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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, November 28, 2018, we are continuing a study of the challenges facing flight schools in Canada.

Welcome to the committee members and welcome to our witnesses.

For the first hour, we have Elevate Aviation, Kendra Kincade, founder and chair. We've been anxiously looking forward to you being here, especially today.

From the First Nations Technical Institute, we have Jo-Anne Tabobandung, chief flight instructor and director of aviation; and Adam Hopkins, vice-president, enrolment management and student services.

From the Gander Flight Training Aerospace, we have Mike Doiron, aviation safety officer, EVAS Air Charters.

We'll start with Ms. Kincade.

Ms. Kendra Kincade (Founder and Chair, Elevate Aviation): Thank you for having me here today. This is a great honour.

You are all aware of the shortage that is facing the aviation industry. Right now we have an industry that's looking very hard to fill positions, but is the industry also open to those positions being filled by women?

My name is Kendra Kincade. I am a very proud employee of Nav Canada, working as an air traffic controller for almost 20 years, and now the employer brand specialist. I am the founder and chair of Elevate Aviation, and privileged to be the honorary colonel of the 417 Combat Support Squadron, 4 Wing Cold Lake, Alberta.

Elevate Aviation is a non-profit organization that promotes the world of aviation to women and indigenous people, and we do not turn any men away. One of the first things we started at Elevate Aviation was a mentorship program. This mentorship program has extended into both civilian and military worlds and we are working on creating a five-tier mentorship program.

We are currently in the middle of a project supported by the Status of Women, which gave us \$426,410 in funding, to do a nationwide project to determine why women aren't looking at careers in aviation

for economic security, and to create recommendations to the industry with our results.

We are just concluding the first phase of this project. We have collected data from across Canada from teachers, students, cadets, industry professionals, etc. A sneak peek from our surveys, which went out to industry professionals, reveals that 63% of people inside the industry believe there is a lack of awareness, 48% believe there is a lack of encouragement and 40% believe there is a lack of interest. We are now working on focus groups and will create a tool kit with recommendations to help companies encourage more women into aviation.

Elevate Aviation gives out bursaries, conducts speaking engagements across the country in schools and organizations, and provides tours in the industry. This year, we will be going to 20 locations on our cross-country tours, adding locations, such as Iqaluit, Prince Edward Island, Gander, Goose Bay, Kelowna and Vancouver to our already existing locations, such as Edmonton, Ottawa, Moncton, Winnipeg and many more.

What we have concluded from our cross-country tours is that bringing people inside the industry is so much more impactful than going to career fairs. This has led to the exciting opening of the Elevate Aviation learning centre. This is a learning centre that we want to take across Canada, with some of your help.

We were honoured to have the Alberta Minister of Labour, Christina Gray, fund our first year with \$230,000. We will be running this week-long exploratory learning centre for 10 weeks in our inaugural year in Edmonton, Alberta. Thanks to CEO Tom Ruth and his team at the Edmonton International Airport, we have been given space for a three-year term, and we are thrilled that Nav Canada is on board for a three-year sponsorship.

What we do during this week is allow people to come out for an entire week and explore aviation through fun, hands-on learning. For example, Canadian North has a half-day where it is showing off aircraft mechanics. It knows that not everyone is really interested in that, so to get people's interest, it's going to drop hints all morning and those hints will be used later in the morning to escape out of the Boeing 737 airplane which will be turned into an escape room.

At the end of the week, we pair everyone up with a mentor to stay connected with someone in the aviation industry. We leave time at the end of the week for those who are eligible and who would like to apply for jobs and receive guidance on how to apply for careers they may now be interested in.

During one of the two weeks that are reserved for female adults inside the Elevate Aviation learning centre, we are welcoming some women from an organization called Lives in Transition. The organization helps women who have been in violent relationships restore their lives and find careers. We hope that by bringing these people inside the learning centre, we can help them change their lives through the wonderful world of aviation; find a job to sustain themselves and their families; and create a life they love. As aviation helped me many years ago, and has helped others since, we want to see it help them.

To answer the question, "Is the industry ready for women?", in my opinion, yes, of course it is. The same survey I mentioned above that came back from participants in the industry showed that only 1% believed that women were not suited for aviation. Although we do hear stories that do reflect the 1% of the survey who said women weren't ready for aviation, I believe there will be fewer and fewer of those stories as we go forward with organizations such as Nav Canada, Transport Canada, Jazz, WestJet and others, all doing things in the aviation industry to create inclusive environments for women and minorities.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Tabobandung, please go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung (Chief Flight Instructor and Director of Aviation, First Nations Technical Institute): Madam Chair, and committee members, *Shé:kon Sewakwé:kon*. I am Turtle Clan from the Tyendingaga Mohawk Territory, and I would like to acknowledge the Algonquin people on whose traditional territory we are gathered.

Thank you for this opportunity for me and Adam Hopkins, VP of enrolment management, to join you today to discuss the challenges faced by flight training schools from an indigenous perspective. I am here representing First Nations Technical Institute's aviation program. I began my career as a flight instructor and later a pilot for FNTI's charter service. Since then, my primary focus has been flight instruction and program management. Today I am a class 1 flight instructor, ATPL-rated pilot examiner appointed by Transport Canada, chief flight instructor and director of aviation.

FNTI debuted our aviation program for indigenous people in 1990 in response to an absence of indigenous pilots in northern communities. I am a graduate of the first class and have vivid memories arriving at a World War I airport, walking into the World War II hangar to start my training as the only female in my class. We now have over 150 graduates from across the country in various positions in the aviation industry and a current enrolment of 38% indigenous women.

FNTI students come from coast to coast to coast to learn much more than how to fly an airplane. They learn effective communication and problem-solving skills, recognize the importance of healthy

living and understand the historical and contemporary issues facing indigenous people in Canada. Moreover, learning takes place in a culturally relevant environment. We have lived through challenges and have problem-solved to provide a great student experience. Challenges include isolation, homesickness, diverse educational backgrounds and financial constraints. We are very happy to share our solutions to achieve student success.

We develop a culture of a community within a community.

We foster a co-operative learning environment, not a competitive one.

We invest in three key supports for students: cultural advisers provide cultural programming, elders are available for emotional and mental health support, and student facilitators ensure healthy and diverse daily living.

Indigenous people stay connected through Facebook over vast distances and FNTI actively posts student successes, which go viral as viewers see themselves in the faces of our students.

We engage with our community at all levels including day care, elementary school and the whole community. We involve students in organizing an annual community day to thank the community for supporting our programs.

We have indigenous mentors in our alumni who share challenges and experiences and also teach in our programs.

We invest in our graduates by training them to be flight instructors and hire them for our program.

We bring industry expertise to learners through strong relationships with the OPP, Jazz, Air Canada and WestJet.

We continually solicit feedback from the aviation industry to ensure our graduates are well equipped for future careers.

This summer, we are hosting the first annual summer camp for indigenous youth. For many attendees, visiting FNTI will be their first experience away from home. We will provide technically enriched training with culturally respectful activities and indigenous staff to support them on their path toward the aviation industry.

We have collaborated with indigenous-owned airlines to support communities to attend the camp. It's a community-based solution to help address a critical shortage of pilots in the north.

Capacity is our largest challenge and we cannot overcome it alone. We have space for 24 students or eight students per year. FNTI receives 50 to 60 strong applications from across Canada and many from remote communities where air transportation is vital to health care, social welfare and food sustenance.

Since I came to FNTI 29 years ago there has been no investment in infrastructure: runways and manoeuvring surfaces are deteriorating, the hangar requires restoration, perimeter fences are required, and we lack aircraft and current technology to meet the growing needs of students.

With support, we could do so much more. I strongly recommend to the committee that investment in our industry goes beyond aviation and not only increases indigenous participation to address the gap in the critical pilot shortage but is an investment in the economic and social livelihood of indigenous communities across the country.

Niá:wen.

•(1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Mr. Doiron.

Mr. Mike Doiron (Aviation Safety Officer, EVAS Air Charters, Gander Flight Training Aerospace): Thank you, Madam Chair and members.

First of all, let me introduce myself. I've been in the business for 46 years. I've been very fortunate to stay in that business for 46 years. I have close to 20 years of experience with Transport Canada as an inspector as well as a senior manager, both at headquarters and regionally. I spent 12 years at the Moncton Flight College as the CEO and principal. I currently am working with EVAS and GFT on special projects, and am contracted with them to do their safety management program and to assist in their quality assurance program, for both the flying school and the airline.

EVAS welcomes this opportunity to present recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. The recommendations presented here will fall into three broad categories: support to student pilots, support to flight schools and immigration issues.

