**House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport**

**Study of Bill C-49 (Transportation Modernization Act)**

**Daniel-Robert Gooch**

**President of the Canadian Airports Council**

Ms. Chair, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you as part of your committee’s study of Bill C-49, the *Transportation Modernization Act*. My name is Daniel-Robert Gooch, president of the Canadian Airports Council.

The CAC has 51 members operating more than 100 airports across Canada, including all of the non-governmentally operated National Airports System (NAS) airports. They handle more than 90 per cent of the commercial air traffic in Canada, and an even greater share of international traffic.

CAC’s priorities involve promoting safe, strong local airports; improving the traveller experience; value for money in government services and growing a globally connected Canada by air.

We have been listening to the testimony over the last few days on this committee’s study of the Transportation Modernization Act.

Certainly, air transport is a complex industry, involving interaction with several different partners including airport authorities, Nav Canada, and government bodies such as the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). In terms of the role of airports, they provide the infrastructure needed to facilitate air carrier movements and the processing of passengers. They enforce airport safety regulations, employ airport emergency services in response to aircraft emergencies, and provide central command to respond to operational, safety, infrastructure and security matters.

Major airports have passenger care response plans in place as a backup to support passenger needs in irregular operation scenarios. These plans involve the deployment of certain assets as needed, such as airfield buses, water bottles, snacks, and baby supplies.

Airports are empowered to activate their passenger care plans when needed, and can call in extra resources to assist to ensure passengers have the basics they need on a short-term basis. During irregular and regular operations, the goal is to get passengers to where they need to go in a timely, safe and secure manner.

Airports strive to improve passenger experience on a day-to-day basis. This is becoming increasingly important for airports that have seen tremendous growth in air traffic over the past decade. In the first seven months so far this year, there has been a 6.3 per cent increase. This traffic is boosting international visitor numbers, which is contributing to Canada’s economy, and providing extra tax revenues for government.

While this is good for business and the Canadian economy, fuller airports can create logistical challenges to delivering the high level of passenger experience that the industry strives for.

Canada’s airports are making strategic investments in infrastructure where needed to accommodate this growth and respond to the needs of passengers. They have spent $22 billion since 1992 on infrastructure, with improvements to safety, comfort, security, and the flow of passengers.

This growth has put a strain on government services at airports, however, in particular, on the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) and on the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA). Travellers are faced with long lineups at security screening checkpoints and at air borders during peak times, which has a negative impact on passenger experience.

You may recall that I’ve spoken about these issues before at your committee earlier this year as part of your study on Aviation Safety. The file is progressing but we’re not where we need to be yet.

Transport Minister Marc Garneau has begun important work in this area. The launch of Transportation 2030 almost a year ago commits to look at CATSA’s governance, make it more accountable to a service standard, and its funding more responsive and sustainable.

Bill C-49 provides a framework for CATSA to administer new or additional screening services on a cost-recovery basis. This will provide added flexibility for airports to supplement security screening services for business reasons, such as giving a higher level of service for connecting travellers or a separate check-in area for premium travellers.

However this should be accompanied by a full allocation of Air Travellers Security Charge revenue from passengers to funding screening by next year’s budget. Otherwise airports have a real concern that cost recovery becomes the mechanism used to prop up funding for screening.

In other words, passengers should not have to pay an Air Travellers Security Charge while airports are also having to pay for an acceptable level of service in their airports. Airports operate on a not for profit basis, meaning any additional charges they have to pay have to be recovered from air carriers and passengers. Travellers shouldn’t have to pay twice.

Canada’s airports are pleased that government recently has begun additional work on a long term structural fix for the problem.

Our shared goal should be not only to improve screening wait times, but also to deliver a professional, facilitative customer experience, while continuing to provide a high degree of security.

Some airports believe the best approach would be to allow airports a greater role in the delivery of screening at airports – as is the case in Europe and in many other parts of the globe, but the important message is that one size does not fit all. It is important that a fulsome exploration of all options happen before a final decision is made by government.

Finding a long-term solution is essential to improving Canada’s competitiveness, as well as for passengers who deserve predictability and value for money. But we also can’t be complacent in the meantime. CATSA needs to be sufficiently funded next year to support demand. Government also should restart its stalled investments in CATSA Plus lanes – which are improving the traveller experience in the limited sites where they have been installed but CATSA isn’t able to proceed any further.

Improving air traveller experience also means improving air service in communities, through more air links and lower air fares. The proposed amendments to the *Canada Transportation Act* to increase foreign ownership limits of Canadian air carriers from 25 to 49 per cent is intended to stimulate traffic and domestic competition. These are worthy goals.

Canada’s airports are pleased with the progress that has been made by this government on all of these important files. We hope the momentum continues, and the work that was committed to in Transportation 2030 and coming out of these committee sessions results in meaningful reforms.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here.