



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Hon. Rob Fleming  
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure  
Room 124, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Minister Fleming,

**Re: The growing need for increased supports for B.C. airports**

I have written to you in the past about the need for a comprehensive plan to sustain B.C.'s transportation networks, which connect our province and support the efficient movement of goods and people. This would include specific and targeted relief for transportation service organizations that are having difficulty making ends meet during this challenging time with COVID-19. I look forward to a response from you laying out such a plan, which is becoming more urgent with every day that goes by.

One specific area in growing need of support is our air service sector, which has suffered massive losses due to the restrictions on international and interprovincial travel. Many of B.C.'s airports are losing millions of dollars as a result of the decrease in air traffic and the suspension of many flights into airports and are facing many other challenges.

For example, in 2020, Kelowna International Airport saw its lowest passenger levels since 1996/97. The Air Traffic Control tower at the Prince George Airport, which is critical for the health and safety and economic development of the region, is under review for potential closure by Nav Canada. The Vancouver International Airport has had to cancel important and long-awaited capital projects. Many airports are also taking on considerable debt, which will lead to increased costs in the future, driving down the competitiveness of B.C. air travel.

Until B.C. air passenger traffic can safely increase, it is vital that we support our airports so they can continue operating and facilitating the movement of goods to supply businesses and frontline workers and other essential services — including emergency services, medivacs and access to health care in the short-term. B.C.'s airports are an integral part of the transportation network of the province, including access to rural communities, and important components of the transportation and trade corridors with the Asia Pacific and the U.S. We need to ensure that the long-term viability of B.C.'s airports is supported for the wellbeing of the communities they serve around our province.

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As such, I ask that as the provincial Minister of Transportation, you work with your federal counterparts to develop a plan to support B.C. airport authorities, including the protection of Prince George's Air Traffic Control. We know that the federal government announced funding support for the air service sector in November 2020, but there is little clarity about when this funding will arrive or what it will entail.

I urge you to help B.C. airports secure the prompt financial support they need to make it through this most challenging time.

Sincerely,

Michael Lee  
MLA, Vancouver-Langara  
Official Opposition Critic for Transportation, Infrastructure and TransLink

cc: Shirley Bond, Leader of the Official Opposition, MLA, Prince George-Valemount  
Sam Samaddar, Kelowna International Airport  
Gordon Duke, Prince George Airport  
Tamara Vrooman, Vancouver International Airport