



Deal has city biz cleared for takeoff

Technology made-in-Calgary
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A Calgary aviation technology company may have hit the jackpot after inking a deal with a major U.S. provider of flight recorders.

About five years ago, Calgary-based AeroMechanical Services Ltd. started selling a technology that would transmit flight data via satellite in real time to crews on the ground.

The device, called Automated Flight Information Reporting system, is meant to complement the traditional black boxes, which record such data without transmitting it to the ground.

Although AeroMechanical now has more than 30 customers, sales were slow during the first few years.

Then, this June, an Air France jet crashed into the Atlantic. The black boxes were never recovered, making it impossible to find out exactly what led to the crash.

That incident, said AeroMechanical president Richard Hayden, sparked a renewed interest. The company currently has orders for nearly 800 aircraft to be outfitted.

Also, it has led to yesterday's deal with New York-based L-3 Communications, a company that lists airplane manufacturers Boeing and Airbus among its customers.

Hayden said the deal is a "huge opportunity" for his company, because L-3, which outfits new aircraft with communication technology, will offer the developed-in-Calgary technology as one of its products. The deal, he said, has helped validate the company.

Installing the technology into a plane costs, on average, \$50,000. To retrofit an aircraft, however, part of the interior would have to be removed, which is an added expense.

With the L-3 deal, Hayden said the technology can be installed into new airplanes as an additional option, similar to extras car-shoppers can order for their new vehicle.