

Grounded airline Jetsgo strands York travellers

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Suzanne Nichols has never been to Canada's west coast but she wasn't about to let Friday's news that Jetsgo was grounded extend that streak.

"I felt sorry for all those people at the airport," Ms Nichols said Friday. "It wasn't too bad for me; I had one week to make other arrangements."

The discount airline announced on the eve of March Break, one of the busiest travel seasons of the year, operations would immediately stop.

Ms Nichols was to leave for Vancouver with her fiancé Friday.

They purchased two tickets online, something they rarely ever did, for \$538.

"I always said the reason I haven't been out west is I thought it would be too expensive to go. Now I have lost a bundle," Ms Nichols said.

With a hotel and rental car already booked, she spent an additional \$1,500 to fly with another airline to ensure the trip wasn't an entire loss.

Calls and e-mails started flooding in early Friday morning, said Wendy

Stuart-Webb, owner of Uniglobe Voyager Travel in Newmarket.

While Jetsgo ticket holders may be reimbursed through the Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) compensation fund, anyone who purchased tickets online isn't covered, Ms Stuart-Webb said.

"A lot of people who booked online are telling us they won't do it anymore," she said.

Most Jetsgo customers from whom she has heard had booked online, however.

Internet bookings have become more popular among travellers look-

ing to avoid the \$50 to \$60 ticket fee charged by registered travel agents, Ms Stuart-Webb said.

Agencies registered with TICO contribute to the organization's compensation fund twice a year, based on revenue, she said.

The compensation fund was created to reimburse consumers affected by insolvent tour operators.

Travel professionals should have a better idea this week if Jetsgo ticket holders will be eligible for a refund through the fund, Ms Stuart-Webb added.

Aurora residents Brian McCue

and Jim McGillivray, both members of the St. Andrew's College music department, heard the news on the way to the airport.

They were booked on a Jetsgo flight to Calgary where they were scheduled to perform in the Indoor Highland Games.

While event organizers paid for their tickets, both were disappointed to be missing out on an event to which they had been looking forward since December.

"Jetsgo wasn't upfront. That's what stings. It's corporate cowardice," Mr. McCue said.

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