



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities**

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TRAN • NUMBER 129 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 7, 2019**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Judy A. Sgro**



# Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Thursday, February 7, 2019

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)):** I am calling the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, 42nd Parliament. Pursuant to the order of reference from Wednesday, November 28, 2018, we are continuing our study of challenges facing flight schools in Canada.

I welcome all of you here today. This is our new meeting room in West Block and it's our first meeting here. We are joined today by, over and above the committee members, the mover of the motion, Mr. Fuhr. Welcome.

Today we have as witnesses, from Aéro Loisirs, Caroline Farly, Chief Pilot and Chief Instructor; from Air Canada Pilots Association, Captain Mike Hoff, External Affairs Committee; and from Carson Air, Marc Vanderaegen, Flight School Director, Southern Interior Flight Centre.

Mr. Vanderaegen, would you like to begin for five minutes?

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen (Flight School Director, Southern Interior Flight Centre, Carson Air):** Madam Chair, good morning and thank you for the invitation to participate today. I'm going to be reading from notes because I want to make sure I don't miss anything.

Southern Interior Flight Centre is a part of the Carson group of companies, which provides flight training in Kelowna, B.C., and medevac, freight and fuel and hangarage services in Kelowna, Calgary, Vancouver and Abbotsford. We get to face the challenges related to the pilot shortage in all aspects, not just training, but that's the focus for today.

At the flight school level, we train students to become recreational, general commercial, airline and instructor pilots, and we have a commercial aviation diploma program with Okanagan College. We have formal training partnerships with WestJet Encore, Jazz, Porter, and Carson Air, as well as informal connections with many companies seeking our graduates. As to the challenges, some of these you will recognize from previous meetings.

First, there is inadequate financial assistance for students. The high cost of initial training for a commercial pilot's licence combined with low funding leaves students deeply in debt. Available student loan assistance combined through Canada student loans and B.C. student loans, for example, in our province is a mere \$5,440 per

semester. Put this against the demonstrated need for \$23,519 per semester and this means the typical unmet need in this is \$18,000 for each semester, or over \$90,000 one might need for a five-semester diploma program.

Second, we are facing increasing training costs. To acquire instructor staff, we now have to train flight instructors at a burden of \$10,000 per instructor. This used to be a revenue stream generated from commercial pilots who wanted to instruct and has, instead, become a cost that now has to be passed along to the general flight training student group, thereby increasing their financial burden. The costs of aircraft parts and fuel are also unstable and increasing significantly. For example, a single-engine Cessna 172 aircraft new from the factory is currently \$411,000 U.S. and requires a lead time of 14 months for delivery. Used aircraft result in bidding wars and still run 50% to 75% of new cost before adding in the high cost of overhauling major components like engines and propellers.

Not only is the domestic training demand fuelling aircraft sales and prices but international companies have been purchasing aircraft in groups of 25 or more for their own training use overseas. In addition to costs being increased through those means, the pool of aircraft maintenance engineers is also being depleted, thereby requiring higher pay and incentives to attract and retain qualified maintenance personnel.

Our third challenge is our general lack of access to potential staff. With the current state of hiring in the industry, new pilots do not need to spend time instructing to build experience to move to being commercial operators. Many graduates are going straight to airlines or other companies directly out of flight school. The lower availability of instructors equals fewer instructors who advance through the instructor class system in order to become supervising instructors or to be able to train new instructors.

As a temporary solution, hiring qualified international applicants for instructor positions is not a viable option for us as the current LMIA process is overly onerous and the lengthy Transport Canada licence conversion process also holds up the administrative processing of international applicants. Medical requirements are also overly restrictive in some circumstances, for example, when dealing with correctable colour blindness or when preventing retired airline pilots who no longer hold medicals from teaching in a simulator for us as they were already able to do at the airlines.

To counter that, our recommendations fall into two groups.

First, we need more aviation-specific funding. I think that's pretty clear. We need to increase federal funding in the way of additional student loans and loan forgiveness programs for students. We need to look at federal funding support in the way of instructor training or retention grants to help alleviate the financial burden passed along to the students. We also need to look at federal funding or tax credits for capital purchases to also help cover the extremely high and increasingly higher equipment costs.

The second group of recommendations involves being able to increase access to instructor staff. First, an increase in student funding would allow flight training units to pay instructors and aircraft maintenance engineers higher wages to be able to retain them. Next, providing easier access in the short term for international employees through the LMIA programs, either on a fast track or by exempting suitable candidates entirely, would allow us to hire pilots or aircraft maintenance engineers who are available internationally to fill the gap.

Reducing turnaround times at Transport Canada for the licence-conversion—

• (1105)

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. Vanderaegen, could you do your closing comments, please.

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** Sure. In closing, I'll get straight to the point. We need these challenges to be addressed to ensure that we cannot only stay in business today but to expand to meet the growing need that's coming up through the market.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Captain Hoff, you have five minutes, please.

**Captain Mike Hoff (Captain, External Affairs Committee, Air Canada Pilots Association):** Good morning, and thank you.

My name is Michael Hoff. I am an airline pilot, and I love my job. I'm a Boeing 787 captain at Air Canada based in Vancouver. I'm here representing the Air Canada Pilots Association.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to thank all of you for taking on this issue. Stable and predictable access to aviation is important in a country as large as ours. Many sectors are struggling with labour supply issues. For pilots, the issue is complex. In our submission to the committee, you will see that the cost of pilot training and limited access to training flight time are factors, and not only that, so are the poor safety records and working conditions for entry-level pilots, factors that are borne out in research we have done to show that young Canadians are more likely to be interested in a career as a nurse, a firefighter or even a video gamer than as a pilot.

The easiest way for me to explain this is to tell my story through personal experience. Not only am I a pilot, but my 26-year-old son now flies for the regional airline Jazz. Let me explain. Pilot training can run upwards of \$90,000, a tremendous cost burden for families, and a difficult case to make if you need to secure a loan. For my son to get the training and accumulate the hours he needed, I ended up buying a small airplane, a PA-22, and we hired our own instructor. Yes, if you're wondering, it is somewhat like learning to drive a car: It can be better if someone else tells your kid what to do.

Flight schools across Canada are fragmented. Some are aligned with accredited colleges; others are not. Many are small, family-run operations. The Canada Revenue Agency does not recognize tuition expenses for all of them. Personally, I can tell you it took three years of fighting before CRA recognized my son's flight school for tax purposes. Not only that, I wasn't able to deduct any of the flying time in my own aircraft. Now contrast this with how easy it was to claim my other son's university tuition.

A lot of students think that when they get their pilot's licence, they can walk into a job at WestJet or Air Canada. In reality, it's more like pro sports. Before you make it to the big leagues, you have to literally get thousands of hours on the farm team. In Canada, that often means flying up north.

Let me speak frankly. Day-to-day regulatory oversight can be totally disconnected from the reality on the ground. Rules require self-monitoring, and that means pilots are supposed to decide for themselves whether or not they are fit for duty, which can be a tough decision when you are new and out of your element. In some operations, if a pilot reports that they are unfit to fly due to fatigue, they will be asked if they need a blankie and a pacifier to facilitate their nap. That is the culture.

If you need the job to get a better job, it can create a tremendous amount of pressure on inexperienced pilots, and it's one of the reasons that, when we look at accident rates in Canadian aviation, the majority of hull losses—in other words, the total loss of an aircraft, and far too often the souls on board—are in the far north. I can tell you honestly that, as a parent, I did not get a good night's sleep when my son was flying up north.

What can we do about this? The survey we commissioned showed very clearly that parents and students today are more attracted to the stable, safe pathways and immediate benefits that more traditional careers might offer. We need to reduce and eliminate the barriers that students face.

That means, one, we need policies to help defray the costs of entry, including making loans and tax credits available for flight schools. Two, we need to find ways to make accumulating flight and simulator time easier. Three, we need to encourage accredited public institutions to build flight schools. Four, we need to work on making aviation safer, which includes ensuring strong regulatory oversight where our new pilots are flying, especially in the north. Statistics show that we must do better. This protects not only our newest pilots but also their passengers.

I am proud to be a pilot. Nothing makes me happier than encouraging young people to consider this as a career. We have the best view in the world from our office, but there's work to be done.

I am grateful for the attention from this committee on these important issues.

•(1110)

I would specifically like to thank Mr. Fuhr for bringing this forward.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Captain Hoff.

Ms. Farly, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Caroline Farly (Chief Pilot and Chief Instructor, Aéro Loisirs):** Thank you. I will also read, and I'm going to do this presentation in French.

[*Translation*]

Good morning. Thank you for having me today.

I am Caroline Farly, owner of the Aéro Loisirs flying school. I am Chief Pilot and Chief Instructor, as well as the person in charge of aircraft maintenance and authorized agent for Transport Canada. I became an instructor in 2011 in order to pursue it as a career.

I want to thank Louise Gagnon, who was a pilot and class 1 instructor at Cargair for 25 years, and Rémi Cusach, founder of the ALM flying school, also class 1 instructor for 25 years and now retired. Both are currently delegated examiners at Transport Canada and helped me prepare this presentation.

Lengthy student admission delays are a problem for flying schools. Behind the problem is an instructor shortage, which is not improving. It is urgent to address our inability to meet the current and growing demand of commercial pilot licence candidates.

