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SAC Annual General Meeting
March 21, 2026
Calgary

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOARING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
LE JOURNAL DE L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE VOL À VOILE

Cover photo by Marco Pronto:
Enjoying the view in the wave 9,000ft above Denbigh Wales from the front seat of a Janus.

Free Flight

SOARING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (SAC)
The Soaring Association of Canada (SAC) is the governing body for the sport of gliding in Canada. Mandated to safeguard and promote our sport, we render support and representation to glider pilots and gliding clubs across the nation through a variety of committees. On a national level, we represent our affiliated clubs and members on issues related to licensing, medical requirements, airspace and regulation. Internationally, we maintain representation within the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale and the International Gliding Commission.
We invest in the renewal and expansion of our sport by offering bursaries for young pilots, financial support for contenders representing Canada in international competitions, and financial aid for clubs carrying out marketing and publicity initiatives. Finally, we work to keep our sport safe by providing extensive training and development programs for instructors, safety seminars and maintaining safety programs.
SAC maintains a head office in Cambridge, Ontario. A volunteer Board of Directors, comprising representatives from all regions of the country, steers the organization. SAC is registered as a Canadian amateur athletic association with the Canadian Revenue Agency, an agency of the Government of Canada. For change of address contact the SAC Office at sac@sac.ca. Copies in .pdf format are free from the SAC website. Please send submissions to the editor at freeflight@sac.ca

Vol Libre

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE VOL À VOILE (ACVV)
L'Association canadienne de vol à voile (ACVV est l'instance dirigeante pour la pratique du vol à voile au Canada. L'ACVV a pour mandat de préserver et promouvoir notre sport. À travers différents comités, elle représente et soutient les pilotes de planeur et les clubs de vol à voile partout au Canada. Au niveau national, nous représentons nos clubs affilié et nos membres pour les questions relatives aux licences, aux exigences médicales, à l'espace aérien et à la réglementation. Au niveau internationals, nous sommes représentés au sien de la Fédération aéronautique internationale et de la Commission internationale de vol à voile (IGC).
Nous investissons dans la reléve et l'expansion de notre sport en offrant des bourses à de jeunes pilotes, en fournissant un support financier à ceux qui nous représentent dans les compétitions internationales et en fournissant une aide financiére aux clubs qui réalisent des initiatives de marketing et de publicité. Finalement, nous prenons à coeur la sécurité dans notre sport, et des plans de maintenance de la sécurité. Pour avoir plus d'information à propos de l'ACVV, veuillez nous contacter via l'un des liens ci-dessous.

Enregistrée comme une Association canadienne de sport amateur auprès de l'Agence de revenu du Canada, l'ACVV a son siège social à Ottawa et est géré par un conseil d'administration bénévole constitué de représentants de toutes les régions du Canada. Pour un changement d'adresse, communiquez par sac@sac.ca. La revue est disponible gratuitement, en format "pdf" au www.sac.ca. Veuillez envoyer vos soumissions à: freeflight@sac.ca.

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DU CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION

Le 21 mars 2026, nous tiendrons l'AGA de l'ACVV en mode combiné, présentiel et virtuel au "Radisson hotel and conference center Calgary Airport".

L'AGA de l'ACVV et le séminaire de mise à jour périodique planeur seront aussi disponibles en ligne. L'AGA de l'ASC ne sera pas diffusée, car elle est réservée aux membres de l'ASC.

Voici le lien afin de se joindre à la diffusion en direct de l'AGA virtuelle de l'ACVV-SAC et au séminaire de mise à jour planeur : AGA de l'ACVV et accéder ultérieurement à son enregistrement. https://sac-agm.in.howspace.com/2026-agm

Ordre du jour - Utilisant l'heure avancée des Rocheuses, avec référence à HAE

11h00 – 12h00 – AGA de l'ACVV-SAC (13h00 – 14h00 HAE)

12h00 – 13h00 – Diner (frais de 25$) et Trophées et récompenses de l'ACVV-SAC pour 2025 (14h00 – 15h00 HAE)

13h00 – 16h00 – Séminaire de mise à jour périodique RAC 401.05 pour pilotes de planeur approuvé par TC (15h00 – 18h00 HAE)

Des dispositions seront prises pour que le dîner soit offert à un coût subventionné de 25 $ par personne. Veuillez donc remplir ce formulaire et prévoir d'apporter de l'argent comptant ou d'effectuer un virement électronique à payments@soaring.ab.ca

Si vous avez des questions concernant l'AGA de l'ACVV, veuillez nous contacter via sacoffice@sac.ca

Nous espérons vous y retrouver sur place ou virtuellement.

Sylvain Bourque
Président du conseil d'administration de l'ACVV

FROM THE BOARD

On March 21, 2026, a Combined Alberta Soaring Council (ASC) and SAC/ ACVV AGM will be held in person at the Calgary Airport - Radisson hotel and conference center.

The SAC AGM and the Glider Recurrent Training Seminar will be available virtually. The ASC AGM will not be broadcasted, as it is reserved for ASC members only.

Here is the link to connect to ACVV/SAC virtual AGM live streaming: SAC AGM and access to the recording after the fact. https://sac-agm.in.howspace.com/2026-agm

Agenda - All times in Mountain Daylight Saving Time (MDT), with reference to Eastern time (EDT)

10:00 – 11:00 – ASC AGM (Not virtual)

11:00 – 12:00 – ACVV/SAC AGM (13:00 – 14:00 EDT)

12:00 – 13:00 – Lunch (25$ fee) and 2025 SAC Trophies and Award Presentation (14:00 – 15:00 EDT)

13:00 – 16:00 – TC approved CAR 401.05 Glider pilot recurrent training seminar (15:00 – 18:00 EDT)

As arrangements will be made for lunch to be provided at a subsidized cost of $25 per person, please ensure that you complete this form and arrange to bring cash or e-transfer your payment to payments@soaring.ab.ca,

If you have any questions about the SAC AGM, please send an email at: sacoffice@sac.ca

We look forward to seeing you in Calgary, or attending virtually.

Sylvain Bourque
SAC Board President

Transport Canada “fee modernization”

Transport Canada has published two regulatory proposals for public consultation: Fee Modernization for Aviation Personnel Services and Fee modernization for aircraft Airworthiness.

While Transport Canada has not increased its fees for several years, some of these fee increases are substantial. For example, the issue of an aviation document, currently at no charge, will cost $165. The issue of a glider pilot licence, currently $55, will increase to $165. The issue of a student permit, currently at no charge, will cost $100.

In the second category for aircraft airworthiness, a certificate of airworthiness for an aircraft not in the transport category (i.e. a glider), currently $125, will increase to $2000.

