

# **AIR SERVICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

A Descriptive Examination of the Aircraft Infrastructure Needs of “F” Division

Prepared for:  
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c/o  
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“F” Division  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police



Prepared by:  
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies



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**Assistant Commissioner Russ Mirasty**  
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**March 28, 2013**

**RE: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**

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On behalf of the University of Saskatchewan’s Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies, it is with great pleasure that I present to you this descriptive examination of the aircraft infrastructure needs of “F” Division. This six-month project was both an interesting and rewarding experience for our team to endure. We were met with great cooperation and ongoing support from all of the individuals we contacted during this process. We are thankful for the advice and clear direction provided by S/Sgt. Bob Miller and the folks in “F” Division’s Provincial Support Services.

Our findings conclude that should “F” Division continue to be responsible for prisoner transport, then a Pilatus PC-12 located in Prince Albert would best meet the provincial policing needs of the RCMP in Saskatchewan. In contrast, should the Government of Saskatchewan immediately take over the responsibility of prisoner transport, then an additional aircraft would not be necessary for “F” Division.

We sincerely hope that this report is useful to your needs. Please feel free to contact me for any questions you may have regarding the content of this report. Thank you for inviting the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies to provide some support to you and your team at “F” Division. We wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

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# AIR SERVICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## A Descriptive Examination of the Aircraft Infrastructure Needs of “F” Division

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 2012, representatives from “F” Division’s Operations Strategy Branch and Provincial Support Services met with researchers at the University of Saskatchewan’s Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies. The purpose of this meeting was to outline “F” Division’s desire for a study on the various aviation needs of the relevant detachments, operations and support services who utilize aircraft in fulfilling their mandate. The question asked by “F” Division was *what type and number of aircraft are required for the provincial policing services in Saskatchewan?*

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed and needs-based response to that question. In preparing to answer this question, the research team worked closely with “F” Division’s Air Services to identify and gather information from the key stakeholders who depend upon the use of aircraft in fulfilling their mandate. As the methodology section of this report will explain, interviews were conducted with over two dozen respondents from “F” Division, as well as other Air Service personnel in Ottawa, Alberta and Manitoba. Qualitative data from the interview process were used to outline the aviation needs of “F” Division. These needs were then matched to the aircraft which can best meet these needs.

This report does not include a technical review of various aircraft. Rather, it describes the diverse aviation needs of “F” Division during its provision of provincial policing services for Saskatchewan. Using this information, it then compares the extent to which two common police-used aircraft meet these needs. This includes the Pilatus PC-12 and the Twin Otter. While other types of both fixed and rotary-wing aircraft were discussed with stakeholders during this process, conversations around satisfying the immediate aviation needs of “F” Division tended to focus on these two types of aircraft.

The opening section of this report provides an overview of the methodology executed to conduct this assessment. Following this is a brief look at the current air infrastructure of “F” Division—including the types of aircraft and their current uses. Next, feedback from the main cohorts interviewed in this research presents information on the factors affecting access to current aircraft and potential uses of new aircraft. The fifth section of this report examines the dialogue provided by respondents on the strengths and weaknesses of the Pilatus PC-12 and the Twin Otter (specifically as they relate to the needs of “F” Division).

The conclusion of this report outlines the reasons why an additional Pilatus PC-12/47E located in Prince Albert is the best option for meeting the air service needs of provincial policing operations in Saskatchewan. Of course, this is contingent on whether “F” Division continues to maintain responsibility of prisoner transport.

With respect to prisoner transport, a number of different systemic variables were identified through this research. Addressing these inefficiencies in justice, corrections and Provost services, may very well impact the need for an additional aircraft. At the very least, addressing these systemic problems would improve access to the existing aircraft operated by the RCMP in Saskatchewan.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed to determine the air service needs of “F” Division involves both quantitative and qualitative data. As for the former, flight information for all three of the currently used RCMP aircraft were retrieved from the Professional Flight Management database. Annual data for 2011 and 2012 were provided by National Air Services in Ottawa. These data provide an empirical view of the current demands placed up “F” Division’s Air Services.

To gather qualitative data, the research team interviewed 32 respondents from a variety of units and divisions within the RCMP. A list of interviewees was provided by the Air Service teams in Prince Albert and Regina. Interviewees were put on the list if they were either frequent users of “F” Division’s Air Services or if they were part of a specific operations unit that occasionally uses aircraft in fulfilling their mandate. Generally, these individuals can be grouped into five main cohorts: Air Services, Operations, North District Office, Support Services and Detachments.

Outside of “F” Division, a lead pilot and several air service coordinators from Alberta, Manitoba and the national headquarters were also interviewed. The purpose of interviewing the latter group was to get a sense of how the air service needs of other Divisions are being met across the country. Alberta and Manitoba were selected specifically because of the similar geographic, population and policing conditions they share with Saskatchewan.

Table 1 introduces the array of respondents interviewed during this assessment process. Under each cohort are several different types of respondents. The intent of this project was to engage a broad variety of stakeholders who could contribute towards a fairly comprehensive assessment of the air service needs in Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, not all administrative or operational units in “F” Division were included in this assessment. Some were simply not reachable by phone, while others were not identified in the planning process of this initiative. Consequently, the list of respondents shown in Table 1 is not a full representation of the individuals and groups within the RCMP who use air services in Saskatchewan.

**Table 1:** Number of Respondents Interviewed by Cohort and Type (*N* = 32)

COHORT	TYPE	<i>N</i>
Air Services	Pilots	4
	Engineers	2
	Coordinators	4
Detachments	Stony Rapids	1
	Wollaston Lake	1
	La Ronge	2
	La Loche	1
North District Office	Managers	2
Support Services	Radio Operations	2
	Health Services	1
	Training	1
Operations	Commercial Crimes Unit	1
	Special Observations Unit	1
	Emergency Response Team	1
	Border Integrity Unit	1
	Explosive Disposal Unit	1
	Combined Forces Specialized Enforcement Unit	1
	Integrated Proceeds of Crime Unit	1
	Identification Unit	1
	General Investigative Unit	1
Provost	Prince Albert	1
	Inter-Provincial	1

In gathering feedback from stakeholders, each was contacted by telephone from members of the research team. They were informed of the interest that “F” Division had in assessing the air service needs of its various units and detachments across the province. More specifically, they were informed that the purpose of the interview process was to determine the type of aircraft that would best meet the needs of Provincial Policing Services in Saskatchewan.

Discussions with respondents were guided by a number of questions designed to solicit dialogue on some key topics that are relevant to the needs assessment. The following is a list of those questions:

- Tell me about the services your *detachment/team* provides.
- What role does “F” Division’s Air Services play in your service delivery?
- How does use of an air plane help your mandate?
- What shortcomings or challenges have you experienced when an airplane has not been available to assist you in your mandate?
- How dependent do you feel your *detachment/unit* is upon Air Services to fulfill its mandate?
- What do you feel could be done to improve the support you receive from Air Services?
- If “F” Division were to acquire an additional aircraft, what ways do you feel it could best be used?



- If Air “F” Division were to acquire an additional aircraft, what sort of features or capacity should that unit have?

While discussions with respondents were guided by these questions, the interviewers were open to respondents discussing a variety of issues related to the role of aircraft in policing. There was also a natural tendency for discussions with those respondents in operations or detachments for example, to discuss the more specific aviation needs they had. In contrast, dialogue from pilots, engineers and air service coordinators tended to focus on the different variables that aircraft could be compared upon, as well as the day to day demands placed upon Air Services by “F” Division. With that said however, a number of respondents in some of the operations and support units, as well as management and detachments, were also quite willing to offer some dialogue on the strengths and weaknesses of different aircraft. This stems from a number of respondents having experience both in a Twin Otter and Pilatus PC-12 (or other aircraft altogether).

