

18 October 2021

The Honourable Richard Cannings
Member of Parliament
South Okanagan – West Kootenay
301 Main Street, Suite 202
Penticton, British Columbia
V2A 5B7

Sent via email: richard.cannings@ndp.ca

Dear Mr. Cannings

RE: Kelowna International Airport

The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen is aware of Canada's COVID-19 response and we support the initiatives taken to limit spread of this insidious virus. We are also aware, however, that the restriction of international air travel through four national hubs has curtailed international air travel at Kelowna International Airport. The suspension of international flights is not only a hindrance to citizens within the Regional District to travel beyond our borders, but is also a significant detraction to the economic recovery of the Region.

Canada's regional airports are critical gateways. They serve as engines of economic development for local companies, large and small, and support key channels that facilitate trade, immigration and tourism. The pandemic and necessary public health shut-down has had a catastrophic effect on air traffic - and for revenues - at Kelowna International Airport and the regional economy. At the Kelowna International Airport air service in 2020 and most of 2021 has been down by up to 96% of pre-pandemic levels.

As the percentage of vaccinated travellers increase and safety measures become more entrenched, we hope due consideration is being given to opening Kelowna, and other regional International airports so they can prosper in the future. We understand that lack of international connections has resulted in a \$2.6 million loss to the airport and we certainly noticed this in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valley's over the summer.

Airlines who have scheduled international flights through the Kelowna International Airport are cancelling routes and will continue to cancel routes if international status for regional airports is not reopened. We know that cancellations of flights currently scheduled for the winter season will mean international routes are unlikely to return until summer 2022.

Canada is relying on medical experts to provide reliable advice on when restrictions might be lifted, and we appreciate that. If they could provide Airports with target timelines or criteria to open, they could start the necessary work to allow that to happen on an expedited schedule once it is safe to do so.

If there's any further information we can share in the meantime, please don't hesitate to let us know. Thanks for your attention to this important matter. I trust you'll keep these issues top of mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karla Kozakevich". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Karla Kozakevich
Chair

cc: Tracy Gray, MP Tracy.Gray@parl.gc.ca