

Hi

I am disabled and large, I use one or two canes, and most years I fly monthly on trips that could be four to six segments, and sometimes more. Lately I have had to cut back on my travel due to some of the challenges below.

My feed back:

1. Handicapped lanes - Security -Security Lanes in all the airport in the Province of Newfoundland do not have a handicapped lanes like in other provinces. It is very painful to wait in line. When I fly through St Johns Newfoundland I try to be at the door at 3am or earlier, so I can be the first one in line, and I can sit on the floor. You would be surprised how long the line ups are in some of those airports, and it is very difficult to wait that long when you have chronic pain, bad back, arthritis, etc.

Handicapped Lanes- Check in – I pay \$500 a year for the Amex Aeroplan Platinum card so that I can use Air Canada first class check-in line just to avoid standing a long time in the regular check in lines. I should not have to do that. Every airline should have a handicapped lane for check in.

2. Seating in the airports- a) St Johns airport does not have a single bench in the luggage carousel room. I have to sit on a luggage carousel which is very low, uncomfortable and hard to stand up from. If the luggage carousel is being used then this is impossible. b) Toronto airport has lots of seating at the gates, but the long halls between gates often have no benches, and it is very painful to make those walks with no rest stops. c) Ottawa airport – they park the luggage carts right in front of the carousel seating, and in front of a wall ledge that could be seating !!
3. Transportation to car rentals – I understand you cannot redesign airports around this, although this should be taken into account in future redesigns, ie. at some airports the car rental counters or rental car parking lots are such a long walk that you actually need a taxi to get to your car. For example St Johns NL, and Victoria BC. My suggestion is that there be golf carts/trams run by the airport to take people to the parking lot or car rental lots.
4. Transportation between gates – Montreal has a moving sidewalk, and it also has little luggage carts inside the secure area that you can pick up at your gate, and lean on to get to your next gate or to the exit – Kudos Montreal !! These are tremendously helpful. Toronto has golf carts which you can sometimes hail, but they need more. Halifax has a golf cart which is parked most of the time. Airports need to have more golf carts operating, moving constantly to find travellers needing help. I have been to US airports where they provide this service and do very well at it. The carts can be hard to get on and off, perhaps there are other designs, or kneeling carts, but they are still better than walking when you are in pain, or have a long way to go. The electric wheel chairs are not great for a large person, I am heavy and was clearly too heavy for the chair I was offered once, and the motor was burning my leg. If there are bariatric wheel chairs, and motorized bariatric wheel chairs please make them more readily available.
5. Seat belt Extenders – all planes should have a number of seat belt extenders, even the little airlines in the north. Planes have been held up while they searched for an extender for me. I have had to use cargo straps because they did not have an extender on board.
6. Aircraft armrests and large people –The Beech plane is particularly bad, a large person cannot fit in the seat with the arm rests locked in place, and sometimes the Beech is the only choice to the destination. I have had to drug myself before a flight because I know the seat arms are going to crush my hips, and the leg room is nil, and I will be in tremendous pain during the flight. I

recently learned that there is a little release on some chairs, perhaps on all. Airline staff should offer to lift the arm up for large passengers, so they are not in pain.

7. Planing/De-planing – Large planes have stairs or ramps, little planes like the Twin Otter or Beech are hard to get on and off, and the staff often do not bring out a small step to help you get to the first step on the ladder up. Please always provide a step stool. I have trouble getting onto a Twin Otter, and have fallen getting off the Otter 3 times, as it is a small door, a rubber stair rail, and high off the ground. I cant jump, so I have to go down backwards, and the last step is about 3 feet of the ground, not good !!

I am happy to discuss this, and would love to partner on your accessibility planning committee if you have external participants. I am part of the Equity committee for the federal public servants, and travel frequently.

Thanks, Anne

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