It is no longer necessary to go through the training process to accumulate flying hours. Only pilots who truly show interest will become instructors. Inspiration should be drawn from the conclusions of this study to promote the value of the flight instructor profession, the current perception of which is definitely impeding candidate recruitment.

Pilots who have decided to pursue a career as instructors are few in the network and are mainly school founders, examiners and chief instructors. They have an immeasurable wealth of knowledge in training and aviation and have been playing a leading role over the past 30 years in the establishment of flying schools. However, they are approaching the age of retirement, selling their schools and leaving an enormous void in the field.

That is what happened with the school I took over in 2013. Until the founder retired in 2018, we were two career instructors, but now it's just me. I like to think that our enthusiasm has strongly influenced and inspired pilots we have trained to become instructors, as access to role models or mentors has always been a key to success in professional recruitment.

Instruction is the least valued and the lowest paid aspect of aviation. That is the harsh reality. Schools are paying wages to independent workers instead of salaries to employees. Weather-related loss of income is considerable, both for flight schools and for

workers, not to mention the negative impact the loss has on the region where our students live. The demand for our services increases significantly when students are on vacation during the summer and during holidays. Last-minute cancellations because of the weather or mechanical failures make the enforcement of labour standards difficult and costly.

Although instructors at our school are relatively well paid because they receive a significant bonus, the fact remains that our operations impose a ceiling on us. The cost of maintenance and the purchase of aircraft parts and fuel are increasing while we face income variations. Pilot training is expensive, and we are trying to keep its cost at acceptable levels that make aviation accessible. Those costs fluctuate and increase, but the cost of service cannot follow suit.

The big question is: who will train the instructors of tomorrow? Only the most senior instructors—those in class 1—who have accumulated 750 flying hours as instructors can train flight instructors. That is essentially what is stated in standard 421.72 of the Canadian Aviation Regulations.

Today, it is possible to become a class 1 instructor after only one or two seasons. Airlines compete for experienced pilots—all experienced instructors and class 1 instructors—over other instructors and professional pilots lacking additional qualifications. We will witness a gradual drop in the quality of training and a disappearance of role models and mentors with a wealth of experience and operational and practical knowledge.

The reality is also that experienced instructors were running flying schools across Canada. Declining experience levels in that area are certainly likely to affect the quality of the training of new instructors. Currently, Transport Canada is mobilizing class 1 instructors to deal with those challenges, and that highly significant and constructive initiative shows that the department is serious about taking action.

•(1115)

The majority of class 1 instructors currently working are over the age of 50, and I am concerned about becoming one of the rare class 1 instructors with more than 10 years of experience. I am already one of the few, if not the only, woman who owns a flying school.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Please give your closing comments.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** In closing, one of my last concerns is the availability of flight examiners for flight instructors. That issue needs to be addressed because a flight examiner for flight instructors must currently be an airline pilot, and that complicates the scheduling of instructor exam activities.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We are going to questions from our members.

We have Ms. Block for six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to welcome our guests here this morning and, as well, echo your appreciation to Mr. Fuhr for bringing his motion forward. I believe it was unanimously supported, so we recognize the very important role that flight schools have in our airline industry.

I want to go back to the testimony of Captain Hoff. If you wouldn't mind recapping for me, I think you outlined three policies you believed the government should undertake in order to address some of the issues for young pilots who are seeking to get more experience and perhaps make it easier for that to happen.

• (1120)

**Capt Mike Hoff:** I highlighted four points. They were to improve working conditions for new pilots in Canada's north, encourage accredited public institutions to build flight schools, make it easier for students to accumulate flight and simulator time, and examine options for reducing costs for students, like making it easier to get tax deductions for their education.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** All of those would touch upon the things you have heard, not only perhaps, from your son and his experience, but also from other young pilots, for whom some of these actually are real barriers to pursuing a career in this industry.

**Capt Mike Hoff:** That's correct.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I would like to follow up on the testimony of Ms. Farly. I appreciate what you were saying at the end of your testimony, in terms of being one of the only females—or the only female—who owns a flight school.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** I think I'm one of the only. I'm not sure if there is another one, so I don't want to proclaim myself to be the only one, but I do not know another.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Okay.

I know time is short, but you were starting out on that train of thought. Was there anything you wanted to add in regard to that?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** In regard to that, I think I had completed that issue. However, it's a whole generation—

I'll speak in French.

[*Translation*]

The idea here is continuity. We are currently lacking succession and there are no more instructors. Even I, as one of the rare class 1 instructors still active with a certain number of years of experience, need support and a group of peers—other class 1 instructors. We no longer have role models or support.

A process must really be implemented to help retain our instructors and make the profession into a viable vocation. Right now, the instructor profession is negatively perceived because the only thing said about it is that it is not well paid, which is unfortunately true. No one is talking about the richness of that career and the experience of flying with so many different people. That whole issue must really be looked into.

[*English*]

I think that was the main point.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you.

You also talked about the costs of operating a flight school. I'm wondering about the other side of the balance sheet, which would be revenue. Where do you get your revenue from?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** For any school or aviation service, the revenue comes when the plane takes off and when we give class instructions. We give theoretical classes, so there's revenue from that, but then we have the office. We have the Internet, so I won't go into that business side. If we don't give theoretical classes and we don't have planes flying, there's no revenue. That's also why instructors....

For example, starting in November until today, we've all seen the weather, and when you're in aviation, you don't look at the weather the same way. I don't know if you all have seen how bad the weather has been for flying. That's less revenue. How can we with *travailleur autonome* ensure a stable work payment when we can't guarantee such a high revenue?

I have a nice team of instructors right now. Because we are career-motivated instructors, I have a really strong and nice team right now, but one is going to leave in a year. He wants to stay, but he's going to be wrapped up by a company. He promised me one year, maybe two, because he wants to stay in the region. He doesn't want to fly an airliner so much. He prefers staying at home. But you cannot compare salaries.

I chose to be an instructor because I love it but also because I have a son at home and I wanted to make sure that I came home at night. We can give instructors different incentives, but right now, the salary is not one of them, unfortunately.

• (1125)

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you.

Do I have any time left?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Fuhr.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.):** Thank you all very much for coming. I appreciate that.

Marc, you ran out of time. I want to give you an opportunity to finish what you wanted to say, and then I have a question.

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** Thank you, Mr. Fuhr.

The thing that was left out for me was the medical requirements that we have to face when we want to have pilots or instructors. I used a small example of people with colour blindness who can use corrective lenses that could fix that, no different from us when we have to wear regular lenses to repair that. But the people with colour blindness are still not allowed to fly at night, and they're still restricted to having to have a radio and a control zone.

With regard to medicals, the other thing is we have this abundance of people retiring at the top end of the airline community right now. Of course, once you reach a certain age, it's harder to maintain your medicals. If they were at the airlines, they could continue to teach in a simulator, whereas we can't use them for any of the specific licensing requirements in our simulators in flight schools.

Who better to train these people for where they're going than the people who are retiring? We have to add that as additional training, and that comes at a cost to the students in addition to what they're already paying.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Thank you for that.

It's been pretty clear that we need more students. We need to remove the barriers to getting them into flight training. Obviously, there's a financial piece. That's probably the biggest speed bump on that note. We need to train them faster and we need more instructors.

On training them faster, I was wondering if any of the three of you would comment on how you think competency-based training might shorten that training cycle so we can get people through the pipeline faster. Caroline, do you have an opinion on that?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** I need you to clarify. Sorry.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** I'm talking about training people to be competent versus just saying for this phase of flying that they need so many hours. That may not be suitable for *ab initio* pilot training, but certainly for a commercial standard or an airline transport rating standard, once we get further up the training cycle. Some places will do training to competency regardless of hours. The Canadian system basically says they need to achieve these hours and competency. Do you think if we looked at how we train people that might help us get people through faster once we got them in the door?

**The Chair:** Ms. Farly, please feel free to speak in French. We have full translation available.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Okay. Thank you.

[Translation]

Your question is really quite interesting, and I will give you my point of view. That is already an approach we use. Take for example the 45 hours of training required to become a private pilot. It is very rare for candidates, even the most talented ones, to be ready after only 35 hours. With exercises added to it, the 45-hour training is completed quickly and effectively. In addition, people cannot move on to the next flight exercise before they really master the previous one.

[English]

I'm sorry. I have difficulty answering this question.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** It's okay. I'll move to Mike.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Do you have an opinion on that?

**Capt Mike Hoff:** Yes. I think that is a piece of it. Some of it is outdated and antiquated, but I think in the process, you have to be careful that you don't start lowering the bar to meet a perceived problem you have. You have to keep the standard, but there are avenues.

My son is in the right seat of a Dash 8 Q400. He's out flying around in circles in my airplane at night, because he needs to tick a Transport Canada box. I really don't think it's going to make him a better pilot, but the box needs to be ticked.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Right. I would agree with you. The standard has to be maintained throughout the entire process. It certainly wouldn't be applicable to every phase of flight training, in

my opinion, and based on my experience, but I think it might shorten the process in areas where it made sense.

Marc, do you have an opinion on that?

• (1130)

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** Yes. I agree with what Mr. Hoff has said here. You have to make sure the bar has been maintained.

