

TCCA Service Quality

In the December issue of our COPA Flight magazine, we asked our membership for feedback on their experiences with respect to the quality of service they perceive they are receiving from Transport Canada Civil Aviation (TCCA). We requested as much detail as possible to assist us in presenting a case to TCCA if there is such a case to be made. As it turns out, it would seem that while there are indeed numerous and significant irritants, TCCA, by and large, would appear to deliver a reasonable level of service quality. Irritants there may be, but these irritants are the cause of much noise, complaints and dissatisfaction, and very likely leading to much additional compensating effort on already limited resources within TCCA. The general feeling in the community is that TCCA has become a 'Poor provider of regulatory services' as expressed by several people.

The feedback from the COPA membership confirms our perception that, while General Aviation (GA) is indeed subject to TCCA regulations and service delivery across the board, two Directorates have a more direct impact on GA on a daily basis: Aviation Medicine and Standards. Subsequent information from TCCA clarified that one more entity, until now unknown to COPA, also has a very significant role to play in this area. The National Service Team (NST), under the direction of the Regional Director Civil Aviation - Ontario Region, is responsible for service delivery on a national level.

The reader will note that this article does not discuss each individual feedback item received from our members. Some items may be worthy of a detailed description in order to better characterize some situations. Generally, the feedbacks are summarized under the various titles we had listed in our request for inputs.

Aviation Medicine

Irritants or complaints with respect to Aviation Medicine are limited to reduction or loss of Medical Certificate, and administrative delays in the management of these cases, as well with respect to the typical regular visit to the CAME and the associated renewal of one's Medical Certificate.

On average, the TC Civil Aviation Medicine (CAM) processes in excess of 50,000 Medical Certificates per year, both new applicants and renewals. Presently, 100% of all Medical Examination Reports (MERs) submitted by the CAME are reviewed by CAM. Priority is given to MERs that were deferred by CAMEs and the Aviation Document Booklet was not signed. In these cases, the Regional Aviation Medical Officer (RAMO) will review the file and determine if further information or testing is required. This process usually results in a short delay (always too long for the pilot) in issuing the pilot's medical category sticker. If a more serious medical condition is encountered, this may lead to a temporary suspension or loss of medical certificate. Approximately 300 cases per year warrant this extra review. Of these, typically less

than a dozen result in eventual loss of medical certificate. Loss of medical certification is most commonly the result of a heart condition. During this process, the pilot is anxiously awaiting feedback from TCCA and this feedback is typically quite significantly delayed.

COPA has met with the Acting Director – Civil Aviation Medicine and discussed these issues. Worthy of note, this is a situation where TCCA has stepped out of the usual path and is definitely displaying the desire to improve the quality of service in this critical area. The incumbent is not a physician, but rather is a nurse (RN), with a vast experience in numerous health related areas of the Federal Government, in different locations, and at various administrative levels. Although new to the position (June 2018), she has readily recognized the need for improvement in the issues that we brought to her and had already initiated efforts in that direction, even before COPA had the opportunity to meet with her.

Medical Issues

COPA does not have the professional expertise to judge on medical issues and will thus leave this to the medical specialists. The significant issue in these cases relates to the usual lack of timely feedback and/or information from TCCA to the pilot. When a health condition develops that may impact a pilot's medical, usually uncovered during a visit to the CAME, the first TCCA feedback appears to be generally relatively timely, typically requesting for more information and possibly additional testing. The real issue comes up subsequently to this first step. No feedback from TCCA and/or the impossibility for the pilot to contact anybody in TCCA to find out what is the status of their medical certificate. The pilot then feels abandoned in a black hole.

In some cases, the pilot is asked to submit to a specific test and send in the results. With no feedback forthcoming relative to this test, the pilot suddenly receives a letter requesting another test, further compounding the uncertainty of the situation. There are cases where after a series of these additional tests, the pilot is requested to repeat the first test because it has been too long since original submission and it is now invalid. This is perceived as a seriously disorganized area within TCCA, and very frustrating to say the least.

