

# Truck traffic key to cargo centre

BY GRACE MACALUSO, WINDSOR STAR    APRIL 1, 2009



**CLOSER LOOK:** Windsor Airport general manager Federica Nazzani, left, tours the airport Tuesday with Robert Schmidt and Mirja Nissen of Lufthansa Consulting of Frankfurt, Germany.

**Photograph by:** Nick Brancaccio, Windsor Star, Windsor Star

A consultant hired by the city to examine ways of maximizing the use of Windsor Airport expressed optimism Tuesday about the facility's future as an air cargo and distribution centre.

"I'm not giving you the final judgment now, but Windsor seems to be in a unique position as far as its proximity to the border," said Robert Schmidt, director of air cargo Infrastructure at Lufthansa Consulting.

"It's got a good track record on the logistics side so we will have to look at some of the competing airports just to make sure they're not in duplication or triplication of facilities."

The city is paying Lufthansa Consulting \$220,000 to conduct a four-month, feasibility study into the creation of a perishable air cargo hub at the airport.

Schmidt and an associate flew in from Germany this week to conduct interviews with several stakeholders, including airlines, freight forwarders, logistic service providers, manufacturers and government agencies on both sides of the border.

"People talk about how they would consider Windsor airport for their air cargo needs and in almost any case that means crossing the border," said Schmidt.

"Air cargo is transported on trucks to a very large degree," he said.

"Where you call that a hub remains to be seen. But, there's a certain potential I see in developing a hub situation that could be based on trucks. The idea would be to turn cargo that's delivered to the airport into air cargo.

"It would have to undergo certain procedures, certain documentation and handling. It would then be put on special trucks; all the inspections would be taken care of here until it reaches its final destination, and that could be Asia or Europe."

The absence of large aircraft flying into Windsor airport is a weakness, but one that could be overcome, said Schmidt.

"What's hurting is the lack of larger aircraft servicing the airport right now. There's no belly capacity to start with on a regular level. If you had belly capacity (for air cargo) all of a sudden Windsor would be more interesting to a lot of shippers."

Windsor as well as other municipalities in southern Ontario are looking at the air cargo business as a way of enhancing underutilized regional airports.

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Are you in favour of an air cargo hub at Windsor Airport that would be based on trucks?

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