



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

TRAN • NUMBER 034 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

—
Chair

Mr. Larry Miller

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

•(0845)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP)): Good morning, colleagues.

This is the 34th hearing of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108.2, we are examining the transportation of dangerous goods, and safety management systems.

We have witnesses from the Northern Air Transport Association and the Canadian Airports Council. Representatives of the council will also take part in our meeting via teleconference from Halifax and from New Brunswick.

I'd like to ask that the members of the committee specify to whom their questions are addressed, especially in the case of our teleconference participants.

As for our witnesses who are participating via teleconference, please identify yourselves before answering so that we may make a note of it. In addition, if you want to speak, please simply say your name and we will add it to the list for the question and answer period. Does that suit you?

You each have 10 minutes to make your representations.

We will begin with Mr. Stephen Nourse, Executive Director of the Northern Air Transport Association.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse (Executive Director, Northern Air Transport Association): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to thank the committee for providing this opportunity for the Northern Air Transport Association, or NATA, to present before it. As you've heard, my name is Stephen Nourse, and I'm the executive director of NATA. I will apologize ahead of time if my voice cracks partway through. It's allergies, perhaps, or a cold; I don't know what is still around.

NATA has approximately 107 members and represents 37 commercial air carriers, all of which operate in the northern and remote regions of Canada. We have operator members in every province and territory in Canada with the exception of the three Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and New Brunswick. None of them are particularly northern or remote, so why would we?

Our carriers run the gamut from large jet carriers like Air North, Yukon's Airline; Canadian North; First Air; and Air Inuit; all the way

down to small mom-and-pop operations and everything in between. We have both fixed- and rotary-wing operators among our members.

I will begin with some comments on the transportation of dangerous goods. On a per-flight basis, I would suggest to you that NATA carriers probably carry far more dangerous goods than the major carriers do in Canada. This is simply a function of where and who our carriers service. A huge part of their market is serving northern and remote communities, where air is the only year-round access to the community. In many cases, it's the only access—period.

With no other mode to move dangerous goods, people have to ship them by air despite all the restrictions in place. Fortunately, the transportation of dangerous goods by air in Canada is a well-developed and mature system based on international standards. If there's any criticism to be made of the system, it's perhaps that in remote locations it can be a bit onerous on the shipper's part.

Air carriers have sophisticated training programs on dangerous goods for handlers, cargo agents, receivers, maintenance personnel, flight crew, even the dispatchers. The manual specifying what can fly under what circumstances, and how packaged, puts the old standby of the Toronto Yellow Pages book to shame in its size. It literally is a multi-day course just to learn how to use the manual properly.

The vast majority of businesses supplying these remote locations know the rules, know how the paperwork goes, and have the specialized labels and packaging necessary to comply with the regulations. However, along comes Fred in a remote community, and all he wants to do is bring back a new battery for his ATV. Daunted by everything involved, or simply not knowing, it ends up either in his luggage or shipped undeclared, and likely improperly packaged. Now we have a potential problem. Fortunately that's relatively rare, but nevertheless it's a potential problem.

A lot of effort is put into DG awareness to prevent this from happening, but more is needed. There also needs to be some thought on how the system could perhaps be simplified for common items moved frequently in remote communities—items such as batteries, bear bangers, snowmobiles, and ATVs, which you and I just go to the hardware store for without a single thought as to how it actually got to the store.

Moving on to safety management systems, CAR 705 operators in Canada, those operating large commercial aircraft, have been under an SMS regimen for many years now. Initially there was a lot of angst among them regarding its implementation. The angst seemed justified for a while, as at first Transport Canada did not do a good job bringing it in.

● (0850)

Initially there was a lot of contradictory information, resistance from the inspectors themselves, and unfortunately a very narrow view of SMS from Transport Canada, limited to just what was regulated by them. The reality is that a successful SMS program requires a cultural shift by the entire organization, not just the portions regulated by Transport.

However, if you go to any of the 705 operators today and ask them about SMS, you will find that they all support it. Yes, it adds costs and complexity to their operations. No, it has not reduced oversight despite public opinion fuelled partially by inspectors who are worried about their jobs. If anything, it has actually provided the inspectors with more and better tools to monitor carriers while still retaining all of their traditional ones.

However, even with all the perceived downsides, it nevertheless has improved the way carriers do business. It has improved safety, streamlined processes, enhanced quality, reduced costs, and above all provided a proactive focus on identifying and managing risk. Has it eliminated crashes? That's hard to say. Has it reduced risk in operations? Yes. Has it made for safer workplaces? Yes. Is it worthwhile? Absolutely yes.

What about extending it to the smaller CARs 704, 703, and 702 carriers? Well, that depends primarily on where Transport Canada is right now in its thinking process. If it is to impose exactly the same requirements the 705 carriers are subject to, then no. That would cripple many of the smaller carriers. It's not that SMS principles won't work for smaller carriers; it's just that the systems imposed on the larger carriers need to be scaled to the size and complexity of the smaller ones. A small business in which people may wear multiple hats cannot afford a dedicated SMS individual, let alone, in some cases, an entire team.

We see this in the airport world today, where the SMS burden imposed on a small certified aircraft receiving a scheduled service of less than one flight per day is simply out of proportion to the size of the actual operation.

To sum up, NATA supports and endorses safety management systems and considers them an important element in the overall aviation safety oversight program. However, they're only successful if the requirements are appropriately tailored to the size and complexity of the operation such that they are not a burden and the organization can truly embrace them as a positive.

Thank you for your attention. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions you might have afterwards.

● (0855)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much, Mr. Nourse.

We will now hear Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch, who has 10 minutes at his disposal.

[English]

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch (President, Canadian Airports Council): Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and honourable members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Canadian transportation safety regime, including safety management systems. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss this topic from a Canadian airports perspective.

My name is Daniel-Robert Gooch. I am the president of the Canadian Airports Council. Joining me via teleconference are Chris Farmer, from the Greater Moncton International Airport, and Gordon Duke and Michael Rantala, from the Halifax International Airport Authority. As they are airport operational practitioners at class 2 and class 1 airports respectively, I will defer to them for most of the Q and A component of this appearance. I also request your patience, as we may need to follow up with the committee on answers to some of your questions and will of course advise if that is the case.

The CAC is the voice for Canada's airports. Our 45 members operate more than 120 Canadian airports, including nearly all of the national airports-system airports and most major passenger service airports in the provinces and territories. Together, CAC members handle virtually all of the nation's air cargo and international passenger traffic and 90% of domestic passenger traffic.

