



House of Commons  
CANADA

**Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with  
Disabilities of the Standing Committee on Human  
Resources, Skills Development, Social  
Development and the Status of Persons with  
Disabilities**

---

SPER • NUMBER 017 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

---

EVIDENCE

**Monday, November 28, 2005**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff**

All parliamentary publications are available on the  
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## **Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

**Monday, November 28, 2005**

•(1140)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.)):** Welcome, Mr. Currie and Ms. Gravelle.

Please take the floor. We'll have questions for you after your presentation.

**Mr. Gavin Currie (Director General, Air and Accessible Transportation Branch, Canadian Transportation Agency):** Thank you. I have a short opening statement.

We are pleased to be back again to resume the appearance we had on May 4. It was unfortunately interrupted at that time. My name is Gavin Currie and I am the director general, air and accessible transportation branch, for the Canadian Transportation Agency. With me today is Mary-Jane Gravelle, director of the accessible transportation directorate.

When we were here last May you told us you were interested in our voluntary codes of practice, so I will be providing you with some additional information today. I'll also be touching on some previous decisions about small aircraft, another area of interest to this committee, and give you an update on some recent achievements in accessible transportation.

[*Translation*]

In the mid 1990s, the Canadian government introduced a policy of trying to use alternatives to regulations wherever possible, an example being codes of practice. There are a number of advantages to using codes of practice in place of regulations. A code of practice is a simplified process: less time is required to prepare the product and achieve results.

Although voluntary, the codes offer practical and functional solutions to solving systemic problems faced by both persons with disabilities and seniors when they travel.

Our four codes of practice were crafted by the agency in consultation with the community of persons with disabilities, and the carriers and terminal operators, and are underscored by lots of listening and refinement. The provisions leave room for creative solutions offering flexibility to accommodate a transportation service provider's particular circumstances.

A large number of individuals and organizations are consulted on a regular basis on initiatives like these. They reflect industry's best

practices and an expectation that industry will comply with the provisions of the codes. Further, as the Agency is committed to monitoring the implementation of these codes, it will have more flexibility to amend them from time to time, as required, without having to go through a lengthy regulatory process.

Carriers and terminal operators have two to three years to make the necessary changes to comply with the codes.

The agency collects information to establish a benchmark then does a survey to determine actual compliance after the code comes into effect. The results are presented to the agency's accessibility advisory committee and are published. Then we follow up.

Monitoring activities include: conducting surveys; reviewing transportation service providers' training records; inspecting sites; and investigating complaints.

[*English*]

I'd now like to turn to the issue of accessibility to small aircraft for persons with disabilities. We have in the past year released guidelines on the services to be provided to persons with disabilities on aircraft with 29 passenger seats or less. As you may know, the agency already has regulations in place for aircraft of 30 passengers or more.

•(1145)

Development of the guidelines involved a lot of consultation with users and carriers in the air industry. We sought advice from the different parties, and now we are able to provide advice to carriers operating smaller aircraft on how they can better serve the needs of travellers with disabilities. The guidelines explain in practical terms how small operators can best accommodate travellers with accessibility needs. Although many of the carriers are already doing much of what is included in these guidelines, they let the industry know what the agency expects and offer practical and functional solutions while adopting the common sense approach.

More recently, in September the agency issued a circular on emplaning passengers with boarding chairs or level-change devices on small regional aircraft with 19 seats or fewer. The intent of the circular is to provide operational advice that can be used by these operators for an approach to service for passengers with disabilities who use wheelchairs. It highlights the importance for the operator to provide this information to the customer at the time of booking in order to properly assist persons with disabilities in making educated decisions and choices in their travel plans.

The agency has ruled on three complaints regarding accessibility of small aircraft. Two were filed in 2003 and one filed in 2004, and we have provided you with copies of these decisions. In these decisions the agency noted that it will not interfere with general internal commercial operations of transportation service providers to the extent of dictating the general transportation equipment they must use. However, the agency is of the opinion that carriers must make every practicable effort to optimize accessibility of the equipment they choose to use in order to accommodate persons with disabilities in a safe and dignified manner.

[Translation]

While some issues are better addressed through formal complaint adjudication, experience has shown that the agency's complaint process may not be the ideal mechanism for dealing with broad issues such as equipment accessibility and commercial marketplace concerns.

