



Alberta Enterprise Group

July 31, 2009

Mayor Stephen Mandel:

I am in receipt of your form letter of July 22, 2009, regarding the ECCA. Having had time to reflect, I have concluded this was the wrong decision for our City.

How can Edmonton possibly be a better city by further limiting access and ultimately removing a key transportation infrastructure asset?

The process used to make this decision, based on both misinformation and a lack of credible information, was done to prop up a pre-determined outcome – closure of the ECCA.

At the public hearings, the vast majority of presenters made "very well-thought out and very passionate" cases for retaining the airport, cases which were largely ignored in the ultimate decision.

A key pillar of your argument to close ECCA – the immediate need of land for NAIT expansion – has proven to be false. In fact in the July 10, 2009 Edmonton Journal, Advanced Education Minister Doug Horner explained:

While the soon-to-be available land may be raising excitement, Advanced Education and Technology Minister Doug Horner said his department has no plans to construct any buildings.

He said the provincial government hands out project funding based on where the greatest needs and demands are, and right now that doesn't include a huge campus expansion for NAIT.

As such, he suggested city councillors were mistaken if their vote to shut down the airport was based, in part, on a belief NAIT would soon be ready to move onto the site.

"Using that as an excuse or reason to close the airport, I'd have to wonder about that," Horner said.

"There has been no indication from this department or this minister that if the airport was to close tomorrow, we'd start planning NAIT's expansion the day after. That's not happening. The city making a decision to close does not do anything to change our planning process."

For you to further suggest that staged closure promotes certainty for users is nonsense. No business will invest or grow, when you have put even more burden on their ability to operate. The only thing certain is this decision has left many with no option but to plan their relocation in whole or in part to another area, many to Calgary.

The decision to close the airport is most insulting to Alberta's biggest employers and investors. It is another clear indication of the City government's lack of understanding about business. Would it not be in the best interest of the City to promote better access for the province's biggest companies and employers, many who were the biggest users of the airport – the Alberta government, ATCO, CN, CNRL, Syncrude, Suncor, Wheaton Group, to name a few. And, as the majority of growth in our economy will be derived from Northern Alberta, would it not be wise to promote more connectivity and efficient access, not less?

Health care expert after expert have clearly indicated that the best possible system for handling emergency medical services is utilizing medevacs out of the ECCA. How can a more complicated, expensive and less effective system be the answer?

Furthermore, there are numerous questions arising from the Edmonton Regional Airport Authority's decision to support closure of the ECCA, which limits choice, competition, access and service related to aviation in the community. Section 21 of the *Regional Airport Authority Act* clearly indicates:

21 The purpose of an authority are

- (a) to manage and operate the airport for which it is responsible in a safe, secure and efficient manner, and*
- (b) to advance economic and community development by means that include promoting encouraging improved airline and transportation service and an expanded aviation industry*

for the general benefit of the public in its region.

On top of the reasons I have spelled out above, a fundamental question remains unanswered. By voting to close the ECCA and develop the land, how much will this ultimately cost and who is going to pay for it?

We sincerely hope, for the sake of the entire province, that council voted to shut down this vital transportation link, for much more than empty LRT stations and a permanent racetrack grandstand.

Sincerely,



Tim Shipton
President

Cc: Edmonton City Council