

Backgrounder

PRECLEARANCE AND INTRANSIT PRECLEARANCE

PRECLEARANCE SERVICES AND HOW THEY WORK

Since 1952, U.S. preclearance in Canadian airports has made transborder air travel much easier and more convenient for U.S.-bound passengers.

Preclearance allows travellers to be inspected by U.S. Customs and Immigration before they depart Canada for U.S. destinations. Precleared passengers enjoy shorter connection times at U.S. airports and direct access to U.S. airports that have no customs or immigration inspection facilities.

U.S. preclearance services are now offered at the Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal (Dorval) airports. Canada does not have preclearance sites in the United States, but the U.S. and Canada will discuss such services. Preclearance has been key to facilitating growth in Canada-U.S. air travel, which has increased 37 percent under the 1995 Canada-United States Air Agreement. About 8.5 million passengers are precleared every year.

What the Act will do

The new law would give U.S. preclearance officers at designated sites in Canada the authority to decide what people and goods are allowed to enter the United States. These officers would administer certain U.S. laws related to customs, immigration, public health, food inspection and plant and animal health, subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Bill of Rights. All criminal matters would be dealt with by Canadian authorities under Canadian law. U.S. criminal law would not be enforced in Canada. Strip searches would be performed by Canadian authorities.

The U.S. government is amending its existing legislation to fully reciprocate Canada's proposed legislation and provide for Canadian customs preclearance facilities in U.S. airports.

NEW INTRANSIT PRECLEARANCE SERVICE AND HOW IT WORKS

The Preclearance Act paves the way for expanding and creating new intransit preclearance facilities in Canadian airports. These facilities benefit travellers by offering shorter flight connections and faster routings from Asia and Europe to North America.

Currently, international passengers en route to the United States through a Canadian airport must pass through Canadian customs and immigration before seeing a U.S.