

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

January 16, 2019

Chief Vicki Christiansen
United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building
201 14th Street SW
Washington, DC 20227

Dear Chief Christiansen:

With growing and more costly wildfire seasons occurring year after year, the Forest Service has become a major user of aerial firefighting services in the United States -- particularly in western states. I write with concerns about the potential federal procurement of Canadian-subsidized aerial fighting assets.

I understand the Forest Service has issued a Request for Proposals for Large Air Tanker Services, with responses due this month. This is essential to ensuring the agency, and the nation, has access to critical aviation assets during the upcoming wildfire season. However, recent press reports indicate that the Canadian government has recently undertaken substantial subsidies in the Canadian aerial firefighting industry.

On October 11, 2018, the *Alberni Valley News* reported that the Canadian government made a \$3.4 million investment in a Canadian-owned aerial firefighting company. While I am concerned about the readiness of the United States to fight the growing number and severity of forest fires, including with domestic resources, I am also concerned that unfair foreign subsidies put domestic producers at an economic disadvantage. These types of actions could directly impact United States-based competitors, creating an uneven playing field, and as a result, impact the safety of our federal lands and adjoining communities.

I ask that your office evaluate these press reports and determine whether the reported subsidies are having a detrimental impact on U.S. service providers and the future readiness of the federal government and individual states to fight forest fires.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member