Safety, of course, is the top concern for the CAC and our member airports. Aviation is the safest mode of transportation there is. This is said so often that it may sound like a cliché, but it is absolutely true, and it permeates all levels of our member airport organizations.

Safety management systems have been characterized as a business-like approach to safety, "a systematic, explicit and comprehensive process for managing safety risks". A safety management system is part of the DNA of an organization, is part of its culture, and is the way people throughout an organization do their jobs. Airports in Canada support safety management systems and believe this is the right approach for Canada. It reinforces the culture of safety that already existed and promotes a national standard and approach for aviation safety at our nation's airports.

In the case of class 1 airports in Canada, an SMS process has been implemented and activated as per the requirements stipulated by Transport Canada. Many class 2 airports have also completed the implementation of their SMS, while others are in the final stage of having their phase four documentation review completed and are implementing their SMS process.

As the phased implementation of SMS moves forward for airports in Canada, the CAC members have established an SMS working group to lead the development and implementation of the requirements of the SMS regulations, in order to promote a consistent application of the regulations across the country. In the long term, this allows airports to share information and facilitate the sharing of knowledge for the development of subject matter experts.

This partnership approach also allows Canadian airports to establish and share best practices and provide a nationwide approach to implementing SMS. Furthermore, the working group developed a common system of reporting so that information sharing across member airports would be facilitated and site-specific or regional variances between airports on these core issues would be minimized.

The objective of the working group was to establish and maintain a robust SMS process across all airports with a far-reaching scope that includes but is not limited to the following: SMS policy, non-punitive reporting systems, performance objectives, performance measures and targets, hazard identification, reactive/proactive reporting processes, accident/incident investigation, risk assessment, quality assurance, safety management plan format, communications, and sharing of best practices.

The working group also uses Transport Canada's guidelines and evaluation tool, as well as International Civil Aviation Organization—ICAO—SMS documentation as their base.

Now I would like to make a few comments about the issue of dangerous goods, which we understand is also a focus of the standing committee.

Airport employees do not typically handle the transportation of dangerous goods, as this is the responsibility of refuellers for aircraft fuel and air carriers for air cargo that includes dangerous goods. Nevertheless, as with other modes of the transportation sector, the transport of all dangerous goods in and around airports is governed by dangerous goods regulations. In the air mode, these regulations are based on the ICAO technical instructions, which establish the rules for the safe transport of dangerous goods at airports within Canada and abroad.

● (0900)

The aviation industry and our airport members are committed to continuous improvement of standards, processes, and training requirements for dangerous goods. An example of this is the shared investment by airports along with air carriers and fuelling organizations in the update and maintenance of the Canadian Standards Association standard for the storage handling and dispensing of fuel at airports. This dictates common standards by which fuel is managed and adhered to by all parties involved in fuel at airports. CAC members are actively involved in the ongoing revision and updating of this standard.

Thank you for your time and we are pleased to answer any questions you may have. I will defer questions to my colleagues on the phone as appropriate.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much, Mr. Gooch.

Before we continue, I would like to make sure that those who are participating by conference call can hear us well, and that the sound quality is good. I would like you to say your names, beginning with Mr. Duke.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Duke (Director of Operations, Halifax International Airport Authority, Canadian Airports Council): Good morning, I am Gordon Duke in Halifax.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you.

Michael Rantala.

Mr. Michael Rantala (Manager, Safety and Environment, Halifax International Airport Authority, Canadian Airports Council): Good morning, it's Michael Rantala in Halifax as well.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Perfect.

Mr. Farmer.

Mr. Chris Farmer (Director of Operations, Greater Moncton International Airport Authority, Canadian Airports Council): Yes, it's Chris Farmer in Moncton.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Perfect. Thank you very much. The sound is good here.

[*Translation*]

I yield the floor to Ms. Morin, who has seven minutes.

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for taking part in our hearing today. The presentations were very interesting.

Mr. Nourse, at the end of your testimony, you mentioned that you were still wondering whether the SMS, as they are known, should be applied to the models in sections 702, 703 and 704 of the Canadian Aviation Regulations. What recommendations would you have for Transport Canada in that regard? What should we do if the safety management system for 705 models is not used in other cases? How should we ensure optimal safety on those aircraft?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I hope I didn't leave the impression that I feel it should not go ahead for the smaller carriers. I would like to dispel that if I did. My concern is that Transport Canada, when they bring in the requirements for smaller carriers, do so in a manner that is sensitive to the nature of these smaller organizations and that the requirements are achievable without putting a significant financial burden on them, which I do believe is possible. SMS principles are scalable. Sometimes it takes a little bit of—

• (0905)

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: In that case, can you tell us how that could be done, concretely speaking? You say you hope that the requirements will be achievable. What type of requirements could be imposed so that things work well and the requirements do not cause the business to go under, as you were saying?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I'm afraid the problem I'm having right now is that Transport has been very close to its chest with the requirements for the smaller carriers. So we actually have no concept of where their thinking is right now. We would very much like the opportunity to see and comment on what their current thoughts are in this area so that we can provide some sort of sanity check with regard to it. All we keep hearing is that it's delayed.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: You gave a concrete example, that of the ATV battery. Practically speaking, can you explain how this works for someone who is an airport in the north and may have checked baggage, plus a carry-on? What verifications are currently done in a case like that?

In addition, what changes have been made since 2008? Before 2008, there were no safety management systems. How have the processes to check baggage changed?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: SMS is fairly distinct from dangerous goods in terms of programs. Nevertheless, SMS principles, particularly in the larger carriers, are used to manage the SMS programs, so you're always looking at risk.

One of the things you have to remember is that going into a lot of the smaller remote communities, you're not subject, in a lot of cases, to the security screening requirements. If someone tries or not necessarily tries but perhaps just doesn't know that they have DG in their baggage.... At any of the major airports, DG will be identified by the security screening processes in most cases. Going into a smaller remote community, you're much more reliant on education. You're reliant on the cargo agent challenging the person about the content of their package. You're reliant on the checking agent challenging the passenger about the content of their baggage or you're reliant—

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Currently, baggage is not checked, and you depend on what the passengers say. Is that correct? I simply want to make sure I understand the situation.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It would be on the person's word.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Very well.