One of the unanticipated outcomes of the interview process was a preliminary understanding of the various systematic issues surrounding prisoner transport. In Saskatchewan, the RCMP are tasked with transporting prisoners to and from court, as well as between various detachments and all correctional facilities. Consequently, there is a considerable demand for Air Services to be involved in this process—so much that up to 86% of the Prince Albert Pilatus’ flight schedule is devoted to prisoner transport. While it was not the intent of this assessment to identify the different inefficiencies in our justice, corrections and prisoner transport systems, the concluding remarks of this report suggest that some further work in these areas could potentially have a positive impact on the accessibility of aircraft to other resources in “F” Division.

On average, most interviews lasted approximately half an hour. A majority of the interviews with Air Services personnel went well over an hour. In several cases, follow-up discussions with pilots and coordinators were needed to clarify various pieces of information. Data gathered from the interviews were recorded on hard copy and analysed systematically by topic.

When it came to organizing the information gathered during the interview process, the research team felt that the best means to satisfy the information needs of “F” Division was to present the results of this assessment in four main themes: current use of aircraft, access to current aircraft, potential uses of new aircraft and comparison of aircraft.

### 3.0 CURRENT USE OF AIRCRAFT

Currently, “F” Division has three planes in its fleet. In Regina, the Air Service team operates a Pilatus PC-12/45 identified as C-FMPE. This aircraft is setup in an executive seating format, but can be adjusted to have a different seating arrangement to accommodate more passengers or freight. Regina also has a Cessna 210R Centurion. This is a small two passenger plane that is equipped with surveillance equipment and a photo-port in one of the rear windows. That aircraft is identified as C-GHVP. In Prince Albert, “F” Division has a single plane: the Pilatus PC-12/47E. This unit has a higher payload than the Regina Pilatus and its interior is setup to be a prisoner and cargo hauler. The tail numbers of the Prince Albert Pilatus are C-GMPA. While the Cessna is owned by “F” Division, the two Pilatus aircraft are leased from RCMP National Air Services in Ottawa.

In terms of personnel, the Air Services coordinator is located in Regina along with 2 pilots and 2 engineers. The Prince Albert hanger has 2 pilots and one engineer. Over the past two years, position vacancies, extensive training requirements and annual leave for members of the Air Services team has put an added workload on the pilots and engineers in Saskatchewan. Complicating matters has been a variety of major repairs and engine replacements for both of the Pilatuses in the last five years.

Despite these challenges, Air Services has continued to meet the diverse needs of “F” Division to the best that it can. Much of the unsolicited feedback from respondents indicate that Air Services is providing a great service for what it has. Dialogue from interviewees suggests that the “Air Services Coordinator is organized and reliable, and the pilots are excellent to work with—and always willing to go the extra mile to help us out”.

In terms of aircraft usage, the busiest plane in the “F” Division fleet for 2011 was the Pilatus in Regina. In 2012, the Pilatus in Prince Albert took over as the busiest plane. As Table 2 reveals, the two Pilatus planes share most of the workload for Air Services in Saskatchewan. They average over 600 legs per year, and usually transport over 2,000 passengers per year. In 2011, the Prince Albert Pilatus had 150 days of flight, while that number increased to 229 flight days in 2012. In Regina, the Pilatus flew 199 days in 2011 and 185 days in 2012. The number of flight legs, air time hours and passengers is quite lower for the Cessna, simply because its purpose is not to haul people and cargo.

One statistic shown in Table 2 is the average load factor. This statistic measures the ratio of lift for an aircraft compared to its weight. It is ultimately, a measure of the stress to which an aircraft is subjected during flight. With respect to the Saskatchewan fleet, the Prince Albert Pilatus has scored the highest average load factor in 2011 and 2012. This is ultimately due to the fact that one of the primary uses of the Prince Albert aircraft is to transport prisoners and on occasion, haul freight.

**Table 2:** Flight Information Data for Each “F” Division Plane by Year, 2011-2012

VARIABLE	YEAR	PRINCE ALBERT PILATUS	REGINA PILATUS	REGINA CESSNA
Total # of Legs	2011	605	708	163
	2012	926	593	82
Average Leg Length (nautical miles)	2011	159	223	173
	2012	168	238	156
Total # of Passengers	2011	2,534	2,111	95
	2012	4,157	1,616	42
Total # of Nautical Miles with Passengers	2011	394,084	475,288	21,166
	2012	678,673	401,500	7,019
Load Factor	2011	4.2	3.0	0.6
	2012	4.5	2.7	0.5
# of Flight Days	2011	150	199	69
	2012	229	185	40
Maintenance Days	2011	18	28	13
	2012	35	23	8
# of Air Time Hours	2011	451:27	745:06	247:25
	2012	823:08	604:46	95:59

Statistical estimates from the pilots in Prince Albert and Regina, corroborated by actual flight data collected by the Air Services Coordinator, confirm that most often, the Prince Albert Pilatus is engaged in prisoner transport. As Table 3 shows, in 2011, C-GMPA spent close to 77% of its time transporting prisoners. In 2012, that figure jumped to 86%. With respect to hours spent in the air, the Prince Albert Pilatus spent 710 hours and 16 minutes flying prisoners in 2012. The second most number of hours were other random trips totalling 76 hours and 16 minutes. Additional trips C-GMPA took in 2011 and 2012 included a return trip for aircraft maintenance, relief of other aircraft, search and rescue and 11 return trips flying RCMP members around for training.

**Table 3:** Prince Albert Pilatus Trip Purpose by % of Flight Time, Total Hours and Legs, 2011-2012

TRIP PURPOSE	% OF FLIGHT TIME		TOTAL HOURS		# OF LEGS	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Air Services Training	0.0	0.1	0:00	1:00	0	1
Emergency Response Team	0.0	0.4	0:00	3:00	0	3
Maintenance	0.3	0.8	1:30	6:12	3	2
Prisoner Transport	76.9	86.3	347:23	710:16	468	778
Relief	0.3	0.5	1:18	4:00	1	4
Search and Rescue	0.3	0.3	1:12	2:06	1	2
Training	3.0	2.5	13:42	20:18	18	22
Other	19.2	9.2	0:48	76:16	114	114
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>451:27</b>	<b>923:08</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>926</b>

In contrast to the Prince Albert Pilatus, C-FMPE located out of Regina did not spend most of its time transporting prisoners. Instead, the biggest proportion of trips for the Regina Pilatus was devoted to those trips categorized as *other*. In dialogue with Air Services staff, it became clear

that many trips included in the *other* category involve flying “F” Division members and management around to various detachments, out-of-province meetings and a variety of special operations. That being said however, the second most common trip purpose for the Regina Pilatus was prisoner transport.

As the 2011 flight data in Table 4 demonstrate, C-FMPE spent 46.6% of its trips on reasons categorized as other, while it devoted 26.7% and 19.4% to prisoner transport and training, respectively. Also different from the Prince Albert Pilatus is that its Regina counterpart was used in trips involving border security, property management and surveillance. Unique to the Regina Pilatus is that it was used for operations outside the Division and even outside the RCMP organization altogether.

