

It was March 25th, 1910 that the first airplane flight took place in the Province of British Columbia. Guess what community it took place in? Right here in Richmond. Today there are over 200 aerospace companies in our province. We've watched as significant growth in industry revenues has taken place over the last five years.

That has created a new challenge for us – the challenge of success. It's the kind of challenge we want to approach in this province constructively by bringing people together – by bringing our public institutions together in a way that's positive and that reinforces the energy and talent of those who want to participate in an industry.

Aerospace manufacturing and maintenance sectors are expected to need 10,000 additional workers in British Columbia in the next eight years. But we already have a significant shortage of skilled workers looming ahead of us.

Currently in British Columbia, more than one third of the workers in the maintenance, repair and the overhaul segments of this industry are 45 years old or older.

Another 42 per cent of aerospace maintenance workers are in the 35-44 year old age group. Clearly we have to make sure we are providing the opportunities for training and learning for people who are much younger. We have to expand training opportunities in this province if we are to take full advantage of the talents of the individuals who want to participate in the industry's future.

Today I am pleased to be here with my colleagues announcing a new strategy to support the growth of our aerospace industry over the next decade. Our aerospace strategy focuses on increasing skilled workers in maintenance and manufacturing, where they are needed the most.

The province will be investing \$20 million in this strategy in three key components: there will be 500 more aerospace training spaces; we'll be expanding aerospace training facilities; and there will be a new consortium advising government on strategies and opportunities for how we can unleash the full potential of the aerospace industry in B.C.

The \$20 million that we're be investing in this strategy will support the new infrastructure needed to deliver 500 new student spaces in aerospace and related programming throughout British Columbia by 2005-06.

The aerospace industry will provide co-op and apprenticeship work placements along with \$8 million in equipment and support. A network of institutions will co-ordinate skill specific programs so that we are avoiding costly duplication.

BCIT, Camosun College, North Island College, Northern Lights College, Okanagan University College and the University College of the Fraser Valley are all part of a new network that is reinforcing their existing programs and ensuring that we invest our dollars in the most cost effective way possible. All the partners in this new strategy will work

together to expand training facilities across British Columbia and to finalize the allocation of new spaces.

There will be a new BCIT Aerospace Technology campus on Sea Island that will replace this facility. It's a \$16.4-million project and will train 525 additional new placements. That's good news for Richmond, it's good news for BCIT, and it's great news for British Columbia.

The University College of the Fraser Valley will be relocating its Fraser Valley Aerospace Training Centre to a new facility in Abbotsford, and that will require an investment of \$1 million in that facility.

Okanagan University College and Northern Lights University College will be collaborating on a new aircraft maintenance engineer program out of an aerospace training centre in Vernon.

The additional investment to Northern Lights and Okanagan University College will amount to approximately \$2.8 million additional dollars. Expanded training facilities at Northern Lights in Dawson Creek will better support delivery of aircraft maintenance engineering throughout British Columbia.

We are working on with Okanagan University College to make sure we have the training facilities needed so that a potential new manufacturer can locate in Kelowna.

To ensure that we move this project forward, we are also establishing a BC Aerospace Consortium. We want to be sure that the programs that government supports and the institutions that we invest in are maximizing the benefits to our students and spreading the benefits across the province.

The Aerospace Consortium will have twelve members, six members from post secondary institutions, four members from private industry, one from the Ministry of Advanced Education, and one from the Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise.

The University College of the Fraser Valley president, Skip Bassford will be the Chair of the Consortium. I want to take a moment to congratulate the educational leaders who have come together under the umbrella of the BC Aerospace Consortium.

Each of these institutions has looked beyond their own institutional constraints and asked, "What can we do when we work together? What can we do that will be in the best interest of all of the people in British Columbia who would like to be involved in this industry?"

As you look at the map behind us you can see that we are reaching out to the Peace River and Dawson Creek with Northern Lights College, to the Okanagan, to the Lower Mainland, and to the North Island.

All of those communities will be part of this consortium. I want to say thank you to the leaders of the programs that have been developed for their cooperation and their leadership in this regard.

Let me conclude today by saying, particularly to all of you who are training right here in this facility today, thank you for the contribution you have made. Thank you for the dedication to provide excellent service to an industry that is growing in our province.

Thank you to our institutions of advanced education for providing top-notch programs that are recognized around the world. Thank you to the private-sector institutions that are contributing \$8 million to be sure that we do have the equipment and the opportunities for training that are essential to have top quality services provided to this industry. And thank you to all of you for being here today.

Aerospace in British Columbia has a very bright future. We have a bright future not because of government – we have a bright future because of you and because of what you do day in and day out.

On behalf of all my colleagues, particularly Ministers Bond and Thorpe, let me say we appreciate your work, we appreciate your dedication and we appreciate the fact that in British Columbia our aerospace industry is noticed around the world for its quality.

In my books you're all number one. Thank you very much I appreciate it.