



December 23, 2024

**To: REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS
BRANCHES & FACILITIES**

2024 Year-End Holiday Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

As we enter the busy holiday travel season, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on what has happened over the past year and to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you. Millions of Canadians will soon be boarding planes and heading to family reunions or warmer climates for the holidays. As they anticipate flying during the busiest time of year for air travel, they'll probably fret about the potential for airport lineups, flight delays, and lost luggage. But few, if any, will give a second's thought to you, the 2,000 air traffic controllers who will be working overtime, often short-handed, sacrificing your own family time to make sure all those passengers arrive safely at their destinations with minimal delays. While passengers fret travel, controllers work behind the scenes to make sure things work and to ensure they work safely. Right now, our members are speaking out loudly on behalf of travelers crossing the ocean. That's a testament to your dedication and professionalism, which have made Canada one of the safest and most reliable airspaces in the world. We won't be quiet when it comes to safety.

Throughout this year, that dedication, passion and professionalism have been on constant display. Not only in keeping planes moving while working understaffed, but in other roles too, such as training, technology and standards. Our members represent the last line of defence for safety and face constant organizational pressures when fulfilling those roles. That goes largely unrecognized by most, but not by us. Working short-staffed day after day with little relief in the foreseeable future is both frustrating and demoralizing. Doing so while taking on the additional pressures of significant technological changes and training responsibilities only adds to the challenge.

Despite that ongoing operational reality, CATCA has made headway on several issues. The government in its role as regulator has taken note of some of our most significant issues and

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changes are coming. Our increased focus on direct advocacy at the governmental level is bringing change with more oversight on staffing, training, and fatigue coming. That should help ensure better working conditions in the future and alleviate some of the challenges that you all currently face daily.

In addition, we've continued to work hard at improving our relationship with the company. We recently concluded a 2-day national UMC. This was an excellent meeting with very candid discussions and representations from both sides which allowed us to make headway on numerous topics and otherwise better appreciate each other's interests on others. We are by no means aligned on all things and big challenges remain, but we are at least committed to hearing each other out and trying to find ways forward. The benefits of that may not always be immediately evident to our members but it is the most productive long-term approach for change.

In the coming year, we'll keep pushing our agenda with Nav Canada and beyond, engaging with Transport Canada, the Minister's office, and members of Parliament to ensure the decision makers understand what we need in order to keep Canada a world-leading ANSP. We will continue our efforts to develop relationships throughout the entire aviation sector, both nationally and internationally, to ensure international standards and policies are developed that support our profession and Canada, as the industry evolves.

Our renegotiated merger agreement with Unifor has, among other things, provided direct support to our branch executives and stewards, the bedrock of our union. Providing some time off for those volunteers to fulfill their duties has hopefully taken some pressure off them and allowed for better direct support for our members. In addition to supporting our CATCA volunteers with some time, we are again running a national training seminar this year to better equip them in the performance of their duties and improve communication within our union. Additional initiatives will be coming later in the year and planning for those is underway.

Classification remains as another significant issue on our agenda. This is a contentious, complex issue but it's high time we tackled it and we are committed to following through despite the stalled progress. We are not prepared to concede on this issue. Likewise on training, staffing and fatigue. Despite the positive steps taken by the regulator, we are continuing to push for more support for our trainers and more meaningful recurrent training for controllers throughout our careers, so we are prepared for the demands of our job. A renewed approach to the FRMS is coming with a controller specific FSAG. That should mean a more common-sense approach to fatigue issues and a more genuinely collaborative approach. Staffing is the fundamental issue at the source of most of our problems and we will continue to watch closely to ensure all steps are taken by the company to address it and we don't start backsliding on any of the positive steps taken recently. At the same time, protecting our members in position remains our immediate number one priority. We expect every reasonable step to be taken to ensure that controllers get the support they need and

that workload is appropriately managed. Unfortunately, that is difficult to do from afar, and the responsibility often falls directly on you as controllers to speak up. An ATC license is a very precious commodity, and every controller has an individual responsibility to safeguard that commodity. As always, CATCA will support you in that so if you encounter resistance or have questions, reach out to your CATCA reps for help.

Canadians flying off for a happy holiday with family or some sun may not think twice about air traffic controllers, but rest assured I and the executive team at CATCA do. We know many of you will miss out on family time while you keep the aviation system moving and keeping it safe – and that’s the best gift you could give air travellers. It’s one of the most difficult, stressful jobs in the world and we will continue fighting to create the best working conditions possible for those who do it. It’s a heavy responsibility but it is also a very privileged role to be part of this very elite club. Take pride and be grateful for that honour.

From the all of us at the national office and the executive board, we sincerely thank you all for what you do and wish you happy holidays.

On behalf of the Executive Board,

Nick von Schoenberg
President