



February 25, 2021

To: REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS
BRANCHES & FACILITIES

CATCA responds to NAV Canada's CEO

Ray Bohn, President and CEO of NAV Canada, is dismayed by comments made by CATCA about potential changes to the level of service provided at several airports, as well as layoffs at several Area Control Centres. His response is equally dismaying as he continues to make assertions that do not hold up under scrutiny. The members of CATCA are uniquely qualified to judge the veracity of the claims being made.

We are in agreement that all decisions should be made *"in the interest of preserving the integrity and sustainability of Canada's air navigation system."* Our contention is that NAV Canada is failing to do so, and that will have an impact on safety. It is in their response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the financial status of the company where Mr. Bohn and NAV Canada executives have made decisions that will have a predictable long-term adverse impact on the safety and viability of the air navigation services. CATCA understands the financial concerns, and they are real, but our business is safety. The company must finance the entire ANSP, not simply tailor safety services to their current temporarily-reduced resources.

NAV Canada's own portal for Health and Wellness states: *"NAV CANADA considers the mental health and psychological safety of its employees to be as important as all other aspects of health. We are committed to promoting and supporting a mentally healthy workplace through appropriate policies, programs and services. By encouraging and supporting open discussions, NAV CANADA is working to remove the stigma surrounding mental health illnesses"*. Recent decisions by NAV Canada are direct contradictions of their stated policy. Any level of mental distress can have an impact on the ability to control airplanes, even where the employee themselves believes they are able to set it aside. Mental distress directly linked to the employer's conduct has been and continues to be critical to our assertion that safety remains in jeopardy.

There continues to be a complete lack of attention and understanding of the psychological impacts of the decisions by NAV Canada regarding the job status of its air traffic controllers, some of whom have notice of upcoming layoff and the rest of whom feel their positions are in an ongoing precarious state. The impact of an impending job loss cannot be overstated. Work

THE VOICE OF CANADA'S AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS | LA VOIX DES CONTRÔLEURS AÉRIENS DU CANADA

is one of the most fundamental aspects of a person's life, providing the individual with a means of financial support and, as importantly, a contributory role in society. A person's employment is an essential component of his or her sense of identity, self-worth and emotional well-being. This is particularly amplified when a person has trained for years to become an expert and works in a monopoly and safety-sensitive environment where the employer controls their livelihood. It is also impacting entire communities who rely upon both this service and the economic benefits of having NAV Canada facilities in their midst.

NAV Canada has already reduced the size of the workforce and are proposing further reductions in order to *"adjust and align our workforce to our new realities."* But the new realities to which Mr. Bohn refers are temporary. Traffic will return, and there will not be enough staff to conduct the work. Under a newly developed staffing plan NAV Canada has rolled out, which came into effect post-pandemic late last year, air traffic control units are close to 100 percent staffed; however, that number is based on significantly reduced traffic levels that are 60 percent below the levels in 2019 for scheduled commercial aircraft. This is a far cry from pre-COVID staffing levels, which were close to 13 percent short, of air traffic control licenses.

In 2019, NAV Canada's air traffic controllers were already working short staffed. These further reductions, with no training in place, make the situation worse. The actions of setting staffing requirements following the biggest drop in airline traffic in memory (the result of a temporary decline in aviation demand due to a global pandemic), laying off qualified controllers based on those requirements, and no training underway to refill any positions, hardly meet the responsibility to *"preserve the integrity and sustainability of Canada's air navigation system."*

Controllers have been and will be let go to reduce the workforce. Nearly all trainees have been terminated, which means no one is in training to fill the gap when the traffic returns. It takes two to three years to train an air traffic controller, and training success is low due to the high skill and stress related to the job, yet there is no training at the current time. The system will be severely short-staffed when the commercial carriers resume flying. This will result in delays and significantly increased workloads for the controllers still working. Mr. Bohn is the one being disingenuous if he suggests that this will have no predictable impact on safety.

All of this ignores the fact that for general aviation airports, the ones that support flight training, private pilots, charters, and business aircraft, the traffic has already returned. Most of these airports are already meeting or exceeding traffic levels from 2019, yet continue to function with reduced staff and no overtime to fill holes in the schedules, resulting in short-staffed units working 12-hour shifts on a regular basis while trying to maintain the operation. This pace of work can be sustained over a short period, but there is no plan in place to bring staffing levels back to pre-COVID levels.

The suggestion that safety is not at risk is what is irresponsible.

As for the consultations with the unions at NAV Canada, CATCA has always valued the opportunity to contribute to the development and delivery of air traffic services. However, these opportunities are no longer being made available by NAV Canada in the recent past or today.

Finally, the CATCA Executive Board would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank you for your contributions over the past months. Our members have modelled collaboration by coming together during this pandemic and ensuring the safety of Canadian skies, which is being jeopardized by short-sighted actions. For Air Traffic Controllers, safety has always remained the top priority. CATCA knows that all members will continue to work and operate in the professional manner for which Air Traffic Controllers have been known.

On Behalf of Your Executive Board;

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