

Roissy, 16 August 2018

Board of Directors appoints Benjamin Smith as Air France-KLM CEO

The Board of Directors of Air France-KLM, meeting on August 16, 2018, has decided to appoint Benjamin Smith as Air France-KLM Chief Executive Officer.

Benjamin Smith is a reputed senior airline industry executive at international level. He has played a major role at Air Canada over the past two decades, where he has been a key player in the airline's economic and commercial development, its transformation, its value creation and the engagement of the teams. Until today, he was Air Canada's President Airlines and Chief Operating Officer.

Benjamin Smith will take up his duties at Air France-KLM at the latest on September 30, 2018. In the meantime, the interim governance structure established on May 15, 2018 will remain in place. Anne-Marie Couderc, non-executive Chairman of the Air France-KLM and Air France Boards, and the Management Committee consisting of three members, will continue to perform their duties until then.

On his arrival, Benjamin Smith will take over executive management of the Air-France-KLM Group and will establish its organizational structure. He will be in charge as a priority to revitalize Air France, to give a new strategic impulse to the Group and to work on a new leadership approach with all Air France-KLM's teams.

The Board has decided that Benjamin Smith will be appointed as soon as possible as director of Air France-KLM, with the full support of the French State. The Board will announce as quickly as possible an updated Group's governance structure as regards to the roles and missions of the non-executive Chairmanship of Air France-KLM and Air France.

Anne-Marie Couderc said: "The arrival of Benjamin Smith is excellent news for the Group. Benjamin is a world-renowned leader in the airline sector who successfully transformed Air Canada. As a man who prefers dialogue, he developed and implemented the historical long-term win-win agreements with the airline's social partners for the benefit of Air Canada's teams, the airline and all other stakeholders. Benjamin Smith will bring his in-depth knowledge of the sector and his unique energy to the job to resume dialogue with Air France-KLM teams around a shared vision and to define a new go-to-market plan that will address the challenges of strong global competition. His on-the-ground experience will ensure a team-oriented approach to increase customer satisfaction and brands value. On behalf of the Board, I welcome and assure him of our total support for the task ahead. The Board also wishes to thank the three members of the Management Committee for their unfailing dedication during this complex transition period."

Benjamin Smith said: “I am very enthusiastic about this new opportunity. Air France and KLM are both airlines well known for the professionalism and commitment of their teams. I am well aware of the competitive challenges the Air France-KLM Group is currently facing and I am convinced that the airlines’ teams have all the strengths to succeed in the global airline market. I am confident in the Group’s capacity to become one of the world’s leading players. I look forward to earning the trust and respect of all teams, working together to win in this highly competitive and fast-changing customer service industry. I am approaching this new challenge with my passion for the aviation sector and with my deep willingness to listen to all stakeholders so we can work together and win. I have spent my entire career in this industry and I am convinced that the teams of the Air France-KLM Group are its strongest assets for its future success. I believe that over the past two decades I have developed very strong trust-based relations with my colleagues at Air Canada and I am looking forward to meeting the teams at Air France-KLM in September to begin working alongside them. I thank the Board of Directors of Air France-KLM to entrust me with this mandate”.

About Benjamin Smith



Benjamin Smith is a reputed senior air transport industry executive at international level. He has spent the last twenty years at Air Canada, where until today he was President Airlines and Chief Operating Officer.

He started out in 1990 at Air Ontario in parallel with his studies and in 1992 set up his own retail corporate travel agency. He successfully helmed this entrepreneurial experience for eight years. In 1999, he also simultaneously took on a consultancy role for Air Canada before finally joining the group in 2002.

Since his 2002 arrival, Benjamin Smith has filled a number of high-ranking positions at Air Canada. He was successively Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Network Planning, before joining the Air Canada executive management team in 2007.

Throughout his career, he has developed strong skills in management, strategy, labour relations management, marketing, and financial and operational management. In particular, he was the man behind Air Canada’s growth and modernization. He has defined and implemented Air Canada’s transformation strategy over the past decade, rolled out the Air Canada Group’s network expansion project worldwide, and substantially upgraded the fleet in terms of aircraft numbers and energy efficiency. As part of his responsibilities, he has also redefined Air Canada’s hub strategy, creating three major hubs to align with the airline’s key markets. Benjamin Smith was also the prime mover behind Air Canada Rouge, Air Canada’s low-cost brand, which is particularly successful at international level.

Benjamin Smith has been deeply involved in social dialogue at Air Canada. He personally oversaw, with the Human Resources Division, the collective bargaining talks with trade unions. These negotiations led to historic win-win long-term agreements for the airline, its workforce, and all other stakeholders.

In 2014, he was appointed President Airlines (Air Canada, Rouge, Express, Cargo) and Chief Operating Officer of the Air Canada Group. He took on overall responsibility for sales, operations, and customer service for the Group. He has also spearheaded Air Canada's operational and financial performance strategy.

On 16 August 2018, Benjamin Smith was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Air France-KLM group.

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