**[Air Tax Revenue Up, Up, Up](http://www.blacklocks.ca/air-tax-revenue-up-up-up/)**

Airline passengers are not getting the “security” they’ve paid for at Canadian airports through a security surcharge that’s become a federal money-maker, say union executives.

Officers of the [International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers](http://iamaw.ca/) and [United Steelworkers](http://usw.ca/) said airport security programs have seen reduced service despite increased funds collected through an Air Travelers Security Charge.

“This is a tax on the flying public,” said Dave Ritchie, general vice-president at the machinists’ union. “They are paying for a service and unfortunately they are not getting it in a time frame that they should be.”

The mandatory Air Travelers Security Charge ranges from $14.96 per passenger on a domestic round-trip ticket to $25.91 on overseas flights. All revenues are returned to the federal treasury and not specifically targeted for airport screening by the [Canadian Air Transport Security Authority](http://catsa-acsta.gc.ca/), a Crown agency.

“The Air Traveler Security Charge is completely out of our hands,” said Mathieu Larocque, spokesperson for the authority.

The security fee generated a $7 million surplus for the Government of Canada last year, projected to increase ten-fold to $74 million next year, according to the Department of Transportation. An estimated 51 million travelers pass through Canadian airports annually. Traffic volume is expected to increase in the coming years, according to the [Canadian Airports Council](http://cacairports.ca/).

“The biggest problem with this is that air traffic is constantly growing, but the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority doesn’t necessarily benefit from the corresponding increase in revenue generated by the Air Travelers Security Charge,” said Daniel-Robert Gooch, council president.

Annual revenues from the charge totaled $658 million last year, by official estimate.

“We continue to see more travelers and fewer screeners,” said Ken Neumann, United Steelworkers’ national director. “All that leads to is asking people to do more. It opens it up to security risks; there is more stress to the worker; and there are health and safety risks.”

“Really what is happening is the public is paying for something they are not getting,” Neumann added.  “It’s a travesty.”

The twin unions, representing most of the nation’s 5400 airport security personnel, held their first joint meeting in Ottawa.

By Kaven Baker-Voakes