

CANADIAN COMMERCIAL AVIATION COUNTING ON ACTION BY MINISTER GARNEAU ON TWO KEY ISSUES

Two aviation related issues on the government's radar these days raise great concern in the industry: laser attacks on airliners and the possible sale of major Canadian airports.

Lasers

Airlines have been complaining about the lack of a firm response by the authorities on the growing number of laser attacks on commercial aircraft in Canada. What should be a swift and strong response by government is another Ottawa-typical dragged out analysis of the issue.

Laser usage in Canada, particularly the long-range green lasers, needs to be regulated in the same way firearms are regulated because lasers can be just as dangerous to a low flying plane as a firearm. Canada has classified firearms in three categories: non-restricted, restricted and prohibited. A similar classification should be in place for lasers where the red lasers used for construction and such should continue to be easily accessible on the market with little oversight by government. Long range green lasers, such as those used in laser strikes against aircraft, should be restricted to those with a legitimate use for such a tool. In a controlled environment, a government issued acquisition and possession license should be required before one can purchase and use a green laser in Canada.

ATAC knows that Minister Garneau is very concerned with laser strikes and, contrary to other officials, he is not stepping back waiting for industry to come up with better shielding for the cockpits or goggles to protect pilots against laser strikes. As much as Minister Garneau is willing to champion this cause, he requires the collaboration of his colleagues at Global Affairs, Economic Development, Justice, and Public Safety if the sale and use of green lasers are to be restricted and prosecution against offenders to be a serious deterrent.

ATAC expects the government to restrict

the import of lasers, monitor their sale, issue permits to those with a legitimate use of restricted green lasers, inform the public of the dangers of using these lasers, and seriously penalize those who continue to deliberately strike against aircraft.

Misguided Suggestion of Selling Major Canadian Airports

There is a lot of talk these days in Canada about the possible sale of Canada's major airports to private interests. While Airport Authorities manage Canada's airports through long-term leases, airports of the National Airport System still belong to the Canadian people and are part of Canada's heritage.

ATAC opposes the recommendation included in the Emerson Report "Pathways: Connecting Canada's Transportation System to the World" which proposes to move to a share-capital structure with private sector equity-based financing. This would add huge financial costs to airports which would be passed down to the carriers. Institutional financing demands a reasonable return on investment and the assets to be financed would be appraised at current market value, much higher than the estimated value of \$1.52B when divested in 1996.

Although the Canadian Government hasn't invested in those infrastructures since then, we can easily estimate that the value of the assets to finance would be well over \$10B. This would lead to very significant cost increases for air carriers as private equity funds would require a sound return on their investment, much higher than the already unreasonable airport rents paid out to Government. The achievement of those financial objectives could result in a drop in service levels to both passengers and air carriers.

Canada's airports already have a tough time being competitive with the highly subsidized

US airports which are currently draining passengers away from Canadian airports. Increasing fees and charges to passengers and air carriers would further cripple our air transport competitiveness internationally.

Should the Canadian Government decide to pursue that option, it would have to ensure that important oversights of those private entities be put in place, perhaps similar to the U.K.'s Economic Regulatory Group which oversees U.K.'s privatized airports and rules not only on airport charges but also on service levels.

Selling Canada's major airports to finance infrastructure projects, as is apparently being discussed at Finance and proposed by at least one Conservative Party leadership candidate, would be a serious mistake which could permanently damage the air transportation industry of Canada.

ATAC IS PROUD TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS



Applied Informatics & Research, Ottawa, ON



Aviateurs et pilotes de brousse du Québec, St. Hubert, QC



B/E Aerospace Canada, Winnipeg, MB



Fraser Education - Vital Aviation Division, Ladysmith, BC



Lansdowne Technologies, Ottawa, ON



Montair Aviation, Pitt Meadows, BC



Prairie Aircraft Sales, Calgary, AB



Northwest Regional Airport Terrace-Kitimat Society, Terrace, BC