



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Bill 201, Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act

Tuesday, March 3, 2020
7:15 p.m.

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Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

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* substitution for Michaela Glasgo

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Also in Attendance

Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)

Bill Sponsor

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Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Participants

Ministry of Transportation

Crystal Damer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Policy

Mark Jacka, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister

7:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good evening, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Mike Ellis. I'm the MLA for Calgary-West and chair of the committee. I'd like to ask members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call on those joining in by teleconference. We'll begin to my right.

Mr. Schow: Joseph Schow, MLA for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Neudorf: Nathan Neudorf, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, MLA, Highwood.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Loewen: Todd Loewen, MLA, Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Gotfried: Richard Gotfried, MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek and proponent of Bill 201.

Member Irwin: Janice Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Dach: Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Sigurdson: Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Nielsen: Good evening, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Massolin: Good evening. Philip Massolin, clerk of committees and research services.

Mr. Kulicki: Good evening. Michael Kulicki, committee clerk.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you very much. Everyone is in attendance, so nobody will be teleconferencing in.

For the record I will note the following official substitutions: Member Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk for Michaela Glasgo, Member Todd Loewen for Nate Horner, and Member Lorne Dach for Member Rakhi Pancholi.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio and video stream and transcripts of the meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

Next we'll move to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes, additions to the draft agenda? Seeing none, could I get somebody to make a motion to approve the agenda? All right. Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Neudorf to move that the agenda for the March 3, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be adopted as distributed. All in favour, say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Next we'll move to item 3, the approval of the minutes. We have two sets of draft minutes to review from our meetings on November 18 and November 21, 2019. First, we will consider the draft minutes

of the November 18 meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member please like to make a motion to approve the minutes of the November 18 meeting?

Mr. Nielsen: So moved.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nielsen. Mr. Nielsen to move that the minutes of the November 18, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. All in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

Now we'll consider the minutes of the November 21 meeting. Are there any errors or omissions? Seeing none, would a member like to make a motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019, meeting?

Mr. Sigurdson: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sigurdson. Mr. Sigurdson will move that the minutes of the November 21, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. All in favour, say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Next we'll move to item 4, the review of Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. A presentation will be made by Mr. Richard Gotfried, the MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek. Hon. members, Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, was referred to the committee on Thursday, February 28. In accordance with Standing Order 74.11 the committee must report to the Assembly on Bill 201 on or before Thursday, March 19, 2020. Joining us tonight, as previously indicated, is our sponsor of Bill 201, Mr. Richard Gotfried, the MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek. At this time I'd like to invite Mr. Gotfried to provide a five-minute presentation, and then I will open the floor for up to 20 minutes of questions from committee members.

Mr. Gotfried, thank you very much, and the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and just to note that I will be talking fast as we literally fly through this presentation this evening. I'd like to thank the chair, committee members, and staff for their support to make this possible this evening and also thank Mr. Brian Andrus from the Alberta Aviation Council and Mr. Lynn Wyton from the Edmonton International Airport, who have joined us in the gallery as well. They've been very instrumental in the development of this bill, as have many other key industry players across all the subsectors, including Mount Royal University, SAIT, WestJet, and many more.

I'd also like to thank the ministries and ministers who will be most engaged with this bill as we move forward: Minister McIver in Transportation and Minister Fir in Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ladies and gentlemen, the impetus for this bill actually came to me during the last three or four years after roughly two decades in the aviation sector myself. Many of you may know that we lost Cathay Pacific Cargo, which was a twice-weekly cargo flight, 134,000 kilograms of cargo payload lost there twice per week. We lost Air China Cargo, three times weekly, 101,000 kilograms of cargo payload per flight. And I'm concerned that we are at risk of losing such flights as Hainan Airlines, which is a Calgary-Beijing service, which recently changed from scheduled to seasonal service. Ladies and gentlemen, these are some of the concerns that I have about the impact on our economy and why we need a strategic approach to aviation. We cannot stand idly by and allow ourselves to continue to lose our global productivity.

