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TORONTO I BEOGRAD „U KOMŠILUKU“

TORONTO AND BELGRADE "IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD"

Preko okeana, bez presedanja

Across the Ocean, Non-Stop

Ekskluzivno za „Elevejt“ ambasadorica Kanade u Beogradu Mišel Kameron i ambasador Srbije u Otavi Stefan Tomašević govore o tome kako direktna linija Er Srbije za Toronto trajno menja ekonomiju, spaja maticu sa jednom od najvećih dijaspora na svetu i briše geografsku udaljenost / Exclusively for Elevate, Canada's Ambassador to Belgrade, Michelle Cameron, and Serbia's Ambassador to Ottawa, Stefan Tomašević, discuss how Air Serbia's direct route to Toronto is permanently reshaping the economy, uniting the homeland with one of its largest diasporas, and erasing geographical distance

U dva ekskluzivna intervjua za „Elevejt“ donosimo vam poglede sa obe strane okeana. S jedne strane, kanadska ambasadorica u Srbiji Mišel Kameron deli svoje dirljive impresije sa inaugurálnog leta i otkriva koje skrivene kutke Toronta putnici obavezno moraju da posete. S druge strane, ambasador Srbije u Kanadi Stefan Tomašević objašnjava zbog čega Srbija investitorima i posetiocima nikada nije bila bliža.

In two exclusive interviews for Elevate, we bring you perspectives from both sides of the ocean. On one hand, Canada's Ambassador to Serbia, Michelle Cameron, shares her heartwarming impressions from the inaugural flight and reveals the hidden gems of Toronto that travellers simply must visit. On the other hand, Serbia's Ambassador to Canada, Stefan Tomašević, explains why Serbia has never been closer to investors and visitors.



FOTO: Profimedia / Henryk Sokura / Getty Images





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Kada je u maju poleteo prvi avion Er Srbije na ruti Beograd-Toronto, svima je bilo jasno da je reč o nečemu daleko većem od običnog komercijalnog uspeha

When the first Air Serbia flight on the Belgrade-Toronto route took off this past May, it was clear to everyone that this was something far greater than just a commercial success



NJENA EKSELENCIJA MIŠEL KAMERON

Ovaj let jača naše međuljudske odnose

Ambasadorka Kanade u Srbiji govori nam o emotivnom značaju rute za Toronto, potencijalu Zapadnog Balkana i srpskoj trobojci na tribinama Toronto Reptorsa

Pored toga što skraćuje vreme putovanja, šta ova direktna veza znači na emotivnom i praktičnom planu za spajanje naša dva društva i kako je možemo iskoristiti za podsticanje dublje kulturne i akademske razmene?

– Najpre želim da uputim veliko hvala kompaniji Er Srbije na ponovnom uspostavljanju ove direktne rute i na prepoznavanju dubokog značaja ove veze za naše dve zemlje! Za našu zajedničku srpsko-kanadsku zajednicu ovaj direktan let ima duboko emotivno značenje. On zbližava porodice, skraćuje distancu između generacija i omogućava spontana puto-

vanja na način koji je ranije bio nezamisliv. Ova veza jača međuljudske odnose koji povezuju naše dve zemlje i pojačava osećaj pripadnosti kod onih koji ponosno obe države nazivaju svojim domom. Lično sam prisustvovala radosti ovih putnika u Torontu kada sam razgovarala s njima na prvom letu. Ova ruta je za mnoge ostvarenje sna! Pored povezivanja ljudi sa dve zemlje koje nose u srcu, ova ruta otvara i nove mogućnosti za kulturnu razmenu, akademsku saradnju i mobilnost mladih. Naš cilj je da iskoristimo ovaj zamajac za proširenje programa stipendiranja, promociju umetničkih rezidencija i podsticanje češće dvosmerne saradnje između kanadskih i srpskih institucija.

Kako vidite da će ovaj direktni koridor preoblikovati bilateralne odnose i obim trgovinske razmene između Kanade i Srbije u narednim godinama?

