

Focused Approach

After a thorough, thoughtful review of the current organizational structure, and with the support of the ACTA Board of Directors, ACTA President Wendy Paradis restructured the trade association to ensure ACTA is in the best position to tackle the opportunities and challenges that face today's Travel Agencies. As a result of that review, four key functional groups led by a member of ACTA's Senior Management Team strengthened the association's position and commitment to the strategic priorities. These functional groups are described as:

- Vice President, Advocacy and Member Relations – Heather Craig-Peddie
- Director, Education and Certification - Christine Chilton
- Director, Marketing, Communication, Partnerships – Marco Pozzobon
- Director, Membership – Doreen Lynch

Through Member Advisories or the bi-weekly newsletter ACTAVision, during 2017, ACTA provided members with an update on the priority issues under our four pillars: Advocate, Educate, Promote and Connect. Below is a snapshot of those priority issues:

Advocate:

Government and Regulation:

- **Federal:** ACTA reignited efforts with Transport Canada and the Canadian Transportation Agency following the announcement by Minister of Transport, Marc Garneau on the proposal of a new Passenger Bill of Rights. With the national, and very public, spotlight on airline/traveler interactions this year, this initiative ramped up and is moving full steam ahead. ACTA was invited to attend a private meeting with Minister Garneau and Mississauga MP Omar Alghabra. The purpose of the meeting was to hear ACTA's input on the upcoming Bill C-49 concerning the passenger bill of rights. Other talking points included much of what was cited in ACTA's 2014 submission: the need for a competitive but healthy travel industry in Canada, the reduction of taxes and airport fees to stop the drain of travelers from Canadian airports to USA border airports, and transparency in pricing. ACTA formed a CTA committee to work specifically on this initiative.
- **Provincial:** In Ontario, ACTA and the ACTA TIA Committee is fully involved in the Ontario government's Review of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (TIA). ACTA submitted feedback for each of the three Phases (submissions available in the resource section of the ACTA website). Legislation has now been drafted encompassed in Bill 166 but the Bill has not yet been passed. ACTA will continue to provide input throughout these next steps and be ready to get involved during the drafting of the regulations. In BC, ACTA responded to proposed changes to the Consumer Protection BC Fee Review. ACTA emphasized that any increase, even one to address inflation, is not seen as favourable to BC ACTA member agencies, especially in light that the fact that only 2% of the fees collected are spent on Education and Awareness. In QC, ACTA contributes as a key stakeholder to the Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC) Advisory Committee for travel agencies. One concern identified was the interest from the QC retail travel industry to allocate funds from the QC Compensation Fund (the "FICAV") for a consumer awareness campaign. OPC listened and a new consumer awareness campaign was launched in October 2017. Additional concerns we are working on behalf of our members in the regulated and unregulated provinces include: Non-Commissionable Fees (Fuel/Carrier Surcharges versus Base Fare Structure, Ancillary Fees), Fraud and Agency Bypass (booking direct).

IATA:

- ACTA leads IATA joint committees with equal representation between retailers and airlines. ACTA is working through the Financial Advisory Group to conduct a thorough review of the Local Financial Criteria. Agency members are working on drafting a strong proposal for an alternative to the submission of costly annual Review Engagement as requested by members.
- While IATA acknowledged ACTA and the global outcry to the June 1, 2017 implementation date for IATA appointed agencies to be Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standards (DSS) compliant was delayed to March 2018, ACTA took measures to assist members in this process. A webinar was hosted in July, and is now available in the Member's Only section of the website.
- ACTA continues to advise members of the Agency Debit Memo Working Group and the progress made on defining, measuring and analyzing the problem of inefficient ADMs.

Travel Health Insurance:

- ACTA continues to work with the Travel Health Insurance Association (THiA) toward an objective of one standard for selling travel insurance across Canada. ACTA worked closely with the Alberta Insurance Council in 2017, engaging in fruitful dialogue on the importance of our involvement in decisions surrounding the sale of Travel Health Insurance in Alberta as well as assisting ACTA in bringing our message of harmonization to the Canadian Insurance Services Regulatory Organizations Regulators (CISRO).

Educate:

- Making learning productive and engaging, ACTA members can browse the ACTA Learning Campus for travel learning programs designed to enable lifelong learning through personal continuing education.
- In 2017 over 4,200 Users on the ACTA Learning Campus completed – 26,030 modules
- Travel Health Insurance Licensing exams for the provinces of BC and SK went online and made available on the ACTA Learning Campus making the process to complete the mandatory exams more efficient.
- The Air Canada Global Sales University content went through a full refresh in both English and French, updating with new product information, imagery and videos. Agents and students starting the Air Canada Experts (ACE) certification process will be accessing relevant, up to date information.
- Our monthly webinars are a huge success, hosting capacity audiences. ACTA's schedule of webinars cover product and destination webinars, always needed and appreciated to enhance or refresh your product knowledge. The topics that reached maximum capacity included: PCI Compliance, Fraud Prevention, and Independent Contractors. Additionally, information toolkits on these subjects are available to you on demand.
- The uptake from ACTA's enhanced commitment to Travel Agency education has also been a bright spot that has exceeded our expectations. More than 400 travel industry participants joined us for our National Travel MarketPlace Conference in Toronto in 2017, and due to the overwhelming demand, there will be two conferences in 2018 – Toronto and Vancouver!
- In recognition of ACTA's 40th Anniversary, a successful grandfathering initiative was launched offering the opportunity for Travel Agent leaders to accelerate the attainment of the prestigious professional designation of Certified Travel Counsellor (CTC).

Promote:

- ACTA contributes as an expert resource for national consumer facing media news outlets such as CTV, CBC, Global as well as local newspaper outlets like the Globe and Mail, National Post and The Toronto Star on topics that allow us to promote the value of a Travel Agent to consumers. Topics include understanding the importance of travel health insurance, Canadian travel trends, the pending Consumer Bill of Rights, the role that the value of the Canadian dollar plays on Canadian travel trends and inquiries on the health of certain destinations following world events like terrorism, hurricanes and flooding.
- ACTA features the value of Travel Agents in consumer shows across the country (in cities including Halifax, Montreal, Kingston, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver) and through our websites and directories.

Connect:

- ACTA turned 40 in 2017 and celebrated our anniversary by hosting celebratory events giving ACTA members opportunities to connect, learn, network with Industry decision makers and influencers, sharing ideas, best practices and experiences.
- ACTA provides valued added benefits and services with member access to a number of resources on the ACTA website, including a Member Discount Program to reduce operating expenses including: Business insurances and employee benefits, savings on Canada Post pre-paid envelopes, and savings on credit card merchant services.
- ACTA connects our members with business tools. How to's, tips and best practices on the topics of Fraud, PCI Compliance and employment of independent contractors are a few of the more popular topics in 2017.