By way of a little history of EVAS, the company was started by Patrick and Florence White as a small flying school, with one aircraft. The company currently employs approximately 100 employees, operates 22 aircraft, and is made up of Exploits Valley Air Services, which is the airline component, and Gander Flight Training, which is the flying school. The company is headquartered in Gander, Newfoundland.

EVAS is part of the Air Canada family as a member of the Air Canada regional express that handles the Atlantic region. EVAS also operates charter, cargo and air ambulance operations.

Gander Flight Training currently has over 80 full-time students enrolled, both domestic and international. Dealing with the international market, the school has an ongoing training contract with Rangsit University of Bangkok, Thailand, to train students for the Thai aviation industry.

Historically, the timeline required to work at a tier 2 or tier 1 airline was eight to 10 years of experience before they even looked at you. In today's world, this can be as little as one to three years. There's a very rapid acceleration in how we get people moving into airline seats.

In today's world, we see pilots going from direct entry to first officer to captain in less than three years in tier 3 operations. When this scenario is added to the fact that new pilots are moving on to larger airlines at a very aggressive rate, it causes the entry-level operators to be stuck in a new-hire training cycle that is time-intensive and very expensive.

For example, EVAS has approximately 67 pilots on strength. In 2018 we hired 34 new pilots to replace departures. This gives us an attrition rate of over 50% annually. The impact of this is the requirement for multiple senior staff members to be involved in training programs at a higher rate than you would expect. From a financial aspect, the training cost for each new pilot is approximately \$20,000.

The main issue within the flying school is keeping a working cadre of senior instructors as well as training enough new commercial pilots to start working as junior instructors. Once again, the school suffers from a high attrition rate of instructors. A new instructor starts off as a class 4 instructor, which requires increased supervision by a senior class 2 or class 1 instructor until they upgrade to a class 3. This normally takes six to eight months. It should also be noted that the school cannot operate without at least one class 1 or class 2 instructor.

What is effectively happening is that the rapid hiring at the airlines is causing extreme stress for the flying schools to maintain their senior people. A chief flight instructor and a class 1 instructor are needed to train new instructors. The main issue here is that new instructors are not staying in the instructing world long enough to achieve the experience required to become a class 1 or class 2.

A secondary issue that will be rearing its ugly head here in the near future, I'm sure, is the shortage of pilot examiners. To become a pilot examiner for private or commercial licences, they need to hold a class 1 or class 2 flight instructor rating for the appropriate category of aircraft and at least 1,000 hours of flight instructing experience. Achieving this in today's environment is very difficult.

However, this is compounded by the fact that Transport Canada is taking excessively long time frames to train and certify new pilot examiners. From our experience, the actual training process, which takes approximately two to three days of focused activities to complete, has taken as much as six to 12 months. Over the last decade, Transport Canada's level of service has become a serious issue for operators. Whether it's licensing of pilots, approval of operational manuals or amendments, or specialty activities such as pilot examiner training, the current time taken is way outside the norm. It recently took over one year to get a flight training manual approved.

Let's talk a bit about student financial support. As you are probably aware, the cost of becoming a commercial pilot today is approximately \$60,000 to \$80,000. The student loan system is based on a four-year university model. The loan amounts are based on weeks of training versus tuition costs.

• (1115)

What this means is that the average student might get \$20,000 instead of \$80,000 to help with his or her tuition.

I have a couple of recommendations. I'll skip ahead a little bit here because I'm running out of time.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Doiron; you're over your five minutes. Could you hold those recommendations and provide them in response to some of the questions from the members?

Mr. Jeneroux, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here today.

Before I get started, I want to bring up the point of M-177 and how I feel that it failed to look at what's more interesting to the committee: that there are issues with regard to having more women in the industry. If Mr. Fuhr were here today to hear these comments, I think it would be something that he could take back. Again, it's been raised a number of times that it would be nice if this motion addressed getting more women involved in the industry.

I'm thankful that we have somebody here today, Kendra Kincade, who spoke in favour of that and about a lot of the work that she does. I know she goes across the country, but in my city of Edmonton, she does a lot of work in that regard.

Thank you, Ms. Kincade, for that.

I want to start my questions with Ms. Kincade. You talk about getting more women involved in the industry. Why are women or even men, for that matter, leaving the industry? We've heard a variety of testimonies, but we'd be interested to hear from your perspective, a strong training standpoint, on why you think people are leaving the industry.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I think it depends on the area of the industry. It's so different. If we're talking about air traffic control, where I am, fewer than 1% leave.

With regard to pilots, for some of the people we talked to, it comes down to financial reasons. They can't afford to stay.

There are, sadly, some cases where we know some women who have left the industry because of things that have happened to them. We're hoping that, through mentorship programs and other things we're doing, we can help solve those problems.

In particular, with regard to one lady I'm speaking with now, there were issues that happened to her, and there was no place for her to go. When she reported it to her own company, there was no support for her. I think that's a very small part of it. I think we're getting much better with that.

Pilots are the huge area, and I think it's financial. It's really hard for people to afford to become pilots and to stay in it. One of the problems is that you become a pilot and then you have to get your hours. Then maybe you need to have another job. You have to get your hours, you have to prove that you're going to be a great pilot, but then you have to work at Walmart or wherever or be a waitress or waiter to help support that job while you try to raise your hours. That can be really impossible for some people.

• (1120)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Is that because pilots are not being paid enough?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Yes. For instance, my son just got his private pilot's licence, so now he's moving on. He has to build hours. He has to go out and fly and build hours and pay for that. How does he pay for that? He has to get a job or ask mom. He has to go out and get a job so that he can afford to go and build up his hours at the flying club.

It's really expensive. If you don't have \$60,000 to \$80,000, how do you become a pilot? Why aren't the companies...? I know it's different with Nav Canada because it's the air traffic service provider, so it is paying the employees to train and become air traffic controllers. I don't have the answer for how that works inside the aviation industry for pilots. If there's a pathway for people that is streamed from working with the flying clubs to working with different levels of airlines to build up so that they can go to Air Canada or WestJet—but helping all the people along the way—that seems a possible pathway.

Also, there is helping people get loans to get their private pilot licences. That seems to be a problem right now.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You mentioned a great advocate in Edmonton, Tom Ruth, with the Edmonton International Airport. He and the airport authority do great work around the region.

In your opinion, is that unusual? Could airport authorities do more of that work?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I just went down to the Canadian Airport Council board meeting in L.A. about two weeks ago, and I was speaking with all the airport CEOs across Canada. They all seem very interested, from my point of view anyway, in helping us take our cross-country tours and our learning centre to different airports across the country.

I think everyone is on board to help out and make this happen. Tom Ruth is definitely a leader in that, in believing in us and helping to give us space for this learning centre. I am so grateful to him.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You say there's not much turnover on the air traffic controller side, but on the pilot side, are they leaving the industry altogether? Is this a hurdle? Do people get frustrated at the point of getting those hours and say they're out, they're going to a different career?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I don't think I would be the best one to answer that, because I'm at the beginning, pushing people in, or encouraging people to get in.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will move on to Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for being here this morning.

Ms. Kincade, Elevate Aviation sets itself apart by its approach of focusing on the participation of women in Canada's aviation sector. The support you are providing for young Canadian women is as beneficial for them as it is for flying as a profession.

Can you tell us about your plan to improve women's economic security by giving them access to careers in Canada's aviation industry? What are the starting hypotheses you want to verify and how will the project implement measures to improve and encourage the inclusion of women in the profession?

[*English*]

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Status of Women gave us \$426,410 to do a three-year project to determine why women aren't looking at aviation as a career for economic security, all across Canada.

We have now closed our surveys. We sent out surveys all across Canada to students, to air cadets, to COPA, to industry, to the CCAA, to a number of people, and we're bringing those results back. Our next step is to look at all these results—from teachers, guidance counsellors and students—and then do focus groups.

We're going to go across the country. If anyone wants to host a focus group with us, we are looking to find out the answers that come from looking at the survey questions. From the focus groups, we are going to create a tool kit meant for companies in aviation all across Canada. We'll provide recommendations from what we see of why women aren't looking at aviation as a career for economic security. Focus groups will help us come up with recommendations to the companies.

The next phase is going to be for us to work with the companies and monitor them as they implement our recommendations.

The final phase is for us to go back and see whether these recommendations made any difference, whether we're seeing more women come into aviation. Hopefully, we'll just continue to do things from there. The end of this project doesn't stop the push to get more women in aviation.

