November 2015 President’s Corner

A new government
As you read this, we likely have (or just about to have) a new government in place. As I mentioned in my last President’s corner (October COPA Flight) the three main political parties would be asked the same questions regarding their commitment to airports and support for general aviation. These questions and responses can be found on the website. Upon reaching our deadline for this column, only the Liberals and the New Democrats had answered us. I will not editorialize about their answers but will let you read them and interpret to your liking.

I would invite you, however, to read our questions once again. As you go through them, you will notice an underlying theme where we sense the government has not assumed full responsibility of its power and authority, or perhaps even relegated its governance to provincial or lower governments. I believe we can play an important part in reminding our government of its role and responsibility concerning aeronautics. And we can improve our impact for getting this message to our leaders if we take steps to improve the social acceptability for personal or general aviation.

To improve this social acceptability I strongly suggest that whenever an event is held at your airport, such as COPA for kids, a fly-in or some other public activity, an invitation is extended to your local Chamber of Commerce people, the elected officials, and the media to witness the benefits of a local airport. All the while, COPA will do its part by continuing to advocate for freedom to fly. For my part as your President and CEO, I will take every opportunity to work with the next Transport Minister and his or her delegates.
COPA’s Freedom to Fly fund at work: helping Neuville - CNV9
There are a few ongoing cases of relentless harassment against local aerodromes by certain municipalities that want to do indirectly what they cannot do directly. In our third question to the parties, we state “A number of municipalities have recently stepped up their efforts to stop the establishment of new aerodromes, and the improvement of existing ones, by passing so-called “site-alteration” or “fill” by-laws and thereafter aggressively prosecuting aerodrome owners for alleged violations of same.” We have seen this across the country (Alberta, Ontario, Québec) and it is going on right now at Neuville airport (CNV9) in Quebec.

The entity managing the airport (Neuville Aero) is being brought to court for moving just over fifteen cubic meters of soil - a threshold that was put in place in a bylaw specifically designed to limit aviation related activities. Since the inception of Neuville airport, the proponents have been doing everything by the book and they have set an example that can be followed by all airports in the country. On top of being targeted by the municipality, the Agricultural Land Protection Commission is also bringing them to court for doing other than aeronautical activities at the aerodrome, mainly when social get-togethers with the neighbours were held to show the neighbours the aircraft, hangars and activities going on at the airport! Because of this perceived harassment and the national impact it could have, COPA is using its Freedom to Fly fund to support Neuville Aero in this case and to try to break the budding cycle of unfounded harassment.