Lessons Learned Review of the Remote Air Services Program

Review Summary, April 2023

The **Remote Air Services Program (RASP)** was created after carriers that provided air services to remote communities began to suffer massive revenue losses in spring 2020 due to COVID-19 and could not maintain service. RASP funding enabled scheduled and charter air carriers to provide service to approximately 140 remote communities for the movement of essential workers, patients, food, supplies, medicines, and medical testing equipment and samples.

$174M total program funding

Allocated to Provinces and Territories (PTs) via bilateral agreements.

21 core small air carriers

Provided scheduled service to remote communities for the movement of essential workers, patients, food, supplies, medicines, and medical testing equipment and samples.

Definition of Remote Community

Communities are considered remote when air travel is used for essential needs (e.g., medical visits and personnel, food, first responders, or laboratory samples), and other travel alternatives (such as roads, rail or marine shipping) are non-existent or impractical.

Approximately **140 remote communities** were identified by TC as relying on air service as the only practical year-round mode of transportation.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

The **RASP Lessons Learned Review** assessed the relevance, design, and delivery of the RASP, as well as any observed program results, with the aim of identifying best practices and lessons learned.
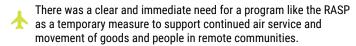
INTERVIEWS
- 8 PT representatives
- 3 Carrier representatives
- 3 Transport Canada staff

DOCUMENT REVIEW
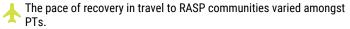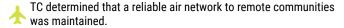
MEDIA SCAN

FINDINGS

There was a clear and immediate need for a program like the RASP as a temporary measure to support continued air service and movement of goods and people in remote communities.

The pace of recovery in travel to RASP communities varied amongst PTs.

The RASP enabled carriers to maintain essential air services to most remote communities through funding contributions, which offset the operational losses caused by limited passenger demand.

The RASP was complementary to, and not duplicative of, other federal or PT programs aimed at supporting air access to remote communities.

The RASP funding did not always get to air carriers expeditiously. However, there is no evidence of noteworthy impact on carrier operations or the achievement of program outcomes.

TC determined that a reliable air network to remote communities was maintained.

RASP success factors include:
- Availability of useful, in-depth carrier and other data at TC
- Working definition of a remote community, developed in consultation with PTs
- More PT control in program delivery: up to PTs to determine how to allocate RASP funds
- Light, flexible contribution agreements
- TC practice of frequent, frank communication with stakeholders

LESSONS LEARNED

The flexibility built into the RASP and the effective communication approach adopted by TC program staff helped PTs and TC successfully navigate through challenges such as the initial exclusion of charters and other unforeseen events.