A pilot's worse fear is to lose a medical certificate and have to stop flying. The survey feedback does not indicate that pilots are particularly upset with TCCA for losing their medical due to a health condition. Overall, affected pilots want to know and understand. The threat to their medical category is not a happy situation of course, but pilots are specially dissatisfied as they perceive that TCCA deals with them in a highly dismissive manner in that TCCA does not appear to treat these cases with any degree of urgency.

We note that the dissatisfaction expressed above is clearly related to the administrative aspect of servicing a pilot's file when a medical issue arises. In this respect, COPA is somewhat disappointed with the level of cooperation of members who experience these types of issues. Members typically phone the COPA office to discuss their situation and we usually request the member to send us copies of the documentation they have received from, or sent to, TCCA with

respect to their case, thus helping us to help them. Too often, COPA never receives any follow-up from the member. We hope our members will understand that if we request and obtain the opportunity of a discussion with TCCA to try to help the situation of the COPA member affected, we need to present a complete, accurate, detailed file of the situation. We do not think it considerate nor polite to take up the time of any TCCA senior manager with hear says or simply our understanding of a phone conversation. We need accurate information. When we cannot obtain this information from the person requesting support, we tend to doubt the validity and accuracy of the report and we will not present it to TCCA in support of a request for better service.

As previously stated, the Acting Director – Civil Aviation Medicine has already started to dedicate attention to these administrative issues. COPA is confident we will see noticeable improvement in the near future. COPA will provide support to our members when one is facing a health issue threatening the medical certificate and resolution has been pending for too long. COPA will not argue the finer details of a medical decision but we will address undue delays in TCCA providing answers to affected GA pilots. As previously mentioned, we do need accurate and detailed information (not of a confidential nature) in order to achieve success.

With respect to BasicMed, or something similar for Canadians pilots, the Acting Director has already been looking into this topic in the context of reviewing the current Canadian Category 4 medical certificate. At present, options are being explored, however there are a number of significant differences between BasicMed and Category 4 that go beyond the scope of medical certification. TCCA Medicine continues to work their Licencing colleagues. This will require some time to resolve but the door is now opening.

Standards

In this sector of activities, irritants and complaints cover pretty much all aspects of this directorate: licensing, airworthiness, flight authority, Amateur-built, Owner-Maintenance, lack of standardization across TCCA Regional Offices, etc...

COPA has met with the Director – Standards to share this and obtain his perspective. Due to schedule constraints, this meeting only allowed a cursory review of the topics discussed here. We are scheduled to meet later in June to discuss these issues in detail. Suffice to say that the Director – Standards has paid close attention to this and will have the relevant members of his staff attending the next meeting. Some of these aspects have been introduced previously but we will expand them further here.

Licensing

COPA notes that the issuing of licences seems to work well and there is no indication of significant delays and issues in this area. RPPs constitute the notable exception to this. There

appears to be a widespread lack of understanding and awareness of the process for issuing an RPP. Recognizing how the RPP came about, we also understand that the application form reflects this and does not lend itself very well to an application for RPP by a licensed pilot. This in itself might be cause for much of the confusion in the Regional Offices.

NST comment: Transport Canada Civil Aviation has advised its' Service Officers that it is acceptable to have both an RPP and other type of aeroplane licence at the same time, and that a formal downgrade is not necessary in all cases.

COPA response: *We recognize this will likely reduce the confusion and significantly improve the service in these cases. COPA recognizes the solution to this particular issue might be shared between Standards and the National Service Team. Hence, this issue will be re-iterated in this the section addressing the National Service Team.*

A revised form would likely go a long way toward addressing this situation, eliminating these unacceptable delays in the delivery of RPPs, in the order of several months.

COPA action: COPA will work with TCCA at revising the current RPP application form with a view on facilitating the RPP application process and eliminating the currently prevailing confusion in some regions. TCCA supports the concept.

With regards to RPP, COPA would like to propose that the privileges associated with the RPP be revised to bring them closer to a PPL in some cases. COPA considers that the RPP as it currently stands, is likely adequate for one who is beginning his/her adventure in aviation and the RPP is the first permit one obtains. Conversely, with the aging pilot population, many licensed pilots elect, or cannot avoid, to go to the Medical Category 4 and the RPP. COPA proposes that a licensed pilot (PPL, CPL, ATPL) who reverts to an RPP would still be afforded most of the normal privileges of a PPL.

