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The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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● (1135)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on aviation safety.

Dear colleagues, as you can see today we have the good fortune of having some special guests in the room. I want to welcome the grade 12 students of the École secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde of Orleans, who are attending this meeting of the committee for their political science class. I hope you will have a good day, a good visit of Parliament, and that this meeting of this committee will be very instructive for you. Welcome, and thank you for joining us.

We are pleased to welcome the following witnesses: Mr. Aaron Speer, vice-president of Flight Operations at Bradley Air Services Limited (First Air), as well as Mr. Edward McKeogh, president of Canadian Aviation Safety Consultants, who is with us via video conference from Montreal.

Welcome gentlemen. Thank you very much for being here with us.

Unfortunately, I must announce that Mr. Massimo Bergamini, president and chief executive officer of the National Airlines Council of Canada, had to cancel his appearance at the last minute this morning.

Because of a vote in the House of Commons, our time will be very limited. We will take the time to hear the witnesses, and we will have time for one round of questions this morning. And so I would ask the witnesses to limit their preliminary remarks insofar as possible, so that we have time to speak with them afterwards. This would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speer, if you are ready to speak first, you have five minutes to make your presentation.

[*English*]

Captain Aaron Speer (Vice-President, Flight Operations, Bradley Air Services Limited, First Air): Good morning. My name is Aaron Speer. I'm the vice-president of flight operations at First Air. On behalf of First Air I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear this morning to present some of the unique challenges that we face on a daily basis in our operations.

With 71 years of experience, First Air is a leading airline serving Canada's Arctic, where we provide scheduled service between 31 northern communities with connections to Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Edmonton. Ultimately, we have more destinations north of the Arctic Circle than south of it. Most of these communities do not have road access, so reliable air transportation represents the only means of year-round access.

Given our theatre of operations, we regularly face challenges and operational issues that are not faced by traditional southern airlines. Many of the airports in northern Canada were established during the Cold War. Since then, unlike many airports in southern Canada, they have undergone very little expansion and modernization.

There are limited approach procedures. While GPS approaches are prevalent in southern airports, they have not been deployed readily across the north.

There are limited lighting systems. Many airports are served with extremely basic approach lights. Visual glide slope indicators often are not available or are configured only for smaller aircraft.

There is outdated technology. The Iqaluit ILS has been off the air since early April, with no clear solution in sight since the failed components are no longer manufactured.

There are gravel runways. The bulk of our network is served by airports with often very short gravel runways. These runways limit the selection of aircraft that can be used and significantly increase our maintenance costs.

There is limited weather information. Many stations are not served by 24-hour weather reporting systems. While some progress has been made recently to expand the areas of coverage, we are often forced to make operational decisions without the benefit of weather reporting or forecasting.

There is limited fuel access. Fuel is resupplied once per year in most communities. When the fuel supply is exhausted it cannot be replaced until late the following summer. In the case of Taloyoak this year, we were required to operate for over three months without access to fuel at that station. Coupled with the distances between communities, the lack of fuel represents a significant operational handicap.

There is a lack of viable alternate airports. Given the limited approach procedures, limited approach lights, limited weather information, potential fuel supply limitations, and the large distances between airports, we are often heavily penalized by a lack of suitable alternate airports.

Without improved infrastructure at some communities we will ultimately be faced with only two options.

One option is that we will continue to operate with older technology aircraft to support those shorter runways. While this does ensure that there is service continuing to all the communities, the older aircraft will ultimately reach a point where they are not financially viable. At the same time, the older aircraft are not able to take advantage of all technological advances, in some cases including safety-related ones.

Our other option is to cease operations to those communities with the shorter runways. In this situation, the only option that would remain would be for a smaller carrier using smaller aircraft, likely a CAR 703 air taxi or 704 commuter operator, to introduce service to those communities. While that would ensure that the communities do continue to receive the service, those operators are not bound by the same stringent CAR 705 airline regulations that govern our operations.

Air transport is a lifeline to the north. From medical travel to food supplies, the populations of the north depend on our service to live their lives to the fullest. Without external investment in the northern infrastructure, our operation is not sustainable. At some point, should this investment not occur, a reduction in the level of service that we provide is inevitable.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to appear today before the committee. Given the number of witnesses who have appeared to date, I believe the committee does have a fairly good understanding of the issues facing the industry as a whole. I have limited my discussion primarily to the issues facing our unique operation in the north. Despite that focus, I would be pleased to answer any questions you have, whether they relate to the industry as a whole, the airline industry, or our operations in the north.

Thank you.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Speer.

Mr. McKeogh, you have five minutes to make your presentation.

Mr. Edward McKeogh (President, Canadian Aviation Safety Consultants): Thank you.

Good morning everyone.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to appear before your committee.

My name is Edward McKeogh. I'm the president of Canadian Aviation Safety Consultants. As the name would imply, the emphasis of our group is aviation safety. That will be the theme of what I will talk about right now.

Findings of investigations into recent high-profile catastrophic aircraft accidents have pointed to a serious inability of many aircrew to competently handle their aircraft in the case of autopilot failure or unsuitability. The evolution of the autopilot in recent decades has been very impressive, to the point where pilots are now using it a minute or so after takeoff. They fly the aircraft off the ground and engage the autopilot a minute or so after takeoff. It does the work in working them out of the departure pattern, en route, and in the arrival. Then they take over and hand fly the aircraft for only a minute or so before arriving at their destination.

The result is that we have people with thousands and tens of thousands of hours in their logbooks, but only a very small amount of hand flying of aircraft. This has resulted in recent catastrophes.

Air France flight 447 crashed into the South Atlantic a short while ago. Here, there was an aircraft at 35,000 feet, with both engines working fine and controls working properly, and when the autopilot went off air because two of the three pitot tubes giving it airspeed information had iced up, it said to the aircrew, “alternate law”, meaning that now you have control and you're going to fly the aircraft. Four and a half minutes later, the aircraft crashed into the South Atlantic, killing everyone on board, the reason being that pilots do not have enough experience in handling an aircraft, in hand flying it.

It might seem to some to be a bit boring or inefficient to fly the aircraft at high altitudes, but it gives you a feel for what it's like up there in thin air when the aircraft must be maintained in that narrow window between stall speed and critical Mach.

Similarly, another one was the Asiana arriving in San Francisco. There was a NOTAM: in other words, they were told in advance the instrument landing system would not be available to them. In that case, what you have to do is think ahead of what you're going to do to set up a visual circuit. A landing isn't made in the hash marks at the end of the runway. It's set up miles back, at 300 feet for each mile, so at 1,000 feet of altitude, at the proper alignment with the runway and at the proper referenced air speed, that is where you start.