When our chairman addressed our accessibility advisory committee on November 7, she said that for example, deciding for carriers what type of equipment they should be using is a policy issue, one that may best be dealt with by way of regulations and standards.

[English]

We believe, however, that much has been achieved in the past several years to improve the travel experience for Canadian with disabilities. The many collaborative efforts between the agency, the industry, and the community of persons with disabilities have certainly produced concrete results, and we are continuing our efforts to achieve the goal of providing persons with disabilities full access to all modes of transport.

I'd like to mention a few examples of projects the agency is actually engaged in.

[Translation]

We are currently developing our fifth code of practice—the Terminal Accessibility Code. Canadian transportation terminal operators have developed many innovative solutions to resolving accessibility challenges and enhancing the travel experience of persons with disabilities. Through this new code, the agency will document best practices in accessible terminal operations, for example, lowered counters for use by passengers in wheelchairs, assistive listening devices at check-in counters and tactile way-finding markings to assist persons who are blind. It will allow these transportation facilities to identify and implement practical service standards.

This year, meetings were held with industry and consumer representatives to prepare for the first round of consultation for our latest code. We circulated the first draft for consultation and it was

the sole focus of the November 7 and 8 meeting of our accessibility advisory committee.

The agency has actively pursued its service provider outreach program and numerous meetings have been held and are planned with large and small operators to discuss services for persons with disabilities, training initiatives and innovative approaches.

[English]

As well, the use of mediation and facilitation to resolve complaints continues to grow. We are confident that these alternative forms of dispute resolution will become even more attractive in the future since business and citizens alike are demanding more efficiency on how the Government of Canada deals with their concerns.

● (1150)

We continue to remove undue obstacles to the ability of persons with disabilities via our formal complaint process. We handle cases both big and small, but of course they're equally important to those affected.

One case we continue to monitor is the case of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities v. VIA Rail, which most of you are familiar with. As you may know, on November 17 the Supreme Court allowed CCD's application for leave to appeal.

We will continue to fulfill our mandate using modern client- and citizen-focused methods, including alternative dispute resolution and Internet-based complaints processing, and we will continue to strive to remain in tune with the transportation industry and the community of persons with disabilities.

I would like to thank committee members for this opportunity. We'd be pleased to try to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Traditionally, tradition continues.

Ms. Skelton, please.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If I'm correct, your budget for the year is about \$24.3 million for program activities. Accessible transportation gets about 7.4% of that. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** That sounds about right.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Can you explain to me how you go about allocating budget envelopes for the agency and its different activities, please?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Yes. We have a fairly well-defined process; it's what we call operational planning. The various elements within the agency prepare plans for what they would like to do in the upcoming year. Then these are taken to what we call our operational plans review committee, wherein the different proposals are discussed and defended. The committee comes out with recommendations as to which proposals should go ahead and which ones should not. They make recommendations for transferring funds between different programs, depending on the priority they assess. The results of this work from the operational plans review committee then goes to the executive committee, chaired by the chairman of the agency, for decisions. That is how we go about doing it. It's a well-defined process within the agency.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I would like to ask you, then, do you believe the Canadian Transportation Agency, with its current budget, is capable of properly exercising its responsibilities regarding accessible transportation under the act?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** There is no question that we are under pressure in terms of resources. I would say we are doing it. It would certainly be a lot easier if we had a few more resources. We are certainly tight—no question about it, particularly in the area of accessible transportation. That means we don't always manage to give service and turnaround times that are as good as we would like them to be.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** You have about 260 employees in your organization. How many of them work for the air and accessible transportation branch?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Approximately a hundred.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** You were mentioning the cases before you. How long does it take an average case to work through the system if you get a complaint?

• (1155)

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I'm not sure what the average is. Some cases are done very quickly, in a matter of a few weeks; others take several years. I don't have an average figure overall. I'm not sure whether an average figure is really meaningful, but certainly some cases do take several years. For example, in accessible transportation we are dealing with complaints regarding oxygen. They have gone on for several years, for a variety of reasons I could get into, if necessary. Major cases can take many years.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** How many cases do you have in front of you right now?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** For the agency as a whole?

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Yes.

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I'm not sure, but it must be several hundred.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Do you have a number for the accessible...?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** In accessible transportation, I think we have approximately a hundred cases in front of us.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** You have a hundred cases with a hundred employees?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** We have a hundred cases, and we have 18 employees in accessible transportation.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** You have 18 employees in accessible transportation.

