

Why Air Canada Chose 16 Airbus A350-1000s Over Boeing's Delayed 777X To Replace Its Aging 777-300ERs



For nearly two decades, the **Boeing 777-300ER** has been at the very heart of Canada's flagship carrier, dominating long-haul routes from **Toronto Pearson International Airport** (YYZ) and **Vancouver International Airport** (YVR) across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. When it came time to plan its flagship fleet successor for the decade ahead,  **Air Canada** turned away from Seattle and placed its faith in the rival company **Airbus**. The airline confirmed a firm commitment for eight **Airbus A350-1000s**, with purchase

>

to opt for European composite-twin technology for its next era of international expansio

It is a major change, e historically relied on
Boeing twin-aisle jets y. Air Canada
leadership, including E ef Commercial Officer
Mark Galardo and Chief Financial Officer JOHN DI BERT, chose an operational
path focused on delivery certainty over delayed promises.

Time To Move On



Air Canada's fleet planners faced a ticking clock for its long-standing 777-300ER fleet, mainly because operating aircraft over thousands of cycles eventually wears them down. According to fleet tracking data from [Planespotting.net](https://www.planespotting.net), the Canadian carrier operates 19 Boeing 777-300ER

approaching major structural overhaul thresholds where engine teardowns and airframe stress in expensive.

Operating older aluminum widebodies across 15-hour transpacific routes creates an escalating financial burden that directly compresses operating margins. As fuel prices fluctuate and international competitors move to lighter, next-generation jets, burning excess fuel on previous-generation airframes while absorbing higher unscheduled maintenance downtime puts a carrier at a competitive deficit. Extending the service life of these older twin-engine jets into the 2030s would mean Air Canada would need to invest heavily in maintenance programs for aging airframes that cannot match the efficiency of modern carbon-fiber wings.

The natural replacement choice within the  **Boeing** ecosystem was the **777X**, specifically the high-capacity 777-9 variant, which offered immediate pilot type-rating overlap and familiar operational handling for Air Canada's flight operations division. What has become clear is that relying on Boeing to deliver a seamless fleet replacement is no longer viable as the 777X program sinks deeper into certification delays and structural testing setbacks.

Falling Behind The Mark

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The 777X program has accumulated \$15 billion in cost overruns and pushed initial passenger deliveries into late 2026 or early 2027, six to seven years behind its original 2020 schedule. For carriers like Air Canada with strict airframe retirement deadlines by 2030, waiting on an uncertain certification schedule creates a commercial planning gap. The eight firm orders and eight purchase options for the A350-1000 therefore guarantee deliverable slots starting in the second half of 2030, offering reliable timeline planning that Boeing is failing to provide.

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Air Canada's decision is part of a broader global movement across flagship international carriers. Industry leaders such as are actively re-evaluating their long-haul strategies, weighing additional A350-1000 orders against their delayed 777-9 commitments and even preparing to reject early-built 777X airframes due to weight penalty concerns and delivery deferrals. Lufthansa also recently rejected taking first-built aircraft, becoming the second airline to do so. By choosing the A350-1000, Air Canada aligns itself with a growing cohort of global operators prioritizing certified operational availability over unfulfilled manufacturer projections.

Air Canada Ordering Airbus A350-1000 To Support Network Growth

3:32

Modernizing a long-haul network requires an airframe that pairs delivery certainty with dramatic efficiency gains over older twin-engine predecessors. Even with the promise the 777X program shows, nothing can beat an aircraft already proven to be highly efficient and valuable to global airline networks.