They had none of that going for them, because they were not used to hand flying their aircraft. The autopilot had been flying the aircraft for them too long. With three people in the cockpit, what happened was that both airspeed and altitude deteriorated markedly and amazingly, and the aircraft, with a very nose-high attitude, had the tail hit the seawall at the San Francisco airport. It broke off, a lot of people were killed, and the aircraft was destroyed.

The thrust of what I'm saying is that we have to introduce this into the training system of airlines and have airlines allow their people, when conditions are suitable at destinations, to cancel an IFR flight plan and ask the control agency if they could do a VFR approach and learn to fly the airplane that way.

Now, we have a long list of things we would like to see introduced into aviation training, things that we would like to see upgraded, but what I've done here is limit it to two of the more serious ones. One you've just heard, and another one—I'll be brief here—has to do with aviation safety lectures. Just as doctors, dentists, stockbrokers, and what have you are required to conduct and attend continuation training lectures to keep them up to speed on their profession, we feel that there isn't enough of this done in aviation.

● (1145)

Some of the larger airlines have an in-house program of this kind. We would like to see it work all the way down to the earliest level of training, even at the flying clubs, and that—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. McKeogh, I apologize for interrupting you. Unfortunately, you are at the end of your five minutes of presentation time, but my colleagues will be able to ask questions on this second recommendation.

If I may, I will immediately yield the floor to my colleagues, who no doubt have many questions for you.

Mr. Rayes, you have six minutes.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here, and for sharing their experiences with us.

My first question is quite simple and is addressed to you, Mr. Speer. If you had any recommendations to make to Transport Canada to improve the situation, whether concerning the fatigue-related risk management system or any other improvement that could be made to ensure the safety of flights, passengers and material resources, what would they be?

[*English*]

Capt Aaron Speer: To begin, your first comment concerned the fatigue regulations. Fundamentally, I wholeheartedly support any improvements we can make in terms of fatigue regulation to improve safety. That being said, I think it's important that we do look very carefully at those regulations to ensure we are reflecting science and actually addressing the fatigue issues. We also need to recognize that there are very different aspects to all the operations across the country, and a one-size-fits-all solution may not be it.

One example that I will look at in the current set of regulations is that looking at science, you generally need to sleep eight hours a night. There are periods of time in the evening where it's really important that we're sleeping, the window of circadian low. I agree we should recognize and respect those times. The current regulations that we're discussing also generated very firmly that 10:30 at night to 7:30 in the morning is a period when you get your rest. If, for example, an operation runs into 10:45 at night, I don't see any science that supports their now needing two full days off.

There are some bases in science there, but it's important to sit back and study the entire thing, understand all of the science, ensure it applies to the operation and that we are basing it on science and the operation and that safety is there. But I think additional study is required to get to that point.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Could you point to other elements aside from fatigue that should be taken into account to ensure safety? Could you list the points we should prioritize, or make recommendations the committee could include in its report?

[*English*]

Capt Aaron Speer: I would focus very heavily on some infrastructure upgrades, particularly in the north where I'm operating. A great deal of emphasis has been put on advancing technology deployed throughout the southern sector—Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. In the area I operate in, there's been really nothing done in a large number of years. In the TSB watch-list, unsafe approaches and runway overruns are two of the big factors in aviation. I argue that in regard to runway overruns, the position many take is that we can't do much more to mitigate the risk of an overrun. I think we can in the north. We have very limited approaches, very little guidance on approach to touch down at any specific point. If I can't touch down at a specific point on a very short runway, the best way to avoid going off the end is to touch down at the right point. Building approach lighting and improving approach lights and approaches gets me to a far better, more stable approach to a better touchdown point. I think a benefit of that is that we can accomplish it relatively cheaply compared to many other changes.

My big push would be on approach information, guidance, and lighting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you.

I am going to give the rest of my speaking time to my colleague, Mr. Clement.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Fine.

With your permission, I would like to put a question to Mr. McKeogh before giving Mr. Clement the floor.

Mr. McKeogh, you said that pilots are not trained to pilot planes without automatic pilot systems. Did I understand that correctly?

[*English*]

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Well, they have. I generalized there. I was talking about two specific cases where they did not have sufficient hands-on flying experience. The vast majority of pilots out there could handle situations, but we want everyone to be able to handle an autopilot failure situation and fly the aircraft properly. We've seen two very high-profile cases where that was not so. We want to make sure the airlines and the regulatory authorities implement procedures to ensure there is a lot of hands-on, visual circuit flying on the part of the aircrew.

[*Translation*]

Does that answer your question, sir?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): That's perfect. Thank you. I simply wanted to make sure I had understood properly. I was both surprised and worried. We will surely have the opportunity to come back to this.

Mr. Clement, you have one minute and 20 seconds. I am sorry for taking some of your speaking time.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is an honour for me to be here with you this afternoon.

[*English*]

I have a notice of motion that I'd like to present at this time. I'd like to read it into the record, if I may.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): I think the notice of motion is about to be distributed.

Hon. Tony Clement: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): You may read it. That way, we can ensure that it is the proper notice.

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Clement: It reads:

> That the Committee invite Ms. Jennifer Stebbing to appear for one hour prior to Friday, June 16, 2017.

I would like to put that to a vote.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Perfect.

Do you want us to debate the motion, or are you asking that the vote be held immediately, Mr. Clement?

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Clement: I can say a few words. Certainly, there has been public commentary about Madam Stebbing and her appointment to the Hamilton Port Authority. Certainly, with respect to GIC appointments, it is expected that a person have a skill set and some experience in the area. Madam Stebbing, I'm sure, is undoubtedly an excellent estate planning administration and accounting lawyer, but of course has no direct experience or authority with issues pertaining to the Hamilton Port Authority. Her only experience seems to be that she was a Liberal candidate.

I think we should invite her here so we can have a discussion with her and maybe ask her some questions and delve deeper into her experience and her expertise.

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Clement.

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I find it quite interesting that this is being introduced now, when we're actually discussing aviation safety. Quite frankly, it shows a total lack of respect for the witnesses that we have before us, especially given today's shortened time frame.

I would put a motion forward, Mr. Chairman, that we adjourn debate and get right to the motion.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Do we have unanimous agreement to vote on the motion?

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: That is agreement.

Call the question, please.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Very well.

The motion reads as follows:

> That the committee invite Ms. Jennifer Stebbing to appear for one hour prior to Friday, June 16, 2017.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order.