SAC encourages glider pilots to register on the Let’s Talk Transportation site and provide their comments regarding the fee increases. Here are some justifications you could use. Keep in mind that the deadlines for the consultative processes are March 27 for airworthiness services and April 13 for personnel licensing fees:

- The Transport Canada analysis overlooks gliding almost entirely, with its different cost structure and ability to pay;
- Aviation enthusiasts often take up gliding rather than general aviation because of their budget limitations. Many are young pilots with limited means;
- These fee increases would potentially discourage many from participating;
- We are seeing a decline in aviation sports, and this really won’t help;
- In some other countries, gliding receives support from government because they see this as a gateway for enthusiasts into the aviation world. Gliding in Canada is not supported by any level of government;
- Clubs do not remunerate their instructors. Clubs do not provide financial support to their instructors for licensing, certification, permit and rating fees;
- The proposed fee increases are substantial for the gliding community.

For the above reasons, we believe that fee increases should be less for glider pilots.

Piper Pawnee wing AD: update

SOSA photo

Many SAC clubs operate the venerable Piper Pawnee as tow planes. Its low acquisition costs and good performance make it ideal for the job. Unfortunately, the fleet was hit with a very demanding Airworthiness Directive (AD) last spring, requiring the addition of inspection ports in the wings to allow visual and non-destructive testing (NDT) of the wing spars. This was because of several fatal accidents caused by catastrophic wing spar failures.

Complicating the issue is the fact that while Piper designed and built all the Pawnees in service in Canada, they sold the type certificate and design rights to an Argentinian company in 1981. This meant that, instead of ADs issued by the US FAA, they are issued by the Argentinian regulator ANAC. ANAC has proven to be difficult to deal with and has been unresponsive to user input.

The initial inspection turned out to be a good idea, as several club Pawnees had damaged or cracked spars. However instead of a one-time inspection the AD requires the inspections to be completed every 100 hours. This inspection interval applied regardless of how the airplane was used. In addition, the eddy current NDT inspection requires bringing in a contractor with specialized equipment which is expensive. This has become a significant issue for clubs facing the requirement to do the inspections once or often twice during the operating season.

Recognizing the threat to Canadian gliding posed by the AD, the SAC board retained the services of a Transport Canada Designated Airworthiness Representative (TC DAR) to prepare a submission to TC for an Alternate Means Of Compliance (AMOC) to the AD, which would be available to all SAC clubs operating the Pawnee. The DAR believed that the inspection interval could be significantly increased, given that the stresses placed on the wing while towing gliders is much less than when the airplane is used for crop spraying.

The DAR completed a proposal for TC and was about to submit it when the ANAC published a draft revised AD that proposed extending the inspection requirements to two years or 500 flight hours. The SAC board directed the DAR to pause the AMOC submission and instead contact TC to find out whether TC was prepared to amend the Canadian AD to reflect the new ANAC draft. He is currently waiting for a response from TC, but is cautiously optimistic that TC will revise the AD.

Feeling competitive?

Some of the competitions coming up this season:

US Nationals

20m - 2-seat: March 24 - April 3 in Seminole Lake, FL

15m and Sports Class: May 14 - May 23 in Reedsville, PA

Std Class: June 17 - June 26 in Hobbs, NM

18m Class: June 23 - July 2 in Nephi, UT

Worlds and International Contests

40th FAI World Gliding Championships: May 16 - May 30 in Czestochowa, Poland

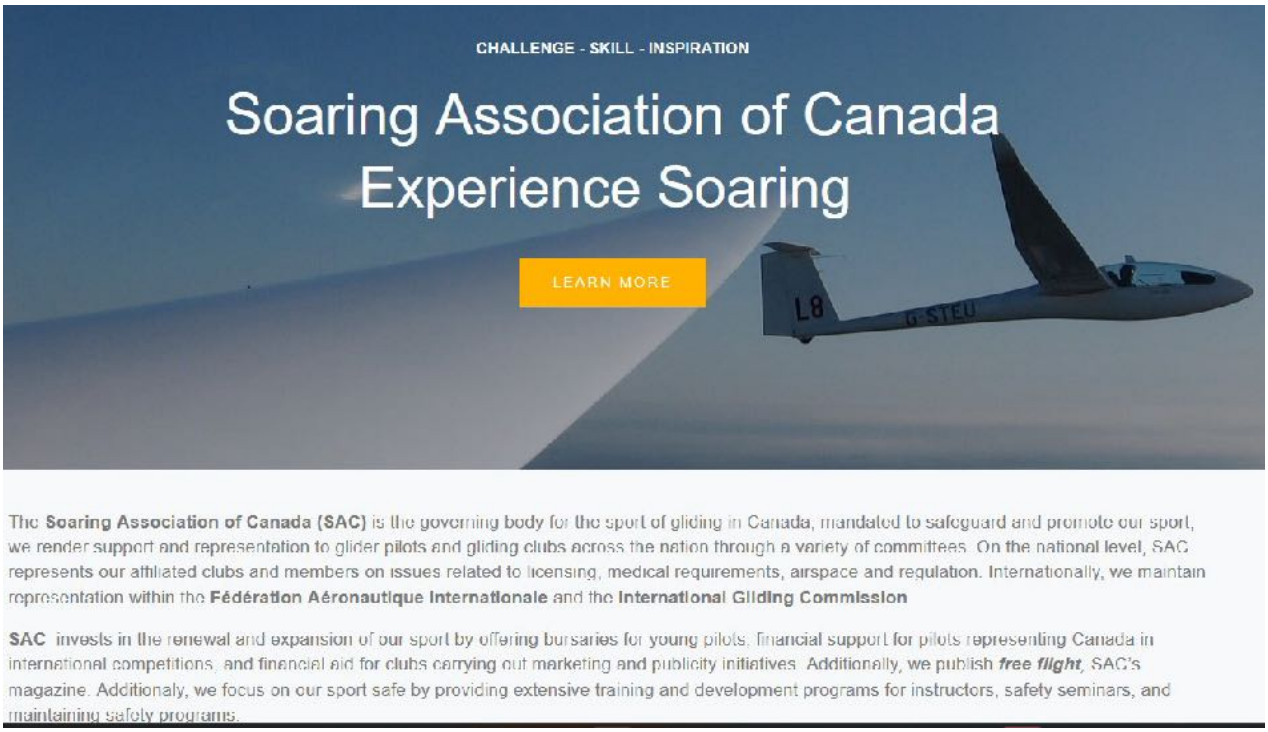
14th FAI Junior World Gliding Championships: Aug 1 - Aug 15 in Aalen - Elchingen, Germany

24th European Gliding Championships July: 11 - July 25 in Ostrow, Poland

And, closer to home:

4th Pan American Championships: July 30th - August 10th , **2027** at SOSA
More information available here.

A new SAC website: How a simple question got complicated



SAC screenshot

By Stan Martin
Southern Ontario Zone Director

Almost two years ago I was asked a simple question about the SAC website: Could some of its outdated information be updated? Simple answer: Not easily.