But it's more than just that. It's more than just the air services that I've referenced. In Alberta we have a proud history and rich legacy as leaders in aviation, and now is the time for Alberta to ensure its place and continue its reputation as a centre of excellence in aviation and aerospace innovation. We have a reputation to uphold as the gateway to the north since as early as 1927 the true pioneers such as bush pilots like Punch Dickins, Wop May, and others flew out of our very own Blatchford field right here in Edmonton. That led, of course, to our history-making contribution to World War II, through the training of over 130,000 aviators as part of the British Commonwealth training plan, which in many ways has contributed to many of the assets we have across our province.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have an opportunity to continue as global leaders and to ensure that aviation and aerospace opportunities are not only pillars of the new Alberta advantage but that we engage our innovative nature and entrepreneurial spirit in attracting capital and talent while creating much-needed jobs in building a reputation for a bright, diversified, and globally competitive sector. The sky is indeed the limit. To not do so would not only disrespect the legacy we enjoy, built by generations before us, but it would be an unconscionable squandering of an opportunity that is clearly within our grasp.

Some of the bill highlights – and you've got copies there and some notes there. It has an ambitious aspirational and inspirational purpose to it. There is clarity of duties, in a nutshell, to research and consult and to prepare and monitor recommendations to government. It has focused powers working with government and stakeholders to drive collaborative action, and it is descriptive rather than prescriptive with respect to council representation to allow latitude as the industry evolves. This bill is broad in its reach but allows for key and emerging subsectors to be represented and engaged. Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, it's about the movement of people, goods, and about thinking globally around opportunities that lie before us.

A few final thoughts. In 2019 Calgary International Airport had just under 18 million total passengers and 155,000 metric tonnes of cargo; our very own Edmonton International Airport here in our great city, just over 8 million total passengers and 43,000 tonnes of cargo, already the fourth and fifth busiest airports in the country. And did you know that Fort McMurray is also an international airport?

Ladies and gentlemen, there's a global pilot and aircraft mechanic shortage. In June 2019 Boeing's CEO said that a global pilot shortage is one of the biggest challenges facing the industry. Demand for air travel is growing so rapidly that 800,000 new pilots are expected to be needed over the next 20 years. We are already leaders in GPS and geospatial technology, much of it developed on the shoulders of our energy sector.

The most gratifying part of the researching and authoring of this bill has been the realization of just how much is already going on within the aviation and aerospace sector in our great province. So join me, share opportunities in your constituencies, and let's build upon the can-do spirit that will continue to take us to new heights in an ever-changing world and ever-evolving economy. Fellow members, let's not waste time in seizing the moment, as I trust that I can count on your support of Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act.

Thank you.

The Chair: Great. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Gotfried. Thank you for that presentation.

We'll now open the floor to questions from committee members. Since this is a bill as submitted by a government member, I think it

only fair that we start with the Official Opposition. Mr. Nielsen, I see you're ready to go. All right. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and through you to MLA Gotfried around Bill 201. I guess I want to just kind of home in on one part of the bill, here, over on page 1, under purpose of council. That would be section 3. Specifically, I'm looking at (e) around "supporting emergency medical and fire response in the province through aviation-related services and infrastructure." I guess one of the questions I would like to ask is leading up to where I'm specifically going. How do you envision council members being able to speak with regard to reports that the council may issue?

7:25

Mr. Gotfried: Well, MLA Nielsen, the idea here is that we can pull in people from very diverse backgrounds. Obviously, the emergency, medical, and fire response is so important to our province, and with that much of the infrastructure that allows us to be able to reach particularly distant and remote communities. So we need the infrastructure to be in place. We need the ability to move people and goods and life-saving equipment to those areas.

Again, the council is set to make recommendations, so we would have experts from various subsectors within the aviation and aerospace sector to take a look at these challenges we may have, or opportunities, as it may be, so that we can actually inform government where they need to, you know, make changes, make recommendations. As you can see further in the bill, it's not only to make recommendations, but it's to monitor those, monitor the ones that were provided the year prior, which I think is very important in this bill, so that there is an accountability loop that comes back to the council so that they can feel empowered that their recommendations are actually being acted upon.