Actually, the motion that I put forward was to adjourn debate now.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Oh! You want to adjourn the debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: You do that.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): With your permission, I'm going to consult the clerk, since I replaced our chair on short notice, and she has a lot of experience. I'll get back to you in a few moments.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Can we go back to the agenda at hand and not vote on this motion right today?

Hon. Tony Clement: No, you adjourned debate. It doesn't mean you don't get a vote.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Yes, that is exactly the advice I received from the clerk of our committee. That is why I am immediately calling the vote on this motion. I call the vote. I now ask those who are in favour of Mr. Clement's motion to raise their hand.

(Motion negatived)

We can now go back to our agenda.

Mr. Sikand, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

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

I'm actually going to give my time over to Mr. Tootoo.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Tootoo, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Thank you.

I'd like to welcome the witnesses.

My question is for Mr. Speer. As you know, I'm on one of your flights tomorrow morning heading up to Iqaluit.

Throughout your presentation you talked about the lack of infrastructure and the implications of that on an airline operating in the north. Throughout your submission you talk about the one-size regulations not fitting everything. I think that's one thing that most people don't understand, the uniqueness of flying in the north.

On the issue of fatigue, they're looking at changing the regulations for duty time and stuff such as that. I know specifically with the trans-Arctic route that you guys fly from Ottawa, all the way across the top over to Edmonton, there are some potential issues there. Could we first just get an idea of some of the issues and challenges around that for you, and also, as you pointed out, the complete lack of infrastructure in the north and how that relates to safety as well?

● (1200)

Capt Aaron Speer: I will address the two questions. First, the flight and duty time regulations will have a very significant impact on us in terms of the limitations they impose on flight time. It's very much predicated on some larger operations. Our operations typically begin and end early in the morning or late in the evening, when people travel into our hubs and then we take them out, and likewise when we bring people in early to catch flights. During the middle portion of the day, we have good infrastructure in place to allow for rest. We recognize those limitations. We've invested heavily in facilities and accommodation to ensure our crews receive rest while they're out on the road. That doesn't seem to be recognized.

On the other implications of days versus nights, in terms of responses, again, we have very good facilities in place to provide for and mitigate fatigue. We've actually structured our schedules around the cycles of the individuals. We think we've very heavily addressed those, but our efforts have not been recognized in the regulations because they are atypical given our areas of operation.

In terms of the infrastructure and the safety implications, I would argue that it's the biggest thing that causes me grief at night. The facilities we see in the north are very much what we saw back in about 1960 or 1970. They haven't changed very much since then.

Ironically, we've had comments about lack of familiarity with hand flying the aircraft. Because of the infrastructure we have, we can't use autopilot very heavily for approaches and landings simply because the approaches don't allow us to fly down that close to the ground. Our crews are actually quite proficient at hand flying the aircraft.

We have very limited weather services and very limited approaches, with the result that quite frequently, with very limited infrastructure, we're not able to land. We spend a great deal of time travelling for three hours only to turn around and come back again because the approaches didn't let us land where they would have down south. It ends up generating lots of back-and-forth, which further adds more flying for us, eroding time and adding to our fatigue issues as well.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Tootoo, I yield the floor to you.

[*English*]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you.

One of the other things I see in your submission is that you were involved heavily in the steep slope approach into Pangnirtung. We all know what it's like trying to get into Pangnirtung, where there is no GPS approach; it's all visual. I think it's about 2,300 or 2,600 feet and three-mile visibility, plus the runway is right in the middle of town.

Capt Aaron Speer: Yes.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: That's a safety issue as well.

You also mentioned the unintended consequences and the need for possible exemptions. Maybe you could elaborate on that also.

Capt Aaron Speer: Certainly.

In terms of the Pangnirtung approach, I agree; that's probably our most challenging approach. I've spent many years personally involved in that. The company invested several hundreds of thousands of dollars in testing and certification, requiring three separate operational approvals beyond the standard just to make operations off a 2,900-foot gravel runway viable with our aircraft, which we can't keep doing with our new aircraft.

In terms of the unintended consequences, I look at many regulations. I'll use the approach ban as a good example. It's predicated almost with a concept that everyone understands the realities of Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto with long runways and excellent approaches, ILS approaches everywhere. However, by structuring that, there is some limited infrastructure that makes those rules not fit.

I've personally been in a case in Iqaluit where I've been stuck holding over the airport when I can see the runway, but with blowing snow in the area, I can't land because of the approach ban. I'm forced to divert off to a much shorter runway and fly an NDB approach, circling inside mountainous terrain at night, which is arguably the most difficult and most dangerous approach to flying. Because of the approach ban, I couldn't carry out the ILS approach in Iqaluit, arguably the simplest approach, to a runway that I could actually see. There was no recognition for some of those conditions.

Quite often I get forced. If I can't land at one airport, I then need to fly two to three hours, a long distance, to an airport that's even less equipped for my landing, just by virtue of the inability of those airports to provide the same infrastructure that exists everywhere down south as a norm. Those norms are not the norm across the country.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Tootoo, you have one minute and 20 seconds left.

[*English*]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you.

I have one last question. You mentioned it may require the need for some exemptions, or some modifications, to fit the uniqueness of the north. I was just wondering if I can get you to elaborate on what some of those might be.

● (1205)

Capt Aaron Speer: There are already several that are in place dealing with the weather situation that we're encountering. Potentially if they continue to force some of the regulations through without analyzing them, the only option is to provide exemptions to recognize the operations that we do throughout, say, the summertime where it's daylight all day long. For other operations there are currently alternate rules in place where the approach ban only applies to 60° of latitude and not above that.

So, again, if the regulations were designed to do that either they should apply or they should not apply, but if we don't consult and don't analyze the entire country, we end up with rules that don't work everywhere. We required exemptions to the interim order requiring flight deck access because they were driven through without realizing the nature of a combi aircraft with cargo carried on board the airplane. We required to add a third crew member just to ensure there were always two up front.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Tootoo and Mr. Speer.

Mr. Aubin now has the floor for six minutes.

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

I thank our witnesses for being here with us.

I am sorry to take some of our time to introduce my motion, but it can't be avoided. The study on aviation safety is moving forward extremely quickly, and I would be remiss if I did not take the time to table it and submit it to a vote this morning. I am going to take a minute to do that, without explanations nor debate. It reads as follows:

> That the committee invite the Minister of Transport, the Honourable Marc Garneau, to testify as part of the study on aviation safety.

Just as with any study, points of view sometimes differ. And so before we draft our report, it would be interesting to also hear the minister's perspective.

