BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OFFICE OF AVIATION ENFORCEMENT AND PROCEEDINGS WASHINGTON, D.C.

)
Christina Castellani,)
) Docket DOT-OST-2020-
V.) Docket DOT-OST-2020
Air Canada)
))
COMPL	AINT OF CHRISTINA CASTELLANI
Comments with respect to this d	ocument should be addressed to:

Christina Castellani

E-mail: ccastel3

Dated: August 20, 2020

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Christina Castellani,)	
v.)) Docket DO	T-OST-2020
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	·)	

COMPLAINT OF CHRISTINA CASTELLANI

- 1. This complaint arises out of Air Canada's non-compliance with the Department's rules regarding consumers' right to be refunded for flights to or from the United States ("U.S. Flights") cancelled by airlines, even for reasons outside the carriers' control, as described in the Department's "Enforcement Notice Regarding Refunds by Carriers Given the Unprecedented Impact of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on Air Travel" ("Enforcement Notice").
- 2. This complaint also arises out of Air Canada's application of its refund policies, which constitutes an unfair or deceptive practice within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. § 41712².

 According to 14 CFR § 399.80(1)(1), it is the policy of the Department to regard as an

See also 14 CFR § 259.5(b)(5), and Enhancing Airline Passenger Protections, 76 Fed. Reg. 23110-01, at 23129 (Apr. 25, 2011).

¹ Enforcement Notice Regarding Refunds by Carriers Given the Unprecedented Impact of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on Air Travel (April 3, 2020) at https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/enforcement notice refunds apr 3 2020.

² Under 49 USC § 41712, the Department is authorized to investigate and decide whether a U.S. air carrier, foreign air carrier, or ticket agent engaged in an unfair or deceptive practice in air transportation or the sale of air transportation. The Department is also authorized to issue orders to stop an unfair or deceptive practice after notice and opportunity for a hearing.

unfair or deceptive practice or unfair method of competition the practices enumerated in paragraphs (a) through (n) of this section by a ticket agent of any size and the practice enumerated in paragraph(s) by a ticket agent that sells air transportation online and is not considered a small business under the Small Business

Administration's size standards set forth in 13 CFR 121.201:

(l) Failing or refusing to make proper refunds promptly when service cannot be performed as contracted or representing that such refunds are obtainable only at some other point, thus depriving persons of the immediate use of the money to arrange other transportation, or forcing them to suffer unnecessary inconveniences and delays or requiring them to accept transportation at higher cost, or under less desirable circumstances, or on less desirable aircraft than that represented at the time of sale.

FACTS

A. Flight cancelled by Air Canada

- On January 23, 2020, I purchased a ticket for a one-way flight on Air Canada from London, Ontario (YXU) to Baltimore, Maryland, USA (BWI) departing on March 16, 2020 with a layover in Toronto, Ontario (Attachment 1). I booked the flight via Expedia for TD.
- 4. On March 16, 2020, I learned that my flight was cancelled by Air Canada (Attachment 2).
- On March 16, 2020, I contacted Air Canada to request a refund for the cancelled flight, but my request was denied. I was offered a Voucher/Credit (Attachment 3). I accepted a voucher/credit of \$0.00.
- 6. There are no additional person(s) attached to this claim.

B. Air Canada's refund policy for cancelled flights

7. Air Canada's current policy is that customers who purchased nonrefundable flight tickets are not entitled to receive full refunds for flights cancelled or changed by the carrier due to reasons outside its control, including cancellations attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Air Canada only offers flight vouchers or credits in such situations and claims in its United States English website that "in accordance with government regulations", that such bookings are ineligible for a refund (Attachments 4 and 5).

