

Regional Community Airports of Canada

"A national organization dedicated to promoting the viability of Regional and Community Airports across Canada"



Regional Community Airports of Canada
Suite 220, 10610 Airport Drive
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October 13, 2020
<BY EMAIL>

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
Finance
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada K1A 0A6

Phone: 613-992-5234
Email: Chrystia.Freeland@parl.gc.ca

Re: Financial Crisis - Support for Canada's Regional Airports

Dear, Ms. Freeland

I write to you today with an urgent call for immediate federal government assistance to regional and community airports severely impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, and in particular to highlight the effects on small airports. **The Regional Community Airports of Canada** is a national organization dedicated to promoting the viability of regional and community airports within the air transportation system in Canada.

Canada's regional airports continue to work with public health officials to maintain 24/7 operations as our airports are critical for medical evacuation flights, cargo, military preparedness, charter flights, diversions and essential business travel in a time of tremendous need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put an unprecedented strain on the airports financial and operational capabilities. Regional airports, with less passenger traffic and limited ability to diversify revenue streams versus large airports, are dependent upon the fees generated from the flow of scheduled passenger flights and the corresponding commercial support activity. As the pandemic continues to suppress travelers, regional and community airports are reporting lost revenue in the range of 80 – 95% when compared to normal conditions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic being declared. Operations related to safety, runway maintenance and passenger services are fixed costs and stricter health protocols aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19 are putting an even bigger strain on cash flows. Regional and community airports cannot sustain operations at the mandatory regulated standards for safety and security based on the projected flight activity and passenger traffic for much longer. Most airports are now actively working on their 2021 budgets and, without a signal from your government of any potential financial support, they are faced with difficult decisions. Most airports have cut staff, reduced customer service amenities, and eliminated non-critical operational activities to survive the current situation. Looking into 2021 these airports are now facing deep staffing cuts and closure of portions of their operational

infrastructure in hopes of offering a bare minimum access for flight operations. The grim reality is that access to critical air service could shut down without swift government action.

While we recognize and appreciate news of potential support for regional air service in the future, airports cannot hold off making deep cuts and reducing service without an understanding of what this future support will mean. We wish to exemplify that regional and community airports are an essential component of regional air service and large increases to airport fees and reduced hours of operations necessary to survive this ongoing pandemic and its aftermath seriously threatens the attainability and viability of regional air service.

Canadians rely on regional and community airports. These airports provide essential transportation links for the vast area of this nation including connections for domestic, transborder, and international business and leisure travelers in support of regional economies. More importantly access to medical and cargo air services are essential for an appropriate quality of life in many rural regions and communities across the nation including remote communities.

More than 190 million passengers have travelled through Canada's small regional and local airports since 1995. Further, from 1995 to 2017, air passenger traffic growth at regional airports has averaged 3.85% per year, outpacing growth at National Airports System airports in 14 of those 22 years.

Please find attached a report RCAC completed in May 2020 which provides specific information and recommendations for the survival of regional and community airports during this COVID-19 crisis.

We hope regional airports and communities can count on your government to swiftly address the preservation of Canada's air transportation system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,



Brian Grant
Chair
Regional Community Airports of Canada

CC The Honourable Marc Garneau
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The Honourable Mélanie Joly
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