



Manitoba Division

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July 18, 2005

Honourable Jean Lapierre
Minister of Transport
Tower C, Place de Ville
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa ON
K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Lapierre,

I am writing on behalf of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Manitoba Division to support the efforts of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities to have VIA Rail comply with the Canadian Transportation Agency's decision that all VIA passenger rail cars should be accessible to people with disabilities. As the Canadian Transportation Agency found and the Federal Court of Appeal agreed despite its ruling, not to do so creates barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities.

We were most disappointed in March to learn that the Federal Court of Appeal had overturned the Canadian Transportation Agency decision that VIA make its Renaissance rail cars accessible to passengers with disabilities. The court's decision appears to uphold denying people with disabilities the right and opportunity, enjoyed by all other Canadians, to travel by rail when and where they choose. We consider this to be a step backwards and do not believe that denying people with disabilities equal access to public transportation in this way is acceptable.

We urge you to uphold the commitments made by your predecessor at the time the Government of Canada announced funding for VIA to purchase new passenger rail cars and ensure that VIA Rail be accessible to all. In our view, it is unacceptable that a major transportation system be allowed to deliberately discriminate against people with disabilities.

We look forward to a positive resolution of this matter and hope that our input has been helpful.

Yours sincerely,

David Bardal
Chair, Board of Directors
MS Society of Canada, Manitoba Division

cc. Council of Canadians with Disabilities