Mr. Nielsen: Then, I guess, Mr. Chair, with a follow-up on that. You know, when we think about the wildland fire rappel program, which, of course, was just cancelled, and we've seen the Ernst & Young report around AHS and the call for the air ambulance cuts, would this council have the ability to advocate on behalf of those programs, potentially recommending to government that they bring back the rappel program and keep our air ambulance?

Mr. Gotfried: MLA Nielsen, the council is not meant to embark on policy per se. They're there to be the experts in the field, to provide objective reviews of best practices, of opportunities but also, again, of challenges. You know, we have a lot of airfields and aerodromes and airports across this province. Some of them may be recommendations on rationalizing those while still providing the levels of service that you need to do the medevac services, to do the fire and emergency rescue, to allow for agricultural aviation to take place with reasonable proximity to where they need it. The council is there to recommend, not to make policy but to certainly recommend objectively what we need to thrive in this sector.

Mr. Nielsen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Schow, go ahead please, sir.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. And thank you, Mr. Gotfried, for your presentation. I just need a little more clarification on this, particularly around, I think, maybe the purpose of the committee. Based on what I hear from your presentation, it sounds to me like we're suggesting that we're setting up a committee, approved by the government, to direct the private sector

or give the private sector some kind of idea of what the government is looking to have the private sector do. I am a little fuzzy, I have to admit. I'm hoping that you can maybe help me to clarify.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you for the question, MLA Schow. It's actually probably the opposite. The idea here is that we engage the experts in the private sector to work together to ask for submissions and to accept submissions and to consult with industry. Again, it's a very diverse industry as well. We can't have everybody at the table with only 15 members, but we can ensure that we do our best to have representation of all the sectors and subsectors there.

The idea here is not for it to be led by government. It's actually to inform government from the experts within the sector, that they can ensure – to go simply, the air services issue is huge to this province, not only for our connectivity to the world for ourselves but for inbound tourism, for cargo connectivity, for investment attraction. All of these things are driven by our ability to prove that we are a city or province that is connected to the world in ways that allow us to grow. These will allow the private sector and organizations that are experts in the field to then have another conduit to provide recommendations through to government in a formal structure that allows them to not only work together but to work with government and other stakeholders to achieve the desired results through the recommendations that they make.

The Chair: Do you have a follow-up there, Mr. Schow?

Mr. Schow: Yeah. So what you're saying is that this panel, made up by industry, is going to advise the government on policy that could help develop trade and economic development in the province of Alberta?

Mr. Gotfried: Well, there's a little bit of a distinction there. Actually, transportation policy: much of it is federal. Certainly, it's been referenced in the bill that they could inform the government on issues within federal aviation policy that might negatively or positively affect Alberta. We would rely on the experts within the council to provide that to us. But, really, again, this is not a policy group. This is a group of experts that can provide input through their recommendations, their vetted recommendations, which I'm sure will be highly prioritized for the best opportunities and options at hand, provide that to government.

Again, the ministries which are most obvious, of course, are Transportation and Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, but as you can see, you've got Agriculture and Forestry, you've got Municipal Affairs, and you've got Health. You've got many of the other different ministries that actually will be, I think, significantly touched by the expertise there and then the comprehensive approach to it by having experts in the field advise and recommend to government some changes they could do to optimize our opportunities and economic growth, quite frankly, the opportunities for pure investment, job creation, and economic growth and diversification in this province.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, sir.

Member Dach, go ahead, please.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. Mr. Gotfried, thanks for your presentation. If I'm understanding you correctly, what I'm hearing you say is that this council would be an ongoing sort of open channel for stakeholders to get their recommendations through to government, which leads me to wonder: what is the lack right now that you're trying to address for these stakeholders? Obviously, you must feel that there are inadequate opportunities right now for these stakeholders to make their voices heard. Is that what stakeholders

are feeling? I'm wondering if perhaps – you mentioned a member from the Alberta Aviation Council. Brian is his first name; I think he's here tonight. Perhaps he could expound on that, as to why he feels another level of council is necessary for his voice to be heard directly into government.

