



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Partnership takes step towards aircraft maintenance school in Cold Lake

Cold Lake, AB – The City of Cold Lake is partnering with Portage College to purchase an Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (AME) curriculum in a step towards opening an AME school in the city.

The City of Cold Lake and Portage College have partnered on the project for just under three years. The City of Cold Lake has completed a feasibility study for the school, created a design for a building, and has brought a first phase of the school to detailed design, meaning that the project now stands shovel ready.

“This project came about through our economic development process and was developed as a way to strengthen and diversify our local economy, while also building on the strong partnership we have with Portage College and the aviation culture that exists here,” Mayor Craig Copeland said. “We are working with several partners in the industry and have been in talks with higher levels of government about support for the project. This purchase will bring the first phase of the school very close to becoming a reality.”

Cold Lake City Council voted to grant Portage College \$88,000 towards the purchase of an AME Structures (AME-S) curriculum. It has also set aside land for the building of an AME school house at the Cold Lake Regional Airport, in addition to drawing up plans for the facility. The facility is designed to accommodate training space for instruction in AME-S, AME Maintenance (AME-M), a pilot school, as well as flex space for training or industry looking for space for unmanned aerial vehicle training, maintenance, or operations in the region.

“We are so very appreciative of the partnership with the City of Cold Lake to bring AME-S training to the region,” said Dr. Donna Feledichuk, Vice President of Academic and Research at Portage College. “We are deeply committed to meeting the training needs of our communities and AME-S training has long been part of the vision of the City of Cold Lake. We understand the regional, provincial, and national demand for AME-S training and are eager to begin working on building a high-quality program in collaboration with the City.”

With the continued sustainment of the F-18, the future arrival of the F-35, as well as a future training jet for the Royal Canadian Air Force, the City of Cold Lake knows that aerospace and defence will continue to grow as a share of the local economy. With the Art Smith Aviation Academy, a K-8 school with a STEM-focused, aviation-themed curriculum, the Cold Lake Air Cadet Camp, and 70 years of history as the home of 4 Wing Cold Lake, the city is well known as a hub of aviation activity. The City's feasibility study confirmed that there is a significant shortage of AMEs required to keep fleets of aircraft maintained and operational, compounding the industry's lack of pilots needed to operate aircraft. The ever growing and changing landscape of unmanned aerial vehicles will also increase the need for skilled trades in the field of aircraft maintenance.

"We have a tremendous pool of talent to draw from locally, and we know that our community is already a draw for aviation enthusiasts," Copeland said. "When you look at the pool of talent our region attracts from the military and the oilpatch, you see men and women who are the backbone of extremely important industries. We have talent that doesn't mind working in a wide variety of conditions, that is accustomed to both rural and urban living, and who can look up on any day and be inspired by the men and women flying for the RCAF. We have a history of hard work, innovation, and aviation. It makes sense for this training to occur here."

The City of Cold Lake will continue to work with Portage College and its stakeholders to secure a facility for the training, tailor the curriculum to the local facility and resources, and assist with getting the program on its feet.

Portage College President Nancy Broadbent is excited to be working with the City of Cold Lake on this programming.

"The most recent announcements on labour pool demands have indicated opportunities in aerospace-related fields," Broadbent said. "It is fantastic to support the City's vision and to have this training that supports military personnel from 4 Wing who wish to transition to civilian duties upon retirement."

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For more information, please contact:

Megan Beaudoin
Communications Coordinator
mbeaudoin@coldlake.com
780-594-4494 ex. 7916 or 780-573-2010

Daniel Noseworthy

Marketing Coordinator
dnoseworthy@coldlake.com
780-534-4494 ex. 7935 or 780-201-3477