We bring women in on our cross-country tours. In the morning, we always ask them who's here because they love aviation, and no one says anything. Then I ask who's here because you get a free day off school, and they all laugh. But, at the end of that day, they're all walking around saying they want to be helicopter pilots, air traffic controllers, aerospace engineers. So they want it; they just don't know they want it yet. We're hoping that this happens.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

At our last committee meeting, we heard from Ms. Farly, the owner of the Aéro Loisirs school in the Laurentians. Ms. Farly emphasized that, although the environment is predominantly male, she had never experienced any discrimination. I understand that this is still a subjective perception, but I would like your opinion about it.

Ms. Tabobandung, in your opinion, what should be done to ensure that girls and women will be attracted to aviation and will want to stay in it?

[*English*]

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: That's a very insightful question. At FNTI, we haven't targeted women to come to our program, but it's a result of the culture that we create.

When I started in aviation, in my training 29 years ago, I was the only female student. We had all male flight instructors, we had all male executives, we had all male management. Everything was male. My experience was okay. It wasn't the greatest. When I look back now, I know it could have been better.

Even then, I didn't even know a female pilot, let alone a female indigenous pilot, to have as a role model. My husband is here today. He went to school with me. He's an Air Canada pilot. When we started, we didn't have any indigenous mentors. What we've done at our school is create indigenous mentors by celebrating successes of people in the program. When one of our students goes solo, we post it on Facebook and it goes viral. We say, "Here's Kayla. She's from north of Thunder Bay. She just went solo."

It goes viral because indigenous youth see themselves in the faces of our students. They see it's working. They see the co-operation at our school and they all want to be a part of it, so it's more inviting. I believe female indigenous mentors will promote more women in aviation, as well as having women in senior executive positions in aviation.

I believe for myself, and Kendra as well, that being in those positions really helps us create an inclusive environment.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us.

I will start with the representatives of the First Nations Technical Institute.

Ever since we started this study, two problems keep coming up: attracting new students and retaining them. You talked about the community aspect and that interested me. You seem to have developed a true feeling of affiliation to the indigenous community and you want to give back to the community that made your path easier.

Would any of the aspects of your practice be transferable to flight schools that are not in indigenous communities?

[English]

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: We're just one flight school that has gone through the challenges and is able to create a great environment. I honestly believe this can be created anywhere in Canada if we want to increase indigenous participation.

With indigenous people, we're so deeply rooted in our communities and in our families that it's difficult to go away to school; it's really difficult to leave your family. Therefore, if we can create a co-operative learning environment, not a competitive one where if you don't make the grade you're out, which in a lot of mainstream schools is the case, by creating that type of environment, it automatically fosters co-operation and community. We actually call our school "a community within a community". The students go to school together, they live together and they share their different cultures. Thus it's part of nation-building as well for our people, and it has really worked.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I have a quick question for Ms. Kincade. It is interesting to learn about what your organization is accomplishing. Does your organization have a francophone equivalent?

[English]

Ms. Kendra Kincade: At the learning centre in Edmonton, there is not. On our cross-country tour, we go to Montreal and we have French speakers there, and in Ottawa as well. On our cross-country tour we have speakers in the morning and tours in the afternoon

inside the industry, so whether we have French speakers depends where we go.

Our Status of Women project is also translated. It is bilingual.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

You are certainly too young to have gone through the crisis in the aviation industry in the 1970s. It was all about language. With your approach involving women in careers in aviation, is there still a difference with regard to language or has that been resolved?

[English]

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I don't think so. I could be wrong about that, but I don't think so. English is the language of aviation we have to speak on the radio around the world, so you do have to speak English for the most part if you're a pilot or an air traffic controller.

In Quebec you can be an air traffic controller, and you can speak French on the frequency, which is wonderful. When I go in there, I'm one of the only.... Most people speak French, and I'm trying to, but I don't think it's a big issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

Mr. Doiron, we have not had the opportunity to hear about your recommendations. I will give you the floor so that you can tell us about them.

Mr. Mike Doiron: In my opinion, the biggest problem for flight schools lies in the difficulty of attracting and retaining students, as you said earlier.

Finances are an important factor. I know a number of students who would like to become involved in the industry as pilots, engineers or in other roles. But they do not have the financial means to do so, since the cost of the training is very high. It is a major problem.

Another point I would like to emphasize is regulation. I firmly believe that there has to be a good regulatory oversight system, but the government has limited resources for work of that kind. Transport Canada would help a number of companies if it provided them with studies and product information and if it enforced very stringent regulatory oversight. At the moment, the greatest obstacle we have to face in Gander is the difficulty in obtaining good service from Transport Canada, both for our students and for our company.

• (1135)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move on to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a few questions I'm going to put up front, and you guys can share the time to answer.

First off, to Ms. Kincade, you do a great job, great work. It's nice to see that someone has the passion for the industry that you do. We all—I can speak for at least us on this side of the table—appreciate that.

I want to direct my questions to the diversity of pilot examiners, controllers and pilots, and shortages. With that, there's equality with respect to gender, linguistic and ethnic equality, and, of course, the needs of the different areas throughout Canada.

We see the grant funding of \$426,000 to Elevate Aviation to examine why more women don't look at aviation to create economic security and to collect data to see if the environment is attractive and inclusive of women.

Ms. Kincade, with that program, are you looking at including in the dialogue you're having throughout the nation—and Mr. Aubin touched on this with the linguistic side of it, but I'll touch on it with the indigenous side of it—folks like those in the indigenous community, so that the results include that equality?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: The focus of that program was just women. As we're growing, we are learning that we need to focus more on indigenous people, so at our learning centre, we have two weeks that are indigenous only. The focus of that is women, whether they are indigenous or non-indigenous. We're going to work together and do a focus group, I hope.

We're also working with NATA. At the conference in Yellowknife in April we are going to do a focus group with them and hope to capture some thoughts from northern Canada. We really want everyone's voice heard in this.

The same things that are stopping women in general from looking at aviation are perhaps the same things that are stopping the indigenous community. Whether we find that out or not with this grant, we can still use the recommendations that we find, work together with the companies and hope to be inclusive of everybody in Canada.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Ms. Tabobandung, do you see that as an opportunity to tap into the same program and work, so that when recommendations do come forward for companies to find and retain women in the workforce, you're going to be a big part of that?

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: Of course. We will work with all groups. It's interesting, because we don't have a difficult time attracting applicants to our program. We just don't have the capacity to train them. We don't target women. Indigenous people make up 4% to 5% of the population. Half of that is women. All our people are under-represented, so we don't target one specific group, but by all means, we'll work with anybody we can to increase the interest. Even if they don't train at First Nations, it's important that they pursue post-secondary education to continue studies in aviation or anything else.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Speaking of post-secondary education, currently the federal government is a steward, for lack of a better word, of the Canada student loans program. Other than that, the provincial levels of government throughout the country are all different, unfortunately, but hopefully we can get more of a consistency. They also offer programs for education at the post-secondary level. Do you see a greater contrast with what's available

to post-secondary students in other programs as compared to the aviation programs?

I guess I'll ask that question of all of you.

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: Yes. Our students have a different base to secure funds for post-secondary education. A common misconception is that all indigenous people have their education paid for. That's not correct. It depends on the size of the communities they live in. FNTI supports bursaries, and there's also Indspire, through the federal government, where our students can apply to help support their education.

• (1140)

Mr. Vance Badawey: I'm assuming, Ms. Kincade, that when you come back with your recommendations, they are going to include indigenous-related concerns and/or mechanisms that can include the indigenous community as well as linguistic and other ethnicities. Perhaps there will be recommendations that the federal government expand its Canada student loans program to include aviation education and that the provincial government make other programs available to the aviation industry, especially in the diverse areas that you're looking at—pilots being the most obvious, but also controllers and others who are seeing the shortage as well.

Would I be correct to assume that?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: We need you on our committee.

Mr. Vance Badawey: We're here with you, but at the same time it's important that it's more than just us at the committee level, that it's the folks in the industry who in fact know a heck of a lot more than we do. I look forward to seeing that final report, and hopefully we can then move it forward and help alleviate some of these challenges.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Thank you for that.

The Chair: Just for the information of the committee, if you have recommendations and have submitted a brief, the analyst will have those, but if you have any other recommendations, please submit them very quickly so that they can be considered in the report.

We'll go on to Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to our witnesses.

I want to focus on the labour market information report of March 2018, which identified that only 7% of pilots are women. There's also, of course, the indigenous side in terms of under-representation. I want to ask this of Kendra, first of all, given that we've seen the work that you're doing with your organization, trying to elevate the profile of training and so on for females and indigenous people. What do you think we could do as MPs, as a committee, to support the work you're trying to accomplish?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Bring awareness to the community would help. For instance, we're trying to take our learning centre in Edmonton across Canada. Anything that can be done to help us take it across Canada and secure funds would help. We can take it across Canada; we just need the funds to help us do it.

