



Via Email

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## Restoring Atlantic Canadian Connectivity via Air Services Critical to Regional Sustainability and Recovery

Dear Ministers and Atlantic Premiers,

We hope this letter finds you are all keeping safe.

As 2021 begins, Atlantic Canada joins with provinces and nations the world over coping with the relentless headwinds of COVID-19. We want to thank all levels of government for your support to businesses and the leadership you have shown in expediting support during these extraordinary times.

**Today, we are asking for your governments' support and leadership to ensure that Atlantic Canadians are not permanently severed from the rest of Canada due to the significantly impaired operations of national airlines and the airports serving our region.**

Public safety and COVID-19 cessation must be the first priority, but we must balance that with consideration for the future of our economies, vulnerable businesses and sectors, and employment for our citizens. While the distribution of vaccines is underway, it may take many months to complete this process. These are months that will further cement the mounting losses sustained by air carriers, airports, their supply chains, and the thousands of people and businesses that rely on air travel for employment and business in our region.

Though we are proud to say Atlantic Canadians are known for our resiliency, the removal of our access to air travel will severely hamper our ability to overcome the severe demographic, fiscal and growth challenges that existed prior to COVID-19. These

challenges will only to be compounded in the aftermath of the pandemic and the loss of air services. We have recently released a series of reports on the impacts based on [sectors](#), [demographic and diversity](#) and [geographic regions](#), which illustrate the initial impacts.

**To be forthright, we cannot grow our population, increase our tax base, and attract investment if people and businesses cannot efficiently and cost-effectively access this region.** People just don't relocate to, and businesses just don't invest in, locations they can't access.

We realize that consumer confidence must return and the desire to travel must be present to generate the critical revenues needed to sustain routes to the region. In the absence of a clear plan for rolling out vaccines safely and expediently, signalling a horizon for lifting of restrictions and lockdowns, business travellers and people will be reluctant to commit to advance ticket sales, further delaying the revival of air services. We have all the tools we need to stave off the virus—safety protocols, testing, contact tracing, and now vaccines—and we want to work with you to contribute to eradication efforts.

Our Chambers are asking your governments to:

- Supply **urgent financial support** to air carriers and our airports to avoid permanent, irrevocable losses of service to the region;
- Communicate broadly the **vaccination plans** for each province with protocols, timelines and roles and responsibilities of government, business, and the public; and
- Communicate the **short-, medium- and long-term plan from governments for economic recovery**. Because while vaccination is critical, it is not '*a plan for economic recovery*.' Our economies and businesses will not return to normal or resume as with the flick of a light switch. They need a line of sight and a level of certainty to the road ahead to appropriately plan.

The social and economic cost of the pandemic is both unprecedented and unsustainable. It is essential that we all do what we can to bring COVID-19 under control so that both families and businesses are once again able to connect normally.

For Atlantic Canada, we will only regain our economic health once society and the economy are permanently reopened. Then we can address pre-existing regional challenges and those levied upon us in the wake of the pandemic, and a key component to successful recovery is ensuring we remain connected to the rest of Canada and the world with reliable access to air transportation.

The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce is Atlantic Canada's largest Accredited business association representing 16,000 businesses through its network of 94 Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade.

Cordially,  
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