Mr. Gotfried: Yeah. Thank you, MLA Dach. You know what? It would be at the will of the committee whether you want to talk directly to our guest.

However, what I can tell you is that I've talked to large operators, from WestJet to the large airports to our postsecondary institutions, Mount Royal and SAIT, who are involved, and they're excited about being able to connect with each other. It's not just a connectivity to government and their ability to access government. It's actually the ability to build that cluster, that economic cluster, that can work together in many ways – share best practices, you know, work together with each other in terms of supply and services – and build a sector that is more robust than each of these individual operators.

I can use an example. As I told you, my impetus to start this in the first place was because the Alberta government was doing nothing to support and retain much-needed air services. Mr. Dach, I called my former colleagues at Cathay Pacific, and from the time they launched their service in October 2014 till their departure, they had not one speck of outreach from an Alberta government representative. Not one. To me, we might have been able to retain that service had we had a group that said: you need to talk to these airlines. There's a recommendation that we need to have a liaison, and they can even call them in and engage them. But when we let things disappear without us touching them, that's criminal. That is something that we should not allow to happen in this province, particularly during tough economic times, when the economics of those flights coming into this province may be jeopardized.

Mr. Dach: Yeah. Let me ask you this, then, without asking for a specific opinion from the member from the Aviation Council. Is it your view, from discussions with the Aviation Council, that they felt the need for this because they weren't able to individually get through to government?

Mr. Gotfried: Well, I'll have to let Mr. Andrus talk another time, but the Aviation Council is actually an umbrella group in itself and represents many very diverse players within the aviation sector in this province. They're already pulling together dozens if not maybe into the hundreds of members from various individuals and organizations to try and create that.

This strategic aviation advisory council is probably taking organizations like the Alberta Aviation Council, our private-sector players, which are – I mean, I've got some great examples here, companies like Peraton, Foremost test facility, the University of Calgary. We have four of Canada's most important military bases. The University of Alberta is recognized with their nanotechnology work that they're doing. We have such diverse players, MLA Dach, and I think that to have an opportunity to have a council which is focused on this one hundred per cent, that can call them in to make submissions, invite them to provide submissions at their discretion, meet regularly – at the end of the year their goal is to have very strong, robust, actionable recommendations that they take to government and then to hold them to account the following year. I think that that's a good thing. That's a positive opportunity for us to grow this sector when we have such great opportunity to do so.

7:35

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Neudorf, go ahead, please.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Chair. MLA Gotfried, if you've done any research, could you tell us: do you have any idea what this panel could potentially cost the government on an annual basis?

Mr. Gotfried: That's a great question. You can talk to everybody that I've talked to. What we've told them, of course – this is within the bill – is that it is at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor. But the conversation we've had is that there will be no remuneration. The remuneration will be that we'll help you to get your sector firing on all cylinders, and then it's up to the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor if there's some modest coverage of some meeting costs, MLA Neudorf. That's obviously not at my discretion or our discretion; that's at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor. What we do recognize is that we are in a time of fiscal restraint, but I think industry, irrespective of maybe having to cover some modest costs themselves, is asking for this. I've got some support letters here already, and they're coming in rapidly in support for this idea, for this council, from across the sector.

The Chair: A brief follow-up.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. It's a two-part follow-up. What will this do that the market cannot do on its own? The second part is: with many of these entities as fierce competitors with one another, will it achieve the goal that you set forward?

Mr. Gotfried: That's a great question. I mean, I think that what we found in the example I gave to MLA Dach was that they were looking for greater leadership and partnership with government. The industry is seeking that. If we can facilitate that through this council and create the opportunities for better dialogue, better focus, and better support – and, again, air services is kind of one of the many parts of this, but we need to look at things strategically. You know, we can get a flight from – I probably shouldn't use an example. We can get a flight from a city that may not really be in our long-term strategic economic benefit when, in fact, we really want to target flights from another place.

