



**NACC**  
National Airlines  
Council of Canada



**CNLA**  
Conseil national des lignes  
aériennes du Canada

June 23, 2020

Ms. Maxime Fortin  
Clerk, Senate Standing Committee on National Finance (NFFN)  
Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4  
Via email: [nffn@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:nffn@sen.parl.gc.ca)

Dear Ms. Fortin:

**RE: INFORMATION FOLLOWING JUNE 2 APPEARANCE**

On behalf of the National Airlines Council of Canada (NACC), please find below information further to my recent appearance before the committee to help inform the NFFN's deliberations.

**Covid-19 and Flying**

To date there are no known instances of passenger to passenger transmission of COVID-19 onboard commercial aircraft. As you will see from the document referenced below, the risk of on-board transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses on planes remains very low.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), there are several plausible reasons why COVID-19, which is spread primarily by respiratory droplets, has not resulted in more on-board transmission:

- High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters on modern aircraft are hospital-grade and clean the cabin air to hospital operating theatre quality, further assisted by high levels of fresh air circulation through the cabin. The filters are 99.9% effective at removing particulates such as viruses, bacteria and fungi
- Passengers face forward with limited face-to-face interactions
- Seats provide a barrier to transmission forward to back in the cabin
- Air flow from ceiling to floor further reduces the potential for transmission forward or back in the cabin. Moreover, air flow rates are high and not conducive to droplet spread in the same way as in other indoor environments

While the risk of transmission on the aircraft is low, airlines in Canada are taking additional measures to protect passengers and crew as part of a layered approach to biosecurity. They include:

- Mandatory wearing of face coverings for passengers and crew
- Mandatory temperature screening of passengers and crew
- Mandatory health screening questions of passengers before allowing boarding



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- Boarding and deplaning processes that reduce contact with other passengers or crew
- Limiting movement within the cabin during flight
- More frequent and deeper cabin cleaning including such measures as electrostatic disinfectant spraying, fogging the cabin interior using a hydrogen peroxide-based solution cleaner, use of hospital-grade wipes and sprays for lavatories, door handles, bins, providing hand sanitizer, sanitization wipes to passengers etc.
- Simplified catering procedures that lower crew movement and interaction with passengers

## References

**COVID-19 How to prevent transmission on board airline aircraft Dr David Powell Medical Advisor - 15th May 2020**

<https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2020-05-05-01/>

## **International Best Practices for Re-opening Travel**

On June 1 the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) released “*Takeoff: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis (Takeoff)*”.

<https://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-Council-adopts-new-COVID.aspx>

The report provides a detailed framework and protocols to maximize biosecurity during all aspects of the airport and air travel experience, minimize the risk of further contagion, and enable the safe, phased return of international aviation. An agency of the United Nations, ICAO developed the report in conjunction with member states including Canada, the World Health Organization (WHO) and industry.

The aviation re-start plan initiated by the European Union draws heavily from the ICAO’s work. The EU began allowing travel across its member states this month, and next month will begin international travel to and from Europe on a targeted basis with countries that are taking appropriate measures to flatten the curve. Europe is following appropriate international standards for airline and airport operations during the pandemic as outlined by ICAO.

In Canada, airlines and airports are fully aligned with the ICAO’s recommendations and are working with the federal government to ensure a well-coordinated and systematic implementation. This will enable us to safely and prudently move away from blanket border restrictions and self-quarantine restrictions, take a targeted approach to enable travel between Canada and select countries through a “safe to safe” travel corridor approach, and help establish the basis for removing travel restrictions within Canada.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on Employment Levels**

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating on member carriers. Very briefly, after many years of growth Air Canada is currently operating at approximately 5% of operations year over year and has laid off over 20,000 employees or more than 50% of its workforce, while reducing its global network from 220 to 46 destinations.



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Air Transat suspended all operations completely as of April 1, grounding their entire fleet and laying off 85% of their 5,000 employees. They are now cautiously initiating a gradual resumption of a small percentage of their flight and tour operating activities in late July.

Prior to the pandemic, WestJet employed 14,000 people, operating 700-plus flights daily. They have now parked two-thirds of their fleet and their workforce has been reduced by 9,000 as they now operate about 100 flights a day, carrying less than 10% the number of guests they would normally carry.

### **Recovery Period**

While it is impossible to establish a clear time frame, the general view is that it will take the aviation industry anywhere from 3 to 5 years to get back to the number of destinations, service and frequency levels, and passenger volumes that existed at the end of 2019.

As last year drew to a close, Canada's economy was experiencing a level of air connectivity and service in communities large and small across the country unlike it had ever experienced before. This was due to years of multi-billion dollar investments by Canada's airlines in new aircraft and fleet and service expansions. This record of investment and growth is now significantly undermined.

Our industry will be critical to Canada's economic recovery from the pandemic, including ensuring the recovery is felt in all regions and across all sectors of the economy, and not just in major population centers.

As noted above, safely and prudently moving forward utilizing the ICAO's international best practices requires establishing appropriate "safe to safe" travel corridors with targeted countries that are flattening the curve; scaling back blanket border restrictions and self-quarantine restrictions for "safe to safe" travel zones; and eliminating the myriad of travel restrictions within Canada.

I hope this information is helpful to the NFFN's deliberations on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact NACC if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Mike McNaney  
President and CEO  
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