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** The agency will issue several thousand decisions a year, because not all of the cases take very long. We get a lot of applications before us that are dealt with in a matter of days, so we're not in a backlog right now. The number of decisions issued by the agency in a year, I'm sure, is several thousand.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Thank you.

In your opinion, are there legislative or regulatory provisions that allow the Minister of Transport, or Transport Canada, to enhance or restrict the Canadian Transportation Agency's capacity to enact regulations concerning accessible transportation?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** The process that's set up requires approval by cabinet, by the Governor in Council. The agency can propose recommendations, but they must be approved by the government. That's not really the Minister of Transport. Of course, that means the Minister of Transport must be in favour of them, because he sends them forward to the Privy Council. I think that is part of the general government system with regard to regulation as opposed to a specific constraint on the agency. We cannot make regulations ourselves. We can recommend regulations, but they must be approved by the Governor in Council.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Correct me if I'm wrong, but Transport Canada developed the code of practice for access to bus transportation. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** That is correct.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Whereas the Canadian Transportation Agency developed a similar code for air, rail, transportation, ferries, and communication with persons with disabilities. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Yes.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Is that not a problem?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I can explain why that happened.

The work on the code of practice started in the early nineties. At that time, the agency did not have clear jurisdiction over interprovincial bus. We did not have the same authority as we did in terms of air, rail, and ferry. In 1996, the act was clarified. We now have jurisdiction over the network under the jurisdiction of Parliament, the authority of Parliament. Clearly, interprovincial bus is now under our jurisdiction. I think if we were doing it today, the chances are we would be involved.

Despite the fact that we did not do the code, we were heavily involved in the code. We were involved in all the discussions involving transport and the industry on the code of practice and, in fact, made quite a number of suggestions as to how the code should be put together and how it should function, which I think were constructive at the time.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** How often do you go back and review these codes? Is that done, or once a code is set in place is it there forever?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** No, the code has no sunset clause to it. They do go on unless they're changed. What we do is monitor how effective the codes appear to be in terms of compliance with the codes by those who are covered by them. As of today, we have not actually changed any of our codes. We've found them to be helpful in their current form, but they could be changed.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I assume we're out of time. Do I still have time?

**The Chair:** We're going to have 27 minutes each today. You have another two and a half minutes, if you like.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** That's okay.

**The Chair:** Then we'll just keep going around.

*Madame, s'il vous plaît.*

• (1200)

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Ms. Gravel and Mr. Cury. I would like you to explain how you deal with complaints. It says here that the Agency can take up to 120 days to issue a decision when a disabled person files a complaint relating to an obstacle to mobility. That is four months, which seems like a rather long time. Why does it take so long? Could we not try to help those involved by shortening the timeframe?

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** In terms of the length of time to process complaints, the act says 120 days. From our perspective, that seems like a short time. What we do when we get a complaint is this. The complaint is received and then served on the respondent, the carrier normally, and they have 30 days to respond. The complainant then has a further ten days to reply to what the carrier has said. After that, there are very often situations where there are further clarifications required from one party or the other. There's a further to-ing and fro-ing between parties. The material is then analyzed and put together and the members look at the material and decide what decision they're going to make on the application. Once they've decided, it's a question of putting together a formal decision, which takes some time to draft, prepare, and translate. We find it actually quite difficult to process complaints on accessible transportation within 120 days.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** What you are saying, then, is that there is a great deal of paper to take care of. That is why it takes four months for you to render a decision.

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** It is a quasi-judicial process. There's a lot of backwards and forwards between the parties. Sometimes it's, as you say, a lot of paperwork, and most of our hearings are done as what we call file hearings, which is an exchange of written pleadings. On occasion, too, certainly for the more complicated cases, we will have oral hearings, which again take time to set up and to organize and to deal with.

We find 120 days actually quite difficult to meet in terms of the time. I'm sure, from the point of view of an advocate, that's seems like a long time, but given the complexity of the complaints and the complexity of the quasi-judicial process, it actually isn't that long.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** Do you think that the current budget of the Canada Transportation Agency allows it to properly fulfil its mandate in the area of accessible transportation?

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** As I said before, I think we would certainly appreciate having more budgetary flexibility. I think we are able to meet our responsibilities. If we had more resources, we could meet them in a more timely manner. We don't always manage to do things as fast as we would like, so more resources certainly would be helpful.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** How many of the agency's 260 employees deal exclusively with accessible transportation issues?

