

FROM THE HILL

Legislative and Political Report

ALPA Meets with New Government in Canada

As a result of the January election in Canada, your ALPA representatives have been and will continue to be busy over the next weeks and months, meeting with key ministers and members of Parliament. ALPA's president, Capt. Duane Woerth, and ALPA's Canada Board president, Capt. Kent Hardisty, scheduled meetings with Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon and Labour Minister

Jean-Pierre Blackburn as soon as the ministers' schedules allowed. Priority issues for discussion are ALPA's opposition to further liberalization of air transport, foreign ownership of Canadian airlines, and excessive hours of work for Canadian pilots.

The 39th General Election, held on January 23, elected members of the Canadian House of Commons. This unusual winter election was the re-

sult of a motion of no confidence that the House of Commons passed on Nov. 28, 2005. Although the next election was not legally required until 2009, the opposition had enough votes to force the Parliament to dissolve. Allegations of criminal corruption within the Liberal party had weakened it.

The Conservative Party of Canada, a center-right party, won the most seats, 124 out of 308. This resulted in a minority government led by the Conservatives with their party leader, Stephen Harper, as the 22nd Prime Minister of Canada. The former governing party, the Liberals, a center-left party, won 103 seats; the Québec pro-sovereignty party, Bloc Québécois, won 51 seats; the New Democratic Party, a social democratic party, won 29 seats; and one independent member was elected. Although no party wants another election soon, the Conservative government's minority status will require it to cautiously approach implementing any new policies on which it cannot gain the support of one or more of the other parties.

Fact Sheet: A Primer on Canada's System of Government

- Canada became a self-governing dominion in 1867 and obtained full independence from Britain in 1931. The national capital is in Ottawa, Ont.
- Canada is a constitutional monarchy and a federal state with a democratic parliament. The federal system of government means that powers and responsibilities are divided between the federal government and the 10 Canadian provincial governments. Canada also has three territories in the far north.
- In general, the federal government is responsible for matters that affect all of Canada. These include national defence, foreign policy, and citizenship. Provincial and territorial governments look after such matters as education, health care, and highways.
- Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is Canada's official head of state, represented in Canada by the Governor General, who must sign all federal laws.
- The Canadian Parliament is made up of two houses: the House of Commons, the national legisla-

ture elected by Canadian citizens, has 308 members of Parliament, or MPs; the Senate is the Upper House of Parliament, with members appointed by the Governor General upon recommendation of the Prime Minister.

- With some exceptions, Canadian laws must be approved by the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Governor General before they become law. Most parliamentary legislation is introduced by the government (see next item).

- The political party with the most members in the House of Commons takes the leading role in forming a government. If that party has a majority of seats (155 or more), then it forms a majority government. If it has fewer than 155 seats, the leading party will seek the cooperation of other parties and form a minority government. The leader of the party that forms the government becomes the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister chooses a Cabinet from members of the leading party in the House of Commons. 🌐

ALPA Blasts Foreign Control of U.S. Airlines Before Congress

On February 8, the U.S. House of Representatives Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing on the Department of Transportation's recent proposal to loosen restrictions on foreign control of U.S. airlines. ALPA's president, Capt. Duane Woerth, voiced ALPA's staunch opposition.

"Pilots spend their entire careers accumulating the seniority required to gain access to (international) flying opportunities," said Capt. Woerth. "In an era when the career expectations of pilots and other airline workers already have been repeatedly frustrated by airline bankruptcies, furloughs, wage concessions, pension plan terminations, and the like, it would be a crowning blow for the U.S. government now to adopt a policy that would tend to eliminate international flying by U.S. carriers."

The radical policy proposal, which came in the form of a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) issued late in 2005, could hold serious consequences for U.S. national security and airline industry jobs. It would allow foreign interests, including foreign airlines, to control fleet planning, route structure, pricing, and marketing of U.S. air carriers.

ALPA opposes the proposed policy changes because

- it violates federal law prohibiting foreign control,
- a foreign airline could change a U.S. carrier's schedules, pricing, etc., to feed its own international operations, to the detriment of the U.S. carrier and its employees,
- for similar reasons, the U.S. carrier's ability to furnish aircraft suitable for the U.S. military's CRAF program could be reduced,
- U.S. workers might not have the same labor law protections that are available in the United States if a foreign owner began to play them off against workers in a different country,
- aviation safety could be reduced because the proposed rule requires that foreign-controlled management meet only minimum FAA standards, and
- the DOT has not demonstrated a need for foreign investment in U.S. carriers nor has it shown that investment will not occur absent such a change.



BILL BIERKE PAGE ONE PHOTOGRAPHY

ALPA's president, Capt. Duane Woerth, testifies on Capitol Hill on February 8 against the DOT's effort to permit expansion of foreign control of U.S. airlines.

In December 2005, Reps. James Oberstar (D-Minn.) and Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.) introduced legislation (H.R.4542) that would prohibit the DOT from issuing a final rule for 1 year and would require that the DOT report to Congress concerning the proposed changes. Currently, this bill has more than 140 cosponsors, including the chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska). Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) introduced S.2135, a bill identical to H.R.4542, in the Senate.

At the hearing, Capt. Woerth also criticized concessions made by U.S. trade negotiators in the recent talks with the European Union. He referred to a June 2004 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office on the effects of easing restrictions on U.S.-European Markets, noting that the GAO concluded that whatever ben-

efit U.S. passenger carriers and travelers would eventually gain from such an agreement might not be realized for several years.

Capt. Woerth was not alone in expressing objection to the DOT proposal. Every House Aviation Subcommittee member in attendance, both Republican and Democrat, strongly opposed the DOT's process and policy.

"The NPRM on foreign ownership in effect would trade away the crown jewel of American transportation—our nation's airlines—at their most vulnerable moment, to their foreign competitors," said Rep. Oberstar, the ranking Democratic member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee at a recent Washington, D.C., speech on the proposal.

Continental Airlines President Jeffery Smisek and AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Edward Wytkind also testified at the hearing and join ALPA in opposing the proposal.

ALPA has also worked to draw public attention to this issue in the national news media, including appearances on CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*.

While the U.S. House hearing on February 8 was extremely important, it was only the first step to ensuring that the DOT's proposal receives full public scrutiny. ALPA is calling on the Senate to hold hearings on the proposal, which could profoundly influence U.S. national security and airline industry jobs.

ALPA is actively supporting the legislation that has been introduced with regard to foreign control of U.S. airlines. All pilots are urged to contact their member of Congress and Senator to express their concerns about foreign control and their support for H.R.4542 and S.2135. Visit ALPA's website to learn more.—*Linda Shotwell, Communications Specialist*