

**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,



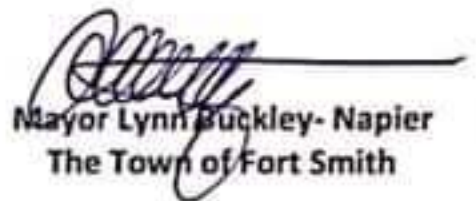
Chief Frieda Martselos  
Salt River First Nation 195



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: