

January 13, 2014

Ms. Line Pagé
Director – Greater Montreal
Radio-Canada

Re : Unfounded allegations broadcasted on Radio-Canada

Madam,

The National Airlines Council of Canada (the Council) represents the country's four major air carriers: Air Canada, WestJet, Jazz and Air Transat.

On behalf of the Council, we wish to denounce unfounded allegations which were broadcasted on Radio-Canada, on January 8, 2014, during *C'est pas trop tôt!*, the radio show hosted by Marie-France Bazzo. Given our timely, same-day response, we also wish to denounce your refusal to withdraw the allegations in question.

Ms. Bazzo stated the following: “How do you all feel about airlines and airports? All these flights cancelled or delayed, these planes. We also forgot to mention that the maintenance of the aircraft very often and more and more leaves much to be desired. What about the number of times where you wait for your plane and that ultimately you are told ‘no’, we have just ordered another one that won’t be available for another 3 hours, 4 hours or 24 hours because the aircraft is in too poor a condition to fly? It happens more and more on large air carriers. So, tell us your stories. We would really like to hear them, write to us. At the end of the day, cars are safer.”

Ms. Bazzo states that airlines are negligent with regards to maintenance, that they are “more and more” negligent, that this is a proven and well established phenomenon that requires no proof, that when an airline proceeds with a “change of aircraft”, it is due to the aircraft “not serviceable”, and that the frequency of such changes is increasing. She expresses herself with certainty, and her allegations (two of which refer to measures of “frequency”), which include statistics, are presented as facts.

Now, all these allegations are completely unfounded and indicate a poor understanding of airline operations. For example, an aircraft may be replaced due to numerous circumstances that are completely unrelated to maintenance issues.

In addition, it is quite ironic that these allegations were made despite the fact that statistics show that air travel has never been safer, even more so than road transport. In fact, according to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the number of accidents decreased by 21% and the overall rate of accidents decreased considerably, to 3.2 accidents for every million departures. In addition, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), security statistics for 2012 are the best in the history of aviation.

We can very well continue to list other statistics. However, it is not up to us to demonstrate that Ms. Bazzo's allegations are false. The onus is on her to prove that her statements are justified. This would be simply impossible, given the blatant inaccuracy of her statements.



To return to the subject of maintenance, we wish to point out the fact that the four members of the Council have been registered on the IATA Operational Safety Audit of the International Air Transport Association. These are, in fact, the strictest standards in the world with regards to equipment maintenance and safety management. The four members of the Council are all model companies when it comes to maintenance, and their respective workforces have shown utmost professionalism for years as industry leaders. Therefore, not only are Ms. Bazzo's allegations unfounded, they are also profoundly unfair. For that matter, Ms. Bazzo's allegations imply that our respective personnel lack professionalism and competence, whereas the opposite remains true; the four companies I represent have teams that are recognized worldwide as being highly qualified.

Considering how careful Radio-Canada normally is with regards to broadcasting accurate information and respecting widely recognized journalistic standards, which should apply in this case (especially those of Radio-Canada or those of the Quebec Press Council), we strongly denounce the broadcasting of false information to the public in addition to your refusal to rectify the situation. We cannot help being concerned about this situation, that is, unfounded rumours which were recklessly spread by way of a journalistic approach. Unfortunately, this casts serious doubt on all comments made on-air.

Ms. Bazzo's comments were false and irresponsible, and the reputation of the air transport industry was sullied. We reiterate that a formal retraction from Radio-Canada is necessary.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL AIRLINES COUNCIL OF CANADA

Marc-André O'Rourke
Executive Director
National Airlines Council of Canada

c.c. Marie-Claude Bocage, Producer, *C'est pas trop tôt*
Louis Lalonde, Senior Vice-President, French Services of CBC/Radio-Canada
Pierre Tourangeau, Ombudsman, Radio-Canada
Hubert Lacroix, CEO, CBC/Radio-Canada