That is the idea behind this motion, and I hope it will be supported by the majority.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, dear colleague.

This is all a good introduction to my chairmanship of the committee.

So, we have another motion on the table submitted by Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a question, Mr. Chairman. Is this a notice of motion, or does Mr. Aubin want to deal with this right now?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: My motion has been tabled for a vote.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): We received the notice of motion on April 12. So it was tabled in due time.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: So he wants to deal with it now. Let's now put a motion forward to adjourn debate please.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Badawey has presented a motion to adjourn the debate on Mr. Aubin's motion. Does anyone wish to speak on Mr. Badawey's motion?

Mr. Robert Aubin: I simply want to say that time is pressing, because the study on aviation safety is coming to an end. This motion is entirely on topic. I don't wish to adjourn the debate, but I would like us to vote.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you.

Mr. Badawey moves that we end the debate on Mr. Robert Aubin's motion.

(Motion agreed to)

I must now call the vote on Mr. Aubin's motion, which reads as follows:

> That the committee invite the Minister of Transport, the Honourable Marc Garneau, to testify as part of the study on aviation safety.

(Motion negatived)

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would make a quick comment.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): I recognize Mr. Badawey, but I must give the floor to Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Is this a point of order?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Yes.

Mr. Robert Aubin: The vote has taken place, and I suppose I may now use my speaking time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Yes, the debate is over. You have your speaking time.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Through you to the clerk, we went through two processes here with two motions where I put together a motion to adjourn debate. I understand that when you adjourn debate, after you vote on adjourning debate, under that process or regulation, it then moves on to the next agenda item. I guess the interpretation is, is the next item the motion that was introduced, or is the next item what is on the actual agenda before us, presented to us before the meeting?

I don't need an answer now, but if I would like to have that clarified. After the last motion by Mr. Clement, I had expected that we would move on to the next agenda item, and that would then take place at the next meeting to vote for that motion. Obviously it was ruled by you that the next agenda item was the motion that was placed on the table. If we could have clarification on that, I'd appreciate it.

Under the dilatory motions, it does state that, when you move to adjourn, this temporarily suspends debate under way on a motion. If the motion is carried, debate on the motion ceases, and the committee moves on to the next agenda item. The motion has been adjourned and can no longer be brought up for the remainder of the meeting. I need clarification on that.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Badawey, I agree with you. In fact I intended to ask for clarifications on this point so that we can do things correctly the next time. We heard a first opinion, but I think it is worthwhile to ask the clerk to give us an answer on this question, which I consider pertinent, at our next meeting.

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Chair, I don't want to belabour the point. I respect the honourable member's intervention. I would only say that, when I heard him intervene with his motion, I took his meaning to be that he wanted to go directly to a vote without further debate. If that was not his intention, it's very simple in the future to be more clear—clearer for my simple mind—so we have no disagreements in the future on this point.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Clement and Mr. Badawey, with all due respect, I have heard what you said. We have asked for clarification on this very relevant issue, and we will wait for an answer.

As you mentioned, we don't have much time. With everyone's consent, I would like to allow Mr. Aubin to use the rest of his speaking time.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Just to clarify, Mr. Chairman, if I may, the motion was very clear to adjourn debate.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): We have all of the information, Mr. Badawey.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): The clerk will provide a clarification to us later. I think it is relevant for the future functioning of the committee, since it could happen again.

Mr. Aubin, you have five minutes left.

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

My first questions are for you, Mr. McKeogh.

The passage in your presentation where you say that pilots do not have enough hand flying experience also surprised me. I have a series of questions with regard to that.

First of all, is there a fundamental difference between training on a simulator and real in-flight training?

[*English*]

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Yes. You're asking if there's a real overlap of 100% between simulator flying and actual flying of the aircraft.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: No, my question was the other way around. I wanted to know whether the two types of training, that is to say training on a simulator and hands-on flying, are of equal value. Would it not be more appropriate to provide more hands-on flying training for pilots?

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Yes, hands-on flying, as we call it, is much more important. Even if simulators have evolved a lot recently, there are things that leave something to be desired in certain areas.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

Unfortunately, you had to be interrupted in your opening statement when you were providing a list of things you would like to see added to training. You started by saying that lectures should be more numerous, but I would like you to tell us more about the other suggestions you were going to make.

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Very well. May I continue in English?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Yes.

Mr. Edward McKeogh: On aviation safety lectures, we feel, as I've said before, that doctors, dentists, and stockbrokers have to put in so many hours annually of continuation training to make sure they're up to speed on what's going on in their domain. Well, we know that human factors—attention, attitude, awareness, anticipation, alertness, and alternatives—are not talked about sufficiently in training, whether it be an issue of training at the flying school and all the way up, with the exception of certain of the larger airlines that have in-house people doing this.

We would like to see the regulatory authorities establish rules, directives, concerning how many hours of training a person must attend per year. It can be dispensed at their own location. They can send an instructor to us and we'll teach that instructor, and he'll go back at the most efficient time and place to give those lectures. They include, not just the human factors that I mentioned, but also cockpit resource management; safety management systems; ALAR, approach and landing accident reduction system; and CFIT, controlled flight into terrain. There are a whole host of things that are not sufficiently emphasized out there, and we, within our purview, have the ability to do that.

What I talked about earlier was about general aviation throughout this universe. We can't be looking over everyone's shoulder, but with ICAO here in Montreal, through them, we can talk a lot about the necessity of hands-on flying.

However, this aviation safety lecture business is something that we can control right here, in-house. We can have people from the various organizations send an instructor to us here in Montreal, and we will teach him all of the things I just mentioned. I don't want to repeat them, but they're very important, especially when it comes to crew resource management, for instance.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Have I answered your question, sir?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Yes, you answered my question very well. Thank you.

I'd like to put a quick question to Mr. Speer.

Regarding the regional partners who fly in Canada, can you tell me if each of the carriers have implemented a fatigue risk management system? If so, could you explain the implementation process of such a system? If not, please explain how you ensure safety.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): You have 30 seconds to answer, Mr. Speer.

[*English*]

Capt Aaron Speer: I guess the short answer is yes.

As part of an airline operation, one of the programs we are required to maintain, and we at First Air fully embrace it, is an SMS system. That SMS addresses any operational and financial risk for the company, one of which is fatigue. We manage it through there, through any reporting investigation in dealing with corrective actions and the associated follow-up through the SMS program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Aubin and Mr. Speer.

Since we had agreed to do the first round, I now give the floor to Mr. Iacono and Mr. Hardie.

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

I also thank the witnesses for being here today.

