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CANADA WELCOMES NEW AIR PRECLEARANCE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE U.S.

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet and Transport Minister Douglas Young today welcomed the establishment of a bilateral working group on the issue of in-transit preclearance as part of the new arrangements for preclearance services at airports in Canada.

"We are pleased that our negotiations have led to a full range of agreements, including the establishment of a bilateral working group, needed for efficient preclearance at Canadian airports," said Mr. Ouellet.

The working group will determine, by March 1, 1996, how 'one-stop' preclearance can be introduced at Canadian airports for international in-transit passengers. In-transit preclearance would permit international travellers to pass through a Canadian airport on their way to the United States without having to clear Canadian customs and immigration inspection. In-transit preclearance would thus make routings on Canadian air carriers over Canadian gateways to the United States much more attractive to international passengers.

"With in-transit preclearance, Canada would be able to reap the maximum benefits of the 'Open Skies' Air Transport Agreement," noted Mr. Young.

The new arrangements, agreed through an exchange of diplomatic notes between Canada and the United States, include a U.S. pledge not to close existing preclearance sites without Canadian consent and a commitment to non-discriminatory treatment of airlines. Canada will grant U.S. inspection officers and their families expanded benefits, including improved documentation and identification as well as expanded tax and duty privileges at the border.



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Last Friday, the United States confirmed the establishment of new preclearance facilities in Ottawa beginning in 1996 and agreed to consider opening a similar facility in Halifax. Such facilities already exist at six Canadian airports (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal). Preclearance allows airline passengers bound for the United States whose flights originate in these cities to clear U.S. customs before crossing the border.

- 30 -

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