ICAO - International Civil Aviation Organization

A specialized agency of the United Nations that was created following the signing in Chicago of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

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Mission

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that was created following the signing in Chicago of the Convention on International Civil Aviation. ICAO is the standing body in charge of implementing the principles of the Convention so as to ensure the safe and orderly development of global civil aviation.

Structure of the Organization

ICAO comprises three main bodies. The Assembly meets every three years to review the work of the Organization and give policy guidance. Between Assembly sessions, the Council conducts the daily business of ICAO. The Air Navigation Commission is the permanent body responsible for technical matters.

ICAO’s work consists mainly of developing and adopting standards and recommended practices in areas such as aircraft operation, aerodrome design, personnel licensing, aviation safety and security, aviation medicine, the economics of civil aviation, environmental protection, legal principles, etc. The standards and recommended practices (known as SARPs) are compiled in the 19 annexes to the Chicago Convention, which are regularly amended, as well as in other technical manuals and guidance material. Publication of SARPs in the six UN languages is one of the main activities of the Organization, hence the importance of translation services.

(See http://www.icao.int/pages/how-it-works.aspx)

Secretariat
ICAO has been headquartered in Montreal since 1947, in a building downtown that houses the offices of the Secretariat and all essential departments. The Organization has a staff of about 900 officials, nearly one third of whom work in the regional offices in Paris, Mexico City, Lima, Dakar, Cairo, Nairobi and Bangkok.

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(See the ICAO website for the addresses of the regional offices.)

The Secretary General, Mr. Raymond Benjamin, is the Executive Director of the Secretariat, which is made up of five bureaus: Air Navigation, Air Transport, Legal, Technical Cooperation, and Administration and Services.

The Language and Publications Branch (LPB) comes under the Bureau of Administration and Services. It comprises the Translation sections (six languages), the Terminology Section, the Publications Section, and also the Interpretation Section.

The Interpretation Section provides interpretation services at the meetings of the two permanent bodies, the Council and the Air Navigation Commission, which each hold three sessions per year. The interpreters also serve many other meetings such as technical panels, symposia, technical and diplomatic conferences, workshops and other events that are organized, usually, during the recess of the permanent bodies. In addition, staff interpreters together with freelance colleagues work at the sessions of the Assembly, which take place every three years.

**Nature of the Work**

Although the main field is aviation, the work is quite varied. The Council deals mostly with policy issues affecting the general orientation of the Organization, but covers all aspects of ICAO’s work: technical, legal, administrative, economic, technical cooperation with Contracting States, etc.

The Air Navigation Commission examines technical subjects, often very in-depth. It is mainly tasked with amending the annexes to the *Convention* covering all areas of the Organization’s work.

There are many standing and ad hoc expert groups working on a plethora of subjects of interest to
aviation in dozens of meetings each year, often with interpretation.

**Interpretation Staff**

ICAO currently has 19 interpreters, of whom eight are members of AIIC. Interpreters at ICAO are also translators, when they are not in the booth, they are assigned to translation duty in their respective language sections (roughly 20% of the time).

**Working Conditions and Benefits**

Like their peers at other United Nations organizations, ICAO interpreters are normally recruited at the P-3 level. It should be noted that ICAO has stopped offering truly permanent contracts. New staff members are given a renewable fixed term contract of two or three years.

ICAO staff members have international status, and as such, enjoy the same benefits and privileges as other UN staff: home leave every two years, a rental subsidy, education allowances for children, reimbursement of VAT, duty free items at the Commissariat, etc.

**Lifestyle**

Greater Montreal has a population of around 3 million. It is located in southern Québec, about 100 km from the U.S. border (New York and Vermont being the nearest states). Both of Canada’s official languages, English and French, are widely spoken in the city.

(See video: [http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Acceuil/MontrealTV.](http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Acceuil/MontrealTV.).)

The climate is continental, with hot, humid summers and very cold winters. Winter starts in November-December and lasts at least four months, with persistent sub-zero temperatures and frequent, heavy snowfall. The city is well-equipped for winter conditions, and larger roads and sidewalks are promptly cleared and gritted. The ICAO building is linked to the downtown warren of underground shopping arcades and tunnels that extends up to ten blocks in several directions and connects to the metro.

**Housing**

It is relatively easy to find a place to live in Montreal, either renting or buying, although home prices and rents have increased considerably in the past decade. There are many luxury high-rises offering comfortable, spacious condominium units in the downtown area.

The countryside is within easy reach, and many people rent or buy a holiday home (known as a chalet) outside of town, especially in the Laurentian Mountains to the north and the Eastern
Public Transport and Driving

The underground metro system is quite extensive, and buses run almost everywhere on the island. Commuter trains go farther afield. ICAO is about 200 m from the Square Victoria metro station in the middle of downtown, and there are two train stations within a short walking distance.

(See the STM public transport website: www.stm.info/, which has a map of bus and metro lines.)

Finally, Montreal offers a wealth of cultural, shopping and dining options. There are lots of museums, theatres, cinemas, a world renowned symphony orchestra, music festivals (in particular the Jazz Festival) throughout the year, numerous parks and a variety of seasonal outdoor activities.

Recommended citation format: