

Dear Canadian Transportation Agency,

First, I would like to commend your efforts concerning the modernization of legislation on accessible transportation. Everyone benefits when our society and services are more inclusive and welcoming. And, I thank you for soliciting citizens' input.

My daughter has severe food allergies. For this reason, we avoided family travel for several years except in our own vehicle. We did eventually fly on one Canadian carrier and found the situation to be excellent in terms of allergy safety. And, my daughter has recently flown on another Canadian carrier for a student event and had an equally safe and well-managed travel experience there. In particular, the airlines allowed us/her to pre-board and wipe down seats and trays before general boarding. They also created a buffer zone in the plane and announced the allergies during the initial flight safety presentation. However, we understand that without clear legislation in place, the airlines may choose not to take these safety measures. Therefore, clear and enforceable legislation to ensure these measures would be helpful to all.

Although the municipal buses in our city are food-free (and this rule is nicely enforced by the drivers), the regional inter-city buses and trains appear to be unregulated. In principle, it may appear simple for a passenger with allergies to change seats if someone nearby is eating an allergen. However, crowding and grouping makes this difficult in practice. Moreover, when people carry food items to eat on inter-city buses, these are often in open packages without caution. Therefore, staff training and precautionary rules would be helpful in ensuring safe surface travel outside of cities. Legislation for this purpose would also be helpful.

The major challenge with severe food allergies is that many people do not understand the seriousness of the problem. Deaths from food allergies are relatively rare, but that is ONLY because allergic individuals and their families are extremely vigilant on a daily basis. Severe allergies are not just a case of the sniffles or a little rash. Severe allergies are life-threatening and have already killed numerous young vibrant people across Canada. This fact should be included in the messages on allergy safety to staff and to passengers using public transportation. Everyone has a role in ensuring traveler safety. Allergic travelers (or their caregivers) have a responsibility to carry appropriate autoinjectors and to inform others. And, other travelers and travel staff have a responsibility to make accommodations for the safety of the allergic individual.

In closing, we can work to improve travel safety and accommodation for all travelers, including those with different abilities and with serious medical conditions. Fostering allergy safety is an essential facet of this endeavour.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With best wishes,

Vanya Ewart