C. Air Canada's obligations

- 8. Air Canada is an airline that operates flights from and to the United States and is therefore subject to the Department's jurisdiction for such flights and bound by the rules enunciated in the Enforcement Notice, which apply to U.S. and foreign airlines operating flights from, to and within the United States.
- 9. In its Enforcement Notice, and based on existing federal regulation, the Department reminds airlines about their obligation to offer prompt refunds for flights significantly delayed or cancelled by the carriers, even if the reason of such flight disruptions are outside the carrier's control, and regardless of the nonrefundablity or cancellation penalty provisions of the ticket purchased by the affected consumers.
- 10. In page 2 of its Enforcement Notice, the Department lists the actions non-complying airlines must take to avoid enforcement action, as follows:
 - a. the carrier contacts, in a timely manner, the passengers provided vouchers for flights that the carrier cancelled or significantly delayed to notify those passengers that they have the option of a refund;

- the carrier updates its refund policies and contract of carriage provisions to
 make clear that it provides refunds to passengers if the carrier cancels a flight
 or makes a significant schedule change;
- c. the carrier reviews with its personnel, including reservationists, ticket counter agents, refund personnel, and other customer service professionals, the circumstances under which refunds should be made.
- 11. On May 12, 2020, the Department issued a notice³ in the form of answers to frequently asked questions regarding airline ticket refunds. In the answer to question 4 of the notice, the Department reiterates that airlines may not retroactively apply changes to their refund policies and must honor the policies in place at the time of ticket purchase.

D. Air Canada's non-compliance and violations

- 12. Air Canada's policy of not issuing prompt refunds for U.S. Flights that are significantly delayed or cancelled by the carrier for reasons outside its control, and regardless of the nonrefundability and cancellation penalty provisions of the purchased ticket, is in direct violation of its obligation to offer prompt refunds to affected consumers as per the rules detailed in the Department's Enforcement Notice.
- 13. Before March 19, 2020 (Attachments 6), Air Canada's policies indicated that consumers can receive refunds for schedule changes and cancellations attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, and since that date, Air Canada changed its refund policies for cancellations and schedule changes in a way that negatively affects

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings, Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Airline Ticket Refunds Given the Unprecedented Impact of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on Air Travel (See answer to question 4: "May airlines and ticket agents retroactively apply new refund policies?") https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/FAQ refunds may 12 2020.

consumers by no longer permitting refunds (Attachments 7A, 7B and 8). The new policy is applied by Air Canada based on the date of the cancellation or schedule change, and regardless of the policy in place at the time the passenger purchased the ticket.

- 14. The aforementioned no-refund policy is applied by Air Canada regardless of the policies and terms in place at the time consumers purchased flight tickets, which stipulate that Air Canada will issue refunds for cancelled flights. Air Canada's policy constitutes an unfair or deceptive practice within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. § 41712.
- 15. According to 14 CFR § 399.80(1)(1), it is the policy of the Department to regard as an unfair or deceptive practice or unfair method of competition the practices enumerated in paragraphs (a) through (n) of this section by a ticket agent of any size and the practice enumerated in paragraph(s) by a ticket agent that sells air transportation online and is not considered a small business under the Small Business Administration's size standards set forth in 13 CFR 121.201:
 - (1) Failing or refusing to make proper refunds promptly when service cannot be performed as contracted or representing that such refunds are obtainable only at some other point, thus depriving persons of the immediate use of the money to arrange other transportation, or forcing them to suffer unnecessary inconveniences and delays or requiring them to accept transportation at higher cost, or under less desirable circumstances, or on less desirable aircraft than that represented at the time of sale.
- 16. Many airlines are complying with their obligations to refund passengers, especially after the issuance of the Enforcement Notice on April 3rd. These airlines will be in an unfairly disadvantageous situation if other airlines, such as Air Canada are allowed to continue practices that violate the same obligations without incurring any penalty.