I think that to do that, we have to work together across the sector, not only with the aviation sector but the tourism sector, the economic development sector, those people who are in international trade, those that are moving goods, particularly just-in-time inventories, and moving through air cargo. There are many different reasons that we should create this opportunity to work more closely together. It doesn't happen without somebody actually taking a step forward and creating an opportunity for collaboration, and I think we need to do that better.

Mr. Neudorf: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have about six minutes and two more people on the list. Mr. Nielsen, go ahead, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to follow up a little bit around some of the comments where you were saying that the council wouldn't be a direct cost, potentially, in the beginning. I guess that as we're looking at the theme of the government currently, where they want smaller government, things like that, reducing costs, is there any concern that a project like this might get put on the shelf and, unfortunately, maybe forgotten about?

Mr. Gotfried: That's a great question, MLA Nielsen. You can see that the renewal on this bill is after five years, purposely, so we're avoiding election cycles and it doesn't get caught up – probably we've lost some pretty good initiatives because they got caught up

in an election cycle, so we've made sure that that window is beyond that. But it's up to the Legislature of the day and the Lieutenant Governor in Council to decide whether this is working or not. Quite frankly, if it's not working, the people that are a part of it will probably say to disband it, but I hope the opposite is true, that we can actually not only build some opportunities and successes through this but that as we move forward, we find that it is a very valuable resource to provide prioritized and actionable recommendations to government. We're all busy, you know, trying to do as many things as we can. This is a focus on the aviation and aerospace sector that I think is well deserved.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sigurdson: I've just one quick question on this. Is there or has there ever been anything like this that has existed in Alberta, and do you have any other provinces that are doing things similar to this?

Mr. Gotfried: That's a great question. There used to be in Alberta a strategic transportation advisory council, which was disbanded, I think, over the last four years. The trouble that I heard from people in the aviation sector is that it was roads, bridges, highways, railroads, and then the airline guys or the aviation people came in. The time that they got and the focus that they got from that was very limited.

This is very broad, no question – it's broad because the sector is broad – but it's specific to creating a cluster, to creating an ecosystem within the aviation and aerospace sector. These people talk the same language very often. They use similar technologies. There's great emerging technology. You can see in my bill that I haven't put the RPAS in there and the UAVs and the UAS. We've said "emerging technology" because it's changing every day.

I think what we're seeing here is an opportunity to do something new. Is this the first one here? I don't know. Your question is well taken, and I will do some research to see if there are any similar groups across the province. There's been so much input coming at me very quickly. If this committee sees that we move forward to the second reading, there's an opportunity to do even greater research, to reach out to more players and groups within the province of Alberta, and also to find out about some best practices across the country that we can utilize as well.

The Chair: Is there a follow-up, Mr. Sigurdson?

Mr. Sigurdson: No. That's good. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Anybody else have any questions?

Mr. Dach: Very briefly, Chair, I'd like to ask simply: in the interest of maintaining the independence of this council, how would members be selected? Do you envision being able to open it up beyond cabinet and have perhaps industries, stakeholders, and the public make recommendations as well?

Mr. Gotfried: That's a great question. I think you can see the fairly broad cross-section of appointment of members. I mean, there are 10 different categories in there, MLA Dach. It's meant to be as broadly representative as we can. Actually, with the recommendations from Legislative Counsel, we decided to be a bit more descriptive than prescriptive because we wanted to make sure that some new and emerging technology could be taken in there.

I think the idea I would have is that as we move forward with this, we listen to the sector, and we find people that are – you know, maybe it's umbrella groups that actually represent a cross-section

of the industry, that we can bring one person forward. I've been very clear with people that I've been talking to: just because you've been helpful in this process doesn't mean you get a seat at the table, including myself.

I think we have to take a look at this and say that this is about doing something that is probably overdue in Alberta, that I trust, I believe will bear fruit, and if we don't do it, we'll suffer the consequences of not building a strong ecosystem within the aviation and aerospace sector. Again, we have been, you know, global leaders in this since the early 1920s and through the Second World War. This is a rich legacy and a proud history that we squander at our peril. Let's not let that happen. Let's drive forward, let's be ambitious and aspirational, and let's create this strategic aviation advisory council as a tool to achieve that, MLA Dach.