We work with many businesses, such as Canadian North and North Caribou Air. We're working with a number of them out in Edmonton that do in-kind things to help us. Nav Canada has an entire day, Canadian North has a half a day, the military has half a day. There are a bunch of different things. We have drones, for example.

Helping to link us up to other organizations; helping us find funding so that we can take that learning centre across Canada, talking to the community to say that we're here and that other organizations are here would help. Northern Lights Aero Foundation is an organization, and there is the Canadian Women in Aviation conference, which is coming up in June. There are things that the public just doesn't know about.

If you are ever out talking and there is opportunity to bring people out to speak about aviation at events you're doing, that's a wonderful thing that can be done. If you're speaking, ask, "Have you ever heard about aviation? Here are some organizations that can help you."

If you or if someone from a different part of the country contacts us at Elevate Aviation, we hook them up with a mentor from various areas. If you want to be a pilot, we'll hook you up with a pilot; it could be a chief flight instructor, a WestJet pilot, an Air Canada pilot or an Air Inuit pilot. It's the same with air traffic control: we'll bring you in, let you plug in for an hour and listen to an air traffic controller—a "try before you buy" kind of thing.

Letting people know that all of these organizations are here would be a wonderful step—and funding.

Mr. Churence Rogers: That awareness piece, then, is huge.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Yes, it is.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Ms. Tabobandung, you mentioned the lack of investment in infrastructure. Do you mean in new infrastructure, in maintaining current infrastructure, or both?

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: It's beyond maintenance, at this time; it's repair. The runways we use now are 78 years old. They're deteriorating; they're crumbling.

We had three runways. One was decommissioned because it had degraded too much, so we're left with two runways with the grass growing through them, and we don't have a perimeter fence. It's just a matter of time before they get to the point that we can no longer use them.

We need infrastructure dollars to help support our program so that we can continue to train indigenous pilots.

• (1145)

Mr. Churence Rogers: And do you believe that's the most effective way of addressing the critical shortage of pilots in the north, to train indigenous people?

Ms. Jo-Anne Tabobandung: Oh, absolutely. Among our admissions criteria, because we have so many applications, is a pretty comprehensive admissions process.

One criterion, most importantly, is a letter of intent. The letter of intent tells us who they are. I'll share with you what I read in a letter of intent last week from a young woman in the Northwest Territories. She's 28 years old. She's the only person in her family who graduated from high school and she wants to stay in the north. She pointed out two carriers that she wants to fly with so that she can help support the community she grew up in.

The Chair: You have a minute left.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Doiron, welcome from Gander, Newfoundland. Being an MP from Newfoundland and Labrador, I wanted to say hi.

You mentioned some recommendations. One that you just referred to concerned financial challenges, the costs of training. We've heard from other witnesses on that point as well.

Are there other challenges that you wanted to identify? I know you were cut short a little when you did your initial presentation. Is there anything else that you have for us?

Mr. Mike Doiron: Thank you for that, sir.

One element we stumbled across—at least in my experience, being in the flight training industry—when we went after funding for students, working with the student loans people and also with the Canada Revenue Agency for being able to claim training costs, was the way we have our training licences set up—we have basically a private, a commercial and so forth. Very quickly, everybody gets hung up on this "private" pilot licence. Even though it is an integral part of the commercial pilot licence, there seems to be a roadblock there. That's one issue.

The second and maybe in some ways greater issue is the fact that most student funding is based upon weeks in class versus costs of tuition. The average student therefore doesn't get any amount near what is really needed to cover tuition costs. An integrated air transport pilot licence or an integrated commercial pilot licence can be done in about 14 to 16 months, on average, while a university degree takes four years. The system is based on that university degree. Some way to change this situation would be great.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Kendra, I'm a member of Parliament from Calgary. I had the opportunity last week to visit the tower with Nav Canada. So I did exactly what you just talked about, listen in on the conversation. I would encourage any member if they have the opportunity to take it up with Nav Canada and see the operations. It's well worth it.

What I found interesting though was, and correct me if I've got this wrong, to become a control tower operator, there's no school to go to. They train themselves through Nav Canada. Is that not correct?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Yes. Nav Canada trains the air traffic controllers.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Yes. And my understanding is the same thing with pilots. You don't go to a technical school to become a pilot, you go to a private flight school. Is that correct?

Mr. Mike Doiron: Or colleges. There are private flight schools; different provinces have community colleges.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Do they in Alberta? SAIT has something?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: SAIT has the pilot program in Calgary.

Mr. Ron Liepert: It seems to me that would be the area, if we want to fill this gap. The problem is I think there's a bit of a jurisdictional area here because you're appearing before a federal committee and education is a provincial responsibility; SAIT is primarily funded by the Province of Alberta. Have there been discussions with, in our case, the Province of Alberta about increased funding for aviation? And then it seems to me that what Jo-Anne is doing in Ontario is a natural thing to be doing in Alberta. We have lots of young people who unfortunately aren't working these days. I just don't understand why all of these dots haven't been connected to date.

• (1150)

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I don't either.

Speaking about Nav Canada to start, first you can see when you go into that tower, what an attractive job it is, and what an easy sell it is.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Absolutely.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: I don't know if you've ever been into the air traffic control centre?

Mr. Ron Liepert: I was amazed how much money you guys made.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: When you start out IFR in the air traffic control centre, the basic salary in Edmonton is \$150,000 in your first year.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Can you believe that?

Ms. Kendra Kincade: So if any of you want to come and see, let me know.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I wish I were about 40 years younger.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: It's an incredible career. I find once we get anyone in the Nav Canada building, it's an easy sell. We're selling pilots too. We're saying, how about this career? Do you have \$80,000 in your pocket?

Mr. Ron Liepert: Okay, that's where I get back to the provincial funding. Jo-Anne's talking about their issue being infrastructure to a large extent. I'm thinking about whether it's Edmonton in Villeneuve or Calgary in Springbank...we have the infrastructure. It seems to me you have a high number of young people who need a new career. Many are indigenous, and I think there are great opportunities there. We have the infrastructure. These dots just aren't connecting and I don't know why they aren't and I'm only speaking for our province. I don't know other provinces that well.

Ms. Kendra Kincade: Perhaps this is a conversation we could start and have a provincial committee to talk about doing this. We're

going up to Yellowknife in April to host one of our tours up there, then we're also going to different areas.

We were talking to some people in Yellowknife who want to send some indigenous people to our learning centre for a week. So the interest is there. Maybe the next step is some sort of committee.

Mr. Ron Liepert: After Jason Kenney gets elected in a month or so, why don't we have a conversation with him?

The Chair: Okay.

We'll move onto Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Thank you folks for having me.

My question is specific, first of all, to Mr. Doiron because Gander Flight Training is in my riding. I've known the people involved for quite some time. Every time I talk to someone who's interested in aviation—and I'm talking about people in the age group of 18 to about 27 or so—I find that many of them now realize that the opportunities to advance extremely quickly are immense. I saw one son of a friend of mine. He's now 24 or 25 years old, and he's close to becoming a captain with Jazz.

To watch him go from this student of 18 and then four or five years later... It's phenomenal, and it was unheard of several years ago, as I was told. This tells me “good for him” and that he's an exceptional person, but even at his level of talent, that wouldn't have happened all those years ago.

One of the things that I keep hearing from people that age is that it's like sticker shock. They look at the price of getting in, and right away, they say, “You mean I have to spend that much money in that period of time?”

Now, Mr. Doiron, I'm picking on you because you addressed this earlier. You said you had a solution, at least one step towards getting over that sticker shock of getting into the school.

Mr. Mike Doiron: I think what has to happen is that we have to sell the career, not the start-up. One of the issues is that for years when I would talk to parents, for example, at my previous school and I would explain, they would ask how much it costs for training, and I would tell them. Then they would ask, “How much can they expect to earn when they start working?” and I would explain to them that it's literally slave wages when they first start in the industry. That's where the disconnect happened. However, if you took the time to explain to them that that's considered an apprenticeship, that over a period of two or three years that salary changes dramatically, especially in this day and age, and that the progression is so rapid, like the young man you were talking about... He went from slave wages to a very, very decent salary in a very short time.

To me, that's the most critical aspect. You don't just sell the training. You sell the career. To me, that's the way to do it because if you just sell the training, people just click out and they're gone. They'll never come back because they just get that sticker shock.

•(1155)

Mr. Scott Simms: We deal with people with student loans all the time, whether it be an issue of forgiveness or interest relief. They're unable to pay; they're unable to get that job to begin with. It seems to me now, in this particular industry, that this is not as big an issue unless you get over that slave wage issue, and then you're on to something that has better pay.

