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LETTER TO MR. HOWARD McCURDY, M.P.

The Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, released today the following text of a letter dated October 24, 1986 to Mr. Howard McCurdy, M.P.

"Dear Howard:

I refer to your question in the House of Commons on Wednesday, October 22, concerning Air Canada and South African Airways (SAA). As promised in my reply, I have now taken up the matter with Air-Canada management. Air Canada has cooperated fully and has, since your intervention on Wednesday, shown keen sensitivity to the government's policy on South Africa.

First, the facts of this particular case. The bookings in question were made with Air Canada by a Canadian tour operator and not by SAA. Contrary to the suggestion in the Gazette, there was no special arrangement made in this instance between Air Canada and SAA. No preferential treatment was accorded and IATA-approved rates were applied to the trip.

The ticket sales in question pertain to a regularly scheduled Air Canada flight from Toronto to London. Air Canada did not control (or benefit from) the onward flight from London to South Africa. It would have run counter to the regulations of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for Air Canada to have refused to sell space to Canadian citizens, or others for that matter, on its Toronto-London flight.

In 1985, the Government banned air links between Canada and South Africa. In June of 1986, the Government asked Canadian entrepreneurs to join in enforcing a ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. The sale by Air Canada of seats to London in no way breaches either of those two policies of the Government of Canada.

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Following my approach to Air Canada's management, the Corporation announced on Thursday, October 23 that it is ending its General Sales Agency Agreement with SAA in Canada and with a private agency in South Africa. Such agreements traditionally exist between airlines which do not fly between one another's country. As a result of the abrogation of this agreement, however, Air Canada will no longer be involved in facilitating travel to and from South Africa.

Further, Air Canada has agreed that when SAA closes its doors in Canada on November 1, it will not undertake to serve as SAA's official agent here.

Finally, Air Canada is examining its legal obligations under the IATA to ascertain whether it is in fact obliged to sell interlining tickets to Canadians travelling on Air Canada flights to connector points, with South Africa being their ultimate destination.

I am writing to the Presidents of other Canadian airlines commending to them the actions which have been taken by Air Canada.

I believe the effect of our interventions has been to strengthen the integrity of the Canadian ban on air links and on tourism promotion to South Africa. Thank you for having raised the matter in the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Clark"