



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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AIR TRAINING PLAN

Statement by Mr. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, made in the House of Commons on March 21, 1951.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recall that, in the statement I made on February 5^{*}, I said that the government had offered to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to train additional aircrew. The number proposed was 1,100 per annum, which would bring the total to be trained for NATO and the United Kingdom something over 1,300 per annum.

We have now received the recommendation of the Standing Group that all the places available in respect of this additional number up to December 31 of this year should be allocated to the United Kingdom. After that the allocation will be reconsidered.

At present our plans provide for a build-up to an annual output of aircrew of over 3,000. That represents an increase of six times the figure for 1950 and fifteen times the figure for the previous year.

This will be accompanied by a fivefold increase in groundcrew training facilities.

Administrative establishments will also be increased though not to the same extent.

This will require the reopening of a number of airfields. During the war we had a total of 56 airfields used for training either under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan or other plans.

We already have air training schools and operational stations or other units in operation or under construction at Goose Bay, and, to a very limited extent, Torbay in Newfoundland; at Summerside in Prince Edward Island; at Dartmouth and Greenwood in Nova Scotia; at Moncton, to a limited extent, and Chatham in New Brunswick; at Bagotville, St. Hubert, St. Johns and Dorval in Quebec; at Rockcliffe, Uplands, Arnprior, Trenton, Downsview, North Bay, Centralia, Clinton and Aylmer in Ontario; at Winnipeg, Gimli and Rivers in Manitoba; at Edmonton, Calgary and Suffield in Alberta; and at Patricia Bay, again to a limited extent, and Vancouver in British Columbia. There are, of course, other headquarters and depots in addition.

* See Statements and Speeches Series No. 51/5.

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Experience during the second world war, when Canada trained 131,000 aircrew, showed that the best places for flying training was in the prairie provinces. Located in these provinces are a number of flying fields with runways, hangars and buildings in a relatively good state of repair, enabling re-establishment to be done as speedily and economically as possible.

Accordingly, all the new flying schools will be located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Also, to facilitate maintenance and administration and to take advantage of more suitable weather, basic flying training schools will be grouped in the western part of this area, while advanced flying schools will be grouped in the eastern part of this area.

The new schools to be re-established are flying training schools at Claresholm and Penhold in Alberta and Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan. Advanced flying training schools are to be at Saskatoon in Saskatchewan and Portage la Prairie in Manitoba, with a gunnery school at Macdonald. The flying training school at Gimli will later be converted to an advanced training school. A large air navigation school will be established at Winnipeg in addition to the present school at Summerside, P.E.I.

Of the existing establishments, Aylmer, Camp Borden and Clinton in Ontario will concentrate on trades training. Selection and manning will be carried on at St. Johns, Quebec, where there will be a very large establishment.

With hardly an exception, all the other establishments will be increased in accordance with the expansion of the programme. Abbotsford will be used this summer for training some of the auxiliary squadrons, others going to other schools. In all probability Abbotsford will later be used as an operational station.

In this connection I should like to say that a large number of representations have been received from members of parliament, mayors, boards of trade and other representatives of most of the localities mentioned and many others. They have all offered the closest possible co-operation and reception to the R.C.A.F., with which they had such excellent relations during the war. That co-operative spirit is very greatly appreciated.

The places chosen have been selected having sole regard to two factors: first, suitability for the purpose intended; second, the condition of the existing facilities so as to provide for the most economic and speedy rehabilitation.

The facilities of all the stations will be used to the fullest extent possible. For example, by improved training methods we expect to have pupil populations of 300 at the flying training schools, as compared with 240 during the second world war. The limiting factor at each school will be the number of hours of flying that physically can be fitted in, having regard to the weather and capacity of the airfield.

To operate the plan will require a large number of additional aircraft for training. My colleague, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe), announced in the house on

March 5 that we would be manufacturing Harvards of the most modern type, as well as engines. In addition to meeting our own requirements, we expect to make a number of these aircraft for sale to the United States. In the meantime, our own needs can be met out of our own stocks, supplemented, if necessary, by aircraft borrowed from the United States, to be replaced out of our own production later.

We shall also be acquiring from the United States some two-seater jet training aircraft to be used until our own production enables us to meet all our own needs for this type of aircraft.

The record made during the second world war in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan has shown that Canada is particularly qualified to make this important contribution to our collective security.

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