



AIR CANADA

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Air Canada Takes Action to Improve Experience for Customers with Disabilities

- *Multi-pronged strategy to improve boarding, secure mobility devices, enhance lift capability and simplify travel*
- *Air Canada to invest more resources in training and equipment*

MONTREAL, Nov. 9, 2023 /CNW/ - Air Canada today announced a series of measures to reduce barriers and make travel simpler, more comfortable and consistently reliable for customers with disabilities. The actions being taken will accelerate [Air Canada's Accessibility Plan 2023-26](#), a three-year strategy released in June, and are intended to reduce or eliminate major sources of dissatisfaction and trip disruption for customers with disabilities.

"Air Canada recognizes the challenges customers with disabilities encounter when they fly and accepts its responsibility to provide convenient and consistent service so that flying with us becomes easier. Sometimes we do not meet this commitment, for which we offer a sincere apology. As our customers with disabilities tell us, the most important thing is that we continuously improve in the future. We are listening to them and today we are committing to do better and demonstrating that commitment with concrete actions," said Michael Rousseau, President and Chief Executive Officer of Air Canada.



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"In June, we released our three-year accessibility plan. The measures we are announcing today accelerate key components in that plan. This includes improving boarding and seating, better customer communications, new processes to prevent delays or damage to mobility devices, more training and an investment in equipment such as lifts. We also intend to implement further measures as we strive to make Air Canada accessible for people managing disabilities," said Craig Landry, Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer at Air Canada.

Air Canada is acting to make travel easier and more comfortable for customers with disabilities. This will include working with the airline's regional partners to ensure consistency. The following measures, which are fully in line with the airline's new, three-year Accessibility Plan, are being implemented now to have effect and produce benefits more immediately. The initiatives include:

Immediate Measures

Boarding: Customers at the gate who request lift assistance will be consistently boarded first before all other customers and proactively seated at the front of the cabin they booked. Air Canada is investing significantly in new equipment at Canadian airports, such as lifts, to ensure that we can meet the expectations of our customers.

Storage of mobility aids: Mobility aids will be stored in the aircraft cabin when possible. When mobility aids are stored in the cargo hold, new systems are being put in place to track them in transit, including a process to confirm mobility aids are properly loaded before departure. Customers travelling within Canada will be able to track the journey of their mobility aid using the Air Canada app. In addition, the airline is adopting new processes to load mobility aids in the aircraft holds to ensure our customers' mobility aids arrive safely.

Training: Enhanced training will be supplied to improve all aspects of employee interactions with customers with disabilities, including understanding customer experiences in air travel. Air Canada's approximately 10,000 airport employees will receive this training as part of a new annual, recurrent training program. This will consist of both soft skill and equipment training, such as lifting techniques. Customers with disabilities will be invited to make presentations at employee workshops and provide advice on further process developments.

Responsibility: Air Canada has created the new senior position of Director, Customer Accessibility. She will lead a team to manage implementation of the company's accessibility plan as well as provide a resource and common reference point for responsive management of disability issues.

Evolving Expectations

Due to advances in technology and customer needs, there has been a welcome and continual increase in travel demand from

people with disabilities. Along with this, societal expectations are also evolving. Companies must constantly review and improve their accessibility capabilities to keep them in line with current advancements. Air Canada embraces this. In June, the airline finalized a three-year plan to increase accessibility for customers and employees called *Air Canada's Accessibility Plan 2023-26*. It also fully supports the Government of Canada's Accessible Canada Act and its aim to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040.

About Air Canada

Air Canada is Canada's largest airline, the country's flag carrier and a founding member of Star Alliance, the world's most comprehensive air transportation network. Air Canada provides scheduled service directly to more than 180 airports in Canada, the United States and Internationally on six continents. It holds a Four-Star ranking from Skytrax. Air Canada's Aeroplan program is Canada's premier travel loyalty program, where members can earn or redeem points on the world's largest airline partner network of 45 airlines, plus through an extensive range of merchandise, hotel and car rental rewards. Its freight division, Air Canada Cargo, provides air freight lift and connectivity to hundreds of destinations across six continents using Air Canada's passenger and freighter aircraft. Air Canada aims to achieve an ambitious net zero emissions goal from all global operations by 2050. Air Canada shares are publicly traded on the TSX in Canada and the OCTQX in the US.

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