The Chair: A follow-up, sir?

Mr. Dach: Just a quick one. I don't mean to open up a hornet's nest, but you did mention rationalizing airports, and I'm wondering which small, rural airports you'd like to see close.

Mr. Gotfried: None at all, actually. You know what? We have experts in the field. If I recall, there was a study done in 2008 – again, there are people much more expert than me – that took a look at the airports and what we've got, from agricultural and grass landing strips to our largest international airports, across this province. I think that's for the experts, MLA Dach, to tell us because they're very valuable.

As I've pointed out in my bill, there are remote communities, places in this province where the only way you can get there is by air travel, by light aircraft. You can see how vitally important it is to so many communities, not to mention the issues around medevac and the emergency issues that we face. Air travel is extremely important because of our geography in this province, and we want to be able to make sure that all corners of this province are accessible to Albertans and that our major centres are accessible to people from across this province.

The Chair: All right. We've got about 20 seconds left. Mr. Gotfried, do you have any final comment?

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to thank the committee for the opportunity to have a chat with you. I hope that we can move this to second reading so that we can have that additional, more robust debate upon this issue and that we can bring forward even more industry experts and sector support, I hope, and detractors as we need to.

Thank you.

The Chair: Great. Well, thank you very much, sir, and thank you very much for your presentation.

I'd like to once again thank Mr. Gotfried for presenting here today.

Next we're going to move on in our agenda. We have a technical briefing by the Ministry of Transportation. Hon. members, the committee will now receive a technical briefing on Bill 201 from the Ministry of Transportation. I'd like to invite Mr. Mark Jacka, the minister's chief of staff, and Ms Crystal Damer, the assistant deputy minister of the safety and policy division, to provide a five-minute presentation, and then I will open the floor up to 20 minutes' worth of questions from the committee members.

Folks, you're seated; you're ready. When you are ready, the floor is yours. Thank you very much.

7:45

Ms Damer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. I'm here to present to you a bit of an overview of Bill 201, which is the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, from the perspective of Alberta Transportation.

Alberta is a trading jurisdiction. It provides multimodal transportation options for our shippers and exporters, which is crucial for us advancing the current and economic potential of this province. Alberta depends on well-functioning, multimodal transportation infrastructure and services and its carriers and logistics operations, including those in the air transportation sector, that support access to domestic and international markets.

Similarly, Albertans also rely on this infrastructure and these carriers, including airports and airlines, to travel to other markets, whether it be for business or for leisure. The aviation sector is used to transport specialized cargo. It includes things like pharmaceuticals, biopharmaceuticals, meat, dairy, fruit, and fresh produce. The sector also supports the social and economic needs of Albertans, industry, and government through activities such as emergency medical responses, search and rescue, business travel, and tourism.

In terms of the sector's importance to Alberta's economy: in 2018 Alberta exported goods valued at \$1.9 billion via the air transportation mode. In 2019 Alberta's aerospace and defence industries included 500 companies, directly employed approximately 16,000 Albertans, and directly contributed \$3.25 billion in provincial annual gross domestic product.

The advancement of air services and aerospace has been identified as a key priority to support provincial tourism and the province's investment growth strategy. This further aligns with one of the government of Alberta's priorities, which is to work with the federal government and the airport authorities in Calgary and Edmonton to expand airport transport agreements and get more flights to Alberta from tourist source countries.

Bill 201 proposes the establishment of the strategic aviation advisory council by the government of Alberta. It would be tasked with providing advice to government on how best to advance the aviation sector, including aviation services and aerospace. The bill notes that the council must do the following, which includes: research and analyzing information about aviation, aerospace-related services, infrastructure and training, and other sectors directly or indirectly impacted by these services; the council will consult with key sector corporations, organizations, associations, institutes and professional and employee groups; and it will prepare and submit to the minister an annual report which would include recommendations in respect of improving aviation and aerospace-related services, infrastructure, and training.