REQUESTED RESOLUTION

- 17. I am seeking the airline provide me with an Refund. In addition, I ask that the Department of Transportation to do the following:
 - (1) Exercise its authority under 49 USC 41712 to open an investigation of Air Canada for its non-compliance with the Department's Enforcement Notice and the regulations on which the notice is based;
 - (2) Order Air Canada to comply with its obligation to offer prompt full refunds to original form of payment for U.S. flights that are significantly delayed or cancelled by the carrier, regardless of the reason of such flight disturbances and regardless of the nonrefundability or the cancellation penalty of the tickets purchased by affected customers.
 - (3) Order Air Canada to:
 - a. contact, in a timely manner, the passengers provided vouchers for U.S. Flights significantly delayed or cancelled by the carrier to notify those passengers that they have the option of a refund;
 - b. update its refund policies, contract of carriage and tariff provisions to make clear that it provides prompt refunds to passengers if the carrier cancels a U.S. Flight or makes a significant schedule change, regardless of the reason of such flight disruptions and regardless of the nonrefundability or the cancellation penalty provisions of the tickets purchased by the affected customers;
 - c. review with its personnel, including reservationists, ticket counter agents, refund personnel, and other customer service professionals, the circumstances under which refunds should be made.

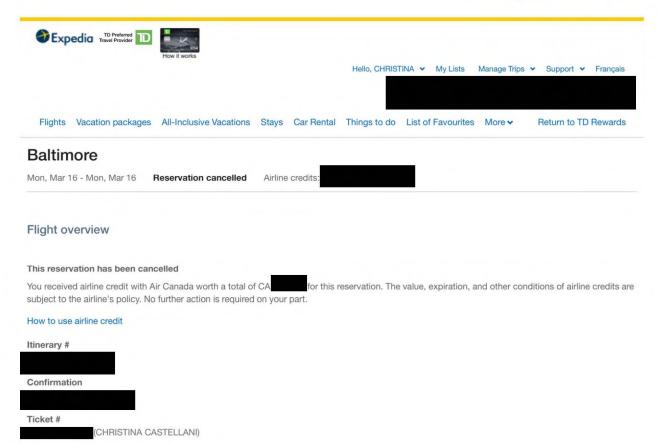
(4) Impose appropriate civil penalties on Air Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Castellani

Attachment 1

Copy of flight itinerary/eticket receipt



Air Canada 8646 London (YXU) Toronto (YYZ) 12:05 PM 12:51 PM Cabin: Economy / Coach (K) 46m duration O 2h 24m stop Toronto (YYZ) Air Canada 8818 Toronto (YYZ) Baltimore (BWI) \rightarrow 3:15 PM 4:39 PM Cabin: Economy / Coach (K) 1h 24m duration **Total duration** 4h 34m Back to top Traveller(s) CHRISTINA CASTELLANI Edit traveller information Update traveller details and make special requests. Please confirm all requests with your airline.

Price summary Reservation Cancelled	Back to top
Traveller 1: Adult ¥	
Total	
All prices are quoted in CAD.	

Travel Protection

The Cancellation Plan and Protection Plan (which includes emergency medical coverage) were offered to the customer and the customer declined to purchase either plan at the time of booking.

Additional information Back to top

Additional Fees

The airline may charge additional fees for checked baggage or other optional services.

Additional fees for your flight to Baltimore

If you are denied boarding or your baggage is lost or damaged, you may be entitled to certain standards of treatment and compensation under the Air Passenger Protection Regulations. For more information about your passenger rights please contact your air carrier or visit the Canadian Transportation Agency's website.

Si l'embarquement vous est refusé ou que vos bagages sont perdus ou endommagés, vous pourriez avoir droit à certains avantages au titre des normes de traitement et de compensation, en vertu du Règlement sur la protection des passagers aériens (Air Passenger Protection Regulations). Pour plus d'informations sur les droits des passagers, veuillez contacter votre compagnie aérienne ou bien vous rendre sur le site Internet de l'Office des transports du Canada (Canadian Transportation Agency).

Airline rules + restrictions

We understand that sometimes plans change. We do not charge a cancel or change fee. When the airline charges such fees in accordance with its own policies, the cost will be passed on to you.

Tickets are nonrefundable, nontransferable and name changes are not allowed.

