

Ottawa 'completely mismanaged' UAE airlines' bid for more slots

Opposition says Canada has lost key ally in the Middle East

- By Mick O'Reilly, Deputy Managing Editor
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Dubai: If you're angry over obtaining a visa for Canadians coming to the UAE, blame Canada.

In an exclusive interview with *Gulf News*, Dan McTeague, the Liberal Party critic on Foreign and Consular Affairs, says the blame for the UAE's imposition of visa requirements on all Canadian visitors lies squarely with Ottawa and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

"The government of Canada under Stephen Harper has completely mismanaged this file," McTeague said from Toronto. "Their mismanagement has resulted in Canada losing a key and strategic ally in the Middle East and it's going to take a long time for Canada's reputation in the region to be repaired."

At the heart of the dispute is a stalemate over landing rights for Etihad and Emirates at Canadian airports. The UAE carriers want more access to Canadian destinations such as Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver, but at present are limited to three flights each per week to Toronto only.

"The manner in which Ottawa is acting in the interests of Air Canada smacks of protectionism," McTeague charged. "Even the Conservative Premier of Alberta — Mr Harper's home province — is saying that Emirates and Etihad should have more access to Canadian destinations."

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