

## Auckland's just a non-stop flight away

TRAVEL | Air New Zealand reconnects with Vancouver

BY BRUCE CONSTANTINEAU  
VANCOUVER SUN

Air New Zealand makes its first official Vancouver appearance in 15 years Friday when it launches a year-round, non-stop service from Vancouver to Auckland.

The new direct trans-Pacific route — introduced to take advantage of growing traffic between Canada and New Zealand — cuts the travel time from about 20 hours to just over 14 hours.

In the past, Auckland-bound Vancouver travelers had to fly to California to catch a connecting flight or fly from Vancouver with a stopover in Honolulu.

"We're very excited to be coming back to B.C.," Air New Zealand vice-president Roger Poulton said in an interview. "The market dynamics have changed. Non-stop aircraft are available now and more Canadians are visiting New Zealand."

Disappointing business volumes prompted Air New Zealand to withdraw its Vancouver-to-Auckland service 15 years ago. But Poulton said the convenience of the new long-range Boeing 777-200 aircraft and the growing Canada-New Zealand connection creates a more viable market this time around.

He said about 16,000 New Zealand travelers visited Canada in the past year while about 47,000 Canadians visited New Zealand, up about 10,000 in the past five years.

Air New Zealand originally planned to offer a three-times-a-week Vancouver-to-Auckland service from November through March only, to coincide with the peak travel season and the New Zealand summer.

But sales were greater than expected so the airline expanded the service to year-round. In addition to the November-March period, the flights are scheduled to operate three times a week in July and August and twice weekly in other months.

Poulton said airline needs the 313-passenger Boeing 777s to be about 80 per cent full for the service to be profitable and the early indicators look good.

"We're already above 70 per cent for the first month or so and as we get into the real peak, we're 80-per-cent full for most of the [New Zealand] summer," he said.

Methanex Corp. president Bruce Aitken, a New Zealand native who often travels from Vancouver to Auckland, said he'll enjoy skipping the process of waiting for connecting flights in Los Angeles or San Francisco.

"Anything that avoids going through U.S. immigration and U.S. security is a big step up," he said in an interview. "It should be a very convenient way to get to Auckland from the West Coast."

Andrew Ferrier, a Canadian who heads New Zealand's largest company — dairy producer Fonterra Cooperative Group, said Air New Zealand advertising has given Canada a higher profile in New Zealand since the airline announced the new Vancouver service eight months ago. He plans to use the new connection next week.

"I have some business in eastern Canada but it just worked out that the best connection was going through Vancouver," he said in an interview. "Now I might get up to Whistler more often than I might have otherwise."

The inaugural flight from New Zealand lands in Vancouver Friday with a trade delegation led by New Zealand Trade Minister Phil Goff, who will be met by International Trade Minister David Emerson. The business group plans to spend about five days in B.C. before heading to Seattle.

bconstantineau@png.canwest.com

# Forget adding third floor, new plan calls for a 10-storey tower



MALCOLM PARRY  
VANCOUVER SUN  
TRADE TALK

**MORE FLOORS:** It was 1962 when Jack Leshgold increased the interests of his family's holding company by putting up a two-floor commercial building at Pender and Broughton Street. Anticipating growth, he had it designed for the addition of a third floor that would, among other things, give a better view of a CPR railyard separating it from Coal Harbour's still-industrial waterfront.

The shipyards and related facilities are long gone. Ditto the tracks. And Leshgold's building is about to join them in the history books. It never did get its third floor. But a 10-storey residential tower will soon rise on its site. A five-floor row of townhouses will then run along Pender Street to the base of a 36-floor tower bordered by Nicola Street.

The \$225-million-range project, West Pender Place, will total 270,000 sq. ft. (15,000 of it retail). Tenants will pay an average \$1,100 a square foot when Platinum Projects chief George Wong and sister Lily Korsanje begin writing sales agreements Nov. 17. It's expected to generate \$121 million worth of sales.

"Interest is extremely strong from offshore buyers," said Reliance Properties developer Jon Stovell, who added his firm's first-time relationship with area-experienced Wong is "a good fit." He said buyers are drawn to Coal Harbour "because it is totally downtown geographically and spatially, but still like an urban oasis — a suburb in the city."

West Pender Place also enjoys 110,000 sq. ft. of transferable density from two of the Leshgold family's many Gastown properties and projects. They are the heritage-redevelopment of 55 Water St. into 64 live-work units in 2002, and a current project at the 1886-built 210 Carrall St. for occupancy in early 2008. Reliance Properties also redeveloped 101 Water St. in 1987. Papered-over windows of its dramatically glass-fronted property at 65 Water St. mark the closure of the Richard Kidd store and the impending arrival of another fashion outfit, believed to be shoemaker-to-the-stars John Fluevog.

Twenty-five-year Reliance hand Stovell knows city hall like his own hand. As president of the Gastown Business Improvement Association, he helped develop the Heritage Management Plan's incentive model, that gives grants, tax holidays and density transfers to qualifying projects. Since 2006, he has sat on the Development Permit Board's advisory panel.

"We learn a lot from study-



Jon Stovell launched Reliance Properties' biggest project: the \$225-million, 270-sq.-ft. West Pender Place.



Suzanne Siemens (left) and Madeleine Shaw's Lunapads firm has an updated take on traditional feminine hygiene.

ing the city planners' priorities," he said. "We follow as closely as we can, and give the planners what they like to see."

The flip side of that mantra is density bonuses — such as the one to West Pender Place.