– Diplomatski gledano, ova ruta signalizira novi zamah u odnosima između Kanade i Srbije, o čemu svedoči i važan razgovor koji su vodili naši ministri spoljnih poslova. Upravo zahvaljujući direktnom letu, bio je moguć njihov sastanak lice u lice, kada su i prepoznali da je sada pravi trenutak da iskoristimo ovu prekretnicu za revitalizaciju naših odnosa. Sa ekonomskog stanovišta, ovaj pozitivni zamah bio je glavna tema tokom inauguracionog leta, dok su članovi srpske poslovne delegacije razgovarali o strategiji uoči Poslovnog foruma Kanada-Srbija u Torontu i svojih B2B sastanaka. Verujem da će

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u narednim godinama ova direktna veza poslužiti kao katalizator za proširenje obima trgovinske razmene i podizanje vidljivosti Srbije unutar dinamične i raznolike privrede Kanade.

Smanjenjem vremena putovanja i pojednostavljivanjem povezivanja očekujemo značajno povećanje poslovnih putovanja, trgovinskih misija i priliva investicija. Sektori kao što su inovaciona partnerstva, napredna proizvodnja i izvoz poljoprivredno-prehrambenih proizvoda posebno su dobro pozicionirani da profitiraju od ove direktne rute. Pohvaljujem generalnog direktora kompanije Er Srbije Jiržija Mareka i njegov tim na donošenju ove hrabre poslovne odluke da uvedu direktne letove u svetu punom neizvesnosti.

Za koje konkretne sektore privrede verujete da će najbrže osetiti korist od ove nove rute?

– Direktna avio-povezanost je često varnica koja ubrzava ekonomsku saradnju i očekujemo da će nekoliko sektora brzo osetiti taj uticaj. Tehnološke kompanije i startapi imaju koristi od lakšeg pristupa kanadskim inovacionim centrima, dok će kompanije iz oblasti zelene energije i poljoprivredni proizvođači istraživati partnerstva, posećivati trgovinske sajmove i graditi dugoročne komercijalne odnose. Turizam će, naravno, odmah profitirati, jer kanadski putnici sada imaju nesmetanu rutu da otkriju lepotu i velikodušno gostoprimstvo Srbije, i obrnuto.

Dok naši dobri prijatelji u Ambasadi Srbije u Otavi ubeđuju Kanađane da putuju u Srbiju, ja podstičem sve u Kanadi da istraže Srbiju, kao i druge dve zemlje koje pokrivamo iz Beograda – Crnu Goru i Severnu Makedoniju – kao autentična, gostoljubiva i kulturno bogata mesta za posetu, sa srdačnim ljudima, divnom hranom i pićem.

Kada ovde dočekujete kanadske zvaničnike, prijatelje ili porodicu, koja su to top mesta na čijoj poseti apsolutno insistirate i šta vam je u srpskom stilu života ili kulturi postalo najdraže?

– Kada želim dobrodošlicu Kanađanima u Srbiji – bilo da su u pitanju kolege, prijatelji ili porodica – uvek se trudim da im dočaram bogate slojeve ove zemlje: njenu istoriju, kulturu, prirodne lepote i, iznad svega, njene ljude! Kako da izdvojim samo nekoliko svojih omiljenih mesta? U Beogradu insistiram na tome da počnemo od Kalemegdanske tvrđave. Odatle je šetnja Knez Mihailovom ulicom do živahne gradske kulture kafića i kafana nezaobilazna kako bi se osetila energija grada. Prepustiti se lutanju kroz različite gradske četvrti, od kojih svaka ima svoju jedinstvenu arhitekturu i šarm, prosto je obavezno! Van prestonice, Novi Sad i Petrovaradinska tvrđava su

uvek na mojoj listi. Mogla bih unedogled da nabrajam atrakcije od Subotice do Vršca, od Loznice do Smedereva, od Valjeva do Novog Pazara, od Vranja pa sve do Bora i Negotina. Laiko bismo ispunili mnoga izdanja ovog magazina blagom ove zemlje koje vredi doživeti!

Ako bih morala da istaknem ono što me je najviše impresioniralo, to bi bili srpski stil života i toplina njenih ljudi. Ovde postoje iskreno gostoprimstvo, otvorenost i velikodušnost zbog kojih se posetioци odmah osećaju dobrodošlo. Vreme provedeno oko stola, uz deljenje hrane, priča, dobru debatu i smeh, očigledno je nešto što se duboko ceni. Ono što na više načina pokušavam da prenesem Kanađanima jeste da Srbija nije samo mesto koje treba videti već i doživeti.

