



## MINISTRY OF FINANCE Treasury Board Briefing

### I For Treasury Board Decision

### II Issue:

Air travel of less than five hours is restricted to economy or regular class. This means that Ministers on flights to and from Toronto via Vancouver, for example, are not generally permitted by existing policy to travel in business class.

### III Background:

TBD 2/95 applies to all those who travel by air on government business at government expense. The directive is intended to encourage travellers to obtain the most economical airfare, and it restricts upgrades from economy to business class for flight duration of less than five hours. The average in-flight time for air travel to and from Toronto via Vancouver is approximately 4.5 hours, as published by two national carriers.

While the restriction to economy class airfare may be waived in exceptional circumstances with prior approval (now by the Executive Financial Officer), in applying this policy, the following guidelines apply:

1. In determining the most economical airfare, all factors should be taken into account including the cost of making travel arrangements and the effective use of the traveller's time; and
2. Exceptional circumstances that might justify the waiving of the requirement for the most economical airfare occur only when the total one-way in-flight travel time exceeds five hours *and* the purpose of the travel is to represent the government at a business meeting. Travel related to simple attendance at a conference or training seminar is not eligible for upgrade.

## **IV Discussion:**

A comparison to nine other provinces and jurisdictions, and the Federal Government has been completed (see Appendix, page 4). The notable differences from British Columbia's policy are as follows:

- Manitoba – ministers and deputy ministers may fly business class at their discretion. Other individuals accompanying them may also travel business class at the discretion of the minister or deputy minister (e.g., where it may be necessary to conduct briefings or prepare for meetings during travel and it may be more desirable to be located in business class for privacy reasons);
- Newfoundland – permits upgrades for trips in excess of travel beyond Toronto (approximately 3.5 hours from St. Johns);
- Northwest Territories – ministers and senior managers may use business class for flights over three hours (in the air continuous), and deputy ministers may authorize other staff to use business class for flights over three hours if staff regularly travel more than three times per month;
- Federal Government – ministers and deputy ministers may fly business class at their discretion. Staff who fly continuously in excess of nine hours on a direct flight may fly business class.

Amending policy to permit ministers to upgrade to business class, plus ministers' office staff or ministry officials that need to conference with the minister during flights for planning and strategy discussions, would be consistent with most other governments. There may be some public criticism given the current focus by the public and media on Core Review and budget cuts.

The financial impact of changing the policy for ministers and related staff would be minimal as current practice is already in accordance with this change.

## **V Options:**

**Option 1:** Status Quo – no change to policy

Pros:

- No additional costs
- No public perception concerns

Cons:

- Reduces minister ability to prepare for meetings and conduct private briefings during long trips to Toronto and further

**Option 2:** Revise policy and guidelines – permit upgrades by all air travellers to business class for in-flight travel time of four hours or more for existing circumstances

Pros:

- Provides ability to upgrade to all

Cons:

- Some additional costs
- Public perception

**Option 3:** Revise policy and guidelines, as in Option 2 – but only for ministers, plus minister office staff or ministry officials that need to conference with the minister during flights

Pros:

- Provides ability to upgrade to prepare for meetings and conduct private briefings
- Minimal additional costs

Cons:

- Public perception concerns

**VI Recommendation:**

**Option 3**

Attachment

**APPROVED / NOT APPROVED**

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Date

## Comparison of Upgrade Requirements

Province / Jurisdiction	Policy
<b>British Columbia</b>	<p>Upgrades only in exceptional circumstances with the prior approval of executive financial officer; the following guidelines apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In determining the most economical airfare, all factors should be taken into account including the cost of making travel arrangements and the effective use of the traveller's time; and</li> <li>• Exceptional circumstances that might justify the waiving of the requirement for the most economical airfare occur only when the total one-way in-flight travel time exceeds five hours <i>and</i> the purpose of the travel is to represent the government at a business meeting. Travel related to simple attendance at a conference or training seminar is not eligible for upgrade.</li> </ul>
Alberta	Air travel at other than economy fare requires deputy minister approval. There is no specific guidance in applying this policy.
Saskatchewan	Departments are responsible to ensure the most economical and efficient modes of travel are used. Guidelines do not identify specific situations where it is appropriate to upgrade air travel from economy class.
Manitoba	Ministers and deputy ministers may fly business class at their discretion. Other individuals accompanying them may also travel business class at the discretion of the minister or deputy minister (e.g., where it may be necessary to conduct briefings or prepare for meetings during travel and it may be more desirable to be located in business class for privacy reasons).
Quebec	Every employee, including deputy ministers, has to obtain the most economical airfare in every circumstance. However, if it is not possible to obtain an economical airfare and the trip is an emergency, the economy class airfare may be waived with appropriate authorization.
New Brunswick	<p>Ministers are expected to travel by economy airfare, however they may travel business class for destinations west of Winnipeg, south of New York City, and international flights.</p> <p>Deputy ministers may approve business class if less expensive seats are not available and a delay in arrival is not acceptable, or the employee is officially accompanying a person travelling business class.</p>
Prince Edward Island	No such provisions, however a deputy minister can fly business class to accompany a minister for the purpose of completing work.
Newfoundland	Permits upgrades for trips in excess of travel beyond Toronto (which is approximately 3.5 hours from St. Johns).
Yukon	Business class air travel may be authorized if excursion or economy class is not available, but itineraries cannot be changed, or if it is more economical to fly business class or first class than to incur lodging and meal expenses. Upgrades from economy class and exemptions must be specifically authorized by the Executive Council Member responsible.
Northwest Territories	Ministers and senior managers may use business class for flights over three hours (in the air continuous), and deputy ministers may authorize other staff to use business class for flights over three hours, if staff regularly travel more than three times per month.
Federal Government	Ministers and deputy ministers may fly business class at their discretion. Staff who fly continuously in excess of nine hours on a direct flight may fly business class.