



November 23, 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

I am writing again on behalf of Advocates for Safer Airports in Canada (ASA Canada) to urgently draw your attention to the escalating and systemic failures in emergency preparedness and Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) services at Canada's airports. We have written to you previously regarding these issues, and while we appreciate your acknowledgement of those letters, the subsequent referral of these matters to the Minister of Transport and Transport Canada is deeply inadequate and places the flying public at continued and unnecessary risk.

These are urgent national public-safety failures, not routine regulatory matters. More than 180 million passengers rely on a safe and effective aviation system in Canada every year. Yet across the country, ARFF capability has been degraded, downgraded, or ignored to the point that most Canada's airports cannot consistently meet even the minimum international standards that Canada is obligated to uphold under ICAO. To be completely clear it is only Vancouver Airport (YVR) that meet the international Standard.

What has occurred in Wabush and Yellowknife are not isolated incidents. They are representative of a systemic problem affecting scores of airports nationwide.

1. Wabush Airport — A Case Study in Federal Failure

When ARFF services were reinstated in Wabush, the federal government purchased obsolete, non-service-ready firefighting vehicles, equipment that should never have been deployed to an operational airport. The trucks could not be placed into service upon arrival, resulting in periods where commercial flights were unable to land, as regulations prohibit scheduled passenger aircraft from landing at designated airports without a functional ARFF service.

This was not an accident. It was the predictable result of years of underfunding, deregulation, decentralized responsibility, and Transport Canada's refusal to enforce meaningful standards.

Wabush is only one example—there are hundreds more across Canada. Many ARFF crews lack the equipment, staffing, training, and regulatory support required to respond effectively to a survivable aircraft incident.

2. Yellowknife Airport — A Serious Incident Waiting to Happen

This morning, ASA Canada received credible information that only one firefighter reported for duty at Yellowknife Airport. The airport could not field a second firefighter and had no Incident Commander on duty. Despite this, the airport failed to issue a NOTAM, leaving airlines and flight crews unaware of the reduction from Category 6 to Category 5 protection. This is a direct violation of aviation regulations and placed passengers at unacceptable risk.

This is especially alarming considering that on October 5, Yellowknife Airport received an emergency diversion from a Boeing 777 carrying 302 people on board. A single-firefighter response would have been catastrophic in a survivable post-impact fire.

ASA Canada has previously raised detailed concerns regarding the Yellowknife Airport Emergency Plan, response capability, and staffing. Those concerns were dismissed. Today's failure confirms that the airport cannot meet its mandated responsibilities yet continues to operate as though it is.

3. M-96 Passed Parliament — Yet Has Been Handed Back to Airport Operators

Private Member's Motion M-96, which directs the government to improve airport emergency response and ARFF standards, passed the House of Commons with strong support. Despite this clear instruction from Parliament, the file has now been diverted into Transport Canada's "consultative process" with airport operators.

In practice, this means the same bodies responsible for cutting ARFF services, reducing firefighter staffing, and replacing trained responders with snow-plow operators are now being allowed to shape the implementation of Parliament's direction.

This is a conflict of interest and a continuation of the failed self-regulation model that has led us to the current crisis. Transport Canada's practice of allowing airport authorities to overrule regulatory expectations—under the guise of "SMS flexibility"—is a primary driver of the unsafe conditions we now see nationwide.

4. This Problem Cannot Be Delegated Away

Prime Minister, with respect, this issue cannot be solved by Transport Canada. Transport Canada has created the crisis—through deregulation, the watering-down of CARs 302 and 303, and the abdication of responsibility to airport operators.

Referring our previous correspondence to the Transport Minister—without any direct intervention from your office—ensures the cycle continues.

This is a public-safety emergency.
It requires direction from the highest level of government.

5. What We Are Asking

ASA Canada respectfully requests that your office:

1. Take direct carriage of the national ARFF and emergency-preparedness crisis, rather than deferring it to Transport Canada.
2. Order an immediate, independent review of ARFF capability at all designated airports in Canada.
3. Implement Parliament's instruction under M-96 without delegating decision-making to airport authorities whose cost-saving interests conflict with public safety.
4. Ensure that all designated airports meet ICAO-compliant ARFF standards, including staffing, training, equipment, and response-time requirements.

The Situation Is Urgent

Wabush and Yellowknife are warnings.
If a major accident occurs under current conditions, the survivability of passengers will be severely compromised—and the responsibility will lie squarely with those who permitted the erosion of Canada's emergency-response capability.

We urge your office to act decisively to correct this course before tragedy forces action upon us. ASA Canada remains available to brief your staff, provide case documentation, and participate in any review process deemed appropriate.

Respectfully,



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