AIRPORT PRIVATIZATION

A real threat to workers and the Canadian public

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About the IAM Union

The IAM Union, previously known as the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, is one of North America's largest and most diverse industrial trade unions, representing approximately 600,000 active and retired members across aerospace, defense, airlines, railroad, transit, healthcare, automotive, and other industries - including more than 15,000 in Canada's aviation sector and 200,000 in North America's aviation sector overall.

In Canada, we represent most pre-board screening officers responsible for airport safety and security on behalf of CATSA and Transport Canada, as well as many airport security and service workers across the country.

Our members include employees at Air Canada, Air Transat, Bearskin Airlines, Keewatin Air, Swissport, TGAS, AOSS, Smarte Carte, Wasaya Airlines, Paladin, WestJet, Menzies, and others.

Privatization Threatens Us All

Privatization = Layoffs

Privatization puts jobs at risk. When airports move from public to private hands, private investors often cut labour costs to increase profits — leading to layoffs, reduced benefits, and unstable working conditions.

At Toronto Pearson International Airport alone, more than 50,000 direct jobs could be affected, including over 10,000 IAM members who keep airport operations running safely and efficiently.

Privatization threatens not just workers' livelihoods, but the quality and safety of services Canadians rely on.

Privatization = Higher Costs for Travellers

When airports are privatized, private operators raise fees to boost profits, and travellers end up paying more.

This shift reduces government tax revenue and airport authority income, while weakening Canadian airlines.

When costs rise, it's travellers who pay the price, not corporations.

Privatization = No Income for the Government

Currently, Canada's airports are publicly owned and generate significant revenue for the federal government through rent, fees, and other contributions.

These funds are reinvested in public services that benefit all Canadians.

If airports are privatized, this steady source of public income disappears and is replaced by profit flowing to private investors, often foreign-owned, resulting in less money for Canadians and more profit for corporations.

Privatization = Fewer Canadian Travellers

Rising airfares will push passengers to nearby U.S. airports to save money — a trend already happening today.

If costs continue to rise, this "cross-border leakage" will worsen, taking business away from Canadian airports and threatening the strength of our aviation sector.

How Can You Help Fight Airport Privatization?

Advocate for Public Ownership and Not-for-Profit Airports

- Support maintaining the non-profit model for Canadian airports, ensuring that airport operations prioritize passengers, workers, and the public good rather than shareholders.
- Encourage improvements to the existing airport model without privatization, such as updating facilities, increasing efficiency, and investing in infrastructure.

Enable Airports to Invest in Their Own Operations

- Allow airport authorities to borrow funds by removing the restriction that airports must be debt-free at the end of their lease period. This will let airports invest in modernizing facilities and improving passenger experience.
- Ensure the federal government reinvests revenue collected through the Air Travellers Security Charge (ATSC) back into airport operations, enhancing security, reducing lineups, and supporting daily airport functions.

Protect Middle-Class Jobs at Airports

- Highlight that many airport positions are middle-class jobs. Privatization risks layoffs that could undermine job security and weaken the middle class, contradicting promises to strengthen it.

Talk with Liberal MPs and urge them to vote against any bill supporting airport privatization.

- Experiences in the U.K. and Australia show it increases costs and hurts airport workers.
- Only 3 of the top 30 international airports are fully private, highlighting that public ownership is the global norm.

IAM's Position on Privatization

The IAM Union in Canada has strongly opposed airport privatization.

David Chartrand, General Vice-President of the IAM Union in Canada, expressed deep concern over the federal government's growing push toward privatizing Canada's aviation sector, warning that such actions "*would benefit private corporations at the expense of Canadian workers and the public.*" He added, "*Privatization will also undermine the quality of services Canadians rely on, from higher fees to reduced accessibility. This isn't just about workers — it's about the entire Canadian aviation industry. We cannot allow profits to come before the public good.*"

In a letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney, Chartrand highlighted the IAM's firm stance against any initiatives or plans that could result in the privatization of Canadian airports.

Kindly read David Chartrand's letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney on the next page.

November 5, 2025

Mr. Mark Carney
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Carney,

On behalf of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers – IAM Union, I am writing to express our strong opposition to any proposals or plans that would lead to the privatization of airports in Canada.

The IAM represents thousands of workers across the aviation sector, including flight attendants, pilots, ground handlers, aircraft maintenance engineers, maintenance technicians, customer service agents, and other critical personnel. Our members see first-hand the critical role airports play in connecting Canadians, supporting regional economies, and maintaining the safety and efficiency of our transportation network. These are not merely commercial enterprises — they are essential public infrastructure that should remain under public stewardship.

In the 2025 Budget, Page 100, The Government of Canada added a line “The government will also consider options for the privatization of airports.” Privatizing Canada’s airports risks putting short-term profit ahead of long-term public interest. International experience has shown that privatized airports often lead to higher fees for passengers and airlines, reduced service quality, and a decline in labour standards. It would also weaken the ability of the federal government and local communities to ensure that airport operations serve the broader public good rather than shareholder returns.

The IAM believes that Canada’s airports must continue to operate as public assets, accountable to Canadians, with reinvestment focused on safety, sustainability, and service — not corporate profit. We urge you to reject any proposals that would lead to privatization and instead support strengthening our public airport system through fair funding, transparent governance, and meaningful engagement with workers and their unions.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and to share the perspectives of the workers who keep Canada’s airports running safely and efficiently every day.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.
Sincerely,

David Chartrand
General Vice President
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers – IAM Union
Canadian Territory

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