

# Airport is setting the pace for safety

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Special to the Review

If you left Sidney and flew from Victoria International Airport to our sister city of Cairns in Australia, would the aircraft communications, navigation, approach and landing, and all the other systems be compatible with every airport en-route? Of course they would — but behind that simple statement lies 60 years of painstaking effort by a little known but vitally important organization.

Located in Montreal, by agreement between the Government of Canada and the nations of the world, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) celebrates its

ICAO is one of the great international success stories. As a specialized agency of the United Nations it has the onerous task of getting 188 member States to agree on virtually every facet of the aviation industry — and amazingly, it does just that.

As the Second World War drew to a close, it was clear that civil aviation was going to help shape the course of the peacetime world. Just occasionally the human race makes a cooperative effort to solve problems before they arise and it was in this spirit that the victorious allies met in Chicago in late 1944 to

ensure that airports and other services will be able to handle it efficiently and safely.

Here in Victoria, we may seem to be at the end of the world, the terminus of the North American aviation system. But that is only an illusion — we are front and centre in the pursuit of international excellence in aviation safety.

Just ask Richard Paquette.

David Olsen is a North Saanich aviation consultant, with extensive experience in

60th anniversary on December 7. This will be marked during the 35th Assembly which began on September 28 and by the publication of a commemorative book. The book reviews the work of ICAO since its establishment in 1944 and includes, in the chapter on safety management, an account of the progressive initiatives at Victoria International Airport.

Under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Richard Paquette, Victoria International Airport has taken an innovative and positive approach to Safety Management. Paquette saw the ICAO initiative as a catalyst and emphasizes that, "when ICAO published new international standards for safety management, we recognized that this was an opportunity to be proactive and reaffirm our commitment to safety."

Well before the January 2005 deadline, laid down in Annex 14 to the ICAO Convention, Victoria assessed its current safety management practices, analysed future needs in relation to the ICAO Standards and commenced implementation of a Safety Management System to meet national and international requirements. Paquette stresses that, "Safety of our passengers and all airport users and employees is literally the cornerstone of our core business."

By the beginning of 2004, Paquette had overseen the establishment of a comprehensive risk assessment and management process and documentation of its ICAO and Canadian compliant safety management system.

During 2003, in keeping with this proactive approach, Victoria International Airport also provided ICAO and Transport Canada compliant, Human Factors training to all members of the airport fire and rescue team, one of the first airports in Canada to do so. Paquette sees excellence in safety management as an ongoing focus for the airport and in this he has the full backing of Chair Linda Petch and the VAA Board.



PHOTO COURTESY VICTORIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**Richard Paquette is the force behind the changes that have taken place at VIA ensure passenger safety meets or exceeds set standards.**

draw up the blueprint for a globally standardized world order in aviation. This work is dynamic and ongoing and 60 years downstream, ICAO is still at work as the technology changes, ensuring standardization and safety in airworthiness, airports, air traffic control, security, environment and a host of other issues. Well before the huge double-deck Airbus A380, the Toulouse Titan takes to the sky in 2005, ICAO has en-

CNS/ATM systems, airports, safety and training.

Beginning as an aircrew officer in the Royal Air Force his international aviation career has spanned 45 years, including service with Transport Canada, ICAO, IATA and the private sector. As a consultant he has worked with

Eurocontrol, the Euro Commission and governments and industry worldwide. He has made major contributions to the aviation press to ICAO and Eurocontrol publications. He continues to write and to lecture on safety and human factors.