



Ideas on a Montreal-Beijing Direct Flight

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I. Reality and Opportunity

Canada's economy is going through a difficult period: our Canadian dollar has devalued against the US dollar about ten percent in recent months; the domestic purchasing power of citizens is going down; we are experiencing the decline of the retail and catering industries and many businesses are closing. We are eagerly awaiting the revitalization of Montreal's economy.

The decline of Canadian dollar is no good for Canadian, but it is a good chance to attract foreign investors, tourists, international students, and international buys. We should seize the opportunity.

After facing many obstacles, Montreal has finally elected Mr. Denis Coderre and his team to lead the city. They are working hard, and they are aiming to promote Montreal's political, economic, cultural and educational development. This public consultation organized by the *Commission sur le développement économique et urbain et l'habitation* is a testament to their efforts.

Since 1978, China has undergone reform and opened up. It has achieved rapid social, political, economic and cultural growth in all areas. China is now moving towards becoming the second largest economic power in the world; its economy is still booming, providing many opportunities. Chinese people travel abroad, study abroad, and have growing enthusiasm for the purchase of foreign goods, all of which has also presented many opportunities for Montreal and for Quebec.

In 2011, the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Montreal was officially opened, an indication that political, economic, cultural and educational exchanges in various fields between Quebec and China have been increasingly frequent. They have reached such an importance that the Chinese government made the decision, forgoing numerous Consulate General applications around the world, to establish the Consulate General in Montreal, Quebec.

The establishment of the Chinese Consulate General in Montreal further promotes and strengthens cooperation in various fields, like politics, economy, culture and education between Quebec and China. China is increasingly investing in Quebec, as evidenced by the recent launch of the Jien Nickel Industry Company project, the Beida Jade Bird



Group, the fire equipment R & D center project, and the Bank of China. Chinese-funded enterprises in Quebec are mainly distributed in the domains of mineral exploration and development, finance, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, logistics, and transportation, and they have injected more than 2 billion Canadian dollars into the economy. In turn, cultural exchanges, investment and trade from Quebec to China have also increased. For example, Mr. Philippe Couillard, prime minister of Quebec, will lead a large trade delegation at the end of October to visit China. The Canadian Ambassador to China speaks quite fluent Chinese, and has recommended the Canadian team to the 1.4 billion Chinese people, for the "Canadian Culture Week" event at the 16th "China International Art Festival".

Montreal's Chinese community has long been voicing demand for direct flights. Commissioned by the Montreal airports, the Montreal Chinese family service center drafted a petition to carry out a direct flight between Montreal and Beijing, which many community organizations and individuals signed. This is the full expression of the desires and expectations of the general public.

Montreal was the work place of Norman Bethune, who is a great friend and hero of the Chinese people. China has chosen Montreal to host a statue in honor of Bethune, rather than his hometown. This emotional connection is an advantage, and favors further development of our economic and trade cooperation with China.

These factors, coupled with opinions expressed in the reports of other speakers at this hearing, all fully illustrate the urgent need and excellent opportunities for direct flights from Montreal to Beijing.

II. Problems and Obstacles

1. This direct flight is a more urgent need on Montreal's side than on China's side. Thus, we need to provide greater efforts to ensure its realization.

- 1) Beijing has opened direct flights to Vancouver a long time ago and to Toronto in recent years.
- 2) Quebec is implementing its "Plan Nord" to attract foreign investment, from China in particular, which must pass by Montreal. With no direct flights, many investors shy away.
- 3) Chinese and Asian travel enthusiasts and tourists choose to come to Montreal less because there are no direct flights.



4) Many Chinese students would like to study abroad and to have study tours. They may have to choose elsewhere because there are no direct flights here.

2. Currently, there are no landing slots available at the Beijing airport to suit the needs of this flight.

3. According to a Secor-KPMG study, there are not sufficient passengers going from Montreal to Beijing as final destination to warrant a direct flight.

There is a need to attract passengers to elsewhere in East Asia, like Chong Qing, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore. These transit passengers are critical to the success of a Montreal-Beijing direct flight. Therefore, it is necessary to have a slot in the Beijing airport in the early afternoon, so that transit passengers have enough time to get to their destination on the same day.

Such a flight should take off from Montreal in the afternoon, which would allow passengers from Ottawa, Quebec, Eastern Canada and other North American cities to travel in the morning and arrive on time to Montreal.

Therefore, we should get the early afternoon slot in Beijing airport, and afternoon in Montreal airport. Thus add to the difficulty to apply the slots in Beijing and Montreal.

4. The CEO of Aéroports de Montreal (ADM), James Cherry, reported recently that the lack of an effective link between the airport and downtown, either by a train or an improved road access, remains the biggest weakness of the airport.

III. Solutions and Suggestions

1. The preferred location for direct flights from Montreal, of course, is Beijing, China's political and cultural center, China's transportation hub, a convenient transfer to other major Asian cities, and the capital of China.

2. It is important to consider the benefits to others and to help them share in the rewards, in order to work together. The most beneficial body in the Montreal-Beijing flights is the landlord – Montreal and Quebec. This matter is an opportunity to strengthen communication and cooperation among all the concerned parties on the Canadian side and their Chinese counterparts, such as the Montreal Airport and Beijing Airport Corporation, Canadian Airlines and China Airlines. It is in our common interest to contribute to this goal together.

3. To achieve wealth and prosperity, we must first build a path; invest first, and then harvest. We should expect municipalities, Montreal Airports (ADM), the government of



Quebec, all levels of tourism departments, and others, to work closely together, not only to urge the creation of the Montreal-Beijing direct flight through the media, but also to economically support the opening of this line. Like for the recent retention of the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal, during this flight's first years, taxation policies can be implemented to provide support for the project, and to help overcome difficulties the airports and airlines may encounter at first. It is also necessary to increase investments and cooperation for the construction of a shuttle train, or improve road infrastructure between the airport and downtown.

4. If negotiations with the Beijing airport genuinely turn out to be fruitless, the second option would be direct flights from Montreal to Shanghai. Because Shanghai is China's economic center and free trade center, it will gradually become Asia's economic and financial capital. Shanghai is Montreal's sister city; it has direct flights to important Asian cities, allowing convenient transit for passengers. However, Shanghai is much further than Beijing for travelers from Northeastern China, which has a similar climate and living conditions as Quebec. (Other large cities in China are difficult to consider, such as China's domestic transportation hub Zhengzhou, because connecting flights to other cities in East Asia are not sufficient; or Guangzhou, due to its location in China's southeast corner, not convenient to reach most of mainland China.)