COPA action: COPA will submit to TCCA a recommendation to this effect in the near future. TCCA supports this concept in principle. COPA requests its members to provide their perspective/suggestions at operations@copantional.ca

Airworthiness and Flight Authority

COPA received several reports of lengthy delays and of inspectors imposing their personal interpretation of the regulation in this area. Regrettably, COPA members are very reluctant to provide more than verbal reports lacking sufficient details, for fear of retribution through more harassment and delays on the part of some TCCA inspectors. COPA cannot verify the validity of these fears but numerous owners/pilots in the community are certainly apprehensive on these issues. TCCA is most certainly willing and interested in addressing these issues but they state they require better information on specific cases brought to their attention.

It is also quite apparent there are issues related to the difference between major and minor modifications, thus leading to unnecessary work, delays, and expenses for the aircraft owners. TCCA recognizes this and will work to address this issue. COPA will remain in contact with TCCA and will keep its membership informed of any progress as appropriate.

Special Certificate of Airworthiness

This particular topic breaks down into at least three different aspects:

- Amateur-built: too many TCCA inspectors delving into a sector they seem to not be adequately trained for, nor ready to address, consequently leading to extremely lengthy delays and unfair treatment for the builders/owners/operators of this category of aircraft and a significant level of frustration and dissatisfaction for these owners. This is probably a consequence of TCCA's continuing refusal to implement the full provisions of Schedule 7 of subsection 4.3(1) of the Aeronautics Act which instituted the Minister Delegate – Recreational Aircraft (MD-RA).
- Owner-Maintenance: based on complaints submitted to COPA, again without sufficient details for same fear of retribution, it does appear as if some regional offices are not supportive of the category and avoid processing applications as a means of preventing aircraft from being transferred into this category. The Moncton Regional Office seems to be mentioned often in this respect, although they do not hold exclusivity on this.
- Limited: although the number of aircraft in this category is quite small, the issues presented above seem to be very well represented, thus no real need to duplicate the comments already presented. But definitely room for improvement in the service to the community.

Lack of Standardization in Regional Offices

Through the feedback we received from our members, it becomes quite apparent that every Regional Offices have their own local perspective on the CARs. This feedback is not specific to the survey we initiated but is rather consistent over time. These disparities touch a wide variety of aspects such as:

- Essentially any of the issues presented above;
- A Regional Office issues a Special C of A to an aircraft, the owner moves to a different region, and this new Regional Office disagrees with the Flight Authority and cancels it;
- A Regional Office issues a renewal for an Instructor Rating and another Regional Office subsequently issues a letter to this instructor cancelling his Instructor Rating;
- Inspectors not accepting some work on the basis of : "I think you should" as opposed to basing their position on a clear and accurate interpretation of the regulations and expressing it as such.
- Inspectors stating : "I am the Minister and this is how it will be!"

These situations foster a climate of mistrust and even fear on the part of GA aircraft owners and pilots with respect to TCCA personnel. These behaviours present a model of policing by TCCA when this should not be the intention nor the image. COPA believes that TCCA has an important role to play in GA primarily as an educator and a guide. This philosophy is wholly supported by the TCCA and COPA personnel dedicating their efforts to the General Aviation

Safety Campaign (GASC) and the impressive progress the GASC has achieved since launch in June 2017. The bulk and complexity of the CARs are such that no aircraft owner or pilot will ever be fully cognisant of them. COPA has noted on several occasions that a sound knowledge of the CARs is a challenge even for TCCA personnel. COPA sees the role of the TCCA inspector, the TCCA point of contact in the field, as a crucial resource in this approach. Being an educator and a guide in this context does not preclude the inspector from taking appropriate enforcement action when necessary. The TCCA inspector is a critical element in this system, that inspector should be considered as an ally the aviator can rely on for advice, information, and help when needed. Not as a threat, not as someone constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to punish aviators.