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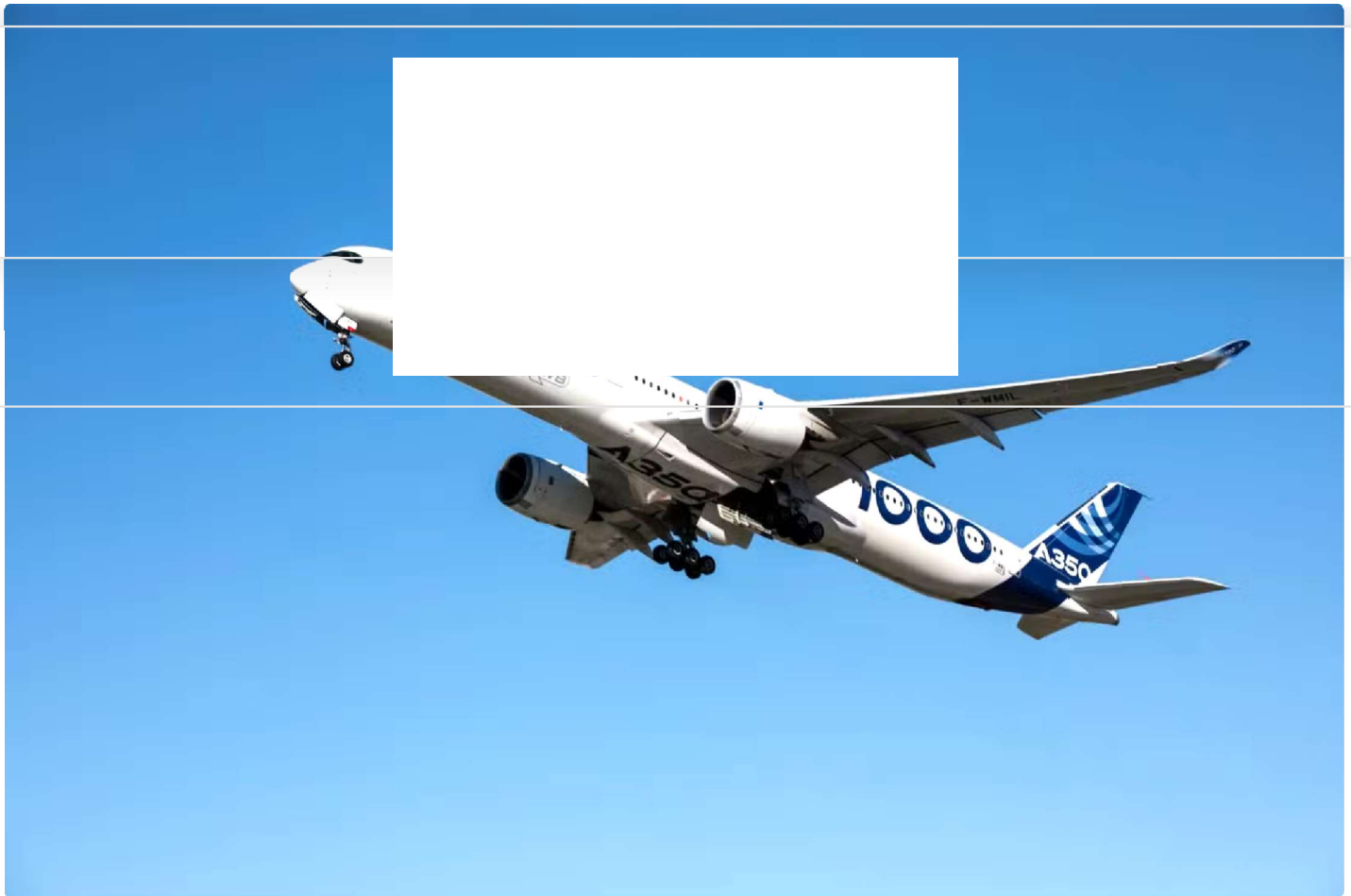
The Aircraft Set To Replace The Iconic Boeing 777-300ER

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Why Specifically The A350-1000?

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The justification for choosing the A350-1000 comes mainly from its structural materials and advanced propulsion efficiency. The A350-1000 features a composite airframe constructed from over 50% carbon fiber reinforced polymers, titanium, and advanced aluminum alloys. According to official performance metrics from Airbus and Air Canada, this lightweight design delivers up to a 25% reduction in fuel burn and carbon emissions

substantially lowers direct operating costs, protecting airline margins against jet fuel price s commonplace today.

The A350-1000 offers a seating range of 9,000 nautical miles (16,668 fill the aircraft with passengers while carry r deck across 16-hour transpacific and South Asian sectors. On 777-300ER operations, extreme distance combined with high summer temperatures or severe winter headwinds often forces dispatchers to cap passenger seating or offload belly freight to stay within takeoff weight limits. The composite A350-1000 does not face these operational compromises, meaning it can capture full payload revenue on ultra-long-haul routes.

Airbus Remains Open To Further Stretching The A350

3:22

Integrating a new long hauler into the fleet is a complex decision. Fleet planners will always be integrating new aircraft alongside incoming single-aisle aircraft into the existing network. For Air Canada, the A350-1000 complements the other aircraft in the long-haul fleet.