In your opinion, is that verification sufficient?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly the level we've experienced among our member carriers, of someone intentionally trying to beat the system, is fortunately extremely low. Most people realize that having it on the aircraft is an issue, and they're likely also on the aircraft, and that this is not a really good idea. It's more the unintentional that becomes the issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: In your view, should baggage be checked using optical scanning, or would that be too complicated to manage?

• (0910)

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It adds an unnecessary burden. I think you're far better off to have a better awareness program along with, as I suggested, perhaps a simplified process so that it becomes easy for the average small person to comply. Right now it's a program that's aimed at the sophisticated shipper, and if you're not a sophisticated shipper, then it can be very daunting. If you could come up with an easy way for the occasional user to compliantly ship, you'd be better off.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Morin.

Mr. McGuinty, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Good morning, gentlemen.

Mr. Nourse, I'd like to go back, if I could, to a comment I thought I heard you make about inspectors keeping their jobs. Can you help us to understand what you meant by that?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: That goes back to more of the early implementation of SMS. In our opinion—and bear in mind that is opinion only—Transport Canada did not do a very good job of explaining SMS to a lot of their front-line inspectors initially. There was certainly a perception among them that this was moving to carrier self-regulation, that the inspectors would not have a role in oversight, and that the big bad carriers were going to get away with murder and not carry out everything satisfactorily, and it's just simply not the case.

Mr. David McGuinty: How does your association, with your 107 members, see the role today of inspectors?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: On the role of the inspector, interestingly enough, we find anecdotally that the inspectors actually prefer to audit, visit, and deal with SMS carriers because they find that the systems in place allow them to more easily monitor the carrier. The carrier is doing self-audit and is doing a lot of their own checks and balances. The difference is that inspectors have access to all that information. Because they're able to review all of this documentation, they actually get a much better feel for the inner working of the companies than they would just coming in and doing an oversight or a normal audit.

Mr. David McGuinty: How does that square with the testimony we heard from, for example, Captain Daniel Slunder, a 40-year veteran pilot, 23 years instructing on jets, who heads up 382 licensed pilots who work as inspectors at Transport Canada? That's not the testimony he gave us at all. In fact he told us the complete opposite. How do we square that?

You're telling us that inspectors prefer to work in a system where, for example, no-notice inspections, which have been commonplace in the last five or six years, reign. You're telling us—or maybe you're not telling us—there's a sufficiency of inspector capacity at Transport Canada.

I'm not sure if you've seen the testimony, but as committee members we have to reconcile what you're saying with what they're saying, and they're not saying what you just alluded to. We haven't heard any inspector representative or inspector on the front line saying that all is well and they prefer to deal with the SMS system as it's presently construed and constructed.

Are we missing something?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly the under...and it's not just SMS aspects that have changed it. With cutbacks at Transport Canada, the flight inspectors in particular do not have the same opportunity to interact with carriers that they did before.

• (0915)

Mr. David McGuinty: Is that a problem?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It is for the inspectors, it appears.

Mr. David McGuinty: Is that a problem for your member companies?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: We actually have problems in getting levels of service in a lot of areas.

Mr. David McGuinty: Which ones?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Everything from manual amendments to sometimes inspector check rides on aircraft to importing airplanes—all of the normal business activities that have to be undertaken, we're finding increasingly difficult to move through Transport. It's not uncommon for new aircraft, or aircraft new to the company, to end up sitting on the ground for months.

Mr. David McGuinty: So that's a capacity problem at Transport Canada? Are there not enough people, qualified personnel, inspectors; what is it?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly not enough personnel would be part of it. We also think there's a tremendous amount of legacy work, shall we say, that's not really value added to safety that they get caught up in.

Let's pick the MMEL, the master minimum equipment list. These are items that you can dispatch an aircraft with, under certain circumstances, if they're not functioning—because of redundant systems, weather at the time, all of these types of things. All of the requirements are put out by the manufacturers to do this.

Transport goes to great effort to analyze them and put them in master lists, but the carrier, any time they change the manual to one of these approved items by both Transport Canada and the manufacturer, still has to send it in and somebody still has to approve it—yet again, one other time—which adds nothing to the safety.

Mr. David McGuinty: So you're telling us that there's a capacity problem at Transport Canada.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Yes.

Mr. David McGuinty: That's what Daniel Slunder told us. He told us there were 50 fewer inspectors now than there were in 2009 when he appeared before this same committee. He told us that the question of Transport Canada's rosy forecast is “based on a simple sleight of hand. Inspections, once required annually, can now be as infrequent as once every five years.” There's a whole litany of evidence put forward by the front-line people. I'm not going to cast aspersions on people whose jobs it is to keep us safe. I don't think that's reasonable. You're not doing that either. But I think we should be heeding some of the warnings being put forward by the front-line inspectors.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you, Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. Watson, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

Mr. Nourse, I want to pick up on that line of questioning for a moment. You suggested it's a capacity issue. If that were the case, and if there were simply more Transport Canada people to perform these value-added items, it sounds to me like you're complaining that those shouldn't be done anyway. Is it really a capacity issue or is it that these items shouldn't be done? Which opinion is it?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I think it's a little of both.

Mr. Jeff Watson: How?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly I think Transport Canada, particularly under the last few budgets, has suffered. I also think there are issues with the retirement wave moving through. Even if the numbers are maintained, the experience level is down in some areas and that tends to slow things up. However, I would also suggest that some things are not particularly value-added on the safety side of things and that effort would be best spent in some other areas rather than some of this routine work.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Okay.

Mr. Gooch, with respect to airports, what was the regulatory regime like prior to SMS being implemented? How is it different now as opposed to what it was before?

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: That predates my time at the organization. I will defer to my colleague.

Gord, can you make a comment on that?

• (0920)

Mr. Gordon Duke: Actually, Daniel, it predates both Mike Rantala and my tenure at airports. Prior to being at airports I was with airlines, so I'm not aware of the regulatory regime that was in place prior to SMS.

Perhaps Chris can answer.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Okay.

Fair enough.

Mr. Chris Farmer: Maybe I can help you out here.

Prior to SMS when we had a regulatory inspection, they were inspecting to a standard. Keep in mind that at airports our infrastructure is static: concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass. An inspector would come in and ensure that the paint lines were correct, the runway lights were working, things of that nature, just to oversimplify it, even though I assured them that we didn't change the runway or anything else like that in the last little while.

