

Transportation services

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Transportation is a vital element in Canada's socio-economic fabric. The vast distances which separate the scattered pockets of population make all forms of transportation important in the daily life of Canadians in all parts of the country.

Transport Canada (the federal department of transport) carries out the federal responsibilities in this field. It must not only satisfy traditional transportation objectives of moving people and commodities but also support other government goals in such areas as economic and industrial development, environmental protection, energy and sovereignty.

It would be impossible and indeed inadvisable for Transport Canada to attempt to provide all transportation services and facilities. Its role is one of co-ordination and regulation to ensure maximum safety and efficiency, functioning through a complex structure which includes a headquarters organization; three operating administrations for air, marine and surface transportation; and a number of Crown corporations with varying degrees of autonomy. Some of these operate within the departmental framework, others are totally independent and report to Parliament through the minister of transport. (See Appendix 1 for brief descriptions of the duties of the department and other agencies.)

Although air, marine and surface activities are handled by separate administrations, it has become increasingly important in recent years to deal with the various elements as parts of one network. This is true of much of the longer-term planning and policy making, and certain operational areas which involve more than one mode of transport. The Arctic transportation directorate develops, promotes and co-ordinates multi-modal plans and programs for facilities in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, maintaining contact with other federal agencies, the territorial governments, industry and the public. The current major initiative in the Arctic is the building or upgrading of airports in all communities having a population of at least 150.

An area of increasing concern is the transporting of explosives, corrosives and other dangerous goods. Training programs are being given to firemen and others involved in emergency services. An information and emergency response centre was opened in Ottawa in 1979, prepared to respond to telephone enquiries from all parts of Canada 24 hours a day. With the increase of traffic of all kinds has come an increase in the number of transportation accidents. Consideration has been given to establishing an independent transportation accident investigation commission which would have the power to look into any aircraft, ship or train accident and report its findings to the minister of transport.

Research and development are essential to keep pace with changing needs. Transport Canada is responsible for co-ordinating this federal program through an interdepartmental panel of 17 federal agencies with a combined annual expenditure of about \$100 million. Four advisory boards of industry and government have been set up to convey the needs of industry and other interested parties to Transport Canada and the panel.

In the department a research and development centre conducts activities on all modes of transport. It works closely with industry to encourage the development of innovations for economic use. Among its recent achievements are a light, rapid, comfortable (LRC) train capable of speeds up to 200 km/h, and the world's first fully computerized, paperless, railway yard inventory, operating in Vancouver. It has also developed a dynamic weigh scale, in use in five provinces, which can determine the weight of a vehicle moving at normal speed on a highway.

For some years, the Canadian Coast Guard has been using air cushion vehicles for icebreaking. This concept is being developed further to extend the shipping season and range of operations in the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes. In air transportation,