Please read the complete penalty rules for changes and cancellations 🗗 applicable to this fare.

Please read important information regarding airline liability limitations 📮.

More help

Back to top

Visit our Customer Support page.

Alternatively, call us at 1-877-222-6492 or from outside of North America at 1-949-333-4946.

For faster service, mention itinerary

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expedia group

Confirmation/notice that a flight in your reservation has been cancelled by the airline.

Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 3:34:27 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Subject: Flight cancelled: AC8646 / 16 Mar 2020

Date: Sunday, March 15, 2020 at 1:23:54 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Air Canada Flight Notification

To: Christina Castellani

We regret to inform you that AC8646 from London to Toronto has been cancelled due to Government travel advisory.

Previously scheduled:

Departing London (YXU) on 16 Mar 2020 @ 12:10 Arriving in Toronto (YYZ) on 16 Mar 2020 @ 12:57

We know how stressful it can be when travel plans get interrupted. You'll receive a separate email from us about getting your travel plans back on track, because we want to get you on your way as soon as possible.

Booking Reference: Castellani, Christina

For alternative options please give us a call at 1-888-247-2262 or visit https://aircanada.com/contactus. (For international and other numbers, visit https://aircanada.com/othernumbers.)

But please do not reply to this email — we're sorry, but because it's an automated email, it does not accept replies.

We've sent you this email about an Air Canada product or service that you've requested - this is not a promotional email. Your privacy is very important to us. To see how we're protecting your personal information, please take a look at our Privacy Policy (https://aircanada.com/privacy).

More details: https://aircanada.com/cancellationpolicy

Si le présent courriel n'est pas dans la langue de votre choix (français ou anglais), appelez les Réservations d'Air Canada au 1 888 247-2262 et nous serons heureux de mettre à jour votre réservation et de vous envoyer une nouvelle copie de l'itinéraire.

Proof of communication that the Airline denied your request for a refund.

None

Captured on May 24, 2020 from https://www.aircanada.com/us/en/aco/home/fly/customer-support/cancellation-options.html#/current-booking

If you booked directly with Air Canada, please select one of the following:

Air Canada has already cancelled my booking

If you have a booking cancelled by Air Canada for travel prior to March 1, 2020, please click here to learn more about your options.

If you have a booking cancelled by Air Canada for travel after March 1, 2020, you have several options available to you depending on the type of fare you purchased and whether the cancellation was within Air Canada's control.

Cancellations outside of Air Canada's control

If Air Canada has already cancelled your booking, and the cancellation is outside of Air Canada's control (for example, due to the impacts of COVID-19, government travel advisories and/or health and safety concerns), you have two expanded options to choose from:

- 1. Air Canada Travel Voucher Transfer the remaining value of all tickets in a booking and associated services to an Air Canada Travel Voucher. The voucher has no expiry date, is fully transferable and can be used multiple times.
- 2. Aeroplan Miles Convert and transfer the remaining value of all tickets and associated services in a booking, minus any taxes, into Aeroplan Miles, and get an additional 65% bonus miles.

If you purchased a non-refundable fare, please note that in accordance with government regulations, non-refundable bookings that are cancelled due to the impacts of COVID-19, government travel advisories and/or health and safety concerns are outside of Air Canada's control and ineligible for a refund.

If you purchased a refundable fare, you have the additional option of returning the remaining refundable value of all tickets and associated services in a booking, minus any applicable fees, back to your original form of payment.

How to process a cancellation

Cancellations within Air Canada's control

For both refundable fares and non-refundable fares, if Air Canada has already cancelled your booking, and the cancellation is within Air Canada's control, you have three expanded options to choose from:

- 1. Air Canada Travel Voucher Transfer the remaining value of all tickets in a booking and associated services to an Air Canada Travel Voucher. The voucher has no expiry date, is fully transferable and can be used multiple times.
- 2. Aeroplan Miles Convert and transfer the remaining value of all tickets and associated services in a booking, minus any taxes, into Aeroplan Miles, and get an additional 65% bonus miles.
- 3. Return to original form of payment Return the remaining refundable value of all tickets in a booking and associated services back to your original form of payment.

