

**Helicopter Association of Canada**  
**Speaking Notes to the Standing Committee on Transportation Communities**  
**and Infrastructure**  
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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, let me say first what a pleasure it is to speak with you. The Helicopter Association of Canada has been in existence since 1995, and has grown from a handful of operators to over 150 Operator-members and over 100 Associates who provide goods and services to our Operator-members. Roughly 80% of the civil helicopters in Canada today are operated by HAC members. We are the only national association in Canada dedicated exclusively to the interests of the Canadian helicopter community.

I intend to keep my presentation to you under the requested seven minutes, but I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have with respect to your investigations – during or following on my presentation. Please do not hesitate to interrupt me.

I come to the committee from a background with the TSB, Transport Canada, the Air Transport Association of Canada, the Canadian Airports Council, as an aviation lawyer and with 23 years as a current helicopter pilot in the Canadian industry. I have been with the Helicopter Association of Canada, or “HAC” as it is commonly referred to, as its President & CEO for the last 18 months. I have appeared with pleasure before this committee on a number of occasions in previous association lives, but this is my first appearance before the committee representing HAC.

Our Operator-members have fleets that range in size from one, to 250 helicopters. Canada boasts the second largest civil helicopter fleet in the world. Since 2006 our accident rate has declined steadily from 8.8 accidents per 100,000 hours to 5.7 accidents per 100,000 hours in 2008. Now admittedly that is still 40 accidents per year too many, but we’re working on that, and our Canadian accident rate is still lower than virtually any other region in the world.

A number of the security-related items that form part of the committee’s mandate are largely transparent to the Canadian helicopter community, since most of our members are not based at airports – and even those that are, do not operate from the terminal or between designated airports. Naturally those that are based at airports or operate from them are still subject to airport and airside security procedures and requirements, but mostly they operate smaller aircraft in the absence of screening, quite happily I should add. Most of our operations are conducted in remote areas where other means of transportation are difficult or impossible. Having said that, when I was invited to speak with you I could not pass-up the opportunity to comment on future of safety in an SMS context. But

first, just a little bit more about HAC and the involvement of its members in safety. Safety is at the top of our priorities.

HAC is participating on the International Helicopter Safety Team or IHST, an international effort aimed at reducing the accident rate for helicopters world-wide by 80% by 2016.

Our association and its members have been focused in recent history on the development of "Industry Best Practices". We are developing Best Practices for the operation of helicopters in Utility Flight Operations (Hydro line maintenance, construction and repair), in Oil & Gas operations, in heli-ski and helicopter wildfire operations and the use of Night Vision Glasses, and Class D external load operations (where people are suspended below the helicopter for mountain rescue operations for example), and in the development of Helicopter Emergency Medical Services Standards and Recommended Practices at ICAO.

These initiatives have been developed from *inside* the association's committees and most notably in the absence of any obligation to do so from Transport Canada or anywhere else for that matter.

The Best Practices largely exceed the regulatory standard, or fill a void in the regulations where only the "specialists" in the industry are capable of developing and applying the latest *and safest* techniques for operating helicopters. A number of our committees work closely with American and international groups who are focusing on similar issues in an effort to capitalize on evolving best practices being developed elsewhere.

We are working closely with Transport Canada when there is an appetite from the regulator to develop standards based on what prudent and reasonable operators are actually doing in the field. You should all understand that these initiatives flow very naturally from Safety Management System principles and are being driven by a move by Canadian certificate holders of all types (Air Navigation System providers, Airports, Air Operators etc.) to embrace Safety Management Systems and the opportunities it presents.

Part of the "promise" of SMS has always been enhanced safety, but also the opportunity to have more influence over the evolution of our regulatory environment, that has historically formed such a costly, cumbersome, and prescriptive part of our day-to-day lives in the helicopter industry. *We welcome* SMS if the Minister is still prepared to walk-the-talk.

It also needs to be said that HAC and its members were *floored* by the Minister's recent announcement to repatriate the oversight and administration of business aviation aircraft by CBAA. The CBAA program was the only program of its kind in the world and was considered by many of us in the aviation community to represent a promising opportunity for other industry segments who were

prepared to consider accepting the responsibility to assume more influence over their regulatory environment.

The Minister's announcement landed like a hand grenade, and for many of us signaled a retreat by Transport Canada from the founding principles of SMS, and from the principle that industry – acting responsibly, would be given other opportunities to exercise oversight and administration.

The aviation community in Canada is *filled* with examples where industry is trusted to carry out part of the Minister's mandate, including testing and checking pilots for commercial operations, administering exams and certifying major airframe repairs and modifications, to name only a very few. There is a long history of successful delegations of authority and this is not, as some have characterized it "The fox minding the chicken coop". These processes are all about "controls, and governance, and oversight" for the industry body or individual. There isn't anything that we cannot accomplish with the right mix of these elements. What's more, SMS and the principles which underlie it form the most promising mechanisms to advance safety in Canada and the world.

For more detailed information relating to HAC and its members, I encourage you to contact me directly or to visit our website at [www.h-a-c.ca](http://www.h-a-c.ca).

Thank-you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be pleased to field any questions that you may have.