

Submitted to the Canadian Transportation Agency (Form submission)

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It will be important to articulate a clear policy for refunds rather than credits in circumstances when the Canadian government issues an advisory restricting all nonessential travel. Since airlines do not cancel all flights and continue to offer flights for essential travel during that time, those of us who abide by the restrictions are compelled to cancel our flights. However, until the airlines cancel those flights, this is not considered a refundable flight and only a travel credit is issued.

In our case, we cancelled a domestic WestJet trip on March 17, 2020, 10 days in advance of schedule departure, when COVID restrictions were announced. However, the airline did not cancel this flight until three days later, a week in advance, and then only cancelled future flights a week at a time. That appears to be a strategy of avoiding repayment and offering a travel credit instead. That is unfair to those who honoured the travel guidelines, and do not know when they would be able or willing to travel again.

Additionally, the limited timeline for use of this credit, even when extended periodically for a short time, presents a condition requiring travel when not convenient or necessary in order to use the credit, or risk losing it entirely. Minimally, removal of this condition and timeline under the extenuating circumstances of governmental restrictions such as currently the case seems imperative in consideration of travellers.