The other part of it is the school itself. In addition to getting the financing to get the kids in there, what relief is needed for the schools, the private schools, to allow them to attract more students? One of the issues in the school that you represent is that there's a large population of international students there.

Mr. Mike Doiron: Yes, very much so.

Mr. Scott Simms: Now we have whole other issues with that school with regard to getting them to transition from students to people in the workforce here in Canada. I'm not specifically asking about that issue, but what help can be provided to the school itself?

Mr. Mike Doiron: I think, once again, it comes back to supporting the infrastructure, like you were talking about, making it easier for the flying schools to effectively operate on a day-to-day basis. One of the elements that we're looking at right now at Gander is the purchase of two very expensive flight training devices to assist us in both the flying school and the airline.

So, anything that can be done to support flying schools right across the country in being able to purchase those units, either through low-interest loans or whatever the case may be, anything that can be done in that regard to support these schools, would be a major step in the right direction because that's one of the things that I find in a lot of cases.

I know that when I was running my own school, we were dealing with the bank, and some of the loans that they were throwing at us were pretty expensive to say the least. We were unable to buy certain things that we felt would have been of major benefit to the students' training and their ability to actually complete the training in a reasonable time.

Mr. Scott Simms: So, financing capability from, say, an economic development agency similar to what we have in Atlantic—

Mr. Mike Doiron: It would be through ACOA, for example.

Mr. Scott Simms: —which would be the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. That certainly goes a long way or has gone a long way towards the school. In GFT's case, you have a situation in which you have two entities on the move here, which would be, one, the school, and two, the actual airline that's doing the flying.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Scott Simms: The transition is great, and that allows them to get into the workforce more easily.

How about when it comes to—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Simms. We're just about out of time.

Mr. Scott Simms: Oh, that's my life story, Madam Chair.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Monsieur Aubin, do you have an outstanding question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms: Sorry, was I just about out of time or was I out of time?

The Chair: You were at five minutes, 34 seconds, and I was trying to make sure that Mr. Aubin, if he had a pressing question, had an opportunity to get that on the record as well.

Mr. Scott Simms: Oh, well, there you go. Understood.

The Chair: Thank you to our witnesses. As you can see, this is an issue that the committee's keenly interested in.

Mr. Fuhr has joined us as well this morning. Thank you very much.

We will suspend for a few minutes until we have the other witnesses come to the table.

•(1155)

(Pause)

•(1205)

The Chair: I am calling the meeting back to order.

With us by video conference, for Aviation MH, we have Martin Hivon, president and chief flight instructor from Rivière-du-Loup. Welcome.

From Central North Airways, we have Captain Michael Rocha, owner, and senior executive of the Central North Flying Club.

From L3 Technologies, we have Richard Foster, vice-president.

Welcome to our witnesses. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Hivon, if you would like to go first, please limit your comments to five minutes so that we'll have time for questions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Hivon (President and Chief Flight Instructor, Aviation MH): Great.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to testify here today.

[*English*]

As the owner of a small flight school and the manager of a municipal airport, I believe I am quite aware of the different challenges facing flight schools in Canada. I do not want to sound negative, but given the fact that this committee is focusing on the challenges facing flight schools in Canada, I will limit my observations to the problems and not discuss what might still be going well.

You have all heard the statistics regarding the pilot shortage that has already started. What is in my opinion even more important is the fact that there are almost no flight instructors available anymore.

If we are at the beginning of an important shortage of pilots, how are we going to train the required pilots if we are already out of flight instructors? One of the traditional career paths for young pilots was to obtain their commercial licence and then become flight instructors for a few years in order to gain experience. New pilots are now bypassing this path, because they get hired by companies that are short of pilots right after they obtain their licence.

When I hired my first flight instructor a few years ago, I chose to offer him much better than average industry conditions. I paid him a decent salary on an annual basis in order to provide a more stable income and better overall quality of life. This strategy worked well for both the company and the instructor. Despite these conditions, I have been trying to find a new full-time flight instructor for four months now, and I have not been able to get one single resumé, let alone hire somebody.

Some would suggest that the free market will always win, and if flight schools were to pay flight instructors even better—a lot better—then some pilots would choose to become flight instructors. However, by doing so, we would have no choice, as businesses, but to pass on these additional costs to the customer.

It is already financially difficult nowadays for the average would-be pilot to afford a quite expensive training. The problem would then be pushed towards the rest of the aviation industry. The pilot shortage would become even more critical, because fewer candidates would be able to afford the training. The lack of instructors, in my view, is the number one challenge we are facing now.

The second challenge facing flight schools is something that you may or may not have heard about yet. The federal government and Nav Canada are concentrating all the services they offer on the major airports in Canada. These airports are already quite busy and cater mostly to major airlines. A few exceptions, like Saint-Hubert airport near Montreal, which are not the destination of major airlines, are operating at full capacity already.

One would think that it would be simple and logical to move some flight training activities away from major centres. This would alleviate congestion problems and noise problems, for example. However, flight schools like mine that operate away from these major centres must operate on smaller aerodromes that are not supported by Nav Canada and/or the federal government. These aerodromes were ceded to the municipalities in 2003, over 15 years ago, and are now in serious need of infrastructure work. The municipalities that own them simply cannot afford these required upgrades.

Nav Canada is also shutting down services at an alarming rate. Nav aids and instrument approaches are no longer supported by Nav Canada, and both nav aids and the approaches are being decommissioned at all but the major airports. How are we supposed to train new pilots if the major airports are overcrowded and the smaller ones no longer have the infrastructure required to support flight operations and flight training? We can train private pilots without access to conventional nav aids and instrument approaches, but we cannot train professional pilots without them. It is another serious problem that has been creeping up for quite a few years now, and it is not getting any better.

My third and last point has to do with Transport Canada. It is risky for a small school like mine to criticize the agency that controls all of our operations, but I believe this committee needs to hear about this other challenge that we face. Transport Canada should be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem. It is getting more difficult every day to get any kind of services without delays at Transport Canada. This is true at every level of our operations. It would seem that Transport Canada is seriously short-staffed. Some serious inefficiencies could be addressed first, and the overall situation would improve.

Another problem with Transport Canada is the need to update and upgrade the way they treat flight training in Canada. The current system is old if not completely archaic. For example, the entire system is based on the number of training hours. A competency-based training system would be a lot more efficient and could possibly reduce the overall cost of training pilots.

• (1210)

Written examinations produced by Transport Canada are mostly based on “catches” instead of focusing on what’s important.

Finally, Transport Canada is too slow to adapt to new realities. For example, no professional pilot today navigates with a paper chart, and absolutely nobody navigates with a sextant. Despite this, Transport Canada refuses to allow modern tools like Foreflight, for example, in pilot training. It may still be important to at least be familiar with paper charts and old navigation techniques, but to simply refuse to allow schools to use and teach with modern navigation tools is quite simply unacceptable. We need to train pilots with the real skills they need today and the skills they will require tomorrow, not with the skills required 30 years ago.

Thank you. If you have any questions, I’d be happy to answer them.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hivon. We appreciate your time and testimony.

Mr. Rocha, for five minutes, please.

Captain Michael Rocha (Senior Executive, Central North Flying Club, and Owner, Central North Airways): Thank you, and I agree with what Mike and Martin have said as well.

My name is Michael Rocha. I’m an airline transport-rated pilot and a class 2 flight instructor. I have a multi IFR rating. I’m type-rated on many different aircrafts: Q400s and Embraer jets. I have flight instruction and charter experience. I have also worked and currently work in the airline industry as a pilot.

I grew up in Brampton. I was fortunate to attend a high school aviation program that had five courses specific to aviation. It was a great opportunity for me. I went on to engineering and did transportation engineering with a focus on aviation.

I started working at Toronto Island and from there went back to Sudbury and opened up a flight school. I was approached by an investor who wanted to do the flight school. At the time, I felt the airport was not a great airport to do business at, so we basically opened up our own airport. Some of our initial challenges were insurance costs. We started right after September 11 and had insurance cost quotes that basically tripled from before September 11 to after September 11. We had to manoeuvre regulations within Transport Canada, the start time, the time that it took from when we wanted to start until we actually started. While you're doing that process, you have aircraft sitting on the ground, waiting and not generating any revenue. The cost of the flight training for the students was and is still a concern today. Student completion rates were also a challenge, as a high number of students start flight training and do not finish.

Once we did get started, we were able to offer all the flight training licences available. We could offer private, commercial, multi IFR and night instructor ratings. We had no issues getting instructors. People were basically dying to work, and instructors were willing to work for very little money, because for them it was a way to build their hours. It was not an issue. There were lots of instructors.