What we had predating SMS was to a set standard, a very prescriptive, standardized sort of checklist inspection. Fast-forward it to where we are today and we're actually looking at the tangible safety results and things that can be measured.

Mr. Jeff Watson: With what frequency is the safety of airport operations both inspected and/or assessed?

Mr. Chris Farmer: Prior to SMS we would count on an annual inspection or we—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): I'm sorry.

Just for the record, could you mention your name so we know who's talking?

Mr. Chris Farmer: Yes, my apologies.

It's Chris Farmer. I'm the director of operations at the Greater Moncton International Airport.

Prior to SMS we could count on an annual inspection. Now we are looking at inspection of the SMS program itself, where what was traditionally done by an airport inspector, we are doing under our own audit program.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I don't know if that answered the question of frequency.

Mr. Chris Farmer: Prior to SMS frequency was a once-a-year annual inspection.

Mr. Jeff Watson: What is it now? How often are you inspecting? How often are you being assessed?

Mr. Chris Farmer: Right now we're being assessed on our SMS program. Please keep in mind that we are just at the end of the phase-in program for implementation, where we had an inspection after each phase, or a program validation after each phase. There were four phases to the program.

Mr. Jeff Watson: How often do you have to send risk assessments or other documentation to Transport Canada as part of SMS?

Mr. Chris Farmer: We don't send our risk assessment or other documentation to Transport Canada; that's internal.

Mr. Jeff Watson: No, they come and look at you, right?

Mr. Chris Farmer: That's right. They come in and we present it to Transport Canada.

Mr. Jeff Watson: How often are they coming in to see you?

Mr. Chris Farmer: Again, in our case, we have just completed our SMS program and we just had our last inspection in January.

Mr. Jeff Watson: They are checking with each phase though.

Mr. Chris Farmer: That is correct.

Mr. Jeff Watson: What types of operational changes at airports would trigger a non-scheduled risk assessment of your SMS?

Mr. Chris Farmer: I can answer that one, because I think it's pretty well standard at any airport. It would be any change to the operation of the airport, any change in the infrastructure, any sort of new carrier coming in with new equipment, anything that would change the normal stasis of the system.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Nourse, ATAC was here and they talked about an SMS tool kit and guide they have developed, aimed largely at the smaller operators, if you will. Are any of your members familiar with that? Do any of them use that? Do they consider that potentially as a model for a more scalable SMS for their operations?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I'm afraid I am not aware of any of our members that have actually utilized the ATAC toolkit.

I am aware of some of our members that have used the CCAA, Canadian Council for Aviation & Aerospace SMS tools to assist them in their implementation.

• (0925)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I'll leave it at that, then.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much.

Mr. Braid, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. Nourse, I'll start with you with a few questions.

I'm just curious. Where is your organization based?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: The organization is based in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. I personally am here in Ottawa just because of the access to the regulatory world.

Mr. Peter Braid: Very good.

In your opening presentation when you were talking about SMS and describing the various results or outcomes of safety management systems, you mentioned that, from your perspective, SMS improves safety. It reduces cost. It reduces risk, and results in a safer workplace.

Could you elaborate on those various results or consequences, and perhaps provide some examples?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: A lot of the real recognizable benefits of SMS tend to be, shall we say, almost more on the industrial side of the operation. We see tremendous improvements in things like cargo handling, maintenance, ramp activities, typically activities that are in themselves inherently perhaps a little more dangerous because of the environs you are working in. As I say, they are a little more industrial. What you find is that in the reporting processes that are used within SMS, the risk assessments that are used, you see real, identifiable reductions in accident rates, these types of things.

That's why I made the comment about whether crashes are prevented being much more difficult to quantify. However, when you take a look at the way SMS works, particularly on risk assessments, so that any change to your operation, any additional point on a route, a change of equipment, the risk analysis and other processes that are part of the SMS world really do focus the attention and help be proactive within an organization.

Mr. Peter Braid: You represent I believe 107 small airlines that serve the northern parts of many of our provinces and our northern territories. From your perspective, could you outline three or four ways for how you think we could improve the safety of airline service in our northern and more remote regions?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: In our northern and remote regions, the biggest hurdle we face right now is infrastructure. The north continues to have a problem with aviation weather. A lot of the locations do not have 24-hour aviation weather, which is a problem. We are still, in many locations, dealing with gravel runways. Although this isn't necessarily a safety issue, as we continue to operate safely off them, it is very limiting in terms of what equipment can be used.

The last commercial airliner that could land on gravel, the Boeing 737-200, is now 30-plus years old—

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: Forty.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: —and probably pushing 40 years old in many cases. We need more pavement or hard surfacing in order to allow the operators to upgrade their fleets to provide more economical and better service.

Many of the runways are still short. The design aircraft of the day was the DC-3, for crying out loud, for a lot of the runways in the Arctic. Things have changed.

Runway approaches, runway lighting, and fuel availability at times—again, all basic infrastructure—continue to be the challenges, more for the carriers.

• (0930)

Mr. Peter Braid: Could you give us some insight into how Transport Canada safety audits and inspections are conducted with respect to the smaller airlines that service parts of our north? What's the experience? What's the frequency?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: If you had asked me a few years ago, I would have said that they're probably seeing someone very close to annually. However, in response to personnel issues, which we discussed earlier, Transport has moved to a very complicated matrix that evaluates the risk of a carrier and sets the frequency of the inspections at anywhere between one and five years. I would suggest that the average is more likely that a formal inspection would be

every year or two, but that doesn't mean the carriers aren't visited in between. The principal maintenance instructors—

Mr. Peter Braid: Are there any unannounced visits?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It's really difficult to get into a lot of these remote locations unannounced. You pretty much know when somebody is coming.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stephen Nourse: But shall we say “unscheduled” ones? Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): You have five seconds, Mr. Braid. No?

Thank you very much.

