
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Government of Alberta
Government of Saskatchewan

WESTERN PROVINCES ANNOUNCE JOINT SUPPORT FOR OPEN SKIES

VANCOUVER – Removing unnecessary barriers to international air carriers’ access to Canada was highlighted at the 2009 British Columbia International Open Skies Summit, as B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach, and Saskatchewan Minister of Enterprise Ken Cheveldayoff signed an unprecedented declaration affirming Western support for Open Skies.

The Declaration on Open Skies focuses on the co-ordination and advancement of research and communications that will result in more Open Skies agreements between Canada and other nations with consequential benefits for Western Canada.

“I want to thank all the delegates who participated in this important summit and commend the federal government on Open Skies agreements they have reached to-date, including a recent agreement with South Korea. That one agreement alone could increase the Seoul-to-Vancouver passenger volume by over 37 per cent in the first few years,” said Premier Campbell. “Further Open Skies agreements have incredible potential to spur new economic growth, create jobs and allow us to take full advantage of the investments we’ve made to improve airports and trade connections across B.C. and Western Canada. This declaration demonstrates our provinces’ shared commitment to working together for the benefit of communities and the economy.”

“Across western Canada, we’ve been working to improve the infrastructure we need to take advantage of increased trade and tourism from around the world,” said Premier Stelmach. “Enhancing airports, railways, and roads will allow us to move people and goods more efficiently. Our shared commitment to Open Skies is another example of our province’s working together.”

“Our three governments have demonstrated the value in working together, whether to remove internal trade barriers, or to improve labour mobility,” said Minister Cheveldayoff. “With this declaration, we’re committing to continued co-operation in support of expanding Open Skies agreements that benefit our provinces, and the whole country.”

The one-day summit showcased the economic benefits of Open Skies for Western Canada’s gateways and regional economies. It built on the spirit of 2010 and promoted further discussions between government, international airlines, airports and businesses from across Canada and around the world.

Topics of discussion included: the progress being made on international air access to Western Canada; the U.S. experience with Open Skies agreements; the airline and airport industry perspectives on the impact of Open Skies; and the critical importance of Open Skies to the western provinces, Canada and other nations.

A recent report by the International Institute of Transport and Logistics indicated an Open Skies agreement between Canada and Japan alone could have a \$55-million impact annually on Canada's tourism industry, increase passenger volume by 15.8 per cent and decrease airfares by 10.6 per cent.

There are currently 82 existing bilateral air service agreements in Canada, but only eight classify as Open Skies (Barbados, Dominican Republic, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States and most recently South Korea). The other 74 have restrictions that do not allow airports in Western Canada to compete with airports in the U.S. and central Canada for international air travel and commerce.

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BACKGROUND

DECLARATION ON OPEN SKIES

Direct, unfettered transportation links between Western Canada and the world are crucial to our economic vision for our provinces. Removing unnecessary barriers to international air carriers' access to British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan will allow international air carriers to freely transport passengers and cargo to and from the Canadian airports of their choice. We believe this will allow businesses to grow and jobs to be created, both in our gateways and regional economies.

We have made good progress with the recent Open Skies agreement between Canada and South Korea. More progress is needed to capitalize on markets and opportunities for Western Canadians.

The Purpose of the 2009 British Columbia Open Skies Summit Declaration:
This Summit Declaration establishes a process for Canada's Western Provinces to coordinate and advance research and communication activities that will result in more Open Skies agreements between the federal government and other nations with resulting benefits for Western Canada.

In so doing, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan will:

1. Exchange information, research and analysis;
2. Participate in and jointly support projects and programs of mutual interest;
3. Engage industry and other jurisdictions to accelerate Open Skies agreements for our provinces; and
4. Undertake advocacy and public education to advance the case for the economic benefits of Open Skies agreements.

Signed at Vancouver, British Columbia, this 25th day of September, 2009.

Honourable Ken Cheveldayoff, Government of Saskatchewan
Premier Gordon Campbell, Government of British Columbia
Premier Ed Stelmach, Government of Alberta

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