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October 7, 2022

The Honourable Minister Diane Archie
Department of Infrastructure
Government of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Minister Archie:

Striving for a General Aviation Friendly Yellowknife Airport

The [Northwest Territories Flying Association \(NWTFA\)](http://www.flyingnwt.com) wishes to highlight the importance of general aviation at the Yellowknife Airport. NWTFA was established as a non-profit society in 2004. Its objects are to support general aviation and air safety, showcase the rich aviation history of the Northwest Territories (NWT), and promote the region as an “aviation friendly” destination. NWTFA serves as the local chapter of the [Canadian Owners and Pilots Association \(COPA\)](http://www.copa.ca) through its designation as COPA Flight 108. As a national advocacy body, COPA’s mission is to advance, promote, and preserve the Canadian freedom to fly. NWTFA membership includes pilots and aviation enthusiasts from the NWT, Canada and United States.

The Yellowknife Airport is planning a major transformation focused on a new terminal building and commercial/retail airside development. This redevelopment will have a significant impact not only on northern pilots and aircraft owners, but also on visiting pilots flying general aviation aircraft for recreational or other discretionary purposes. Based on the information available from the Department of Infrastructure, it is apparent that general aviation is not yet a strategic consideration in this planning, despite its enormous positive impact on public airports and local economies.

A study commissioned by COPA entitled [Economic Impact of General Aviation in Canada 2017](#) clearly illustrates the value and importance of general aviation. It recognizes that general aviation has played a vital role in the Canadian economy for decades. Apart from allowing individuals to experience the joy of private flight, general aviation activities maintain and support important infrastructure and public services such as flight training, aircraft maintenance, and civil air search and rescue. Ensuring that the benefits of these activities accrue to the NWT requires inclusion of general aviation in plans for future development of the Yellowknife Airport.

General aviation holds considerable potential for growth in the tourism sector. While traditional community tourism development efforts focus primarily on local attractions, discretionary visits by general aviation pilots center around the availability of an airport that provides a welcoming and positive experience. Development of an airport friendly to general aviation users with appropriate services, such as on-site amenities and transportation to nearby attractions, will stimulate discretionary travel by such users. As a result, visitor spending will increase through the local economy at local businesses, accommodations, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers. The economic magnitude of these benefits is scalable by the number of general aviation visitors.

The current environment at the Yellowknife Airport illustrates the necessity to consider general aviation as the airport transformation unfolds. Over the years, the private aircraft and visitor parking area has been relocated numerous times; land is not available for lease for private hangars or general aviation related businesses such as maintenance facilities; and electricity is not available for maintenance or winter use of private aircraft. Such amenities are standard at other airports where considerable effort is put into attracting general aviation interests including aviation tourism and flight training facilities.

Additional benefits to be gained by fostering general aviation include cultivation of interest among northerners who might pursue aviation as a career or business and attraction and retention of individuals who view the region as an ideal location to work and enjoy flying.

This letter is intended to encourage the Department of Infrastructure to consider general aviation in its vision for redevelopment of the Yellowknife Airport. The Yellowknife Airport holds great economic and tourism potential for all NWT communities. It is our hope that it will one day be widely considered a “general aviation friendly” gateway to the North that we can be proud to promote to the broader general aviation community.

The future of the Yellowknife Airport is exciting and NWTFA would be happy to participate in discussions concerning general aviation aspects of the important work ahead. We look forward to working together to establish a vibrant general aviation interest in the North.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Brezinski', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

Kevin Brezinski
President
Northwest Territories Flying Association/
COPA Flight 108

Copied to:

Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
Rebecca Alty, Mayor, City of Yellowknife
Yanik D'aigle, President, NWT Chamber of Commerce
Melissa Syer, Executive Director, Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
Harold Grinde, Chair, NWT Tourism Association
David Taylor, Director, Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA NWT)