I would ask the witnesses to provide brief answers, so that we have the opportunity of asking several questions.

Some witnesses have told us that the rules concerning fatigue management should be different according to the nature of the flight, for instance long international flights as opposed to several short flights which involve several take-offs and landings. In your opinion, would such an ad hoc approach be the best way of doing things?

[*English*]

Capt Aaron Speer: I would argue absolutely, there are different risks associated with long-haul overseas flying as there are with short-haul multiple takeoffs and landings in the day. The fatigue factors I think are very different, so the only way to address fatigue is to address the factor causing it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Mr. McKeogh, it's your turn.

[*English*]

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Could you repeat the question, please? I was studying my notes as you were asking it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Some witnesses informed us that the current rules concerning fatigue management should differ according to the nature of the flight, for instance long international flights as opposed to several short flights. Should there be different fatigue management systems?

[*English*]

Mr. Edward McKeogh: This, sir, is a little outside of our domain.

Certainly we all know about fatigue in the air, and crew rest is necessary. This is why there are three pilots in the aircraft. One is sleeping while the others are flying.

However, it is something that needs to be looked at very carefully. You can get sedentary fatigue too; just sitting there not doing much produces fatigue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Mr. Speer, what do you think could be done to minimize the effects on the profitability of airlines?

[*English*]

Capt Aaron Speer: Affordability is not really something I address too heavily. My job is to make it safe, so I do what it takes to be safe.

The reality is that we need to look at what is being done to address those issues. If I look at the arguments in the north, the user-pay system does not work there, where we stretch the population of Kingston or Thunder Bay over 70 communities. There needs to be some support from the government in that sense, to provide national infrastructure as part of the mandate and not expect the true cost to be borne by every single individual passenger.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

I yield the floor to Mr. Hardie.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): There are three minutes left if you want to use them.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Lovely.

Mr. McKeogh, the issue has come up before of the actual hands-on assessment of somebody's flying skills versus time spent in a simulator. In the two scenarios that you presented off the top, I think in one of them the airspeed indicators had frozen up, etc. You can't duplicate that, or you wouldn't want to try to duplicate that, up in the air.

What is the proper balance, if you will, between the use of simulators versus the use of actually being up there with an inspector?

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Simulators have their place. They are very excellent machines, built by someone we know well in Montreal, CAE, but nothing replaces hands-on doing it. Yes, you can do things with the airplane at altitude. All good pilots know that "P plus P", power plus position, of the nose will give you a certain airspeed. You don't need an airspeed indicator if you're a good hands-on pilot.

Mr. Ken Hardie: But creating the kinds of issues you mentioned would be more easily and safely done in a simulator, I would expect.

Mr. Edward McKeogh: Yes, but at altitude you can safely do a partial panel, for instance. You can remove certain things from the pilot's view, although they're to be put back immediately. You can ask them to do certain things.

Sure, they're more safely done in a simulator if you're talking about something close to the ground, but at altitude you can disable certain elements that are there in the primary flight display.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. Speer, with regard to the impact of climate change, especially on the runways, are you noticing anything there? I'm thinking of permafrost and shore erosion and all manner of things that might be going on.

Capt Aaron Speer: We are seeing some significant challenges with our runways that I assume are related to factors such as that. A couple of years ago one runway basically washed out for half a month. We lost the middle portion of the runway. There are very significant challenges with the underlying layers that cause break-down of the runway—sinkholes, ruts, etc.—that were not seen in the past.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Right.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Hardie.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speer and Mr. McKeogh, for your testimony, which we greatly appreciated.

We are now going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to let our witnesses leave the room, and to allow our next group of witnesses to come in.

● (Pause)

●

● (1225)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): We are going to resume the meeting immediately please, since people are here and are quite anxious to testify before the committee.

During this second hour, it is our pleasure to welcome Mr. Greg McConnell, national chair of the Canadian Federal Pilots Association, Mr. Jean-Marie Richard, aviation safety consultant, as well as Mr. Dan Adamus, Canada Board president of the Air Line Pilots Association International.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here.

Mr. McConnell, you now have the floor for five minutes. We are going to be very strict with allotted time.

[*English*]

Captain Greg McConnell (National Chair, Canadian Federal Pilots Association): Thank you and good afternoon.

CFPA members work as Transport Canada's most highly skilled aviation inspectors. I am here to add their front-line perspective to this very important study.

Our message is sobering. We are witnessing the dismantling of aviation safety oversight in Canada and the progressive weakening of Transport Canada's inspectorate. This state of affairs has been years in the making. Piece by piece, the checks and balances that have delivered one of the safest aviation systems in the world are falling victim to cost-cutting and misguided management. Meanwhile, the perishable skills and competencies of inspectors are deliberately being allowed to wither.

All the while, Transport Canada officials reassure you that all is well. But consider this: a dangerous culture of non-compliance and secrecy has set in over the years. Transport Canada has come to regard safety regulations and international safety requirements as little more than inconveniences that can be ignored to satisfy budget limitations or industry pressure, without regard to public safety. I say "dangerous" because this culture affects aviation in Canada at large.

In a recent example, last August, without consultation and in secret, Transport Canada completely withdrew or reduced safety oversight from significant portions of aviation, including all airports in the country, business aircraft like those in which Jim Prentice and Jean Lapierre died, urban heliports, and aircraft that do dangerous work like fire bombing.

While reassuring you that inspection is robust, Transport Canada watered down its inspection process in order to boost its 2016 performance metrics. These and other decisions have been taken without notice to Parliament, MPs, or the public, through a bureaucratic tool called an internal process bulletin, a practice the department is using with increasing regularity.

Transport Canada is quietly planning to roll back oversight even further by completely washing its hands of monitoring the proficiency of pilots, delegating professional pilot exams to industry, and allowing airlines to set their own operational safety standards without checking. With the cancellation of the inspection and audit manual, Transport Canada gave up its ability to ensure compliance with the safety regulations. The singular reliance on SMS puts Canada offside with ICAO, which requires member states to establish and maintain safety through direct operational oversight. In fact, Canada fails to meet more than half of ICAO's mandatory minimum safety requirements. That's right: Transport Canada is offside with eight out of 13 of ICAO's mandatory minimums. These are requirements, not suggestions. Our assessment of Canada's performance in this regard can be found at tab four of our handout.

In keeping with its default towards secrecy, Transport Canada hasn't notified ICAO of these deficiencies, as member states are required to do.

You may be wondering how it is possible for my remarks to be so different from the story you heard earlier from Transport Canada. I was struck by the misleading nature of the testimony you heard from officials. It deserves a reality check, which we have produced for your information. This can be found at tab five.

