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The Department of External Affairs announced today that an Air Transport Services Agreement between Canada and Japan was formally signed at noon today in Ottawa. His Excellency, Dr. Koto Matsudaira, the Ambassador of Japan, signed the Agreement on behalf of his Government, while Mr. L. B. Pearson, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Mr. George C. Marler, the Minister of Transport, signed on behalf of Canada. The Agreement, which was negotiated in Tokyo and initialled there on November 24, 1954, will come into force when it has been approved by both Canada and Japan in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures.

The Agreement will enable a Canadian airline to operate an international air service between Vancouver, Tokyo, and Hong Kong via the great circle northern Pacific Route. A Japanese airline will in return be allowed to operate an international air service on a similar route between Tokyo and Vancouver and other points to the south. Full traffic rights at Tokyo and Vancouver will be exchanged reciprocally under the Agreement.

At present Canadian Pacific Airlines operates a Vancouver-Tokyo-Hong Kong service on a temporary basis, and it will be the Canadian airline designated under the Agreement. A Japanese airline will be designated by the Government of Japan in due course, when it is ready to operate the northern Pacific route set out in the Agreement. Japan Air Lines now operates a trans-Pacific air service between Tokyo and San Francisco.

The Air Agreement is the second important bilateral agreement concluded between Canada and Japan since the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The first was the Agreement on Commerce which was signed in March 1954. These two Agreements, one promoting trade and the other improving communications, should serve to bring about closer relations and thereby strengthen the bonds of friendship existing between Canada and Japan.