



December 1, 2020

Hon. Bob Bratina, Chair
Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
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NATA Briefing Note- Support for Indigenous Communities, Businesses, and Individuals Through a Second Wave of COVID-19

Dear Mr. Bratina,

Thank you for inviting again the Northern Air Transport Association to this important committee. Since our last testimony to the INAN Committee on May 29, 2020, it has been a daily struggle for northern air carriers to manage the changing society health security challenges caused by this pandemic.

NATA members have been proud of the efforts to maintain essential services while implementing new rules in regard to passenger and flight crews to meet federal and different territorial gather and travel restrictions. With all that has been done, it is discouraging to have the COVID outbreaks continuing to take place and seep into the northern and remote areas of Canada.

We are doing our best, doing a lot of things right and everyday working with partners to find new ways to improve our overall system safety.

Once again, we would like to begin our Briefing by recognizing the efforts of the Ministers for Indigenous and Northern Affairs. We appreciate the engagement of their staff with NATA members in seeking an understanding of the challenges being faced by the operators and the communities they serve. The initial federal funding to the territorial government to support essential air travel was appreciated.

The focus of this committee is to analyze what needs to be done to support indigenous communities, businesses, and individuals through a second wave of COVID-19.

NATA believes because aviation is so critical to every aspect on northern and indigenous society, there needs to be a much more inclusive consultation of all the stakeholders depending on the northern and remote air transportation system.

NATA would like to offer the following for consideration by the committee:

- Along with a 2021 Essential Air Services federal funding plan, there is also a need to revisit Canada's air policy that supports sustainable air travel with northern sector safeguards.
- As northern air carriers struggle to find a new business balance, NATA is concerned there are federal rules being implemented that offer no imminent safety benefit but do increase costs and distract resources at a critical time. NATA encourages much more indigenous and northern stakeholder engagement by the federal regulator to measure impact of new rules on present business practices and overall society system safety.
- NATA supports an increase in the federal Airports Capital Assistance Program in order to upgrade necessary runways and navigation infrastructure, as well as develop new health security facilities and protocols.
- NATA encourages the federal and territorial governments to develop northern specific travel incentives that could include some form of taxable exemption for northern air travel tourism as well as increasing taxable exemption for travel costs associated with initial resource exploration to stimulate northern economic activity.

In spite of the COVID pandemic and all the challenges presented, NATA members are providing the important support for indigenous and northern community health and welfare.

In closing, NATA believes there needs to be a comprehensive federal/territorial plan of support for the indigenous and northern tourism and resource exploration sectors in order to maintain their business, as well as prepare for 2021 season.

Thank you



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