National Service Team

In this sector of activities, irritants and complaints take on a very heavy toll particularly in the areas of registrations, licensing, lack of standardization across TCCA Regional Offices, etc... As COPA just discovered, the primary contact for services with TCCA, for most Canadian aviators, happens through the National Service Team representatives. COPA has not been able to meet with the Regional Director Civil Aviation – Ontario Region, to share this and obtain his perspective.

When attempting to contact him, we were told, in a very dismissive fashion, that somebody from the staff would provide some answer. This did happen and we will present these below as well as COPA's responses. When the point of contact between an organization, in any industry, and its customers lacks a good understanding of the concepts of customer service and customer support, the customer goes somewhere else, and this happens relatively quickly. The major issue is that, in the case of aviation, TCCA is the only service provider, without any risk of customers going somewhere else. Monopoly does have its benefits in some cases.

Some of these aspects have been introduced previously but we will expand them further here.

Registrations

The main issues include:

- 1- Obtaining an initial Certificate of Registration (CofR), which has required almost up to a full year in at least one case, because documents were lost, staff did not have time to get to it, etc ...;

NST comment: There are a number of reasons for delays in processing times. These include: untimely submissions, inaccurate documentation provided by the applicant, complexity in the submission and/or possibly delays in response times from the client.

COPA response: *These are some valid explanations on TCCA's part, but do not justify all delays, such as lost, and eventually found, files for instance. I have been advising our members to keep photocopies of anything they send in to TCCA as a basic precaution. As*

for untimely submissions, would it not be reasonable to consider that the clock starts ticking when the submission is made, untimely or not?

- 2- Carry out a change of address on a CofR where delays of several months are often encountered, this when TCCA requires an owner to inform them within a week of a change of address;

NST comment: This should not be an issue, as the policy for these circumstances are for the client to activate their Interim Certificate of Registration, which is valid for up to 3 months, to allow for the continuous operation of aircraft while the client returns the old Certificate of Registration together with their request, in writing, to change their address.

COPA response: *Right, but the issue comes up when the 3 months is exceeded and a new CofR has not shown up yet.*

- 3- Issue of a new CofR when an aircraft changes ownership, compounded by many TCCA staff having their own perception of what constitutes an appropriate or acceptable Bill of Sale. This issue of course varies with the regional offices as they seem to have their own local interpretations of what a Bill of Sale should look like;

NST comment: We have advised our Service officers across the country that a Bill of Sale must include specific information in order for the document to be accepted. This information includes: Buyer/Seller; date of sale; details of the aircraft – make, model, serial #, aircraft mark; signature(s) of Seller and a statement that clearly identifies that the custody and control of the aircraft has changed.

COPA response: *This is all good but how about providing a sample Bill of Sale so all TCCA personnel across the country will have a viewable copy and avoid throwing in their own interpretation of how the required information should be presented? Note that I was told numerous times in the past, by TCCA, that the aircraft marks need not, or even should not, appear on the Bill of Sale as they are susceptible to changing whilst the serial # is the only permanent reliable identifier of the aircraft. This is the first time I ever hear about the requirement for 'a statement that clearly identifies that the custody and control of the aircraft has changed'. The CofR includes a form specifically for that purpose. You are now telling everybody that the official TCCA form for change of ownership is not appropriate nor sufficient anymore to inform TCCA of that fact. Is this another example of changing the rule as we go, spur of the moment thing, and nobody knows how long it will be good for? What is wrong with the official form? It always did the job of informing TCCA staff adequately, at least for those who knew how to read it. If it does not do the job anymore, why not fix it or better yet, educate staff on the use of the form, instead of just throwing in something that will simply create more confusion, as numerous TCCA staff will have their own interpretation of 'clearly identify' due to a typical lack of accurate definition. We very strongly recommend sticking to the official form which works perfectly well when the staff uses it properly. At any rate, what do you suggest COPA should do now? Should we leave things be? Should we inform our 16,000+ members that someone in TCCA replaced the Change of Ownership form and replaced it by that questionable statement on the Bill of Sale, just on a whim? Any idea on how to sort out this newly created additional confusion?*

- 4- No one can understand why in this day and age, TCCA would even require the delays they award themselves for such services and yet cannot come close to meeting such delays on a reliable basis. The basic concept is that while one can transfer ownership of a car within 10 minutes anywhere across this country, TCCA cannot achieve an aircraft ownership transfer within in weeks/months/.... , despite the fact that the transfer for a car requires more documentation when compared to a plane. However, I can state that I personally had a CofR issued to me within 10 minutes. This happened to me twice, over the years, in two different offices, illustrating that the actual issuance does not require much time. It would appear that the delay results from the time or motivation required to get to it.