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Approximately 18 to 20.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** Is that enough?

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** As I explained a few minutes ago, with regard to our operational planning process for reallocation of resources, we have over the past few years actually moved some more resources into accessible transportation, and that has certainly helped. We do certainly borrow resources from other parts of the agency. If for example another part of the agency does not have as many applications at a given time, because we do respond to what comes in, then we will try to use resources from elsewhere in the agency to help. It is certainly the case that successful transportation is one of the areas of the agency that is under pressure from a resource point of view.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** The Canadian Transportation Agency has the power to adopt regulations to eliminate obstacles to the mobility of disabled persons. However, no new regulations have been adopted since 1994, as the agency has preferred to develop voluntary codes of practice.

Do you think that these voluntary codes of practice represent an efficient way to promote the accessibility of disabled persons to various modes of transportation?

•(1205)

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Yes, I believe they do. I think there are advantages and disadvantages to both regulations and codes of practice. In terms of codes of practice, the reason we moved from regulations to codes of practice was a broad government policy to try to use voluntary methods as opposed to regulations where possible. We did in fact transform a number of initiatives that were in preparation to be regulations into codes of practice, for example, the air code and the rail code.

We believe they have been successful, and I think there are a number of factors that are important to this success. It's very important to have a good consultation process, to start with. It's important to have a buy-in from the industry, a commitment from industry to follow the code. You have to have good monitoring, and you have to have some method of following up, and I can perhaps give you some examples of that.

On the air code, for example, I think there are a couple of concrete examples where the code has helped. The code requires carriers to have on-board wheelchairs, and I think you'll find virtually all large aircraft now have on-board wheelchairs. I think you'll find many more aircraft now have movable armrests than we had before. They're not all movable, but there are a lot more. This again is another code requirement.

We introduced the air code back in 1996, I guess it was, and did a baseline survey in 1997. In 1999 we found that carriers had not made as much progress as we'd hoped, so the chairman wrote to all the chief executive officers of airlines in this country, pointing out her disappointment with the lack of progress and asking them to provide a commitment that they would improve things. When we did the next survey back in 2001, we found a significant improvement. This is an example of where the monitoring had shown things had not gone as well as expected, action was taken by the chairman, and the carriers responded to that.

Now, I don't think codes of practices are perfect in every situation. I think that clearly there are times when a regulation would be better. If you get a very complicated or very expensive issue, then probably a regulation is better because of the way a regulation is put together and the fact that everyone has to follow a regulation. If you have a code of practice, one of the problems we do have is that not everyone in industry follows it equally well. Some carriers do better than others. Although you do try to make sure they all follow the codes of practice, if you have a variation in response to it, then that can make it less effective.

But our view is that, yes, they have been helpful, they have been successful in improving accessibility, but I'm not saying in every circumstance they are the best answer.

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** Merci.

**The Chair:** Your operation as a unit deals with the system trend-wise in the country, with smaller aircraft, more feeder systems, more people, more airlines, and perhaps more competition. This all tends to mean that for many communities, although they may get air service, it's certainly not going to be with a plane that can carry even a collapsible wheelchair. That means, if we're following this

argument, the opportunity for people to have national accessibility means going to big cities or larger centres as opposed to rural if they want to travel by air.

To a large extent, the same process is happening in the rail system. Very seldom outside of larger Greater Toronto Area-type systems where you have commuter trains do you have passenger systems so people can actually travel by train. The train system, I believe, is becoming a tourist operation as opposed to a means of transportation amongst people.

Can you tell me if you agree with me as to that reality and those trends and how small communities are going to adjust to it?

•(1210)

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** You've certainly stated a fact. There's no question at all that over the past decade the airline system has certainly changed and there is now a lot more use of smaller aircraft. It's a worldwide phenomenon.

Airlines around the world have bought Bombardier's regional jets and are using them to service communities that couldn't otherwise justify certain larger aircraft or the provision of more frequency on routes. That has certainly been a worldwide trend. And you're right that a corollary is that for certain people the aircraft are no longer accessible.

I don't think there's an easy answer to that. If it's going to be addressed, it's the kind of issue that has to be addressed at the policy level and in a broad consultation. Clearly there are benefits to the country as a whole in having more frequent service to more places with smaller aircraft, but there is a downside in the sense that persons with disabilities may not be able to get on all the services.