The bill only presents a high-level sense of what the council's duties are, but it also identifies a broad range of members that would form the council such as airlines, airport authorities, economic development organizations, aerospace engineering organizations, pilot training institutes, search and rescue, and emergency medical organizations. While the proposed membership reflects the diverse nature of Alberta's aviation sector, some duties the council would choose could pursue other interests to certain members. There would be value in focusing on specific initiatives to enhance economic growth and identifying members whose mandate fits within those outcomes.

Additional engagement and further information may be necessary to further explore the role of the council. Industry could then identify gaps in the aviation sector and pursue targeted investment attraction activities to fill these gaps and other critical objectives, including market access, trade diversification, and job

creation. It may also be appropriate that the council can be directed by the minister to complete specific duties such as engagement on federal airport transportation items, which could then be used to inform provincial submissions to the government of Canada on strategic air transportation policies and programs.

While Bill 201 identifies that the Department of Transportation would be providing secretarial support to the council, it is recommended that the ministry responsible for supporting the council not be identified within the legislation but best left to cabinet to assign responsibility.

In conclusion, there are existing forums that do support the aviation sector such as the Alberta Aviation Council and the Alberta Airports Management Association. These organizations could be leveraged to provide advice to government. The government of Alberta could also have targeted discussions with select stakeholders should it wish to seek any advice on a particular topic affecting Alberta's aviation sector.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, and thank you very much for that presentation.

We will now open the floor up for 20 minutes' worth of questions. We'll again start with the Official Opposition. Mr. Nielsen, thank you. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that presentation. I appreciate it. I really only have the one question around, I guess it would be the membership within the council. We definitely have a good list from which to potentially look at members. Do you see them maybe needing some parameters in terms of balancing the membership? Obviously, you wouldn't want to overload it, say, just from commercial airlines. We would want potentially some other views on there. Do you think that there might be some kind of requirement around balancing that out a little bit?

Mr. Jacka: I can address that. I'm sorry. I'm Mark. I work for Minister McIver. I think that the thing that we would recommend on behalf of Transportation is engaging larger stakeholders in terms of the formulation of the council, not necessarily advocating for a specific membership requirement itself, though, but just to, at the very least, have the conversation with the large airports to indicate what their level of support would be.

Mr. Nielsen: Okay. No follow-up.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Schow, go ahead, please.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question for either Mr. Jacka or Ms Damer. Is it your opinion that this committee would fill a void that the minister or the department couldn't fill on its own? Do you see that this is a necessary step?

Mr. Jacka: I think, as Mr. Gotfried has laid out, the strategic aviation advisory council would provide a unique private-sector perspective on some aviation priorities, yes. It could provide an outside perspective that is not currently, obviously, by definition, within Alberta Transportation.

Mr. Schow: Okay.

The Chair: Go ahead. You have a follow-up, sir. Yeah.

Mr. Schow: So it's not currently there. Is it one that could be filled by the ministry itself, or is this committee something that you see

would be highly beneficial because the ministry can't fill that void on its own for whatever reason?

Mr. Jacka: Well, I'm going to try to give you the most political answer I can. If it's the desire of the government to fulfill that role within the department, then the department can certainly cover off a lot of bases. It's not necessarily the most efficient to do that within the department, however.

Additionally, in terms of engaging stakeholders and outside perspectives, obviously we can't hire private-sector subject matter experts to provide, like, consistent advice in a way that a council could, right? You know, there's a benefit to having an agency, board, or commission to engage people who we can't have on the government payroll to provide that kind of advice. But in terms of: can it fulfill the objectives within the department? I think Dave Hancock used to say: whatever interests the Premier fascinates me. It's very much that way within the department, so if it's determined to be a government priority, we could probably make it work.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Jacka, thank you very much.

Mr. Nielsen, go ahead, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Yeah. Just one quick question. You know, with Mr. Gotfried being a private member and with limited resources in terms of consultation, maybe it's a chance to help him out and save him some work here. I don't suppose the ministry might already know of other jurisdictions that maybe have something like this in place and could share that information if there is.