**Table 4:** Regina Pilatus Trip Purpose by % of Flight Time, Total Hours and Legs, 2011-2012

TRIP PURPOSE	% OF FLIGHT TIME		TOTAL HOURS		# OF LEGS	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Air Service Training	0.1	0.0	1:00	0:00	1	0
Assist Another Division	0.3	0.0	2:24	0:00	2	0
Border Security	0.0	0.4	0:00	2:12	0	2
Maintenance	0.6	0.0	4:48	0:00	6	1
Outside Division	0.5	1.8	3:54	10:44	4	8
Outside RCMP	0.0	0.2	0:00	1:30	0	2
Prisoner Transport	26.7	19.2	198:59	116:00	204	101
Property Management	0.8	3.6	5:49	21:36	6	20
Relief	1.1	2.7	8:00	16:36	10	19
Search and Rescue	0.8	0.2	6:18	1:00	6	1
Surveillance	3.0	0.0	22:06	0:00	4	0
Training	19.4	13.8	144:49	88:36	115	74
Other	46.6	58.1	347:00	351:32	350	365
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>745:06</b>	<b>604:46</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>593</b>

Last but not least, the Cessna is primarily used for border security (2011 = 29.0%; 2012 = 40.9%) and surveillance (2011 = 29.5%; 2012 = 0.0%). Other uses of C-GHVP include flights for maintenance, search and rescue, training and at least three legs (or 7 hours and 12 minutes) for matters falling outside the mandate of the RCMP (see Table 5).

**Table 5:** Regina Cessna Trip Purpose by % of Flight Time, Total Hours and Legs, 2011-2012

TRIP PURPOSE	% OF FLIGHT TIME		TOTAL HOURS		# OF LEGS	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Border Security	29.9	40.9	73:55	39:18	45	32
Maintenance	0.3	4.5	0:42	4:18	2	2
Outside RCMP	2.9	0.0	7:12	0:00	3	0
Search and Rescue	5.1	3.4	12:30	3:18	7	2
Surveillance	29.5	0.0	73:00	0:00	40	0
Training	0.0	2.6	0:00	2:30	0	2
Other	32.4	48.5	80:06	46:35	65	44
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>247:25</b>	<b>95:59</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>82</b>

### **3.1 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON CURRENT AIRCRAFT USAGE**

While data from the Professional Flight Management database help us get an exact picture of the various trips, hours and nautical miles logged under each plane, interviews with stakeholders provide a rich and descriptive account of how “F” Division utilizes the Air Service fleet in its operations. During the interview process, respondents were asked to discuss the extent to which they use “F” Division’s aircraft in their day to day operations. They were also asked to describe the dependence of their services on air travel. The results of the interview process are presented by each cohort of “F” Division.

#### **3.1.1 Detachments**

In Saskatchewan, there are three Northern detachments that are either inaccessible by road in the non-winter months, or they are just too far to drive for such travel to be cost-effective. These communities include Stony Rapids, Wollaston Lake and La Loche. Another detachment which provides policing services a variety of isolated communities is La Ronge. Members from all four of these detachments were interviewed for this assessment process.

The Stony Rapids detachment is completely dependent upon Air Services to move its members and prisoners in and out. While certain support services from the South will drive to the detachment in the winter, it is too far for that to become a regular winter trip for the members. One of the observations from the Stony Rapids detachment was that it is really dependent upon the plane schedule. Come most weekends, the detachment is usually full of prisoners and needs to be emptied out. When prisoners are not filling up the detachment cells, officers can get back to policing the community.

The Wollaston Lake detachment is also completely dependent upon Air Services—particularly in the summer months. Even in winter, the distance to transport prisoners by road is out of the question. One observation from Wollaston was that if “F” Division is to continue being responsible for prisoner transport, then another plane is necessary. The reason for this is because Wollaston Lake—like other Northern detachments—is very busy with prisoners. Also, because of its isolation, its members need supplies brought up, or they themselves need to be flown down south for meetings or training. Due to the busy prisoner transport schedule of the Prince Albert Pilatus, it is hard for all of their needs to be met right now.

The La Loche detachment is accessible by road, but because of its considerable distance from Prince Albert, air travel is used to transport prisoners twice a week. Members of the detachment also use the plane to attend courses in the South, but those trips are often bumped because of some other pressing reason (mainly prisoner transport). With respect to cargo, the La Loche detachment is not too dependent on Air Services for that, simply because there are lot of freight trucks which come to the area.

While the La Ronge detachment is very accessible by road, it depends upon Air Services to help transport prisoners down to Prince Albert. A major challenge for La Ronge is that it polices a

number of communities in its service area. From those communities it manages to collect quite a few prisoners. On top of that, La Ronge often becomes a hub for receiving prisoners from other communities—either by air or ground travel. The reason for this is because court for many Northern offenders is in La Ronge. As a result, the detachment itself becomes quite full of prisoners. While Provost can and does transport prisoners from La Ronge by road, the sheer volume of prisoners that end up in La Ronge makes prisoner transport by air a necessity.

Another way in which La Ronge depends upon air travel is in getting support from operations. Special operations units are occasionally flown into La Ronge or the other communities that the La Ronge detachment polices. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen all that often because the planes are usually not available. However, being able to receive quick support from the various operations units brings added-value to policing in the La Ronge area. Doing this requires an airplane that is available.

Overall, interviews with respondents from the Northern detachments reveal that the challenge with being so dependent upon Air Services is that it is difficult to get members in and out—whether it be for training or other reasons. Similarly, satisfying the need to empty detachment cells of prisoners is completely dependent upon the availability of an air plane. Recently, Air Services has been flying monthly freight runs to the Northern detachments. According to various respondents, this has been a real morale booster for the members in the North. The risk with this run however, is that it too is affected by the overall demands of "F" Division's aircraft.

### ***3.1.2 North District Office***

At the management level, members from the North District Office spend a considerable amount of time in various communities in the Northern parts of Saskatchewan. While many of the communities they visit to provide support and oversight are reachable by road, it is more cost-effective to reach several by air. In a few cases, the only way to reach some communities is by air. As a result, much of the work done by members in the North District Office is dependent upon access to an airplane. In their work with the Northern detachments, the North District Office staff see the true dependence of air travel in policing the North.

### ***3.1.3 Support Services***

One of important roles of Air Services in Saskatchewan, beyond supporting regular members, is to provide air travel for various supports that need to access Northern and remote detachments. The needs of these support services vary considerably.

One support service included in this assessment is maintenance and radio operations. Generally, the radio technicians and information technology specialists each use a plane five times a year. Since a bulk of their work involves the maintenance of communications equipment in the North, access to an aircraft is essential. Respondents from this unit report that Air Services can always accommodate their needs if they plan trips far in advance. However, when they do use a plane,

it's almost always the Regina Pilatus because the Prince Albert Pilatus is usually tied up with prisoner transport.

According to respondents, the Pilatus meets the needs of the radio and information technology unit. Every 5 years however, this unit has to transport a large number of heavy batteries to northern locations to conduct maintenance on radio towers. In these occasions, they charter a Twin Otter—simply because it can handle the weight. The staff of this unit were clear to say that it would not be worth the money for “F” Division to acquire a bigger plane just for their needs. In fact, one respondent who has flown in a Twin Otter with “F” Division for many years, says that “the Pilatus is a welcomed change”.

Another support service that uses air travel is Health Services. Every two years, a team of nurses conducts a flu vaccination tour. Generally, they leave from Prince Albert and make a three-day tour to each of the Northern detachments. On occasion, they will also fly up a physician or psychologist to provide care for members located in the North. In terms of dependence on aircraft, nursing visits generally wouldn't happen without the planes. With respect to scheduling, the team usually books a plane one month in advance. When they book the flight, they are careful to inform the Air Services coordinator that the lifespan of the vaccinations they are transporting do have a limit. To date, all aviation needs of the Health Service team have been met.