So I don't think there's an easy answer to that. It's one that I don't think can be dealt with through the complaint process. Because of the number of people and the range of issues involved, it has to be addressed at a policy level and perhaps through regulations.

Certainly a regulation that required airlines to use aircraft of a certain size to serve certain places would be a very significant imposition on the market. It certainly is not the kind of thing one could enter into lightly. It would require a lot of thought and a lot of consultation.

**The Chair:** Is there an association of airport or airline manufacturers, designers, or producers? Do they have their own group? Shouldn't you guys know?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Yes, certainly. There's the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, for example, and I'm sure there are others worldwide.

I think the aircraft are becoming more accessible within. If you take an aircraft of a particular size today and compare it with that aircraft ten years ago, that aircraft is now more accessible. If you take a smaller aircraft in place of a big one, simply because of the physical constraints of a small aircraft, it's going to be less accessible than the big one.

There's no doubt that aircraft manufacturers are certainly trying to do what they can to make any particular aircraft as accessible as possible. For example, in large aircraft now we have accessible washrooms, which we certainly didn't have ten years ago. For persons with disabilities, being able to have a washroom that is genuinely accessible to a person in a wheelchair is a very significant improvement. These are clearly advantages.

When you get down to something like the regional jet, you try to get the manufacturer to make that aircraft as accessible as possible within the constraints of the aircraft's size. But as you're getting to the stage of deciding which aircraft a carrier should use, that's a very significant regulation of the market. I'm not saying it can't be done, but it shouldn't be done without a great deal of thought and consultation.

**The Chair:** Understanding that issue in design and production, should we be inviting the aircraft manufacturers to talk to us and explain some of these things?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** You might well find it interesting. I think you'll certainly find that manufacturers would be able to tell you about a number of accessibility improvements that they've been able to make. At least part of that is due to the work we're doing at the agency and the work we've done through the International Civil Aviation Organization, because there are now standards there. For example, when we have a code of practice in aircraft accessibility here, we try to make sure it is compatible with what's being done in Europe and in the States.

So there's no question at all that there's a real evolution to make aircraft more accessible within a given size. But if you're replacing large aircraft with small, that's a different issue.

**The Chair:** People like Steve Estey and Dave Shannon are trying, on Canada's behalf, to present a UN protocol for accessibility on a planetary scale. We could suggest, even through a group such as ours, that while we don't want to discourage competition, we want new companies to come into the aircraft field and use planes that are as humanly accessible as possible—and the emphasis is on “humanly”. It would be, as you say, a policy decision. The encouragement, I believe, also has to be fought at all sorts of policy levels internationally.

Your group deals primarily with air, so we won't go into the rail situation. The Canadian Council on Disabilities is pursuing a case about the Renaissance cars. I know them well because they're being refurbished in Thunder Bay. Trying to upgrade something that already exists is always more difficult than designing it from scratch. We'll probably have enough rail cars for many decades after this refurbishing is done, so we're talking about a case here where it's going to be rather difficult, in terms of the expense of trying to fix something that's already been upgraded, fixed, and repaired, and is now found to be somewhat deficient, or is approaching that.

How fast, from policy to reality, can we get this kind of input for these modes of transportation so we can have a national standard—even for things like taxis, buses, ferry systems, and things of that nature?

•(1215)

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I'm not sure I can give you an answer on that. My sense is that it would take several years to do it. I suppose one

would decide on a policy of what one wanted to do and implement it by way of regulation. The regulation-making process in the government tends to be long because of the consultation to try to get a consensus from the various parties as to the appropriate way to go. It would probably take several years to put in place regulations, for example, on rail car accessibility. If you had particular regulations in place, if a rail company in this country were going to buy new rolling stock it would have to meet the requirements. So regulation would certainly be appropriate there.

If you wanted to put in place a regulation on aircraft, saying only aircraft of a certain size or with certain accessibility features were to be used in Canada, that could be done. We know many parts of Canada are served by small aircraft, and without them there would be no service at all, so it's always a question of how far you go. You can perhaps fairly readily say you can only serve Toronto to Vancouver with large aircraft, and if you're going to serve small places in the north, you're going to have to be quite careful as to how tightly you regulate what can and cannot be done.