Five minutes for Mr. Sullivan, please.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

One of the things we've heard in the testimony is that a key feature of SMS is a culture of safety in the employees and the company itself. One of the recommendations we've heard is that whistleblower protection or the non-culpable reporting on safety is a key to ensuring that people feel comfortable, to making sure that they're not going to get in trouble if they report something they did or that one of their colleagues did. Would you agree with that generalization?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Non-punitive reporting is absolutely essential. It's very unfortunate that the actual legislative protection for that has not made it through on a couple of occasions.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: So would that have assisted the two pilots at First Air who were 20 minutes late because they went slightly off course and were then fired?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: That's a good question. Actually to my knowledge, First Air has a very robust non-punitive policy in place.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Clearly that's not for pilots who go 20 minutes off course.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I don't believe that—

Mr. Mike Sullivan: It would send a chill through the whole industry if that were to be the case.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I don't believe that actually qualifies in that case, as the circumstances were well known to the corporation before the pilots told them.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: I understand that. My point is that what seems to be a problem that needs correction instead results in the firing of the pilots. I know the airport folks can tell us that the GPS system was new, that the system for flight approaches using GPS has only been used, certainly in Toronto, in the last little while, and that it was being used on this particular flight as well.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: First Air has probably been using GPS systems, particularly en route, I would say for at least 10 to 15 years. The north has been a very early adopter of it. Satellite navigation and satellite systems just in general with everything from communications to navigation have been the single biggest advance in Arctic aviation.

• (0935)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Regarding the issue of non-culpable reporting of incidents, I understand that the airline knew because they were 20 minutes late. I was actually on a First Air flight from Edmonton to Yellowknife, which was then going on to Rankin Inlet, and that same flight the week prior had accidentally flown to Resolute, which is a significant distance away from Rankin, and the passengers were all very surprised to learn that it had landed in Resolute. I don't believe anybody was fired over that.

My point is that it would send a chill through the entire organization if a 20-minute mistake ended up costing someone their job, and I'm not sure that is in keeping with the spirit of SMS.

Let me shift gears a little bit. You or your member companies have applied for exceptions to allow fewer flight attendants on flights, and you intend to implement these exceptions sometime in September. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I can't talk to specific carriers and their intentions. Certainly we as an organization endorse the move to the 1:50 ratio where appropriate.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: I'm aware that some of the carriers have actually asked to move to that, and I think one has been given an exemption already by Transport Canada. We have not had the finalization of the testing, the proof that it works. Our understanding is that the proof so far is that it doesn't work. But we're going to see how that plays out. In any event, do you believe it is safer to fly with fewer flight attendants?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Answer very quickly, please.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I wouldn't categorize it as being safer. I would call it as safe, provided the exit arrangement on the particular aircraft is suitable.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much, Mr. Nourse.

Thank you, Mr. Sullivan.

Ms. Young, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you very much.

Your presentations have been truly excellent in terms of giving us a broad overview of what happened before and what you are facing now with all the changes, not just with SMS but, I think, with older infrastructure, older planes, and all of that sort of thing. I want to delve into that a little bit.

Quickly, just because time is always an issue, what happens with infrastructure in the north right now in other jurisdictions like Greenland, for example? Do they have short runways or gravel runways? What do they do?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Greenland put a tremendous amount of money into their system. Actually, the Danes put a tremendous amount of money into Greenland's system. They have a considerable number of paved runways. A lot of them are still shorter, because they are using STOL aircraft on them. They also have an extensive heliport program. They have a fairly sophisticated system.

Greenland also benefits from having, in most cases, year-round navigation up and down the west coast, which is significantly different as well.

Looking to the other side, there are something like 100-and-some paved runways in Alaska. There are a dozen in northern Canada.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Gooch, whose jurisdiction is it with regard to building these runways? Is it a government thing? Is it an airport infrastructure project?

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: The northern airports are generally operated by the territory.

In southern Canada we have a model where airports have been devolved, so we have 26 airports that are national system airports, where they officially are still on federal land. They pay rent to the federal government, but they are operated by the local airport authorities.

Ms. Wai Young: It's the airport authorities' responsibility to oversee infrastructure. Is that correct?

• (0940)

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: Generally, that is correct, yes.

Mr. Nourse is going to add something in the northern context.

Ms. Wai Young: Very quickly, Mr. Nourse, please, because I have other questions.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: If I could briefly speak to the territories, in all three territories, Yukon initially, the Northwest Territories, and then Nunavut when it was devolved, all of the airports were transferred from Transport Canada to the territorial governments. It's the three territorial governments that handle them. The territorial governments have done a wonderful job of maintaining those assets. The problem is that they simply do not have the funding or the tax base available to develop the airport.

Ms. Wai Young: You are drawing a line between maintenance, of course, and building new infrastructure, the costs associated with that.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Correct. They've done a fabulous job of maintaining what was transferred to—

Ms. Wai Young: May I move on, just because of the time.

You note in your article that there are five different challenges for northern operators. I note that many of these are not safety or SMS-related. You talk about infrastructure, weather reporting. They are more external as opposed to regulatory, which the SMS is. Would you say that is correct?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: They are all safety-related.

Ms. Wai Young: I'm not saying they are not safety-related. I'm just saying they are more external. Building a longer runway is more external than doing a SMS safety inspection.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: They're external to the organization, yes. They are absolutely external to the organization.

Ms. Wai Young: Right.

My question, for Chris Farmer, please, is, which was more rigorous?

Chris, you outline that prior to SMS being implemented, there were annual inspections, and so on. Now SMS has been implemented. I know that statistically we've seen an increase in safety. Therefore, which is a more rigorous system, would you say, when the airlines are taking ownership of their own SMS and doing their own SMS audits?

Mr. Chris Farmer: In my opinion, it's certainly a more rigorous system now, because now we are being informed of when safety incidents happen within the airline as it relates to the airport, or if an incident happens at an airport, we get the safety report. Also, if there's a safety concern from the airlines that's put forward, say, when a pilot is flying into our facility, we're made aware of it through their SMS. Essentially, we're almost heading to the point where one SMS is talking to another SMS.

Ms. Wai Young: Basically, you are saying that the system is more rigorous today and therefore safer today. Is that correct?

Mr. Chris Farmer: I would say that. Again, it goes back to what I'm saying, that now SMS makes safety tangible. Before it was just a concept. Now we're seeing it as tangible results, something we can measure and act upon and do—

Ms. Wai Young: Would you say that the system is working then, as it was envisioned and as it is implemented?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Very quickly, please....

Mr. Chris Farmer: I would say yes, but keep in mind, as you've heard before, it's a cultural change. When we have that cultural change, then it's going to be an effective system.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you, Ms. Young.

Ms. Morin, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To continue in the same vein, what we hope to achieve with the SMS is a decrease in the number of accidents. That is the ultimate objective of all that.

