

JUL 08 2019

Chief Frieda Martselos
Salt River First Nation #195
PO Box 960
FORT SMITH NT X0E

Chief Gerry Cheezie
Smith's Landing First Nation 196
PO BOX 1470
FORT SMITH NT X0E 0P0

Mr. Ken Hudson
President
Fort Smith Métis Council
PO BOX 1107
FORT SMITH NT X0E 0P0

Her Worship Mayor Lynn Buckley-
Napier
Town of Fort Smith
174 McDougal Road
PO BOX 147
FORT SMITH NT X0E 0P0

Dear Chief Martselos, Mr. Hudson, Chief Cheezie, Mayor Buckley-Napier:

Narrowing of the Main Runway at Fort Smith Regional Airport

Thank you for your letter of June 17, 2019. I appreciate the concerns that you have raised regarding the modification of the runway width at the Fort Smith Regional Airport. I would like to take this opportunity to provide further information on this project and to confirm that the concerns you raise were taken into consideration during its planning.

The decision to modify the runway width was made following discussions with key users, aviation partners and the regulators. Most runways in Canada were constructed more than 40 years ago, when aircraft were becoming larger to handle increasing volumes of passengers. As such, runways were constructed based on expectations that future runways would need to be wider and longer. However, these expectations have not materialized. In fact, modern aircraft are becoming more efficient, requiring shorter runways. Larger, higher volume aircraft are confined to specific routes, while smaller aircraft are used on other routes to maximize frequency and efficiency.

Transport Canada standards specify that a 30-metre wide runway is appropriate for the aircraft serving the Fort Smith Regional Airport, currently and in the future. This width accommodates a broad range of modern and efficient aircraft, including the Boeing 737 and Airbus 319-321 series of jets. These types of aircraft are larger than the Jetstream 31/32 that presently serves the Fort Smith airport and surrounding communities.

.../2

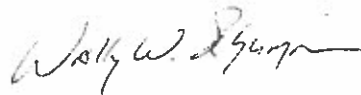
The importance of the airport in an emergency, such as an evacuation, is well understood and has been considered. In an emergency, any aircraft that can operate on a 6000-foot runway can land at the Fort Smith Regional Airport. The width of the runway will not impact the aircraft's operations. In addition to the broad range of aircraft that can evacuate passengers, the air tanker fleet for the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Government of Alberta, including the Electra L-188, Birddog (King air 100), Air Tractor 802A, and FireBoss Air Tanker, require a runway with a width of 30 metres or less. Nonetheless, the runway surface, including the safety areas (shoulders outside the runway edge lights) will remain at 90 metres.

The new LED lighting includes an "Arctic kit" and has been tested and approved for cold weather. They produce a brighter and more reliable light, which will replace the older obsolete incandescent systems. The GNWT has recently installed this new modern type of lighting system in other northern locations and the feedback from various pilots has been very positive. Northwest Territories (NWT) airports also have alternative systems in the event of a lighting failure to maintain the safety of the airport and allow arrival and departure of aircraft to continue.

We are similarly pleased to see the launching of the aviation school. The aircraft used for pilot training is smaller than aircraft presently serving the Fort Smith Regional Airport. In addition, a large number of flying training schools in Canada operate on runways with a width of 30 metres or less. Pilots, once trained, will see their initial flying years travelling into smaller communities with gravel runways 30 metres wide or less. The improvements afforded by this project will prepare the newly trained pilots for success.

I appreciate you bringing your concerns forward. The improvements being constructed at the Fort Smith Regional Airport will position the Northwest Territories to effectively and efficiently maintain this important piece of infrastructure and enable the community to maximize the airport's economic potential now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Wally Schumann
Minister
Infrastructure

c. Distribution List

Distribution List

- c. Honourable Bob McLeod
Premier

- Mr. Gary Bohnet
Principal Secretary
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

- Mr. Louis Sebert
MLA, Thebacha

- Mr. Mike Aumond
Secretary to Cabinet/ Deputy Minister
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

- Mr. Paul Guy
Deputy Minister
Infrastructure

- Mr. Keith Morrison
Senior Administrative Officer
Town of Fort Smith

- Mr. Allen Stanzell
Chief Executive Officer
Salt River First Nation

- Mr. Frank Lepine
Chief Executive Officer
Smith's Landing First Nation