The student demand was present in northern Ontario. We had a lot of private ownership of aircraft in northern Ontario. We had generational students. Dad owned an airplane, so the son was going to learn to fly and take over the aircraft. We had a good general aviation community at the airport. We had a Sudbury flying club with lots of members. It was a place where people could go to the airport if they just wanted to poke their nose in and see what aviation was all about. There was a place where they could go and walk in, and there would be a bunch of pilots hanging out, drinking coffee and shooting the breeze about flying.

That was what was going on there. Flying clubs existed at our airport. They no longer do. We were fortunate to do fairly well with the flight training. We expanded into the charter operation, but it was not an easy business. It's a highly regulated business. There are low margins and small volumes. We were able to survive based on the fact that we had the private pilots sector, the people who were just doing their private licences, plus we were able to get commercial students.

We were able to train our own instructors. If students came in, we could basically offer them a job. If they did their private and commercial licence, and went on to do their instruction rating, we could tell them right there, "Yes, we're going to give you a job and we'll hire you," which we did with many of our students.

The pilots who were living in the Sudbury area could train in the Sudbury area. They could do their private and commercial licence, live at home and do their training. At that time there were 352 flight schools in Canada and over 100 in Ontario alone. What changed?

For us, one of the biggest factors that changed was that the Ontario government decided it wanted to oversee and regulate the flight training industry. When that happened, the rollout, in my opinion, was poor. Businesses had to deal with it. Schools were initially able to pay the fees, because it was just a course fee to cover the commercial and the instructor rating course. Then the

government demanded audited financials. The cost became prohibitive to the schools that did not have a large commercial student base.

Schools in northern Ontario did not have enough commercial instructor ratings taking place to cover the costs of the audited financials and the course costs. As a result, we were no longer able to offer those courses, so we lost a lot of our full-time student base, people we were going to train every single day.

Small schools lost a significant student base, and then a lot of the students who wanted to continue in commercial training had to travel elsewhere to do it. That was a big problem. The instructors followed, because if you didn't have the student base, the instructors would go where the employment was.

● (1215)

Another thing we noticed was the airport funding. As my colleague previously mentioned, we did not have an airport that was investing heavily into the general aviation community. The focus was passenger traffic and not student traffic. When the club got moved over into a different space, it basically went dormant and we lost that general aviation community.

The other items were Transport Canada oversights, the flight tests and the funding for Transport Canada. We have a Transport Canada office in Sudbury right now that's actually going to be closing. That's a service that is really valuable, in that you can get your flight tests, licence and written test done right there. Where are we now? Today we only have 148 active schools and there are only 43 in Ontario.

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Captain. I'm sorry, I have to cut you off at this point. I'm sure you can get the rest of your comments in.

Mr. Foster.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Foster (Vice-President, L3 Technologies): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

L3 Technologies develops defence technologies and advanced commercial solutions for pilot training and aviation safety. In this country, L3 Technologies currently employs more than 2,200 Canadians, and the company is continuing to grow.

L3 Technologies estimates that 151,000 new pilots will be needed around the world in the next five years, an average of 30,000 per year. For reference, the industry trained about 20,000 pilots in 2017.

[English]

This committee will find it interesting that our airline academy programs are constructed to assist airlines with receiving well-trained pilots. In Europe, we conduct the recruiting, selection and training processes that will guarantee successful candidates a right seat with a paired airline operating with the European Aviation Safety Agency; easyJet and British Airways are two examples.

At our airline academy in Florida, we have over 780 students, 104 aircraft and a yearly flying rate of 130,000 hours. Two-thirds of the students are foreign nationals. There are no Canadians at the moment.

Due to FAA requirements to achieve air transport licenses, L3 offers graduates the opportunity to remain in our schools to become instructors and achieve their required hours. While we cannot guarantee placement to airlines in the U.S., our recruiting and training standards are well respected and the hiring rate of graduates by airlines is high.

In both of these programs, the largest barrier to producing more pilots is cost. Students are required to finance themselves. We do provide assistance and have government as well as commercially backed loans. There are also several scholarship programs.

Although the financial burden to the student remains high, L3 provides a thorough screening selection on students to maximize the success rate as we assume some of the financial risk.

L3 Technologies owns Dawson Aviation in Pueblo, Colorado. Since 2006, Dawson has provided initial flight training for all United States Air Force student pilots, combat system operators and remotely piloted aircraft operators. More than 15,000 USAF students have passed through since inauguration. This program consolidated initial flight training that had been farmed out to 183 local schools across the United States. The decision to consolidate the program into one school and to be more closely supervised by the USAF was a result of a series of accidents at several civilian flight schools that had difficulty ensuring appropriate technical and safety standards.

[Translation]

All these programs highlight the requirement for a critical mass of resources and infrastructure. Flight safety and flying and maintenance standards must be observed. In addition, a constant source of flying instructors and aviation maintenance personnel must be provided. The student selection process must be rigorous and they must be provided with sound advice and financial assistance. It must also be possible to invest in the latest simulation and aircraft technology, so that training is aligned with airline requirements.

[English]

Our first recommendation is to develop a national strategy. This problem in Canada is not going to solve itself and our airline and global aviation businesses are creating that demand. An appropriate training pipeline needs to be developed for the recruitment and selection of students to maximize success for the investment made, one that promotes and increases women's, indigenous and minority representation; that provides financing options including government assistance; that enables a critical mass of resources and infrastructure to provide up-to-date training and solid flight safety practices; and that is in direct alignment with the airline and global business requirements.

Our second recommendation is to directly involve the major airlines, global aviation business community and government in the development of a solution. The major airlines and global aviation businesses are creating the demand and have a major stake in how any strategy should roll out. These entities should be involved in the development of a national strategy. Their requirements will frame the national strategy solution and government will be better placed to understand how they can help. L3 Technologies would welcome the opportunity to participate.

Our third recommendation is to consider different business models that will enable the national strategy. As demonstrated with the European Aviation Safety Agency example, L3 provides guaranteed right seat placement with an airline. Finding the right business model for Canada is important.

• (1225)

[Translation]

All stakeholders need to be involved and must work together to find the right solution. If we as Canadians want to remain competitive in a rapidly changing technological global environment, where regulation and standards will only increase, then we must work together to find a national strategy for Canada.

I would like to thank the committee members for their interest.

I am ready to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to welcome our witnesses here. We are now on the last day of this study hearing from witnesses. Of course we'll provide some recommendations in terms of what we've heard. We've heard from many of our witnesses, over the course of reviewing this private member's bill and studying this issue, talking about the challenge our flight schools are facing. That probably goes without saying, given the title of this study.

I know many have mentioned the financial challenges, the cost of training, as well as the cost of highly technical equipment and the need to innovate and move to newer technology in order to provide the best training possible to our flight students.

One of our witnesses in the previous panel outlined the costs borne by flight schools. She made the observation that flight schools are operating in what she referred to as a very unpredictable environment. I want to quote something that we heard from the National Airlines Council just last month. In a statement, they estimated that "by 2030, a...carbon tax...would add over \$800 million [a year] to the cost of air travel". I'm wondering if you could comment for us on how that policy, driven by government, to impose a carbon tax on the air industry would affect flight training schools. Will it raise the costs for a flight training school, and how does that fit with our desire to address your challenges? Here we are imposing yet another one.

Any of you can answer that question.

Capt Michael Rocha: I can start.

I think when you add cost to the industry, the customer will ultimately have to pay for it, which will be the prospective pilots and the students. What they're going to do is look at their options and say, "Okay, am I going to spend \$100,000 to do a pilot's licence to make x amount of dollars, or can I go into another industry and do something else?" That's ultimately what ends up happening: the costs get so high that they'll do other things and they'll go and find other jobs and professions to pursue. So I think you have to be very respectful of the sensitivity to the cost of doing flight training.

Mr. Richard Foster: I would agree with that. I think the cost eventually would be passed on to the customer with any kind of regulation. I do think the industry is trying to align itself to reduce its carbon footprint with new technologies. I would say that I think it's important that the business model that would help Canada to provide for future jobs in the airline industry needs to align itself with airlines. For example, Lufthansa, as I understand it, actually recruits right from the beginning and trains its pilots through their entire program, which helps offset a lot of the cost.

We talk about flight schools and recreational flying, and then we talk about the business of the airline industry. To me, those are two different things, and perhaps they need to be addressed in two different ways.

Mr. Martin Hivon: Basically I fully agree with what I've heard so far. Any additional costs will eventually be passed on to the customer. In the case of a flight school, the customer is the student pilot. But all of that is going to eventually end up at the industry level, and the ultimate customer, the regular passenger on any airline, will end up footing that bill. There's no miracle there.

