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Air Canada Flies 300 Firefighters from Johannesburg, South Africa to Assist with Alberta Wild Fire

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa and EDMONTON, AB, May 29, 2016 /CNW/ - Air Canada flight AC7007 departed O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa early today en route to Edmonton, Alberta with 300 South African firefighters on board. It is carrying the largest number of wildland firefighters ever brought into Canada. The Air Canada Boeing 777-200LR is carrying firefighters from South Africa's Working on Fire Program (www.workingonfire.org) who will assist in firefighting efforts underway in Northern Alberta. It is also that organization's largest-ever deployment.

"Air Canada's employees have once again risen to the challenge to make this mission possible," said Marcel Forget, Senior Vice President, Commercial Strategy, whose responsibilities include the airline's network planning and scheduling. "This is the first time Air Canada has operated into South Africa, which also required rescheduling flights to make one of our largest aircraft available in order to accommodate this request. We are extremely honoured to be able to support the firefighting underway in Northern Alberta, and on behalf of all Air Canada employees, I sincerely thank the men and women of the Working on Fire program for the invaluable contribution they will make on the ground."

"We are proud of our South African fire fighters from our Working on Fire programme and we no doubt believe that they will do us proud to provide these essential services to Canada," said Llewellyn Pillay, Managing Director, Working on Fire. "We are immensely proud of the fact that the international firefighting community has recognised the skills and expertise within Working on Fire to provide essential integrated fire management services at an international level. We are grateful also for this partnership between CIFFC and for the contribution of Air Canada in bringing our fire fighters safely to Canada."

"On behalf of the Canadian Wildland Fire Community we offer our gratitude and thanks to Air Canada for helping transport the South African Firefighters to Alberta," said Kim Connors, Executive Director, Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. "This mobilization represents the largest group of wildland firefighters ever brought into Canada. Air Canada's willingness to make such a large aircraft available is greatly appreciated."

Air Canada is operating this flight on behalf of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (www.cifffc.ca) in cooperation with the Alberta Government with 17 Air Canada crew members on board. Flight 7007 will make a brief stop in Barbados for refueling and change of crew before arriving in Edmonton Sunday evening, 22 hours after departing South Africa.

Air Canada is Canada's largest domestic and international airline serving more than 200 airports on six continents. Canada's flag carrier is among the 20 largest airlines in the world and in 2015 served more than 41 million customers. Air Canada provides scheduled passenger service directly to 64 airports in Canada, 55 in the United States and 87 in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America and South America. Air Canada is a founding member of Star Alliance, the world's most comprehensive air transportation network serving 1,330 airports in 192 countries. Air Canada is the only international network carrier in North America to receive a Four-Star ranking according to independent U.K. research firm Skytrax. For more information, please visit: www.aircanada.com, follow @AirCanada on Twitter and join Air Canada on Facebook.

Note to News and Photo Editors:

Photos are now available for download at: www.aircanada.com/en/about/media/facts/ac7007.html

Media availability for the arrival of flight AC7007, expected at approximately 21:30 MT at Edmonton International Airport, may be arranged by contacting Edmonton Airport Authority, Corporate Communications directly:

Heather Hamilton, Director, Public Affairs at Edmonton International Airport

Mobile: 780.884.2966

Email: hhamilton@flyeia.com

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