



Canadian
Transportation
Agency

Office
des transports
du Canada



Making Transportation Efficient and Accessible for All

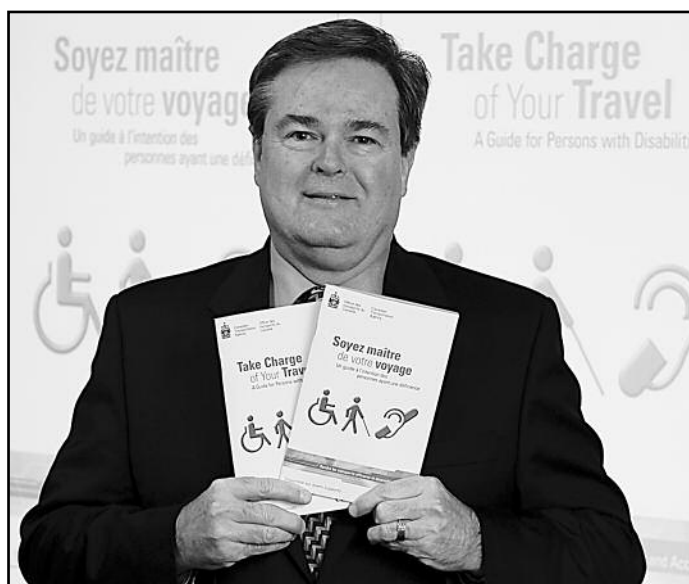
SPRING 2009

MOVING AHEAD

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Message from the Chair and CEO

It has been another year of significant developments in the Canadian Transportation Agency's ongoing efforts towards an efficient and accessible transportation network. This issue highlights the key achievements that have been made in collaboration with the community of persons with disabilities and the transportation industry.



Geoff Hare

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AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE FORMATS

Canada

In this issue, we are focusing on instances where industry is removing undue obstacles to the mobility of travellers as a result of consultation, codes of practice, or regulatory requirements. For example, consultations are currently underway on tactile row markers and floor space requirements in aircraft for service animals.

A major goal of the Agency is to improve our monitoring activities and enhance compliance by transportation service operators. With this in mind, the Agency has developed and is implementing a comprehensive monitoring and compliance methodology to build on its existing activities in this area.

As part of this initiative, the Agency released two compliance reports in early April dealing with multiple format policies and alternative communications systems. The reports revealed that, with one exception, all key transportation service providers are compliant with these two important sections of the *Code of Practice: Removing Communication Barriers for Travellers with Disabilities*.

In addition, VIA Rail has been working on a number of modifications to its Renaissance passenger cars to accommodate persons with disabilities. These modifications are the result of two Agency Decisions and rulings by the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.

Understanding one's rights and obligations as a traveller is critical to having the best possible travel experience. At the Agency, we are committed to making tools and information readily available to persons with disabilities. *Take Charge of Your Travel*, which was launched recently at a meeting of the Agency's Accessibility Advisory Committee, is a free guide designed to help travellers with disabilities anticipate and address the challenges that travel can present.

As a transportation regulator, it is our role to balance the interests of the public and those of the transportation industry. Tribunals such as ours are faced with the challenge of weighing those interests, but we are also guided by our commitment to making decisions and orders in a fair and transparent manner.

Evolving demographics mean that more and more Canadians require some form of accommodation when they travel. The Agency will continue to anticipate accessibility-related issues and identify ways transportation service providers can eliminate them, ideally, before travellers encounter obstacles.

We will also continue to foster productive dialogue with representatives of the community of persons with disabilities

and industry, and with other interested parties who have a stake in accessibility issues. We are privileged to work with these groups and industry to make transportation without undue obstacles a reality for all Canadians. ■



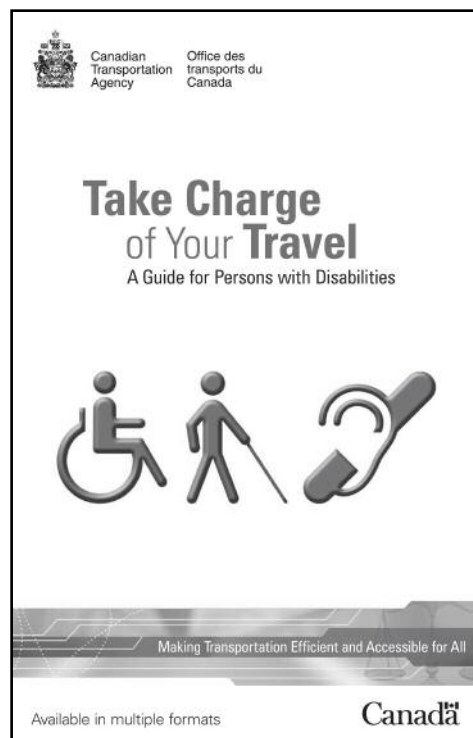
Geoff Hare
Chair and Chief Executive Officer

New Agency Guide Helps Travellers “Take Charge”

Take Charge of Your Travel is a free guide for travellers with disabilities who use airplanes, trains, as well as passenger ferries and buses that cross a Canadian or provincial border.

