



The Honourable Marc Garneau,
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Sent via email and mail

Re: Level of Service reviews by NAV CANADA

Dear Minister Garneau,

Founded in 1952, the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) is a federally registered not-for-profit association that fosters the advancement of General Aviation (GA) in Canada. As the leading voice for this flying community nationwide, COPA is the largest Canadian aviation association and its mission is to advance, promote and preserve the Canadian freedom to fly. COPA is proud to represent close to 16,000 members from every province and territory who recognize the need for strong, effective representation resting on our core principles of integrity, commitment, unity and leadership.

As the President and CEO of COPA, I am writing today to urge the Government of Canada to support air navigation services in Canada throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic and post pandemic recovery.

Our members, general aviation, and all air operators depend on these services for safe air travel. If we lose the expertise currently at NAV CANADA to safely manage and operate air navigation and traffic control, not only will the post pandemic recovery be slowed with aircraft remaining grounded, but much worse, due to the lack of services, there could be an increase in aviation incidents and accidents. We cannot lose the expertise that has kept our airspace safe.

There are several locations where, should NAV CANADA no longer provide the service it was mandated to provide, it will become perilous to aircraft operations, both commercial and private, now and post-COVID. The 30 locations listed below are currently under review and NAV CANADA has made it abundantly clear that they wish to close or reduce the service at these facilities in order to recover costs – the only reviews being done, in all transparency, is how to find mitigation for identified risks to as low as reasonably practicable when the services are reduced or removed. Cost should never be the reason for reviewing the services being provided at any facility. Many of these sites are remote and provide eyes on the ground in areas of the country that can be hazardous to fly (mountainous, remote) regardless of the number of movements

(revenue) they generate. The removal of these services would create a large void where GA aircraft would be left with no one to communicate with should they encounter adverse flying conditions.

- Seven (7) Air Traffic Control (ATC) Towers: Prince George BC; Whitehorse YT; Fort McMurray AB, Regina SK; Sault Ste Marie ON; and Windsor ON, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu QC.
- 13 Flight Service Stations (FSS): High Level AB, Churchill MB, Peace River AB, Lloydminster AB, Castlegar BC, Fort Nelson BC, Brandon MB, Prince Albert SK, Fort St-John BC, Inuvik NT, Norman Wells NT, Sept Iles QC, Port Hardy BC.
- Ten (10) Remote Aerodrome Advisory Service (RAAS) which can easily be repositioned to other facilities not under review: Dawson Creek BC, Fort McMurray AB, Flin Flon MB, Dauphin MB, The Pas MB, Buffalo Narrows SK, Kuujuarapik QC, Blanc Sablon QC, Natashquan QC, Sydney NS.

These services are being provided because they are essential to the safe and efficient operation of air traffic, and this prior to COVID. Failure to continue these services on the basis of revenue loss is irresponsible and will inevitably increase the risk to aviation incidents and accidents. NAV CANADA convinced us, the aviation community, that their services were required to enhance safety and that a yearly fee would allow us the benefit to use these services. Now that NAV CANADA is struggling to survive financially, they are telling us, the aviation community, that their services are not required to enhance safety. Will these decreases in services also come with a decrease in fees? With the 30% increase in fees introduced in September of this year by NAV CANADA, we already know that it will not.

NAV CANADA has given all stakeholders one month to provide their needs, issues and concerns toward these reviews. Several stakeholders, such as COPA, have a vested interest in many of these sites and require much more time to conduct a proper analysis on the risks to their own operations should these sites permanently close or see a reduction in service. This is an unreasonable amount of time to provide feedback. Level of service reviews by NAV CANADA take on average up to one year to conduct (I am a former Level of Service Manager 2016- June 2020), leaving stakeholders ample time to conduct their own analysis on risks to their operations. Why is NAV CANADA rushing the process now if not for the sole purpose of cutting costs at the expense of their customers and the safety of air traffic.

NAV CANADA informed stakeholders it was conducting these reviews due to the lack of overnight movements at several of the sites. There is no mention of a required minimum of air traffic movements required to provide any type of service in the NAV CANADA Level of Service Policy document published on their website. Furthermore, in 2006,

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NAV CANADA conducted a review of the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu control tower where it recommended the termination of the service based on a total of aircraft movements of approximately 38000 a year. After Transport Canada reviewed the recommendation, it did not concur with its conclusion due to aircraft movements during the summer months which could have an impact on aviation safety and advised NAV CANADA to maintain the service, with reduced hours in the winter months. NAV CANADA complied. There are now 48 000 movements per year at the airport (with an increasing trend) then during the 2006 review. If there was an impact to aviation safety in 2006, there is certainly an impact now.

The NAV CANADA business model had been very successful until COVID-19. Their revenues have declined significantly due to the major drop in the number of flights during the pandemic. Government inaction will be costly to airspace users, both commercial and private. Cost recovery will be solely shouldered by the aviation community in terms of decreased safety, efficiency and increased cost of operation in Canadian controlled airspace. **This should not be a privilege, but a right.**

Germany, Singapore, France, the UK and the US have all announced support for their air travel industries. It's time for Canada to act, especially for our air navigation system. Whether that means:

- providing financial assistance to NAV CANADA, the sole provider of air navigation and traffic control services in Canada to maintain the current level of service;
- to agree to temporarily reduce the level of service with a promise of a return to normal operations post-pandemic as per the *Aeronautics Act* Part I section 4.91(1); or
- to assign the responsibility, either temporarily or permanently to another contingent (i.e., the Canadian Armed Forces or Transport Canada) as per the *Aeronautics Act* Part I General Regulatory Powers Section 4.9 and Responsibilities of the Minister Section 4.2(1), 4.3 (1) (2) (3), 4.31 and 4.32 (1) (2).

The safety within Canadian airspace is in jeopardy. Air navigation services must continue as before the pandemic. It is key to maintain service delivery and the expertise of those who deliver the service for a safe and efficient post-pandemic recovery.

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Mr. Garneau, thank you in advance for the attention you have provided and please accept my sincerest regards,



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