

Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute wins \$1 million in funding

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- Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute award revealed during Sen. Clinton visit

By DAN HEATH

PLATTSBURGH — Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute has landed \$1 million in NASA funding.

The funding was revealed by institute officials during a visit Monday by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), who was here to talk about plans for the institute and Laurentian Aerospace Corp.'s development on the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base.

Speaking in the building being renovated for use as the institute's classroom space, CV-TEC President Dr. Barry Mack told Clinton her support has been instrumental in helping the institute move toward a fall 2007 opening.

"Thanks to you, Congressman John McHugh and Sen. Charles Schumer, the NASA appropriation of \$1 million has been announced today," Mack said.

After the meeting, Mack said that in addition to the money, the institute now has a connection with NASA that it can use for years to come. The money is tied to curriculum development, computer systems and some of the institute's staffing and aeronautical tools, he said.

Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute Coordinator Jim McCartney III said Clinton's contacts with the federal General Services Agency also helped secure a T-39 Sabreliner from the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tuscon, Ariz.

Her contacts with New York and its Office of General Services helped the institute acquire an F-16 engine from the Vermont Air National Guard and two Huey helicopters from the Vermont Army National Guard.

Clinton Community College Dean of Continuing Education Dave Lawliss said that from its inception the institute has been a collaboration with everyone in the local community.

McCartney said Clinton and other state and federal elected officials have helped the institute secure \$2.4 million in appropriations. He said the county stepped up by donating \$16 million in property leases, and local industries and businesses have done the same by donating a total \$3 million in goods, services and labor.

International opportunities were opened when the institute signed a memorandum of understanding with Ecole Nationale d'Aeronatique, an aeronautical school with 1,600 students located in St. Hubert, Quebec.

Sen. Clinton said it's exciting to see educational institutions, businesses, industries, politicians and

the local community working together.

"This is exactly the kind of partnership I like to see. I am delighted to see this working relationship."

Lawliss said Clinton Community and the institute will be the only SUNY school offering a two-year degree in aeronautics. It will be able to attract students and trainees from across the country because of Clinton Community's dorms, he said.

Mack said that when the project began two years ago, one of the aims was to help attract aeronautic programs. With the recent announcement of Laurentian Aerospace's plans for two mammoth maintenance and repair hangars, each employing up to 750 employees, that goal is beginning to be realized.

Laurentian Aerospace President and CEO Paul Gobeil told Clinton the facility's computer-guided docking system is a major evolution in the industry.

"The primary thing is the equipment you use inside," he said. "The hangar is merely what's around it."

Gobeil was president of Hudson General Aviation Services from 1978 to 1989, followed by five years of service as a consultant.

During his tenure with the company, he expanded its operations from two airports to 11. Company revenue increased from about \$10 million to about \$70 million, and the number of employees rose from about 300 to more than 2,000, including about 250 qualified line maintenance engineers.

Gobeil later went on to partner in the acquisition of the World Aviation Centre, a fixed-base operator located at Toronto's Pearson International Airport. The company provided fuel, line maintenance, hangar space and service and other aviation-related services to commercial airlines and operators of corporate aircraft before ceasing operation when the airport expanded starting in 2002.

The new docking system to be used by Laurentian Aerospace, designed by Jim Mullins of Multidocking Systems based in Cheshire, England, will save airlines at least \$500,000 each time it is used, Gobeil said.

The system adjusts for use with different types of wide-body aircraft, such as the Boeing 747 Series 400, 777 Series 200 and 300, Airbus a300-310, A330-200, A340-500 and A340-600. One system is currently in use by Emirates, the Dubai-based international airline.

The Multidocking Systems Web site said the \$6 million computer-assisted, laser-guided docking systems offer "speed, efficiency and access to all areas of the aircraft, from nose to tail, delivered at one time within 30 minutes."

Other docking systems require up to a day and a half to bring a plane into the hangar and the same amount of time to bring it back out.

Clinton and her staff were also involved in meetings with Gobeil, Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce President Garry Douglas and others that led to Laurentian Aerospace choosing Plattsburgh.

"You let us know if there's anything we can do to help you," Clinton said.