

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

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International (ALPA)



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Recommendation 1: That the government implement an aviation sector–specific financial assistance program—with strong labour protections—that provides direct support to airlines that have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation 2: That the government support the airline industry by providing support for technology that includes crew training and proficiency, to ensure commercial air travel in Canada remains the safest mode of transportation.

Recommendation 3: That the government lead and implement a national aviation strategy in relation to the recovery of the airline industry from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the stabilization and continued viability of the aviation sector in Canada.

Introduction

The Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA) is the largest pilot union and nongovernmental aviation safety organization in the world, representing over 63,000 pilots at 35 U.S. and Canadian airlines.

ALPA's mission is to promote and champion all aspects of aviation safety throughout all segments of the aviation community; to represent, in both specific and general respects, the collective interests of all pilots in commercial aviation; to assist in collective bargaining activities on behalf of all pilots represented by the Association; to promote the health and welfare of the members of the Association before all governmental agencies; to be a strong, forceful advocate of the airline piloting profession, through all forms of media, and with the public at large; and to be the ultimate guardian and defender of the rights and privileges of professional pilots.

In Canada, ALPA represents over 5,000 pilots at 15 airlines—WestJet, WestJet Encore, Air Transat, Jazz Aviation, Wasaya, Calm Air, Provincial Airlines, PAL Aerospace, Canadian North, First Air, Kelowna Flightcraft, Bearskin, Sky Regional, Air Georgian, and Perimeter.

As an integral and irreplaceable part of the Canadian economy, air transportation facilitates trade, plays an instrumental role in tourism, and ensures the movement of people and cargo throughout our country and the world. Canadian airlines employ over 50,000 people directly, another 141,000 indirectly with an economic footprint of \$35 billion, and help support millions of other good jobs throughout the economy.

Airlines feature one of the highest union-density rates of any industry, and through collective bargaining employees share in the benefits of the work they create. Taken together, the failure of the airline industry would have wide-ranging effects on the workforce and the economy, including increased downward pressure on Canada's GDP.

Recommendation 1

Since the beginning of the pandemic, airlines have implemented flight reductions, reduced work schedules, and layoff notices at some carriers. Unfortunately, forecasting suggests these measures will, in many cases, increase.

The airline industry continues to face an unprecedented and financially devastating crisis that requires a governmental response given the magnitude of ongoing travel measures, reduced consumer demand due to the coronavirus, and a downturn in overall economic activity.

ALPA pilots recognize that stabilizing the Canadian airline industry and restoring its indispensable role as a driver for Canada's economy and supply chain is of the utmost importance—as is protecting the hardworking Canadians who make it possible.

This is why ALPA pilots have continued to do their part to help keep the Canadian airline industry strong and ensure its continued contribution to the Canadian and global economies.

ALPA pilots have worked with airlines to withstand one of the greatest threats to the aviation industry in history so that airlines can remain economically viable and keep our pilots healthy, their families protected from financial harm, and passengers and cargo flying *safely* and efficiently.

We look to the federal government to safeguard the public health, limit the economic toll on the airlines and support their recovery, and protect the airline workers who help power this important industry.

Further, as we are committed to the health and safety of our families, our colleagues, and the travelling public, we are unequivocal in our opinion that the government provide an airline-specific stimulus package and that it include strong labour protections for the airline employees who have suffered—and will suffer—from financial harm, experience quarantine or treatment, or who need to care for a loved one.

Recommendation 2

Airline travel in Canada continues to be the safest mode of transportation. The industry has invested heavily in the crew training and proficiency that have led to the level of safety Canadians enjoy (and expect) today. But despite the high level of safety of air travel in Canada, investments must continue to be made while the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when the industry is hard pressed in generating sufficient revenue to invest in safety, the government must intervene to ensure that this level of safety is maintained. Safety, especially pilot proficiency, is not something that can be ignored in the short term with the expectation that it will return to pre-COVID-19 levels just because demand for travel resumes at some point in the future. Without appropriate levels of support, safety may be compromised.

In addition, ALPA's ongoing call for mandated, consistent COVID protective measures and equipment as well as modifying procedures in terminals to avoid mixing crews with passengers requires financial resources and will be essential to a safe reopening of our air transportation system.

In closing, the safety and security of the flying public, pilots, and all aviation workers remains ALPA's top priority. As the leading voice of the pilot profession in Canada, we request that funds be considered so that safety systems at the regulatory and airline level continue to be supported, so that pilots may continue to maintain skills required to ensure aviation's safety record continues to be the gold standard now, throughout, and post recovery.

Recommendation 3

If the airline industry is going to survive and support Canadians and our national economy in the way we know is possible, we must think strategically about the future and create an industry that is financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable. We need a national aviation strategy and a collaborative body facilitated by the federal government in order to achieve maximum strength and stability within the aviation industry.

ALPA believes that discussions need to take place between industry, labour, Canadian communities, and the federal government so that we can develop and execute strategies that have collective support at the foundational level. We think that communities (municipalities, economic zone regions), and other stakeholders such as airports and commerce associations should take part in the development of a strategy that would ultimately lead to more predictable, sustainable air service across our country, creating better business environments, a more resilient industry, and a balance of reasonable fares and service that consumers will support.

While COVID-19 has led to a situation of contraction and loss of employment within the aviation sector, we must be careful that our short-term mitigation strategies do not incumber our industries ability to recover.

ALPA recommends that resources be committed to ensure that the aviation sector remains sustainable through the creation of a stakeholder working group to develop an all-encompassing Canadian aviation strategy that would consider such issues as pilot training and pilot supply, recalibrating labour's relationship with industry, and recognizing the aviation industry as a critical national strategic asset and infrastructure.