We should be able to provide the minister with a signed written statement that the inspected airline is fully compliant with all safety regulations. Right now, an inspector is not able to do that. That is why I urge your committee to recommend that the government reinstate compliance audits to determine whether or not an airline is in compliance with safety requirements.

On behalf of the public, the minister needs to know if the airlines are meeting safety requirements, not whether or not they have a good SMS. To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, the public is expecting the minister to trust the airlines to act in their own self-interest but also to verify that safety standards and requirements are being met. Without this change, an aviation disaster on the scale of Lac-Mégantic is very likely.

Transport Canada must be put on a tighter leash. There should be no more sweeping decisions to dismantle oversight made in secret. Transport Canada should be required to justify in a public forum, such as this committee, why less oversight means more safety.

It has been more than a decade since ICAO last audited Transport Canada's safety oversight system; this happened in 2005. Your committee should recommend that Transport Canada invite ICAO to complete a full assessment of Canada's compliance with minimum international safety requirements.

● (1230)

Finally, we concur with Justice Virgil Moshansky's recommendation for a commission of inquiry into aviation safety oversight. We agree that it's long overdue.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. McConnell.

Mr. Richard, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard (Aviation Safety Consultant, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for your invitation to appear today.

My presentation will be from a regional perspective, more down-to-earth and less strategic than the other witness presentations.

I worked for 26 years in management at the Civil Aviation Directorate of Transport Canada. Since 2010, I have been providing training on aviation safety in different institutions.

We are in a period of continuous aviation safety improvement, and we must make the necessary efforts to ensure that this situation continues. Nine years after the implementation of the Transport Canada Civil Aviation Oversight Program, its relevance and effectiveness are still being questioned.

My presentation covers three areas. First, the oversight of Transport Canada, in effect since 2008. The simultaneous implementation of the new surveillance procedures, including increased surveillance, program validation inspections or PVIs, SMS assessments, and the civil aviation internal organization, have had a significant impact on the industry oversight. At first, PVIs revealed that operations managers lacked operational control, which could have been avoided if they had the necessary tools, like quality assurance, to exercise that control. Thus, the SMS airlines' implementation undertaken in 2005, should be completed by the addition of the quality assurance element. For enterprises that do not have an SMS, the implementation could be done over a longer period, starting with quality assurance.

Secondly, I'd like to speak to the training of civil aviation personnel. In the Quebec region, training gaps were identified in 2013. Corrective actions require a regional investment and appropriate headquarters support.

My third topic is training within the industry. Since December 2014, the public no longer has access to all Transport Canada documentation, and this has made the preparation of training courses far more difficult. We are missing a lot of information. I provide further details in the brief I prepared for you.

I will do my best to answer your questions to the best of my abilities.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Richard.

I now yield the floor to Mr. Adamus for five minutes.

[*English*]

Captain Dan Adamus (Canada Board President, Air Line Pilots Association, International): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members.

ALPA is the largest non-governmental safety and security agency in the world. This allows us a unique ability to provide professional pilot expertise.

Our brief, which we submitted earlier, highlights several important areas where aviation safety could be enhanced. For the sake of time today, I would like to highlight one issue: fatigue management.

For many years, Canada has lagged far behind the rest of the world in adopting science-based fatigue rules. While work began in the 1990s, no progress was made until a 2010 working group, composed of representatives from industry and government, developed recommendations for meeting ICAO standards.

In 2014, Transport Canada issued a notice of proposed amendment, NPA, dealing with fatigue management. This NPA very closely mirrored the working group report that, in our view, was very much a reasonable and responsible compromise in order to move the process forward. Although not all of ALPA's concerns were addressed in the report, it was as step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, the 2014 NPA has since been diluted, as witnessed in the notice of intent, NOI, that was recently issued by Transport Canada. While one can only speculate why this has happened, we are aware of many operators that have been lobbying for change to the NPA based on economic or operational concerns, not safety concerns.

In the current proposal, we have five key areas of concern.

One, these rules would not apply to all commercial pilots.

Two, the implementation period for smaller operators is way too long.

Three, if the current proposal proceeds, Canada will have one of the highest monthly flight hours and the highest monthly duty hours in the world.

Four, Transport Canada stated in the 2014 NPA that aerial work, air taxi, and commuter operations accounted for 94% of all commercial air accidents. However, the current proposal not only exempts aerial work entirely, but also gives air taxi and commuter operators four years to comply.

Five, fatigue risk management systems, FRMS, as outlined in the recent NOI, will allow operators to bypass the prescriptive rules without formal approval or oversight from the regulator. What perplexes us even more is that the draft proposal also permits aerial operators—and as I mentioned, the sector that has the highest accident record and that will be exempt from the rules—to obtain further relaxation of the current inadequate rules Canada has in place.

While the rest of the world has progressed in line with international standards, Canada's current rules continue to fall behind. In order to help advance Canadian aviation safety, ALPA recommends that Transport Canada proceed with the prescriptive rules as it proposed in the 2014 NPA, while taking into account ALPA's comments. Additionally, it is important that a one-year implementation period, applicable to all sectors of commercial aviation, be enacted.

Furthermore, we need to hit the pause button on FRMS. We believe in FRMS, but rushing this product to market without proper consultations with industry is setting up for failure. Over the course of your study, you have heard claims that the new regulations would be financially devastating to some operators. Our analysis does not support that.

Let's look at the U.S. as an example. It transitioned to new science-based rules just a few years ago. Initially, the large operators anticipated that they would require 3% more pilots and small operators 7% to 10% more pilots. However, a post-implementation study conducted by the RAND Corporation found that the impact of the new rules on pilot supply and demand was about half of what was anticipated.

To further demonstrate ALPA's concerns, we have provided you with a chart so you can see how Canada compares with several other countries. Green indicates where Canada would be ahead, yellow is for where it would be on par, white is for where data is missing or there's no comparable rule, and red is where Canada would remain behind. As you can see, there's a lot of red.

On behalf of not only our 55,000 members, but all Canadian pilots, we thank the committee for carrying out this very important study. I look forward to your questions on this and on other aviation safety issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, and thank you very much to our three witnesses for having so carefully respected the time they were given.

I must say that you have all presented briefs that contain a lot of information. My colleagues will surely have the opportunity to read them carefully, which will provide background for our debates.

Mr. Rayes, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of you, especially for adapting to today's irregular schedule, due to the votes and motions that were introduced.

My first question is for you, Mr. McConnell.