The guide is an updated, expanded and easier-to-use replacement for the Agency’s popular guide to air travel, *Taking Charge of the Air Travel Experience*.

It provides ideas about how to take advantage of accessible services and features in planning and conducting travel.



The guide encourages travellers to “take charge” by planning trips ahead of time and making their needs known to service providers.

To help with the planning process, it includes a detachable reservation checklist that details possible services in areas such as accessible seating, mobility and technical aids, and service animals.

Persons with disabilities are informed about help available at several points along their journey, such as:

- checking in;
- moving through terminals;
- boarding, connections and disembarking;
- storing and retrieving baggage;
- moving to and from washrooms;
- transferring from a personal wheelchair to a seat, including using a boarding chair; and
- moving through customs and immigration zones.

Key advice:

- Don't assume all required services will be available automatically or that others know your needs.
- Talk with your transportation company at least 48 hours ahead of time.
- Shop around, because services vary.

When booking a trip, the guide advises travellers to identify their disability-related needs, get information about schedules, fares, services and equipment, and ask for written confirmation of all arrangements and services they will receive.

Take Charge is available on the Agency's Web site (www.cta.gc.ca). Copies of the new guide are also readily available in multiple formats for individuals and for distribution by organizations. ■

Industry Adopts Provisions of the Communication Code

In two compliance reports released recently by the Agency, it was found that the majority of key transportation service providers are compliant with two important sections of the *Code of Practice: Removing Communication Barriers for Travellers with Disabilities*.

The two reports are:

1. The Multiple Format Policy Compliance Report, and;
2. The Alternative Communications Systems Compliance Report.

With one exception, Canada's key transportation service providers were compliant and had developed a multiple format policy – this allows travellers to request documents in accessible formats such as large print. Additionally, every major airport was compliant with the Code's provision that the car rental companies that operate from their airports have alternate means of communications for customers to get information or make reservations.

1. The Multiple Format Policy Compliance Report

Under the Code, all service providers are to develop and implement a multiple format policy to ensure that travel information can be made available in a variety of formats. At the time the Code came into effect in 2007, only one of the 55 providers covered by the Code had developed a policy.

To encourage providers to establish a policy, the Agency provided advice and guidance, including a sample multiple format policy, placing special emphasis on those providers who collectively carry 75 per cent or more of passengers for a particular mode of travel. As of March 2009, only one of these key service providers, Northumberland and Bay Ferries, had not submitted a policy.

The Agency will continue to work with those service providers who need help drafting a multiple format policy, in order to facilitate full compliance.

2. The Alternative Communications Systems Compliance Report

Airports are responsible for ensuring that ground transportation companies operating from their premises, including car rental companies, provide an alternate means of communication for persons with disabilities to make reservations or obtain information.

Agency staff reviewed the Web sites or called the reservation lines of car rental companies located at Canada's key airports to ensure that they had an alternative to the telephone for information or reservations, for example:

- a Web site with an online reservation system;
- an email address;
- a TTY telephone number; or
- a fax number.

At the time of the survey, all of the car rental companies offered at least one alternate mode of communication.

Both of these reports are part of a broader Agency monitoring and compliance framework, which works towards achieving the Agency's strategic outcome of increasing the accessibility of the federal transportation network by removing undue obstacles, while at the

same time increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of its monitoring activities.

For more information or to read the two compliance reports, please visit the Agency's Web site (www.cta.gc.ca). ■

Issues the Agency is Consulting On

The Agency consulted with its Accessibility Advisory Committee on two issues affecting persons with disabilities travelling on aircraft with 30 or more seats operated by Canadian carriers. Out of the consultations, guidelines will be finalized to facilitate implementation of two provisions in the *Code of Practice: Aircraft Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities* (Air Code). The two draft implementation guides, which relate to the application of subsections 2.6 and 2.7 of the Air Code, were among the topics of discussion during the meeting of the Agency's Accessibility Advisory Committee on March 30-31, 2009.

Space for service dogs

The *Air Transportation Regulations* require service animals on domestic flights operated with aircraft with 30 or more passenger seats to be carried free of charge and allowed to remain on the floor at the person's seat.