Kao Kanađanka, koja su top tri skrivena dragulja ili iskustva u Torontu koje posetilac koji dolazi prvi put apsolutno ne bi smeo da propusti kako bi zaista uhvatio ritam grada?

– Iako je Toronto veliki grad, njegov duh, lokalne četvrti, multikulturalni festivali i gostoljubiva atmosfera brzo će osvojiti srce svakog posetioca! Da bi uhvatio autentičnu atmosferu Toronta, turista iz Srbije koji dolazi prvi put treba da potraži mesta gde se lokalno stanovništvo i posetioци prirodno mešaju i da uživa u prizorima blizu obale jezera Ontario. Ako moram da izaberem tri, neka to budu: 1. Šetnja obalom Toronta („Toronto Waterfront stroll“) drvenim šetalištima u „Harbourfront“ centru, gde idete ka istoku sve do „Sugar Beach“, maštovitog gradskog parka sa belim peskom, jarkim suncobranima i čuvenim muskoka stolicama sa pogledom na vodu. 2. Pijaca Sent Lorens („The St. Lawrence Market“) koju je „National Geographic“ proglasio za najbolju pijacu hrane u Kanadi. 3. Istorijska četvrt „Distillery District“, zona isključivo za pešake sa kolekcijom viktorijanskih industrijskih zgrada iz 19. veka. Prvobitno je to bila destilerija „Gooderham and Worts“, a danas je uspešan kulturni centar sa buticima, kafićima i galerijama.

Lutanje kroz „Entertainment District“, uživanje u internacionalnoj kuhinji po vašem izboru, a zatim odlazak na svetski umetnički performans jeste način na koji ja provodim vreme u gradu, između posećivanja brojnih festivala i sportskih mečeva. Toronto ima hokejaške i bejzbol timove u profesionalnim ligama, mada bi Srbe verovatno najviše privukao naš košarkaški tim – Toronto Raptors. Sigurna sam da bi glavni trener Darko Rajaković voleo da vidi srpsku zastavu kako se vijori na tribinama! Ako vas ove atrakcije nisu ubedile, Toronto je takođe i čvorište za ostatak Kanade, odakle možete nastaviti da uživate u svim bogatstvima koja moja zemlja nudi.



Diplomatski gledano, ova ruta signalizira novi zamah u odnosima između Kanade i Srbije

Diplomatically, the route signals renewed momentum in the relationship between Canada and Serbia





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Beyond reducing travel times, what does this direct connection mean emotionally and practically when it comes to bridging our two societies, and how can we leverage it to foster deeper cultural and academic exchanges?

"First, a deep thank you to Air Serbia for re-establishing this direct route, and for recognising the profound importance of this connection for our two countries! For our shared Serbian-Canadian community, this direct flight carries profound emotional meaning. It brings families closer, shortens the distance between generations, and makes spontaneous travel possible in a way that was previously unimaginable. This connection strengthens the people-to-people connections that bind our two countries and reinforces the sense of belonging among those who proudly call both countries home. I experienced their joy first-hand in Toronto, when I spoke with the passengers of the first flight. This route is a dream-come-true for many! In addition to connecting people to the two countries they hold in their hearts, the route also creates new opportunities for cultural exchange, academic cooperation and youth mobility. Our goal is to leverage this momentum to expand scholarship programmes, promote artistic residencies, and encourage more frequent two-way engagement between Canadian and Serbian institutions."

From a diplomatic and economic standpoint, how do you see this direct corridor reshaping the bilateral relations and trade volume between Canada and Serbia over the coming years?

"Diplomatically, the route signals renewed momentum in the relationship between Canada and Serbia, as evidenced by the important discussion had by our two foreign ministers. Their face-to-face meeting was made possible thanks to the direct flight, and their recognition that now is the time to leverage this milestone to reinvigorate our relationship. From an economic standpoint, this positive momentum was the hot topic during the inaugural flight, as members of the Serbian business delegation discussed strategy in advance of the Canada-Serbia Business Forum in Toronto and their business-to-business meetings. Over the coming years, I believe this direct connection will serve as a catalyst for expanding the trade volume and elevating Serbia's visibility within Canada's dynamic and diverse economy."

