

Minister of Transport



Ministre des Transports

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0N5

The Honourable John Williamson, M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee) for its 32nd report, entitled *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities* (Committee Report), tabled on November 9, 2023.

The Government commends the members of the Committee, and the witnesses who appeared before it, for their insight and commitment toward improving Canada's accessibility and reinforcing its commitment to achieving a barrier-free Canada by 2040. The Government of Canada is pleased to provide the Committee with its response to the nine recommendations in the Committee Report.

The *Accessible Canada Act*, which came into effect on July 11, 2019, provided an important framework for planning and reporting requirements in the federal jurisdiction, including in transportation. This resulted in the development of the *Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations*, which came into force on December 13, 2021, and were created to systemically and proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities who travel.

The *Canada Transportation Act* offers provisions for enhancing accessibility in transportation. Under Part V of the Act, the Canadian Transportation Agency (the Agency) is responsible for removing undue barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities from federally regulated transportation services. The creation of the *Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations*, which fully came into force on June 25, 2020, provide an important framework of rights for Canadians with disabilities to ensure their equal participation in society and complete access to the federal transportation network.

Despite this strong legislative and regulatory regime protecting the rights of persons with disabilities who travel there continue to be systemic issues preventing a seamless transportation experience. Issues, including unsafe handling of mobility aids, inadequate awareness training for personnel, and inaccessible websites, are examples of persistent barriers. The Government will continue to measure its efforts to advance a federal transportation system that is harmonized and accessible for all Canadians. Accessibility is a non-partisan issue, and all parties have raised concerns about the need for more accessible transportation data and accessibility performance monitoring.

On June 20, 2023, the Government introduced Bill C-52, the Enhancing Transparency and Accountability in the Transportation System Act, including proposed amendments to the *Canada Transportation Act*, to help achieve a barrier-free Canada for persons with disabilities. Transportation service providers would have to collect and provide accessibility data to the Minister of Transport and the Agency, which will help identify barriers and increase accountability by permitting the creation of regulations allowing the publication of transportation service providers' accessibility-related complaints data. Bill C-52 will provide an evidence-based pathway to enable the Government to proactively develop policy that furthers accessible transportation.

The Government agrees with and supports each of the Committee's nine recommendations. The Response describes the concrete actions, policies and programs, either underway or planned to address the recommendations. The Response outlines how ongoing actions, including changes to accessibility training, stakeholder engagement with the community of persons with disabilities, website accessibility at VIA Rail Canada Inc. (VIA Rail) and the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), and enforcement policies and data collection at the Agency, support the recommendations raised in the Report. The reporting dates outlined in the Committee Recommendations do not always align with the realities of the timeline commitments made by VIA Rail and CATSA in the Office of the Auditor General Report. Therefore, some reports will be presented at later dates, which have been identified in the Government response. The Government notes that the spirit of the recommendations are well-aligned with initiatives currently being advanced by the Government of Canada. Please find enclosed a response to the Committee's recommendations. Once again, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you and the members of the Committee for your important work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pablo Rodriguez', written in a cursive style.

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Transport and Quebec Lieutenant