Before me I have the Transport Canada objectives for the number of accidents per 10,000 flight hours. I can see that for 2010-2011, the target rate was 6.5 accidents, for 2012-2013 it was 6.5 and for 2013-2014 it is 6.7. So there is an increase. Transport Canada's targets for accident rates are established by flight hour. Even if there are more flights now than there were before, the objectives are calculated in flight hours.

Unfortunately, the majority of accidents occur in the Canadian North.

Mr. Nourse and Mr. Gooch, I would like to know what you think about that. Do you think it is reasonable that Transport Canada has accident rate objectives that are on the rise? That doesn't make sense to me if we have safety management systems that work.

Mr. Gooch, earlier you spoke about the safety management system and its advantages. However, concretely, there are more and more accidents per flight hour.

Do you have any comments to make on that? What do you think of that? Do you think it makes sense that accident rate objectives are increasing?

• (0945)

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I guess I have a bit of a concern with broad statistics. I certainly have a concern with the statement that most accidents happen in the north. I truly do with that statement. However, without a little more detail on the statistics as to the classes of carriers that we're talking about and whether those carriers are actually SMS system carriers or not, I'm at a bit of a loss to comment on accident rates.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Unfortunately, I don't have the information. These are overall objectives set by Transport Canada. I can't tell you any more than that. They were given to us by the Canadian Federal Pilots Association when their representatives came to testify before this committee a week ago, June 5.

Mr. Gooch, do you have any comments to make?

[English]

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: I'm not sure that we could comment on numbers that are without context. Certainly, I'll ask my colleagues on the phone if they have anything to add to that.

Gentlemen...?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly we just finished our annual general meeting in April, and we had a presentation by the Transportation Safety Board, right up to date including 2013 statistics. It showed us we were actually on a continued decrease in accident rates. I'm at a little bit of a loss to—

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Would it be possible to send these documents to the committee?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Certainly, I can obtain that.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Thank you.

Could one of your colleagues on the telephone tell us more about this?

[English]

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: Gord or Chris, do you have anything to add on this subject?

Mr. Chris Farmer: It's Chris Farmer in Moncton.

I can only say what's been said earlier. It's very difficult to comment on that without any sort of context. Even if you look at it from an individual airport perspective, it would be the same sort of answer. I'm sorry.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: When the Canadian Federal Pilots Association came to meet us, they mentioned inspections that take place at five-year intervals. The pilot we were speaking with said that it was a way of extending the resources allocated to inspections. He wondered how that would impact the safety of passengers. When he said that the inspections were done every one to five years, he wondered if this would have an impact on passenger safety.

Could you give us your thoughts on that situation quickly, please? I don't have much time left.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): You have very little time left.
[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Nourse: If you ask Transport Canada, they'll tell you that it's had no effect on safety. If you ask the airlines, I don't think they feel it's had any significant impact on safety either.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Morin.

[*English*]

Mr. Komarnicki, please, you have five minutes.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Nourse, you said initially in your evidence that you have 107 members, 37 carriers, and everything from jet operators to small mom-and-pop operations, and that if you imposed the same SMS system on all of them, the requirements would cripple the small operators. Obviously in some of the small mom-and-pop operations the management and the employees are maybe at times hard to distinguish, but they're there for sure. You also said that it would need to be "appropriately tailored" and scaled to size of operation, and that it would need to be "sensitive to the nature of these small operations" and be "achievable".

Yet we want to be sure that safety is still optimized. When you're looking at those smaller operations and at a great number of operations and the issues you have with infrastructure and everything else that's included, it makes safety a pretty significant issue. So you have to be careful when you're making that adaptation.

I would like to maybe have you give more examples of what you mean by that, actual examples of how you think it may happen. I think you mentioned one of them, the person who might bring something on board unintentionally. You were saying that for small operators in a remote northern area, it's not likely that anyone will try to smuggle stuff on board knowing that it's maybe harmful, particularly if they're on there as well.

That's one example of how you may simply need to ask the person or remind them or educate them and not go through a complex operation, or add in an additional burden that's not necessary. Can you give me more examples of what you mean by that? I would like some concrete examples, if you could.

• (0950)

Mr. Stephen Nourse: If you take a look at a larger organization, one of the real benefits of an SMS system is data. The more data you

acquire on your operation, the more data you can mine on incidents—incidents that are captured before they become accidents so that you can proactively deal with them. These are invaluable.

In terms of the larger organizations, virtually all of them end up with sophisticated computer tracking programs and analysis systems to handle all of this data. If that's the expected norm, the cost of the actual programs and the administrative burden to run them can both be very high. However, if that data collection in a small operation can simply be handled by a written log, and that's the expectation of the inspector, then life is good. It satisfies the purpose and gives the small operation that ability to focus on these items without a huge burden. But if the expectation is that you'll have a sophisticated data system, computerized, and somebody to look after it and run monthly reports, it's a problem.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: So you're suggesting, then, that one should sit down with the small operator and say, in terms of the size of the operation, "Here's what we want to achieve, so let's figure out how we can do it economically and within your capacity."

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: On the issue of the number of operators, small operators, even under the circumstance of where you've made it scalable, where you've made it appropriate, would that perhaps also require increased inspection, when you might not need to do that in the situation of larger carriers?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Part of the problem from the very beginning has been that Transport Canada will not tell you how to do SMS. They will tell you what their expectations are, but they will not tell you how to do it. That has spawned a whole industry out there of people, with the ATAC product, or the CCAA product, or from DTI, who will come in and do that for you, because Transport won't tell you.

Transport won't even tell you what your problem is. If they come in during a validation inspection, they'll say "No, that's not acceptable", and then you have to go back and figure out what's not acceptable and how to fix it.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: And how it might be—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Mr. Komarnicki, your time is up unfortunately.

The next round is Mr. Toet, so maybe he'll be able to share or ask your question.

Mr. Toet, you have five minutes.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): I'll allow Mr. Komarnicki to finish up that line.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: You were saying that Transport Canada holds it close to their chest and you can't do a safety check on what they may want for an SMS system. Why don't you propose, as associations, the type of SMS system they could have with the specific requirements for the small operator?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Our particular organization simply does not have the resources for that. We actually prefer to work with the Canadian Council for Aviation & Aerospace and endorse their product as we feel it's appropriate.

• (0955)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you, and thank you to our witnesses.