The comments you made are almost frightening. A few weeks ago, some officials from Transport Canada appeared before the committee and stated that oversight was very active.

Do you agree with that statement?

I might even go a little further and ask you whether, in your opinion, the number of inspectors in the field has increased or decreased.

● (1240)

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: There are a number of facets to your question. With respect to the number of inspectors, it's remained relatively stable. However, with attrition, new inspectors come in, and they're not being trained.

With respect to the activity of which Transport Canada has spoken, the number of inspections that they're conducting, rest assured that those numbers are not being met. I'm talking about the planned numbers that Transport Canada uses when they plan on a yearly basis to inspect the airlines. As a matter of fact, arguably 50% to 65% of their targets are not being met.

Due to the use of a secretive internal process bulletin, what they have done is reduce the complexity of inspection that they are now going to do. To understand that, you have three types of inspections: a full-scale assessment, which is a large assessment; a process validation inspection, which is a lesser degree of inspection; and the process inspection. They are moving toward process inspections only to keep their numbers up, so if that's the activity to which you are referring, then I guess they are increasing their activity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: My next question is somewhat related to that. In your presentation, you put a great deal of emphasis on Transport Canada's reduced ability to fulfill its duties in terms of assessment and rule enforcement.

Could we say that something of a cultural secrecy exists within Transport Canada—a sort of a code of silence—in terms of telling it like it is?

Can you give us further specific examples of deficiencies in the work those people have to do?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: There are again a couple of facets to your question. With respect to the training that the inspectors are supposed to get, nine out of 10 mandatory courses are no longer being offered. So how is it the inspector or the minister can be protected when we're not being provided with these courses in order to go out and try to complete the oversight? When you say oversight, Transport Canada is lacking because we no longer have primary oversight.

In 2013, through an internal process bulletin, we cancelled the inspection and audit manual. It's no longer available. Primary oversight does not exist. SMS exists. Canada is unique in the world with respect to the implementation of SMS, and they have forgotten about primary oversight. They now have SMS as a tool that was supposed to have been implemented as an umbrella; however, it's become the only tool. Some of the portions of the air sector are not governed by SMS, 703 and 704, for instance, the air taxi commuter industry. They have the wrong tool to govern certain sectors of the industry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: That is worrisome.

Earlier, my colleague Mr. Aubin moved a motion to get the Minister of Transport to appear before us. We really would have liked to put a number of questions to him in the wake of the various comments you have shared. Unfortunately, that motion did not pass.

Can you tell me when the International Civil Aviation Organization, or ICAO, last carried out an inspection on the current Transport Canada rules and inspection systems?

How would you say Canada compares to other developed countries in that area?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: I can tell you unequivocally that the last ICAO audit was completed in 2005.

With respect to how Canada ranks with other civil aviation authorities around the world, I believe we're relying right now on our reputation. With the dismantling of the safety oversight culture within Transport Canada, it's the safety of the flying public they're putting at risk. You would have to ask ICAO, I think, to rank where Transport Canada sits.

I do know with respect to my colleagues' issues with respect to fatigue management that we are light years behind.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you very much.

Mr. Richard, I would like to put a short question to you in light of your comment. Your brief says that Transport Canada decided to stop making certain documents available on its website. Have you asked Transport Canada any questions about that? What reasons have they given you?

● (1245)

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: I was a subcontractor for the Quebec region when that happened. I prepared training for post-assessment corrective action plans. All the documents containing elements of that training simply disappeared. All the Transport Canada internal documentation was removed from the department's website. The guidelines and personal instructions were removed.

Afterwards, some of those instructions were put into advisory circulars. The difference between an advisory circular and personal instructions is that advisory circulars don't have to be followed, whereas a Transport Canada inspector must follow their personal instructions.

The documents are identical. However, the purpose of those two documents is not the same.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Rayes, but your time is unfortunately up.

Mr. Iacono, you have six minutes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To answer Mr. Rayes, I can tell you that Minister Garneau will be with us, here, on May 9.

[*English*]

You can ask all the questions you desire. I'm sure it will be the minister's pleasure to respond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard, I would like to hear what you think about the concerns raised by Mr. McConnell. You seem to think that regulatory oversight and SMS have improved our aviation performance.

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: SMS oversight, when performed according to the instructions provided in advisory circular No. SUR-001, goes beyond compliance. In fact, when inspectors prepare their assessment, they must review the company's files and write their assessment list, in addition to ensuring that the company meets the expectations of advisory circular No. SUR-001. So they ensure compliance and make sure that the systems work, which is not something that was being done before. That is if the inspectors follow....

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Richard, do you think a national investigation on aviation safety is really necessary, given Canada's current performance?

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: I personally don't think so.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Very well, thank you.

I will share the rest of my time with my colleague, Vance Badawey.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Badawey, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Iacono.

First off, it was interesting to see the contrast between Mr. Richard and Mr. McConnell with respect to your comments. It was very interesting.

I have to ask the question, and it was asked earlier, about flight simulators and the ability to essentially do procedures or exercises with a simulator versus in the air.

Mr. Richard, do you feel that the flight simulators actually offer the opportunity for pilots to really have more of an ability to practise and to train safely on a simulator versus some situations that may occur in the air?

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: Flight simulators are not my field of expertise, so I cannot answer that one.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay.

Mr. Adamus, maybe you can comment on that.

Capt Dan Adamus: Flight simulators allow you to do procedures that you couldn't ordinarily do in an aircraft, for the obvious reasons, so they are very valuable tools. There are very sophisticated simulators these days. We do a complete check-out on a new aircraft. In the actual aircraft you have passengers behind you, so that's how good they are.

That's for pilots who have been working in the industry for some time. Initially, you need to learn respect for the aircraft. You actually have to scare yourself a little bit. That's why you need to train in the real aircraft first and then gradually transition over to the simulators.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Fair enough.

I have to ask the question about what was mentioned earlier and, again, the contrast between Mr. McConnell and Mr. Richard. It was confusing in respect to the comment made about entering an aircraft and sometimes it can be a devastating expectation versus aircraft safety improving and continuing to improve.

We're expecting that the minister or the ministry is going to move forward within the next year, I would assume, with improvements to air safety, aviation safety, hence, the reason we're going through this exercise.

What are some of the things, Mr. Richard, that we're improving on? Then I'm going to go to Mr. McConnell on some of the things that we can improve more on.

● (1250)

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: What I understood of what the people said at the two previous meetings is that inspectors were spending less time doing auditing. If they're doing that, they're not following the procedure, because the procedure is in reality what we used to do, plus making sure that the system works. If they're not doing that, then they're not following the procedure.

