

The war on airplanes in the Yukon...

Aviation in the Yukon is likely a dying activity. This, despite it being just the opposite situation in Alaska, and perhaps the Northwest Territories, which border us on each side. Maybe something in our history indicates the cause? Consider;

- Some years ago, Transport Canada (TC) operated the airport system, and we complained about the inefficiency;
- In those days TC obtained weather forecasts from the Environment observers located in a building located on the airport property. But TC decided they should “rent” the space to their “brother” Federal department. The rent was calculated and set so high that Environment quickly decided it was cheaper to move “off-airport” and build a new building. Using millions of tax-dollars they did just that (the brown building below the Canada Games Center). But, before the observers were even moved into their fancy new digs, they were all laid off or moved to the Okanagan. Their old building was torn down. Their new building was renovated (for several hundred thousand\$) and leased at bargain rates to the Yukon Government (at least until another Federal department grew enough to take the building back).
- Someone realized that some weather observations might still best be made in the Yukon (perhaps there were some differences between here and Kelowna). The “Fully Automated Unmanned Upper Air Observation Station” machine was purchased for several million dollars and set up in front of the new brown building (you can still see it there, it looks like ATCO met the lunar rover). It was intended to launch balloons and send the recorded data to Kelowna by phone. But it turned out not to function in typical Yukon cold, so new staff had to be hired to keep it operational. In an effort to recover some of their costs they reduced the number of daily observations to two (a savings of almost \$ 200 a day). Weather forecasters were prohibited from using any observations from Alaska (the Canadian Government refused to accept them for free) and similarly any observations by Forestry lookouts were outlawed (they were trained but from the wrong union).
- Thankfully (?) about 20 years ago the Yukon Government (YTG) assumed responsibility for aviation. The **Aviation and Marine Branch** was created. But despite growing to now include about 30 highly paid people, still no one in that entire branch of the Yukon Government is a pilot, has flying, or has any direct aviation

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experience at all. (With apologies to one nice guy who now drives a snow plow but who used to work filling airplanes in the private sector). As a result they are unable to interact intelligently with Transport Canada, and Transport retained oversight tied to funding, and we saw them notorious for being absurd. Aviation and marines lack of experience might also explain why the many new rules they create are largely poorly conceived or irrelevant.

IE (Just before John Ostachek became the Premier of the Yukon, he tried landing his new Maule aircraft on “Tundra Tires” on the paved runway in Whitehorse instead of in the grass alongside the runway as was the normal procedure. He discovered that was a bad idea when he instantly flipped over on its back destroying his airplane. Since his departure the Yukon Government has prohibited landing anywhere but on that same pavement, despite the risk. Paramount Federal law still allows an aircraft to land in the ditch along the Alaska Highway outside the airport fence rather than risk a crash. The irony is thick, John must twist in his grave.)

- The Yukon Government assumed control of the only two remaining aircraft hangers along the aircraft ramp (“D” and “E” hangers). There was a desperate need for aircraft hangers. They promptly converted both into warehouse storage for their old furniture.
- I decided to try to build a hanger for my little airplane on a property leased from the Yukon Government for that purpose. They combined with the City in insisting any such building be spaced at least 6 meters from the edge of each of the properties YTG surveyed and leased to the public. This left 2.25 square meters available for a building (barely enough room for a “one-hole’r”) in the middle of my lot.
- When I finally overcame the first permitting issues, I was stopped by YTG’s Whitehorse Airport Manager and told that I must facilitate access at the rear (the West side) of my new building. He said a new survey had been completed and I must now “only access my lease from the new road” they constructed (now called “Boeing Place”). He also told me; “...no access will be allowed in future from the existing gate, it is being removed”. So, I dutifully moved the footings for my building several meters to the East. Now, its ten years later and I am the only one using the new road. Newer leasers around me have even built on top of it. Access remains primarily through the old gate, and I now have 3 meters of unusable lease on the West side and no room to park an airplane on the East side taxiway.

