



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay
P.O. Box 10308, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6T8
www.noma.on.ca
p. 807.683.6662 e. admin@noma.on.ca

Date: April 24, 2024

Resolution 2024-08: Support for Municipal Airports and Scheduled Passenger Service

Background:

Whereas the Fort Frances Municipal Airport is one of only two airports in the District of Rainy River; and

Whereas the Fort Frances Municipal Airport and Dryden Regional Airport have recently been advised that Bearskin Airlines will be discontinuing scheduled service effective May 11, 2024; and

Whereas the withdrawal of Bearskin Airlines has threatened the ongoing viability of the Fort Frances and Dryden Airports; and

Whereas the withdrawal of Bearskin Airline services and reductions in passenger movements through the COVID-19 pandemic has now made the Fort Frances Municipal Airport and Dryden Regional Airport ineligible for Federal Airport Capital Assistance Funding (ACAP) which was to be used to address specific capital needs including runway rehabilitation; and

Whereas the Fort Frances Municipal Airport provides services to multiple other carriers including Ornge, MNRF, other private aircraft, and is a Canadian Customs Port of Entry; and

Whereas the Dryden Regional Airport provides services to multiple other carriers including Ornge, MNRF, and other private aircraft; and

Whereas the Airports of the Northwest have a huge impact on economic and tourist opportunities within the entire Rainy River and Kenora Districts; and

Whereas the loss of the Fort Frances Municipal and/or Dryden Regional Airport would severely impact the municipality's ability to attract new industrial and commercial enterprises; and

Whereas the Town of Fort Frances and City of Dryden play critical roles in the emerging mining and green energy sectors in the Northwest of Ontario; and

Whereas sustainable scheduled air transportation to these communities is key to the growth of operations in these key sectors for the future of Ontario; and

Whereas the Airports of the Northwest also play a critical role in access to higher levels of emergent healthcare; and

Whereas the availability of scheduled flight services into these communities plays a critical role of bringing in Locum physicians and specialists to provide critically needed medical care supports; and

Whereas the Town of Fort Frances, City of Dryden and the Loomex Group are working collaboratively to source a new scheduled air passenger carrier(s) to replace the service loss due to Bearskin Airlines withdrawal; and

Whereas a new scheduled air carrier(s) will need time to establish themselves as a reliable and affordable carrier(s) for these communities, likely at a financial loss for the carrier(s); and

Whereas the Province of Ontario has played a significant role in supporting other transportation initiatives across the North such as the Ontario Northland Bus service and Northlander passenger train.

Recommendation:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that NOMA urges the Provincial Government to provide financial support for a new carrier(s) to provide reliable, affordable, convenient scheduled passenger and freight air services to the Town of Fort Frances and City of Dryden; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NOMA urges the Federal Government to continue to provide Federal Airport Capital Assistance Funding (ACAP) to both municipalities regardless of annual scheduled passenger movements and that ACAP funding is provided in this fashion until such a time that new scheduled passenger services can be established, and passenger movements return to pre-pandemic levels.

Moved By: Lisa Teeple, Councillor of Emo

Seconded By: Alex Crane, Councillor of O'Connor

CARRIED



President