



November 17, 2006

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, PC, MP
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
Place de Ville, Tower C
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

Honourable Minister:

The members of the Canadian Airports Council (CAC) collectively account for more than 95% of the passenger volumes in Canada today. Our members represent the interests of the largest and smallest certified airports in Canada, and a matter has come to our attention that could threaten the ability of our members at every level to safely continue to play their essential role in the communities they serve in the event of a labour strike.

The CAC has followed the progress of private members Bill C-257 regarding replacement workers, which recently received second reading. Canada's airports are alarmed by the potential that the bill, if enacted in its current form, could negatively impact the ability of airports to continue operations in the event of a strike by some labour groups at the airport.

As we understand the implications of the bill from our legal counsel, there is a very real potential that the inability of an airport to use management staff, replacement workers, or other non-striking employees during a strike will affect its ability to live up to regulated responsibilities under the terms of the Canadian Aviation Regulations. Our members appreciate the paramount importance of safety at their airports and we question whether a strike by groups providing safety or security services could compromise the ability of our members to provide these core services.

For example, a strike by the bargaining unit that provides snow removal services at many airports, could require an airport to terminate airport service altogether in the winter. Similarly, a strike by a contractor's employees providing de-icing services at some airports also could paralyze airport operations during the winter months.

A strike by commissionaires, or other occupational groups who provide important security-related duties, also could require an airport to cease operations unless management or replacement workers could be used to carry out these functions.

Meanwhile, a strike by non-safety/security labour groups also could negatively impact the ability of an airport to maintain operations. For example, a strike by baggage handlers, at some airports could shut-down operations at any time of the year. Other occupational groups may cripple or delay operations at the airport and obstruct the movement of people, cargo and baggage through airport facilities. Although we do not pretend to represent the interests of other stakeholders at the airport, we believe that there are a wide variety of other occupational groups involved in operations at airports that would be affected by the terms of Bill C-257, including fuelers, ground handling services, cargo handlers, to name only a few.

Canada's airports believe that you should be alive to the devastating potential effect that this legislation could have on the airport community across Canada. Airports play a central role in their communities as economic engines and facilitators of trade. Particularly in remote areas, they also serve as vital links to other cities in Canada and internationally.

Given the potential that some airports could be required to shut-down in the event of a strike by airport workers, our members need to know if Transport Canada is prepared to advance the proposition that all federal jurisdiction employees at airports should be excluded from the application of this legislation. If the Minister is not prepared to advance this proposition, the bill must be defeated altogether owing to the hugely disruptive effect that it will have on Canada's air transportation system.

Sincerely,



Jim Facette
President & CEO

cc: Brian Jean, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport,
Infrastructure and Communities
Sam Barone, President & CEO, ATAC
CAC Membership