

Honourable Minister Wally Schumann
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment
Minister of Infrastructure
Board of Management (Member)
Member's Office:
P.O. Box 1320 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9
(867) 767-9141 ext. 11138
Wally_Schumann@gov.nt.ca

June 17, 2019

Re: Narrowing of the main runway at Fort Smith Regional Airport

Dear Honourable Minister Schumann,

As leaders of the Community of Fort Smith, we understand the runway will be significantly narrowed and could have disastrous results should we ever have to quickly evacuate Fort Smith due to a forest fire or other natural disasters.

We are opposed to the current infrastructure changes that have begun at the Fort Smith Regional Airport. We understand this decision was made without any consultations with local stakeholders or the community members of Fort Smith. Consultation to the entire community has not taken place, a drastic change to transportation without consultation is unacceptable.

This change to the runway will have negative economic impacts to our current businesses and any future economic development within the community. Fort Smith is one of the larger communities. The community leaders and the local residents should have a right to consultation on such a vital transportation need.

We are pleased that Northwestern Air Lease has launched an aviation school that will have a positive effect on our struggling economy. The challenge will be for the new training pilots to safely land on the narrowed runway. This company is the second largest employer in Fort Smith with a family component. Their contribution to Fort Smith and the other communities they serve, including Hay River is a much-needed service with extremely positive attitudes towards all the needs of the communities they serve.

We also understand the only reason to narrow the runway is to save operational and maintenance costs. We understand the project is to replace the runway lighting with a brighter LED bulb. We have been informed that if you were just to replace the old lights with new lights in the same area, the cost savings would be considerable. We have been told that in winter the lights need to be cleaned and they could potentially not operate properly in the cold weather. We would stress that human life has always been paramount in the North and nominal cost savings should not impair the airlines safe return and takeoffs from Fort Smith.

We as leaders are requesting your input to stop the direction of this unprecedented decision considering all the negative effects it will have on our community. This decision is crucial for future economic growth and vital safety of the community in case of Forest fires or other natural disasters.

We look forward to favourable and positive response as soon as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,



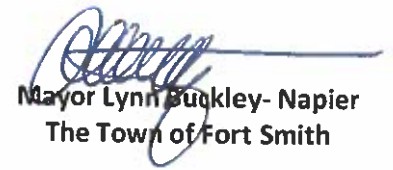
Chief Frieda Martselos
Salt River First Nation 195



President Ken Hudson
Metis Nation Local 50



Chief Gerry Cheezie
Smith Landing First Nation 196



Mayor Lynn Buckley- Napier
The Town of Fort Smith



cc:

Honourable Premier Bob McLeod
Lou Sebert Member of the Legislative Assembly Thebacha

Attachments included:

jheidema@nwal.ca

From: jheidema@nwal.ca
Sent: June-14-19 10:51 AM
To: 'chief.srfn@northwestel.net'; 'chief@slfn196.com';
'fortsmithmetis council@northwestel.com'; 'Lynn Napier-Buckley'
Subject: Major concern - Narrowing of the runway in Fort Smith
Attachments: Runway Narrowing - Fort Smith - Letter.docx

Dear Chief Marselos, Cheezie and Hudson and Mayor Napier-Buckley;

As you may be aware the GNWT has begun a process to narrow the runway at the community airport in Fort Smith. We would like your help to ask the GNWT to revise this process.

NWAL as the principal and consistent user of this airport was never consulted on this project. It was presented to us as a decision. It make no sense to us on any level.

As you can see in our email below, we have major concerns about this narrowed runway.

We need your help to write Wally Schumann, GNWT Minister of Transportation; MLA Louis Sebert; Premier, and Premier Bob McLeod to demand they reconsider this project. I have attached a sample email. Feel free to edit it.

Thank you for whatever help you can offer.

Warm regards,
Jim

James Heidema
Chief Operating Officer



Northwestern Air Lease Ltd. www.nwal.ca
Hanger 2 Airport Road
Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Canada
Tel: 867-872-2216 Ext: 304 • Fax: 867-872-5202 • Cell: 867-872-0247
Email: jheidema@nwal.ca

From: jheidema@nwal.ca <jheidema@nwal.ca>
Sent: June-03-19 10:24 AM
To: Louis Sebert <Louis_Seibert@gov.nt.ca>
Cc: Barry <bbergen@nwal.ca>; Brian <brian@nwal.ca>; George <george@nwal.ca>; Terry <terry@nwal.ca>
Subject: Narrowing of the runway in Fort Smith

Hi Lou!

(Lou sent this email on to Wally Schumann)

As you know, at this moment GNWT Airport Authority is narrowing the runway in Fort Smith from 200 feet to 100 feet wide. We were not invited to participate prior to this decision being taken, and we were only informed of the decision

after the fact. We understand the only reason to do this is save operating costs. Otherwise it makes no sense to our company.

Our major concerns are as follows;

- In windy conditions, it offers less runway space for our aircraft to maneuver. Cross winds are a common occurrence on this runway.
- We recently launched an aviation school. Our training pilots would have really benefited from a wider runway.
- The Airport authority advised us they have spoken to Boeing, and they were told a 737 could land on a 100 foot wide runway. We are not sure a Boeing 737 could safely turn around on a narrow runway.
- As the summer is our most profitable period between schedule, chartered flights and now Aviation School, closing the runway at 7 pm will definitely affect our revenue.
- From a safety point of view, it is definitely a backward step.
- No other runway in the NWT has been narrowed in this way.

You should be aware the construction people who are narrowing the runway by placing new LED lights, they are having significant difficulty cutting through the payment to run the cables. This difficulty could have been avoided if they cut outside the existing runway. Although GNWT has informed us the project will be finished in the fall, we have no confidence in the stated completion date.

Regardless, we will reluctantly live with this decision. Unfortunately this is another example of government making decision without consulting the users of the service.

Warm regards,
Jim

James Heidema
Chief Operating Officer



Northwestern Air Lease Ltd.

www.nwal.ca

Hanger 2 Airport Road

Fort Smith, NT X0E 0P0 Canada

Tel: 867-872-2216 Ext: 304 • Fax: 867-872-5202 • Cell: 867-872-0247

Email: jheidema@nwal.ca