

OUR LATEST MEDIA RELEASE



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OCIF invests in SAIT Aerospace Materials Composite Lab to increase Calgary's advanced aerospace capabilities

(Calgary, Alta.) – The [Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund](#) (OCIF) is investing up to \$709,000 over the next three years into the [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's](#) (SAIT) Aerospace Composite Materials Lab (ACML) to strengthen Calgary's aerospace sector and diversify the city's economy. This funding is expected to amplify Calgary's position as a key player in Canada's aerospace ecosystem, while filling critical skills gaps in the city's workforce.

"Calgary has become the home base for aviation leaders, and this investment is a continuation of collaboration and growth in this sector," said Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek. "By OCIF supporting this lab, we're enhancing local research and development capabilities while strengthening Calgary's reputation as an aerospace hub."

This investment will enable the ACML at SAIT to foster growth in Calgary's aerospace industry by using cutting-edge manufacturing and testing equipment at its facility. The lab will facilitate collaboration between industry experts, researchers, students, and SMEs to provide innovative solutions to aerospace's biggest challenges including improving aircraft performance and reducing environmental impacts.

"The ACML will be a transformative resource for Canada's aerospace industry and is a testament to OCIF's role as a catalyst for economic diversification in Calgary," said Brad Parry, CEO of the Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund and president and CEO of Calgary Economic Development. "This investment adds one more piece of the puzzle that will help build an aerospace innovation ecosystem and position Calgary as a leader in the sector."

The ACML is expected to train 21 individuals and support 25 companies over its duration, with students from SAIT and other institutions participating in hands-on, applied research projects for a minimum of six months. These efforts will directly address labour shortages and skill gaps in the industry by providing high-quality training to the next generation of aerospace professionals.

"Alberta's aviation sector is set for significant growth and this investment into an Aerospace Composite Materials Lab will further position us as leaders in the industry research and manufacturing," says Mark Butler, Vice President, Corporate Development, Applied Research and International, SAIT. "SAIT was recently honoured to be recognized as the fourth top research college in Canada and this additional lab space will be another area set for extraordinary innovation and research outcomes."

The project aligns with OCIF's previous investments in the [Aerospace Innovation Hub \(AIH\)](#) and boosts Calgary's aerospace cluster. The AIH is a collaboration between [Innovate Calgary](#), [WestJet](#), the [Calgary Airport Authority](#) and [Chapter.aj](#) Ventures to help Calgary's aerospace innovators gain access to funding, business support and the ability to validate their technologies in real-world settings.

The ACML also strengthens Calgary's capacity to support global defense initiatives. Through the partnership between NATO's Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) program and SAIT's Centre for Innovation and Research in Advanced Manufacturing and Materials, the ACML will further enable SAIT's capacity to join in transatlantic partnerships. This collaboration will give SAIT access to NATO's network and resources to accelerate aerospace research and development.

By focusing on cross-sectoral research, including advancements in robotics and composite materials manufacturing, the ACML will enable interdisciplinary partnerships that benefit not only aerospace but also industries like automotive, energy, and construction. This support of research and skills development reinforces Alberta's capacity to lead in two crucial areas: robotics and automation, and composite manufacturing.

OCIF joins [PrairiesCan](#), the [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada](#) (NSERC) and industry as key funders of the ACML.

To date, OCIF has allocated over \$83 million to 32 projects, which has created or retained over 3,000 jobs, created or scaled almost 900 companies and generated almost \$800 million in economic activity – nine times return on funds committed.

Learn how the [Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund](#) is helping diversify Calgary's economic future.

ABOUT OPPORTUNITY CALGARY INVESTMENT FUND

Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund ("OCIF") was created as a wholly owned subsidiary of The City of Calgary in 2018 to support catalytic investments within the city to help diversify and transform the economy. The fund is administered by Calgary Economic Development and has a volunteer Board of Directors. It is vital tool to achieve the goals of the economic strategy and diversify Calgary's economic future.

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ABOUT SAIT

Established in 1916, SAIT was the first of its kind, publicly funded technical school in North America. As a global leader in applied education and research — serving nearly 40,000 students annually — SAIT offers certificate, diploma, post diploma, apprenticeship and applied degree programs, baccalaureate degrees, corporate training and more than 1,000 continuing education courses, along with four dedicated, award-winning areas of research and capacity for new and emerging research. Curriculum and research priorities are developed through industry partnerships to ensure graduates have the skills and knowledge required to fulfill the demand for talent. SAIT is honoured to be recognized by Mediacorp Canada Inc. as one of Alberta's Top Employers for 2024, and to be ranked fourth by Research Infosource Inc. in the Top 50 Research Colleges in Canada for 2024. CEOWORLD Magazine ranked the SAIT School of Business #49 on the list of Best Business Schools in the World for 2024, and the School of Hospitality and Tourism placed #14 on their list of Best Hospitality and Hotel Management Schools in the World for 2024.

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