I raised this issue with the Board, which agreed something needed to be done. Since I was interested enough to pose the question, I was invited to investigate further and report back.

Short summary: It was complicated. The Board set a modest budget and I settled into a (naive) confidence that all would be well as I proceeded with the task. The goal was to have a fresh-looking site that would be easy to manage.

The brave are undaunted….
Upon detailed investigation, it was clear that the website was stuffed with files, repetitious content and numerous connections to outside sources. A bit of a dog's breakfast, to use the technical term. Draft followed draft and progress was slow. New and redesigned pages were placed on a test address and comments were invited. There were comments. Lots of comments. And a few glitches, which did not go unnoticed. Progress felt not unlike pushing a piece of string uphill. Weeks turned to months. Undaunted, I dusted off my 30-year-old programming treasure chest and waded into the maelstrom.

To my pleasant surprise, and with some patient fiddling, order began to emerge from chaos. But as we know, progress is a journey, not an end result.

The next important objective for SAC is to create a French-language component to the site. This will require careful and knowledgeable input. And volunteers. The desired outcome is to have an attractive, functional site that can be managed with relative ease. The Board is always happy to entertain proposals.

SAC transitions to WeGlide

By Pavan Kumar
Alberta Zone Director
SAC Secretary

SAC transitioned to WeGlide last fall after OLC announced it was closing. With this change, contest rules and some awards criteria have been updated, so please familiarize yourself with information from the WeGlide and SAC websites about each.

There are new features, types of competition scoring, and the ability to create custom scoreboards that come with this new host. Included is the basic (non subscription) free user experience.

There was a website that helped migrate past flights posted on OLC to WeGlide which may still work. See the SAC Forum, Website, and WeGlide for more details.

SAC is always open to hearing from our members and clubs about our programs to encourage engagement in the sport.
www.sac.ca www.weglide.org https://forum.sac.ca/

SAC Funding still available!

SAC offers several funds to Canadian gliding clubs. At present, they've not been used to their full extent. Have a look and see what may be available to help your club:

- **Safety and Instructor Improvement Grant**: Clubs can claim any expenses that result in improvements to safety or aid in the development and training of instructors. Clubs can receive a minimum of $1,000 and larger clubs can receive larger amounts based on their membership numbers.
- **Financial Support for Club Marketing & Publicity Initiatives**: SAC will cover 80 percent of marketing-related expenses to a maximum of $1,000.
- **Soaring Simulator Fund**: SAC will cover a third of the cost for the club to construct a soaring simulator, up to a maximum of $1,000.
- **Contest Hosting**: Clubs can get $1,000 for hosting a contest that is less than six days, $3,000 for a contest that is more than six days, and $4,000 for hosting a national contest.
- **Youth Bursary Program**: SAC will offer $500 for up to five youths under 25 years of age per club. The fund is to be used for towing and glider rental charges.
- **Youth Contest Support:** SAC will cover the cost of entry fees for young glider pilots interested in competing in the Canadian Nationals.

Note that these funds have different submission time limits. Club representatives should consult their Zone Directors when applying for funds. To get more details about each fund, go to the SAC website, click on the SAC/ACVV tab and you will see the funds listed in the Programs Section. Please keep an eye out, SAC is considering adding other funds.

NEWS

Toronto Soaring

The 2025 season was a banner year that saw us make full use of our new, self-funded hangar. We started the year with a field trip to the Dayton Museum by a few members and we sold our ASK-13 to Invermere. The club received six new Toronto Metropolitan University students as part of its University Soaring Society program, with initial training on the Condor simulator. Thanks to the generosity of Youth Flight Canada, a Jantar Std 2 came to the field in the early summer, as did an LS-1 from Montreal Soaring Club.

We had seven new solos, six new licenses, three Silver badges (one of the recipients was a first-year pilot!), six Bronze badges, and 24 A/B/C badges. We hosted the Ontario provincial championships--two flying days with low ceilings and two days of student flying and rain. Our OGN receiver was able to track all contestants and continued flawlessly throughout the season.

In the clubhouse, the new pool table became the place of many boisterous crud games. Our monthly potluck bonfires continued, and thanks again to the YFC, a small bunkhouse was placed at the back corner of the club for overnighting students, rather than tenting it. We have an amazing corps of volunteers who contribute at all levels, like aircraft, vehicle and runway maintenance, groundskeeping, instruction, aerotowing, Condor training, public outreach and membership retention.

Veerhkeekat Kaur (left) and Refia Gunes, glider pilots at TSC, both studying Aerospace Engineering at TMU, attended a winter motorcycle show to talk gliding with attendees.

Special thanks to Don Malott, who volunteered his time and his Super Cub for our extra towing needs. We made a definite effort to put the SOARING back into the Toronto Soaring Club with more than 22,000km logged on the OLC. Our club leadership is excellent, as is our membership.

Come visit us on the fourth Saturday of each summer month for the potluck-bonfires!

Bonnechere Soaring: small but mighty!

Cockpit view of Bonnechere's airfield, cleverly disguised as a canoe paddle.

By Julia Clitheroe

The 2025 gliding season was a year of growth and transition for Bonnechere Soaring Club. As a small but mighty club, we remain focused on sustaining and expanding gliding operations while preserving the distinctive character that sets Bonnechere apart within the Canadian soaring community.

We are the "vintage bush gliding" club! Operating from a remote grass runway deep in the Ottawa Valley and surrounded by crown land, the club offers flying that feels closer to early bush and pioneer gliding. With minimal infrastructure, classic aircraft and an emphasis on stick-and-rudder skills, members and guests experience quiet, low-key weekend flying combined with camping, bonfires, and a strong sense of community, making the club a unique destination as a place to fly.

Our club is young and growing (but with a long history)! Our fleet is gradually expanding as well. The club owns a Super Cub for towing, a 2-22, and a Bergfalke. Jim Gordon generously allows

From left: Leon Whytcock, Jim Gordon, Dylan Podkowka, Callum Guppy

members to fly his K-6 and gives members motor glider endorsements in his Ogar.

In the next few seasons, we'll be working on projects to welcome more vintage gliders into our club! To support training and introductory flying, the club acquired a Scheibe Bergfalke from our friends at Central Alberta Gliding Club. The Bergfalke has since been well-received and actively flown during the fall season.

During the season, the club conducted 105 glider flights totalling 34.5 flight hours. Membership grew to 14 active members, supported by an additional five guest SAC members assisting with towing and training activities. Two youth students participated in club operations, while three long-standing members concluded their involvement. Club leadership changed as well, with Dave Beeching continuing as president, Jim Gordon becoming treasurer, and Julia Clitheroe assuming the role of secretary.

A long-term concern for the club remains the deteriorating condition of the runway, which has become increasingly rough and narrow. Addressing this issue is important for the club's future sustainability. Input from the soaring community is welcome.