In addition, the Air Code provides that "each class section of the passenger cabin of an aircraft, e.g., first class, business class, economy class, should have a number of passenger seats, other than exit row seats, and each of these seats should provide enough floor space for a service animal to lie down."

The objective of this provision in the Air Code is to ensure that air carriers provide sufficient floor space to permit the service animal to remain on the floor at the person's seat while ensuring that both the person with a disability and the service animal can travel safely.

In a June 2008 Decision, the Agency stated that if the space available is so limited that it causes extreme discomfort to the traveller and animal, it can increase the risk of injury to both and affect their safety and well-being. While the Agency noted that air carriers are free to use different means of providing the accommodation



A meeting of the Agency's Accessibility Advisory Committee

required and are best placed to know what space is available in the aircraft, the Agency determined that it would engage in a consultative process to help them determine the floor space requirements.

The Air Code defines “service animal” as “an animal that is required by a person with a disability for assistance and is certified, in writing, as having been trained to assist a person with a disability by a professional service animal institution.” While many different types of animals are used by persons with disabilities to provide assistance in daily living, e.g., pigs, ferrets, monkeys and miniature horses, dogs are the species most commonly used. Research indicates that professional service animal training institutions in

Canada only certify dogs as trained assistance animals. As such, the scope of this implementation guide is limited to space on aircraft for persons with disabilities travelling with service dogs.

To develop the draft guide that was reviewed by the Agency's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Agency undertook preliminary consultations with air carriers and professional service animal training institutions. The consultative process included questionnaires and the viewing of various aircraft types and configurations by Agency staff and representatives from air carriers and service dog training organizations.

Once completed, the implementation guide will provide approximate dimensions that can be used by air carriers in determining how best to provide sufficient floor space to be shared safely and without extreme discomfort by persons with disabilities and their service dogs. It will not dictate the manner in which a Canadian carrier provides sufficient floor space to permit a service dog to remain on the floor at the seat of a person with a disability while also ensuring that the person and the service dog can travel safely. There are many ways in which a carrier can achieve the objective of section 2.6 of the Air Code.

Tactile row markers

In a Decision issued in October 2008, the Agency addressed another provision of the Air Code that sets out that tactile row markers to indicate row numbers should be placed “on overhead bins or on passenger aisle seats.” The objective of this provision of the Air Code is to enhance independent access to air transportation for persons who are blind or who have visual impairments. Recognizing the practical difficulties of implementing the

provision, the Agency decided to consult with air carriers and national organizations of the blind to explore alternatives that will permit persons who are blind or who have visual impairments to independently find their assigned seats.

Based on these preliminary consultations, the Agency developed a draft guide which was reviewed by its Accessibility Advisory Committee. The draft guide addresses permanent and temporary tactile row markers and alternate means of providing independent access to and from seats.

Next steps

The two draft implementation guides are being reviewed by the Agency, taking into consideration the comments provided by its Accessibility Advisory Committee. The final guides will be issued in the coming months and widely distributed to serve as guidance material for the determination of floor space for various-sized service dogs and to enhance independent access to air transportation by persons who are blind or who have visual impairments. ■

VIA Rail Modifying Renaissance Cars

As a result of two Agency Decisions and rulings by the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada, VIA Rail must make a number of modifications to its Renaissance passenger cars to accommodate persons with disabilities.

VIA has been working on a final design plan to, for example, widen doors, provide an adequate-sized wheelchair tie-down, add sleeper car wheelchair-accessible bedrooms, and provide adequate seating for attendants and space for service animals.

The Agency has given preliminary approval for modifications to three accessible sleeper cars and nine accessible economy coach cars.

Here are some of the main modifications to the sleeper car:

- It will contain a suite with a bedroom and adjoining washroom accessible to persons using personal wheelchairs and to accommodate their attendants and/or service animals;
- Access to the car will be through one of two 810-millimetre-wide (32-inch) exterior doors on an adjoining service car;

- Entrance to the suite will be through a power-operated door of similar width, which will lead to a 1550-millimetre by 1677-millimetre (61-inch by 66-inch) washroom with CSA-standard accessories; and
- The suite's 1310-millimetre by 2000-millimetre (51-inch by 78-inch) bedroom will have a turning radius of 1500 millimetres (59 inches).

"Personal wheelchair" means a passenger-owned wheelchair that requires a minimum clear floor space of 750 millimetres by 1200 millimetres (30 inches by 47 inches) to accommodate the wheelchair, its occupant, and a minimum clear turning space of 1500 millimetres (59 inches) in diameter.

