

Good Morning

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today and for the efforts being taken to address this critical issue. I apologize for not being there in person but conflicting commitments did not allow me to travel to Ottawa, fingers crossed the technology does not let us down.

I speak today as the Board Chair of the British Columbia Aviation Council representing the interests of the Aviation Community in BC. My personal background is in the area of Air Navigation, during my 36-year career I have worked as an Operational Air Traffic Controller in both control Towers and the Radar Center. When I retired from NavCanada I was the General Manager of the Vancouver FIR, responsible for all Air Navigation Services in the province.

I have provided a briefing note with more in-depth information than my time will allow me to express. I am also aware that the Committee has had the opportunity to hear from many respected Industry professionals and as such I am confident that the committee is aware of the critical resource shortages being experienced and projected for our Industry. These resource shortages are and will span the depth and breadth of our industry and will include but not be limited to Airport Operators, Air Traffic Controllers, Aircraft Maintenance Engineers and Pilots.

As the motion before the committee is specific to Pilots I will focus my comments on the Pilot Shortage and the difficulties at the Flight Training level, but I feel it is important to note that the pilot shortage, while critical, is not singular.

Just as the resource shortage is not specific to the pilot group, the "fix" for this issue is not simple or singular. Again, I know that several of my colleagues have made recommendations to the committee so I would like to add the support of BCAC to the following four recommendations:

1. *Increased and consistent access to student loans for flight training*

Currently the access to student loans for flight training is not consistent from province to province. Loan funding in British Columbia is based on the length of training rather than the cost of training. As has been presented to the committee, the cost of flight training to the level of a Commercial Multi-IFR licence will exceed \$75,000; certainly, more than the cost of tuition and books for most 4-year University Bachelor Degrees. **The creation of a Federally backed National Student Loan Program that makes available a level of funding commensurate with the cost of Flight training would be the single most impactful step that could be taken.**

2. *Initiatives to increase recruitment and retention of Flight Instructors.*

Prior to the resource shortage Flight Schools and Northern Air Operators could count on students gaining much needed flight hours (and experience) by obtaining Instructor ratings and working as Flight instructors or taking positions with Operators servicing Northern and remote communities. Now with Airlines taking young pilots as soon as they obtain the minimum requisite hours, we see our Flight Training Units and Northern Air Operators struggling to recruit and retain employees. Some FTUs have reported skyrocketing Instructor pay that is putting a severe strain on business sustainability. Passing the cost of increased Instructor pay onto their Customers (the same students who struggle with financing) is not a viable option. **Along with the development of a National Student Loan Program we recommend a matrix of loan forgiveness based on time spent as a Flight Instructor or time spent flying designated remote routes.** For reference we see similar programs in place for Medical personnel working in remote

communities.

3. *Support Training Innovation*

The regulatory requirements around aviation can be an impediment to innovation in training. We need to rethink how we train and who is doing the training. Aviation is an extremely complex environment so it is interesting to me that flight training is one of, if not the only system I can think of where, for the most part, we send our least experienced aviators to train the next group of aviators. We don't send first year medical students to train new Doctors we don't send High School students to train the next Teachers, yet, in the beginning of the career that is what we do with Pilots....I am not saying it is not safe and I am not saying we do not produce a good product; it certainly is and we certainly do but is it the best way? ATAC has recommended **the Approved Training Organization model that has the potential to strengthen, streamline and better support training all while meeting regulatory requirements. BCAC strongly supports this initiative.**

4. *Support for initiatives to remove barriers to entry for Women and Indigenous Peoples.*

Women and Indigenous people continue to be poorly represented in the Industry. With women making up 50% of our population and Indigenous Youth being the fastest growing demographic in Canada, a focus on these two groups could prove advantageous on many levels. We strongly encourage continued support for established outreach programs to Women such as Elevate Aviation. But for energizing the Indigenous sector I believe there needs to be a concerted effort to take culturally relevant programs of introduction and education out to Indigenous Communities. I am the co-founder of a program called "Give them Wings" where we will be introducing careers in Aviation to Indigenous Youth with a focus on Pilots. Our first event will be held in March at Boundary Bay Airport with the hopes of connecting with the Tsawwassen, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh communities. With support we hope to take this initiative across the province and beyond.

Today Air Transport has become a "taken-as-granted" mode of transportation in the developed world. The social and economic impacts stemming from a pilot shortage have the potential to be at best annoying (your vacation is ruined because your flight from Penticton to Vancouver was cancelled, causing you to miss your connection to Rome and subsequently your Mediterranean cruise) to at worst, devastating when there is no pilot to transport your critically ill child and the unimaginable happens.

Again, I thank the committee for this opportunity, I look forward to your questions and to any assistance I or my organization can offer.

Heather Bell
Chair, BC Aviation Council
Info@BCAviationCouncil.org