• (1230)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question goes to Mr. Hivon. In your presentation, you mentioned that the majority of industry leaders are increasingly promoting skill-based training.

Can you tell us about the advantages and disadvantages of that kind of training? Can you also talk to us about the obstacles that currently exist?

Mr. Martin Hivon: Current regulations allow no flexibility. The whole system that Transport Canada manages is based on a certain number of hours per type of training. For a private pilot, the minimum is 45 hours of flight time; for commercial pilots, it is 200 hours. Nothing lets us determine whether a student is ready to move on to the next stage after 35 or 40 hours of flight time. Is a student who has logged 175 hours of flight time ready to obtain a commercial pilot's license? No consideration is given to questions like that.

My flight school is somewhat unique. First, we taught aerobatics. Then, the school started offering standard training. We include more advanced training into the commercial pilots' training. We provide them with more training. Despite all that, according to the Transport Canada rules, no one can get a commercial pilot's license without

200 hours of flight time. It does not matter whether they have the skill and are ready to work in the industry.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

My next questions go to all the witnesses.

Canadian universities operate with a system in which tuition fees vary with nationality. So tuition fees are lower for a Canadian than for a foreign student.

Can you tell us about the tuition fee system used in your schools? How are those fees established? Do the fees vary according to a student's nationality?

[English]

Mr. Richard Foster: I can speak only for L3 Technologies. We do not have schools in Canada, but we do offer major scholarships for women and for minorities in the United States and we have programs in Europe. L3 will sit down with the students, after they've been selected to show that they have the aptitude to go through the program, and work through financing solutions with them, and also reach out to the banks and provide collateral loans against their loans. We're actually, in some ways, helping finance them to get through the course, which means we have a vested interest in their success.

Capt Michael Rocha: We're currently not offering flight training for international students, but I do know that in industry, one of the trends right now is that international students are generally paying more overall than what some of the Canadian pilots are paying, but it's having an adverse effect. Some flight schools now are primarily catering to only the international students and are making it even more difficult for the Canadian pilots to actually get training, because, from a business perspective, that's paying their bills, so they're going after that market.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Hivon: We are in the same situation. We do not have foreign students registered in a formal program, though we do not turn those students away. I mentioned the shortage of instructors, which is a problem we have to face. It exists because some schools have specialized in training programs designed for foreign students. They come to be trained in Canada and then they go back to their own countries. I know for a fact that those students pay a lot more for their training. The schools can then probably provide their instructors with higher salaries than we provide to ours. In fact, the average Canadian student is not in a position to spend what a foreign government is prepared to pay to have its students trained.

[English]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: There's another company called Cargair that has a partnership with Caisse Desjardins to help students obtain funding.

Are any of you, in any way, connected to any financial institution, or are you thinking of connecting yourself with a financial institution so that pilots, as well as future student pilots, can have some leeway with respect to payment?

• (1235)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Hivon: I can go first, if you like.

It is interesting that you raise that question, because we are in fact in discussions with officials from the Caisse populaire Desjardins de Rivière-du-Loup to see how we can get easier access to financing for students who want to take a commercial pilot's course. I am not sure how those discussions will end, but there does seem to be some openness.

We also provide courses for those who want a private pilot's licence, as a form of leisure activity. These are people who have decided to take flying lessons instead of buying a snowmobile. However, I am really talking about the training for students who want to become professional pilots and work in the industry. Currently, it is very difficult for them to obtain funding.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us this morning.

Let me start with you, Mr. Hivon. Under the previous government, we watched Transport Canada become progressively disengaged from a number of sectors including aviation, with certain responsibilities offloaded to NAV CANADA, for example.

Your flying school interests me particularly because it is located in a region; it could be part of the solution to the problem of noise around large airports, which our committee has just studied. If NAV CANADA decides to no longer offer instrument flight services at your airport, is it possible to challenge that decision?

[Technical difficulties]

I will turn to the other witnesses and hope that we will be able to get the video link with Mr. Hivon back.

Mr. Foster, your third recommendation is to consider different business models in Canada. You started to tell us about Lufthansa, for example. I was wondering whether there is a preferred model that you could share with us.

[English]

Mr. Richard Foster: I think that if Air Canada were to recruit and train right from the get-go, that would be ideal. I'm not sure if they're prepared to do that.

Another model would be to employ L3 Technologies or a company like CAE, which has the resources and infrastructure and would do the selection process for them and help them build the financing requirements.

We're affiliated with the banks in the United States that provide the collateral risk for students based on the selection that we do because the guaranteed success rate of those students is much higher. What you don't want is a student who goes into a program, thinks he wants to be a pilot, pays all that money, gets the loans and is not successful. That's what I think Canada needs to wrestle with, the model of how we've recruited for aviation in the past, and how to solve the problem of the airline industry, which is hoovering up all the instructors and all the pilots who are coming out of the schools.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Rocha, my question for you is on the same subject.

In your opening remarks, you say that a lot of students begin their training courses but do not finish. The issue of paying for the studies is clear to everyone around the table, I believe. So I am trying to understand why students who are aware of the costs of the training would start it if they know they cannot pay for it. Do people quit the program for financial reasons only or because it does not meet the expectations they had at the start?

[English]

Capt Michael Rocha: It's a good question. There are two parts.

For the commercial student, someone who's endeavouring to become a professional pilot, those success rates and completion rates are a lot higher than for the general aviation public, who are just coming in to do a private pilot licence. Those people come in with an expectation that it will be all fun and all easy, but when they get involved in the actual program, they realize it is quite a bit of work and commitment. That's where you have a lot of people who don't complete the private pilot licences.

Transport did introduce the recreational pilot permit, which alleviated some of that. It made the private licence a lot easier. One of the things I was going to suggest, on advanced ultralights that have come into the market and are out there for people who are trying flying, is allowing more credits or adjusting the ability for advanced ultralight time to be applied further. If somebody decides to start in as a candidate for a private pilot licence, they can get in at relatively lower cost, and then they may enjoy it so much that they want to go on and pursue it as a career later on. They can then go on to things like what Mr. Foster's suggesting, where you can go into a simulator-based...and things like that. Overall, I think people come in with an expectation of what it's going to be and then realize it's not.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: My last question goes to all the witnesses and I hope that Mr. Hivon will be able to join us.

Are there statistics on the number of Canadian students registered in flying schools? What percentage of those students are retained? In other words, how many trained students will go to work for a foreign company rather than serving Canada?

Mr. Richard Foster: I do not have that information but I will see if I can find it.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I will ask Mr. Hivon when he comes back.

Mr. Martin Hivon: I am back, but I don't think that you could hear me.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Yes, I can hear you loud and clear. Did you hear the end of the question?

Mr. Martin Hivon: No. The connection cut out in the middle of your question. However, I understood that you were talking about NAV CANADA, which really interests me.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I was also talking about Transport Canada, which has been offloading a good number of its responsibilities for years. For example, when NAV CANADA decides to drop instrument flight services in a particular airport, do you have any right of appeal at all to Transport Canada so that you can demonstrate that you need that service for the reasons you described in your presentation?

Mr. Martin Hivon: Not at all. We are neither consulted nor advised. It comes as a *fait accompli*, and there is nothing we can say.

Take the airport at Rivière-du-Loup, as an example I know well. This is a little technical, but the three conventional instrument approaches have just been decertified. The VOR, the NDB, the transmitter itself, is still there. But the documents have gone, which means that it is of absolutely no use. Our only option is to make instrument approaches using the GPS system. For commercial pilot training, it is important to be able to do both, because you cannot fly with the GPS alone.

It was a *fait accompli*, and it was very recent. So we will have to go to another airport to be able to use those approaches, which will increase the costs.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not going to preface my comments as I did last time. I believe you were in the room and heard them.

We are speaking of government funding or other opportunities that may exist at the federal and provincial levels, and hearing a lot of recommendations today with respect to a national strategy. I assume that it would include gender, linguistic, ethnicity, equality, education and of course, your operating challenges, as well as your capital challenges.

This should be an inclusive process that includes the private and the public sectors, government, yourselves, different organizations and associations, as well as obviously, the companies that are in need of pilots.

There should be consideration of different business models, especially as they relate to examples of international business models that exist across the world.

Ms. Block mentioned earlier that this is our last meeting to bring forward recommendations to satisfy what Mr. Fuhr is looking for.

First, am I accurate and second, are there any further recommendations you want to add that we can include in the final report?

Capt Michael Rocha: Accurate, in the sense of opening up for all of the different genders and different segments, or—?

