

June 29, 2005

Hon. Jean Lapierre,
Minister, Transport Canada
Place de Ville, 330 Sparks Street,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N5

Dear Mr. Minister:

Thank you for your letter of June 21, 2005, this is a sad day indeed! I am sorry that you felt the need to communicate with each member individually by way of a form letter to the representative's organization in writing rather than speaking to the members at a face to face meeting. ACAT members, without exception, gave of themselves on behalf of their respective organizations and companies for the office of the Minister of Transport. Your actions towards my colleagues and I are regrettable.

The fact that you have decided to make the membership process for the consumer sector through individuals rather than organizations is a terrible step backwards when organizations are constantly in touch with their members and others in Canada. Further, I see the potential of people being placed on the committee who have connections to government rather than to organizations who advocate on behalf of their members. Your decision seems to be an aftermath of your experience at the ACAT Committee meeting in November 2004 when you felt you had been blackmailed by an organization when in fact they had briefed you months before of their intentions should the "log jam" continue concerning issues to which your office was fully aware. You appear to say to your committee "my way or the highway" and your solution is to disband in the hope that the problems go away. You, sir, have, in my humble opinion, made the consumer network less effective as agents of change in Canada for people with disabilities and seniors. In fact, you have slammed the door on our communities. This would appear to be a wrong turn when seeking support for the department and your mandate.

I believe your approach is punitive as well as regressive and most regrettable for all. The role of ACAT is to advise the office of the Minister and yet the Minister seems not to want to work with the advisors but rather let others in your department handle the work so that you, as Minister, can stand back and watch the fall of ACAT. Pity, when you consider the talent and network your committee had when working with national organizations of Canada for the benefit of all people. The potential of ACAT under the membership that was in place allowed groups to come together and discuss issues in the forum of understanding and resolution. Where resolution was not possible your office

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would be advised to the concerns and sub-committees were set up to deal with potential solutions. Everyone worked hard in the attempt to move recommendations to the office of the Minister. Only recently has the impasse been seen between the department, the Minister, and the Members due to the lack of will to move ACAT forward in a productive and progressive manner. Your committee recommended a modernization as to how ACAT work should be done not a process of divide and conquer through the appointment of individuals in the consumer sector of the committee. The fact that industry's process continues unchanged sends a message that you were unable to effectively manage ACAT under the previous process and mandate. It is truly a disgrace when one witnesses a leader succumb to tactic such as yours of moving light years in reverse to avoid accountability.

Respectfully, I ask that you review your decision of process so that you do include the community of persons with disabilities as well as seniors. In the Transport policy by the former Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Jean Corbeil, Access for All, the government wanted an inclusive approach with Canadians through the most effective manner possible, organizations not individuals.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is fully prepared to work on behalf of Canadians who are hard of hearing / late-deafened and to work with your office and your committee so that Canadians, all Canadians are treated equally and are included not excluded. We are prepared to provide you and your team frank and honest opinions so that all issues are explored and hopefully addressed with solutions. We are prepared to work with our colleague for the benefit of all but first you must be prepared to take on a visible leadership role and provide decisions that build a strong foundation toward Canada's transportation network. Together it can and will be done. The vision is there and all of us are willing to work towards a better national transportation system in a cooperative setting versus a confrontational environment. I ask, once again, that you reconsider your approach to ACAT a very valuable committee with the potential to add a positive presence in Canada's transportation scene.

Respectfully yours,

Colin J.S. Cantlie
Special Advisor to the President

cc. The Right Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada
Ms. Carole Willans-Theberge, President, CHHA
Ms. Janice McNamara, Executive Director, CHHA
The CHHA Transportation Committee