

## Canada needs to take decisive action on 752

**MARK PAVILONS**

Like any dutiful Canadian, we put our toonie into the coin slot, make our selection, and watch the fattening snack creep along, and fall to the magical tray below. We feel rewarded, and head out on our way. We pay our taxes, try to stay ahead of our bills and take our car in when the engine light comes on. We follow the rules and even give up our rights and freedoms faithfully in times of need. Most average Canadians have followed all the rules and regulations, and yet many have lost their jobs, their security, and have been stressed out to new levels. We get tested and when our time comes, we get our vaccinations. And through it all, we remain proud and loyal citizens. As a journalist, I have learned a great deal about our democratic system over the decades. I have received some first-hand accounts of how things 'really work' and yet I, too, remain optimistic. I still firmly believe that the ultimate goal in any government bureaucracy is to serve the public good. Despite my years of getting inside peaks at some of our closed-door systems, I still remain in the dark about many of our society's inner workings. I'm still blind and naive at times. We try to track a host of current events and cover them in a common sense chronology that's easy to understand and portray. A tragedy takes place. Governments, emergency personnel, volunteers and aid organizations respond. Boots and shovels hit the ground and work begins. In time, the rubble is carted away, people are given food, shelter and clothing. And in more time, life carries on, the world continues to spin, and the attention moves on to something else, something more current. It's sad in a way, but that's the reality of today's modern media. Given the lightning-fast pace of information spread these days, it's vital to be up to the minute. In more visual, descriptive terms, media types pounce on a story, beat the heck out of it, get up and move on. Some pat themselves on the back for a job well done. Seldom do they look back. But that's the mistake. Looking back, gaining more insight and hindsight, can be invaluable. There are literally thousands of minor stories being told each and every day. And, there are a couple of biggies, too. But all have their own shelf life. I've been revisiting one of Canada's biggest tragedies in decades, and yet there seems to be fleeting coverage and concern over it. The shooting down of Ukrainian Flight PS752 by the Iranian military is a huge story, filled with human tragedy, politics, draconian control, cover-ups and legal entanglements. It's really a fabulous tale of international intrigue. But ask any Canadian if they recall the details, or victims, of this crime. I doubt it's front and centre on many people's minds. And yet it has become one of the saddest events, the greatest loss of Canadian lives, and one of the hottest political potatoes of the time. Safety investigators from Iran's civil aviation authority conclude the Boeing 737-800 passenger plane was shot down accidentally in January 2020 after being 'misidentified' by an air defence unit as a 'hostile target'. All 176 passengers and crew members 'including 138 people with ties to Canada' died in the crash. Their families deserve answers to important questions, including on the series of events that led to these missiles being launched in the first place, said Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport. The Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims strongly rejects the submissions of Iran in its final technical report on the downing of Flight PS752, 'which appear to be mere fabrications and a continuation of a lie. The contents published in this report, as with their previous reports, contain countless inconsistencies and are grossly inadequate to justify Iran's claims about the causes of the downing. Given all available information, the families of victims cannot accept Iran's claims that Flight PS752 was shot down due to a human error or that it was mistaken for a cruise missile. The available evidence, as well as inconsistencies in Iran's claims, point to the opposite direction: that Flight PS752 was shot down intentionally. The Iranian report is also being reviewed by the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752. The group includes ministers representing Afghanistan, Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. They all lost people, but our country lost the most. One would think we would be going after the culprits with teeth bared. But that's not the Canadian way. We approach things subtly, diplomatically. And yet we have no diplomatic relations with Iran. We have some of the brightest minds on the planet. We have friends in the G7, UN, NATO, etc. Canadians have been among the bravest soldiers, and top-notch peace-keepers throughout history. And yet, a few harsh words and fist-shaking is all we produce. Not what I expect from our leaders. The victims' family members, some of who reside locally, are shattered. Their lives forever altered. A year after the horrific event and there's no resolution, no settlement, no penalties. Even millions in potential damages, lawsuits and payouts will not change anything. These won't bring back the dead and won't bring closure or absolution. From the confines of that military missile launcher, right up the ladder to heads of state, this issue merely floats around the desks of bureaucrats, given a neatly bound cover and set off to the side. That's not right. All democratic governments around the world, especially Canada and our largest ally the United States, need to force this issue. We need to press upon everything that this is not acceptable and acts of terrorism will not go unpunished. Our bureaucrats need to get out of their offices, run down the hall and make some noise. The world needs to know what happened. We

need to go down in history as a country that took decisive action, not sat on our hands.

