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October 30, 2023

Honourable P.J. Akeagok, Premier
Office of the Premier
Government of Nunavut
P.O. Box 2410
Iqaluit, NU
X0A 0H0

Re: Air Transportation Services for the Kitikmeot Region

Dear Premier Akeagok,

I am writing to bring to your attention recent and very impactful challenges that Kitikmeot residents are facing regarding air transportation services in our region. We respectfully request your government's support and immediate intervention on this matter.

As you know, Nunavut almost exclusively relies on air transportation as the means to move people around our territory and to connect to them to southern Canada. Our supplies of fresh food are also hugely dependent on reliable and regular air transportation. When our air transportation services start to fail, so do we.

The unprecedented forest fires that occurred this past summer in the Northwest Territories severely affected our region. Almost all Kitikmeot air services originate from the Yellowknife Airport. During Yellowknife's evacuation, these services were halted, creating uncertainty and stress within our communities. Following the closure of Yellowknife Airport to commercial operations, air services to Kitikmeot communities were temporarily re-routed. Cambridge Bay and Kugluktuk were connected to Edmonton through Inuvik, while Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak and Kugaaruk were connected to Edmonton through either Rankin Inlet or Iqaluit. This temporary service resulted in 12-to-14-hour travel days in many cases. Such routing was especially difficult for Elders, persons with medical conditions, and those travelling with small children.

While the wildfire issue was thankfully a temporary inconvenience, the event brought into sharper focus more intractable issues related to air transportation in the Kitikmeot region. Earlier this year Canadian North discontinued commercial jet service to our region following the retirement of the company's 737-200 aircraft; the only passenger jets in Canadian North's fleet capable of landing on gravel runways. Canadian North's replacement of the 737-200s with much smaller ATR aircraft has severely reduced seat and freight capacity. This change in aircraft, in addition to other recent airline decisions, has resulted in the following negative impacts:

- A significant increase in the back log of air freight destined to the Kitikmeot region due to the ATR's lower cargo capacity.

Affiliates: Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Kitikmeot Corporation,
Nunavut Resources Corporation. Inuit Tapirisat of Kanatami



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Thurst Inlet
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Taloyoak
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Kugaaruk
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- A substantial increase in passenger fares and air freight costs despite being contradictory to Canadian North previous commitments that rates for Kitikmeot air travel and freight services would decrease or stay the same.
- Patients on medical travel are frequently having to wait an extra three to five days, and sometimes longer, before being able to fly home.
- The over-booking of flights is becoming routine, causing travel delays for customers.
- A substantial increase in personal luggage being bumped, with passengers often not receiving their luggage for up to four to five days.
- Current schedules having passengers spending one, two or even more days in Yellowknife when going further south, or on return flights to the Kitikmeot region.

Given the impacts being experienced, it is clear that air transportation services need dramatic improvements to adequately meet the basic needs of the Kitikmeot region's people, organizations, and businesses.

As a public government and as a major purchaser of air transportation services, the Government of Nunavut has an important and powerful voice to effect change. Please lend the voice of your government to improve the situation in our region by executing the following suggested actions:

1. **Immediate:** Please engage with both Canadian North and its regulator, Transport Canada, to push for immediate air transportation service improvements and price relief.
2. **Short Term:** Please direct your Minister of Economic Development and Transportation to investigate and advance ways to encourage greater competition that can provide the Kitikmeot region with improved air transportation services.
3. **Medium Term:** Please champion and lead the formation of a consortium of federal departments and agencies, Inuit Associations, Inuit Development Corporations, and major private sector parties tasked with attracting and deploying investments for the improvement of Kitikmeot airports that will lead to the more efficient and less expensive movement of people and goods in our region.

I would be pleased to discuss these proposed actions with you, and to identify the ways that we can work together to improve air transportation services in our region.

Regards,

Robert Greenley, President

CC: All Kitikmeot Mayors
 All Kitikmeot MLA's
 Aluki Kotierk, NTI President
 David Omilgoitok, KC President