

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Canada's Chambers call on federal government to support a more competitive air strategy**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Regina, September 19, 2016** – Canada's business leaders are calling on Ottawa to lower taxes and fees and improve air access in order to make the domestic airline industry more competitive in the global arena.

“Canada spans over three oceans, so it's crucial that we have a reliable and efficient air travel network that can support the growth of our trade and transportation sectors,” said Val Litwin, President and CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce. “As we become a bigger player in the global market with potential deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, it's now more important than ever for Canada to strengthen the competitiveness of its air strategy.”

Delegates passed a made-in-B.C. policy this past weekend at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce AGM (Sept 17-19) designed to establish a three-pronged outcome: greater competition in the airline industry, liberalized air access achieved through reciprocal agreements with other jurisdictions, and a greater capacity for the free movement of labour and goods.

This policy initiative aims to solidify Canada's position as a global hub for aviation traffic, a prospect that is hindered by high taxes and fees that continue to drive away business and leisure travellers, often pushing them across the border in search of better rates.

“The high cost of travel and the lack of airline competition is stunting Canada's ability to attract not only tourists, but also international companies wanting to do business within our borders,” said Litwin. “Without access to affordable and reliable air travel, relationships are not made, business is not done, and ultimately the economy suffers.”

This initiative led by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and Richmond Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber of Commerce, Prince George Chamber of Commerce and Whistler Chamber of Commerce

Additionally, Canada's Chambers have backed the following made-in-B.C. policies, calling for:

- The federal government to renew a softwood lumber trade agreement with the United States that supports the Canadian forest industry and defends Canada's rights to free trade of softwood lumber – a policy initiative led by the BC Chamber;
- The ratification of a free trade agreement with India, one of the world's fastest growing economies - a policy initiative led by the Surrey Board of Trade;
- An affordable pension environment for all stakeholders that enables employees to increase contributions without requiring employers to contribute additional funds;
- A return to demand-driven immigration to ensure that businesses aren't struggling to meet their skilled labour needs – a policy initiative led by the Victoria Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber;
- Increased government support for responsible resource development in Canada – a policy initiative led by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce and Prince George Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber; and
- Improved access to the Canada Job Grant for small- and medium-sized businesses that currently struggle to access funds due to red-tape – a policy initiative led by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the BC Chamber.

While Litwin recognizes the progress that's been made to create and pass these policies, he says the real work of translating policy into reality has only just begun.

“These policies have huge potential for Canada and for British Columbia – but only if Ottawa implements them. So, as Chambers across Canada, we'll be rolling up our sleeves and working hard to advance these policies to ensure our country's success.”

*The BC Chamber is the largest and most broadly-based business organization in the province. Representing more than 125 Chambers of Commerce and 36,000 businesses of every size, sector and region of the province, the BC Chamber of Commerce is “The Voice of Business in BC.”*

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