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## Late news

Donald Macdonald, federal Finance Minister for two years, resigned from his post on September 6 for personal family reasons. The Prime Minister was expected to announce a replacement within a few days.

## From TCA to Air Canada — 40 years of flying for national airline

September 1, 1937 was a historic date for what was then Trans-Canada Air Lines. It was then that a ten-passenger *Lockheed* airplane took off from Vancouver's Sea Island airport for Boeing Field in Seattle, U.S.A., 122 miles away.

The flight, the first of two daily scheduled runs between the cities, was a modest *début* for a tiny company which would, in the next 18 months, begin passenger air services between Vancouver and Montreal, a distance of over 3,000 miles.

A re-enactment of the pioneer flight took place 40 years later on September 1, 1977, when civic dignitaries, and the company's directors, flew the same route in an Air Canada *Boeing 727*. Accompanying them was TCA's first employee, D.R. MacLaren, a First World War ace, who later became executive assistant to the president, and senior employees who have been with the company for nearly 40 years.

### Early days

The first route was a mail and passenger run. Within two years an overnight transcontinental service was in effect as far east as Montreal.

Vancouver and Montreal were linked by scheduled passenger air service on April 1, 1939. The 2,411-mile flight took more than 14 hours. That same day, the fledgling airline inaugurated other intra-Canada services and early in the next year "transcon" operations were extended to Moncton, New Brunswick. TCA became a sea-to-sea airline with the start of flights to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on April 16, 1941. Oxygen masks and box lunches were still the order of the day.

The outbreak of war somewhat inhibited the young airline's development. In September 1939 it boasted a fleet of five *Lockheed 10As* and 15 *Lockheed 14s*. By the end of 1942 the payroll had grown to 1,662 and almost a third of those were women.

TCA's operational centre during these years was Winnipeg, while its administrative headquarters was Montreal.

### Trans-Atlantic service

One of the company's most exciting events was the inauguration of the Canadian Government Trans-Atlantic Air Service in 1943. A blockade of Britain interrupted mail delivery to Canadian troops and when spirits began to lag, the decision was made to modify *Lancaster* bombers for the carriage of mail and a few passengers. TCA's maintenance people participated in the conversion program.

In all, nine of the converted *Lancasters* made a total of 500 Atlantic crossings by the end of 1945. In the process a west-east speed record was set for the 3,100-mile trip of ten hours, 15 minutes.

### Postwar growth

Expansion was the hallmark of the postwar period. TCA turned its attention to



TCA's first plane, a Lockheed 10A, leaves Vancouver for Seattle in 1937, on a regularly scheduled flight, with passengers and mail aboard.

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