Looking ahead to 2026, Bonnechere Soaring Club aims to fly more, grow its base of experienced pilots, train an additional instructor, expand introductory flying, address runway challenges, expand the fleet, reinforce a strong safety culture, and continue offering a uniquely rewarding vintage bush gliding experience.

Guests are always welcome to spend a weekend flying with Bonnechere Soaring Club. Reach out to us on Facebook!

London Soaring relocates to Lucan, Ont.

By Sue Eaves

After more than 50 remarkable years near Embro, London Soaring has officially begun a new era in Lucan.

During our most recent lease negotiation, the Mackay family informed us of their intention to sell the family farm. This gave the club two years to find a new home—an opportunity that set several members on a determined search for a suitable location.

As options were explored, Lucan quickly emerged as the leading candidate. A group of members visited the airfield and met with Paul Hodgins and his son Dave, who manage the site. The Hodgins family (General Airspray) had already been maintaining our gliders and towplane at Lucan, making the transition feel both logical and welcoming. Following a general meeting, the club voted to relocate at the end of the 2025 season.

Before the move, we held a final potluck at Embro, where many past members joined us to share stories and memories from the past several decades. The move itself went smoothly at the end of October, and we flew our first flights from Lucan that very same weekend.

A Hangar That Feels Like Home

Our new hangar in Lucan represents a significant upgrade from our previous facilities. For the first time, the entire fleet and all club equipment are housed together in one modern building. The massive hydraulic door has transformed daily operations, allowing aircraft to move from storage to the flight line with ease. A special thank you goes to Franco, whose “We’re Moving” guide helped ensure a smooth and well-organized transition for all members.

London Soaring, present and former members.

The local aviation community in Lucan greeted us with curiosity and enthusiasm. We anticipate that many locals will become involved with the club in the coming year.

Preparing for a Safe Transition

In advance of the move, Franco met with the London Airport Tower chief to establish procedures appropriate for our proximity to London Airport. This included protocols for ferrying three of the club's gliders from Embro to Lucan—flights that passed through the ILS approach to London's main runway. A dedicated training session was held with the pilots and tow pilot involved, and everything proceeded smoothly.

Moving Day: A Milestone to Remember

Moving day was nothing short of unforgettable. We finished packing the last items at Embro in the morning and were set up in Lucan by early afternoon. For a moment we considered unpacking the boxes, but the sun was shining, the wind was calm, and the sky was calling—so we went flying.

Six flights were completed that day, giving members a chance to familiarize themselves with the new surroundings. Rolling out the towplane and the Blanik from our new hangar was almost effortless, and putting everything away at the end of the day was just as easy. Truly luxurious new digs for the club.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The club is energized and optimistic as we prepare for the 2026 season. Flying from a new location will bring a learning curve, but any challenges will be met with the same teamwork and determination that have carried London Soaring forward for the past 55 years. Here's to new beginnings, new opportunities, and many great flights ahead.

Montreal Soaring turns 80

Ayden Sorensen (not yet celebrating his 80th)

By Gord Sorensen

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Montreal Soaring Club. Looking towards the future, the club is setting up committees to investigate long-term fleet renewal and future hangar plans.

For 2025, our main goals were to: focus on pilot recency, make the launch and circuit even safer, have better communications for better operations, increase the member participation on all club activities, and to complete more than 100 Intro flights. The season started April 13 with tow pilot training/checkouts, and the first glider flights were on April 20.

Over the flying season, the club recorded approximately 1,500 flights, with five first solos and four new Instructors trained. During the season, we had a couple of “BBQ Lunch on the Flightline” days, with hot dogs, chips and soft drinks. Members brought home-baked goods to the flightline on many days as well. The club hosted its end-of-season pot luck supper on October 2th. The last flights of the season were on October 26th, with the hangar and club facilities closing up on November 2.

In early January 2026, the club presented the MSC SOAR Advanced Ground School. This Zoom class focused on members' cross-country development. In February, the SAC 2026 flight instructor class was attended by three club members.

Here`s hoping for a dry start to the 2026 season!

Runway remediation at Gatineau: cost effective (with a little sweat equity)

Jacques Asselin photo

GGC's Kim Empey spoke with Jacques Asselin, the club's director of grounds and building maintenance, who led the resurfacing project of a critical runway which had become damaged over time with usage. A unique and economical solution was put in place for sustainable grass runway maintenance.

Q: Why was the resurfacing required?

A: Runway 31/13 is the main landing strip at the Pendleton airfield. It's closest to the aircraft hangers, the campsite entrance, the clubhouse and the facility exits. It's an essential asset. Over time, the ground had become uneven; the winter freezes and spring thaws in this region haven't helped. After several very rough landings and potential damage to aircraft, the club decided to explore options on resurfacing. The first was to roll the runway, which proved unsuccessful as the compacted ground showed little improvement.

Another suggestion was to till the entire runway, level the ground, roll it to a smooth surface and reseed. While potentially effective, this was prohibitively expensive and would have rendered the runway unusable for at least two years. Additionally, the tilled surface would have remained soft, making it susceptible to ruts.

An further proposal involved bringing in topsoil, levelling the runway with machinery, and reseeding. However, this method would have destroyed the existing grass and incurred similar costs, yielding comparable results. The club consulted a prominent Ottawa landscaping contractor and sod farm owner, who recommended applying a thin layer of sand to fill in ruts and depressions. Since the sand was applied lightly, the existing grass could grow through it, stabilizing the surface. This approach preserved the integrity of the runway while creating a smooth, level surface.

Q: How did it go?

A: The project was carried out entirely by club member volunteers, ensuring minimal costs. About a dozen volunteers over the course of a week moved 100 tons of sand. The only cost incurred was the sand. Six tandem truckloads were brought in at a cost of $2,373.

Q: How long is the resurfacing supposed to last?

A: This appears to be the first time the club's grass runways have undergone resurfacing. With proper maintenance and careful mowing—especially avoiding mowing on rainy days—the runway should remain in good shape for many years. During its first season in 2024, the grass had grown through and the runway surface was a lot smoother.

Q: Lessons learned?

A: We now know that applying a thin layer of sand to the runway is an effective method. A key lesson is that nearly half of the work was initially done manually using shovels and rakes, while the latter half was completed with a tractor. The tractor was significantly faster and required far less labor; however, it resulted in a thicker layer of sand, which took longer for the grass to grow through. The thicker sand layer was less stable, making it more prone to ruts from aircraft wheels. Over time, the grass will consolidate the surface, improving its stability.

Q: What was your maintenance like before this? And now?

A: In the past, runway maintenance efforts were limited to rolling the surface with a heavy, concrete-laden roller pulled by a tractor. After sanding I'd recommend replacing the tractor's large lug tires with more suitable turf tires, which would help minimize surface disruption and ensure better long-term stability. Rolling provided limited benefits, working best in the spring when the ground is soft. However, during these conditions, the tractor wheels can cause as much damage as the rolling process helps, limiting overall effectiveness of rolling.

