

*Transportation Accident Investigation Board*

are in a conflict of interest, with both the commercial aviation respondents believing that there is a conflict.

One point mentioned in support of the claim that a conflict exists is that under the Act the Minister of Transport may appoint a representative to attend any investigation. This was seen as an example of conflict inasmuch as no comparable privilege is available to other interests and involved parties.

Another question asked was: "In your opinion are the findings of CASB objective, i.e. are they impartial?" A total of 18 replied affirmatively while 6 replied negatively. Four out of the six who replied negatively were from Transport Canada. We see the development of a pattern in which so far in the public debate there has been a conflict among board members. But here there is an indication that Transport Canada officials, and I assume that these are the people who work directly with CASB or who are concerned about aviation safety, are questioning the objectivity of the Board.

Another question asked was: "Are the findings of the CASB credible?" Sixteen said: "Yes" while seven said: "No". Six of the seven were from Transport Canada. Close to 30 per cent of the respondents questioned the credibility of CASB. Another question asked was: "Are CASB recommendations technically feasible, i.e. can they be implemented?" Eighteen said: "Yes" while six said: "No". Six of those were from Transport Canada.

The respondents were asked: "Are CASB recommendations economically feasible?" Fourteen said: "Yes" while nine said: "No". That is to say that 36 per cent of the respondents believe that CASB recommendations are economically not feasible while 56 per cent believe that they are.

Madam Speaker, if you look at that just on the surface you will say: "There is a problem. CASB is off the mark. They want the sky. They want chapter and verse to ensure that there is no risk whatsoever". I recall a study that I had the CASB initiate. It was a safety study concerning the area of northern Ontario between Wawa and Kenora. There was a belief that in an area referred to as the Wawa triangle there was an extraordinarily high number of general aviation accidents. As a result of a particular crash in the Wawa area the CASB agreed to evolve the study into a general safety study of the region. It found that that part of northern Ontario had a higher level of accidents per capita than the Canadian average. It was not as high as northern Canada. Some of the reasons for this were pilots unfamiliar with the area

pushing into the weather and a few other minor reasons. It recommended improvement of weather services.

A report went to the Minister and the Department who came back and said: "No". They argued at the time that in some cases what CASB had recommended was not technically possible at this point in time. In other cases they indicated that they were not prepared to do it. We just cannot assume that CASB is the one at fault when we read this particular statistic in terms of the economic feasibility of the recommendations.

The question of staffing is the nub of the problem in air safety in Canada. The question asked in this respect was: "Are findings and recommendations made available in a timely manner?" Fifteen respondents said: "No" while seven said: "Yes". Some 60 per cent of respondents believe that Canadian Aviation Safety Board findings and recommendations are not made available in a timely manner. This figure is higher for Transport Canada than for other respondents. Non-Transport Canada respondents are evenly divided on the matter. As of last September there were 81 members of the inspection staff. On average they received 600 occurrences to investigate a year. They have a backlog of 1200, to which they have yet to respond. Is that because the Minister of Transport has been unable to acquire the person-years necessary to maintain the level of investigations appropriate given the response time needed? This gives us a sense of how people outside of CASB feel about the operations of the Board.

I would now like to return to the role and size of the CASB as detailed by Hickling Management Consultants. This is the report about which the Government spoke very highly and one which was used as a defence to criticism from the Members on this side of the House concerning the Government's lack of action.

The role of the CASB and the roles of individual CASB members relative to that of the chairman have been the subject of much recent discussion within CASB. Representations have been made to outside bodies by individual board members and by the Chairman of the Board to seek advice, clarification and direction on individual aspects of these two issues.

Dealing first with the over-all role of the CASB, interviews of CASB board members and senior officials suggest different interpretations of the Act with regard to the appropriate degree of involvement of the board members in this investigation function. A questionnaire subsequently confirmed this. From the analysis of the questionnaire it was found that the board members who responded to the questionnaire were evenly split on the