

Aviation Experts Gather in Halifax to Tackle Safety Management Challenges

SM ICG Industry Day 2025: "Practice Makes Improvement: Embracing Non-Linear Progress Towards Safety Enhancement "

On March 18, 2025, aviation experts from around the world met in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the Safety Management International Collaboration Group's (SM ICG) Industry Day. This year's theme, *"Practice Makes Improvement: Embracing Non-Linear Progress Towards Safety Enhancement,"* explored how progress in aviation safety doesn't always follow a straight path—but that consistent effort still leads to meaningful improvements.

The event brought together around 80 participants from across the aviation sector, including representatives from 12 SM ICG member countries, civil aviation authorities (CAAs), and various industry stakeholders.

What is the SM ICG?

Formed in 2009, the SM ICG brings together 19 aviation regulatory bodies with one shared mission: to promote a common understanding of Safety Management Systems (SMS) and support their implementation across the global aviation industry. The group publishes practical safety materials on SKYbrary and holds regular meetings to exchange knowledge and best practices.

Since 2012, the SM ICG has hosted "Industry Day" events alongside its bi-annual meetings. These full-day events provide a space for aviation professionals to connect directly with regulators, share experiences, discuss common challenges, and help shape the future of safety oversight.

Opening Remarks and Acknowledgments

The day began with a land acknowledgment by Mireille Lapensée, Program Manager, Technical and Regulatory Coordination with Transport Canada, recognizing the traditional territories of the Mi'kmaw, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, Peskotomuhkati, Inuit, and Innu peoples—ancestral lands where Transport Canada operates in the Atlantic Region.

Mireille then welcomed both Canadian participants and international guests, introducing the speakers and outlining the day's agenda.

Collaboration and Context

Stacey Mason, Regional Director for Civil Aviation in the Atlantic Region with Transport Canada, emphasized the importance of cooperation between regulators and the industry. He highlighted Transport Canada's oversight responsibilities in the region, ongoing safety initiatives, and some of the key challenges currently facing aviation in Canada.

Following Stacey, Andrew Larsen—Chair of SM ICG for 2025 and Head, International Aviation Policy & Engagement at Transport Canada—addressed the crowd. He thanked participants for attending and stressed the importance of international collaboration in improving aviation safety. Andrew reaffirmed the group's focus on risk-based decision-making, regulatory engagement, and continuous improvement in safety practices.

The Day's Theme: "Practice Makes Improvement: Embracing Non-Linear Progress Towards Safety Enhancement"

Andrew introduced the event's theme by rethinking the old phrase "Practice Makes Perfect." In aviation safety, he argued, the goal isn't perfection—it's progress. Every effort, whether it leads to success or setback, contributes to safer skies. Andrew pointed out that the journey of improving Safety Management Systems (SMS) is often non-linear. In other words, safety enhancements don't always happen in a straight line; there can be detours, challenges, and lessons along the way.

The theme recognized that improvement is a process—sometimes messy, but always valuable. And just like in aviation, where rigorous practice and learning from experience are essential, embracing that imperfect process leads to better outcomes over time.

Highlights from Each Speaker

IATA – Serkan Simitcioglu

Serkan presented IATA's Safety Management Framework, explaining how tools like the **Safety Issue Hub (SIH)** and **Risk-Based IOSA** audits help organizations keep improving. He emphasized moving beyond just meeting regulations. Instead, operators should use **data-driven insights** to spot risks early and adjust.

✅ **Key stat:** Global accident rates dropped from **1.75 in 2015 to 1.13 in 2024**, showing the impact of proactive strategies.

IATA supports operators with tools like risk assessments using **bowtie methodology**, which helps identify key risk areas and tailor audit scopes—not just to check compliance, but to measure how mature and effective an SMS truly is.

Exchange Income Corporation – David White

David explained how SMS implementation is different for every organization. EIC operates in many regions—from Canada to the Dutch Caribbean—and each has different rules, resources, and cultures. David stressed that **SMS progress isn't linear**, and organizations have to adapt based on their unique operational realities.