Kim Empey photo

Rideau Valley reps at Gatineau Airshow

ASW-20 at the Gatineau Airshow— Rideau Valley Soaring photo

By Dave Villeneuve

Rideau Valley Soaring began flying in early April at the Arnprior airport, later moving back to Kars as field conditions improved. Operations continued with the Citabria while the Pawnee spars were still being replaced.

There were fewer great soaring days this year, resulting in fewer tows by regular members, though the club continued to fly many introductory flights. We participated in the Gatineau Airshow with a static display. Club communications transitioned to Discourse. A fly-week included a visit from Bonnechere Soaring Club with their Bergfalke. We had a number of visitors when the RAA club at our airfield held their fly-in BBQ and our airfield hosted a mix of gliding and power flights.

During the winters we maintain an active group doing flights in Condor.

Aviate, Navigate, Communicate at TMU

USS photo

By: Veerhakeekat Kaur

On January 19, The University Soaring Society (USS) at Toronto Metropolitan University hosted *Aviate, Navigate, Communicate*, an engaging aviation-focused event designed to connect students with industry professionals and introduce them to pathways to flying careers.

Emily Peelar, president of the University Soaring Society, highlighted USS's mission of making aviation more attainable for students and emphasized the importance of mentorship, community, and hands-on exposure in an industry that can often feel out of reach to newcomers.

The heart of the event was a panel discussion with an accomplished group of aviation professionals: Serge Valade, former military pilot and Air Canada pilot; David Donaldson, safety officer with the Soaring Association of Canada; David Culos, Porter Airlines pilot; Mike Morgulis, glider pilot and safety officer at the Toronto Soaring Club; and Dr. Goetz Bramesfeld, glider pilot and professor in the Aerospace Engineering Department at TMU.

Despite their diverse backgrounds, advice from the panelists echoed a common theme: keep moving forward, don't give up, and just do it. They emphasized resilience, curiosity, and showing up, as key ingredients for success in aviation.

The takeaway was clear: the path into aviation may not be simple, but with persistence, support, and a willingness to take that first step, it is absolutely possible.

SOSA and University of Waterloo launch simulator pilot project

TMU's simulator demonstration at their recent event.

SOSA and the University of Waterloo's Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics (WISA) are starting a simulator pilot project this coming season which will have five ab initio students train on simulators to determine whether and how learning can be accelerated. Key indicators will be the number of flights to first solo flight and number of flights to successful flight test.

This initiative, under the supervision of long-time SOSA pilot and Waterloo professor Paul Parker, is similar to a similar, successful project at Toronto Metropolitan University's soaring society (see previous FF/VL issue).

"Simulators have been used for decades to reduce the costs of training pilots on new aircraft types," Parker says. "High quality simulators are available for glider training. However, they're not widely used in Canada, so this research will evaluate the effectiveness of simulators to reduce training time in the air and thus reduce costs to pilots. In addition to evaluating the time and costs saving from using simulators, the project will examine barriers to the wider adoption of simulators for glider pilot training."

Transport Canada data show that on average, about 300 new glider pilot licenses were issued each year for the last 25 years, versus 2,000 private pilot licenses and 1,000 commercial pilot licences. But while PPLs and CPLs have returned to pre-pandemic levels, GPLs are only about half (172 in 2024 versus 354 in 2017) of their previous level.

"This creates an urgent need to increase training and membership among Canada's gliding clubs," Parker says. SOSA and WISA want to work together to find solutions and efficiently train the next generation of pilots."

"We're excited to participate in this study," says SOSA president James Wood. "We look forward to welcoming the WISA students, who will join with our other students on the flight line this coming season. We look forward to making a meaningful contribution to improving training and enticing aspiring pilots to experience the excitement and satisfaction of our sport."

Is gliding in Canada doomed?

Michael Viechweg photo

How's that for a headline?

This could be a logical conclusion if you look at the trending line since the 1990s in the number of licensed glider pilots across the country. In 1990, SAC membership was 1,334. As of 2025, that number sits at 919, up somewhat from its lowest point, 845 in 2021, likely a reflection of the COVID lockdown.

Globally, according to a 2022 study by the International Gliding Commission's Gliding Development Group, there has been an average percentage decline of 18 percent across 34 countries (although some countries, including Argentina, Japan and Turkey have seen dramatic increases of several hundred percent).

So what's driving the numbers? How are clubs in Canada responding to their own unique realities? Are there common strategies and objectives? Well, yes and no. For some clubs, growth isn't a priority; for others, managing demand requires a careful curation of waiting lists for new members. And then there's annual churn as new members don't return and always, the inevitable loss of members as they "age out."

What follows are insights from some clubs across the country.

Ian Grant, from Gatineau Gliding Club, east of Ottawa, notes that GGC's membership slowly declined from 70-plus a decade ago to a low of 45 in 2021, following the COVID pandemic, though numbers have rebounded slowly since then. "GGC is working to grow its membership to improve club activity and finances," he says. The board has set a target of reaching and maintaining a stable membership cohort of more than 75 members.

"About 10-15 percent of members do not rejoin each year," he says. "For instance, of the 56 people who were members in 2023, 43 were still with the club two years later. This rate has remained steady for years and is lower than previously seen in some SAC clubs." The club has not had to refuse membership applications due to lack of capacity. Recently, enough new recruits have joined each year to fill the instruction program, which can handle 10-15 students.

"Twenty years ago, GGC reversed a period of declining membership with a successful strategy, backed by the club executive, consisting of advertising, a media profile and presence at public shows and air displays," he says. "Our board last year endorsed a proposal to re-energize club marketing to increase its membership." This was influenced by several factors:

- Declining membership as a trend;
- Financial sustainability; higher membership previously generated operational surpluses, enabling the club to better maintain and upgrade its aircraft and ground assets;
- Loss of experience; the retirement of long-standing members underscores the need to attract new members with fresh energy and dedication;
- Risks of further decline; ongoing membership losses could necessitate higher fees and increased workload among the remaining members;
- Capacity for growth: the club's current fleet, ground facilities and instructional program can accommodate 20 additional members.

GGC created a membership growth team. Key elements of the program included a new website with appealing information for prospective members, club displays at public events, improved responsiveness to email and phone queries, promotion of the winter ground school (run jointly with Rideau Valley Soaring), a Spring open house for ground school participants, a social media presence and some local media coverage.

First year results for club memberships, activity and revenue are strongly positive. A net seven new members joined, bringing total membership to 63 by end of season. The club flew 68 intro flights, many more than in recent years. Ten "5-Pack" and "6-Pack" trial memberships were sold, generating a further 30 flights. In total, the club flew 924 flights, 22 percent above the previous three-year average.

"Recruitment alone is not enough," Grant says. "Newcomers need to be supported as they integrate into the club and develop into safe, enthusiastic glider pilots and club members."

