



March 27, 2020

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion  
140 Promenade du Portage  
Gatineau, QC  
K1A 0J9

**Subject: Financial support for Canadian travel agents and agencies**

Dear Minister,

I am writing today concerning the difficult situation facing the more than 6,000 travel agencies in Canada and their more than 20,000 Canadian employees.

Travel agents have been doing extraordinary work in recent weeks helping to repatriate Canadians and they will continue to be there for their clients. Never has their work been more vital. Over 90% of agencies are considered small businesses and 75% of travel agents are women. At the Canadian Automobile Association, which operates travel agencies in nine provinces, our Clubs benefit from the expertise of 700 travel agents.

Minister, we are writing to make sure you and your colleagues are aware that the enormous effect the COVID-19 crisis is having on the travel industry is not limited to just airlines and airports.

Let me first salute your government for its rapid response to this global pandemic, and acknowledge the extraordinary and complex work that is being undertaken by government and its private-sector partners, across all industries, to cope with the sudden and systemic shockwaves that have resulted.

I want to also express how proud we are of all travel agents that have worked tirelessly to help coordinate the return of many thousands of individuals, families and groups to Canada during this crisis. Their expert knowledge and resources have helped many travellers get home who would otherwise have been left stranded abroad.

Our industry has suffered greatly over the past few weeks due to the COVID-19 virus. With many airlines, cruise lines and other travel providers announcing extended operational shutdowns, we expect that the critical economic situation our industry faces will continue over the next several months. COVID-19 has devastated new travel bookings. New revenue is all but eliminated. Layoffs and temporary travel agency closures have already begun in the industry.

At CAA, we stand in solidarity with our colleagues in the travel agency community, and we face many of the same issues.

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We are in the middle of an unprecedented crisis for everyone and we are asking that travel agents and travel agencies be included in any financial support tailored to the air travel industry or the travel and tourism sector. Among the elements that would be most helpful immediately would be:

- Ensuring that travel agencies meet the requirements for the federal direct wage subsidy for employers;
- Enhancing the Work-Sharing program;
- Continuing to enable greater access to credit and low-interest loans for small businesses;
- Mortgage/rent relief.

We commend your government for establishing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) earlier this week for employees and for also increasing the federal percentage of direct wage subsidy for employers. These steps will provide much-needed assistance to Canadians and businesses who need it most at this time. While these are excellent first steps, we encourage you to consider making the CERB benefit non-taxable or consider increasing the subsidy amount to maximize the benefit.

Once again, we applaud your government's efforts to react quickly under this extraordinary crisis, prioritizing the health and well-being of Canadians. We are proud to be doing our part. We would be happy to answer any questions you or your staff might have. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at (613) 863-2590 or email at [ijack@national.caa.ca](mailto:ijack@national.caa.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'IJ', is positioned below the 'Sincerely,' text.

Ian Jack  
Vice President, Public Affairs  
Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)

CC:

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P., Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Affairs  
The Honourable Mary Ng, P.C., M.P., Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade  
The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport