The 10,000-foot view: Aviation trends and advice from lawyer Katherine Ayre

September 21, 2021

Kate Ayre started flying in 1994, spending her first flying hours behind the controls of a Bellanca Scout. A commercially licensed glider and fixed wing pilot (with some helicopter experience), she once considered working in air traffic control. It was with law, however, that her career truly took off. Today, Kate is an experienced aviation litigator who heads up BLG's National Aviation Focus Group. On any given day she could be working on a property damage file, offering regulatory advice, navigating a difficult piece of litigation following a product recall or handling a highly sensitive fatality case. In this Q&A, Kate shares her thoughts on everything from the pandemic to space travel, offering insights on what those in the industry need to reach new heights.

How does your experience as a pilot help you as an aviation lawyer?

When I started in law, I considered myself a pilot who happened to be a lawyer. Now it's the opposite. Flying is in your blood, and I share that passion with our aviation clients and with their clients. I want to know everything about their business, their pinch points, what they want to achieve. If I wasn't doing what I'm doing now, I'd be doing what my clients are doing.

How would you describe the aviation industry right now?

Aviation is coming out of a significant valley, but the industry is poised to take off again. We're expecting exponential growth from disruptive companies and technology, and innovation from legacy operators who used the pandemic as a time to re-evaluate their business models and customer service.

How do the impacts of COVID-19 on aviation compare to other influential events of our time?

There have been some interesting studies on how the pandemic affected the aviation industry compared to 9-11, the 2008 financial crisis and SARS. I like to compare it to what happened after the Spanish flu in 1919. John Alcock and Arthur Brown piloted the first transatlantic flight in June of that year. What did that flight mean to the world back then? And how did it eventually revolutionize the way we conduct business and live our

personal lives? Now we're at that point with space travel and supersonic flight. Think about it—we landed on Mars during a pandemic! Right now, high atmospheric travel is something for the rich—just like transatlantic flight was after the 1919 pandemic. In 15 years we won't even recognize today's aviation or aerospace.

What's one piece of advice you have for businesses in aviation and travel hit hard by the pandemic?

Unknowns and inconsistencies are tough and it's hard for companies to make decisions without clear regulatory guidelines or support. The answer to what to do is changing week by week and often the answer lies with the client—there's no cookie-cutter solutions. Together, we can uncover those answers, assess the pros and cons, and work on the preferred approach.

Who are some of BLG's aviation clients?

BLG has Canada's largest private aviation legal department, and every day we're proving that we deserve to be the first point of contact for legal advice for anyone that operates directly or indirectly in the aviation market in Canada. I'm talking air carriers, insurers, air traffic control, airports, software developers, avionics, OEMs, travel agencies, tourism operators, and companies involved with electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) technology, sustainable aviation fuel and electric aircraft fleets—the sky's the limit, really.

How is BLG set up to serve the aviation and travel industry?

We've established a national platform with lawyers in every conceivable area of law who are embedded in the aviation and travel industry. That way we can meet every need our clients have—intellectual property, labour and employment, regulations, mergers and acquisitions, cybersecurity, products, litigation, environmental, construction, insurance, trade and more. Aviation is global, and the U.S. is such an important partner to Canada. We work with businesses in the U.S. and work very closely with U.S. law firms so we can support U.S. clients operating in Canada and Canadian clients operating in the States. The team approach is key. Serving our clients is a lot like flying: how do I get you from point A to point B with a safe happy flight? If I'm not the best person to fly you there, I'll find you the right one on my team.

What are the emerging areas in aviation that get you excited?

Over the next few years, I see massive growth in urban air mobility like flying taxis and eVTOLs, and the municipal regulations, air navigation policies, intellectual property and insurance issues that will arise from that. Another area is de-carbonization and using different assets to lower aviation's carbon footprint, including sustainable aviation fuel and completely electric fleets. Then there's high altitude flight. Less visionary but still important is ensuring the skills of all employees—pilots, maintenance and air traffic control—are still sharp after COVID-19.

How can those in the aviation industry set themselves up to take advantage of what's next? What's the 10,000-foot view?

It’s interesting that you put it that way, because when you fly over 10,000 feet above sea level there are oxygen equipment requirements—we can’t fly that high without support. Similarly, I’d say that the best way to take advantage of what’s next is to use the supports around you. Contrary to popular belief, the use of supports is a sign of strength, not weakness. It’s a lesson that’s brought home for me every time I do yoga—you bring out the bolster or the yoga strap to help you safely try new things and grow as a result. Developing a business or entering a new area means taking risks. When you have support—for example, legal guidance—you can take bigger risks, achieve more growth and fly smoothly through turbulent times. Our aviation clients are looking for what’s next, and so are we. Sure, we can offer legal advice and bill you for it, but we'd rather be innovative partners, offering support in the form of strategy, creative fee structures and non-traditional services. BLG Beyond is a great example.

What's a resource that you'd recommend to those in the industry to stay a step ahead?

John Ostrower’s *The Air Current* is a one-stop shop for the market and an excellent resource for finding out what's happening and what’s next in the industry. I’d also recommend Skies magazine for all things fixed-wing and Vertical mag for rotory-wing news and features.

If you could wave a magic wand and make anything happen in aviation, what would you do?

I’d have more women flying. More women working on the engines. More women engineering the technology. More women in executive roles. There’s a lot of support for diversity in aviation right now, so I would just speed that up. Diversity of representation creates a diversity of thinking, and the industry has never needed it more than right now.

By

Katherine Ayre

Expertise

Disputes, Transportation, Aviation, United States

BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.