Last year's membership included 15 student pilots at different stages of training. Three attained their first solos and three their glider pilot licences. Newly-licensed GGC members also advanced their soaring and cross-country skills by completing their Bronze and Silver badges and flying the Proving Grounds tasks that the club set up for this purpose. Several have purchased gliders in recent years. These indications of people being bitten by the gliding bug and developing advanced skills are positive signs for member commitment and retention.

"Recruitment alone is not enough," Grant says. "Newcomers need to be supported as they integrate into the club and develop into safe, enthusiastic glider pilots and club members."

"Our club," says George Domaradzski, of Rideau Valley Soaring, "is still in need of members. We had 53 in 2025 but could accommodate 60-65. We have quite a few new members joining every year, but there's a significant turnover – up to 25% per year. Many new members leave after getting their licence. We'd like to accommodate even more (at one time we had 80 members), but we're limited by the number of instructors. In general, we've not had a waiting list for membership, and we've been accepting everybody who applies. Only once in the last 30 years have we had to limit new membership."

RVSS is active in advertising the club. One strategy that was successful was to bring a glider for display at the Aero Gatineau Air Show. "It was surprising to talk with visitors who didn't even know that gliders existed, let alone that there were gliding clubs in the area," he says. "As a result of the air show, we had a few visitors come to the airfield and we expect some to join in the future."

"Another venue that seems to bring in members is the Ottawa Glider Pilot Ground School," he says. This is an in-person class that takes place over the winter. There is some advertising that brings 20-30 students to ground school every year. There could be some improvement because, typically fewer than half end up joining one of the two Ottawa clubs, even though a free flight certificate is offered at the ground school."

RVSS is working on getting more members trained to become instructors, and is open to recruiting more qualified tow pilots.

“We support increasing gliding participation in Canada.”

“I joined SOSA (in southern Ontario) in 2016, having no prior experience at a gliding club,” says James Wood, currently the club’s president. “At the in-person AGM in 2020, just before COVID, a member of that board gave an illuminating presentation on the state of gliding in Canada and the trajectory of our club. It wasn’t a pretty picture. The sport of gliding was in decline and there was a legitimate concern that our club wouldn’t be able to buck the trend.”

A significant portion of the club’s sustaining membership is over 60 years of age. The core of volunteers who do the heavy lifting to keep the club running were at risk of aging out before they could be replaced. Analysis of the retention data confirmed how difficult it was to replenish the “core” by converting new students into long-term sustaining members.

Fast forward five years and the challenges remain:

- Retaining members beyond two years remains difficult;
- Today’s target demographics are “time-poor,” which means we have to find new ways for members to participate in ways compatible with modern lifestyles;
- Prospective members are hesitant to commit without a clear plan for their training, so we must make the process as transparent as possible;

“We’ve taken a macro-level approach to attracting new members,” Wood says.

Over the last two years, SOSA has completely redesigned its website, with up to date information and content that showcases many aspects of life at the club. It has modernized and streamlined the intro flight booking process and identifies the curious thrill seekers versus those who are interested in membership (about a third of new members take intro flights first). Membership application forms have been designed to assess potential commitment levels. Online ground school provides opportunities for people to get started and enables the club to pre-qualify prospective members based on their engagement levels.

“We also clearly promote our youth bursaries and the WSPA’s Women in Soaring scholarships which are open to Canadians,” he says, “and we’ve been working closely with local air cadet squadrons and universities.”

In addition, the club’s social media accounts are optimized to show up in searches for nearby activities, offer regular fresh content and invite guests to leave reviews of their experiences (which have been highly positive).

“We’re trying to be purposeful about how we grow,” he says. “It’s natural to worry about accepting too many new students, which means we monitor our instructors’ capacity and work actively to bring new instructors on line.” Not all students attend regularly and they seldom attend all at once. As a general rule, if 10 new students join, five will likely go solo, two or three get licensed and one or two become sustaining members.

“We’ve had good success with dedicated training times for students (e.g. weekend mornings, weekday evenings).”

SAC offers clubs an annual publicity grant of up to $1,000 and recently introduced the Jim McCollum Award to recognize innovations in club management that grow membership, improve fleets or strengthen financial assets.

Ian Grant of GGC sees other potential opportunities SAC might explore.

“SAC could foster exchanges with and among clubs to share marketing insights,” he says. “Existing virtual communities for CFIs and club safety officers show the value of this approach.” A virtual club development forum could benefit presidents and membership directors, he says, by providing opportunities to share experiences and insights.

“Launching such an initiative entails consultation and involvement of club officials, but I think if you build it they will come. Such a platform could help reduce isolation among clubs and promote collaborative growth. I’d be pleased to participate.”

Quick thinking, a safe landing and a torched plane at Invermere

Herrie ten Cate photos

Date/time of incident: 1PM Friday, May 23, 2025

Pilot: Herrie ten Cate.
Lives in Invermere and has been gliding for over four decades. Host of The Thermal Podcast.
https://thethermalpodcast.libsyn.com

It was a beautiful morning and based on the forecast, and looking out the window it was going to be a great soaring day, the first good day of the season.

The glider had been fuelled and inspected…ready for flight.

Take off on Runway 15 at Invermere was normal with temps and RPMs in the right range. At 500 feet, I was pulling up the gear, setting flaps and throttling back. I also turned off the secondary fuel pump. The engine died. I quickly switched it back on and kept climbing for more height. I also noticed on the ILEC engine control unit "0L". Initially I thought "oil" but realized it was telling me zero fuel. Very shortly afterwards, the engine stopped again, and I smelled smoke.

The engine on this glider is behind me. I couldn't see the fire but knew the glider was burning. I immediately turned back to the airfield for an emergency landing, put the gear down and engaged the prop lock to reduce drag. I radioed ahead for fellow pilots to meet me with fire extinguishers.

I landed on Runway 15 and was planning to roll out by the hangars, but after touchdown the cockpit filled with smoke. I brought the glider to a halt and got my ass out asap. I then watched a six-foot tower of flame envelope the glider.

The entire flight lasted less than seven minutes. Once fire was detected I was back on the ground within two or three minutes. We tried hand-held extinguishers to stop the fire, but they had little impact. Fellow pilot Harry Peters (wisely) suggested we get the burning glider off the runway.

We grabbed the cockpit rails and pulled the glider onto the dirt. We also removed the aircraft documents, oxygen tank and canopy. A water truck from the Shuswap Band was there very quickly and started to hose down the fire.

About ten minutes later the fire truck arrived-- and parked on the runway. It took repeated (ok, and heated) requests to get it off the runway, as the airport was still active as the only option for the other gliders still in the air.

In hindsight, I think there was a fuel line rupture of some type, and the fuel was pumped into the engine bay where it was possibly ignited by the exhaust system. Another clue is the blue fuel staining on the fin. It was the worst day and the best day of my gliding career. I lived to tell the tale and have acquired a new high-performance sailplane.

This kind of incident is extremely rare and my training kicked in. I already had a plan. After reading about the 1998 Swiss Air disaster in Nova Scotia, I knew that if I ever smelled smoke, I would land immediately.

That evening, I had a very happy 27th wedding anniversary dinner with my wife.

Every pilot who wants to learn from my story should:

- Study your POH regularly;
- GET IN YOUR COCKPIT and practice your emergency procedures;
- Those who “have a plan” usually survive;
- Never assume that it won’t happen to you.

The exact cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Soaring in Argentina

By Rafael Bravo, SOSA

In the fall of 2024 an opportunity to move to Buenos Aires for an 18-month assignment opened up in my job.

I was very excited about the opportunity to live in a different country and culture; I am of Venezuelan origin, though I've lived most of my adult life in Canada. (Even if Argentina is a Latin country, the cultures of Argentina and Venezuela are very different.)

I was somewhat reluctant to leave gliding for that extended period. Luckily I had some connections in the Argentinian soaring community through Carlitos Iucci, a member of the Argentinian national soaring team, who I met while we both were participating in the Pan-American Gliding Championships at SOSA in 2019. He put me in touch with members of Club Argentino de Planeadores Albatros, which is located about 100 km west of Buenos Aires. With the hope of being able to fly in Argentina, I decided to take the assignment.

During the first few months I mostly enjoyed getting to know the wonders of Buenos Aires and the good asados and empanadas. Although I didn't bring any real paperwork, I was received very warmly at Albatros. Talking to the instructors, we decided to go the ab-initio route (it took two check rides to become a solo student). After that I was allowed to fly solo on Blaniks and the ASK-18 basic single seater (basically a K-8 with longer wings), with a plan to obtain a full licence after the required three months and 15 hrs of student flying. Now able to fly on my own, I've been doing some "local cross-country" flying, staying more or less within gliding distance of the club (which in a K-18 and 2000m AGL means about 30-odd km). The K-18 (actually a locally made ASK-18AR) flies beautifully but it can't go very fast….

In any case I've gotten to see the immense plains of the Argentinian Pampas west of Buenos Aires and some nice towns that dot the area.

This area is a dream for land-out locations, with crops that are almost the same as in southwest Ontario (mostly soybeans, wheat, corn and hay), and not a single ripple on the ground-- it's the biggest landing field you'll ever see.

Unfortunately, due to the vagaries of bureaucracy, I have been stuck as a "solo student," unable to demonstrate documented command of the Spanish language – which is maddening because that's my native language. That's kept me from flying the more advanced gliders in the club fleet, which is extensive (PW-5s, Jantars, LS4s, ASW-20s, LS-6, Janus). I've more or less given up on getting my Argentinian full license and I'm happy to bum around in the K-18.

The club is very active in cross-country flying, with most pilots trying the club-assigned tasks on weekends, taking advantage of the sometimes phenomenal conditions, with 10kt thermals up to 4000m not unheard of. However, as much as I enjoyed flying vintage gliders in exotic locations, I'll be happy to be back at SOSA this summer to fly my trusty ASW-20C "B5".

Wind, waves in Wales

Marco Pronto photo

By Marco Pronto

The following includes lessons on landing and take-offs with 20-30kt winds, cloud flying, some ridge soaring and then the mighty wave.

My instructor was in diapers when I first started gliding. Today he's world-renowned for a major gliding achievement: he flew across the Irish Sea—twice— in one flight that started in Wales, crossed to Ireland and then back over to Scotland.

A little background on Denbigh Gliding: It's nestled in a distinct valley in Wales, surrounded by mountains to the east, south and west, but open to the Irish Sea to the north. When the wind blows (and man does it blow!) from the east, south or west, they get strong ridge lift and wave. Denbigh is surrounded by restricted airspace, but most importantly, the airspace above Denbigh belongs to the Royal Air Force (RAF). Don't tell the Russians, but the RAF doesn't operate on weekends, and during this time, the space is unrestricted to the stars. Combine a strong wave and open airspace and you have the perfect playground for glider pilots who want to explore the limits of heaven.

I have been in close contact with my friend Ian Molesworth over the past few years and with his help I got the opportunity to spend three weeks during December in Denbigh. My intent was to take formal lessons on wave flying.

These lessons include:

- Take-off and landings in heavy 20-30kt winds, when good wave typically occurs;
- Introduction to ridge lift – to get up into wave;
- How to get into and stay in wave;
- Oxygen system management;
- Cloud flying, as per British Gliding Association requirements, in case the clouds close in below. Cloud flying is illegal in Canada and most parts of the world – but not the UK.

I enrolled with the Denbigh Gliding club and thus for a short time I was a member of the BGA. My instructor was CFI Chris Gill. A little background about Chris: He's become one of the "big wind" pilots who has had some amazing achievements. He's flown multiple times across the Irish Sea from Wales to the Isle of Man, from Wales to Scotland and then his most epic flight; from Wales to Ireland and back across to Scotland. You can see more on his YouTube channel.

Take-off and landings in heavy winds

My first lesson was dealing with heavy winds; the transition between downwind and a turn into upwind is dramatic and can put you in big trouble in a simple circuit. A highlight: at 1,000ft AGL on final approach, I was told: "Put the spoilers away. You're too low."

Introduction to ridge lift

Before my lessons, I studied a manual on ridge lift by the French Gliding Association (Fédération Française de Vol en Planeur) and The Soaring Engine by G Dale. Putting theory into practice is quite a challenge. I call these lessons, "introduction" because I quickly rose well above the ridges and was not flying in the danger zone alongside ridge walls. The key learning here is dealing with a strong wind pushing you to the lee of the mountains, while your intended direction of flight is both against the wind and along the ridge. In other words, you're learning coordinated flying as you crab.Put in a series of figure eights and you quickly gain enough altitude to put the nose down and punch as hard as possible into the centre of the valley, pierce through the rotor and suddenly, you're in the smooth constant of the wave! The vario has calmed down and keeps to a constant beeping sound.

Introduction to wave flying

Understanding the characteristics of wave flying is in itself an amazing lesson. Your pathway upward involves figure eight patterns and you spend a considerable time "sniffing" the wave bar to find its various limits. All the time you're in a different world of flying-- balancing your rate of climb versus flying fast and going places is the new skill requirement.

"Then comes the wild ride. The instructor takes control and progresses into an aerobatic maneuver with the glider stalled upside-down, and calls out: 'You have control!'"

Flying in wave is highly addictive. Truly worth the time, effort and expense.

Cloud flying

I could fill pages describing this experience but will be brief. All I can say is, you have to be good with being taken way out of your comfort zone to do this. It's crazy by any measure.