The final support service involved in this needs assessment was the Training Division. According to one respondent, the Province is split into three different districts. It is generally those members from the Northern district who use the planes for training. The training unit of “F” Division runs approximately 100 courses a year. Throughout the year, they depend upon Air Services to transport trainees, two to three times a month on average. Due to the need for at least 3 passengers to be onboard the plane at once (in order for it to be cost-effective), there are often situations where Northern members will put off their training until more passengers are booked on the same day. This tends to impact the opportunity for Northern members to participate in training. Where there is no flexibility in the training schedule of the member, and there is not enough passengers to justify an RCMP plane, they will simply fly down to Regina on a commercial flight or drive.

### **3.1.4 Operations**

Within “F” Division, several different operations units depend upon Air Services in a variety of ways. The type plane they require often depends on the tasks assigned to that operational unit. For example, if the plane itself serves as a tool in the operation, then quite often the Cessna is used. Examples of this include surveillance, border security, and search and rescue. In other operations, where the plane is merely a means of transportation, the Pilatuses are generally used. It is usually in these latter scenarios where several individuals as well as equipment or supplies must be transported to the site of service delivery. Examples of such operations include the Emergency Response Team, the Dive Team, Identification Unit, Explosive Containment Unit, etc.

During the interview process, feedback was gathered from 9 different special operations units. Interviewing respondents from all of the operations units of “F” Division fell out of the scope of this assessment process. As such, the intent of interviewing operations personnel was to provide a basic overview of some of the different units who use Air Services.

One of the operation units examined herein is the **Commercial Crimes Unit**. Members of this unit typically travel to various cities in Western Canada. Their use of the plane is generally out of convenience and in the interest of saving time. Unlike other operations units, the work of the Commercial Crimes Unit does not involve emergency situations. Quite often, their travel schedules are flexible. As a result, they can usually fit into the flights that Air Services has available. Feedback from one respondent indicated that they can function without use of the RCMP’s planes, but when they do use them, “F” Division saves a lot of money and resources.

A second operations unit is **Special Observations**. By estimate, one respondent believed his unit needed air support roughly 16 times a year. Having access to the use of an airplane is a real benefit to the unit. Typically, the Special Observations Unit makes use of the Cessna. The only real barrier to service is when they have a spur of the moment need for the plane, and the pilots in Regina have already flown their legal amount of hours for the day.

Another operations resource consulted during this process was the **General Investigative Section** out of Prince Albert. The main role of this team is to provide Northern detachments with long-term investigative support. In fulfilling that role, members of this team often need to visit isolated northern and remote communities. While they typically drive to most communities, Wollaston Lake, Stony Rapids and Fond du Lac are not accessible by car. As such, the General Investigative Section depends upon Air Services to get them where they need to be.

One unit that faces somewhat of a time crunch is the **Identification Unit**. On average, the Identification Unit requires air travel 6 to 10 times a year. Quite often their use of the plane is with short notice. However in the interest of preserving evidence, it is important that this unit arrives on-scene quickly. Another factor that makes air travel a preferred means of transportation for the Identification Unit is that after 8 or more hours of driving, it’s difficult for members of this unit to properly examine a crime scene. As such, to reduce investigator fatigue and preserve evidence, it is important for the Identification Unit to use an airplane in their work—especially that which occurs in the North.

One team that faces a significant time crunch in its work is the **Emergency Response Team** (ERT). The role of this unit is to respond to emergencies throughout Saskatchewan—with the exception of the major cities which have their own teams. In most situations, the ERT is able to make use of roadways with its specialized vehicle. Time delay can be a huge safety risk, so the priority is how they can reach the site fastest. As one respondent described, not always, is a plane the fastest way to get somewhere. Factors influencing this include weather, pilot availability, plane readiness and the closest place that the plane can land to the site of interest. When the ERT has requested a plane however, it has been made available. The only limitation



with air travel mentioned by the ERT respondent was that the Pilatuses can only carry so much weight. As such, what often happens is half the team and equipment goes up in a plane while the rest follow by road.

The next operations unit interviewed for this assessment was the **Border Integrity Unit**. The main use of planes by this unit is in patrolling the United States-Canada border. While the winter months allow for this unit to patrol the border by snowmobile, in the summer, they cannot access many parts of the border without a plane. This unit usually uses the Cessna. However when the Cessna is either not working or not available, they end up using the Pilatus. Unfortunately, the Pilatus has limited use in border patrol because it is fast and not equipped with special surveillance technology. Despite this limitation, the unit still uses the Pilatus because patrolling the border by air is one of the unit's major mandates.

Another unit which requires a quick response to a location is the **Explosive Disposal Unit**. This unit responds to explosive, chemical and radioactive threats in Saskatchewan. Due to the sheer geographic size of Saskatchewan, air travel is a tremendous asset to the unit. One of the major reasons why the Explosive Disposal Unit is very dependent upon Air Services is because it can get them to locations quickly. Many of these locations are too far to travel by vehicle in any reasonable amount of time. Another major reason the Explosive Disposal Unit depends upon "F" Division's plane fleet is because they often have to carry products and equipment that are not allowed on commercial flights.

The eighth operations unit explored in this needs assessment is the **Combined Forces Specialized Enforcement Unit**. The role of this unit is to provide support to all other detachments with respect to specific cases that may involve organized crime. The main use of aircraft for this unit is when they need to travel outside of the province. While the travel could be done by road, doing so would take up too much officer time and police resources. One respondent from this unit reports that the use of a plane makes their job more efficient, therefore allowing them to get more things accomplished quicker and easier.

The final operations unit discussed in this report is the **Integrated Proceeds of Crime Unit**. The major purpose of this unit is to identify and seize assets obtained through criminal activities. The main use of a plane in fulfilling the mandate of this unit is in travelling to other provinces to execute search warrants. Most of the time, members of the team fly commercial. However if a group of investigators is required to travel, it is usually more cost-effective for them to fly with "F" Division's Air Services.

### **3.1.5 Provost**

The biggest user of the Prince Albert Pilatus, and a common user of the Regina Pilatus, is Provost. This unit is responsible for transporting prisoners between the various correctional centres, detachments and courts in the province. In many cases, Provost transports prisoners by road. However considering the long distances of many trips, coupled with the high volume of prisoners in need of transport, travel by air is often the most feasible option. In communities

north of La Ronge, prisoner transport is almost exclusively done by air. The transport of prisoners by air, is quite often a daily activity for Provost in Saskatchewan.

The dependence upon aircraft by Provost becomes quite clear when one considers the constant flow of prisoners between the courts, attachment cells and correctional centres. It is the responsibility of Provost to make certain that prisoners appear before a judge prior to the end of their remand period, or when changes occur in their court process. As such, there is often a need to move prisoners quickly and in short notice.

While most of the prisoner transport conducted by Provost involves prisoners remaining within Saskatchewan, “F” Division also has to transport prisoners out-of-province. In most cases, this is done by road or commercial aircraft. The reason for this is because it is not cost-effective to transport one prisoner via air. In some cases however, Provost finds itself needing to depend upon Air Services to try and get a prisoner somewhere out-of-province right away. Under these circumstances, they will use an aircraft from “F” Division.

### **3.2 AIRCRAFT USAGE IN OTHER PROVINCES**

While the focus of this assessment is on the needs of “F” Division, it is also useful to explore the use of air services in other jurisdictions. Interview data from Alberta respondents reveal that “K” Division has use of 2 Pilatuses—one setup for freight and prisoners, the other set up in an executive format. The RCMP in Alberta also have use of a Cessna and a helicopter.

