

Historic adventure marks Canada's anniversary, supports charities



By Mark Pavilons

A King pilot has combined his love of flying and adventure, into a very special goodwill trek part-way around the world. Kingscross resident Steven Dengler and his father Bob, of Aurora, have created the C150 GlobalOdyssey (C150GO). It will be the world's first Canadian around-the-world helicopter flight, and the first-ever father-son global circumnavigation by aircraft. In celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary, the Canadian crew – comprised of Bob, Steven, and helicopter ace Rob – MacDuff – will fly a Canadian-made Bell 429 Global Ranger helicopter over 37,000 kilometres in just over one month. Starting in Ottawa on July 1 and zigzagging the globe, the crew will visit more than 100 airports in 14 countries. Along the way, they will be joined by notable Canadians such as astronaut Dave Williams and hockey legend Guy Lafleur. Dengler said the journey has been years in the making, involving some “unreal” preparations. What started as a “crazy idea” became less crazy as they sorted out the details.

This is a real chance for the trio to do something historic, but Dengler said his main motivation was the father-and-son connection. The experienced fixed-wing and helicopter pilot said they chose the Global Ranger for the “fun factor” and the mystique surrounding choppers.

C150GO is a registered Canadian not-for-profit organization supporting both the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation and True Patriot Love Foundation.

“This historic milestone in Canadian aviation has been years in the making,” said Dengler. “But for this journey to make a real impact on the lives of Canadians, we want to give back by raising funds for Southlake and True Patriot Love. We are humbled by the work of these charities and are proud to have them as partners.”

Southlake Foundation supports its world-class hospital and the community it serves. Southlake Regional Health Centre is a full-service hospital with a regional, clinically advanced focus, serving more than one million people who reside in the surrounding regions.

True Patriot Love Foundation (TPL) is a national charity that funds unique programs and innovative research in the areas of Veteran family health and support. It honours the sacrifices of members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans and their families by bridging the gap between military and civilian communities.

The project has attracted some welcome corporate sponsors. Citizens can donate as well, and if you visit their website, you'll be directed to Southlake or TPL to contribute.

Along the way, C150GO will stop at several Canadian military bases while also visiting several national and international Canadian landmarks, including:

Confederation Bridge (Borden-Carleton, Prince Edward Island): One of Canada's most important engineering achievements, the Confederation Bridge opened in 1997 to connect Prince Edward Island to the mainland. Almost 13 kilometres in length, it is the world's longest bridge crossing ice-covered water.

Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site (Baddeck, Nova Scotia): In February 1909, Alexander Graham Bell made his mark on

Canadian aeronautical history when he financed and organized Canada's first powered flight at his estate in Baddeck. John McCurdy flew the AEA Silver Dart over Baddeck Bay and with it, ushered in the age of Canadian aviation.

Signal Hill National Historic Site (St. John's, Newfoundland): In 1901, Guglielmo Marconi received the first-ever transatlantic radio signal on historical Signal Hill. The transmission was sent from his station in Poldhu, England, where the C150GO crew will also visit in their travels.

Marconi Centre (Poldhu, England): The signal received in Newfoundland in 1901 was sent from this location in Cornwall, England. Built in 2001, the Marconi Centre Poldhu commemorates the first transatlantic transmission's 100th anniversary.

Dengler said their visit to the Canadian National Vimy Memorial (Vimy, France) is particularly poignant. This year marks the 100th anniversary of The Battle of Vimy Ridge, a defining moment in Canadian history. They hope to bring a wreath or perhaps an artifact with them.

Bell Helicopter Plant (Montreal, Quebec): Founded in 1935, Bell Helicopter stands at the forefront of aviation technology. Its Mirabel plant, opened in 1983, manufactures some of the world's most advanced helicopters, including the Bell 429 flown on the C150 Global Odyssey.

Dengler said it's an international celebration of Canadian accomplishments and culture.

Canada's 150th is a time to recognize Canadian achievements, and give ourselves a well-deserved pat on the back. This will be one of the most far-reaching Canada 150 projects and the crew is very excited about it.

Dengler said they will meet many foreign dignitaries and they hope to connect with Canadians abroad.

The team lifts off from Bolton's National Helicopters on July 1, heading to Ottawa for Canada Day celebrations that day.

From there, they head up the coast to Baffin Island, then off to Greenland and Iceland. The route goes from west to east to take advantage of the prevailing winds and Dengler pointed out a tail wind is always an advantage. The Bell 429 can comfortably travel 400 nautical miles at a time, and two legs of the journey push the envelope.

Two of the longest stretches run from Baffin Island to Greenland (392 NM) and Greenland to Iceland (400 NM). The luxurious, spacious cabin of the Global Ranger will be altered to accommodate extra fuel.

They will be travelling in the summer months, so they don't expect much in the way of bad weather. But, they are cautious and their journey all depends on conditions.

They have the benefit of the extremely reliable twin-engine Global Ranger, used as a search and rescue helicopter. They also rely on the most modern tracking technology.

‘It's going to be an adventure,’ Dengler said.

While trips over water are problematic, they will be flying over some very remote parts of Russia. The crew will fly through Russia from July 14-21.

Most of the journey's challenges are operational and organizational in nature and involve clearances and permission from various authorities around the world.

Dengler is quite excited about meeting people on the ground as they make their way around the globe. In some instances, they may be sleeping on someone's couch in Chelyabinsk and Dengler said ‘that's quite something.’

‘2017 is Canada's year. On this the 150th anniversary of Canadian confederation, we will travel across the country and the world with a message of pride, goodwill, friendship,’ said Dengler. ‘C150GO is truly a global endeavor, and it would not be possible without the generous support from our partners.’

The C150GO team will post live updates online throughout their journey on their website at www.c150go.ca, and on social media using the ‘C150go’ handle.

C150GO is actively seeking sponsorship partners. A chance to make a mark on Canada's history, sponsors will benefit from increased recognition during a year of global gratitude, spikes in tourism and nation-wide celebration. Three sponsorship tiers are currently available, providing benefits that range from a sponsored leg of the tour to an official C150GO helicopter visit.

To learn more about the C150 Global Odyssey, to become a sponsor or to view the complete C150GO itinerary, please visit www.c150go.ca

Founder of Dynatec Mining in 1980, Aurora's Bob Dengler is a recognized pioneer of modern Canadian mining, growing the company over 25 years into an industry leader employing over 1,500 people. Bob has a true adventurous spirit; in 2014 he summited Kilimanjaro and in 2015, flew his Bell 429 from Toronto to the top of Baffin Island, a 4,400-nautical-mile journey.

King's Steven Dengler is a Canadian entrepreneur with over 20 years of leadership in the tech space. In 1993 he co-founded XE, the world's trusted currency authority. A renowned financial technology innovator, Canadian investor, and startup mentor, Steven is a proficient pilot of both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

A retired test pilot for the Bell 429 Global Ranger, Rob ?Dugal? MacDuff is a distinguished helicopter professional with over 12,000 hours of flight experience. Rob has helped other notable Canadians pursue their love for flying, including hockey legend Guy LaFleur.