

Cold Weather Testing at Yellowknife Airport

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is following through on its mandate commitment to strengthen connections with public and private sector partners in transportation infrastructure. As the primary aviation hub of the Northwest Territories, the Yellowknife Airport hosts a number of businesses and industries that employ northerners and contribute to economic growth; provide services that support our growing tourism sector; and, provide essential services to our communities and residents.

Maintaining our relationship with partners at Yellowknife Airport is vital to its growth and success. Consistent with this commitment, the Airport has been seeking out partnership opportunities with international aviation leaders that are looking for locations to undertake cold weather testing.

Last fall, the Yellowknife Airport held discussions with the City of Yellowknife, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and NWT Tourism to determine how we could come together to capture new revenue streams associated with cold weather testing. One of the outcomes of these meetings is the newly formed Yellowknife Airport Cold Weather Testing Group.

The group's goal is to ensure Yellowknife is recognized by global aerospace leaders as the number one arctic cold weather testing destination. In order to achieve this, the group is joining forces and adopting a collaborative approach to marketing the Yellowknife Airport to the highly competitive cold weather testing aerospace industry.

Mr. Speaker, cold weather testing offers significant opportunity and major economic benefits for the local economy. Visiting teams typically stay in the testing location for 30 to 90 days and often include between 30 to 70 professionals such as engineers, pilots and support staff. This could significantly increase revenue growth for Yellowknife Airport's partners, and create an opportunity to diversify the Northwest Territories' winter tourism markets by developing a new sector of business tourism.

Working with local air carriers and operators, the Cold Weather Testing Group is developing the resources and relationships that position Yellowknife as the Canadian Arctic cold weather testing location-of-choice. These resources will assist aeronautical decision-makers to locate suitable accommodations and working venues for their away-teams prior to their arrival in the Northwest Territories.

Working with our partners, efforts are being made to ensure that information packages are available to respond to both proactive and reactive cold weather testing enquiries. Packages will include maps, brochures and other information such as restaurant listings, vehicle rental locations, entertainment venues and tourism operator information for those off-duty testing team members wishing to explore our unique northern environment and communities.

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to say that Yellowknife Airport is hosting Bell Helicopters. They are conducting cold weather testing of one of their larger helicopters, the new Bell 525 Relentless, the next generation helicopter. This is the first commercial helicopter to incorporate the Garmin G-500-H touchscreen, and is recognized as the best-in-class for low noise and vibration, and sets the new standard for vehicle control, and operational safety.

The partnership between the Cold Weather Testing Group and Bell Helicopters has created an opportunity to host 30 engineers and pilots for approximately 90 days in Yellowknife. This group will provide a measurable economic boost to Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that this one cold weather testing partnership with Bell Helicopters will infuse \$2.3 million dollars into the local economy. In recent months, Yellowknife Airport has also had discussions with Mitsubishi to test their medium-sized jets, and Korean Aerospace Industries has inquired about testing their helicopters here.

In addition to the creation of the Yellowknife Airport Cold Weather Testing group, planning efforts are underway for the development of a preliminary competitor analysis, a marketing framework, and the decision to link the cold weather testing marketing strategy to Destination Canada's Business Events Canada Marketing Program for the Aerospace Industry.

The Northwest Territories has a unique arctic advantage. Yellowknife is one of the coldest cities in the country. As the major gateway airport to the Northwest Territories, conditions at Yellowknife Airport in the winter are cold, clear and dry, and temperatures can dip as low as minus 50 Celsius. Yellowknife Airport has all of the facilities and services required to be a testing site: runway and airspace as well as apron and ramp space available for aircraft testing, emergency services, and onsite airport firefighting facilities, coupled with airport based businesses who understand the needs of the aerospace industry.

The Yellowknife Airport Cold Weather Testing Group recognizes Bell Helicopters as one of many successful partnerships bringing innovation and economic opportunity to local businesses. We believe that there are other cold weather testing opportunities to be developed, all of which position the Northwest Territories as a global leader in the aerospace industry.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to cold weather testing, there are important improvements underway at Yellowknife Airport. On Sunday of this past week, Madame LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue, MP Michael McLeod, and I were pleased to announce funding of approximately \$2.5 million dollars from the Airport Capital Assistance Program for the airfield lighting rehabilitation project. In addition, the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund will contribute 15% of the total project cost, bringing the total of the project to over \$3 million dollars.

This funding announcement will bring changes to airfield lighting on Runway 16-34, the primary runway of Yellowknife Airport. The project will make the airport safer and further contribute to our commitment to reduce energy consumption.

These and other initiatives will reinforce our efforts to strengthen connections with public and private sector partners in transportation infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.