You need a glider equipped with an artificial horizon instrument and a moving map, like XCSoar. The training had me sitting in the back seat of the club's twin Astir. The entire rear seat area is enclosed in a black plastic sheet; you can't see anything outside the glider (see photo on previous page). The exercises had me using the instruments alone to turn the glider to designated headings. It's very easy to go into 'Pilot Induced Oscillations' (PIOs) and it requires an exhausting level of concentration to make smooth yet relatively steep turns.

Then comes the wild ride. The instructor takes control and progresses into an aerobatic maneuver with the glider stalled upside-down then calls out: "You have control!" The recovery method has been clearly explained in the classroom but needs to be demonstrated for you to have confidence that the glider can be recovered without you having any visual cues.

The final test! On this particular flight I was told to navigate to points on the map, then turn back to the club and make my way into a circuit with the intent to land the glider. At 600ft I call out, “You have control” and the instructor completes the landing. The intent is to be able to fly in cloud to the club with you peering out of clouds at 600ft AGL. (I passed the test – Huzzah!!)

Time to go Solo

With my medical cleared, I was allowed to fly the club Twin Astir solo. During my first flight while in tow in heavy winds, the tow plane and me went through rotor. That in itself was exciting. Then the tow plane took me through cloud. I didn't get lessons on cloud flying on tow! We cleared the clouds in 30 seconds and at 2,000ft I unhooked, headed for the hills, got back up to 2,000ft and cut into the valley to get a little taste of what turned out to be a very weak wave that day.

Back to wave flying.

Denbigh had a two-seat Janus glider available. Ian and I took the Janus. After take off I got control and followed Ian's instructions. I got us into wave at about 2,000ft, took it up to 9,000ft and spent most of the day exploring Denbigh valley. In case you missed it, I will say it again: Flying in wave is highly addictive.We were joined in formation (see cover photo) by Chris and Simon in the club Twin Astir. Check out the video. A truly wonderful high altitude experience.

Check flight by the BGA

My next step was a second check flight by a senior BGA instructor, Chris Hall. The intent was to have me cleared to fly the single LS4 glider. During this flight Chris asked me a range of questions and had me flying back up the ridge and into wave. Then we attempted to skip from one wave to another, but landed in the sink portion of the wave. This in itself was a great way to understand the wave's sink bar. I landed the glider in heavy winds and Chris cleared me to fly the LS4 in lighter winds. Alas, the LS4 opportunity never came up. Rain came in for the next few days and I had to make my way home to Toronto for Christmas.

The entire cost, including air fare, train tickets, accommodation, meals, BGA and daily club membership and of course flights for 20 days was in the order of $3,000. Considering that I flew in peak season, I could have gotten a better price on flights if I had chosen to fly another time. I want to launch another trip to Denbigh in November 2027 or January 2028. If you’re interested in joining me, even without a full commitment, please let me know, as I’d like to make some provisional plans with Denbigh Gliding.

Marco (left) with Denbigh CFI Chris Gill and friend

Practice makes permanent:
The neuroscience of safer piloting

By David Donaldson, SAC Safety Officer

There is a universal maxim that says "practice makes perfect."

Many industries, including aviation, have embraced it. It's stitched into training syllabi, simulator sessions, check-ride preparation, even how we measure accomplishment as we track our experience. But it is incomplete and potentially misleading. Practice does not make perfect, practice makes permanent. And permanence, in aviation, can either save your life or compromise it.

The Most Important System in the Aircraft

The most important piece of equipment in the cockpit is the pilot's brain. Every decision, every scan, every corrective action flows through the neural circuitry between a pilot's ears. Understanding how that circuitry functions under stress is not academic, it is operationally critical.

Let's break this down; in very simple terms we have three brains: the neocortex or the thinking brain, the mid-brain or emotional centre, and the brain stem which is often referred to as the lizard brain. In the midst of all of this is our amygdala, our early warning radar. When alerted, our amygdala prioritizes action over contemplation, triggering reactions that are faster than our conscious thought can keep up with. While this served our ancestors well, in aviation unmoderated reaction can degrade safety.

The question is, how can we moderate this reaction and align to the correct action? Turning it from dangerous to, at the very least, not completely wrong. This is where the permanence of practice can literally save a life. This concept is often expressed as "we do not rise to the occasion, we sink to the level of our training". In reality we do not sink to our training, we sink to our practice and, more precisely, to our habit.

As we practice, our brain creates new neural pathways. The more we practice the more those pathways are strengthened, literally becoming thicker. We have an expression for this: muscle memory. This is where the safety ramifications of "practice makes permanent" becomes stark. In a crisis, you do not rise to the situation; rather you default to the level of your habit.

Let's start by taking a critical look at what you are practicing. A commonly-cited contributing factor in accidents is the pilot who rushes, short-circuiting a checklist, rushing to meet an external demand, and in so doing missing a critical step. What is your response when rushed? Do you justify your haste with, "I have x-thousand PIC hours so I can go more quickly"? There is some truth in this. The more we practice the easier and faster we can complete the series of tasks, but it also becomes easier to miss a step. Regardless of your rationale, it is your reaction in the moment that will either improve or degrade the situation. If you have developed the habit of slowing down as you assess and take deliberate action, that is what you will default to.

What about those emergencies we cannot practically practice? We have two effective strategies here, of which the first is quite simply visualization or "chair flying." To use the example of the aerobatic formation team who chair fly their entire route before climbing into the cockpit, in a glider context we can visualize that aborted take off, the bail out, walking mentally through the steps so they're available to us should we need them.
A second strategy for practicing is in the simulator. Here we have the ability to practice those things that we cannot practice in the air and the key here is to treat them like real life.

Operationalizing our Emergency Response:

Operationally there are very few situations in our flying that truly require a split-second response. Our needed response time is in direct correlation with our proximity to the ground; the lower our altitude, the less time we have to respond. In the world of professional aviation this is operationalized as the "sterile cockpit," meaning no chit chat below 10,000'. The essence of a sterile cockpit is rooted in the fact that the human brain cannot multi-task and we have too many accidents where pilots crashed because they were distracted. We'll save that discussion for a future article.

For gliders, we can use something a little lower, say 1,000' AGL. This nicely aligns to our entry into the circuit for landing. Using an approximate 1/30 sink of a modern glider, this gives us about seven and a half minutes, plenty of time to assess and respond to our changing situation.

Again, what are you practicing? Are you practicing a sterile cockpit or are you allowing yourself (and your crew) to become distracted at critical times? This includes preparing for launch and clearing the runway after landing, too.

From Perfect to Permanent:

The aviation industry does not suffer from a lack of procedures. It does suffer from inconsistent execution of proven techniques and tools. It's not the procedure that will save you, it's deliberate and intentional practice. The question you should be asking is not, "Have I practiced enough?" But, "Have I practiced correctly?" Practice builds habits. Remember, everything you do is habit building so let's be intentional and build good habits.

Fly Safe

Montreal Soaring photo