The main modifications to the economy coach car are:

- An accessible seating area, composed of a wheelchair tie-down with independent access to an accessible washroom, that will have clearances similar to the above;
- A lowered row of double seats will face the tie-down to provide space for two travel companions or attendants;

- Space will also be provided for a service animal at the tie-down and a service animal and/or attendant within the washroom; and
- In each economy car, two rows of double seats facing each other will be reserved exclusively for two individuals travelling with two service animals, upon receipt of the standard 48-hour advance notice and subject to availability.

In addition, VIA will be adding liftable armrests and lowering some seats in 38 coach cars.

VIA is required to submit its detailed plans for modifying the cars, including a final implementation schedule, to the Agency in September 2009 in order to obtain the Agency's final approval prior to implementation of the modifications.

For more information on the VIA Rail Decision No. 620-AT-R-2003, please visit the Agency's Web site (www.cta.gc.ca). ■

Ferry Fit-up for Access

Accessibility features are among the modifications to the newest addition to Marine Atlantic's ferry service in the Cabot Strait.

The German-built *Atlantic Vision* carries 531 passenger vehicles, 50 per cent more than the company's next largest vessel.

It has been dry docked at a shipyard in Finland for alterations to meet Marine Atlantic's needs. The work includes changes to doors, ramps, alarms, cabins, signage and telephone systems to meet the standards of the *Code of Practice: Ferry Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities*.

The vessel features:

- Sloped access to and from the car deck, which will be supplemented by hands-on assistance from the *Atlantic Vision* personnel;
- Two elevators between decks, both outfitted with audible deck indicators and braille markings;
- High-contrast colours for floors and walls;
- TTY phones;
- Full roll-through accessibility across all areas of the passenger deck;

- Adapted cabins with braille door numbers, doorbells that flash strobe lights inside for persons with hearing disabilities, wheelchair lockdowns and various modified bathroom fittings; and
- Coloured flashing lights to signal general or fire alarms.

The *Atlantic Vision* enters into service in spring 2009.

Visit the Marine Atlantic Web site (www.marine-atlantic.ca) for more information. ■

WestJet's Specialized Web Site for the Visually Impaired

WestJet has introduced a Web "Lite Site" for persons who are visually impaired, providing a booking engine for flight reservations.

The Lite Site is designed for screen-reading software that finds and reads a hidden pixel on the westjet.com splash page. Guests are offered a link to the Lite Site, which contains this message:

Hello screen reader guests, and welcome to westjet.com. If you are using JAWS or another screen reader, and would like to book a flight, please click to access an alternative booking engine which is more screen reader friendly. Thank you.

Based on extensive testing, the booking process is intuitive, stripped to essential information, and easy to use. Helpful prompts are provided to use buttons, check boxes and forms. Oral instructions replace hyperlinks.

Because most persons with visual impairments are not completely blind, the regular WestJet site's font, images, tables, links, colours and security features have also been improved for easier use by persons with varying degrees of vision.

WestJet has worked closely with CNIB on the changes. ■

Working Together:

Government, private sector and persons with disabilities



The Agency's Chair and CEO, Geoff Hare, highlights the merits of informal dispute resolution during his opening remarks to the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Facilitation: Finding informal solutions

In order to resolve accessible transportation disputes, persons with disabilities and service providers are more frequently turning to facilitation, a process based on trust and collaboration. The process involves Agency staff working with both sides to achieve the common objective of resolving access concerns in a highly

effective and efficient way. Facilitation is a learning experience that helps prevent the same problems from recurring.

In 2008-09, 40 per cent of the accessible transportation disputes resolved by the Agency were resolved through facilitation. The following are two examples of this process.

Hearing aids not to be screened

A passenger who experienced difficulties during the airport screening process requested the assistance of Agency staff to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents. During the screening process, the screening officer tried to pass her hearing aid through a screening device.

Following staff review of the incident by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), it was determined that the method used was contrary to its standard operating procedures, which call for passengers with hearing devices to be screened by visual inspection only. The passenger accepted CATSA's apology and was pleased with CATSA's actions to ensure that its service contractor responsible for airport screening was made aware of the incident and would review the proper process with all screening officers.



Painful return from Cuba

A woman injured her foot in a fall during a holiday in Cuba, and was wearing a cast when she arrived at the airport for her flight home. She was denied pre-boarding and, given the lack of a boarding bridge, she had to make her own way up stairs to the aircraft. Despite conveying to airline personnel her doctor's instructions to elevate her foot, she was put in a seat that made this impossible. She was not allowed to move seats even though there were empty seats on the aircraft. Her foot lost feeling and colour and swelled significantly before another passenger volunteered his seat and she was able to raise her leg.