There's more to come from a restoration and maintenance project on Alexander Street. And Reliance's redevelopment of a former downtown-heels property on East Hastings Street will create 30 fully equipped, 275-sq.-ft. micro-suites which will rent at market rates of \$1.50 per square foot to \$1.80 per foot (between \$400 and \$500 per month). Architect Bruce Carscadden has studied current Asian practices for maximizing livability in the suites.

Density transfers from those projects should go to a 580,000-sq.-ft. downtown tower with up to 70 per cent residential occupancy and the balance for hotel, com-

mercial and retail space. At an expected \$450 million, it will double Reliance's current costliest project, West Pender Place.

The firm will also undertake a 350,000-sq.-ft. primarily residential development at Columbia and Eighth Street, New Westminster, near to Degelder Group president Michael Degelder's Plaza 888 project, where three of four towers are under construction.

As for subsequent developments, Stovell echoed standard holding-company policy with: "Because your properties are always changing relative to each other, you just follow where the zoning potential is on them."

**THAT TIME OF THE DECADE:** If ever a market were systemized and regularized, it's the billion-dollar one for feminine hygiene products. Yet two Vancouver entrepreneurs, Madeleine

Shaw and Suzanne Siemens, believe there's more than room enough for their Lunapads firm to sell non-disposable products to women who would use them for some five days out of 28.

In the U.S. alone, they calculate, the 73 million women who regularly use menstrual-period tampons will each flush 16,800 of them away. In 1998, the Franklin Associates waste consultancy calculated that 6.5 billion tampons and 13.5 billion sanitary pads were disposed of annually.

Those are big numbers for former fashion designer Shaw and chartered accountant Siemens's six-person firm. They expect to ship \$650,000 worth of washable liners and underwear from their Commercial-Street-at-East 18th Avenue headquarters this year — up from \$475,000 in 2006 — and to exceed \$1 million in 2009.

Eighty per cent of their sales are via the Internet.

"It's a natural for our 100-per-cent-cotton products," Shaw said. "A woman will say, 'I've heard about cloth pads.' So, she'll Google it, and Lunapads will come up in the top five."

"And there's no shortage of people looking for green products," said Siemens, who was controller at B.C. Gas before she met Shaw in 1999 as participants in the Vancouver Board of Trade and Volunteer Vancouver's Leadership Vancouver program.

Shaw's notion for Lunapads began in 1994. As a venture-capital student at the B.C. Institute of Technology, she won \$1,000 for a business plan she wrote. She set up as a fashion designer-manufacturer soon after. But in 1999, with Siemens's aid, she received \$50,000 in equity financing from Carol Newell and Joel Solomon's Renewal Partners venture firm, and a \$50,000 credit line from Vancity. Today, Shaw said, Renewal Partners and another individual each own 12 per cent of Lunapads, and she and Siemens hold the balance.

The products are made at Wendy Lin's Apple Garment firm, located next door to the 1,100-sq.-ft. premises Shaw and Siemens bought for \$180,000 this summer. A second product line, Luna(tic) chocolate, comes from Tiziana Ienna's Zazubean operation on Main Street.

"Periods and chocolate go hand in hand," said Siemens, smiling as she put one-year-old son Garret down for his nap in Lunapad's lounge area.

"When women do shift to our products," Shaw said, "we find their whole attitude to their period, their cycles and their bodies is greatly improved. I can show you hundreds of testimonials."

She can, too. Some of the many appear on the Lunapad website.

They're not prophets or proselytizers — just two young mothers who see society-wide ecological sensitivity bringing the market closer to what they offer.

"I always thought Lunapads was a product ahead of its time," Shaw said. "Then, two years ago, I realized our time had come."



Lovelace



Fossett

**FINDING FOSSETT:**

Wings Over Canada TV-series producer-host John Lovelace had the wings of his twin-engine Piper Navajo aircraft over America Saturday. He was flying to Nevada, where he expects to spend the next week or two at ground level.

Make that lake level, since that's where Lovelace and a camera crew will seek traces of the single-engine Bellanca Super Decathlon in which celebrity-pilot Steve Fossett took off Sept. 3 and was never seen again.

After fruitlessly scouring the rugged terrain, hundreds of searchers — including Britain's Sir Richard Branson — quit on Oct. 2. But Lovelace believes Fossett never hit the ground.

"He's 63, I'm 60. I'm wondering what was going on in that man's mind," Lovelace said. His answer: "People fly differently when they're alone, especially when the weather is good. There was water on his route, and guys like flying low over water."

He figures Fossett was skimming a lake, when he fell afoul of glassy water. That's the condition where even the most experienced pilots can't judge how high they are above it.

"The fact his ELT [Emergency Locator Transmitter] didn't go off: It's water," Lovelace said.

"You can find a beer can from space," he said, referring to satellite-scanning technology. "It's water."

Regarding Fossett: "It's just not in the cards to take off and vanish from the face of the world."

So Lovelace will search the bodies of water on Fossett's likely route. A shred of verifiable fabric from the aircraft would give him confirmation — and a hot TV episode.

Lovelace likened the search to the one for American aviatrix Amelia Earhart that began in 1937 and continues to this day. That's a stretch, but it is up there — or down there — with D.B. Cooper, who vanished after jumping from a plane over Washington state in 1971, carrying a \$200,000 ransom he'd extorted.

Maybe Lovelace will defray his \$30,000 expenses by finding that stash on the way home.

malcolmparry@shaw.ca, 604-929-8456

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