



ALS Society of Canada
Société canadienne de la SLA
als.ca

June 6, 2024

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, MP
Federal Transport Minister of Canada
TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca

Re: Accessibility of air travel for passengers using mobility devices

Dear Minister Rodriguez,

On behalf of 4,000 Canadians living with ALS, many of whom depend on rely on mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, to participate in daily activities, I am writing to urge the government to ensure accessibility of air travel for passengers using mobility devices.

ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) is a fatal neurodegenerative disease that progresses quickly, resulting in paralysis and, eventually, the loss of the ability to move, speak, and breathe. For people living with ALS, air travel offers opportunities to connect with loved ones and embark on new adventures before their disease progresses.

At present, many of the 288,800 Canadians who use wheelchairs¹, including people living with ALS, face significant barriers to air travel. They often cannot transfer out of their customized wheelchairs due to physical constraints, leading to discomfort and potential injury. Furthermore, wheelchairs stored in cargo holds are frequently damaged or mishandled, leaving people without their primary means of mobility and safety and upon arrival. For people who rely on them, wheelchairs play a crucial role in day-to-day living, and any damage can drastically affect their independence and overall quality of life. The lack of accessible air travel options compounds the daily challenges and limits the mobility of people using wheelchairs. This issue is significant and requires immediate attention to ensure equitable access to air travel for all.

We are encouraged to learn that the Canadian Transportation Agency and Transport Canada are conducting a feasibility study to explore adapted wheelchair access on Canadian airlines, Success of this initiative would be transformative for people using mobility devices travelling within Canada and internationally.

This is particularly timely as Montreal will host the 2024 International Alliance of ALS/MND Associations and ALS/MND Symposium, bringing the ALS community across the globe together. Ensuring equitable access to air travel is essential for their participation and underscores the urgency of these efforts.

We would like to request an update on the expected timeline for the completion of this project.

Additionally, please let us know how we can inform, support or expedite the efforts of the Canadian Transportation Agency and Transport Canada in this crucial endeavour.

We are eager to collaborate with the Ministry to ensure that people using mobility devices can travel by air with dignity and safety.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Tammy Moore

Cc: Ms. France Pegeot, Chair and CEO of the Canadian Transport Agency
Mr. Arun Thangaraj, Deputy Minister, Transport Canada
Mr. Paul Sandhar-Cruz, Director General, Strategic Policy, Transport Canada

¹ Smith E, Giesbrecht E, Mortenson W, Miller W. Prevalence of wheelchair and scooter use among community-dwelling Canadians. *Physical Therapy* 2016; 96: 1135-42.