



March 6, 2025

Air Consultations
Canadian Transportation Agency
60 Laval Street
Gatineau, QC. J8X 3G9

RE: Consultation Response to proposed changes to APPR

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultation process regarding the proposed changes to Canada's Air Passenger Protection Regulations (APPR). Wasaya Airways L.P. has proudly served the people of the remote regions of Northwestern Ontario and Manitoba for the past 35 years, and being Indigenous owned we have an acute understanding of the challenges people living in the remote areas of our country are faced with daily.

After reviewing the proposed changes to the APPR, we are asking that the CTA consider the potential unintended negative impact these changes will have on small northern air carriers, and the people that we serve. The following is a short list of challenges that northern operators face on a near daily basis, that larger (mainstream) carriers would not.

- Multiple-day weather events present significant challenges in the northern region. Airports are staffed only Monday to Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM, with no coverage on weekends or holidays. The staff responsible for runway maintenance and snow removal are only available during these hours, which can lead to substantial delays. As a result, restoring airport operations and access after severe weather can take many hours or even several days.
- Short runway lengths in the north cause operators to take aircraft performance penalties under normal conditions. This is amplified further by weather events, which regularly impact payloads on the aircraft.
- Limited infrastructure at the remote airports hinders the air carrier's ability to serve that market. The older technology at these airports prevents lower approaches into them, so when a flight is dispatched to a destination, there is a high probability that the flight cannot land at its destination

- The lack of weather and runway reporting in the north is a major factor that frequently results in flights not being able to land at their destination as a result of accurate and current information. This is particularly evident during weather events and outside of the airports regular business hours of operation.
- Most of the remote communities served do not have the infrastructure to accommodate the proposed food and accommodation requirements contemplated.

Proposed Compensation

Proposed changes may not provide clarity around the claims process as intended for passengers. The list of “Exceptional Circumstances” would need to be very well defined. The management of this process is impractical based on our system’s inabilities and amount of resources required.

Burden of Proof

By transferring the burden of proof to the carrier from the passenger, this could cause more confusion for the passengers, as often information that would be provided would be of a technical nature which most passengers would not understand. In addition, some of the information provided to passengers would be of a proprietary nature and cannot be made public.

Standards of Treatment

In the proposed changes air carriers will be responsible for providing assistance to its passengers for all flight disruptions, regardless of the disruption being deemed as an exceptional circumstance. The impact on air carriers operating in remote geographical areas would be difficult to accept. Multi-day weather events are common occurrences, that are further complicated due to the lack of airport infrastructure (modern navigational aids, weather, and runway reporting) would be major contributors, adding to the confusion of passengers. The lack of accommodation, food options, and basic services in the north would further complicate this, not to mention the high costs of these services where they are available. Many of these variables are beyond the carrier’s control but will now become our

financial burden to bear. This will result in an additional burden on passengers as carriers try to recover these costs through higher ticket prices. The cost of air travel in remote regions is already unbearably high, and these proposed changes will only further exasperate this issue.

Communications

The push to provide detailed information to passengers electronically will be a major hurdle for northern air carriers. Many passengers traveling for medical purposes are booked through third party booking agencies and organizations, which the carrier does not have access to. This coupled with the lack of cellular services in the north, will create further issues when trying to communicate with passengers electronically. Many of the people traveling to and from the remote north, do not have cellular devices and in some cases, they require interpreter services to relay information to them in their native language, further complicating the process.

Monetary Penalties

Any increases to monetary penalties should be based on the size and scope of the air carrier and distinctions should be allowed given the varied geographical challenges faced by remote regional operators, compared to main line carriers.

Overall impact on northern operators

We understand the goal of the proposed changes, however in our opinion the proposed changes do the exact opposite. Imposing higher penalties and additional monetary obligations on carriers will not directly benefit the traveling public in our remote regions. The cost of air travel in the remote north is already very high, and even though indigenous people have been included in the process, in our opinion there may not have been enough consideration to the potential impact of these changes on the communities we serve. There is a distinct difference in the geographical area that we as northern air operators face, compared to those in other areas of the country.

In closing Wasaya Airways requests that the CTA reconsider the proposed changes and extend the consultation process for you to better understand the complexities faced by northern regional carriers and our passengers. This will allow for the proposed framework that supports passengers rights and maintains the integrity and sustainability of air travel in the remote north. Should you require further information pertaining to the potential financial impact these proposed changes will have on Wasaya Airways, and ultimately the people we serve, please feel free to reach out to us.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments, and we look forward to further discussion regarding the proposed changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Disley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Disley
President and CEO
Wasaya Group Inc.