We use a combination of competency-based and scenario-based training, but you still have to meet the standards. We have students we will test at three-quarters of their training. That would be more than adequate to fly commercially, but we have to fill in another 40 or 50 hours with them. Those are the ones we do advanced things with, which is fine. Again, that would also be a method of potentially reducing costs for them. On the flip side, you're probably also going to see students with whom you have to go beyond the current limits. I guess it's finding the balance.

I think with input from the airlines.... We have a large program advisory committee. If they're provided access in schools in the way we provide access, where we open the books and show them how everybody is performing, I think that could help maintain those standards.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Thank you very much.

I believe that's my time.

**The Chair:** Yes, it is.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to make a quick comment before I ask my questions. At the meeting's outset, during the opening statements, the interpreters told us that they had not received the texts, which complicated their job. I was wondering whether we could make an effort for future meetings and ensure that interpreters have the texts before the meeting starts.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us this morning.

Your testimony is very enlightening. Since we began our study, I have felt that the situation is complex, but relatively simple to summarize. We have two problems: how to attract new pilots, and how to retain them, regardless of whether they are professionals or instructors.

We are talking about the situation in Canada, but the pilot market is global. With a pilot shortage, I assume that every one of them holds all the cards when it comes to finding the company that will give them the best working conditions.

About a year and a half ago, we carried out a very broad study on aviation safety. One of the issues discussed intensively was the matter of flying hours imposed on Canadian pilots.

My first questions are for you, Captain Hoff. First, can the number of flying hours imposed on Canadian pilots put the Canadian industry at a disadvantage and push our pilots to work abroad in better conditions? Second, are the new regulations submitted by the minister and by Transport Canada satisfactory to you in that regard?

[English]

**Capt Mike Hoff:** Sorry, the volume went down there, but I think you were asking if the hours were adequate and if Canada was out of line globally with.... Was that annual flight times or flight times for licensing?

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** My question is about whether the number of hours plays a role.

Can the number of flying hours Canadian pilots must log compared to what is required of foreign pilots affect our ability to keep our pilots in Canada?

[English]

**Capt Mike Hoff:** I think our pilot qualification times are in line with those of other ICAO countries. We are actually advantaged over the U.S. system where, as a result—

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** If I may, I am not talking about training hours, but about flying hours.

[English]

**Capt Mike Hoff:** I think we're fairly well aligned with other ICAO jurisdictions. I don't see any disparity there that would tip it one way or the other.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** I will move on to another question. In your opening remarks, you quickly mentioned issues with the Canada Revenue Agency that lasted three years. It seems to me that this situation is well within the federal Parliament's jurisdiction. Can you explain to us the issues you have had with the agency, so that we can decide what measures could help retain students?

[English]

**Capt Mike Hoff:** I'm really glad you asked me that question.

Actually, Marc and I went to college together, a college that no longer exists, unfortunately.

One of the big problems I ran into was the inconsistency in pilot training across the country. Ontario and Quebec have much more fulsome, vertically integrated training programs. Out west it's really become the wild, wild west. Some colleges are affiliated with a flight school, but they have no idea what happens over at the airport. They've put together a basket of some economics classes and called it a business aviation diploma. But you go over to an airport and they're not the college's instructors. They don't really know what's going on with the curriculum, and something magic happens over there.

There are really good examples of how to do it properly; it's just that there's no continuity. It was quite interesting to see the juxtaposition with my younger son, who's an engineer, and the

resources afforded to him to pursue his dream there the resources afforded to my older son as a pilot.

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you.

My next question is for Ms. Farly.

A lot is being said about the cost of training a student. That is a delicate and complex issue because education also comes under provincial jurisdiction, and the federal government cannot act alone. However, you were saying that you bought a company you were already working for. Could the federal government implement measures that would foster business transfer, thus enabling a flying school to quickly find someone to take over instead of closing?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** That is an excellent question. I was able to benefit from the regional support program for young entrepreneurs under the age of 35. The Community Futures Development Corporation and the local development centre really helped me buy that business, and those measures are in line with what you are talking about.

Currently, flying schools are being bought by people who are passionate about flying, but who are not necessarily flight instructors. In Quebec, I don't know of any schools that have declared bankruptcy or have been closed, which proves that the transition is taking place. However, I know nothing about the rest of Canada.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Graham, for six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will start with you, Ms. Farly.

In your conclusion, you talked about the issue of examiner availability. Can you tell me more about that? What is the current time frame for examination candidates? In my case, it only took a few days for me to take the exam. How long does it now take for a candidate to be able to take the exam, receive the results and be able to take on their new role, with their new licence?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Thank you for the question.

Currently, it takes about one week for someone to be able to take their private pilot or commercial pilot exam. When the instructor feels that the student is ready, they can call in and arrange for the exam to take place fairly quickly. The flight exam can be cancelled due to weather, but it is easy to reschedule it for the next day, the weekend or the following week, if necessary.



However, for a flight instructor flight exam, at least two months are needed, without the possibility of a definitive date because, for the time being, examiners must be airline pilots and have other professional obligations. Since instructor training takes three months when attended full time, as it is generally the case with us, it is difficult to set at the start of the training a specific date for the final exam because a two-month advance notice is needed, which is reset if the exam has to be postponed. So that leads to significant delays. At the same time, I know some class 1 instructors who are currently on the ground as flight examiners and would like to be flight instructor examiners for Transport Canada, but they are being turned away because they are not airline pilots.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Are the theory exams up to date? Are they in line with current knowledge?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** That's one of the concerns those of us in the field have right now. The process to review or challenge the theory exams is either outdated or non-existent. A number of my fellow instructors and I have concerns about the subjects covered in the exam. Obviously, the content of the exam isn't public.

To give you a sense of the situation, I'll give you an example. I am an authorized agent for Transport Canada, and my job is to invigilate exams. I had to be fingerprinted by the RCMP. I have a file. I know that I will be held criminally responsible if anything were to occur, but I would like Transport Canada to invite me to take part in an exam review committee. Many of us in the field are concerned about the subjects covered in theory exams and their updating. On both the private and commercial sides, students are discouraged for the simple reason that certain subjects are now out of step with current practice and standards.

• (1140)

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** At the beginning of your presentation, you talked about the shortage of pilots interested in becoming instructors. In the past, all many pilots wanted was to accumulate flight hours.

Do a lot of pilots interested in becoming instructors not do so because they can't make a good living at it?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Indeed, I knew many 25 years ago and still know many today. At my school, the pilots who become instructors do it because they want to and can. They're retired and work part time. That's the reality. We work with part-time instructors, so it's quite the juggling act. For example, one of my instructors has another job because he wants to be home with his partner in the evening. I have another young pilot who's becoming an instructor next year. He began the process to become an instructor. He wants to stay in the area and work with his father. It won't be a full-time job for him. These are people who wish to become instructors and make ends meet by working a second job. All of that makes it harder to run the school and provide a stable learning environment. It's tough to make sure students are consistently trained by the same instructor when we work with a team of part-time instructors.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Say an instructor completes their training and has up-to-date skills and knowledge. If they find another job, are you able to keep them on part time but offer them more hours?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** I sure wish I had an incentive other than motivation to offer. The sense of belonging to a school and being part of the culture is what motivates people to work as instructors, not the money. Our schools can't afford to pay them as much as they'd like. There's just no comparing the pay. For now, the only things that can keep someone working as an instructor are motivation and love of the job.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** In response to Mr. Aubin's question, you mentioned the help of the CFDC and the CLD. Could you tell us more about the program that made it possible for you to buy the flight school?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** For the project, I submitted an action plan, and I received a grant for young entrepreneurs. Adopting a similar program for instructors would be worth exploring. Unfortunately, I can't remember the name of the program anymore, but the funding enabled entrepreneurs to be paid during the business's first year in operation. That meant the business had more working capital. It was as though I was receiving employment insurance benefits, but they weren't, of course. What it allowed me to do was spend money and revenue on getting the business up and running or at least to have more working capital.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Graham.

Mr. Rogers, please.

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing today.

I want to address my question to Caroline first.

According to the labour market report of March 2018, only 30% of the people involved in the aviation industry are female, and only 7% of pilots are women. What do you believe is the cause of this significant under-representation of women among Canadian pilots?

Is it because of how we have created a gender divide or is it the way we've targeted certain people? I know that back in the day doctors were men and nurses were women. We have gender parity, of course, and gender equality and all the other things we talk about, but is this a problem such that females in our society and under-represented groups, such as minority groups, have not applied to pilot schools to become pilots? Is that one of the biggest causes of the shortage that we see today?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** That's a very good question.

I think we all have this image... I'm sorry to say it this way, but Captain Hoff represents the image of the pilot that we all have. We do not see a lot of female pilots. The fact is that we need to hear the voice of a woman telling us that we're ready to land in Peterborough or that we're ready to land. Our parents never tell us as young women that it is a possibility to be an airline pilot. We're not given that possibility. It's when we're older and we see someone that we're given the opportunity to think outside the box.

At my school I think I do have a certain influence. I do influence the daughters of my pilots. I do influence my pilots who say, "I have a daughter and I think she should come and meet you." At my school we're way more than 7%, but I think there's this new generation, and there are a lot of initiatives for women in aviation that are going out. We have the Ninety-Nines. We have a lot of women's associations that do exist. I think that soon enough we'll be increasing those percentages.