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- The City of Whitehorse (COW) wanted to expand the City sewer system West of the Alaska Highway, but didn't want to pay for it. When the Yukon Government gave the COW control over new airport buildings they saw their opportunity and insisted all future hangars at the airport have water and sewer (despite most, like mine, being unheated shells). So, the Yukon Government obediently installed Water and sewer (taking 2 1/2 years and at 10 times the estimated cost). The Yukon Government then allowed their contractor to back-fill the trenches using fuel-contaminated soil from the old "Upper Tank Farm" which he now owned. The water and sewer remains largely unused except for frequent excavation apparently for repairs. My leases and taxes have doubled to recover the costs. The COW seems oblivious, they have expanded their system for free, **but** the kick in the gut was when the COW began advertising for anyone in Yukon interested in buying permits to use the new airport sewage system for "...only \$250 dollars per year." (It turns out there is not enough sewage to keep it operational in winter) ???
- A few years ago, in preparation for a convention of dozens of planes and hundreds of people coming up to the Yukon on a flying tour, I requested the Yukon Government pump out the outhouse and fill the wood box in the shelter at the small campground beside the airport. Their response within a few hours was to remove those camping facilities and close it.
- Schwatka Lake has been a float plane base ever since the City of Whitehorse (COW) demanded all float aircraft move there (nearly 50 years). Now COW find it offends their sensibilities, but they have no legal jurisdiction on the water, it remains a Federal jurisdiction. But, defying legal authority..... the COW have created a licencing regime for docks; They now demand floatplanes purchase a licence from them for \$300.00 each year. They demand a surety deposit of \$1,500.00 (to be used to manage each dock). They demand that they be provided with the description (including a photograph), of any aircraft using the dock. They demand a copy of the insurance and ownership documentation for the aircraft. They demand \$2,000,000.00 insurance be purchased by the user naming the COW as the insured. They also demand all docks meet their standards. In public meetings to implement their wishes COW staff have

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“accidentally named” certain commercial operators they intend to push out. There are now fewer floatplanes on Schwatka Lake than at any time in past 30 years.

- The Yukon Government has closed runways (ie the parallel grass and ski strips, they attempted to close runway 19 in Whitehorse), they have given away as many airports as possible to First Nations (Squanga, Magundy, etc), they have offered to give away more to real-estate developers (Cousins), and have discovered it advantageous to routinely close runways and airports using administrative “NOTAM’s rather than to routinely maintain them. (IE Mule Creek, Fort Selkirk, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Faro, etc). There have been no complaints from the communities involved, they may not know, or perhaps they may intend on ignoring the rules in an emergency.
- Yukon Government staff have been confronted peeking into hanger windows and taking photographs to document.....something. (I luckily elected not to install windows in my small hanger (I was informed windows would have increased building “set-backs”).)
- The Yukon Government has told the people who lease aircraft parking spots from them that we need to obtain a Special Airport Drivers Licence from them, but we need to write an exam, they want a complete description of any private vehicles we might use to access our leased property, and we need to but \$2,000,000.00 dollar liability insurance with Yukon the named as co-insured on any vehicle we might use.
- My lease on the airport property I built the hanger on expired. I was told my new lease would be valid for twenty years. I received two copies of the new lease in the mail and, as requested I signed both copies, noted my concern about the contamination the soil they introduced (above) and returned both copies, with my cheque, for their signature and return of one copy in October 2014. They cashed my cheque in February 2015? It is now August 2015 and they have not yet returned a copy of my lease to me.
- The local flying group hosts a kids day at the airport, where kids can learn about aviation and fly in a real airplane. It is all done by volunteers. This year it was held after much negotiation with YTG Airport officials who wanted copies of liability insurance and at the last minute demanded a Formal Plan including air photographs of the site for the event. We did everything they asked. The event was a tremendous

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success, we flew just under 100 kids. Everyone was smiling. Within a few hours of completing the event i got a copy of an email from the Assistant Airport Manager. He wrote to complain that, while he had been there (I didn't even see him), he noticed "no organizer was at the access gate checking the public" (for what I don't know), AND, he had "seen a dog in the parking lot that he believed might belong to someone at the event?" He also complained that, in future, he wanted to be notified at least 30 days in advance of any event. I'm afraid that was where my patience ran out, we had notified the airport management several months in advance and had been in touch with his seniors the whole time. What is the public to do when inefficient internal Government process inhibits its own operation? (My fear is their answer will be to do whatever they can to prevent future events from even happening.)

- I bought two aircraft in last six months (an old Certified Piper Cub to fix up and an Ultra-Light project). I submitted both the Government-required change of Registration forms by completing the back of the old forms, attending at the local office of Transport Canada where, despite their objections to accepting them (they wanted me to mail them ?), I insisted on delivering the forms, and I insisted on paying the \$110.00 fee for each. The same day I filed the Airworthiness Report online for the Cub. Two months later the new Registration arrived for the Cub, but nothing else. I waited another month, then I thought I better check on the status of the other documents.

