

Lack of Action in Aviation Sector a “Black Mark on Liberals’ Watch”

28 January, 2021

For immediate release

Toronto, ON – “It has been a full year since COVID-19 became a reality in Canada, and the Liberal government has stood by and watched this sector slip further into crisis.” Strong words from Political Action Representative Derek Ferguson headlined the IAM presentation to the Federal Transportation Committee.

Today, yet again, the IAM called on the federal government to move urgently on a much-needed plan for the aviation sector. The IAM has repeatedly called for quick and decisive action, but the calls have fallen on deaf ears.

In a brief presented to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities today, the IAM outlined the challenges and the devastation experienced by the aviation sector.

“As the hardest-hit sector,” continued Ferguson, “Air transportation is expected to experience a slow recovery, as well as a fundamental change. We have been vociferous advocates of support for the industry and encouraged employers to take advantage of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), while acknowledging the gaps in support programs to date. However, it is becoming evident that CEWS alone is not enough as an intervention; direct funding is critical.”

“A recovery is not-expected until 2025, and companies in this sector will not survive by raising funds independently. Without timely action and a robust sector-specific strategy, several industries face decimation.”

Across Canada, air passenger capacity is more than 90% down, 28 stations have ceased operations, leading to jobs losses, and isolation of communities that depend on air service for goods, services, and medical supplies. “How much worse does the situation need to get before the Liberals react; the lack of action is beyond disappointing, it is infuriating,” stated Stan Pickthall, IAM Canadian General Vice-President.

“Canada’s Liberals are miles behind other countries when it comes to support for this crucial sector. Stop dithering and get something done! Canada just observed one year since COVID-19 entered our borders, yet the Federal government continues to ignore air transportation workers and the sector in general!”

In the air transportation sector alone, 10,000 IAM members are currently laid off, but there are numerous others across Canada who are facing economic hardship, if not poverty. If left unchecked, this crisis will affect generations of Canadians. The effect of the crisis in this sector will have far reaching implications that will take years to rebuild.

The IAM demands the government immediately establish a Sector Council Working Group to implement a program that helps sustain the airlines, including small air carriers. We also propose that the government maintain a domestic and regional air network, as a healthy domestic air network will be the backbone of recovery in this sector.

Without swift action, this sector will be obliterated. Pickthall has a very clear message to the Liberal government: “Mr. Trudeau, the death of Canada’s aviation industry will be a black mark on your watch!”

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) is the leading union in the aerospace sector and air transportation industry. The IAMAW represents over 55,000 members across Canada, of which 22,000 work in the aviation, aerospace and air transportation sector.

***[Read the IAM Brief to the Federal Transportation Committee \(PDF\)](#)** [with link to the downloadable document]*

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