If I can be permitted to say one other thing, because I'm asked to talk to a lot of ladies. Although it is conceived of as a male environment, women are so included in aviation. I have never felt discriminated against. I have never felt that I was a woman in a man's group. This is a sisterhood, a brotherhood, and there is always room for women and everyone in aviation. One thing that we learn in aviation is you cannot be a pilot if you're not a team player.

● (1145)

**Mr. Churence Rogers:** I thank you for that. I've done a lot of flying in my lifetime, and I think last year was the first time on a flight where I ever saw a pilot and a co-pilot who were female. That was the first time I've ever seen that.

The other comment I want to make is directed to Captain Mike Hoff.

Teaching is a noble career. I was a teacher for 29 years. I loved interacting with high school kids on a daily basis—most days, anyway. It was imparting knowledge and guiding these young people who were chasing different careers and stuff.

In your pilot association is wanting to be mentors to young pilots an inspiration for you as part of your career?

**Capt Mike Hoff:** Absolutely. I would love to be able to participate in that. I feel strongly about it. My career has been fantastic because of altruistic people ahead of me. Marc and I were extremely fortunate to go through a school that had a lot of retired airline people and retired military people, and we got a fantastic education as a result.

It's been difficult to give back vis-à-vis instructing, because we have time limits and we're expensive to our companies. If I go and teach somewhere else, that takes away from the time my employer can use me. That's a no-go area for them.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Rogers.

We move now to Ms. Leitch.

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you, witnesses, for being here today. My questions will be for all of you, so please feel free to step forward.

One of the things I think all of you have mentioned is the high capital cost, obviously, of running flight schools. Has there been any opportunity for you to speak to an increase in the airport capital assistance program or, quite frankly, a change in the capital cost allowance on your taxes for your organizations? We talk about that frequently for other industries, but have you been able to approach the government with respect to that in your flight schools and your overhead costs?

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** I can answer a little bit of that.

The way the programs are set up—where we are for the aircraft capital part of it—the airport doesn't qualify, because it's too busy. It's one of these things where there's nothing out there that assists specifically for this. Even if it did qualify, it wouldn't qualify under the equipment and rules of—

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** What I'm saying is I think there may be an opportunity there for you. I would encourage you to be advocates on that, whether it be for your flight simulation equipment, which is a high capital cost.... I'm a surgeon. We use simulators all the time. You guys are like the anaesthetists in my world, you do the takeoff and landing, and I'm the person in between as a surgeon. We use simulators all the time, and they're high capital cost equipment.

I have a second question. With respect to the actual education of young pilots, obviously for undergraduate or post-graduate education in this country, we provide the Canada student loans program and a forgiveness program. Have any of you, or a large industry leader like Air Canada and others, advocated that, similar to skilled trades, your young pilots and trainees should be a component part of that program?

I leave it with you.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** In terms of student loans, if a flight school isn't linked to an accredited college program, students aren't eligible for those loan programs.

Even though private schools aren't linked to the college system, their performance levels are recognized by Transport Canada and they are equally as qualified. Ideally, the government would open up those programs to our students as well.

Currently, what students are allowed to do is take out a loan, enter into a specific agreement with a bank for professional training delivered in the region.

[*English*]

One thing, I'm sorry, that I can say is I know that

[*Translation*]

students submit their tuition receipts for a tax deduction. Recently, my students have told me that the percentage of tax deductible tuition fees has dropped significantly for aviation.

By no means an expert in the area, I do know the issue is worth a closer look. Numerous students have told me that changes were made to the tax credit for commercial programs and that it's significantly less.

[*English*]

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** Maybe I could ask each of you about one of the other issues that came up, and I guess it's a bit tangential to what Ms. Farly was just mentioning.

It's with regard to the regulations for the simulation schools, and who should be eligible to be running them. That may also aid in providing an opportunity, whether it be for the federal government or provincial governments, to say that all students should be eligible. If there's one set of regulations that governs one being able to function in these facilities, and one standard, then obviously each organization should be eligible for financial support for their students.

Mr. Hoff, you look as if you would like to answer that.

**Capt Mike Hoff:** Yes, I'd like to jump in here.

First of all, I'd like to thank both of my colleagues for the work they do at these schools. These schools have done a great job of stepping forward and filling a need—

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** Absolutely.

**Capt Mike Hoff:** —that wasn't there, because it had been abandoned.

One of the upsides to the type of school that Marc and I attended was that the college bought the simulator. This is not to take anything away from businesses that need to make a profit; they have to pay for that simulator, so they need to charge for the time on it. When Marc and I went to school, our college was very highly regarded for its grads, for their instrument skills, because we had 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to those simulators for free. We would get in there and fly them. A private institution can't do that.

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** I would beg to differ on whether a private institution can do it. It's whether they choose to do it. I think that is the issue. I think it's incumbent upon industry to actually try to escalate that bar. If we're going to have excellence, then we should be training people to be excellent.

That being said, with respect to regulations, my question would be for Ms. Farly and Marc Vanderaegen.

Would these regulations be more of a burden to you as a company, or would you see them as something that would augment your ability to receive additional funding and support for your students and for your own company?

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** I guess I'm trying to understand what regulations you're actually talking about as a potential.... Are you talking about regulations that would allow, that would be established —

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** I mean educational standards.

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** Educational standards of...?

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** You're running a flight school. It's a school.

**Mr. Marc Vanderaegen:** It depends on how they're rolled out, I guess, and what they actually are.

Right now we have educational standards per se through Transport Canada already, so if it's just doubling them up, like we have with the Ministry of Education in B.C. where they try to manage us as well and things like that, it becomes cumbersome, and it doesn't really benefit the students.

No, if it benefits the students and can be managed, that's fine. Just bear in mind that costs do have to come out of the students' pockets unless there are other funding avenues set up as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Badawey.

• (1155)

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Hoff with respect to the industry, as well as the partnership that industry may have with the Air Canada Pilots Association, and in particular Air Canada itself.

In my former life, we really encouraged industry, in partnership with unions, in partnership with communities, secondary and post-secondary schools, etc., to get students at a younger age interested in different trades, different disciplines, and with that, to partner then to start the process of co-ops, apprenticeship education, etc. Then leading into post-secondary, they would pursue those disciplines to further their education and ultimately end up in the area of expertise they want to be in.

Is there any of that partnership between the association and, in your case, Air Canada with respect to getting the younger secondary individuals interested and from there to pursue it through secondary and post-secondary? You have the air cadet programs. You have other interested organizations that would actually align with being a pilot. Is there any partnership occurring between you and Air Canada?

**Capt Mike Hoff:** First of all, I'll speak to the piece with my employer. I've approached my employer. They are the apex predator. Their position is that they don't have a problem getting pilots. I've found very little traction with them. Personally, they do give me access to the simulator, as well as taking would-be pilots, who are looking at it as a career, up in my own plane. I also take them into the simulator. I thank Air Canada for the opportunity to use their simulators, but that's about where it ends.

On the altruistic side, where I feel the need to give back, I've got excellent traction through my association. People would ask why your association would use your membership's dues to hire advocates and do these studies to collect the data. The data wasn't there. I'm a pilot. I need data. I can't come and talk to you and say, "I've heard". We did a study. We drilled down to get some data and we're trying to help.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** You seem very cautious in your comments. I'll have a little chat with you offline, after the meeting, about some of the—

**Capt Mike Hoff:** I appreciate that.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** —comments that I'm sure you're being very cautious with.

With that, I'll pass it over to Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Thank you.

Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Farly, I want to commend you for having the courage to take over a business that was on the verge of going under. Sorry, I didn't mean that it was about to go under; what I meant was that it was about to close its doors. My apologies.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** That's fine.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Let's say you saved it from going under.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** I saved it from shutting down.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Precisely.

Describe for us, if you would, the challenges you faced or continue to face. What has the economic impact on regional flight schools been?

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Sorry, but are you asking about the challenges I faced getting the business back on track?

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Yes, and those you continue to face.

**Ms. Caroline Farly:** Oh, well, that's a lengthy conversation.

The biggest challenge to the school's sustainability is finding instructors. I don't mean instructors just looking to do a few hours—in any case, they don't exist anymore. I'm talking about instructors who can deliver quality training that lives up to the school's reputation—instructors who will stay with us. That's our biggest challenge in terms of long-term survival.

Another challenge I faced was managing the demand. Being a stable resource in the aviation sector, I had five places ask me to start a flying school in their region. I won't name them, mind you. One of my challenges right now is running the flight school with a view to stability, while maintaining the same standard upheld by its founder. I've been there since 2010.

Flight instructors are desperately needed all over the regions for two-engine airplanes. I was discussing it with Mr. Vanderagen, in fact. Commercial pilots are being trained all over, with demand on the rise. However, there aren't any more two-engine airplanes for pilot training because of how expensive they are. The current wait time for two-engine pilot training is two to three months.

If I was to let the company go, despite the ever-increasing costs of the school, I would buy another plane. I would buy another two-engine plane, but I can't allow training costs to go up. Training has to remain accessible. I try to pay my instructors more. I'd like to provide more training by purchasing a two-engine plane and more, but students are already struggling to register for my programs because of the cost. There aren't any funding programs.

