



November 8, 2024

The Honourable Anita Anand
Minister of Transport
HOUSE OF COMMONS
OTTAWA ON K1A 0A6
Anita.anand@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Anand:

Canadian Transportation Agency Complaint Fees

We are writing to express concern with proposed fees on airlines to process customer complaints. While we understand the Government of Canada is leading a Federal Air Access Review in order to improve air travel across Canada, this proposal could have unintended negative consequences in regions like the Northwest Territories (NWT) where affordable and reliable air travel is an essential service.

While the underlying intent of Air Passenger Protection Regulations are to hold airlines more accountable, we believe charging a fee will result in costs being transferred to travelers and/or reductions in flight options and will not incentivize better service. We have just started to emerge out of the chaos associated with the initial pandemic and the changes regarding Duty Time and Pilot Fatigue and Approach Ban regulations.

In the NWT, air travel is not merely a convenience; it is vitally important to provide lifelines of connectivity between remote and vulnerable communities, including the timely transportation of goods and supplies to sustain local businesses and residents. This includes basic needs such as groceries, and essential government services including medical care. For residents, particularly those in remote areas, air travel is the only viable link to necessary resources and support services. Given these unique needs, maintaining affordable and accessible air travel options is of utmost importance.

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As stated in a letter to the Honourable Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport at the time) from the NWT Minister of Infrastructure dated June 26, 2023; “...the GNWT appreciates the federal government’s review of air access across Canada however please do not lose sight that the aviation ecosystem of Canada’s North is more vulnerable than southern Canada.” The aviation industry’s recovery from the pandemic has not been consistent across Canada. Yellowknife Airport has just reached pre-pandemic passenger levels this year, however regional air service has not and is continuing its recovery. Transportation cost remains high and air travel routes are still in flux; for example, the Competition Bureau revised conditions to a Northern airline merger to reflect market changes from the pandemic. These negotiations have already resulted in scheduled reductions of flights from specific communities which have reduced our regional connectivity.

Any increase in expenses or decrease in service accessibility could severely impact residents’ ability to travel for essential purposes, including medical appointments and urgent family matters. NWT residents and businesses already face higher-than-average travel costs compared to their southern counterparts.

Given the unique circumstances, the NWT, other northern jurisdictions and smaller markets face. We respectfully urge that this fee not be implemented at this time. We need to acknowledge the essential role air travel plays in ensuring access to medical care, supporting family connections, and sustaining economic and social well-being to communities, Indigenous peoples and businesses of the NWT.

Thank you for considering these perspectives.

Sincerely,



Caroline Wawzonek
Minister
Infrastructure



Caitlin Cleveland
Minister
Industry, Tourism and Investment

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