Ms Damer: I'm not aware of other provinces that have struck a similar organization.

Mr. Nielsen: It sounds like you're on your own on this.

Mr. Gotfried: Well, you gotta break trail sometimes.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have nobody else on the list. Do we have any other questions at this time? Mr. Dach, go ahead, please.

Mr. Dach: Very quickly, the communication that the council would have with government: it would be an ongoing communication? It would be one annual report to the ministry? What do you anticipate?

Ms Damer: Based on the bill, it's my understanding that government would also be at that table working with the council, so there would be representation at the meetings, and then, of course, as outlined in the bill, the council would present an annual report back to the minister.

Mr. Dach: All right. It would be an open channel that could respond to ongoing issues or things that come up without waiting for an annual report?

Ms Damer: Oh. I would say absolutely that the minister would be interested in speaking with the chair or members of the board if that was an opportunity that needed to be opened up.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Dach.

Are there any other questions at this time?

Okay. Seeing none, I'd like to thank Mr. Jacka and Ms Damer from the ministry for attending and providing that presentation and answering questions from the members. Thank you very much for joining us this evening.

7:55

We'll now move on with our agenda here, decisions on review of Bill 201. Hon. members, the committee must now decide how to conduct its review of Bill 201. In accordance with our agreed upon process, the committee may decide to invite additional feedback from stakeholders on this bill at a later meeting or it may choose to expedite this review and proceed to deliberations. What are the members' thoughts on this particular issue, and would members wish to hear from stakeholders, or would they wish to expedite this review? I open up the floor.

Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen: Seems like I'm dominating the time here tonight. Yeah. No. I think we have a bill here that has some good merits. I'd certainly love to be able to explore it further with all MLAs within the House. You know, certainly, I guess, if stakeholders in the room who are present want to provide any kind of information that they think that we should know about, they could always just send that in for copies for everybody, but I don't see any reason why we can't get this back to the House to begin further debate.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Is there anybody on the government side who would like to make a comment? There's consensus here? All right. Anybody opposed at this moment here? No further questions? Okay. Well, then we'll put up a motion here regarding – sorry. Pardon me. All right. Let me just read the top paragraph of the notes here.

The committee will now begin its deliberations on Bill 201. At this time the committee must consider its observations, opinions, or recommendations with respect to Bill 201, including whether or not the bill should proceed. The committee's process allows up to 60 minutes of deliberations on the bill although members may extend this time limit if there is consensus that additional time is necessary.

It sounds to me like we do have some consensus that we want to move on with the bill. I'm thinking that we – does anybody want to make any further comments? I open up the floor to that. Hearing none. Okay. Then we'll be looking at a possible motion going forward here.

Hon. members, having finished any deliberations with respect to Bill 201, the committee should now consider directing research services to prepare a draft report, including the committee's recommendation. The clerk is going to put this motion up for us all to see once the computers warm up. I guess, would somebody like to move the motion that I am eventually going to read? Okay. Mr. Neudorf. I'll let the clerk put this up here.

Mr. Neudorf would like to move that
the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills recommend that Bill 201, Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, proceed.

All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed?

That motion is carried.

All right. Next we have a second motion here. This is the draft motion that is going to direct research services to prepare a draft report. Would somebody like to move this particular motion? Mr. Sigurdson, I see your hand went up. I will read it once the clerk is able to put this up.

Mr. Sigurdson will move that
the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills direct research services to prepare a draft report on the committee's review of Bill 201, Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, in accordance with the committee's recommendations and authorize the chair to approve the committee's final report to the Assembly on or before noon on Thursday March 5, 2020.

All in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no.

That motion is carried.

All right. Well, next, a few more items here. Other business. Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting? Seeing none.

All right. The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair whenever another private member's public bill is introduced in the Assembly.

Adjournment. If there's nothing further, I'll consider a motion to adjourn. You know what? I'm sure Mr. Nielsen wants to say something. All right. Mr. Nielsen to move that we adjourn. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed? This meeting is adjourned.

Everyone, have a great night. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 8 p.m.]