"By reducing the travel time and simplifying connectivity, we expect a meaningful increase in business travel, trade missions and investment flows. Sectors such as innovation partnerships, advanced manufacturing and agri-food exports are particularly well positioned to benefit from this direct route. I commend Air Serbia CEO Jiri Marek and his team for making the bold business decision to introduce these direct flights in a world wrapped in uncertainty."





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Which specific sectors of the economy do you believe will benefit the quickest from this new route?

"Direct air connectivity is often the spark that accelerates economic collaboration, and we expect several sectors to feel the impact quickly. Technology companies and start-ups will benefit from easier access to Canada's innovation hubs, while green energy companies and agricultural producers will explore partnerships, attend trade fairs and build long-term commercial relationships. Tourism, of course, stands to gain immediately, as Canadian travellers now have a seamless route to discover the beauty and generous hospitality of Serbia, and vice-versa.

"As our good friends at the Embassy of Serbia in Ottawa convince Canadians to travel to Serbia, I am encouraging all in Canada to explore Serbia and the two other countries that we cover from Belgrade, Montenegro and North Macedonia, as authentic, welcoming, and culturally rich places to visit, with warm people and delicious food and drink."

When you welcome Canadian officials, friends, or family members here, what are the top places you absolutely insist they visit; and which aspects of the Serbian lifestyle or culture have you grown most fond of?

"When I welcome Canadians to Serbia - whether colleagues, friends, or family - I always try to give them a sense of the country's rich layers: its history, culture, natural beauty and, above all, its people! How can I name just a few of my favourite places? In Belgrade, I insist on starting at Kalemegdan Fortress. From there, a walk along Knez Mihailova Street into the city's vibrant café and kafana culture is essential to gain a sense of the city's energy. Losing oneself in the various neighbourhoods of the city, each of which has their unique architecture and other charms, is a must! Beyond the capital, Novi Sad and its Petrovaradin Fortress are always on my list. I could go on and on naming attractions from Subotica to Vršac, Loznica to Smederevo, Valjevo to Novi Pazar, Vranje up to Bor and Negotin. We could easily fill many editions of this magazine with the treasures of this country to experience!

"If I had to highlight what has impressed me most, it would be the Serbian lifestyle and the warmth of its people. There is genuine hospitality here, an openness and generosity that make visitors feel welcome immediately. Time spent around a table, sharing food, stories, a good debate and laughter, is clearly something deeply valued. In many ways, what I try to share with Canadians is that Serbia is not only a place to see, but a place to experience."

As a Canadian, what are the top three hidden gems or experiences in Toronto that a first-time visitor absolutely shouldn't miss if they want to truly catch the vibe of the city?

"While Toronto is a large city, its spirit, local neighbourhoods, multicultural festivals and welcoming spirit will quickly win over the heart of any visitor! To catch an authentic Toronto vibe, a first-time tourist from Serbia could seek out experiences where locals and visitors naturally mix, and take in scenes close to the Lake Ontario waterfront. If I have to shortlist three, let them be: 1. Toronto Waterfront stroll - a walk



FOTO: Miroslav Nedić

along the wooden boardwalks at Harbourfront Centre, where you walk east until reaching "Sugar Beach", a whimsical city park with white sand, bright umbrellas and Muskoka chairs with waterfront views. 2. The St. Lawrence Market - named best food market in Canada by National Geographic. 3. The historic "Distillery District" - a pedestrian only area with a collection of 19th century Victorian industrial buildings, originally the Gooderham and Worts Distillery, now a thriving cultural hub with boutiques, cafes and galleries.

"Wandering around the Entertainment District, enjoying international cuisine of your choosing, before catching a world-class performance, is how I spend my time in the city, between attending the variety of festivals and sporting matches. Toronto has professional league hockey and baseball teams, although Serbians would likely be attracted to our basketball team: the Toronto Raptors. I'm sure head coach Darko Rajaković would love to see the Serbian flag waving in the stands! If you are not convinced by these attractions, Toronto is also a hub to access the rest of Canada, where you can enjoy the richness that my country has to offer."