It's a financial challenge. I try to maintain an acceptable balance on both ends without having excessive operating costs. I'm trying to keep aviation accessible to my pilots.

•(1200)

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but our time has expired.

Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for coming today.

We will suspend momentarily, while we change our witnesses.

•(1200)

(Pause)

•(1205)

**The Chair:** Welcome to our witnesses for this portion of the program. By video conference, we have Ms. Bell, Board Chair of the British Columbia Aviation Council. From CAE, we have Joseph Armstrong, Vice-President and General Manager. From

Super T Aviation, we have Terri Super, Chief Executive Officer. From Go Green Aviation, we have Gary Ogden, Chief Executive Officer. Welcome to all of you.

I would ask that you keep your comments to five minutes, because the committee members always have lots of questions.

We will start with Ms. Bell from the British Columbia Aviation Council.

**Ms. Heather Bell (Board Chair, British Columbia Aviation Council):** Good afternoon. 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 speak today as the chair of the British Columbia Aviation Council, which represents the interests of the aviation community in B.C. Personally, my 36-year career has been in air traffic control. I've worked as an operational tower controller and a radar controller. When I retired from NAV Canada, I was the general manager of the Vancouver flight information region. I was responsible for all air navigation services in the province as well as the more than 500 employees who delivered that service.

I am aware that the committee has had the opportunity to hear from many respected industry professionals. As such, I am confident in your awareness of the critical resource shortages being experienced and projected for our industry. These shortages 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 this issue is not specific to the pilot group, the fix for it is not simple or singular, either. I know that several recommendations have been put forth to the committee and I would like to add the support of BCAC for the following four:

Number one is 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. Unlike some other provinces, loans funding in B.C. 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-engine IFR-rated pilot will exceed \$75,000, certainly more than the cost of tuition and books for most four-year university bachelor degrees. Therefore, 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.

Number two is initiatives to increase recruitment and retention of flight instructors. Prior to the resource shortage, flight schools and northern air operators could count on new pilots gaining much-needed flight hours and experience by obtaining instructor ratings and working as flight instructors. They could also take positions with operators servicing northern and remote communities. Now we see our flight training units and northern air operators struggling to recruit and retain employees. 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.

Number three is support for training innovation. The regulatory requirements around aviation can be an impediment to innovation and training. We need to rethink how and who is doing our training. Aviation is an extremely complex environment, so it's interesting that flight training is one of—if not perhaps the only—system I can think of where, for the most part, we send our least experienced aviators to train our new aviators. We don't send first-year medical students to train new doctors and we don't send high school students to train the next generation of teachers, yet in the beginning of their career, that is what we do with pilots. I'm not saying it's not safe and I'm not saying we don't produce a good product, because it is and we do, but is it the best way?

ATAC, the Air Transport Association of Canada, has recommended the approved training organization model that could change, streamline and improve training, all while meeting regulatory requirements. BCAC strongly supports this initiative.

Four is support for initiatives to remove barriers to entry for women and indigenous people. Women and indigenous people continue to be under-represented in this industry. With women making up 50% of our population and indigenous youth the fastest-growing demographic in Canada, a focus on these groups could prove advantageous on many levels. We strongly encourage continued support to established outreach programs for women such as Elevate Aviation.

To energize 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'm the co-founder of a program we have called Give Them Wings where we will introduce indigenous youth to careers in aviation, with a focus on pilots. Our first event will be held in March at Boundary Bay Airport, where we will connect with the Musqueam, Tsawwassen and Tsleil-Waututh communities. With support, we hope to take this initiative across the province and beyond.

Today our transport has become a “taken for granted” mode of transportation in the developed world.

●(1210)

The social and economic impacts stemming from a pilot shortage have the potential to be annoying at best. It would be annoying if your vacation is ruined because your flight from Vancouver to Penticton or vice versa was cancelled because of a lack of a pilot and then you miss your connection to Rome and subsequently your cruise.

●(1215)

**The Chair:** Do your closing lines, Ms. Bell.

**Ms. Heather Bell:** At worst, it can be devastating, like when there is no pilot to transport your critically ill child and the unimaginable happens.

I thank the committee, and I look forward to any questions you may have and to any assistance I or my organization can lend.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Armstrong from CAE.

**Mr. Joseph Armstrong (Vice-President and General Manager, CAE):** Hello Madam Chair and committee members. It's an honour to be here today on behalf of CAE to provide our perspectives on pilot training in Canada and abroad.

I'll give a bit of a history lesson. In 1939, in conjunction with its allies, Canada established the British Commonwealth air training plan, or BCATP. Located in communities across Canada, the BCATP trained more than 130,000 crew men and women over a six-year period, which is considered today one of Canada's great contributions to allied victory. Today our nation's history in pilot training and our strong aerospace sector remain some of our greatest national assets. Successive governments have identified flight training as a key industrial capability.

Building on the BCATP heritage, CAE was founded in 1947 by Mr. Ken Patrick, an ex-Royal Canadian Air Force officer, who had a goal to create something Canadian and take advantage of a war-trained team that was extremely innovative and very technology intensive.

Fast forward to today. We're now the world leader in training for civil, defence and health care professionals. With over 65 training locations, we have the largest civil aviation training network in the world. Each year, we train more than 220,000 civil and defence crew members, including more than 135,000 pilots. Most people don't realize it, but wherever you're travelling, chances are the pilots were either trained at CAE in a simulator we built right here in Canada, or in a training centre located somewhere in the world.

Although the number of pilots we train annually is impressive, it is far from being sufficient to meet current and future needs. In 2018, we released a pilot demand outlook. According to our analysis, by 2028 the active combined airline and business jet pilot population will exceed half a million pilots, and 300,000 of those pilots will be new. Many military pilots are choosing a career in the commercial sector. Some of the driving factors are quality of life and better pay and opportunities. Military pilot attrition is also having a significant impact on professional air forces, reducing their ability to maintain a cadre of pilots to meet operational requirements, as well as their ability to produce qualified flight instructors to support their training pipelines. We see this impact today on the military training programs we deliver right here in Canada.

In this context, maximizing the available pool of potential talent is more important than ever. Today, women make up only 5% of professional pilots and cadets worldwide. Tackling gender diversity would address that imbalance, while giving the aviation community access to a talent pool nearly twice its current size.

In a recent survey that we conducted of aviation students and cadets in Canada and abroad, a number of issues were raised consistently, including the significant financial burden placed on students to enter into pilot training as well as the lack of certainty in career outcomes when they make that investment. Women specifically raised concerns about being able to fit in a male-dominated world and have an appropriate work-life balance. The fact that they have very few female role models in aviation does not help to mitigate their concerns.

Faced with such a shortage, our industry is looking for solutions to help develop more pilots faster. We'll do this by building new types of partnerships between fleet operators and training providers to provide better links between flight schools and the airlines that will ultimately receive these students. New training systems that make better use of real-time data and analytics are facilitating a move towards competency-based training. We are taking advantage of AI and big data analytics.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but could you slow down a little. I realize you only have five minutes, but the translators have to

**Mr. Joseph Armstrong:** Yes, no problem.

I'll slow down the fire hose. It's a lot of information.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Joseph Armstrong:** Last summer, in partnership with the governments of Canada and the province of Quebec, CAE announced a digital transformation project to develop the next generation of training solutions. We will be investing \$1 billion over the next five years in innovation, which is one of the largest investments of its kind in the aviation training sector anywhere in the world.

Beyond technology and improving training, the real challenge is attracting students and increasing diversity to broaden the civil aviation talent pool. As an example, through its recently launched CAE women in flight scholarship program, we will award up to five full scholarships to women who are passionate about becoming professional pilots and interested in becoming role models.

Incentives are required to stimulate pilot production in both the civil and military markets and to offset the significant costs associated with student fees, investments in infrastructure and the need to evolve technology to optimize training output. Focused investments are required, targeting areas such as scholarships and bursaries, which should be put in place to support financing of pilot training in Canada for students and cadets; infrastructure, to support increased pilot training capacity; committing to training and simulation as a key industrial capability; and AI and competency-based training.

We encourage Canada to increase funding and directly support pilot training as a unique part of our heritage that must be maintained as a key economic driver for growth within Canada and abroad, and as a key focus for young Canadians to become part of the global aviation community.

Thank you very much.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

We go now to Ms. Super from Super T Aviation.

**Ms. Terri Super (Chief Executive Officer, Super T Aviation):** Madam Chair, it is with great pleasure that I present to this committee the concerns and challenges facing Canadian flight schools. As the chief pilot of Super T Aviation based in Medicine Hat, Alberta, I have over 13,000 hours in medevac, training, and charter and scheduled flying experience. While I have provided the committee with a briefing document outlining our recommendations, I would like to highlight three categories for the committee to consider: student support, instructor attention and school support.

Pursuing a career as a professional pilot costs between \$75,000 and \$85,000 in training alone, not including living expenses. Lack of funds or their unavailability are often the reasons for student dropout or students' inability to consider a career in aviation. Therefore, we are calling for increased government-backed financial aid and assistance for flight training. This would allow students to obtain financing through the government and/or a commercial pathway and eliminate a major barrier facing Canadians interested in becoming pilots.

