

AFAC POSITION PAPER 05/2008

Issue: National Recognition of a Century of Flight

Background

- February 23, 2009 will be the 100th anniversary of the first powered, heavier-than-air, controlled flight in Canada, by J.A.D. McCurdy in the Silver Dart at Baddeck, Nova Scotia. This seminal event heralded the beginning of aviation activity in Canada.
- Throughout the past century, aviation has been a key 'enabler' to the exploration and development of our nation. Aerospace activity now constitutes a larger component of Canada's defence industrial base than for any other nation.
- A national office for the Centennial of Flight Project has been established in Ottawa. Its role is to act as a clearing house for activities taking place during 2009. The Board of Directors for the project includes a wide representation of stakeholder aviation organizations.
- Unfortunately, the Board has been unsuccessful in accessing federal funding for Centennial of Flight commemoration activities. As a result, although work on this once-in-a-lifetime commemoration has been underway for some time, it has been severely constrained by the lack of funds. This has resulted in a significant lack of visibility, with the consequence that many Canadians remain unaware of its historic significance.
- Examples of other initiatives underway include 'Hawk One', a Sabre aircraft which is being refurbished in the original colors of the Golden Hawks demonstration team, formed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the flight. Additionally a full sized replica of the Silver Dart itself is being fabricated by the Aerial Experiment Association 2005 team from Welland, Ontario. Support for these projects currently comes from private/corporate sponsorship.

AFAC Position

- The AFAC applauds the excellent work of the Centennial of Flight Board of Directors and looks forward to supporting, and participating in, planned events.
- Given the national significance of aviation, it is important and appropriate to commemorate a century of flight on a national scale. Any effort to



celebrate aerospace achievements would serve to educate Canadians at large, inspire young people to consider a related career path, and infuse a common sense of pride and recognition of our collective accomplishments in this field. While the Centennial of Flight Project is promoting activities across Canada, this is being done without significant funding from the Federal Government. Additional resources would greatly enhance the work underway and significantly increase the impact of this important national undertaking, consistent with other commemorative events.

- The Association recommends that the Department of Canadian Heritage provide funding for the Centennial of Flight recognition. This money should be used to support Project activities as needed, but also to fund promotional material, media advertising time and space, educational packages, etc.

Messages

- Centennial of Flight events will commemorate the evolution of aerospace activities in Canada, which constitute a major element of our development as a nation.
- The Centennial of Flight Board of Directors is to be commended for the work being done to commemorate the first flight and other events, albeit with very limited resources.
- The Federal Government, and specifically the Department of Canadian Heritage, is urged to actively provide funding support to the promotion of a century of flight in Canada. There remains a limited window of opportunity to rectify this situation; accordingly this issue should be given a high priority.

Developed by the Aviation Affairs Committee – for more information, visit <http://airforce.ca/>

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