



November 5, 2018

Honorable Maryanne Mihachuk  
Chair

Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs  
House of Commons

via email: [INAN@parl.gc.ca](mailto:INAN@parl.gc.ca)

**Northern Air Transport Association Submission to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs- Study of Infrastructure Projects and Strategies**

Dear Madame Chair;

The Northern Air Transport Association's membership is representative of all aspects of northern and remote air operations including scheduled passenger service, on demand charter, helicopters and specialized operations including internationally renowned medivac and firefighting capabilities.

NATA was formed over forty years ago to support the economic development of northern and remote Canada with safe, sustainable air transport services. Attached to this written brief is a map of Canada that is useful to understand the challenges air operators face daily.

This briefing will be focusing on four specific aviation infrastructure issues for consideration by the INAN committee. All four issues are critical to providing essential services to communities with little or no access to other means of transportation. All four issues are important to the economic development of northern and remote Canada.

1. Aviation Weather Information
2. Airport Infrastructure
3. Runway Approach Aids
4. Aviation Labour and Skills Needs

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee and staff for including NATA on these important aviation system safety infrastructure investment discussions.

Sincerely

Glenn Priestley  
Executive Director



## **Written Brief on the study of Northern Infrastructure Projects and Strategies.**

### **Presentation to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs**

#### **Northern Air Transport Association**

**November 5, 2018**

#### **Introduction**

The Northern Air Transport Association's membership is representative of all aspects of northern and remote air operations including scheduled passenger service, on demand charter, helicopters and specialized operations including internationally renowned medivac and firefighting capabilities.

NATA was formed over forty years ago to support the economic development of northern and remote Canada with safe, sustainable air transport services. Attached is a map of Canada that is useful to understand the challenges air operators face daily, providing essential services to communities with no other access to transportation.

The management of operational system safety is a complex and daily issue for northern air operators and stakeholders. Northern operators must find solutions to operational problems that simply do not exist in southern Canada. Examples include long range flight planning with limited weather information to airports with minimum runway standards.

A unique aspect of northern and remote aviation operations are the commercial partnerships with many First Nation and Inuit groups. Pride of ownership and recognition of the diverse cultures creates a special bond between the air carrier and customer that does not exist elsewhere. This commitment includes providing an essential service with the most modern aircraft possible. However, this service is limited by the existing infrastructure.

The goal of this written brief is to highlight four specific aviation infrastructure issues for consideration by the INAN committee. There is specific focus on technological advancements that present opportunities to improve operational efficiencies, mitigate environmental impact, as well as offer solutions to address the challenge of developing a northern based workforce for the aviation industry.



**Aviation Weather Reporting-** The importance of accurate weather reporting for destination and alternate airports is vital to operational system safety. NATA supports the goals of the federal government's Transportation 2030 - A Strategic Plan for the Future of Transportation in Canada. Investment in new technology will improve system safety; improved infrastructure will increase service reliability to northern and remote communities. Advancement in Automatic Weather Observation Systems (AWOS) can enhance weather reporting capability, and in some cases may modify the role of the human observer. However, there is a need to keep engaged a local workforce capability as a desirable goal of a human resource development plan and system safety considerations.

**Airport and Runway Infrastructure-** Numerous recent reports have identified the need for lengthening and strengthening northern and remote runways including the Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities Committee July 2017 Report and the May 2017 Office of the Auditor General's Report on Civil Aviation Infrastructure in the North—Transport Canada.

The standard for runway lengths at Northern Airports was set in the 1970s at 3500' ft. With the subsequent changes in equipment, regulatory and safety standards that length is no longer appropriate.

The lack of adequate runway length limits aircraft size, and therefore load carrying capability, which adds to overall cost of living and increases the stress on the environment.

Operator system safety example- Northern Airport locations have near ideal conditions for a night illusion called the black hole effect. The only way to mitigate this illusion is with high quality runway lighting. Most remote airports do not have REIL's (runway end identification lights) nor do they have high intensity lighting. The minimum standard for runway lighting must include ARCAL controlled REIL's, PAPI's and high intensity runway lights.



**Runway Navigational Approach Aids**-Also identified in every recent report on northern aviation infrastructure, is the need for more satellite-based instrument approaches and improved runway lighting systems to enhance operational reliability. Operators providing essential services are forced to use technology and navigational procedures that are outdated which increases operational risk.

Operator reported system safety example- “There are a number of remote communities that have marginal Instrument Approaches that need to be improved on. The current approaches at these airports have a significantly higher risk associated with them. These approaches rely on Non-Directional Beacons (NDB’s) that do not provide nearly as much or as accurate information as a modern Global Position System (GPS) approach does. In many cases these approaches also require flight crews to complete a “circling approach”. While technically meeting all required regulatory standards, they are universally considered high risk approaches. These approaches also have higher visibility and ceiling requirements meaning that in poor weather there is less chance of a flight being able to land. Hence marginal approaches are not only a safety concern they also increase the times a remote community is cut off from emergency and essential services due to weather considerations. The minimum approach standard at all remote airports needs to include GPS/LPV approaches to each end of the runway.”

**Increased Northern and Non-Traditional Workforce in Aviation**- Increased recruitment, training and retention of northerners for northern aviation jobs with a goal of increased participation by non-traditional demographic groups.

On October 2-3, 2018 the Minister of Transport gave the opening address to an Aviation Labour Shortages Forum. His remarks highlighted the importance of developing a competent aviation workforce to ensure system safety.

The Minister also addressed the challenge of attracting the next generation of aviation workers, especially non-traditional groups such as females, indigenous and other under-represented visible minorities. While the forum focused primarily on flight crew shortages and solutions, for the northern and remote aviation stakeholder there is a shortage of personnel for all aviation-related occupations.

There are various barriers that need to be considered to develop a program that would be successful in attracting, training and retaining northern youth for aviation-related occupations.



Training methods need to be sensitive because as discussed in the Aviation Shortages forum, it is problematic for students to have to leave their home and community to go to a school far away for a long period of time. There is an opportunity for more Industry sponsored federally funded On the Job mentoring and training, customized for specific cultural needs and company specific skill development requirements.

This is the type of program that provides awareness and increases individual confidence and should be supported with federal funding with greater direct community engagement.

As an earlier witness said;

“When there is investment in the people who live there, it's a fantastic opportunity for the growth and development of our communities. Money gets invested in our communities. The people who live there are able to give back to the communities. They provide better for their families. They're able to give more back to the community. They have a better, more enriched life. They have higher self-esteem. It's so much healthier for the people in their own communities...”

There is a need for a Northern and Remote Aviation Labour-Skills Committee of regional stakeholders including service providers, regulators and territorial representatives to conduct aviation needs assessment to develop a labour- skills strategy for northern and remote areas of Canada.

NATA's 43rd northern and remote aviation conference is taking place April 28-May 1, 2019 in Yellowknife.

The important discussion on northern and remote aviation infrastructure will be continuing with an airport development workshop planned, as well as a focus on the recruitment of a northern, and more diverse aviation workforce.

Thank you

Glenn Priestley  
Executive Director

