

EU, Canada ink air travel pact

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[CBC News](#)

Canada and the European Union have signed an agreement to ease restrictions on transatlantic air travel.

Canada and the European Union announced Tuesday a deal that would end many rules governing air travel between this country and the 27 member nations of the European coalition.

Without giving many details, both governments said the agreement will lead to increased and easier travel across the Atlantic Ocean.

"The successful conclusion of air transport negotiations with the European Union is another step forward in our ongoing efforts to facilitate growth in trade, investment and tourism for Canadian business," Canadian Transport Minister John Baird said.

The new arrangement should improve:

- traffic rights, allowing carriers from either side to add or subtract routes at will;
- security, by boosting co-operation between Canadian security officials and those of the EU; and
- ground operations, by reducing restrictions on personnel, such as airline representatives.

Europe also touted the pact as a "breakthrough."

"The new agreement makes the EU-Canada market one of the most open in the world and is a milestone for EU-Canada relations.... The agreement is an important sign in the current economic situation that EU and Canada want to significantly expand their relations," EU Transport Minister Antonio Tajani said in a release.

Besides removing travel and investment restrictions, the agreement would let airlines in the two regions share passenger codes, which effectively let one carrier book its travellers onto another airline, a change that should make Canadian travel to Europe more convenient.

Canada has been reluctant to conclude international deals that would put at risk the ability of domestic carriers to move passengers within this country and from Canadian cities to U.S. ports of entry.

Details of the EU-Canada arrangement were not immediately available and could result in less-than-free air travel, some experts said.

That's because, in the arcane world of airline treaties, the fine print can cause commercial headaches.

Canada has a patchwork of travel deals with various European countries. With France, for example, Canada signed an initial air agreement in 1976 and has made at least 13 major adjustments to the deal's provisions since.

In addition, there are only three designated routes from France to Canada, with only one of those links terminating in a U.S. city — Chicago.