Flying the “K” Division fleet are 6 fixed-wing pilots and 3 rotary-wing pilots. Alberta also uses civilian back-up pilots for its helicopter at times of need. In terms of use, the Pilatuses are used for moving prisoners (with Sheriffs as escorts), members for training, administrative meetings and the Emergency Response Team. Almost always, the Pilatus planes accommodate the long distance needs of “K” Division. One exception is when the Emergency Response Team has to bring additional gear. If it does not fit on one of the Pilatuses, they are forced to travel by road.

Similar to Saskatchewan, the RCMP in Alberta use their Cessna for surveillance, border security and search and rescue. They also use their Cessna for assisting the Emergency Response Team from above, and in supporting traffic enforcement. The helicopter in Alberta is used for surveillance, search and rescue, pursuit, traffic enforcement, night surveillance, border integrity and the Emergency Response Team.

With respect to prisoner transport, “K” Division’s Air Services engage in far fewer of these flights than “F” Division. One of the reasons for this is because the Alberta justice system uses a lot of telecourt (video conferencing). This places less demand on aircraft. In addition, the Sheriffs in Alberta are able to drive prisoners on road surfaces in most situations—simply because there are very few fly-in detachments in Alberta compared to Saskatchewan. With respect to a regular prisoner run, only one community in the whole province requires weekly flights to transport prisoners.

One of the interesting facts about Alberta Air Services is that operational or Divisional needs will trump the Sheriffs' needs to transport prisoners. Whether this is the case because there are many more communities in Alberta that are accessible by road or not is unknown. What is confirmed however, is that this is not the practice in "F" Division.

On the other side of Saskatchewan, "D" Division has quite a different demand for their Air Services than both "F" and "K" Divisions. While Saskatchewan has three fly-in communities and Alberta has only 1, Manitoba has 15 isolated communities. To access these communities, as well as conduct other Divisional business, Air Services in Manitoba has 3 Pilatus aircraft and 1 Cessna. One Pilatus, located in Thompson, is flown by two pilots while the operation of two Pilatuses in Winnipeg is shared among by three pilots.

One unique aspect of Air Services in Manitoba is that "D" Division is not responsible for transporting prisoners. Consequently, the planes are used for training, operations, management and servicing many of the non-detachment communities in the Northern parts of Manitoba. Another common use of the planes is transporting witnesses for court, as well as for witness protection.

## 4.0 ACCESS TO CURRENT AIRCRAFT

The results of this needs assessment have so far indicated that there is variation in the extent to which the different detachments, units or groups of “F” Division are able to utilize aircraft in their delivery of service. Some of the factors affecting their use of air travel include how quick they need to be somewhere, whether a plane can get them to the right place, if the plane is available, if the plane can handle their operation’s weight, how urgent the trip is and if their use of the plane would be cost-effective. Essentially, these variables bring importance to the general accessibility of the current aircraft in “F” Division’s fleet.

One of the first barriers to accessibility is the number of conditions which typically have to exist in order for an individual or unit to use an “F” Division plane. The first condition to be met is whether the trip itself would be cost-effective. Essentially, if a trip involves three or more passengers it will be deemed cost-effective and approved if the flight time is available. Any other trip request—unless it is an emergency or major priority—is quite often denied. Unfortunately, this type of condition has limited the extent to which either Pilatus can be used to help a number of groups—including management, Integrated Proceeds Of Crime, Commercial Crimes and Combined Forces Specialized Enforcement Unit.

Another condition that determines accessibility is the availability of a plane. Clearly, more advanced bookings have a higher probability of being secured. However prisoner transport and emergencies take priority over all other flights. As such, there is often a chance that even if a flight time is confirmed, it may be bumped after all.

As both quantitative and qualitative data found throughout this process reveal, the Prince Albert Pilatus is almost always tied up with prisoner transport. That leaves the Regina Pilatus with the lion’s share of satisfying all other aviation needs in the Division. As a result of both planes being busy, many regular and civilian members of the RCMP are forced to find other means of transportation. Some book a commercial flight while others eat up hours and resources driving to their destination.

When this occurs to the same individual or group too frequently, they begin to develop some doubt around exactly how accessible the planes are. Dialogue from some of the special observations units indicates that a number of them don’t even bother requesting a plane because they know it will be tied up with prisoner transport anyway. Similarly, several members from the Northern detachments admit not calling for support from other detachments or special operations because they know that they wouldn’t be able to find an available plane anyway.

Interestingly, while respondents from many different cohorts pointed to the lack of access to aircraft due to prisoner transport, some interviewees felt that even prisoner transport was being sacrificed. According to one individual, prisoner transport is generally supposed to be a priority for Air Services in Saskatchewan. However, a shortage of pilots, along with other RCMP

priorities in the last few years, have forced Provost to use the roads more often in transporting prisoners.

The problem with limited access to air travel—whether it is perceived or actual—is that it negatively effects the quality of policing in Saskatchewan. Some of the things which help foster effective policing include operational support, supervision, supplies, training, collaboration and a timely response. Unfortunately, due to a low accessibility to aircraft, several parts of “F” Division is forced to go without many of these assets for an extended period of time.

Another consequence of inaccessible air support in Saskatchewan is the damage that unavailable or bumped flights cause to the morale of officers. When training commitments, supply shipments, operational plans or flights out of the North are cancelled because of a prisoner transport, it can be quite unsettling for both civilian and regular members of the RCMP.

The challenges presented by periodic inaccessibility of “F” Division aircraft has not gone unnoticed by Air Services. In response to these difficulties, the pilots and Air Services Coordinator have made a number of conciliations across the province. One example is in using the Regina Pilatus for Border Patrol and Special Observations when the Cessna was down. Although not an ideal aircraft for surveillance, the unit members were pleased that Air Services was still able to help them out. Another example is where the Regina Pilatus helps out with a lot of travel required by the North District. In terms of relief, the Regina Pilatus has also helped in prisoner transport.

Another means by which Air Services has tried to minimize hardship of plane inaccessibility is by reducing the uncertainty of each plane’s availability. They achieved this by implementing an online scheduling process that allows all employees of “F” Division to see what planes are available, and when. According to several respondents, this is a very useful tool in their own planning. Of course, to others, what this tool also does is confirm exactly how unavailable a plane really is to them.

Overall, much of the blame around inaccessibility lies not in the scheduling done by Air Services, but in the actual number of planes and pilots that “F” Division has. In fact, most users of the planes are quite satisfied with the service they receive from Air Services. According to one respondent, “I don’t know how Air Services does such a fantastic job with what little resources they have. They’re at the whim of the courts—yet they still try their best to help us out even though they’re flying prisoners all the time. It would help them and us if they had another plane”.

## 5.0 POTENTIAL USES OF NEW AIRCRAFT

During the interview process, a lot of respondents found it difficult to think of what they would do with more access to a plane; simply because they are so used to not having access. On the other hand, quite a few were happy with the access they did have, and as such, didn't need any more access.

Despite this initial difficulty, many respondents were eventually able to identify some ways in which they could increase their use of a plane (should "F" Division acquire another aircraft). While some reported that they would be interested in doing different things with a new plane, others felt that they would simply just expand their current use of Air Services.

Feedback from the North District Office suggest that "if we had another Pilatus, we could access our non-detachment communities more often, and expand the service delivery of both our operations and management". Another member from this cohort felt that a third passenger plane would save a lot of time and money that is spent on members driving around to various detachments.

