

Airbus Helicopters adding new production line, 40 new jobs

Premier Wynne tours former Eurocopter facility as byelection campaigning heats up

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Airbus Helicopter CEO Romain Trapp takes Economic Development for Southern Ontario Minister Gary Goodyear and Premier Kathleen Wynne on a tour of his facility on Tuesday. The Fort Erie facility is adding a new production line and will expand with 40 new jobs.

FORT ERIE – Rarely does the announcement of a few new jobs come with the kind of pomp and circumstance seen at Airbus Helicopters in Fort Erie on Tuesday.

But with a byelection comes attention, and this week the addition of 40 new manufacturing jobs at the plant in town came with a glitzy conference from Premier Kathleen Wynne, who toured the facility before touting the province's aerospace manufacturing sector as one of the strongest in the world.



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Premier Kathleen Wynne speaks with Dwayne Charette, Airbus Helicopters' director of supply chain, and Ward 1 Coun. Stephen Passero.

Airbus Helicopters Canada, which up until last week was still called Eurocopter Canada, announced on Tuesday that it will be adding a new production line at its helicopter production facility on Gilmore Road, creating about 40 new high-skill manufacturing jobs.

Following a global tendering process, the new production work was awarded to Airbus Helicopters Canada by its parent company, Airbus Helicopters, based in Marignane, France. The Canadian facility will be making engine cowlings for the EC225. The EC225 is an aircraft sold in markets around the world and is known as the “workhorse” of the oil and gas industry, where it is used to transport workers to off-shore drilling rigs.

“With this multi-million investment, Airbus Helicopters is demonstrating its confidence in and commitment to Ontario and Canada,” said Romain Trapp, CEO of Airbus Helicopters Canada.

“This is very good news for the Niagara region,” he continued. “This expansion of our composite department will also help protect the jobs already here as we continue to grow.”

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Since opening its doors in Fort Erie back in 1984, Airbus Helicopters has grown to more than 235 current employees, making it the largest manufacturing facility in town.

“This announcement recognizes Ontario as a good place to do business, particularly in advanced manufacturing,” said Trapp.

“More than 50 per cent of the new civil helicopters delivered in Canada over the last 10 years come from our facility. It demonstrates the success of our product range, the largest in the world, and how we have been able to customize it to the specifics of the Canadian market.”

Airbus is one of the leading suppliers of helicopters in Canada, where it's choppers are used for a variety of purposes including: law enforcement, emergency medical services, oil and gas, mining, firefighting, hydroelectric utilities, environmental surveys, tours and corporate transport.

“This exciting expansion is a vote of confidence in the 250 hard working people here at Airbus,” said Wynne. “This is a testament to this company, and we're going to keep working make those investments in people.”

Airbus Helicopters has a strong working relationship with Mohawk College, where it often donates parts and equipment. A few Mohawk College graduates have been hired by Airbus in the past, and Wynne said she hopes to see the facility continue to grow its ties with Ontario's skilled trade colleges.

“This place has a great relationship with the colleges, and they are also very patient in hiring and training people in-house to develop those necessary skills,” said Jim Thibert, general manager of the town's Economic Development and Tourism Corporation. “They treat people well here, it's a great working environment.”