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Canada's National Unmanned Association Responds to New Drone Rules

OTTAWA – Canada's national association representing the unmanned systems sector welcomes the Federal Government's newly announced regulations governing Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), commonly known as "drones."

The new rules were announced Wednesday morning in Montreal by Federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau and outline key measures which provide regulatory certainty for best safety practices, while also encouraging growth and innovation in this fast-paced sector. Today's announcement concludes the first of four planned regulatory development phases, and formalizes the rules for operating small drones (<25kg) in Visual Line of Sight.

"We have co-chaired the RPAS regulatory working group with Transport Canada, since its inception in 2010" says Mark Aruja, Chairman of Unmanned Systems Canada/Systèmes Télécommandés Canada. "We have leveraged over a decade of experience and technology development to arrive at these rules, which strike an appropriate balance between assuring safety while enabling economic growth."

Key changes announced will require that all RPAS pilots, whether flying for commercial or recreational purposes, pass a comprehensive Transport Canada on-line knowledge test. In addition, commercial pilots must demonstrate piloting skills by flying a drone for an examiner. Additional requirements are levied on the design of systems being used for commercial use, increasingly stringent depending on how close the intended operations are to people or airports.

"This new licensing system will produce better pilots across the country," says Aruja. "It will also effectively eliminate the somewhat cumbersome process that was previously in place," he says. "Detailed paperwork and special permissions will now only be required under specific circumstances, which will allow professional operators to carry out their jobs with less bureaucracy."

The new RPAS rules have been eagerly awaited by Canada's growing drone industry. "We now need", says Aruja, "to move firmly ahead with Beyond Visual Line of Sight

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(BVLOS) flights. These allow commercial drone operators to carry out many types of long-range missions, such as surveying our vast forests, mining properties, agricultural lands, hydro lines and pipelines where there are tremendous economic opportunities. Transport Canada can now free the necessary resources to move forward expeditiously to support industry's needs."

The commercial RPAS industry in Canada has doubled in size every two years over the past decade. Over a 1000 companies now design, manufacture or operate drones in an ever increasing variety of scenarios. Last year, over 3000 commercial drone pilots were trained in Canada. Regulatory certainty provides a strong foundation for business growth and promotes investment. Today's announcement is a positive step in that direction.

Mark Aruja is in Ottawa and available for media interviews. He can be contacted at 613-882-3077. Queries can also be addressed to media@unmannedsystems.ca

ABOUT USC/STC: <https://www.unmannedsystems.ca/about-us/>

BACKGROUND:

Recent, rapid technological developments have meant drones now have greater capabilities and applications than ever before. They are being used by first responders in rescue operations, post-disaster infrastructure and insurance assessments, wildlife and environmental monitoring. Low-level surveys for the mining industry, route mapping for highway construction, or high precision agricultural surveys are now undertaken across Canada on a routine basis. Not to be left behind are real-estate surveys, tourism videos and even collection of genetic data on whales from their spouting! Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems are now an essential tool for over a thousand companies. However, we do not yet have the regulatory approvals to truly exploit the technology which is now available to survey and secure our vast land mass and infrastructure. Solving this challenge is the present task which industry and regulators must address.

Industry and regulators alike have a shared commitment to safety: simply put, safe operations underpin business success. USC/STC has long taken a leadership role, working with Transport Canada on the industry's behalf to ensure that regulations underpin safety requirements while enabling innovation.

About USC/STC

USC/STC is a national not-for-profit association founded in 2003, which represents the unmanned system industry in Canada.

Our mission is:

- To promote public awareness, education and appreciation for the Canadian unmanned vehicle systems community to its members, to Canadians and to international organizations in our sector.
- To represent the interests of the unmanned vehicle systems community including industry, academia, government, military, and the Canadian public.
- To promote and facilitate the growth of the Canadian unmanned vehicle systems community through education, advocacy, and exchange of ideas and technologies.