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For Immediate Release

## **Asthma Society of Canada disappointed with Air Canada's refusal to accommodate passengers with severe allergic disabilities**

TORONTO – The Asthma Society of Canada expressed both disappointment and concern today with the Federal Court of Appeal's decision to set aside a ruling from the Canadian Transportation Agency requiring airlines to provide appropriate and reasonable accommodation for passengers with a physician-diagnosed severe allergy to dogs, now deemed a disability.

After reviewing an air traveller's complaint, the Canadian Transportation Agency ruled in August 2013 that airlines must provide reasonable accommodation to ensure passengers with an allergic disability can travel safely onboard commercial aircraft. The decision required a buffer of at least five rows between passengers whose physicians have acknowledged a severe allergy from passengers with dogs (either pets or service animals) travelling in airline cabins.

"We are disappointed that Air Canada decided to put the needs of pets and their owners over the health and safety of passengers with a severe allergic disability," said Rob Oliphant, President & CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada. "At a time when accommodation for people with disabilities in Canada is becoming more commonplace, Air Canada is taking a step backwards and putting their passengers at risk, even risk of death," Oliphant said.

Following the CTA ruling, The Asthma Society of Canada, and its National Asthma Patient Alliance (NAPA), offered support to Canadian airlines to adapt and implement new policies to ensure appropriate accommodation for those with an allergic disability. "An airplane is a closed environment with no escape for someone suffering from a severe allergic reaction," said Noah Farber, Executive Director of NAPA. "Allergy and asthma sufferers are willing to meet half-way on this issue, ensuring animals, especially service animals, also travel safely. Air Canada, however, has refused even reasoned arguments based on scientific and medical evidence," he added.

The Asthma Society of Canada represents almost 3 million Canadians who suffer from Asthma and associated allergies and is focused on providing a balanced voice for asthma in Canada, advancing optimal self-management, prevention, research and health-care.

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Contact:  
Noah Farber  
Asthma Society of Canada  
416-787-4050 x100

T 416 787 4050

F 416 787 5807

E [info@asthma.ca](mailto:info@asthma.ca)

124 Merton Street, Suite 401, Toronto, Ontario, M4S 2Z2 **Charitable Registration No.** 89853 7048 RR0001