

# Job opportunities in Quebec's aerospace industry

JAMES CARELESS  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Quebec's aerospace industry this year has needed to fill 3,642 jobs — and pilots only make up a small part of this total. The aerospace industry also needs engineers, machinists, process planners, furniture makers and finishers, assemblers and aircraft maintenance technicians.

This heartening news comes from the Comité sectoriel de main-d'oeuvre en aérospatiale (CAMAQ). It is the Quebec trade association that promotes and manages the employment interests of the province's aerospace companies. CAMAQ's 3,642 jobs-to-fill figure comes directly from aerospace employers themselves.

"The economic slowdown really seems to be behind us, to the point where some positions requiring specific skills are difficult to fill," said Serge Tremblay, CAMAQ's executive director. "We can anticipate ongoing challenges on that score if young talents, as well as experienced workers, do not join the existing workforce."

More good news: Quebec's booming aerospace industry is centred in the Montreal area. In fact, this region is home to world-class firms such as Bombardier Aerospace, Pratt & Whitney Canada, CAE, and Bell Helicopter Textron — among a total of more than 240 companies. So not only is the Quebec aerospace industry offering a wide range of jobs, but the majority of them are close to home.

And not all of these positions require university training. Many aerospace industry positions can be prepared for at provincial technical schools and CEGEPs. Meanwhile, positions such as woodworkers and cabinet-makers — the people who finish air-

plane interiors — can be filled by people with practical experience in construction and other non-aerospace sectors. According to Tremblay, jobs associated with the interior and exterior finishing of aircraft have grown by 48 per cent in the last four years alone!

Bombardier Aerospace is one of the firms that has needed qualified help.

"We have added 2,500 to 3,000 employees annually for the past two years," Stéphane Pelletier, Bombardier Aerospace's senior director of human resources, corporate services and talent acquisition, said this summer. And the company will continue to recruit in the coming years as its new aircraft programs begin production and enter the market.

At Bombardier, the growth has been due to its new CSeries passenger jets, its Global 7000/Global 8000 passenger jets, and its Learjet 85-passenger jet — plus the ongoing success of its CRJ, Q-Series, and business aircraft sales.

Meanwhile, the rest of the industry is doing well due to the depth of their offerings: Pratt &



COURTESY OF BOMBARDIER

Employees at Bombardier's Mirabel plant work on the interior of a Bombardier aircraft.

Whitney's aircraft engines, for example, CAE's aircraft simulators, and Bell Textron's helicopters.

"On a province-wide basis, Quebec has the aerospace businesses, resources, and skilled people to build aircraft from A to Z — from design and planning to manufacturing, marketing, and after-sales service," said Suzanne Benoit. She is president and CEO of Aéro Montreal, an industry think tank that has been bringing together aerospace companies, educators and government since 2006.

"However," she added, "it is the quality of our work that has

made our aerospace products globally popular. This is why the Quebec aerospace industry is growing — and hiring new people on an ongoing basis."

In an effort to fill these jobs with qualified Quebecers, the aerospace industry is working with educators at all levels to offer industry-specific education. In Montreal, aerospace companies have partnered with universities to create aerospace institutes. These institutes allow engineering and computer science undergraduates to work on real projects for local aerospace companies.

After graduation, "a large number of these students settle into

aerospace careers," said Dr. Nadia Bhuiyan, associate director of Concordia University's Institute of Aerospace Design and Innovation. "There are also aerospace forums and many events organized by the industry aimed at attracting students and workers to the field."

But the industry isn't looking only for university grads.

"We work with trade schools and CEGEPs to help stream students to aerospace careers," said Pelletier. "The fact is that there are excellent long-term jobs in the industry that can be filled by people with a wide range of educational qualifications and work experience."



PHOTOS (2) COURTESY OF CAMAQ

Not all aerospace careers require university training; many can be prepared for at provincial technical schools and CEGEPs. Positions such as woodworkers and cabinetmakers — the people who finish airplane interiors, like the man sanding wood panels (left) and the one tweaking a set of cabinet drawers (right) — can be filled by people with practical experience in construction and other non-aerospace sectors.