Mr. Vance Badawey: What I'm getting at and what I've heard to date is what I just mentioned. When you look at a national strategy, if in fact that is the direction this committee embarks on, it is all of the above that we have heard, as you heard earlier in testimony.

Capt Michael Rocha: I think in terms of recommendations, one of the things I had noted down was definitely a national strategy in terms of airport infrastructure, and looking at the general aviation community aspect of it. I can't just make a blanket statement about them all, but airports that are run by regional governments are generally passenger-focused. They're trying to generate the revenues that way, as opposed to through general aviation. That's one definite recommendation.

As Mr. Foster said, there are alternative ways of delivering flight training. It has been shown that simulators specific to airlines are a fantastic way to train future airline pilots, and that does solve some of the airlines' needs. Keep in mind, with that, you also have to consider the general aviation needs in terms of just the general flying population, because you do need that segment to the industry. It does feed the other businesses that are at the airport—maintenance, etc.—and as well, not everybody is going to go and work for an airline. Some people might work in a 703 air taxi operation or a commuter operation, so you want to make sure you're not ignoring that aspect of it. That's generally what we've seen happen at some of the airports. They focus all on the airline and not necessarily on the general aviation community. Then when that aspect dies, the businesses that are there supporting them—the fuellers, the maintenance people—have a hard time staying in business. That aspect definitely needs a national strategy that takes into account the airline's needs as well as the general aviation needs.

If we can keep it as inclusive as possible...we need pilots. There are opportunities for everyone. I think the biggest thing I heard from the previous session was just getting the information and education out there to those groups. This is definitely important. I think that would go a long way.

There are external threats, too. I work in an airline, and there are pilots who are considering flying elsewhere. You can get an airline pilot trained here and they may leave. They may go and fly in the U.S. or Asia...opening up their markets. They are short of pilots as well, and those are real threats. The issues have to get addressed quickly.

• (1245)

The Chair: We have Robert Lavigne, who's at the table with us. He's vice-president of the Kingston Flying Club.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Lavigne, you haven't had a chance to comment at all yet, so I'll open up the floor to you.

Mr. Robert Lavigne (As an Individual): Thank you.

Quickly, the Kingston Flying Club is the oldest surviving flying instructional institution in the country. We were founded in 1927, and the fact that we still exist is a marvel largely predicated on the fact that we are a federally chartered charity.

I don't have much time, so I'll just tell you quickly. Because we have volunteers from a different catchment, we have M.B.A.s, Ph.D.s and so forth attached to our group.

Let me touch on some of the more hard-core business-related information that you may lack. The flying school business today largely survives on a net variable margin of 3% to 7%, and I challenge you to find any other business in the country that can survive at that level. We all do it because we want to do it, and we care to do it, and there's a passion for aviation involved. Often those schools are attached to the communities and render services to those communities. Sometimes, as Jo-Anne was telling you from Tyendinaga, they're attached to the very survival of the communities. There are things like 703 air taxi operations. We heard them referred to earlier.

It's really important that you understand that there are significant capital considerations. More than 70% of the costs of every one of the schools you're speaking to here are generated in U.S. dollars. All our equipment, all our fuel, oftentimes subscriptions that operate things—for example, our scheduling software and so forth—all come from the U.S.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go on to Mr. Fuhr.

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Thank you all for coming. Bob, Michael, Richard and Martin, it's nice to see you again.

I don't have a ton of time. I want to reinforce this, because this is coming to a close really quickly and the committee will have to deliberate on recommendations to the Government of Canada. This isn't overly complex. We need to remove the barriers for students to get into pilot training. Largely, it's financial. There might be a couple of other ones, but the bottom line is that it's expensive, and people can't afford to do it anymore.

We need to train more effectively, and I think competency-based training, as Martin mentioned, is part of the solution. It will reduce time to get people out the door and working, and it will save some money. Transport would need to be a big part of that to see where that fits because it won't fit in every phase of training, but I think there's a place for it.

We need to get people back into instructing. We have to figure out how to do that. Again, that will largely be financially based. I would prefer to see people coming back off the career end than the upstream end. They just bring a lot more to the table. Again, that will be a financially incentivized process, I'm pretty sure, and then you, if you agree, can deliberate on what that might look like.

I also agree with something Martin said that I hadn't heard here today. I hold two airline transport ratings: an American one and a Canadian one. I recently had to renew my Canadian one, and it was a way bigger process than I thought it would be. In fact, if I was depending on that to go to work every day, I probably would have stayed home for a few weeks to try to get that sorted out.

Transport is going to need to step up its game in supporting... whether it be exams, licensing or whatever. I think we need to have a good long conversation about that.

I would like to give some time to Mr. Foster. He was in the process of going through some recommendations, and I want the

committee to hear what those were because he didn't get time to finish.

• (1250)

Mr. Richard Foster: Just to reiterate, I think we need to develop a national strategy. I think the market is going to try to correct itself, and the business airlines are going to go elsewhere other than Canada if we don't align ourselves and provide for the students.

I think it's important to bring the appropriate stakeholders to the discussion: the airlines and companies like L3 and CAE that can provide infrastructure and resources. Then we need to separate and look at what the rest of the flight schools can do in order to support that. There is going to be a critical mass requirement in terms of resources and infrastructure to make this work. We're not talking just over five years. We're talking in the longer term—10 to 20 years, I would think.

In terms of the other business models, just to elaborate a little bit, there are several. I know Martin was mentioning the problem of retaining flight instructors. The model we have in Florida, which trains about two-thirds of foreign national students, allows us to keep instructors in place because there's not a glut of students coming out and going into the airlines. The gentlemen and the ladies who are staying in the United States can stay on as instructors to build their time. There's enough flow-through from foreign national students going elsewhere to allow them to stay and to allow an instructor base to flow through that pipeline.

I think those are the kinds of models that a national strategy task force should be able to look at, and I think you need to get the appropriate stakeholders around the table to develop that.

Mr. Stephen Fuhr: Thank you.

I would like to give whatever time I have left to Mr. Lavigne so that he can come back into the conversation.

Mr. Robert Lavigne: There was a question earlier regarding carbon tax. That's largely irrelevant to us. It's a rounding error.

In Ontario, for example, the Ontario government insists on charging flight schools road tax on aviation gas. If we extract that, the carbon issue is irrelevant.

We would like to see something come back *à la* Nav Canada: a bursary system fed back, for example, through BDC to allow people to have a capital pool for either bursaries or capital. There are many opportunities for us to deal with this. Flowing veterans back through the veteran education piece to flying schools and tax relief for retiring airline pilots would be suggestions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Liepert.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Mr. Foster, your notes here say that you have 31,000 employees worldwide. We've heard from you about a couple of things that you think the U.S. does better than Canada. What about other countries in the world? Is there something we could learn from the U.K. or from any of the other free world countries? Do you have any thoughts there?

Mr. Richard Foster: Yes, absolutely.

Although the examples I used are U.S.-based, our commercial aviation division is headquartered in the U.K. We have a flight school in the U.K. We're paired with the RAF. We also have flight schools in New Zealand. Most of them are paired or are pairing with airlines, which I would submit is probably going to be the future model of how airlines train.

• (1255)

Mr. Ron Liepert: In those cases, the airlines run the flight schools, is that what you're saying?

Mr. Richard Foster: No, they pair with us. We work with easyJet and British Airways, for example; they tell us what their requirements are, and we do all the heavy lifting up front in recruiting, selecting, financing and getting the students. Then those two airlines guarantee those students a right seat after completion. That's the agreement we have, based on our ability to provide them the standard of pilot they need.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I guess that works for major airlines, but in some of the earlier testimony we had, because of our geography we have high demands in this country for private flights into the north. We're told those kinds of jobs are really hard to fill in a lot of cases. I hear what you're saying on the partnership with British Airways.

Do they have any funding models in the rest of the world that you might be aware of that we could take a look at?

Mr. Richard Foster: I gave you the example of our helping students find the financing. We have people whose job that is. When these people show up, we assess their ability and then we help them meet their financing. Then we work with the banks to provide the—

Mr. Ron Liepert: Okay, but effectively at the end of the day, the student is still stuck with the high cost of training.

Mr. Richard Foster: I'm not sure. The student gets a very high chance of getting a job. This model helps offset the demand that is drawing student pilots and other people from the north, for example. I think you need to create two different models, one that's servicing the airlines and then another that is focusing on the northern region or on commercial pilots. You need to satisfy the market demand of the airline industry somehow.

The Chair: It's 12:58.

Thank you to all our witnesses for sharing your knowledge and time with us, and to Mr. Fuhr for bringing this bill forward. It's been fascinating, and I think a real learning experience for all of us here on the committee.

The meeting is adjourned.

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