

## VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK TEAM UP TO INCREASE AIRPORT ACCESSIBILITY



**RICHMOND, B.C. (April 18, 2019)** – Today, Canucks Autism Network (CAN) and Vancouver International Airport (YVR) welcomed 175 individuals to the fifth annual YVR & CAN Autism Accessibility Tour. The tour took individuals and families living with autism through the entire pre-flight process, including checking-in, finding the gate, going through security, and boarding the aircraft for a simulated take-off. For the first time, this year’s tour also took participants through the arrivals experience. Families had access to the typical two-step customs process at YVR which includes using a BorderXpress kiosk to answer questions and then talking to a Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) agent.

Due to anxiety and sensory sensitivities, individuals with autism can become overwhelmed by the airport environment and the lengthy and unpredictable experience. The simulated airport rehearsal helps to reduce barriers to air travel by preparing families living with autism for the whole pre-flight process, making the airport a less stressful and more predictable environment.

“We are thrilled to partner with YVR once again to increase autism accessibility at the airport,” said Stephanie Jull, VP of Programs, Training and Community Outreach. “Because of this tour, individuals and families living with autism can more confidently navigate the airport, opening up a world of air travel opportunities.”

CAN and YVR began their partnership in 2014 with the aim of decreasing anxiety associated with air travel and building confidence for future travel success. Since its launch, the annual YVR & CAN Airport Accessibility Tour has been delivered to over 400 individuals, many of whom have since travelled successfully.



“At YVR, one of our top priorities is providing a positive and accessible experience for everyone. We are proud to once again partner with CAN to host this year’s autism accessibility tour,” said Kim Halowski, Manager, Community Relations, Vancouver Airport Authority. “Beyond the tour and through our long-standing partnership with CAN, we have been able to introduce a number of accessible travel tools and resources to help families and individuals living with autism navigate the airport experience—another step towards our goal of removing barriers to air travel.”

The autism accessibility program includes helpful resources such as the YVR Resource Kit which features a step-by-step storybook, interactive checklist, airport map and tips for travel, and a video series that helps travellers with autism prepare for flight. YVR has also introduced the YVR Autism Access Sticker, a self-identification tool for individuals living with autism that can be placed on boarding passes. The sticker ensures an expedited airport process through screening and customs and better communicates the specific needs of passengers to airport employees.

Special thanks to Air Transat, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) for their support of the program.

For more information about autism accessibility at YVR, please visit [yvr.ca/autism](http://yvr.ca/autism).

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#### **About Canucks Autism Network (CAN)**

Canucks Autism Network (CAN) is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing year-round sports and recreation programs for individuals and families living with autism while raising autism awareness and providing training opportunities in communities across British Columbia. For more information, please visit [canucksautism.ca](http://canucksautism.ca).

#### **For media interviews with Canucks Autism Network (CAN), please contact:**

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#### **About Vancouver Airport Authority**

Vancouver Airport Authority is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that manages Vancouver International Airport (YVR). Canada's second busiest airport, YVR served 25.9 million passengers in 2018. Fifty-six airlines serve YVR, connecting people and businesses to more than 125 non-stop destinations worldwide. In 2019, YVR was voted Best Airport in North America for the tenth consecutive year in the Skytrax World Airport Awards. Vancouver Airport Authority is a dedicated community partner and in 2018 donated more than \$1,000,000 to local organizations. We are committed to creating an airport that British Columbia can be proud of: a premier global gateway, local economic generator and community contributor.

#### **For media interviews with Vancouver International Airport (YVR), please contact:**

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