According to other respondents from the different operations units, having another plane would allow the Special Observations Unit to train and involve more people in aerial surveillance. This would increase the capacity of "F" Division to conduct surveillance in Saskatchewan. Another aircraft and more pilots would also allow for increased border patrol. Right now, the Border Integrity Unit is limited by what time the pilots have outside of their other flight duties. With an additional plane and pilots, more time could be spent protecting non-reachable parts of the border. As for the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, respondents felt that their team would use the plane twice as much as it does now. Currently, their team usually doesn't bother asking for a plane unless it's a long trip—simply because the plane is always tied up in other matters.

With respect to Support Services, the radio technicians did not feel that they would use a new plane anymore than they do already. The same was said from the health staff. In contrast however, those responsible for coordinating training for members of the RCMP felt that an additional aircraft could help them increase member access to training—whether it be in Regina or at the various detachments.

When it comes to Provost, although they take up a majority of the flying schedule for the Prince Albert Pilatus, an additional plane could speed up prisoner transport. Not having to share a plane with other Divisional operations would mean more turnaround on prisoners. This would ultimately reduce demands on both detachments and Provost—who are currently holding prisoners in unnecessary places simply because a plane is not available.

At the detachment level, several respondents pointed to the fact that a third passenger plane would significantly change policing in the North. According to one member, "another plane would allow for more visits from administrative units and supervisors. It would also allow us to

get some additional help from specialized units such as Canine, Identification and the Emergency Response Team”. According to another respondent, another plane would give members at Northern detachments more opportunity to get the training updates they need; receive supplies they just can’t access in the North; and have more on-the-ground support from management and operations units. This would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in the North.

One point made by several respondents in both the detachments and North District Office was that having another plane would be a major morale boost among the detachments. According to one senior officer, “having another plane to be used just for operations in the North would bring un-measurable value to the detachments. Being able to fly in supplies and additional supports to the members would be incredible”. Another respondent explained that if “F” Divisions planes were more accessible to those members in the Northern detachments, there would be higher retention of Northern officers.

## 6.0 AIRCRAFT COMPARISON

As the introductory comments of this report indicate, it is not the purpose of this research effort to provide a technical overview of different aircraft that can be used in policing. Rather, its purpose is to assess the air service needs of “F” Division, as they relate to current and future uses and demands of aircraft in the RCMP’s provision of provincial policing services. The intent of the interview process was to solicit dialogue on each respondent’s aviation needs, as well as additional commentary on the key features and capacity that an aircraft should have (were it to meet those needs).

During the interview process, a number of different aircraft were mentioned. These include the Pilatus PC-12, Twin Otter, King Air 200, King Air 350 and a helicopter. In comparing the strengths and limitations of each aircraft, very few respondents mentioned either of the King Air models. Those that did, pointed out that the 200 is not as fast as the Pilatus and it has no cargo door. The 350 could haul a lot of people and cargo, is pressurized, but needs too long of a runway to be used primarily in Northern Saskatchewan.

In discussing the utility of a rotary-wing aircraft, a few of the operations units felt that it would be useful for border patrol, search and rescue, traffic enforcement, critical incidents, missing persons, identification of stolen property and getting members into remote and hard-to-reach locations. In contrast, some felt that a helicopter would be too loud for surveillance, not good for hauling cargo and wouldn’t help with the increasing demands for prisoner transport. With respect to its overall use, several felt that there just wasn’t enough work in Saskatchewan for a rotary-wing aircraft at this time. Should the need arise, it would best be met through a multi-agency partnership that funds, manages and operates the helicopter.

### 6.1 RESPONDENT COMPARISONS

The two most-mentioned aircraft during this needs assessment were the Pilatus PC-12 and the Twin Otter. Essentially, both are passenger/cargo aircrafts designed to cover medium to long distances. They are also the two most common aircraft used in police work that involves large geographic challenges (i.e. remoteness, moderate distances).

#### 6.1.1 *Pilatus PC-12*

The Pilatus is a single-engine turboprop air frame with retractable wheels, a movable seating arrangement, a cargo door and can be operated by one or two pilots. Since the Pilatus is a pressurized vessel, it can be flown at high enough altitudes to avoid extreme weather. The Pilatus is a smaller plane that holds roughly 9 passengers and two pilots. It’s greatest attribute from a policing perspective is its speed. Getting from point A to point B quickly, is often a common desire among police professionals (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Pilatus PC-12**



In providing feedback on the Pilatus, respondents pointed out a number of features about the Pilatus that make it an ideal aircraft for “F” Division. These include:

- It can move people quickly.
- Advanced avionics allows for autopilot and directional support in poor visibility.
- Can take 7 prisoners and two escorts.
- Can be operated by a single pilot.
- Can fly above bad weather.
- Has a cargo door.
- Long and short trips are both quite quick.
- Operates on the radar system—which adds increased safety.
- Good value for the speed and comfort it provides.
- More economical to operate (single engine).
- Can easily be converted to carry passengers or cargo.

While quite a few respondents offered some positive feedback on the Pilatus, the group also pointed out a number of challenges with this type of aircraft. They include:

- The Pilatus is not compatible with several airstrips in Saskatchewan.
- It is too fast for effective surveillance, search and rescue or border patrol.

- Pilots will have to make two trips to get the same amount of prisoners as one trip with a Twin Otter.
- The Pilatus is very limited in the amount of cargo it can carry.
- The advanced avionics requires additional training for pilots.
- The avionics used in the Pilatus require downloading before each take-off; this wastes time sitting on the runway.
- It is more difficult to cross pilots over from one Pilatus to another.
- Some governments do not allow for their VIP to fly in single engine planes.

### **6.1.2 Twin Otter**

The Twin Otter is a twin-engine air frame with wheels attached to a fixed tricycle undercarriage. It has a cargo door and holds 19 passengers, in addition to two pilots. The Twin Otter is non-pressurized, which means it cannot fly above the weather. For decades, the Twin Otter has been the aircraft of choice for not only police, but all private and government entities with northern and remote operations. The cabin of the Twin Otter can be easily reconfigured to accommodate passengers, cargo or both. It's main strength is its ability to haul larger cargo shipments, multiple passengers and land and takeoff on short runways (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Twin Otter**



In discussing the benefits of “F” Division having a Twin Otter, most respondents focused on the ability of this air craft to haul large amounts of cargo and prisoners. The strengths outlined by respondents include:

- Can haul twice as many prisoners as the Pilatus.
- Can be used to help special operations units move many members and their gear.
- Can transport heavy equipment to remote locations—batteries, snowmobiles, supplies.
- Can be flown slow enough to be effective at search and rescue and surveillance.
- Can land on most runways in Northern Saskatchewan.

Despite these strengths, respondents were also quick to point out a number of challenges with the Twin Otter. These include:

- Slow aircraft that takes quite a while to get anywhere.
- Two engines burning fuel means more cost.
- Expensive maintenance on twin engine aircraft.
- Can only fly through the weather—including heat, snow, wind, rain.
- No radar capabilities.
- Longer time in air for prisoners, crew and escorts.
- More maintenance required for twin engine aircraft.
- Pilots in “F” Division are not trained in flying the Twin Otter.

### ***6.1.3 Discussing the Air Service Needs of “F” Division***

While pointing out the pros and cons of each aircraft, respondents were invited to discuss the means by which each plane could or could not meet the air service needs of “F” Division. There were a number of respondents in favour of the Twin Otter aircraft, however there were more in support of the Pilatus. In fact, some proponents of the Twin Otter even tempered their position by saying that if “F” Division commits one entire plane to prisoner transport, then a Pilatus could suffice.

