



**Sent via email- Omar.Alghabra@parl.gc.ca**

January 14, 2021

The Honourable Omar Alghabra  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Alghabra,

Allow me to offer my heartfelt congratulations to you on your recent appointment to Cabinet as Minister of Transportation. On behalf of the Nova Scotia PC Caucus, I look forward to building a strong relationship with your Department and achieving common goals for the betterment of Nova Scotia. I know you will do Canadians proud.

I would like to bring a matter to your attention that has been a major blow to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

On January 11, 2021, Air Canada indefinitely suspended its operations at the J.A. Douglas McCurdy Sydney Airport. This was the final nail in the coffin of this facility, which had struggled mightily during COVID-19 restrictions and suspended its flight from Sydney to Halifax this past fall.

This suspension has resulted in layoffs for employees of this airport and, combined with travel restrictions to Nova Scotia, has halted our province's world famous tourism industry and, specifically, travel to the region voted as the "Best Island in Canada" for two years in a row.

My provincial colleagues in Cape Breton, Allan MacMaster, Keith Bain, Brian Comer and Murray Ryan have been inundated with calls and emails from their constituents worried of the long-lasting impacts of this closure. I have no doubt you will hear from your caucus colleagues as well. I wholeheartedly share their concern. When you slowly chip away at services, infrastructure, and opportunities, you realize that if and when it does return, it is never quite the same.

If this announcement was not already bleak, the many rotational workers and university students from coast to coast to coast, who rely on this airport are now forced to drive over four hours to the closest airport in Halifax. It is firmly in the best interest of Canadians and Nova Scotians that we work together to ensure this closure is not the new normal.

- What will your Department do to ensure the protection and revival of this

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airport? A complete return of these routes is vital to the economic recovery of Cape Breton communities.

- Transportation safety will continue to be a factor long after COVID-19 is in the rearview mirror. How do you intend to ensure the safety of passengers travelling to our area when airports return to capacity?
- Despite a lacking of appetite from our provincial government to implement testing in airports, will your Department proactively put standards in place to encourage safety of passengers and to the greater community?

I do not have any interest in blaming, only in coming together to find solutions. I know you share that goal. But I do believe that government money for airlines in the aftermath of the pandemic must put a focus on jobs and people. Put simply, Nova Scotians will not tolerate money for airlines if job certainty and route preservation are not guaranteed. It is vital to our economic recovery.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts, and to you visiting the province when circumstance and time allows.

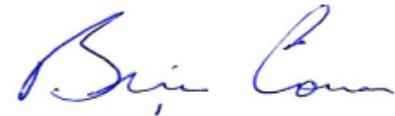
Yours truly,



Tim Houston  
Leader of the Official Opposition



Murray Ryan  
MLA Northside-Westmount



Brian Comer  
MLA Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg



Allan MacMaster  
MLA Inverness



Keith Bain  
MLA Victoria-The Lakes