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SMOKING BAN TO COST CANADIAN AIRLINES MILLIONS OF
 DOLLARS

OTTAWA, MAY 17 (XINHUA) -- CANADA'S SMOKING BAN ON INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS WILL COST THE COUNTRY'S PRINCIPAL AIRLINE -44 MILLION DOLLARS IN REVENUE THIS YEAR.

THE CALGARY-BASED CANADIAN AIRLINES INTERNATIONAL LTD. SAID THE LOSS WILL INCLUDE 24 MILLION DOLLARS ON THE JAPAN-CANADA ROUTE AND 16-20 MILLION DOLLARS FROM OTHER INTERNATIONAL ROUTES MAINLY TO SOUTH AMERICA AND EUROPE.

MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF ITS JAPAN-CANADA TRAFFIC ORIGINATES IN JAPAN AND ABOUT 53 PERCENT OF THOSE PASSENGERS ARE SMOKERS. ON ROUTES TO FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY, SMOKERS MAKE UP ABOUT 22 PERCENT.

THE COMPANY'S SPOKESMAN SAID THE EFFECT OF CANADA'S REIGN-ROUTE SMOKING BAN "IS LIKE TAKING ON THE COMPETITION WITH ONE ARM TIED BEHIND YOUR BACK, BECAUSE THE FOREIGN AIRLINES ARE NOT BOUND BY THIS LEGISLATION."

HE SAID A RECENT SURVEY OF ITS PACIFIC ROUTES INDICATES THERE WILL BE A 12 PERCENT NET LOSS OF ITS PASSENGERS AS THOSE WISHING TO SMOKE WILL MOVE TO OTHER CARRIERS.

LAST WINTER, THE AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA CALCULATED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL NON-SMOKING POLICY MIGHT COST A TOTAL OF 100 MILLION DOLLARS IN LOST REVENUE A YEAR.

THE SMOKING BAN ON INTERNATIONAL ROUTES WILL TAKE EFFECT AS OF JULY 1 THIS YEAR. SMOKING NOW IS BANNED ON ALL FLIGHTS OF LESS THAN SIX HOURS BY CANADIAN-OWNED AIRLINES.

THE BAN AFFECTS MAINLY AIR CANADA AND CANADIAN AIRLINES INTERNATIONAL, THE TWO PRINCIPAL MEMBERS OF THE AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.

AIR CANADA, THE FIRST MAJOR NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINE TO EXPERIMENT WITH NON-SMOKING FLIGHTS FOUR YEARS AGO, SAID HOWEVER THAT THE POLICY HAS BEEN BENEFICIAL.

"WE FOUND OUR EXPERIENCE OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE," AIR CANADA SPOKESMAN BROCK STEWART SAID, "EVEN SOME SMOKERS SAID THEY ENJOYED THE NON-SMOKING FLIGHTS."

THE AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA SAYS IT WILL ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES TO BAN SMOKING ON INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS, RATHER THAN PUTTING THE CANADIAN CARRIERS AT A DISADVANTAGE..END

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