This question is more directed to Mr. Nourse, and that's regarding the ability to find employees and pilots, especially for your northern remote airports, both for the ground services and your pilots. Is that any kind of challenge or is it very easy? Is there a surplus of qualified personnel who are willing to work up in those areas? Is it sometimes a challenge to fill those spots?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It's definitely a challenge and it's becoming more so. We have a lot of programs and we're actually just setting up a training program to work with the local community colleges and high schools, because what we find is that people from the north tend to stay in the north and we have to try to figure out a way to encourage them to enter the aviation trades.

The aviation trades—pilots, mechanics, all of it—across Canada are actually in trouble. The college enrolment is down, demand is up, and yes, it's a challenge to get people in the north. Typically the north is a training ground. When people go north they either love it and stay forever, or they just can't wait and all they want to do is get that opening at WestJet or Air Canada and move on.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: The reason I ask that is that there seems to be constantly an assertion across the board and this whole concern with SMS that companies are going to use it—and it was raised in questioning earlier today—as a way to release employees, to let them go because something went wrong in the safety system. I guess the reality, from what you've just said now, is that companies that have proper well-qualified people are going to do everything they can to hang on to those people rather than looking for excuses to get rid of them. There seems to be this constant myth going out there that companies are looking for ways to get rid of employees.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I would wholeheartedly agree with you. The employers right now are far more focused on retention than getting rid of people. The cost and investment in your pilots, your maintenance people, your cargo handlers, your DG experts, with what it takes to attract and then get those people properly up to speed, you do not want to get rid of them.

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: If I may just add to that I would say on the airport side I would echo that comment. Transport Canada used to run airports. There was a large organization that served as a training ground for expertise in airport operations and when Transport Canada devolved airports to local airport authorities that expertise went there and the training ground kind of went away. Private sector and our organizations, Airports Council International with which we're affiliated, private colleges, have moved to fill the gap. But certainly personnel with expertise in airport operations and safety is something we look to the future with concern, to ensure that those professionals with experience are in the marketplace. Talent in that area with expertise in that area is something we are concerned about for the future.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: From a safety aspect there would come a point in time obviously if repeated warnings or if somebody shows a

consistent pattern of behaviour, that you would have to deal with it. Your members would be very slow to go to that process. You would really want to do some education, some behavioural changes if need be. That would be much preferable before going to “here we go, you're out”.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I was recently talking with one of our smaller members, and he was really bemoaning the fact that he finally had to let go a pilot he was bringing up through the ranks. The pilot wasn't going to work out, and the member was really upset at having to do it because of the time he had invested in this individual.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Okay. Thank you, Mr. Toet.

We have a bit more time, so we'll have a full round of five-minute questions each.

I'll start with Mr. Sullivan.

• (1000)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks again. I didn't get to ask too many questions of the airport authorities, so I'm going to move to you folks a little bit.

You have, in some airports at least, an SMS system now as opposed to direct inspections by Transport Canada. Does that include the security, the thing we all know and love, lining up at security to be scanned? Is that part of SMS as well, or is that an independent thing that is given to the airports by the government?

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: Security is a different beast. At 89 airports throughout the country, screening—what you see when you're lining up as well as whole baggage screening and screening of non-passengers, which is employees essentially, the workers at airports—is conducted by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, which is a crown corporation of the federal government. Airports do have a role in security, but it's more in the areas of security that you as a passenger don't necessarily see.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: The airport authority is not directly responsible for that.

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: It is not at those 89 airports with CATSA services.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Those security services are not considered part of an SMS system. I'm just thinking, for example, of the Edmonton incident with the bomb that got through. That's not the airport's responsibility.

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: That would be screening. That's not an airport authority conducting the actual operation. That's CATSA.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Okay.

Mr. Mai is going to—

Mr. Hoang Mai: I'd just like to take a few seconds to move my motion that was sent out. Notice was given on June 5 about asking VIA Rail to come before the committee so we could ask them questions regarding the report. The annual report came out, and it was submitted to the House on May 6.

I know we don't have anything planned for Thursday, and I think that would be a good occasion for us to look at the study.

Also, because we have witnesses here, I would ask that the committee consent to talking about this motion later on during committee so that we don't waste the time of the witnesses. We can actually talk about this motion at the end of the rounds. Do I have consent?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): Does Mr. Mai have committee consent?

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: He's not moving his motion at this particular moment, so he's looking to move it after the rounds.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): Let's ask Mr. Mai.

Mr. Hoang Mai: I'm moving it now, but I'd like to discuss it later.

Mr. Jeff Watson: If he's moving it now, we have to discuss it now.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): With the consent of the committee, we can agree that he can move the motion and forego discussion until after we're finished with the—

Mr. Jeff Watson: Chair, once the witnesses are dismissed, he can move the motion.

Mr. Hoang Mai: I am moving the motion—

Mr. Jeff Watson: I understand what you're asking.

Mr. Hoang Mai: We've done it in committee before that we have moved a motion—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): To cut to the chase, Mr. Mai, I take it that consent is not granted here. There is not unanimous consent to allow you to do so.

If you want to move your motion now, you'll move your motion now, and we'll enter into a discussion, or you can withdraw the motion with the consent of the committee, or you can move right now to discuss and present your motion, or we can go on good faith and say that we'll allocate a certain amount of time at the end of this meeting, 10 minutes, so that we have the consent of everyone that you will move the motion and we will have our discussion and move on from there.

Are we agreed?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): We're agreed.

(Motion withdrawn [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): Continuing on....

Mr. Mike Sullivan: On the issue of Transport Canada and SMS, that doesn't touch the security screening at all. I'm coming back—

Mr. Daniel-Robert Gooch: I don't want to get this wrong technically, so I'm going to defer to Gordon Duke.

Mr. Gordon Duke: With SMS the focus is on aviation and airside safety. Security is a separate apparatus from that.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Nourse talked earlier about the issue of passengers bringing things that they shouldn't onto aircraft, which would be a connection between the airport authority and security at that point. How does that work? We're talking about the transportation of dangerous goods now. He was suggesting that there be a different set of regulations regarding the transportation of dangerous goods for passengers, so that it's easier and they don't have to cheat to get through the system.

In southern Canada airports, there is quite rigorous security screening. In northern Canada airports, perhaps less so.

How does that work with the entire safety management system? How would we implement a system that we can say works for Canadians in terms of keeping passengers safe and keeping airplanes safe, but at the same time keeping the connection between the airport authorities and the security services working properly?

• (1005)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much.

A quick answer, please....

