Pacific Western and Canadian Airlines, and I flew that aircraft that is parked here at the City Centre Airport, and the aircraft number 7-4-5 I have in my log book many, many times," proclaimed Bjornson. "It is a fabulous aircraft and this is where it belongs. It belongs here at the City Centre Airport and this is where it should stay!" (td)