

Date

The Honourable Marc Garneau
Minister of Transport
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The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance
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Re: Federal Governments Programs to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19 and Canada's Municipal Airports

Dear Ministers:

I am writing you today with grave concern for the future of our municipally owned and operated <insert airport name>. Our airport – a critical social, tourism and trade link between our community and the rest of Canada – is one of about 200 airports explicitly excluded from being able to participate in federal relief programs launched to support small and medium sized businesses like our airport that have been dramatically impacted by federal and provincial travel restrictions for COVID-19.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, <airport name> has seen air traffic and revenues dwindle by XX per cent. We remain open to support the transport of essential workers, cargo, medevac and other essential services, and so we cannot cut our airport operating costs by more than XX per cent and still maintain a safe and secure operation that meets its regulatory obligations; we need financial support.

Ministers, unlike healthcare, transit and other industries of provincial jurisdiction that are provincial priorities for relief through the \$19 billion federal stream of relief funding to the provinces, aviation is a federal responsibility. In fact, the federal government owned and operated <airport name> up until XXXX. As the federal government of the day implemented the National Airports Policy, which saw the transfer of more than 100 airports from federal ownership and operation, Transport Canada's preferred approach was to transfer responsibility to municipal governments. These governments assumed this operational and financial responsibility with some trepidation, but with a federal commitment to the viability of a national system of safe, commercially oriented and cost-effective airports.

Unfortunately most of the federal relief programs announced to support businesses through COVID-19 – most notably the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) – bar participation by airports like <airport name> that are owned and operated by a municipal, provincial or territorial government. We were particularly disappointed to see this discrepancy was not addressed in the recent extension and expansion of the CEWS program.

As the federal government considers additional programs to support Canada's air transport sectors, we seek your commitment that municipally-owned and operated airports will be eligible for these programs. There is also a precedent in the federal Work Sharing Program, which treats government-owned businesses engaged in activities that are not purely governmental in nature, in the same way as privately owned businesses engaged in similar activities.

Minister, if ever there was a time for the federal government to play an active role to ensure the integrity and long-term viability of Canada's airports, it is now, with devastating financial losses, job losses and mounting debt at airports throughout the country. Airports like <airport name> play an important role in supporting and promoting local tourism, trade and are just as essential to the continued viability and competitiveness of our community as those airports that are privately operated.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signature Block

CC:

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