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The Rest Of The Fleet Will Make The A350 Stand Out



Air Canada's long-haul strategy is built on a disciplined, three-tiered fleet architecture that segments route profiles by capacity and range. Single-

Montreal and Halifax to Western Europe, far more seen as long-thin routes in the overall network. transcontinental legs ; account for 14 incoming 1000 sits atop this structure specifically for premium haul operations.

as high-density seen major hubs, flagship Airbus A350-backbone designed for nonstop ultra-long-haul.

Operating this modern multi-tiered layout across main hubs in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver yields major operational synergies. Both the A350-1000 and 787-10 feature lower cabin pressure altitudes, maintaining cabin environments equivalent to 6,000 feet (1,828 meters) or lower during cruise compared to legacy metal airframes pressurized to 8,000 feet (2,438 meters). Higher cabin humidity and lower effective pressure significantly reduce passenger fatigue on flights longer than 12 hours.

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Aircraft Model	Network Role	Engine	Delivery Timeline	Primary Network Focus
Airbus A321XLR	Thin long-haul and secondary transatlantic	Pratt & Whitney PW1100G GTF	2026 onwards	Eastern Canada to secondary European destinations

Aircraft Model	Network	Delivery	Primary Network Focus
Airbus A350-1000	Ultra-long-haul flagship cargo truck		Transpacific, South Asian, and deep South American corridors

Pairing slender single-aisle economics on thin long-haul routes with the immense range of its new flagship, Air Canada can reallocate widebody assets to previously unreachable destinations. It may seem that the arrival of the A350 will be the biggest difference maker, but it is actually the other aircraft in the fleet that can make it shine.

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More Possibilities Are Now Available

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Under current operations, flying ultra-long routes like Vancouver to Delhi or Toronto to Mumbai pushes the 777-300ER to its absolute limits, especially with current Russian airspace closures requiring lengthy polar detours. Heavy winter headwinds over the North Pacific or hot summer departures in South Asia frequently force dispatchers to trim passenger lists or offload high-yielding cargo pallets just to carry enough fuel. According to AirInsight, Mark Galardo, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer at Air Canada, noted that the flagship widebody will *"unlock new possibilities for long-haul flying for our customers,"* enabling direct, uncompromised nonstop links to high-growth markets across India, Southeast Asia, and Australia that were previously unviable.



Connecting eastern ar
South Asia, Southeast
reshapes Air Canada's

h-growth markets in
oad compromise
eign carriers. No

longer having to head to intermediate foreign hubs like Hong Kong, Tokyo, or Los Angeles allows the airline to capture high-yielding, point-to-point business and diaspora traffic directly from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. This new position is one of serious promise: the airline now has a seemingly perfect fleet mix that can truly start to rival its geographical competition.

SAS' CEO 'Stolen' By Air Canada? Anko van der Werff To Be President & CEO Of C...

3:48

This position is not exactly good news for Boeing, as many other carriers may be influenced to follow suit. Losing such a highly valued, long-time

Moving Into The Future With Certainty

Credit: Shutterstock



Air Canada's transition to the A350-1000 is a big change, and one that reflects the current state of affairs at Boeing. While the airline continues to partner with Boeing on its incoming 787-10, passing on the delayed 777X shows that flag carriers will no longer leave their long-haul replacement timelines vulnerable to chronic certification setbacks, even with a strong partnership.

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Capping capital expenditures at or below 12% of annual revenues, Air Canada has set out a modernization strategy. Locking in eight firm selections gives fleet planners the agility to flex capacity globally while scaling up transpacific capacity as demand dictates. As the first A350-1000 delivery arrives in the fall, the new composite technology will take over as the flagship anchor of Canada's global network, and there is very little Boeing can do about it.

Ultimately, selecting the A350-1000 secures delivery certainty, lowers fuel burn by 25%, and gives the airline 9,000 nautical miles (16,668 km) of uncompromised range that can open up its future. By choosing a proven, in-service widebody over an uncertain development timeline, Air Canada enters the next decade of aviation with a resilient, ultra-long-haul fleet ready to connect North America to the world.

Question 1 of 5

Which widebody aircraft has Air Canada selected as the new flagship to replace much of its aging Boeing 777-300ER long-haul fleet?