**The Chair:** The pace of voluntary compliance seems to be slower than anybody expected or desired. The stick of mandatory measures seems to be the resort that everybody is looking for. Do we have any choice except to go to mandatory legislation?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I know that right now the Department of Transport is doing a study of the dangers of voluntary codes versus regulation. I don't know what the result will be, but I suspect it will point out certain areas where voluntary codes work well, and certain others where mandatory regulations are required. Once that study is done, I think we'll have the answers on what should be done.

I'm not convinced that you need to mandate everything. I pointed out a couple of examples where the voluntary code has got response from carriers for things like on-board wheelchairs and fixable armrests, but there may be other cases where mandatory is the only way to go.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We can have a second round.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** It's interesting to be talking about this. I've been very cognizant of what I've seen when flying on the small regional jets, the Bombardier jets.

Two weeks ago there was a young woman with two hand crutches. She had a terrible time getting into the bathroom. It was almost impossible to get her, without a lot of help, into that bathroom, and it took a lot of care to get her out again.



I recognize your point about servicing northern Canada, but given the people in the north now with severe disabilities, I have a real problem with the statement that some service is better than none. I think there are times when we have to make sure the disabled can be moved in and out of these communities. We just can't get people into a lot of these small planes.

How long has the departmental study you were talking about been going on?

• (1220)

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** The department is doing the study. I do not know what stage it's at right now.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Do you know when it started?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I don't even know whether it actually has started. I know the department said it was going to do the study. I don't know whether it has actually started or what stage it's at, but they certainly undertook to do the study.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Okay. They intend to do a study, then.

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** That is my understanding, that they intend to do a study of the relative merits of voluntary codes versus regulations. Once it is finished, if it shows that certain aspects must be regulated to be effective, then I assume regulations will follow.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** When did the department first announce they were thinking about doing this study?

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** My recollection is they gave it in response to this committee's report.

Is that correct?

**Ms. Mary-Jane Gravelle (Acting Director, Air and Accessible Transportation Branch, Canadian Transportation Agency):** It was directly in response to the standing committee's report, "Access for All". I think I've heard the first step is to establish a methodology for this independent study. But again, as Gavin said, we're unaware of the stage it's at right now.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Madame Poirier-Rivard.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** Could you tell us about the people who take care of persons with a disability. Are they given any special training?

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** Certainly our staff all go through sensibility training. We go to the rehabilitation centre in Ottawa and do a day's course there. I personally find it very helpful in getting a better understanding of some of the challenges persons with disabilities face. You learn about wheelchairs, about going around without being able to hear what's going on, going around with impaired vision. Obviously it doesn't give you a complete answer, but it certainly does help.

We also learn, of course, during that course how best to deal with persons with disabilities, the appropriate way of addressing them—

the importance of speaking to the person, as opposed to an attendant, for example. I think this is all very helpful.

All of our staff have had that kind of training.

[Translation]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard:** You did say that they are given two days of training. That seems rather short. For example, one would need special training to deal with a passenger who is afraid of flying.

[English]

**Mr. Gavin Currie:** I was talking about the training my staff have for dealing with complaints.

As for the training airlines or terminal operators give their staff, we have regulations that require airlines and terminal operators to train their staff in a variety of ways. One is through general sensibility training or sensitivity training. In addition, those air carrier staff who have to deal with, for example, mobility aids or lifting persons—giving special services of that kind—have to go through additional training of that nature.

There is a regulatory requirement on the part of air carriers and terminal operators to do that training.

**The Chair:** Merci.

We seem to be exhausted, or we may also have other things. I want to thank you very much for your presentation today.

We'll now entertain items for next week's meeting.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I think the airline industry, or...

**The Chair:** I think, when this committee reconvenes at a future date, that is a group we would ask to come here, so that we can talk about the problems of design in the field—their application to people who have to deal with stuff.

• (1225)

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I think we should also ask the rail system and the bus system. I think we need to talk to all of them about this, because the sensibility and the design isn't there.

**The Chair:** It's truly nuts and bolts, and I think we'd like to get at that too.

We thank you very much for your presentation today.

Members of the committee, I'll ask if there is anything further for the good of the committee. If not, then I'll wish everyone *bonne chance, adieu et Joyeux Noël*.

I thank the staff very much for their professionalism and their excellent service to us. It is very much appreciated, and I know I speak for all of us when I say we are very grateful. Thank you so much.

So...until we meet again.





**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**