👉 His key message: *There's no "one-size-fits-all" in SMS—what matters is continuous adaptation and learning.*

Pratt & Whitney Canada – Jodi Diamant

Jodi, also Chair of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada (AIAC) Civil Aviation Committee, shared how the design and manufacturing sector had early hurdles with SMS—but it's now a **core tool** for improving both safety and innovation. Jodi highlighted that SMS helps engineering teams **prevent hazards early** and **create safer products**, while also ensuring compliance with certification rules.

✅ **Takeaway:** A **strong safety culture** leads not just to safer operations—but also to **higher quality and innovation**.

St. John's Airport – Dennis Hogan

Dennis outlined how SMS at YYT evolved over time. Originally focused on basic compliance, the airport gradually shifted toward a **culture of trust, data use, and proactive hazard identification** that came with SMS implementation. Now, staff are trained to spot risks early, investigations look for **systemic causes**, and quality control is used to improve **overall operational efficiency**—not just safety.

✓ The result? Fewer incidents and a mindset of **continuous improvement** across the airport.

Big Picture: What All These Stories Have in Common

- **Early SMS efforts were often isolated** in safety departments. Today, more mature systems involve the entire organization—from frontline staff to leadership.
 - **Safety is no longer just a regulatory requirement.** It's a business asset that influences resource planning, strategy, and innovation.
 - **Culture and leadership matter.** You can install all the right tools and processes—but without trust and long-term leadership commitment, SMS won't thrive.
 - **SMS progress looks different everywhere.** Not all organizations or countries are moving at the same pace—and that's okay. Limited resources, workforce gaps, and other challenges affect what's possible. The key is to support each other across the global aviation community.
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Closing Words from Andrew Larsen

SM ICG Chair Andrew Larsen wrapped up the day by thanking all the speakers and participants. He praised the Canadian aviation sector's ability to apply SMS across varied environments—from remote northern regions to busy international hubs and highlighted the importance of collaboration, in Canada and around the world, to helping improve aviation safety and supporting an effective SMS.

His closing message: **SMS is never “done”—it's a process of constant learning and improvement.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

SM ICG Industry Day 2025 – Key Takeaways

 Halifax, Nova Scotia | March 18, 2025

What is SM ICG?

- A group of **19 aviation safety regulators** from around the world
 - Focused on sharing knowledge and improving **Safety Management Systems (SMS)**
 - Hosts **Industry Day** events to connect regulators and the aviation industry
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Theme of the Day

“Practice Makes Improvement: Embracing Non-Linear Progress Towards Safety Improvement”

- ✓ Progress in aviation safety is not always smooth
 - ✓ Learning from mistakes is just as important as getting things right
 - ✓ The goal is *improvement*, not perfection
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Who Attended?

- Regulators from **12 countries**
 - **Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs)**
 - Around **80 industry participants**
 - Representatives from across the aviation sector
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Key Messages

- ◆ *“Safety improvement is a journey, not a straight road.”*
— Andrew Larsen, Chair, SM ICG 2025
 - ◆ *“Collaboration between industry and regulators is essential.”*
— Stacey Mason, Regional Director, Civil Aviation, Atlantic, Transport Canada
 - ◆ *“Practice doesn’t make perfect—it makes progress.”*
— Event Theme Explained
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Why It Matters

- Builds a stronger **global safety culture**
- Encourages **real-world learning** and sharing of best practices
- Helps both regulators and operators improve how they manage risks

Industry Experts Share Real-World SMS Insights at SM ICG Industry Day

Throughout the day, four respected aviation leaders took the stage to share how their organizations are applying and evolving Safety Management Systems (SMS):

- **Serkan Simitcioglu** – Head of IATA's Operational Safety Audit (IOSA)
- **David White** – Executive VP of Aviation at Exchange Income Corporation (EIC)
- **Jodi Diamant** – Chief Engineer for Airworthiness & Certification at Pratt & Whitney Canada
- **Dennis Hogan** – CEO of St. John's International Airport (YYT)

Full speaker bios, presentation summaries, and slides are available on the SM ICG SKYbrary site.