REASONABLE? I thought so. I tried to phone the local TC office, but found they are not listed in the local phone book, in fact, **NO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES ARE LISTED IN THE YUKON PHONE BOOK !** I drove into town and tried to attend in person again, but the office was closed when I got there (perhaps they saw me coming?). So I called the 1-800 all purpose Federal "Services Canada" phone number. But there was only an answering machine. So I left a message there and thought I might also try phoning the number shown on the back of the old TC Registration form, it was "No longer in service!" OK, I wasn't going to be beat yet, I emailed them at the online "TC Information" page I found on the TC web site. Several days later I got a phone call from an actual woman in Vancouver directing me to call TC's Winnipeg office number. I called, it was an another answering machine, I left a message there. Another two days later a live but different woman from TC phoned

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back but she didn't seem to know what I wanted, she said; " There's a note on file that you were contacted, and instructed to send a photo of the data plate back East". I pointed out that TC has my home phone, my cell phone (both with answering service), my mailing address, my email address, and I am known by the local office and I'm listed in the local book....I was easy to find but had NOT been notified, of anything. She didn't even pretend to be interested, she knew nothing about my AIR Report. After the call ended I took a photograph of the data plate as required, and sent it by email to an address she gave me. It was immediately rejected by their server. So I sent it again, but this time I copied it to her, every address on any e mail I had received or the on-line TC web page, then I waited two more weeks and emailed again. I asked for confirmation that my Airworthiness Inspection Report was received for the Cub, and if the registration for the ultra-Light was on track. A day or two later (not sure exactly when) a voice message appeared on my cell phone. A woman's voice from TC somewhere (I was not clear where), stated that she had no idea what I was asking about. But, then she went on to tell me my Cub was already registered to me (she knew that much?), and she stated that my Ultra-Light was Registered now to a Quebec address??? She added that; "...all forms received by TC are dealt with on a first come first served basis." and hung up. I was not exactly sure what to do then. I kept her message on my phone.

- A few weeks after the above message, I got an email from the original lady at TC who now told me; "...the data plate on the Ultralight is not acceptable." The builder is NOT the manufacturer, and the data plate needs to be changed. (I guess it has been flying illegally since 1993?). She carefully instructed me that the original aircraft manufacturer must remain listed. OK, but now I wonder what she will think when I apply this logic to the Maule M-4 I am rebuilding as an Amateur Built and need to Register.....when I took that project over last summer I did the Government paperwork, paid the fees and received an e mail saying "...**you must not change anything on the original application, to change at this point causes untold hardship.**" I wouldn't want that, so with TC guidance I left it listed on the record as a "**Richardson Maule**", "**model M-4**", after all who cares what it is called right? (Cue the music). 6 months later, this spring, I tried to book the "pre-cover" inspection to get

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Government approval to finish the re-build. I completed the application forms, paid my \$500.00 fee, and waited. The inspector was due in Whitehorse in five days when I got an e mail from Ottawa that said I was “**...not permitted to use any reference to the original make or model of aircraft, including the words Maule or designation M-4**”, and, I must “**refile with all new paperwork**”, including the original application “Letter of Intent” (and pay new fees?). **My inspection could NOT be completed until this was done**. So, I did what any confused tax-payer would do, I copied the first email, and the second email (with the contradictory instructions), to the Minister of Transport, and asked her to make the decision on which bureaucrat to comply with. Within 24 hours I was notified by the bureaucracy that my inspection could continue and promised “**...any minor administrative issues can be dealt with in the future**”. Stay tuned.

- A tourist from southern Canada called a few weeks back, she and some others were planning to fly through Yukon camping as they went. She had called the “Yukon Government Airports” and was told by an official there that; “ ...there is no place to camp nor to park your airplane overnight here, but you can find someone who already leases a parking space and maybe borrow theirs.” She wondered if that was true? None of us is sure.
- That reminds me, the COPA International fly in was held up here in Whitehorse a few years back. I helped with the local organizing. One thing we arranged (far ahead of time) was for a local fuel company to sell fuel directly to fly-in visitors. (About 40 or so aircraft arrived and all needed fuel). A scant 8 hours before their arrival the Yukon Aviation Branch informed fuel company they were no longer able to sell fuel because “**they had no leased base here to work from**”. In a last minute rush of sub-leasing and rental payments fuel company achieved what was demanded by the Yukon Government officials. Airplanes started arriving, tourists pitched tents around their airplanes (remember, the camp-ground had been closed just a few days before their arrival), and the fuel company arrived and began to sell fuel. But, then, within a few hours and before even half of the airplanes had been filled, the Airport Manager arrived in person with new directions for the fuel company to cease selling fuel and vacate their sub lease. The fuel companies manager never explained the

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Governments reasons to me, but he stated “...**these guys don't want an airport here, they dont know anything about running an airport, I have wasted enough time and money!**” and then he drove away, never to return. The flying tourists were left on their own.

I will continue to add to this list of events as absurdities are recalled or encountered, after all it should be recorded, and you couldn't make this stuff up...If Shakespear were alive this would make a great farce.