Mr. Gordon Duke: The safe—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): I'm sorry, but just to confirm, for the witness on the video conference, could you mention your name?

Mr. Gordon Duke: My apologies. It's Gord Duke in Halifax.

SMS would kick in after, in the event that an item got through that was not permitted. What Mr. Nourse is talking about is that there wouldn't be the level of response in a northern airport. The connection would not be there. They just don't have the resources in the northern airports.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: To be very clear, the airports don't have the dangerous goods responsibility. What goes on the aircraft is the carrier's responsibility.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you, Mr. Nourse.

I'm sorry, Mr. Sullivan, but the time is up. You're way past the time.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Can you let him finish? He was speaking again.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Mr. Duke, very quickly....

Mr. Gordon Duke: The responsibility for the transport of dangerous goods is the airlines'.

Typically the airport employees do not transport any dangerous goods or handle them during the transportation phase. Our emergency responders would need to be aware of what was on board an aircraft that may have been involved from a dangerous goods standpoint so they understand what they're going into, but that would be about it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Okay, thank you very much.

Mr. McGuinty, you have five minutes.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Nourse, I would like to go back to the insightful comments you made with respect to the 1:40 versus 1:50 flight attendant ratio.

As I understand it now, if you're flying one of the major 705 carriers, and you want, for example, to sit in an emergency exit, you get the privilege of paying an additional sum of money so you can be of service to the airline should there be a problem. We've all been on different flights. Sometimes you get a thorough briefing; sometimes you get a cursory briefing; sometimes you get no briefing. I don't know how that all shakes down in terms of consistency.

What are Canadians to make of this? We're told it's an ICAO standard. I'm sure your member companies will abide by whatever the standard might be. On the other hand, Canada has filed dozens of exceptions, I think is the right word, to ICAO standards.

What are Canadians to make of this move, this pressure for moving from 1:40 to 1:50 flight attendant ratio? Keep in mind that we've asked the major 705 carriers to give us the financial implications of this move. This committee has not yet received from those witnesses, those companies, the pecuniary consequences and how much cheaper it's going to be. Will there be savings or no savings?

Keeping that in mind yourself in terms of your 107 member companies, can you address that?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I don't think the marketing of the exit row, primarily due to the fact that it typically has a little more leg room, can be muddled into the safety aspect of it. I'm very chagrined to hear you say that some of the briefings you get there aren't adequate.

When I talk to northern carriers in particular, the interesting thing is that although some of the carriers have applied to take advantage of the 1:50 ratio, most of the time that's done to have the flexibility if there is an issue or a particular problem on a day. As a matter of fact, I would say in almost all circumstances with northern carriers, they actually have excess cabin crew due to service requirements. Most of the northern carriers actually provide service. We provide hot meals, cooking services, and lots of drink services. We actually have more flight attendants than the 1:40 rule requires for service issues. However, that doesn't mean that when something untoward happens, it would not be beneficial to be able to use the 1:50 ratio to get you out of a circumstance.

•(1010)

Mr. David McGuinty: What is the position of your organization and your member companies on this?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: We support the 1:50 ratio. We feel that if the exit arrangements on the aircraft can be properly covered with the 1:50 ratio, then there's no degradation to safety and there's no reason we should not be harmonized with both ICAO and the U.S. FAA in this matter.

Mr. David McGuinty: Have your members ever considered the possibility of the travelling public sitting in emergency exits to be properly trained to do so or to get briefings in advance of boarding the flight, and/or instead of charging a surplus, actually providing a

discount to those people who are prepared to be of assistance and are physically able to do so?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Being physically able to do so is part of the briefing. When the person does the briefing, they are not only looking to impart the information but also evaluating the person as to whether or not they are physically capable of handling the exit and whether or not they speak an appropriate language to be able to understand the flight attendant's commands in case there is an emergency situation. They are also verifying that an infant hasn't inadvertently been placed in the exit row.

Mr. David McGuinty: Let's just take it a little further. Let's say somebody has four drinks on a flight, or let's say somebody takes a sleeping pill on a long-haul flight and is sitting in an emergency exit. How do you deal with that?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: I cannot answer that question. I actually do not know the answer.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Okay. Thank you, Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. Watson, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I just want to clarify something about the briefing. In fact Transport Canada regulations mandate that passengers receive a briefing with respect to emergency exit procedures. There is no—

Mr. Stephen Nourse: It's not optional.

Mr. Jeff Watson: It's not optional, exactly. In fact, it's part of the actual message that has to be delivered in the briefing right off the top by flight attendants to passengers. So they are informed that they must make an examination out the window to ensure there is nothing obstructing the way, and that there's no fire or smoke. They have to be able to operate the door. They are instructed how to do that.

Is that correct, Mr. Nourse?

Mr. Stephen Nourse: That is correct.

Mr. Jeff Watson: If they do not speak either English or French, or they do not feel they have competency in either of the two official languages, they are in fact moved out of that row and replaced with somebody else who does.

Mr. Stephen Nourse: Even if they are not comfortable with carrying it out, they certainly have the option of being replaced.

Mr. Jeff Watson: I've been on flights where that's actually happened.

That's all I needed to clarify. Thanks, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Hoang Mai): Thank you very much.

I think we have done the rounds. We'll suspend and come back.

Thank you very much for being here today.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank the witnesses who took part in the meeting via conference call.

We are going to take a short break to allow the other witnesses to come to the table.

•(1010) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1015)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): Okay, committee. We're back.

Mr. Mai.

Mr. Hoang Mai: As discussed, I would like to move the motion. As I mentioned, notice was given on June 5. It is very important for us, and I think it is important for the committee, to look at what's happening with VIA Rail. We know that a report was tabled in the House of Commons on May 6. I think Canadians all know about the importance of passenger rail.

[*Translation*]

A report was published. We want VIA Rail representatives to appear before the committee. In fact, the committee has nothing

planned for next Thursday. It is important, I think, for the committee to work hard, to continue its work and to examine what is happening at VIA Rail. Certain issues have to be discussed, such as the matter of persons with reduced mobility. We have to discuss certain repercussions on VIA Rail, as well as impacts on persons with reduced mobility.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): Thank you, Mr. Mai.

Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Chair, I move that we go in camera.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): That's non-debatable. I just have to put the question.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: A recorded vote, please....

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 3)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David McGuinty): The motion is adopted. Could I ask anybody who is not here officially to please clear the room?

Thank you.

We will suspend for 30 seconds.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>