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The New Media Innovation Centre

by Dave Morgan

With more than 400 people from Vancouver's vibrant new media community in attendance, the **New Media Innovation Centre (NewMIC)** officially opened its new 25,000 square foot state-of-the-art research facility at the Harbour Centre in downtown Vancouver on October 18, 2001. Close to 40 organizations, members and affiliates of NewMIC, were on hand to demonstrate new technologies and applications. Students and professors from five of B.C.'s premier academic organizations presented the latest in new media research, and guests had the chance to experience NewMIC's \$2 million **Virtual Reality Lab**, funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada.

NewMIC is a groundbreaking collaboration between industry, academia and government that focuses on the research, development and commercialization of cutting-edge new media technology. As an interdisciplinary centre, players in the new media industry can share resources, learn from one another and push the boundaries of how we think about new media.

NewMIC's goals are ambitious. They will help position British Columbia and Canada as world-class players on the new media stage, and will play a key role in increasing the quantity and quality of researchers and faculty members in Western Canada by helping attract the best talent to the West and by training the next generation. And, it will create job opportunities in the growing field of new media by developing new technology

and spin-off companies from ideas cultivated at NewMIC, and by supporting and incubating emerging technology businesses.

NewMIC President and CEO Alan Winter says, "NewMIC is a new concept that started a little more than a year ago with nothing more than a vision and a business plan. We wanted to become an internationally recognized centre for new media innovation and commercialization, a place where people from different sectors with different expertise could share ideas and resources to put Western Canada on the new media map. The foundation is in place. We have commitment, excitement and a facility where everyone can come together. Now we are ready to deliver."

Most recently, Sony Corporation of America committed \$1.5 million into the Centre over the next five years to sponsor a newly established research cluster in Rich Media Entertainment. In this cluster, industry and academic researchers will work together on technologies aimed at delivering rich media (the convergence of audio, video, graphics, animation and digital pictures) to the home.

NewMIC has received \$21 million in committed funding over the past year and a half. To find out more about the about the New Media Innovation Centre and the Virtual Reality Lab, visit their web site at www.newmic.com. ♣

The Aerospace Industry in West



Craig Fulton, Supplier Development, WD - BC, at the Team Cormorant - Acro Aerospace Helicopter announcement, Richmond, April 2000.

by Craig Fulton

Since 1988, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has been a strong supporter of Western Canada's aerospace sector and views the aerospace industry as vital to the diversification of the economy of Western Canada.

The western Canadian aerospace industry employs some of the most sophisticated technologies and production methods

available. Companies offer a diverse range of capabilities from precision machining to the fabrication of composite parts, from aircraft design to robotic assembly. Western Canadian aerospace companies have developed expertise in a number of specialty areas such as the modification of aircraft, air ambulances and firefighting, and in remote-sensing and satellite data capture applications.

In the West, this industry has enjoyed strong growth over the past decade and now ranks as a major strategic industry fuelling export growth, creating highly skilled jobs and long-term employment. Western Canadian companies represent 20 per cent of the total Canadian aerospace manufacturing industries, with combined sales revenues exceeding \$3 billion.

As one of the founding supporters of Air Show North America, the largest aerospace tradeshow in North America, WD provided financial support for each annual event. Sponsorship of these events has enabled aerospace companies in Western

Canada, and specifically B.C., to meet with large multi-national aerospace firms and promote their services. "B.C. companies have benefited in a number

of ways from the intervention of Western Economic Diversification Canada," said

Andrew Huige, Executive Director of the Aerospace Industry Association of British Columbia.

"WD facilitates a wide variety of projects and has been critical in helping our members develop new products, customers and markets."

Prior to 1995, WD provided a number of aerospace companies with loans under the Western Diversification Program (WDP) that enabled them to undertake research and development,



New Cormorant SAR (Search and Rescue Helicopter)

British C

ern Canada Spreading Its Wings

adopt new technologies, purchase new capital equipment, develop new products and improve their productivity. In its early years, WD's International Marketing Initiative and Quality Assurance Assistance Program greatly benefited the



ter) enroute to CFB Comox over Lake Okanagan.

aerospace industry in the West. These programs helped aerospace companies institute quality assurance programs and enhance their competitiveness, and to penetrate foreign markets.

Ted Croft, president of Pyrotek Heat Treating Ltd. of Langley, indicated, "WD's assistance played an integral part in Pyrotek's plan to provide aluminum heat treating services to the aerospace industry of British

Columbia. Their continued support of our growing client base is both welcome and required."

Today, WD offers a hiring program called the **First Jobs in Science and Technology Program** which has been used by

the aerospace industry to facilitate the hiring of recent graduates. Under this program, WD helps to cover part of the salary costs of hiring a graduate with the skills necessary to complete science or technology related projects.

WD ensures that western aerospace companies obtain maximum benefit from the Government of Canada's **Industrial and Regional Benefits (IRB) program**. Industrial and regional benefits require prime contractors on Major Crown Projects (projects worth over \$100 million) to generate economic activity (through subcontracts, purchases, technology transfer, investment, etc.) in all regions of the country.

"In its efforts to identify industrial offsets against Canadian contracts awarded abroad, WD has elevated Spectrum's visibility within large Defence prime contractors such as EADS, Thales and Boeing," says Dan Simard, director of strategic programs at Spectrum Signal Processing. "Although Spectrum has a historical relationship with these companies, industrial offsets represent important leverage into new and significant business opportunities."

WD organizes prime contractor tours and briefing events to promote western aerospace firms to large multi-national companies and exposes prime contractors to as many qualified small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as possible. These events provide advice and information to stakeholders and are for the purpose of showcasing the capabilities and world-class expertise of western aerospace firms.

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The Department has played a key role in a number of major government purchases. For example:

- Canadian Search and Rescue Helicopter, resulting in \$86 million for the West. B.C. companies such as ACRO Aerospace Inc. and CMI were beneficiaries.
- Radarsat II contract contains direct IRB benefits of \$102 million for MacDonald Dettwiler and Associates – the successful bidder.
- C-130 Tactical Transport Tankers contract worth \$360 million with over \$50 million awarded to a western firm.
- Current Major Crown Projects in which WD is involved include: the Maritime Helicopter project, and CF-18 and C-140 modernization programs.

WD also publishes the *Western Canadian Aerospace Industry Capabilities Guide* every two years. This guide is used extensively by prime contractors and multi-national firms who have IRB obligations to identify potential subcontractors.

WD seeks to enhance the competitiveness and growth of the aerospace industry by partnering with the aerospace industry in Western Canada and helping western SMEs pursue market opportunities both domestically and internationally. Aerospace is a leading-edge industry in the West and WD will continue to support this sector in keeping with its mandate of promoting the diversification of the economy of Western Canada. ✳