NST comment: Our Service Standard for the issuance of a continuing Certificate of Registration is 60 working days. The average number of days to process a Certificate of Registration in 2017-18 was an average of 42.1 days. In 2018-19 (year-to-date) the average days to process a Certificate of Registration is 31.7 days. That means there is almost a 20% improvement from the previous year.

COPA response: *Lovely stats that must make the Director of the National Service Team feel comfy and smug that he is doing a good job. Stats are a wonderful thing. They can be a very useful tool when used properly, or they can be incredibly misleading when not properly understood. I wonder how many files exceed the 60 days standard (woefully inadequate in its duration under any circumstances), and by how much. These are the files that we are trying to address here, they are the ones owners are complaining about. We note it may a good thing for TCCA to not apply a more realistic turn-around time (say 10 days or so). Your 'great stats' would take quite a beating, don't you think?*

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Conclusion

COPA wholeheartedly recognises and supports TCCA’s role and responsibility in ensuring the safety of the public from an aeronautics perspective. COPA urges TCCA to work closer with the GA community to provide a quality service that supports the operation of GA aircraft as well as creates an atmosphere of respect and trust within the community whereby all will be confident in a system that should support them as aviators. A critical requirement to this improvement would be that TCCA dedicates a serious effort at ensuring that their personnel in the field acquire a better understanding of their role and responsibilities, a better understanding of the regulations, and that their interpretation of the regulation be standardized across the Regions. COPA is a firm believer in the concept that a collaborative and cooperative approach on the part of TCCA would lead to an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding in General Aviation, eventually resulting in improved customer satisfaction and a lesser burden on the supplier through a reduced need for corrective action.

Additional NST comments:

Transport Canada Civil Aviation is working to develop staff instructions, relevant manuals, and other documentation to ensure standardization within the service team.

COPA response: This might appear to someone like a good initiative, but likely many years before anybody sees any benefits, considering the rate at which government develops and publishes this type of documentation. As a client, and as a taxpayer, I cannot help but wonder about the necessity of this initiative and its associated expenses. TCCA worked very well for many years and then, over a period of a few short years, here we are. The issues discussed here are purely administrative, as opposed to regulatory. Did the staff forget their long-standing procedures? Did TCCA get a lot of new personnel and did not bother training them on proper procedures, or even efficient service? Or is it simply that management does not really care anymore and any form of leadership has simply gone out the window? As a client, this is what I perceive. And of course, the near impossibility of reaching anybody on the phone, or getting a return call, or a response to an email are all evidence of this 'efficiency of service'. And now add to this situation the fact that most, if not all, Regional Offices refuse any walk-in service. This initiative might look good on paper but it will not address much. The solution to poor service typically resides in management taking ownership of the issue and dealing with it, as opposed to hiding behind new documentation that essentially reiterates what has been there for years but people eventually ignore, or have forgotten, or are not aware of. I have a 40+ years career in aviation and I have personally noticed what I consider to be a severe drop in service quality in the last 5 years or so. Bottom line, it seems we have forgotten that the National Service Team actually is the primary interface between the regulator, TCCA, and its clientele, the aviation industry, without which there would be no need for TCCA.

TCCA has become a 'Poor provider of regulatory services'. TCCA now makes both Canada Revenue Agency and Canada Post look good. Considering that the person primarily responsible for the National Service Team considers this situation in such a highly dismissive manner, as evidenced in previous email, it would seem obvious the General Aviation community cannot realistically expect to see any form of improvement any time soon.