

# Backgrounder

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## **AIR CANADA OFFICIAL AIRLINE FOR THE VANCOUVER 2010 PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES**

Air Canada is the Official Airline for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic teams. The airline is ready to bring the world to Vancouver and meet increased travel demand during the peak Paralympic Games travel period, between March 6 and March 22, 2010.

To welcome travellers flying into and out of Vancouver International Airport during the Games, Air Canada has worked closely with the Vancouver Airport Authority to provide customers with the best possible travel experience.

### **Air Canada transports Paralympic athletes – by the numbers**

As the Official Airline of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Games, Air Canada has the privilege of transporting **close to 800** Paralympic athletes who are participating in five different sports, requiring the transportation of thousands of kilos of sports equipment and hundreds of wheelchairs, on many different routes across the world to Vancouver International Airport.

#### **Number of athletes by sports and country**

Of the almost 800 Paralympic athletes we are transporting, there will be close to:

- 250 alpine skiers
- 180 biathletes
- 180 Nordic skiers
- 120 sledge hockey players
- 50 wheelchair curlers

Besides Canada, these athletes are representing the following countries, to name just a few: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, China, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Korea, Italy, Japan, Mongolia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

#### **Sports equipment numbers**

An estimated 2.6 bags will be travelling to Vancouver for each Paralympic athlete, including ski bags, rifle boxes, duffle bags, medical equipment, hockey bags, sledges, curling sticks, tools and repair kits for a total of almost 6,000 bags including 234 wheelchairs; some wheelchair athletes will have an additional 2 or 3 specialized sports wheelchairs in addition to their regular wheelchair.

## **Special needs customer service:**

Air Canada's Going for Gold aircraft services team is prepared for the influx of large numbers of wheelchairs which require special handling to load and secure on the aircraft. Both customer and aircraft services teams are prepared to provide exceptional individual service to our Paralympians, based on their requirements.

## **Air Canada in the community - Kids' Horizons programme brings children to Paralympic Games**

Kids' Horizons, Air Canada's community investments program, will accompany five children to Whistler, BC for an all-inclusive three-day experience during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games;

- one child from Alberta, referred by the Camp He Ho Ha;
- one from Quebec, referred by L'Association des paraplégiques du Québec;
- two from Ontario, one referred by the Central Hospital of Eastern Ontario and another referred by an Air Canada employee;
- one child from Newfoundland and Labrador, referred by the Easter Seals Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The five children will experience all of the excitement of the Paralympic Winter Games including watching various live events such as ice sledge hockey and skiing among others.

## **Preparation for the 2010 Winter Games**

For the Paralympic Games, one offsite check-in location at the Whistler Athletes Village is currently planned to welcome customers prior to the key March 22 departures day.

An expanded baggage area has been specially built for handling winter sports equipment and oversize bags.

Air Canada aircraft planning and airport teams around the world have plans in place to ensure a robust operation network wide is maintained, even if the unexpected occurs.

Technology is playing a key role in how the airline is streamlining the airport experience for customer handling and baggage. In addition to online check-in and flight information available at [aircanada.com](http://aircanada.com), recently launched initiatives include free BlackBerry and Apple applications, "Smart Drop" self-tagging baggage options at kiosks, and a self-service online rebooking tool to reduce customer line-ups and wait times.

## **More convenient connections**

With all domestic Air Canada and Jazz flights now consolidated in the new Pier C, Air Canada customers are benefiting from easier domestic Canada connections for themselves and their baggage, as well as more convenient access to Air Canada's international and U.S. transborder flights in the adjacent concourse.

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Transborder travel to the U.S.A. has been streamlined with customers proceeding directly to the In-Transit Pre-Clearance facility via a designated route. Customers are no longer required to take their bags when they go through pre-board screening or when pre-clearing US Customs as their bags are now processed and transferred to their US-destined flights automatically.

## **Baggage**

Baggage handling is a priority during the 2010 Winter Games, and several measures have been taken to minimize the occurrence of baggage delivery delays, including:

- identifying in advance team travel arrangements around the world to ensure the appropriate equipment and manpower are in place throughout the airline's network,
- ensuring special baggage recovery processes are in place to expedite delayed baggage.

## **Air Canada employee involvement**

**“Going for Gold” volunteers:** Air Canada's “Going for Gold” program is an employee-driven initiative to provide the best possible service to the thousands of Paralympic Games customers travelling throughout Air Canada's worldwide network. About 75 Air Canada employee volunteers are located at 13 airports around the world including YVR, YYZ, YUL, FRA and EWR. They offer our Paralympic customers and athletes a warm welcome and support a seamless travel experience from boarding, through connections until final arrival in Vancouver and baggage pick-up.

**Air Canada volunteers:** During the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games, close to 30 employee volunteers will be in Vancouver to support the airline's operations and the YVR Paralympic Operations Control Centre.

## **Official Languages**

Air Canada is committed to providing services in Canada's two official languages. Several initiatives have been undertaken to facilitate communication in French with customers and the travelling public, including language training for YVR-based employees and temporary assignment of bilingual employees from other locations to YVR during the Winter Games. About eight Air Canada bilingual volunteers will provide French-to-English support and translation services in key areas at the Vancouver International Airport during the 2010 Vancouver Paralympic Games.

## **Look of the 2010 Winter Games**

Air Canada's role as Official Airline of the 2010 Winter Games is also about bringing Canadians and the world to Vancouver. As Official Airline, Air Canada is proud to show its association with the 2010 Winter Games:

- Eighteenth and final Boeing 777 flagship aircraft, Fin 742, in the unique Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic livery illustrating snowboard parallel giant slalom, ice hockey, cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, ice sledge hockey and ski jumping. Since July 2009, this

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aircraft has taken the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games message around the world, flying to destinations in Europe, Asia, Australia and across Canada.

- Building wrap on the side of the Vancouver Operations Centre Hangar, covering an area the size of a football field and visible to all coming across the Arthur Laing Bridge towards YVR, illustrating a snowboarder in mid-backwards flip,
- Building wrap on the side of Terminal 1 in Toronto at Air Canada's largest hub,
- Elevator wraps in Maple Leaf lounges in Montreal, Ottawa, Edmonton and Vancouver,
- Front line employees wearing Games-themed uniform accessories with pride, and greeting guests at the Gate, Check-in and Baggage areas with Winter Games-themed pull-up banners sporting the caption: *With you to the finish!*

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