Enclosure

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

	Committee Recommendation	Government Response
1.	<p>Recommendation 1 – On VIA Rail Inc. (VIA Rail)’s consultations with persons with disabilities</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, VIA Rail present the Committee with a report on the consultations with persons with disabilities for its new fleet of long-distance trains.</p>	<p>VIA Rail agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>Their first consultation with persons with disabilities for their new fleet of long-distance trains will be held on 30 January 2024 in Ottawa. VIA Rail was unable to conduct consultations in 2023, as targeted in the Office of the Auditor General Report, due to the project layouts not being finished; therefore, VIA Rail will present the Committee with a final report on the outcomes of the consultations with persons with disabilities for its new fleet of long-distance trains by 23 February 2024.</p>
2.	<p>Recommendation 2 – On the accessibility of online information – VIA Rail</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, VIA Rail present the Committee with a report indicating which tests were conducted by the web accessibility specialist and the Universal Accessibility Advisory Committee, and what corrective action was taken. This should also include the issues that were identified for which no corrective actions have been taken, and when they will be undertaken.</p>	<p>VIA Rail agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>Their web accessibility specialist is working on the accessibility assessment of VIA Rail’s website, and the specialists’ assessment report identifying gaps in accessibility will be completed by late January 2024.</p> <p>In the summer of 2023, VIA Rail started modernization of its various key information technology support systems, including its reservation system and web page content; therefore, the specialists’ assessment was coordinated to occur at the conclusion of these improvements to identify any remaining or recurring gaps and to ensure a meaningful report. This meets VIA Rail’s commitment in the Office of the Auditor General Report to have their web and mobile sites reviewed once a year by a web accessibility specialist. Once VIA Rail receives the web accessibility specialists’ assessment report, corrective actions will be made. The Universal Accessibility Advisory Committee will then review VIA Rail’s website after they have made the initial corrective actions; therefore, VIA Rail will present the Committee with a final report on the outcome of the tests conducted by the web accessibility specialist, the tests conducted by the Universal Accessibility Advisory Committee and their outcomes, and issues that were identified for which no corrective actions have been taken, and when they will be undertaken, by 23 February 2024.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Recommendation 3 – On the accessibility of online information – Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA)</p> <p>That, by 31 March 2024, CATSA present the Committee with a report indicating whether its objective of meeting all web accessibility standards was achieved, as well as the results of the quarterly review of accessibility compliance. This should also include the issues that were identified for which no corrective actions have been taken, and when they will be undertaken.</p>	<p>CATSA agrees with this recommendation and plans to meet all web accessibility standards by 31 March 2024 as committed to in response to the Office of the Auditor General’s Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Report, published in March 2023. Following implementation of the web accessibility standards, all changes will undergo a comprehensive internal review ensuring alignment with current accessibility standards. CATSA will be in a position to report on the changes on 1 May 2024.</p> <p>In terms of the quarterly review, CATSA committed to developing and implementing procedures that will include quarterly reviews of accessibility compliance by March 2024. As such, the results of the first quarterly review will only be available one quarter after the implementation (i.e., June 2024). As such, a final report containing the quarterly results, including the issues that were identified for which no corrective actions have been taken, and when they will be undertaken, will be presented to the Committee by 31 July 2024.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4 – On accessibility training – VIA Rail</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, VIA Rail present the Committee with a report indicating: 1) the percentage of managers who have received accessibility training within 60 days of their hire—and the changes implemented to achieve its target rate; and 2) whether current management training material has been reviewed, and what changes were made further to reviews.</p>	<p>VIA Rail agrees with this recommendation and will provide the Committee with the requested report by 31 January 2024. VIA Rail notes that: 96% of managers have received accessibility training within 60 days of their hire; and management training material has been reviewed by several persons with disabilities. The training team is implementing the recommendations made by the reviewers with disabilities.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Recommendation 5 – On accessibility training – CATSA</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, CATSA present the Committee with a report: 1) indicating the percentage of managers who have received disability awareness training—and the changes implemented to achieve its target rate; and 2) presenting the results of the consultations with disability advocacy organizations on teaching methods and the changes to the training content for third-party screening personnel.</p>	<p>CATSA agrees with this recommendation and will present the Committee with the requested report by 31 January 2024.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Recommendation 6 – On the monitoring of the <i>Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations</i></p>	<p>The Agency agrees with this recommendation. The Agency will present the Committee with a report indicating what measures have been taken to</p>

	<p>That, by 31 May 2024, the Canadian Transportation Agency (the Agency) present the Committee with a status report indicating what measures have been taken to implement additional oversight approaches and adjust its staffing level to enforce the <i>Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations</i>. A final report should also be presented by 31 May 2025 and include statistics on the number of inspections performed, such as those including direct observations of available services, and the number of employees responsible for enforcing the <i>Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations</i>, in fiscal years 2022–2023, 2023–2024 and 2024–2025.</p>	<p>implement additional oversight approaches and adjust its staffing level to enforce the <i>Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations</i> by 31 May 2024, with a final report by 31 May 2025.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Recommendation 7 – On complaint data analysis – CATSA</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, the CATSA present the Committee with a status report on its draft strategy for complaint data. A final report should also be presented by 30 September 2024 on the changes made further to consultations on the strategy and its implementation.</p>	<p>CATSA agrees with this recommendation and will present the Committee with a status report on its draft strategy for complaint data by 31 January 2024.</p> <p>Pursuant to the commitments in the Office of the Auditor General Report, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority strategy will be implemented by 30 September 2024. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority will be in a position to respond to the Committee in a detailed final report on changes made to its strategy and its implementation by 1 November 2024.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Recommendation 8 – On complaint data analysis – VIA Rail</p> <p>That, by 31 January 2024, VIA Rail present the Committee with a status report on its draft strategy for complaints data. A final report on the strategy’s implementation should also be presented by 30 September 2024.</p>	<p>VIA Rail agrees with this recommendation and will present the Committee with the requested draft strategy report by 31 January 2024, and the final report by 30 September 2024. VIA Rail notes that it has updated its accessibility complaints data strategy to produce a detailed quarterly accessibility complaints report for the Accessibility Team. This strategy was developed in consultation with persons with disabilities and aligns with <i>A Federal Data and Measurement Strategy for Accessibility 2022 to 2027</i>.</p> <p>Data is extracted from VIA Rail’s database and assembled into an accessibility complaints file that is shared with the Accessibility Team to analyze patterns and trends. The Accessibility Team then holds a quarterly meeting with the managers of the impacted business units to address complaints. The managers then take corrective actions and report back to the Accessibility Team. The Accessibility Team records these corrective actions in the accessibility complaints file, which includes</p>

		<p>information related to the nature of complaints, identified root cause(s), and actions taken. This updated strategy helps ensure the appropriate actions are taken to prevent future accessibility complaints.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Recommendation 9 – On access to complaint data for the Agency That, by 31 March 2024, the Agency present the Committee with a status report indicating which government processes were undertaken and how much information the Agency has received from transportation service providers to determine the number and nature of accessibility complaints and to classify them. A final report should also be presented by 31 March 2025.</p>	<p>The Agency agrees with this recommendation and will present the Committee with the requested report on government processes undertaken and information received from transportation service providers to determine the number and nature of accessibility complaints, and to classify them, by 31 March 2024, with a final report by 31 March 2025.</p>