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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **New WestJet Service to Edmonton Debuts at Nanaimo Airport**

*Nanaimo, B.C. (December 15, 2015)* -- Travel planning for central Vancouver Island residents and businesses became much easier as of today, thanks to the launch of new non-stop flights to Edmonton from Nanaimo Airport.

The inaugural flight on the new WestJet Encore route touched down at the airport this afternoon. It was greeted by dignitaries, airport and WestJet executives, and many central Islanders on hand for a celebration to commemorate the milestone.

Edmonton is one of WestJet's main connection hubs, giving Island residents more access to sun locations and other destinations around the globe. Direct flights to and from Nanaimo Airport to the Alberta city take less than two hours.

"Developing service is key to Nanaimo Airport's continued growth to ensure safe, reliable transportation for Central Vancouver Island residents," says Mike Hooper, President and CEO of the Nanaimo Airport. "We're proud to be central Vancouver Island's gateway to the world."

"We're pleased to provide additional service to our guests in Edmonton and Nanaimo and the surrounding regions," said Ferio Pugliese, President, WestJet Encore and Executive Vice-President, WestJet. "We truly appreciate the support and loyalty they've shown to us over the years and we look forward to continuing to grow our business in both markets in the years to come."

The new flight uses a 78-seat Q-400 aircraft. It leaves Edmonton daily at 12:45 p.m. local time, and departs from Nanaimo at 2:25 p.m.

WestJet also has two daily flights from Nanaimo to Calgary. Air Canada Express started its own Calgary connector flight earlier this fall. Combined, the airlines offer more than 300 seats per day for tourists, workers and investors coming to the Island or heading to Alberta.

Passenger numbers at the airport have climbed by more than 70 per cent since 2008. Approximately 315,000 passengers will have gone through its gates by year end, putting the airport seven years ahead of passenger projections.

**About Nanaimo Airport (YCD):**

Nanaimo Airport is a ten-minute drive south of downtown Nanaimo on 224 hectares (550 acres), which includes the nearby Cottonwood Golf Course. YCD is a not-for-profit authority owned by the Nanaimo Airport Commission. Vancouver Island's third largest airport, Nanaimo Airport serves a primary central Vancouver Island area with a total population base of approximately 250,000. The YCD service area extends north from Nanaimo to Qualicum, west to the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, and south to Duncan and the Cowichan Valley. YCD is ideally situated as the most convenient departure/arrival point for customers from the mid-Island area.

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