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Canadian Federal Pilots Association
Association des Pilotes Fédéraux du Canada

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Spike in aviation accidents and incidents mirror cuts to oversight

Ottawa – After cuts to aviation safety oversight by government it is not surprising to see a significant spike in accidents and incidents involving commercial airlines, commuter aircraft and air taxis last year.

The Transportation Safety Board (TSB) reports that Canadian aviation last year was marred with a sharp increase in accidents and incidents involving airlines that carry the most passengers.

Canadian Aviation Accidents in 2017

	2017	2016	5 year average
Airlines	9	1	5
Commuter	5	3	3
Air Taxis	28	26	30
Aerial work	17	16	20

Source: Transportation Safety Board

In addition, the TSB reports a sobering rise in the number of incidents involving Canadian aircraft which jumped almost 10% to 921 from 833 in 2016 which is 25% higher than the five year average.

Among several other serious aviation accidents and incidents that have taken place recently are two that stand out, both involving Air Canada jets.

On July 7th, Air Canada 759 came within a few dozen feet of crashing into four jets on the ground full of people and fuel after the pilot mistakenly lined up to land on a taxiway. The worst aviation accident ever was averted by seconds. And just a few weeks ago, only a terrain avoidance warning system (TAWS) prevented an Air Canada Rouge jetliner from slamming into a mountainside on approach to Huatulco (Mexico).

“These data, especially the sharp increase in incidents, tell me a major accident is coming,” McConnell said.

The licenced pilots who work for Transport Canada as aviation inspectors seem to agree with McConnell’s assessment. An Abacus Data survey of these inspectors in April 2017 revealed eight-in-ten (81%) inspectors surveyed predicted a major aviation accident in the near future, according to the survey.

“Transport Canada’s cuts to aviation safety oversight may be largely invisible to most Canadians but they are having an impact that is increasingly apparent and worrying,” says Greg McConnell, National Chair of the Canadian Federal Pilots Association.

Transport Canada’s systematic dismantling of aviation safety oversight has accelerated in recent years due to budget shortfalls. Most recently, the safety regulator handed off checking the skills and competencies of commercial pilots to the airlines.

And in 2016, Transport Canada cut back its oversight program whole sectors at a time. For example, urban heliports such as those atop of many big city hospitals will no longer be subject to scheduled inspections. And, all airports will no longer be subject to full safety assessments. Instead, a Transport Canada inspection will now cover only one small part of an airport’s safety plan. By comparison, the US Federal Aviation Administration requires full inspections of airports annually. Business aircraft, like the plane former Alberta Premier Jim Prentice died in, have not been subject to Transport Canada safety oversight for several years.

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