

**March 9, 2024 statement from Ross Cloutier, Helicat Canada CEO responding to Minister Cullen's initial comments that all renewed heli-ski tenures would include requirements to report flight data:**

The intent of flight following is that it is to be used by the government to compare helicopter flight paths with the locations of wildlife. We have tried to engage with the government on this topic for a number of years with little response, so to hear from the media in a statement from the Minister that flight following was going to be a requirement, and that tenure terms would be amended, was surprising. Helicopter skiing operators are the most conservative users of helicopters in the province when around wildlife and we have developed various training content, flight rules, and wildlife observation and reporting protocols that have been implemented into our operating standards. No one else has this. We already meet or exceed government policy with regard to flying distances from wildlife. We are being asked to provide flight data when no other government or industrial sector is being asked to provide the same. Helicopters are used in many sectors, including by the government, but they are not required to follow similar guidelines or provide flight data. Our position is that others, including the government, should have the same conservative flight protocols that ski operators implement and that these, and any flight reporting requirements, should be applied to all.

For example, net guns are used by government biologists to capture caribou and hundreds of wolves are killed from helicopters each year. Wildlife are chased with government helicopters as part of census practices. Ski operator pilots maintain flight distances from wildlife that meet government policy while other sectors are not required to do so. Rumours are that the government are planning to change the rules for avoidance in goat habitat for heliski flights in terrain operators have been flying for longer than the current generation of goats have been alive with no evidence of a drop in population. This may have catastrophic consequences for some helicopter skiing businesses and their employees with no known benefit to the goats, particularly given that anyone else can continue to fly in and around the same wildlife habitat, including government biologists.

Providing flight following data, and its analysis, should apply to all sectors who use helicopters, including government. We have always said that we are prepared to provide the data if processes are in place to provide unbiased analysis and that others live to the same rules. So far, none of this is in place. The Minister's statement that he will engage with the helicopter skiing sector about our best practices is welcome news. It has taken us years to find a Minister who would engage with us on the topic and I am very appreciative that he is willing to do this.

**Cloutier's March 13 responses to The Narwhal's questions after Cullen said the province would wait for the results of a pilot project before making decisions about industry-wide requirements related to flight data.**

**Q: What's your reaction to the Minister's change in direction to allow time to assess results of this pilot before determining whether to implement industry-wide requirements that heli-ski companies report flight data?**

A: The Minister's statement is correct that we have some members reporting flight data as a pilot which hopefully will enable the government to learn whether or not this is a worthwhile endeavor.

**Q: Minister Cullen said he wants to leave space for operators if they have another suggestion to reach the same outcomes to make that case, are there other approaches to assess and reduce any impacts of caribou that Helicat Canada plans to propose?**

A: I think this is a very smart position for the Minister to take and we look forward to these conversations.

**Q: Did Helicat Canada raise concerns with the province after learning that Minister Cullen had committed to requiring flight data reporting in all renewed tenures?**

A: We are in continuous attempts to converse with the province about a wide range of tenure issues but I suspect that your conversation with the Minister was the initiative for them to discuss the topic internally.