How to process a cancellation

Captured on May 18, 2020 from https://www.aircanada.com/us/en/aco/home/fly/flight-information/delayed-flights-and-cancellations/refund-options.html

Home | Fly | Flight Information | Delayed Flights / Cancellations | Refund Options ^

Refund Options



For flight cancellations due to the impacts of COVID-19, government travel advisories and/or health and safety concerns, click here.

In the event of a flight cancellation or a delay of more than three hours, for situations other than those outside our control, Air Canada offers you the option of requesting a refund for the unused portion of your ticket, or using the unused portion toward future travel with us. Cancellations resulting from the COVID-19 crisis are considered outside our control.

To Request a Refund

If your flight is cancelled or delayed by more than 3 hours for reasons other than those outside Air Canada's control, and you'd like to obtain a refund for the unused portion of your ticket (including some fees and/or purchased travel options), please call Air Canada Reservations. You'll be directed to present your refund request via your original point of purchase.

If you choose to request a refund, the method with which you are refunded will accord with the method in which you paid. Your refund will include your fare and all taxes, as well as certain charges paid for added travel options.

To Retain the Ticket Value for Future Travel

To retain the value of your ticket for future travel:

- Contact Air Canada Reservations. Please provide the booking reference number or ticket number. A customer service agent will
 cancel your current reservation.
- Air Canada will retain the value of all unused portions of your ticket and certain related travel options. (Fares available online
 are not necessarily available through Air Canada Reservation.)
- You may also cancel your entire reservation or all remaining portions of your ticket online. Please keep your booking reference number so we can better assist you when you are ready to use the value of your ticket.

When you're ready to use the unused portion of your ticket for travel with us:

- Please contact Air Canada Reservations, and make sure to have your booking reference handy.
- Please keep in mind that:
 - Any change fee associated to your original ticket will be waived.
 - The value can be used for future travel on Air Canada, Air Canada rouge or Air Canada Express.
 - Unused non-refundable travel options, such as assigned seat selection, Maple Leaf Lounge access, and Air Canada Bistro snack or meal vouchers may be used on future flights, subject to availability.
 - If your ticket is fully unused, you must commence your travel within 12 months of the original issue date.
 - If your ticket was partially used, you must complete your travel within 12 months of the first used portion.
 - Tickets are non-transferable: the original booking passenger(s) must use their respective amount(s).
 - Any amount remaining unused after booking a new flight is forfeited.

Captured on March 17, 2020 from https://www.aircanada.com/us/en/aco/home/book/travel-news-and-updates/2020/covid-19.html

Note: Air Canada removed the information displayed in this attachment on or around March 19, 2020.

For flight cancellations, we will contact you via the email address or phone number you provided when you booked your flight. At a later time, when you decide you want to travel, you can apply your credit to a future booking. Please call Air Canada at 1-888-247-2262 to book your new flight with your credit. If you decide to have your credit refunded to the original payment method, please fill out the refund form and submit it here

Attachment 7A

Captured on May 21, 2020 from pagepages 2 of https://www.aircanada.com/content/dam/aircanada/portal/documents/PDF/agents/en/ca/policies/SKCH_EN_V13.pdf

Overview

Air Canada has revised the Schedule Change policy, effective immediately, for schedule changes processed as of March 19, 2020.

This policy and these procedures cover Air Canada operated flights affected by schedule changes. A schedule change (SKCH) is a flight cancellation, time change, flight number change, routing/airport change or operating carrier change which occurs **more than 48** hours prior to the original scheduled departure time.

