March 15, 2019

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

My name is Kennen Dorgan. My dream is to fly to Alaska to visit my sister. I have a complex physical disAbility and I use a wheelchair for mobility. I cannot sit independently from my wheelchair and airplanes do not have designated wheelchair spots. Every summer I spend at least 108 hours of challenging and exhausting driving time to visit with my sister in Alaska. A flight would take 15 to 20 hours.

In 1988, the Canadian Transportation Agency was given a mandate to protect the human rights of disabled persons to access air transportation. The CTA ensures that undue obstacles are removed from federally regulated air carrier services by creating regulations, codes of practice and guidelines for accessibility. The 2008 decision to implement the One Person One Fare program is a progressive example of how the Canadian government has improved access to air travel for disabled persons. The Canadian Transportation Act of 1994, as administered by Transport Canada, lays out the legal standards carriers must comply with for carriage of mobility devices and personnel training for any employees or contractors that will handle the mobility aids.

Despite the oversight of both the Canadian Transportation Agency and Transport Canada, there are no provisions to improve accessibility to aircrafts for travellers who, because of their disabilities and for safety reasons, cannot sit in a standard airline passenger seat and must remain seated in their personal wheelchairs. These individuals are prevented from traveling any way except by land vehicles.

I propose that every commercial aircraft be retrofitted to have one to two removable passenger seats with a 4-point air cargo system underneath (identical to the system used in military cargo transport aircraft) to fasten each wheelchair securely to the floor of the cabin. An additional safety belt will be required around the waist of each wheelchair user. This proposed setup will guarantee the accessibility and safety of every passenger on board. It will also promote efficiency of getting someone with a disability on and off an airplane.

Such implemented change is an economically sound investment for air carriers. In 2016, the cost of repairing assistive devices stowed in cargo cost Air Canada over $300,000 (within their North American market alone). For a disabled person, a wheelchair is an extension of their self, and it provides accessibility to the built environment. Loss/breakage of mobility devices is further disabling and costs Canadian taxpayers money by increasing the demand for funding replacements on provincial assistive device programs (due to inadequate repairs and reduced lifespan of device).

The large and growing market of people with disabilities has $175 billion in discretionary spending. Additionally, The New York Times reported that spending by travellers with disabilities exceeds $13.6 billion annually. I estimate that this amount will increase significantly once individual aircraft become more wheelchair accessible.

In the United States of America, the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 2018 included a research provision to study the feasibility of a wheelchair spot onboard an aircraft. Initial research performed by All Wheels Up has yielded positive results. I believe that the National Research Council of Canada’s Centre for Air Travel Research provides Canada the opportunity to once again advance access to air travel for disabled travellers.

In *Transportation 2030: A Strategic Plan for the Future of Transportation in Canada* the government has committed to “Make the transportation system more accessible for persons with disabilities”. I call on you to create a mandate for the Canadian Transportation Agency and Transport Canada to develop regulations providing a designated wheelchair spot on commercial aircrafts.

Yours sincerely,

Kennen Dorgan

cc: All Wheels Up
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