Arguments for the Twin Otter claim that because Air Services already has one plane almost completely tied up with prisoner transport, there is no use getting another multi-purpose plane like the Pilatus. Instead, “F” Division should just get a Twin Otter to haul more prisoners at once. Others posited that hauling the same amount of prisoners in one trip as the Pilatus hauls in two trips, would free up the Twin Otter to help in Divisional operations during the remaining days of the week. With the Pilatus, it’s too busy trying to keep up with prisoner runs to help out in other operations.

When looking into the future, one proponent of the Twin Otter felt that it will come in handy as the demand for prisoner transport increases: “Many of our detachments are dealing with an increased crime rate. As such, there are an increasing amount of arrests, and ultimately, prisoners to transport. This is going to place an increased demand on Air Services to fly prisoners in and out of the North. The sheer number of prisoners that can be transported by a Twin Otter makes it the best plane for “F” Division to acquire”.

Arguments against the Twin Otter cover a variety of points. One respondent felt that Twin Otters were uncomfortable and rough. As one experienced passenger explained: “everyone will happily fly in an Otter once. After that, they won’t be happy flying in one again. It holds a lot of people but just isn’t all that comfortable”. Others point to the fact that in transporting prisoners, the Twin Otter will free up ground-crew because it doesn't need to take two flights to haul the same amount of prisoners as the Pilatus. However, with that many prisoners on-board, it will need double the escorts. With a slower plane, those escorts and their prisoners will be tied up longer per flight.

Other arguments against the acquisition of a Twin Otter are that to fly long distances in the North, it will have to take quite a bit of fuel. That combined with a cabin full of prisoners will limit some of the options pilots will have in prisoner transport locations. Another limitation pertaining to the Otter’s slow speed is that it may have to stay the night in some locations—whereas the Pilatus can turnaround and come home the same day. The final argument against the Twin Otter was that while it may haul a lot of passengers and cargo, its low speed is not conducive to the dynamic policing needs of Saskatchewan. This is particularly so among northern communities that are becoming increasingly affected by crime and violence.

One observation that was made not so much about the Twin Otter, but about the need it satisfies, is that hauling cargo isn’t as much of a need for detachments as it used to be. The reason for this is because many Northern communities have increased shipping traffic that provide a lot of options. As one respondent explained, “we don’t need as much gear hauled in anymore because there are a lot of other options by road and charter”.

In identifying the ways in which the Pilatus meets the needs of “F” Division, several respondents pointed to its speed, versatility, safety and advanced avionics that are an incredible asset to pilots during flight. The main arguments for the Pilatus were that it can quickly transport prisoners and haul a limited amount of cargo. It also is capable of cross-country trips which are an important feature for administration and several of the special operations units. Respondents were quick to point out that the Pilatus is an aircraft that is an economical and practical tool for policing—hence why it has become the aircraft of choice for the RCMP nation-wide. With respect to hauling equipment, one respondent from an operation unit pointed out that while the Pilatus does not hold as much forensic gear as the Force’s old Twin Otter did, it still does the job. More importantly, it does the job quicker.

During the interview process, one respondent pointed out the un-measurable value of getting RCMP personnel to their destinations quicker. As he described, “while we can compare the costs of members wages and gas spent driving places versus flying, it is hard to put a value on flying the commanding officer places, responding quickly to service calls, supporting operations units or helping officers in the North get in and out more often. These are important factors to consider in selecting a plane”.

One of the most-mentioned strengths of the Pilatus was that it is in a good position to meet most of the broader needs of “F” Division. If the weather is bad, time is of the essence, and

multiple people need to get to a specific location quickly, the Pilatus can achieve that. In contrast, the Twin Otter may not be so successful.

One argument for the Pilatus over the Twin Otter is that the conditions by which “F” Division uses airplanes has shifted in recent years. As one respondent explains, “things have changed in the North, there is more access to roads—at least in the winter—and so using planes for hauling cargo is not as critical as it used to be. Also, the demand for turn around on prisoners between their communities and the correctional system is becoming increasingly quicker. As such, regularly scheduled prisoner hauls to predetermined locations is not an option for Provost. Our needs in “F” Division have changed over the years. Considering this, what we need now is a means to transport RCMP personnel and prisoners quicker”.

When it comes to debating the need for a Pilatus, respondents pointed to its limitations in passenger and cargo capacity. According to one respondent, “the Division used to have two Twin Otters, which hauled 15 prisoners and two escorts. The plane ran on a circuit. That process was very efficient. However the rules on escorts have changed, as did the planes. We’re now reduced to hauling only 7 prisoners with 2 escorts. The Pilatus is quicker, but because it is a smaller airplane than the Twin Otter, it requires more stops to pick up an equal amount of prisoners as the Twin Otter. This results in more Provost and detachment members being tied up on the ground. The small size of the Pilatus also means we have to double back or simply leave prisoners behind”.

## **6.2 OUT-OF-PROVINCE COMPARISONS**

Through interviews with Air Services personnel in other parts of the country, several comparisons of the Pilatus and Twin Otter were also made. In Alberta, the Pilatus was chosen because of its speed, efficiency and ability to fly above the weather—something not possible by “K” Division’s Cessna or Helicopter. Respondents from Alberta recognized the absolute payload of the Twin Otter but felt that that particular type of aircraft did not meet the needs of “K” Division since most of its communities are accessible by road. As such, large amounts of freight, members or prisoners can be hauled by road.

In Manitoba, “D” Division’s Air Services personnel explained that the Pilatus best meets the needs of their provincial policing mandate because it is quick, cost-effective and reliable. Although it is not as large as the Twin Otter, it is able to haul quite a bit of supplies and people to where they need to be. In discussing the Twin Otter, a respondent from “D” Division explained that “we chose not to get the Twin Otter because they’re slow and they are not pressurized. Which means they cannot get above the clouds in bad weather—which we have a lot of”.

Another reason for why “D” Division did not choose the Twin Otter is because it has two engines; which means its hard on fuel and therefore too expensive to operate—never mind maintain. Finally, the respondent from Manitoba pointed out that because “D” Division’s Air Services typically have further distances to fly than other Divisions, “we can’t haul much cargo

or people at one time anyway—because we have to save weight for fuel. With a Twin Otter, we'd have real trouble delivering a full payload to northern communities—many of which don't have aviation fuel. The Twin Otter just doesn't meet our Divisional needs.”

The final dialogue from outside of “F” Division came from Air Services Headquarters in Ottawa. According to one respondent, most of the country—with the exception of the territories—has moved towards the Pilatus. The reason for this is because they are fast, versatile, relatively cost-effective to operate, and most of the pilots in the RCMP—both civilian and regular members—are trained to fly a Pilatus. The reason that the RCMP in the territories still use the Twin Otter is because it is primarily used for hauling freight in to remote detachments that are completely inaccessible by road any time of the year.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The two-part question driving this needs assessment is whether “F” Division is in need of another aircraft, and what aircraft should that be? An additional dimension to this question is whether the need for such an aircraft changes if “F” Division is relieved of its prisoner transport responsibilities.

In trying to answer these questions, this review has worked with various units of “F” Division—including Air Services—to identify the air infrastructure needs of the RCMP’s provincial police mandate. The evidence uncovered in this report suggests that indeed, another plane is required for “F” Division to continue fulfilling its mandate in Saskatchewan. If the RCMP were to acquire another plane for use in Saskatchewan, the quality and scope of “F” Division’s policing services would be increased.