Attachment 7B

Captured on May 21, 2020 from page 8 of

https://www.aircanada.com/content/dam/aircanada/portal/documents/PDF/agents/en/ca/policies/SKCH EN V13.pdf

Refunds

Schedule Change occurred on/before March 18, 2020

A refund is permitted and applies only for a 014 ticket if an acceptable protection cannot be found due to a schedule change on Air Canada, Air Canada Rouge, Air Canada Express (Jazz, Sky Regional, Air Georgian, EVAS), AC*/OAL or OAL that is:

- A schedule change of 60 minutes or more.
- · A change of operating carrier.
- · A routing/airport change.
- · Not permitting a same-day connection.
- An aircraft change that results in a cabin change.
- Refunds are processed back to the original form of payment.
- · Apply waiver code: ACUSKEDCHG along with the flight number.

Schedule Change occurred on/after March 19, 2020

Full refunds are not permitted.

Please refer to the Save as Future Credit and Cancel and Refund as per Fare Rules sections below.

Exception: Refunds are permitted for flights originating from the below countries; apply waiver code **ACUSKEDCHG** along with the flight number (e.g. **ACUSKEDCHGXXXX**).

Flight Origin	Refund of Unused Coup	ons Deadline to request refund after SKCH
From Algeria	Yes + return to origin	8 days

Information subject to change without notice. "Altitude Super Elite 100K, Air Canada Express and Air Canada rouge are trademarks of Air Canada. «Aeroplan is a registered trademark of Aimia Canada Inc. "Star Alliance is a trademark of the Star Alliance Members. May 14, 2020. V12.

ro/rrom israel res gradys	To/From Israel	Yes	21 days	
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Captured on May 18, 2020 from

https://www.aircanada.com/content/dam/aircanada/portal/html/flash-files/20/200323 en.html

As of May 7, 2020 - V8

We've waived changes for new and existing bookings made by customers worldwide. See below for additional details.

For quick reference on which policy to apply (Goodwill or Schedule Change), please refer to our helpful one-page document.

AIR CANADA CANCELLED YOUR FLIGHTS?

NO

Apply Goodwill Policy

t cancelled.

cancelled up to 2 hours prior to the departure flight.

Y	ES

Involuntary Changes - Apply Schedule Change Policy

Applies when there is a flight cancellation, time change, flight number change, cabin change, routing/airport change or operating carrier change, which occurs more than 48 hours prior to the original scheduled departure time.

	MAY 31, 2020		SCHEDULE CHANGE PRIOR TO MARCH 19, 2020	SCHEDULE CHANGE ON/AFTER MARCH 19, 2020
	Between March 1, 2020 and up to May 31, 2021		Permissible as per policy guidelines	Permissible as per policy guidelines
	24 months from the date you cancel your booking	Rebooking:	(allowed OAL). Add DUE SKCH in ticket endorsement.	(does not allow OAL*). Add DUE SKCH in ticket endorsement.
	As per fare rule			As per fare rules.
	Waived - one time		Permissible, and applies only for a 014 ticket if an acceptable protection cannot be found.	Non-refundable amounts will be lost (including non-refundable taxes). Any cancellation fees will apply.
	Applies	Refund:	cannot be found.	or
	CHNGFEE20		Add ACUSKEDCHG + flight number in waiver code field.	Credit** ONLY for 24 months. Add CV20VL22 in ticket endorsement. Change fee waived – ADCOL collected if applicable.
		•	Over-the-water reprotection flight must be Air Canada-operated and Air Canada-marketed.	
		**	Ticket will need to be exchanged prior to the in the Schedule Change policy located at a or by contacting the GDS Help Desk.	
Vers	sion 4: May 7, 2020	For complete	details, please refer to the Schedule Cl	nange policy.

Additional Attachments

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that I have, this 20 day of August 2020 a copy of the foregoing Complaint to be served by electronic mail on the following persons:

Kimberly Graber, Esq. kimberly.graber@dot.gov Blane Workie, Esq. blane.workie@dot.gov Robert Gorman, Esq. robert.gorman@dot.gov

Anita Mosner, Esq Anita.Mosner@hklaw.com

Christina Castellani