Amending the Canada-provincial job grant program to allow flight schools to obtain funds for employee training without the need for the training to be done by third party providers would remove another barrier facing pilots who want to improve flying qualifications. Most flight schools are the only training unit at an airport. To receive advanced training through this federal assistance program, these pilots would have to move to a new city and new airport to obtain training that could last anywhere from one to six months.

Retention of experienced flight instructors has become a major issue facing the flight school community. While flight schools would traditionally mentor an inexperienced flight instructor for one and a half to two years before they moved on to bigger, faster aircraft with a charter or small airline operator, these days the progression can be as little as a matter of months. This puts a tremendous strain on flight schools, which must constantly be training and hiring new students. This also adds a safety concern where inexperienced pilots are focused on moving on to their next job and end up flying more complex aircraft without sufficient experience.

In order to rectify this situation, I recommend that the government offer loan forgiveness for instructors similar to what is offered to medical...working in the remote and rural areas. I also recommend legislation similar to that of the United States, where pilots are required to obtain a minimum of 1,500 hours of flying experience before they are eligible to fly for the major airlines. Regulations such as these would not only aid flight schools but also small charter and medevac operations.

We need to provide help for flight schools. Flight schools are the backbone of the aviation industry and we cannot keep up with the demand, given the high cost of training which is partly due to government policy. It's a harsh reality that aircraft burn fossil fuels. The cost of fuel is one of the largest expenses for a flight school. This cost of course is passed on to the student as part of instructional fees.

To help keep the cost of training down for the student, we recommend that the federal government: one, exclude flight schools from the carbon tax, which has increased and/or will increase the cost of training for the student dramatically; two, reprise the federal excise tax for fuel on instructional aircraft; three, support the development of alternate biofuels for aircraft or electric aircraft; and four, financially support flight schools in their use of specialized equipment that is required for flight training, including flight training devices commonly known as simulators. These devices increase competency and experience in a controlled environment but come at a cost usually several times greater than the cost of a flight school's other capital assets.

In conclusion, this committee has been presented with statistics of the pilot shortage from various witnesses appearing before it. The numbers are real and the shortage is real. Flight schools are tasked with producing safe, dependable and professional pilots in ever-increasing numbers in order to sustain and in fact expand the growing aviation industry. This can only be accomplished by government and the aviation industry working together to provide students, instructors and flight schools with the resources and help they need.

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

•(1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We go now to Go Green Aviation. Mr. Ogden, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Gary Ogden (Chief Executive Officer, Go Green Aviation):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, members of the committee, and thank you to my fellow witness colleagues.

My name is Gary Ogden—Gary Douglas Ogden, if my mom's watching—and I'd like to speak to a higher level. My colleague Mike Rocha, who is an executive from our flight school, will be speaking to this committee on the 19th. I'd like to touch on some of the elements of our business and offer analysis of a possible root cause showing why we're in the situation we're in right now.

My background aligns itself with airports, airlines and ground service providers in the aviation industry. I rode my bike to the airport in 1979 and haven't been home since. I started as a security guard and I became a CEO. The business and the industry holds much for us all, and it offers opportunity.

I'm concerned with the fact that I have five major clients, all of whom—including Aura Airlink, which will be doing business as Central North Flying Club—are struggling to find and keep people. We face the enemy of attrition and turnover in aviation.

I have worked overseas at airports in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in the States, and pretty much everywhere. I choose to work in Canada because I'm proud of our aviation, and as my colleague points out, we have a vast history of training. We are world-renowned for the training we offer. Part of the reason I wanted to be involved with Aura and CNFC in a flying school in Canada is that we have this reputation and should be able to attract domestic students, and we should be very successful at attracting international students as well.

We do this business for two reasons, one a holistic reason. These do still exist. I listened to my colleagues here speak about this earlier. There are holistic reasons for doing this work. We see a shortage and we want to fill it. We want to accommodate the view stated by ICAO, IATA and ATAC, and all of the industry pundits who say that there is growth in their business. We want to accommodate that growth. We want to facilitate regional access. We don't want to lose regional access by having no air service. We want also to serve our remote communities and our indigenous people to the level to which they deserve to be served. We want to build bridges and we want to fly over obstacles. We want to do so holistically, but then the economic reality sets in: The math doesn't work. Airlines and the industry itself are burdened with a number of challenges. The price of a ticket today is probably as low as or maybe less than it was in 1980, yet our costs are a lot higher.

Central North Flying Club plans to start up in Sudbury. A regional airport has to struggle to get the attention of government. I salute Mr. Fuhr and the efforts of the current sitting and previous governments as we work towards alleviating some of this problem. The problem with general aviation, GA, at regional airports is that they don't generate revenue. They generally don't pay for themselves. At best, they are revenue neutral. We don't have duty free. We don't have parking. We don't have non-aeronautical revenues to support the airport.

Kelly, who I believe is gone for now, brought up the ACAP. We need to do more for regional airports at which flying schools are located to ensure that the flying school is not burdened with the infrastructure of that airport. We have to see the flight schools, the medevac, the charters, and the public flying and learning as critical, as providing a benefit in the pipeline of our aviation industry.

In a hockey sense, think of it as your farm team. If you don't have a farm team, if you don't reproduce for the future, you are doomed not to successfully live it. We must support the farm team, must support flying schools, and must support regional aviation to the best of our abilities.

● (1230)

I thank all of you, because there are a number of initiatives with loans, student work programs and LMIA's. We have a number of initiatives. As for what I would like to see—I was talking to my friend MP Sikand about this—maybe we have to get our information out there better. Maybe there are programs, but maybe they're not consolidated and maybe they're not accessible, so for somebody who struggles...and God bless our friend who started a flight school after it looked like it was closing.

Maybe access to information is something that we can do, perhaps even as low-hanging fruit. Give people access to the information that they can use in order to access those funds that you have there. As well, let's grow the funding, and let's grow the initiatives to further those funds.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ogden.

We'll start the questioning from our members.

Mr. Falk, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses at committee today. Your testimony has been very interesting.

Ms. Super, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

I took my pilot's licence about 20 years ago. I have my private pilot's licence, with just over 800 hours.

At the time, I thought the cost was expensive. I was really frustrated that I couldn't write it off as a furthering education expense. It wasn't tax deductible for me at all. I talked to our local flight school operator, Harv's Air, where I took my training.

My instructor, by the way, was a woman about 20 years my junior. I had no problems with that and she had no problems with training me. She did a great job. Her name is Dana Chepil, if I can give her a little shout-out. I think she is an examiner today.

I thought at the time that the cost was prohibitive. In talking to my flight school in the last couple of weeks, they said that retaining instructors is a huge challenge. You've mentioned a few things, but what do you think would really be the number one thing or the two things that you could do to retain instructors? You talked about increasing the hours to 1,500 before they can fly commercially. That's probably not a bad idea, because most of them are instructing just to log hours to get onto a carrier somewhere. Is that right?

**Ms. Terri Super:** Yes, that's true. Flight schools have traditionally been the bottom-feeders. Instructors do not usually stay with instructing. It would be great if we could get some of the airline captains to come back. We're currently in talks with WestJet, one of the carriers, to see if we can work out something where they lend us one of their pilots for even one or two days a month, which would be a really good start.

I don't think you're ever going to cure that problem. You can throw more money at the instructors—higher salaries—but they're looking for the “big iron”, because most of them are young people and they want to fly larger aircraft, so you can only capture them for a short period of time.

That's where I think if there were some sort of loan forgiveness it might be an incentive, because the loans are significant for these students. That may be an incentive for them to stay in the flight instructional area longer and get more experience before they go out to their other jobs.

**Mr. Ted Falk:** I don't know what your experience is with the pilots or the potential pilots that you're attracting, whether they're domestic or international. I know that Harv's Air in Steinbach attracts a lot of international students, but domestic ones not quite so much.

I talk to young people all the time about getting into aviation and getting their pilot's licence. The number one reason they cite is not that they're not interested and not that it's not exciting—it's the cost. One of the things that adds significantly to the cost, and I know it from operating an aircraft—my Mooney doesn't fly on fumes—is the cost of fuel.

You talked a bit about the carbon tax and what it is and will be. Just last week, the National Airlines Council of Canada released a statement saying that they had done two studies in 2018 showing the negative impacts a carbon tax would have for aviation, both on the cost of passenger travel and also on the cost for flight school operators, without really any measurable effect on reducing emissions. Could you comment on that?

● (1235)

**Ms. Terri Super:** The carbon tax that we have already in Alberta, and it is significant, does increase the costs.

We need the infrastructure. We need airlines. Everyone wants to fly. You guys all fly on an airline to get home on the weekends. We have to provide that.

The idea that the carbon tax will help people to reduce use of fossil fuels is just not going to be true for a flight school. The more students we put out, the more fuel we're going to use.

The one thing I see that has great potential is the use of simulation. At our school, we have an integrated course that we give to students. We have two simulators. They're flight training devices. They don't move, but they simulate flight very well, but we can't use all of that training for their licence.



**Mr. Ted Falk:** Also, we heard previous testimony that the cost of simulators is very expensive, and you need to recover that cost somehow, as well. Perhaps there are some assistance programs you could have that would help you explore that avenue.

**Ms. Terri Super:** Some sort of government matching for these costs—

**Mr. Ted Falk:** I'm out of time in eight seconds, but if you have the opportunity to talk a little bit about infrastructure needs either at municipal airports or private airports, I'd appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Please be very brief.