- A Airbus A321XLR
- B Boeing 777-9
- C Airbus A350-1000
- D Boeing 787-9

Airlines



Air Canada

A350-1000

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Crossbuck

2026-08-17 13:02:09

I can't help but feel that part of this decision, however big or small, might be based in the threats made by the current American president to Canada.

 14



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Ken

2026-08-17 13:24:46

I would choose a super
times, but I guess you h

Boeing 777X ten out of ten



5



Michael

2026-08-17 14:54:23

American threats, vaporware aircraft, and the fact AC already operates Airbus widebodies (A330s (using Rolls-Royce engines)).



6



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Doz

2026-08-17 17:30:01

Because the 777X is old tech from the 1990s



5



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Simon

2026-08-17 12:41:00

Air Canada also have 20 A330-300s in their fleet currently, the youngest being only eight years old or so, and a total of 40 787-8/9s, so their medium to long term long haul strategy surely won't only include the A321XLR, 787-10 and A350-1000.



4



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Tariffs brought in by the present administration also played a part in this decision. You go from a free trade agreement to ret

"...the tariff rate ... government, which applied to
an order of this size, will be



Doz

2026-08-17 17:31:44

Basically Trump messed up.

the A350-1000 has a much longer range than the 777X

**SNO**

2026-08-17 13:16:32

The A35K was the only MAJURE solution. The Trumpish issues helped move away from Boeing. The best example for the A35K superiority is Riyadh Air, who analyzed the 777-9 and the A350-1000 very detail until they decided for the A35k with remarks, that the A35K is the superior, next generation airliner, while the 777-9 is based on improved legacy technology.



Richard

2026-08-17 21:40:15

The 777X gains efficiency over the 777-300 because of its engines, longer wingspan, and more extensive use of lightweight composite materials. But the 777X still has an aluminum fuselage, so it is not the state-of-the-art aircraft the A350 is. The more important factor is that it is simply too much airplane for carriers the size of AC. If they went for the 777X, they would still be operating small subfleet dedicated to a specific but limited mission, with all the same financial drawbacks. So in the end AC went for the more appropriately sized airplane. The 787-10 is good for traffic-

 2    Copy**Peter Baltzer**

2026-08-18 07:34:22

There's probably a bit of truth in line is actually quite simple.

Like any other airline Air Canada sat down and calculated which Aircraft would likely make their operation most profitable.

At the end of the day, that's all there is to it. What factors it takes for an aircraft to become profitable is not a uniform calculation or a uniform result.

 1    Copy**PAUL**

2026-08-17 19:25:35

Before the 777 Air Canada was a large A340 operator, so its only natural Airbus wants their customer back. Whatever the politics add to this the A350 is a good airplane with more time certainty for Air Canada. AC was not an early 777 flyer they only did it when the 777-300ER came around 2004, I would not rule out the 777-9 flying at AC. An AC 777-9 would probably carry over 500 people if we use current 777-300ER configurations as a guide. Montreal to CDG is a heavy economy route for AC using the 450 seat 777 from AC.

    Copy**Daniel**

2026-08-18 10:11:36

The A350-1000 is the best replacement for the 777-300
And I guess 777x would be a bit too big for Air Canada

Congratulations Air Canada great choice



benz

2026-08-17 21:13:28

Air Canada's decision-making
airlines have already started
just finalized its aircraft pur

. Other major and leading
his year, while Air Canada



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Avio

2026-08-17 23:32:00

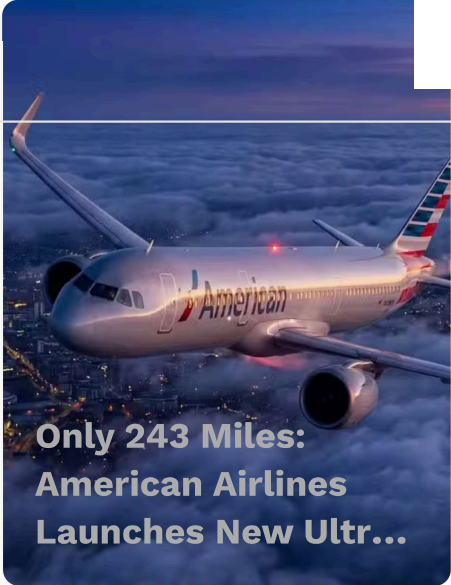
Because AC have seen the light. Their passenger comfort and experience is clearly of high
importance to them hence the A351.



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