

Submitted by email to the Canadian Transportation Agency

Name: Joint submission - Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC), National Coalition of People who use Guide and Service Dogs (HOOH), Guide Dog Users of Canada (GDUC), La Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN), Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), Canadian Association of the Deaf, Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC)

Subject: Open Letter: Transportation Financial Support Package Must Include Funds Earmarked for Accessibility

April 9, 2021

To:

Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau

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The undersigned national, provincial and local disability groups call upon you and other Members of Cabinet to ensure that the Transportation System Financial Support package currently being negotiated, includes funds specifically designated for Transportation entities to meet their accessibility requirements under the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulation*.

In June 2020, most provisions of the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulation* came into effect. This regulation provides a set of clear, specific, legally binding accessibility requirements for Canada's Transportation System. This regulation is a critically important part of making Canada's transportation system accessible.

It is our understanding that some airlines, airports and other transportation entities have asked the Canadian Transportation Agency to exempt and/or give them extensions or work arounds and exempt them from having to enforce the accessibility requirements in the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulation*. They state that the entire industry has experienced significant financial impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, they do not have sufficient funds to meet their accessibility requirements under the regulation.

The undersigned strongly oppose the granting of any exemptions, extensions or exceptions to the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulation*. For decades, people with disabilities, including Blind, Low Vision, deafblind and Deaf people have fought to have our right to equal access to transportation respected. Accessible transportation is a human right. It is essential for realizing full and equal participation of persons with disabilities including Blind, Low Vision, Deafblind and Deaf persons in Canada. Without accessible access to transportation, people are prevented from getting to work, attending medical appointments, voting or participating politically, engaging in social and leisure activities in the community, and virtually all other aspects of life.

Accessible transportation is not something that can or should be delayed or exempted. Over 24% of Canada's population has stated they have a disability.

We, therefore, call upon you and other Members of Cabinet to ensure that any Transportation Financial Support Package of any kind, must allocate funds that are specifically designated for the Transportation Industry to meet their accessibility requirements under the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulation*. These funds must be required to be used by recipients to comply with their regulatory requirements within the timeframe set out in the regulation. All recipient entities must be required to publicly account for these funds, to ensure that they are used for their intended purpose.

Building back better after COVID-19 means building a truly accessible transportation system – one which does not exclude one person with a disability, including Blind, Low Vision, Deafblind and Deaf people.

Thank you

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