**Ms. Terri Super:** I'm afraid I'm not really qualified to talk about the infrastructure at airports.

**Mr. Ted Falk:** That's fine. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Graham.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Ms. Super, when the transition between the panels was taking place, you met Ms. Farly from my riding. It was nice to learn about the other female airport owner. I just wanted to make that point; you hadn't mentioned that particular bit in your opening statement.

Are there other comments from the previous panel that you want to address? You indicated interest in doing so at the beginning and that in our early conversations there were things that were animating you.

**Ms. Terri Super:** Yes. Now if I can think of them.... I'm getting a little older, so it takes me a little longer to—

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** That's okay. Some flight planning is required.

I'll go to Mr. Ogden for a second. You mentioned the costs of the infrastructure burden on flight schools. Can you go more into detail on what those costs are and what the actual numbers are?

**Mr. Gary Ogden:** I can't give you actual numbers because I'm sure it changes by airport, but you have hangarage fees and you have the controlled environment at an airport that needs to be maintained from a safety and security perspective. We have flight instructors basically going out and de-icing airplanes, pushing them back either by hand or by machine, adding oils and doing maintenance work while they are supposed to be flight instructors because there's just not the money there. Again, that's a vicious circle, and it puts people off being flight instructors.

I can speak to Sudbury a little better because we're going up there and have taken a facility. The cost of hangaring the airplanes and of keeping them in a weather-protected environment when we have weather exactly like what we have just seen is not cheap.

De-icing at airports is not cheap. With regard to our business, we simply don't fly at big airports, so we don't have the benefit of central facilities, but we are forced to buy de-icing equipment. I believe there was even a study released a couple of weeks ago which said that northern airports are somewhat lacking in their de-icing capability and coverage.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Well, a lot of flight schools are at grass strips and things like that, too, where there's very little infrastructure to speak of.

**Mr. Gary Ogden:** Also, we have to wait until it thaws, or we have to wait until it goes.... I mean, we contemplated using Brampton, but we needed more access to better facilities—unfortunately, more expensive facilities. At Sudbury, we also have a second airport, just adjacent there, that we can use to increase our flying hours.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** I think I have a picture of that.

Just out of curiosity, what is the GO Green reference?

**Mr. Gary Ogden:** GO Green is the company I started many years ago with respect to cleaning and greening the airport environment.

I personally am involved with a number of initiatives. One is to try to electrify more of the airport ramp—again, cleaning and greening that ramp, making it safer for our staff out there. That's the holding company that the consultancy goes out from, but I have joined with Aura to be a component of this flight school.

• (1240)

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** Okay, thank you.

Ms. Super, I'll come back to you now.

You talked about the cost of fuel in your presentation. Flight schools generally rent their aircraft wet. When you rent a plane, you rent it wet. Can you explain, for those don't fly, what that means and if that approach is sustainable over the long term?

**Ms. Terri Super:** If the aircraft is “wet”, that means it has fuel in it. If a student or a renter is going to take one of our aircraft, it comes with fuel. If they go away to another airport, we will reimburse them at our cost. We won't reimburse them if they purchase fuel at a higher price at a different airport.

Some schools don't do it that way. Some operators actually do because the price of aviation fuel floats week to week, as the price of fuel does at the gas pumps. They rent it to the person dry, and for every flight, they figure out how much fuel has been used and apply the cost of the fuel onto the price of the flight.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** It sounds like a lot of extra paperwork to keep track of how much fuel you will need.

**Ms. Terri Super:** Yes, and that's why a lot of schools go with just wet.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** That makes sense.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Graham.

We'll move to Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today. Hearing what they have to say is quite enlightening.

My question is for you, Ms. Bell. In an industry where the issues are complex, you've put your finger on a problem all the witnesses have talked about—the training costs for students who choose this career path.

The problem, as I see it, is that models seem to vary from province to province, even territory to territory. For example, in Quebec, which I know more about because I live there, students have the option to train at a wholly private school that meets Transport Canada's standards or a school that is integrated into the college system.

Is there a model Quebec should conform to in an effort to harmonize things and, by extension, examine the impact on training costs?

[English]

**Ms. Heather Bell:** Thank you for that question.

Yes. If there was a more consistent model across the country, I believe that we would see streamlined training, certainly from province to province. The issue that I spoke about was with respect to the availability of student funding and how that varies from province to province.

With respect to how the training organizations operate province to province, I'm not an expert in that, but I do know that the Air Transport Association of Canada has put forth a model with respect to approved training organizations that would make a more uniform training system. Right now, the Canadian aviation regulations regulate the number of hours that are required to be accomplished prior to any student pilot receiving any level of licensing. I think that some of that needs to be re-examined about how the training is applied with respect to time. As other people have said, a simulator would be a very valuable asset for a training organization, but right now, the regulations don't allow much simulator time to be applied to a licence. Yes, if there were more uniform federal regulations, it would be very helpful.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you for that information.

My next question is for Mr. Ogden.

Mr. Ogden, the name of your company, Go Green Aviation, is inspiring. In another study the committee did, on the impact of aircraft noise in the vicinity of major airports, we learned how difficult it was for aviation and civil society to coexist.

Is it now possible to train pilots on electric airplanes, where the cost of buying those planes is comparable to that of gas-fuelled planes?

**Mr. Gary Ogden:** Thank you, Mr. Aubin.

[English]

I'm a big believer that anything that improves our environmental stewardship at airports is a positive thing. I don't necessarily like following Europe, and even some U.S. states, in what we do in Canada because I think we should lead, not follow.

The use of any non-flying, non-gas burning alternative is a positive. I think simulators are certainly an answer. I think the use of simulators and ground school elements can help us get over the national carrier pilot accessibility, with respect to fatigue. Yes, those companies don't want their pilots doing flight time in their four days off or any number of days off. However, non-flying and more systems and aids-related flying with simulators and the like can serve

a lot of purposes. It's a lot safer, a lot cleaner and we do have access then to a more available labour pool in terms of flight instruction.

I'm sorry about speaking to electric airplanes. It's not an area of expertise that I have.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** Mr. Aubin, you have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** I hope we'll have an opportunity to hear more of what you have to say on the subject.

Mr. Armstrong, I'd like you to talk about the new agreement with Quebec on the development of digital pilot training.

[English]

**Mr. Joseph Armstrong:** I'm not familiar with which agreement you're talking about, unless you're referring to the agreement we have established with both the Quebec government and the federal government in terms of innovating, and the digital investments we are making in digitizing training.

I think the biggest change that's happened over the last, let's say, decade, has been a significant advancement in the science of learning and education, and applying the evolution of that science in learning to understanding better how to apply assets at various points along the pilot training curriculum. The whole concept of creating a system whereby you have a more efficient, more optimized, more tailored program to build people up to a level of competence can be done with things other than aircraft.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

We'll move to Mr. Sikand.

You have four minutes.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to start off with a question for Mr. Ogden.

You hit some political trigger words for me: international and you choose Canada. I often like to amalgamate the two.

You said that the enemy for flight schools is attrition. Why is it that we can't turn to the international community to bring in trainers to help train Canadian pilots?

**Mr. Gary Ogden:** Mr. Sikand, the concept is a very good one.

We have looked, and we are looking at establishing an international element to the flight school we have. It will come down to the age-old recognition of standards and credentials that we face in many fields in Canada.

I'm not really up for lowering standards, but I am for recognizing standards. If international students and international flight instructors can fill that necessary gap for us and all we have to do is match the accreditations, then that's on us. Let's do it, because the solutions it provides are geometric in their impact.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** Thank you.

I have less time than normal, so I'm going to move to Ms. Super.

You were mentioning the price on pollution and how that affects the cost of operation. If smaller flight schools or airlines were to be excluded in an initial program but the larger carriers were priced but then given a rebate as they improved technology or became more efficient and had less of an impact on the environment, is this a system that you think would be favourable?

**Ms. Terri Super:** I can hardly hear you.

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** Sorry.

You were mentioning carbon and how things can be taxed and how that affects operations. If smaller carriers or flight schools were excluded initially but larger ones had a tax but then were given a rebate as they became more efficient or lowered their carbon footprint, is that a model which you think would be favourable?

**Ms. Terri Super:** Yes, that could be feasible, as technology improves, for instance, with simulation or with the electric aircraft. They're not really at the stage where they're feasible to use for a flight school. The charge doesn't last long enough. Flight schools are required to have a minimum of 150 nautical mile cross-country flight for beginning students, and I don't believe there's any electric aircraft that can do that yet. I think that would be feasible if we could come up with something like that.

With the simulation, there needs to be, in my estimation, changes to the regulations on the amount of simulation that can be used. If that were possible, that would greatly aid it. For a commercial pilot, you need 25 hours of instrument time, of which only 10 hours can be used in a flight training device or simulator. If we could up the hours that are used in the simulator, that would greatly help and obviously reduce our carbon footprint.

• (1250)

**Mr. Gagan Sikand:** Thank you.

I'm going to jump in and with the 30 seconds I have left quickly ask Ms. Bell a question.

If the government were to subsidize training to help students become pilots, but then they had a return of service, that they had to serve in Canada or maybe with Canadian airlines, is this something that's possible? Would you be open to something like that?

