



Wayne Coulson, President and CEO of Coulson Aircrane, was recognized by the B.C. Aviation Council in September with an entrepreneur of the year award. He is pictured with the company's Hawaii Mars water bomber on Sproat Lake. [FILE PHOTO]

# Alberni entrepreneur wins BC Aviation Council award

## Coulson says airport expansion will benefit Valley economy

ERIC PLUMMER ALBERNI VALLEY TIMES

Wayne Coulson's interest in aircraft was sparked in 1984 when his family's company bought its first helicopter.

The Coulson Group of Companies has a logging history dating back to the 1930s, but 61 years after acquiring that forestry helicopter, aviation has grown to encompass a large part of the corporation's activities.

"We then purchased our first Sikorsky S-61 in 1986," wrote Coulson in an email to the *AV Times*. "We excelled there in helicopter logging, fire fighting, offshore oil and gas, [as well as] transport of U.S. Troops in Afghanistan working worldwide."

As president and CEO of Coulson Aircrane, the Alberni-bred businessman was recognized by his peers in the aircraft industry with an entrepreneur of the year award from the B.C. Aviation Council in September.

Coulson Aircrane employs 30 people at the Alberni Valley Regional Airport, where the company is currently focusing on manufacturing eight sets of Sikorsky helicopter sand filters for a customer operating with the U.S. Military in South Africa.

The company also converts Hercules C-130 airplanes with water and retardant tanks for firefighting contracts. Mainten-

**"There is no doubt in our minds that the airport will grow the Port Alberni economy. While everyone loves certainty in business we live with very little, and it is up to us to create opportunities to prosper."**

Wayne Coulson CEO of Coulson Group

ance on these planes is being done in San Bernardino, California and Singapore, while Coulson plans to equip a C-130 with a 16,600-litre tank in Edmonton later this month in time for a forest firefighting contract in Australia that begins in late November.

"At the present time minimal work can be done to the C-130 in Port, so we will be moving teams to Edmonton in October," Coulson said. "Our long-term plan is to install a structure at the airport that the C-130 will fit in and do maintenance at home."

With the absence of a global positioning system and a shorter runway than most commercial airports, the Alberni aviation company is limited with what's currently available at the airport near Sproat Lake. Large government grants have yet to

support the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District's \$7.5-million plan to upgrade the airport, but Coulson is confident the expansion project will benefit the Valley's economy. This summer the ACRD passed a bylaw that allows the airport project to be funded by loans and property taxes.

"There is no doubt in our minds that the airport will grow the Port Alberni economy," said Coulson. "While everyone loves certainty in business we live with very little, and it is up to us to create opportunities to prosper."

Eric.Plummer@avtimes.net

» We want to hear from you. Send comments on this story to [letters@avtimes.net](mailto:letters@avtimes.net). Letters must include daytime phone number and hometown.