
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

SELKIRK COLLEGE AVIATION CENTRE TAKES FLIGHT

CASTLEGAR – Selkirk College’s \$2-million professional aviation centre was officially opened today by Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell, giving Canada’s oldest college-based professional pilot training program a new home under one roof.

“Selkirk College is renowned for its aviation program, and today’s graduates are filling a vital need in the industry in B.C. and the rest of Canada, as more pilots reach retirement age,” said Coell. “This facility will build on the success of the program by providing students, faculty and staff a modernized environment with enough space to learn, teach and work.”

The 690-square-metre centre is located at the Castlegar Airport and was funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education. It replaces two portable buildings and is large enough to house classrooms, labs, a dispatch area and specialized equipment, such as flight simulators, worth more than \$2 million.

“Selkirk is very pleased that the provincial government has financed the construction of this beautiful new aviation training centre, and that the City of Castlegar has provided the long-term land lease and subsidy,” said Marilyn Luscombe, president of Selkirk College. “We are proud of the outstanding reputation of our aviation program, its graduates and staff. This new building will help to ensure the ongoing top quality of the program offering.”

Selkirk College began to offer the two-year aviation technology diploma program to help fill a shortage of pilots when those who trained during the Second World War began approaching retirement.

Classroom and lab instruction is provided by the college, with flight training by SelAir, a non-profit society run by the college, students and staff. Over the course of the program, students spend 16 months on flight instruction in Castlegar followed by two months of night flight training in Abbotsford.

“Our graduates form only a small part of the industry, but they are represented in the major airlines worldwide in numbers far out of proportion to their presence,” said George Westinghouse, aviation instructor and department head from 1997 to 2003. “The earliest graduates from Selkirk’s program were some of the few pilots who went directly from school to airline pilot positions.”

This year, Selkirk College is celebrating its 40th anniversary. The multi-campus community college's main campus is in Castlegar, with other locations in Nelson, Trail and Grand Forks, and learning centres in Kaslo and Nakusp. The college provides a variety of post-secondary programs including university transfer, business administration and forestry technology, as well as a wide range of vocational and technical, pre-employment and adult basic education.

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