

EurocopterCanada:

Partners in Building Safer Neighborhoods

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In the law enforcement market, there are helicopters, and then there are Eurocopters. What differentiates Eurocopter products from other aircraft in this domain is not only the latest technology and design, but also the versatility, reliability and adaptability to suit the ever growing needs of agencies all over the world. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Eurocopter is today the preferred choice of aircraft for most of the leading law enforcement agencies in not just North America, but worldwide.

Canada is one such market where Eurocopter products lead with more than 75 percent share of the police services market. This has been possible through years of Eurocopter Canada and its products playing a valuable role with premier law enforcement agencies.

The company celebrates its 25th anniversary in Canada this year, having grown its footprint to almost 150 customers and over 540 aircraft. Its newly expanded facility—which has grown to over 135,000 square feet—continues contributing to the Canadian aerospace industry and manufacturing base, increasing the capability of the organization from the early days of being just an assembly shop to a full fledged manufacturing entity covering design and engineering services for Eurocopter aircraft.

The largest law enforcement agency in Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), procured their very first helicopters in the mid-1970s. However, the requirements for helicopters expanded over the years from doing searches for missing people to being active players in crime detection and prevention. An increased use of technology, including FLIR, nightsuns, microwave downlinks and mapping systems, not only added weight to the helicopters, but also took up storage space in already cramped cabins. As a result, the existing range of RCMP aircraft was having a hard time performing.

In 1997, when it was decided to replace the RCMP helicopter fleet with a more modern and capable aircraft, two Eurocopter AS350 B3s were selected to be part of this prestigious fleet. The selection process included evaluations for speed, lift capacity, useful load, passenger capacity, storage area and an extensive product trial. As time went on and older RCMP aircraft came up for replacement, the fleet across the country continued to expand with new AS350 B3s. The new AStars, with better seating, storage, power and versatility, have become the mainstay of the RCMP fleet today.

The Canadian law enforcement fleet of Eurocopters is not only comprised of the very versatile AStars but also TwinStars and EC120s. The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is responsible for a geographical area of 993,000 square kilometers and waterways of approximately 174,000 square kilometers. In area, the unit's policing population fluctuates from a winter low of 2.3 million to a summer high of 3.6 million. It has operated aircraft since 1974, and along with the fixed-wing aircraft, it currently operates two twin-engine Eurocopter AS355 F2s from bases in Sudbury and Orillia in Ontario.

The OPP helicopter operation began in 1974 under the direction of Commissioner Eric Silk. The rotorcrafts were brought in to assist with a myriad of policing requirements in the large province. The Twinstars were introduced in 1991 and are still operational today. Both aircraft average 500 hours per year, each with the primary mission (50 percent) being SAR throughout the province. OPP enjoys the safety of the twin-engine and the fact that it allows them to respond to the ever-increasing demand for night responses in support of ground units. Thermal imaging, coupled with real-time video downlink technology and the advantage of night vision, have resulted in an increased demand for aerial support.

Another popular Eurocopter among the policing agencies in Canada is the EC120. The modern design provides excellent visibility for all passengers. This, coupled with a low noise signature because of the FENESTRON tail rotor, makes it an ideal patrol helicopter over busy cities and neighborhoods. It is no surprise that the EC120 comprises the second largest fleet of helicopters for Canadian law enforcement agencies. The platform is used by the Edmonton Police, Calgary Police Air Services Unit, RCMP and York Regional Police.

The York Regional Police Air Support Unit's "Air2" has seen the usage and deployment of their EC120 only grow over the years. With a well-staffed unit of tactical flight officers and pilots, Air2 is structured for

24/7 yearly availability. In 2008 alone, Air2 responded to 1,518 calls for service, providing support for the officers on the ground. Another testament to the increasing popularity of EC120 in the Canadian law enforcement market is the fact that Edmonton Police are adding another EC120 into service this year.

In Canada, like elsewhere in the world, the role of police helicopters is continuously evolving. From the days of being a dedicated search and rescue operation, today's police aircraft are used in a whole gambit of activities, such as surveillance (electronic, video, thermal imaging, visual), drug eradication (visual, thermal imaging), support for specialized units (K-9, tactical, emergency response, divers, etc.), public demonstrations, transportation of personnel (routine transport, remote location transport), prisoner escorts, photography (video, still, FLIR, Wescam, Gyrocam), high speed pursuits, search and containment of escapees, major events (communication and observation platform), regional traffic/crime initiatives, and evidence searches.

Eurocopter Canada has continued to work with law enforcement agencies in not only understanding and meeting their unique requirements, but also anticipating their needs and developing specific supplemental type certificates or options to enhance the performance of its products. Going forward, the company is committed to providing its customers with the very latest and best products and services Eurocopter has to offer.

Eurocopter Canada Limited is a subsidiary of Eurocopter. Eurocopter Canada, based in Fort Erie, Ontario, has a customer support network that spans the entire country. Established in 1992, the Franco-German-Spanish Eurocopter Group is a Division of EADS, a world leader in aerospace, defense and related services. The Eurocopter Group employs approximately 15,600 people. In 2008, Eurocopter confirmed its position as the world's number one helicopter manufacturer in the civil and parapublic market, with a turnover of 4.5 billion Euros, orders for 715 new helicopters and a 53 percent market share in the civil and parapublic sectors.

Overall, the group's products account for 30 percent of the total world helicopter fleet. Its strong worldwide presence is ensured by its 18 subsidiaries on five continents, along with a dense network of distributors, certified agents and maintenance centers. More than 10,000 Eurocopter helicopters are currently in service with over 2,800 customers in more than 140 countries. Eurocopter offers the largest civil and military helicopter range in the world.