My contention was that with the implementation of SMS Transport Canada would require more people than with the old system and also that the people should be more attuned, better trained, and more vigilant during the surveillance process.

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's in reference to the surveillance procedure, the quality assurance, SMS—

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: Exactly.

Mr. Vance Badawey: —the assessment investments that are being made.

Okay.

Mr. McConnell.

Capt Greg McConnell: Simply put, respecting the time that I know is short, train our people, supply us with the mandatory training, get us back into the cockpits and get us out of the office.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you.

I'm going to share my time with Mr. Sikand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: There are 30 seconds left.

[*English*]

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Okay.

I have questions for Dan.

I do see a lot of red on this and I'm also looking at emerging countries in the aerospace industry, like India, Taiwan, China, and Korea. Will this affect our competitiveness if we don't have safety standards that achieve better competitiveness as well?

Capt Dan Adamus: Our focus throughout this whole exercise on flight and duty times was on safety. Competitiveness is obviously something that's important, because if we don't have an airline to fly for, we don't have a job obviously.

I think with this world standard that's out there already that will just put Canada in line with the rest of the world. It levels the playing field.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

Mr. Aubin, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Chair, echoing others' comments seems to have become the way to do things. I would still like to clarify, for the record, that during the same hour, on May 9, we will hear from not only Minister Garneau, but also the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and officials. If you are telling me that I will have time to ask all my questions in one minute, I really don't see how I will manage. It seems to me that we are stretching the limits a bit.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us. The last thing you could be accused of this morning is using doublespeak. So I thank you for shedding light on this issue, which has been a concern for us for months.

I always think about the well-known saying that we can always do more with less. Over the past two years, the budget has not contained a single line on aviation safety. The funding has decreased by $7 million. In addition, there have been no reinvestments and no announcements. That is why I have a hard time believing that this will not have an impact on aviation safety.

Mr. McConnell, do you have an idea of how many safety management system inspections your members carried out last year?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: Yes, I can answer that by virtue of an oversight document, the director general of civil aviation went across the country, and arguably they're meeting 50% to 65% of their targets. They have probably done hundreds of SMS-type inspections, whether that be a full assessment, PVI, or PI.

I think the number they referenced was 10,000 and I also heard 120,000 in this committee. That is simply just not possible. In this country we have 800 airlines basically. How can that be so? I just don't understand.

The numbers provided to the minister are different from what the directors general are briefing in their oversight tours

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Does such a large discrepancy between the figures provided by Transport Canada and those provided by you this morning stem from a lack of human resources or a lack of training for those resources?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: I would say both. It's both a lack of training and a lack of resources. Mind you, remember I've already testified that through a new internal process bulletin, the department is going to increase its activity by doing a smaller, shorter version of an inspection, called a process inspection.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: My understanding is that a self-regulatory system is supposed to prevent accidents and incidents. At least that is the intended objective. We were told that more than 5,000 incidents and accidents took place in 2016. Why do you think there were so many? Is the system working or not?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: That would be a reactionary type of inspection to an event, incident, or accident. Generally, I believe Transport Canada should be in the business of preventative measures and not reactionary-type measures. This is what's causing Transport Canada to not meet its targets on an annual basis, being at 50% or 65%, depending on how you choose to look at the numbers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I want to come back to my previous question. Regarding the number of inspections you talked to us about, were those reactive inspections, proactive inspections or a combination of both?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: Absolutely reactive. The majority of inspections being conducted are reactive to incidents, accidents, or events that are occurring.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: So after the accident. How are the findings of those inspections applied to ensure that the incidents don't reoccur?

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: I don't think it would be offside for me to comment that the Transportation Safety Board has 52 recommendations that haven't been looked at in 20 years. That would be a very good place to start, because it is their job to investigate the accident and come up with recommendations to enhance safety.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I would like to hear briefly from all of you, from a personal or professional perspective, on issues that seem very simple to me.

Is our air transportation safe at this time?

Are you in favour of Judge Moshansky's request to create a public inquiry into aviation safety?

Do you think it would be entirely justified for Canada to be audited by the ICAO? The last audit was conducted in 2005, if my information is correct.

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: Do we have a safe system? I can tell you that flying in Canada has never been more risky, due to the lack of primary oversight and the compliance to the regulations as they exist.

With respect to Justice Virgil Moshansky's recommendation of a full-scale inquiry, I believe in 1989 he wrote that an aviation authority should check its vital signs every 10 years. We are now 28 years past that point. With respect to my recommendation or the recommendation that ICAO come in and measure Transport Canada's compliance to Annex 19, I would fully support that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: As far as safety goes, I do believe that aviation in Canada is safe.

Regarding the inquiry commission proposed by Judge Moshansky, I personally do not agree.

As for the ICAO audit, it would be absolutely justified to get one.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much.

Mr. Adamus, do you have anything to add in a few words?

[*English*]

Capt Dan Adamus: Canada has one of the safest airline systems in the world, but we can always improve. I am aware that the actual hands-on inspections are way down, and we're relying more on safety management systems. SMS does work when it's done properly. However, with pressures put on airlines on the economic side, SMS is one of the first things to go, and unfortunately it doesn't work in all airlines. So it certainly could improve.

As far as an inquiry goes—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much. Mr. Adamus.

Unfortunately, that's all the time we have.

Mr. Iacono, you have enough time left to ask one question before we wrap up this hour-long meeting.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The question is for all three witnesses.

According to you, what is the most important issue for aviation safety in Canada at this time?

● (1300)

[*English*]

Capt Dan Adamus: We'll say improving the flight and duty time regulations. It's something we've been looking at for years. Canada is way behind the rest of the world. This started back in 2010. This is 2017. If we go ahead with the recommendations that the department has put forward on the implementation time frame, we're looking at another year for the large carriers and another three years on top of that for the small. We have to get moving on this, and one year for all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Mr. Richard, go ahead.

Mr. Jean-Marie Richard: It would be Transport Canada not reducing its oversight resources. Those resources should actually increase.

[*English*]

Capt Greg McConnell: I believe the most important thing the inspectors can do for Transport Canada is to exercise the minister's delegation. In order to exercise the minister's delegation, the civil aviation inspectors have to be fully trained in order to exercise that mandate and to bring back confidence for the flying public and the safety in this country. I believe that is important. That's what Minister Garneau is charged with. I believe that Minister Garneau would really like to work, as any transport minister should, towards a safer aviation system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

I want to thank everyone for joining us today and answering the committee's questions.

Thank you, respected colleagues.

The meeting is now adjourned.