She requested the support of the Agency to facilitate the resolution of her complaint.

In addition to receiving an apology for the lack of assistance, the applicant was pleased to note that the matter had been addressed with the director of in-flight services and that future training was to be provided to all staff to avoid recurrence of similar incidents. ■

Updates

Under Study: Allergies

In cases dating back to 2000, the Agency determined that an allergy is not automatically considered to be a disability for the purposes of the *Canada Transportation Act*, but there may be people with allergies who can be considered to have a disability due to their allergies. As a result, allergy disability determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

For example, in two Agency decisions issued in 2007 and 2008 regarding a woman who has allergies and chemical sensitivities, the Agency found that she was a person with a disability for the purposes of the Act. The Agency also found that she encountered an undue obstacle regarding one of the issues she raised and ordered the carrier to undertake corrective measures related to reservations, communication, service procedures and personnel training.

Four investigations – three regarding allergies and one regarding multiple chemical sensitivities – are currently in progress. For these investigations, the Agency has hired independent experts in the fields of allergies and multiple chemical sensitivities to further the Agency's understanding of these subjects.

For the allergy-related cases, the Agency is in the process of determining whether the applicants are considered to be persons with disabilities and, if so, whether they experienced obstacles.

With respect to the investigation regarding multiple chemical sensitivities, the Agency has already determined that the applicant is a person with a disability and found that she encountered an obstacle. The Agency is currently considering whether the obstacle is undue.

Decisions regarding these cases are expected to be issued during 2009.

Agency Rules on Medical Oxygen

Air Canada has been ordered to take a series of corrective measures by June 2009 to assist air travellers who require medical oxygen on board flights.

Air Canada does not allow passenger-supplied gaseous oxygen, but provides its own gaseous oxygen service to passengers for a fee on all of its flights. In a Decision dated June 26, 2008, the Agency ruled that passenger-supplied oxygen – specifically, passenger-supplied gaseous oxygen and portable oxygen concentrators (POCs) on domestic air services and passenger-supplied POCs

on international air services – in whatever form permitted by safety and security regulations, is the most appropriate accommodation for persons with disabilities who require oxygen. In the fall of 2008, Air Canada began to permit the use of passenger-supplied POCs on its domestic, transborder and international flights.

The Agency has agreed to let Air Canada continue to provide a gaseous oxygen service rather than allow passenger-supplied gaseous oxygen, provided it implements corrective measures with respect to its domestic air services by June 2009. Key measures include:

- Providing a continuous carrier-supplied oxygen service from the point of check-in, during connections and until arrival in the general public area at the final destination; and
- Providing its carrier-supplied oxygen service free of charge on board the aircraft and within terminals, except for the cost of the oxygen itself and any non-reusable pieces of equipment.

In addition, another key corrective measure ordered by the Agency, which applies to both domestic and international air services, is the modification of Air Canada's Fitness for Travel form to seek only information on the person's oxygen-related needs. ■

The Agency's New Web Site

The Canadian Transportation Agency launched a brand new Web site in February 2009!

Ensuring clear and timely communication of its role, objectives and processes is a key priority for the Agency. In support of this goal, the Agency's Web site was significantly revamped to enhance content, navigation, and look and feel.

The Agency is continuously improving the information content and accessibility of the site to help strengthen the interaction

between travellers, transportation service providers and industry users of the national transportation system. The site will continue to grow to allow the Agency to deliver its services and programs and to provide needed information in a user-focused and user-friendly way.

You are invited to subscribe to our site and receive the latest updates on accessible transportation issues! Visit the Agency's new site at www.cta.gc.ca. ■

Announcing: TRANSED 2010



The 12th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED 2010) will be held in Hong Kong from Wednesday, June 2 to Friday, June 4, 2010 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Held every three years, the TRANSED conferences are milestone events in the field of accessible transportation, attracting researchers, policy-makers, transport operators, consumers and other specialists worldwide to share innovations and best practices.

Delegates from around the world will be meeting in Hong Kong to exchange strategic and technical experience. The conference will focus on accessible tourism, and will feature an exhibition showcasing the latest technological developments in accessible transportation and universal design.

For more information, visit the TRANSED 2010 Web site at www.transed2010.hk. ■

CONTACTING US

Canadian Transportation Agency
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N9

Toll-free: 1-888-222-2592

Fax: 819-997-6727

TTY: 1-800-669-5575

Web site: www.cta.gc.ca

E-mail: info@otc-cta.gc.ca



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