

FEB 04/98 - GLOISE + MAIL

Crash passengers were in dark, probbers say

'We thought we were probably dead,' said a survivor of the Fredericton disaster involving a Canadair Regional Jet landing in fog

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RIS MORRIS
dian Press

The small Air Canadair Regional Jet landed in Fredericton on Christmas Eve but all electrical and other in the plane was

tion from investigators and the Transportation Safety Board. The desperate situation members and passengers on the Canadair Regional Jet at a landing at the fog-

the right wing of Flight 616 hit the ground as the pilot attempted to abort the late-night landing, cutting a gouge into the runway.

"The fact is that once the wing tip hit the ground, the next thing that hit was the nose," a spokesman for the Ottawa-based safety board said. "That was a very heavy hit. It sheared off the nose gear, but the nose gear was trapped underneath the aircraft."

The aircraft then made a rightward arc toward a fairly steep, heavily treed knoll on one side of the runway. The nose gear fell away when the jet hit a snowbank on its way to a crash-landing on top of the knoll, with a large fir tree protruding through the front sec-

tion of the passenger cabin.

None of the 42 people on board were killed, although several people were injured. One man is still in hospital in Fredericton. The Air Canada jet was on a regularly scheduled flight from Toronto to Fredericton.

The investigator, who did not want to be named, said the cockpit voice recorder stopped when the nose slammed into the ground.

"I don't know if we've quite determined why all the electrical power went out, but obviously it was a very

heavy hit and it obviously had some effect on the electrical system. ... A majority of the instrumentation was gone as well."

Of the two engines in the rear of the plane, one quit, but the other kept running for a few moments after the plane

came to a stop.

"The damage caused by the tree as it entered the aircraft crushed a lot of that cabling and the electrical system that goes to the rear of the aircraft where the controls go to the engines," the investigator said.

Mike Power, a passenger on the jet with his wife and infant son, said. "It was dark, and the only light was from the two emergency exits when they were opened," referring to light from outside.

Mr. Power said he still hasn't recovered from the trauma. Often, just looking at his little boy will trigger memories about that night when he was convinced they were all about to die, he said. "We thought we were probably dead, especially when the lights went out and the cabin filled with a smoky haze."

An update on the investigation is expected next week.

Firefighting services to increase at 28 airports

Canadian Press

OTTAWA -- The federal government will increase firefighting services at Canada's 28 busiest airports after complaints that cuts threaten public safety.

Transport Minister David Collette said yesterday he has ordered an independent review of firefighting at airports to supplement the work of another committee of groups involved in aviation and firefighting.

The extra firefighting capacity at the 28 airports is a regulatory change that requires firefighting services at

airports whenever scheduled and chartered airline flights arrive or depart, Mr. Collette said. The 28 busiest airports serve at least 95 per cent of the Canadian air travelling public.

As well, there will be a moratorium on proposals to change emergency response plans at smaller airports until the end of the review process.

"These initiatives are being put in place to ensure more complete firefighting coverage for passenger flights at Canada's larger airports, an issue raised following the recent accident at Fredericton airport," Mr. Collette

said in a news release.

In December, an Air Canada Regional Jet crashed in Fredericton in dense fog with 42 people aboard. No one was killed in the crash, but two people are still in hospital. Federal investigators are months away from filing a final report on the cause of the accident. Mr. Collette said the two separate reports will be considered before final decisions are made later this year on changes to emergency response standards at Canadian airports.

Vernon Grose of Omega Systems Group Inc., whom Transport Canada

describes as an internationally recognized safety expert, has been appointed to evaluate emergency response. Mr. Grose, a former member of the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board, must report to Mr. Collette by the end of May.

"While preventing accidents will always be the primary focus of government and industry aviation safety efforts, I am also committed to ensuring appropriate levels of firefighting and emergency-response services are available to the travelling public," Mr. Collette said.

Case left in limbo after DNA test

Man convicted of murdering his mother now free awaiting Crown's decision

Canadian Press

ST. JOHN'S -- Two days ago, Gregory Parsons was the only person but one who knew with any certainty that someone else stabbed his mother more than 50 times in her home in 1991.

That changed Monday when the

day in an interview at his lawyers' office. "I couldn't have expected a better outcome."

His lawyers did.

By staying the charge, rather than dropping it, prosecutors have left themselves a year to decide whether the case will be taken to trial again.



Holocaust gallery site draws Ukrainian ire

'Inclusive' facility on genocide urged

BY GRAHAM FRASER
Parliamentary Bureau

OTTAWA -- News that the Museum of Civilization is prepared to consider a Holocaust gallery in a permanent site separate from the Canadian War Museum has not ended the controversy.

Several representations by Ukrainian-Canadian organizations yesterday expressed concern about the proposal.

"Our principal concern is that any

veterans affairs, which is examining the Canadian War Museum.

This is the latest development in a debate that started last fall after the Canadian War Museum announced plans to include a Holocaust gallery as part of its renovation and expansion.

Canadian veterans organizations reacted angrily to the plan, arguing that the Canadian War Museum should be dedicated solely to Canadian military history, and the Holocaust had little to do with Canadian military experience.

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