**Ms. Heather Bell:** Absolutely. One of the recommendations is that there be some student loan forgiveness for time spent as a flight instructor or flying in a northern and remote community. Certainly you've heard a lot about how schools are having trouble retaining instructors.

Also, I have fear that here in the province of British Columbia, one of the first places we're going to see the drop-off in our pilots are in those areas that are servicing remote communities. I have a fear that we are going to see some unfortunate incidents happen.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Bell.

We'll move to Mr. Fuhr.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Thank you, witnesses, for coming today.

I want to thank Ms. Bell. I used your letter. I got dozens of letters on this topic, and I used yours in its entirety in my remarks in the House.

Something that hasn't come up is we're losing a significant amount of the limited capacity we have due to foreign entities buying Canadian flight schools or foreign students coming here to get trained by Canadian flight schools and then leave. I want some feedback on that.

Ms. Bell, could you wade in on that issue?

**Ms. Heather Bell:** Certainly in British Columbia we see a very high number of foreign students. When I speak to my members who are flight training unit operators, they don't see that as a problem in that those students are not taking spots that other students could be taking. More of a problem is getting the Canadian students in the pipeline to begin with. You have people there with the flight training unit who may have a different experience, but here in B.C., we're not seeing the uptake.

There is a further issue. I want to mention something about immigration and bringing in pilots from other countries. Some of our members would very much like to do that but they stumble across immigration rules that require that pilots coming into Canada not just meet the regulatory standards for being a pilot but also there is no real framework for how pilots should be hired from offshore.

They are considered to be like an engineer such that hours have to be guaranteed at 40 hours a week, a Monday-to-Friday type of job. These are not the kinds of jobs that people are hiring for. I wanted to have an opportunity to throw that out there. We don't see the intake of foreign students as a problem or as taking spots that Canadian students would take otherwise.

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Armstrong, has the military looked at what future air crew training looks like, how that's going to be delivered? Do you think that, given both the domestic need and the global need for pilots, it could be structured in a way that it could incorporate some excess capacity to train civilians or accommodate a surge in production of pilots for the military and when that was no longer needed, we then... civilians.... It's complex and it's thinking outside the box, but given where we are and what we have to do, do you think that's possible? How do you think that would look?

**Mr. Joseph Armstrong:** If you look at NATO flying training in Canada, which is the existing military flying training program, when it was crafted, it was created within the context of international contribution and international involvement from the get-go. Right now it's partly due to try to generate revenue to subsidize the cost of operating the training centre. The training centre is expensive because you're now operating military aircraft that have a different price point from what you would see on the civil aviation side.

Certainly I think the approach of building tailored flight training programs is what we need to be targeting because the idea of saying you're going to have a fixed cost base that you need to operate to be able to deliver a training service.... If I can build that fixed cost base that has variable capacity, then the ability to inject participation by other students, whether or not that's civilian or from foreign nations, absolutely goes a long way in being able to amortize that cost.

Certainly I think the mindset we need to have as Canadians—and we certainly see this within our company—and the success we've had globally is that the solution to these problems involves a global mindset. If we look at anything in isolation from the complete ecosystem of pilot training, then you're only looking at one piece of the problem and the solution is much larger than that.

Even the conversation about are foreign students in Canada creating problems or is it possible to bring in foreign instructors to supplement Canadian instructors, think about it in the inverse. The demand we see for pilot production and pilot training requirements is so high globally that it is creating a draw on Canadian capacity.

I go back to what the others have said and suggest we need to focus on a few things. One is building tailored competency-based training programs, and two, really focusing on and emphasizing the ability to recruit active students.

●(1255)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Armstrong.

Thank you, Mr. Fuhr.

We'll move to Ms. Block for four minutes.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank you, and I appreciate the committee's indulgence as I take a few moments to move a motion regarding aviation safety, which was circulated to the members of the committee on January 2.

I'll give you a bit of back story. Nearly two years ago, on June 8, 2017, 21-year-old Alex, along with his girlfriend Sidney, rented a single-engine Piper Warrior from a flight school in Lethbridge, Alberta, and headed for Kamloops, B.C. Alex, being a certified pilot, flew the light aircraft, with Sidney as the sole passenger. After refuelling in Cranbrook, they departed but never arrived at their destination. An 11-day search was conducted over a vast area. During this 11-day period, 18 Royal Canadian Air Force and civil search and rescue aircraft flew a total of 576 hours and covered approximately 37,513 square kilometres. On average, 10 aircraft were deployed each day, with more than 70 Royal Canadian Air Force personnel and 137 volunteer pilots and spotters from civil search and rescue. Despite this extensive search and rescue mission, they were unable to find Alex, Sidney and their aircraft. It was at the end of this extensive search that Alex's father and stepmother, Matthew Simons and Natalie Lindgren, were notified that the emergency locator transmitter, ELT, on board the aircraft failed to activate, thus making the plane impossible to find. Sadly, this happens in 38% of crashes.

ELTs are emergency transmission devices that are carried on board most aircraft. In the event of a crash, ELTs send distress signals on designated frequencies to help search and rescue locate the aircraft and its passengers. ELTs operate on two frequencies: 121.5 megahertz and 406 megahertz.

Since 2009, ELTs that operate at 121.5 megahertz are no longer monitored by satellite systems and are therefore ineffective. However, they are still mandated. Since June 2016, the Transportation Safety Board has put forward seven recommendations with regard to modernizing ELTs, but to date, these recommendations have not been acted upon. In many aircraft accidents, the ELT, if there is one, is damaged to the point that no distress signal can be

sent. As a result, a number of light aircraft are never found. This was the case for Alex and Sidney, and it's the case for many others like them.

With this motion, I believe that we have the opportunity to help grieving parents like Matthew and Natalie by undertaking a short study that will help us to better understand the issue and make recommendations to Transport Canada. In particular, the motion requests that the committee look at the benefits, for search and rescue purposes, of using GPS technology that allows an aircraft's position to be determined via satellite navigation and periodically broadcast to a remote tracking system. The idea is that a GPS would be used in conjunction with a modern 406 megahertz ELT on light aircraft.

The chair of the Transportation Safety Board, Kathy Fox, has pointed out that when an aircraft crashes, it needs to be located quickly so that survivors can be rescued. The information that a simple GPS system could provide would empower search and rescue to respond quickly when a crash occurs, and would reduce lengthy searches for lost aircraft, thus saving lives and tax dollars.

In closing, I believe that together we have the opportunity to initiate a very important study in honour of Alex and Sidney, and I hope that all members of the committee would support this motion.

Thank you so much for allowing me to take this time.

●(1300)

**The Chair:** I have a couple of speakers. Please note the time. The next committee is prepared to come in at 1:00 p.m., so our time is very tight.

I have Mr. Graham, Mr. Aubin and Ms. Leitch. Please keep your comments brief.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** I understand your motion and your intent. I think if we look at the intent of the motion, it is, quite frankly, to improve methods to ensure recovery of missing aircraft. That's the objective, right?

The motion is very prescriptive. I can't support the motion the way it's written, but I am willing to propose an amendment that I have put to your motion: "That the Committee conduct a study for the duration of 4-6 meetings, on:"—that's what you have—and from the colon all the way from (a) through to (e), we'd replace that with "improved methods to ensure recovery of missing aircraft, particularly in general aviation."

I'd further amend it to remove the idea of reporting within four months, because we have quite a bit on the agenda for this committee at this time.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Obviously, it's an important issue. I won't oppose the motion.

I would, however, like to know whether you think the study should follow what we already have planned. For instance, a passenger rail study has been in the works for months. It had unanimous committee support.

If we tack the study on at the end, in terms of what's already on our plate, that's fine, but if we bump work that's already planned to accommodate the study, I think that's a problem.

I'd like to know where you stand on that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, there's no question that we do have a full schedule. We have supplementary estimates coming up. We have to finish off two other reports and we have committed to four meetings on bus safety and a couple of meetings on rail safety. Those are things we've already committed to, so I would suggest that if the committee adopts either of the motions, it would start when we have completed what we currently have on the agenda.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** The passenger rail study is one of the items already on the agenda, isn't it?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes.

Ms. Leitch.

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** Thank you very much.

I'm commenting on this from my perspective of being a former minister of labour. I had heard from many families, as well as pilots and other professionals within the industry, the need for safety regulations, but also specifically for technology that would augment the safety and the ability of not just families but also the professionals working in the area to modernize the industry. The

one thing I will say is that this industry modernization is required, this case being evidence alone, let alone the other cases that have taken place.

We as Canadians use GPS every day. My brother and sister, Michael and Melanie, use it to make sure they know where their children are. We could use this to make sure that families similar to Alex's and Sidney's families, are able to find their loved ones, hopefully so that they can actually be rescued and taken care of in a hospital, but if nothing else, for the families to have closure.

I recognize there is an amendment on the floor with regard to this motion, but the use of modern technology such as GPS and others is something that is fundamental to this motion. I'm sure you use it in your car to get home on occasion. Thus I would encourage the government to consider that those specific pieces of technology that we use every single day be things that we should be encouraging and facilitating for pilots and other people in the aviation industry to use as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Leitch.

Mr. Graham.

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham:** My only point is that having the study include its conclusion is not how a study works. The study is on how to improve the recovery, not here's a solution to figure it out.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Graham.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you all very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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