Currently, non-detachment communities are not visited enough, regular and civilian members face barriers in getting out of the North for training, managers and supervisors are not visiting their detachments to the extent that they need to, Northern detachments are in constant need of supplies and select operations units are having trouble performing their roles because their access to air transport is currently limited. Further to this, several Northern detachments feel cut-off from the support of special operations units because they do not feel the latter will be successful in securing a flight to the North. While all of this is going on, many human resource hours and mileage dollars are eaten up as civilian and regular members try to meet their travel needs along the ground.

A major source of these problems, is the unavailability of the Prince Albert Pilatus; which is most often tied up with prisoner transport. While Air Services has worked hard to use both the Prince Albert and Regina-based planes to meet the needs of “F” Division, there is still some measurable need going unmet. According to the suggestions offered by individuals who both operate and benefit from Air Services, having another plane would alleviate a lot of these problems.

With respect to which type of aircraft would best meet the needs of “F” Division, the process of providing that answer has not been an easy one. There are considerably good reasons to believe that the Pilatus PC-12 and the Twin Otter are both ideal planes for Saskatchewan. After all, each aircraft has their own set of strengths. Historically, both have also played a relatively important role in the RCMP’s provision of policing.

From a distance, the Twin Otter appears to be the right plane for “F” Division’s Air Services. It hauls a lot more cargo than a Pilatus, and would alleviate a lot of the extra flights that “F” Division currently makes in the North when it cannot fit all prisoners onto a Pilatus. However, this paper has shown that there are diverse air infrastructure needs within “F” Division. Considering the needs of air travel by so many entities involved in provincial policing, settling for a plane that meets a single need really well (i.e. prisoner transport) is not practical. In a

dynamic and changing police environment, versatility is a must—especially when the final price tag involves several million dollars.

This report concludes that there is no demonstrable need for a larger aircraft than the Pilatus—especially when it comes at the expense of speed. In addition, the Twin Otter’s inability to fly above the weather reduces its relevance to the air service needs of “F” Division. There are far too many urgent and time-sensitive circumstances in policing to wait around for the weather to improve.

Needed in “F” Division is an aircraft that can help multiple facets of the organization fulfill their mandates. A third Pilatus in the “F” Division fleet would strengthen the current air service delivery, and in turn, help the Force work on these mandates. According to results gathered through this needs assessment, the Pilatus meets most needs of the Division. The biggest challenge unfortunately is in availability of the Pilatus. As such, the most certain way for “F” Division to overcome the unavailability of a multi-purpose aircraft that meets the needs of provincial policing, is to purchase another one.

## **7.1 PRISONER TRANSPORT**

With respect to prisoner transport, under current arrangements with the Province of Saskatchewan, this task falls under the responsibility of the RCMP. As such, assuming that the need for prisoner transport does not change in the immediate future, this report recommends that “F” Division acquire a second Pilatus PC-12/47E, and locate this plane in Prince Albert.

The role of this plane could be to partially relieve the C-GMPA of its prisoner transport duties, so that both planes can be used for operations and prisoner transport. An alternative option would be for one Prince Albert Pilatus to be used exclusively for transporting prisoners, while the other could be used to assist management, special operations, support services and detachments travel to, from, in and around the North.

Should the Government of Saskatchewan immediately relieve “F” Division of its prisoner transport responsibilities, than no purchase of any additional aircraft would be necessary. The amount of air time saved by not transporting prisoners would free up more than enough aviation support to meet the needs of “F” Division’s various management, support services, special operations and detachments.



## 7.2 SYSTEMIC FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEMAND FOR PRISONER TRANSPORT

In searching for answers to meet the aviation planning needs of “F” Division, a number of unintended outcomes occurred in the research. These outcomes include some valuable insight into many different systemic problems that are tying up Air Service resources in Saskatchewan. Interestingly, they are all related to the air transport of prisoners.

The first problem identified in this research is the lack of videoconferencing (telecourt) currently being used in Saskatchewan’s court system. According to respondents, most courtrooms and detachments are setup with the appropriate technology to provide secure communications between judges, lawyers and the accused. However they are very rarely used.

Instead, prisoners remanded in Prince Albert are quite often flown up North to meet a justice or judge for a very short amount of time; only to be flown back to Prince Albert shortly thereafter. In other cases, the entire court party and prisoner are both flown from Prince Albert to a northern community (separate planes), for a simple non-trial court procedure.

The proof that telecourt is functional in Saskatchewan also reveals another systemic problem. As several respondents pointed out, it is not uncommon to have a prisoner flown from Prince Albert up to a northern community, only to communicate with a judge back in Prince Albert—via videoconferencing. In other cases, where the court party is scheduled to be up North—but their plane cannot fly due to bad weather—Provost takes prisoners up North using the Pilatus. Once again, the offender is stuck communicating with the court party through videoconferencing.

According to one respondent, “increased efficiencies in the court system, which would reduce demand on prisoner transport, would free up RCMP officers to spend time actually policing and building relationships in the community”. A second respondent felt that “the court system has an opportunity to save the Province a lot of money simply by turning on the television. The RCMP spend so much time and money hauling prisoners and members around for court appearances when they can just appear over telecourt. When you calculate the cost of Provost, RCMP escorts, food, pilot and plane costs, we save \$5,200 with every telecourt call”.

It is no secret that these extra demands for prisoner transport are placing a major burden upon all of those involved. In particular however, such unnecessary prisoner runs are having a major impact on Northern detachments. According to several respondents, there are very few cells in Northern detachments and they are often full of prisoners. This causes a real barrier to policing because the members spend so much time coordinating prisoner transport, not to mention escorting prisoners and guarding them. Most of the time, the detachments have to depend upon their members doing this on their days off because they’re just short staffed.

Another systemic issue relates to the RCMP’s own Provost section. Limited staffing and resources of this section, reduce their ability to transport prisoners by road. However, with all the various stops made to nearby communities, particularly in the northwest part of the

province, a lot of time and fuel is wasted by Air Services. What could potentially streamline the air travel process is to develop a hub system for prisoner transport; whereby Provost will bring prisoners to a central location in the region. It is as this single hub, as opposed to all of the surrounding communities, where Air Services could pick up a full load of prisoners.

A third systemic issue raised in the interview process regards the admitting times of Prince Albert Correctional Centre. According to respondents, Provost cannot bring a prisoner to the facility for admitting past 6pm. This severely limits the ability of Provost and Air Services to bring multiple prisoners to Prince Albert. Rather than making multiple trips in one day, Air Services has to have most of its flying done by 5pm so that Provost can take prisoners to the remand centre on time. In most cases, the overtime dollar value of a correctional worker that is saved by not accepting prisoners past closing time, pales in comparison to the hundreds, and sometimes thousands of dollars spent transporting prisoners back to a detachment or to Prince Albert cells.

In trying to determine why these inefficiencies have been able to continue, several respondents pointed to the possibility that everyone has gotten so used to doing it this way that nobody asks any questions. One in particular commented that, "Air Services has become a panacea for a lot of inefficiencies in our justice system. The RCMP and Saskatchewan Justice need to work more closely together to solve these systemic issues".

In close, it is quite conceivable that the hard work of Air Services in trying to meet the needs of "F" Division, is making it difficult for many of these problems to surface. Through this research however, the elusiveness of each problem has been abated. A final recommendation of this report is that "F" Division work with Government of Saskatchewan, as well as its own Provost unit, to address these systemic issues. Doing so, may reduce the unnecessary prisoner transport demands placed upon Air Services. At the very least, addressing these issues would save a considerable amount of time, money and resources.