NEWS BRIEFS

Bombardier Is Pulling a Critical Piece of Its Supply Chain In-House

Bombardier is buying the Mississauga operation that already builds major aircraft structures for its jets. The real prize is skilled people, industrial know-how and more control over a critical Canadian capability.

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Illustration: Nasty Canuck / AI-assisted.

The Mississauga operation already builds wings and fuselage structures in Canada. Bombardier's deal to acquire it isn't reshoring. It's something subtler — and in a less predictable world, potentially just as important: more control over a capability that would be difficult to replace.

There is an understandable temptation to describe Bombardier's latest deal as bringing aerospace manufacturing home. That isn't quite what happened, because the manufacturing is already.

Bombardier has **agreed to acquire the assets of MHI Canada Aerospace**, the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries operation in Mississauga that manufactures major aerostructures for Bombardier aircraft. If regulators approve the transaction, the operation and its roughly **750 employees** are expected to become part of Bombardier later this year. Bombardier says the deal will strengthen its in-house aerostructures capability, resilience and autonomy.

So this isn't a new Ontario factory, and those aren't 750 newly created jobs. The more interesting story is what Bombardier is actually buying: direct control over a Canadian operation that already knows how to manufacture major structures its airplanes depend on.

At a time when Canada is thinking much more seriously about supply chains, industrial resilience and which capabilities are important enough to keep close to home, that distinction is worth paying attention to.

Wings are not widgets

The MHI Canada operation doesn't make cup holders.

Its people manufacture major wing and centre-fuselage structures, install and test aircraft systems and flight controls, do engineering and tooling work, manage design changes and configuration control, and support spare parts and technical publications. The operation also manages materials and suppliers feeding the production process.

Aircraft manufacturing depends on this kind of work: specialized, difficult and heavily reliant on people who have spent years learning how to do it properly. A company can replace a commodity supplier relatively quickly. Rebuilding qualified processes, tooling, supplier relationships and a workforce experienced in complex aerostructures is another matter.

The valuable part of an industrial base is often not the building itself. It's the accumulated knowledge inside it.

That's also why the old calculation that treated supply chains mainly as a contest over cost has become less comfortable. The cheapest arrangement when everything is running smoothly isn't necessarily the best arrangement when transportation is disrupted, suppliers fall behind or political relationships become less predictable.

None of this means Bombardier should manufacture every component itself. Modern aircraft are international products assembled through highly specialized global networks, and trying to reproduce every capability inside one company or one country would be an expensive way to make worse airplanes.

International cooperation and unnecessary dependence are different things, though. Some capabilities are valuable enough that greater control is worth paying for.

Bombardier appears to think heavy aerostructures belong in that category.

Mitsubishi helped build the capability Canada now has

This is also not a Canadian-versus-foreign story.

Mitsubishi helped build the Canadian capability Bombardier now wants to bring in-house.

MHI's aerospace relationship with Bombardier in Canada dates to 1996. MHI Canada Aerospace was incorporated in Ontario in 2006, expanded into a Mississauga facility and progressively took on more sophisticated work. Challenger wing assembly moved to Canada in 2008. The operation relocated to a purpose-built 270,000-square-foot facility in 2012, and centre-wing work for the Global 5500 and 6500 followed later.

That history matters because it shows what a productive international industrial partnership can look like. A Japanese company invested here, work and expertise accumulated here, Canadian employees developed specialized skills, and the operation expanded around Bombardier programs.

Now Bombardier intends to make that operation part of its own manufacturing organization.

There is nothing inconsistent about welcoming investment from dependable international partners while also wanting Canadian companies to retain deep industrial capability. Quite often, one helps create the other.

Canada can remain open to foreign investment while being deliberate about what it wants to keep and deepen at home: the things we do well, the capabilities that would be painful to lose, and the partnerships that leave us with more options rather than fewer.

Seven hundred and fifty jobs — with no creative accounting

Approximately **750 existing employees** are expected to join Bombardier through the acquisition. They are not 750 new jobs created by the announcement.

Those jobs still matter because advanced manufacturing runs on institutional memory as much as machinery. Equipment can be purchased and another building can be leased; replacing hundreds of technicians, engineers, inspectors, production workers and supply-chain specialists who already understand a complicated aircraft program is much harder.

Once that workforce disperses, a company cannot reconstruct years of practical knowledge with a hiring announcement.

Canada needs more people who know how to make difficult things, and keeping an experienced aerospace operation intact matters even when nobody gets to stand behind a podium and announce hundreds of brand-new positions.

Canada Wins doesn't require us to pad the scoreboard.

Sometimes keeping sophisticated work — and the people who know how to do it — is itself a win.

More control matters when customers are waiting

Bombardier has a straightforward commercial reason for wanting more of that capability inside the company.

Its backlog stood at **US$21.8 billion at the end of June**, up sharply from the end of 2025. Demand has been strong, but Bombardier has also been reminded that small supply-chain problems can interfere with big aircraft deliveries. Isolated supplier issues, including shortages involving aircraft windows, contributed to lower second-quarter deliveries despite the strong order book.

Buying every supplier clearly isn't the solution. But when customers are waiting, greater control over a company producing major aircraft structures can remove one source of uncertainty.

That is ordinary business logic with an increasingly familiar parallel in the way Canada is beginning to think about industrial capacity.

The federal Defence Industrial Strategy now uses a **Build–Partner–Buy** framework: build domestically where Canada has important strengths, work with trusted partners where cooperation makes sense, and buy abroad where necessary while preserving useful Canadian control over operation, sustainment and critical know-how. Aerospace is among the capabilities Ottawa has identified as strategically important.

Bombardier's acquisition is not a defence procurement and shouldn't be presented as one. It's a private commercial transaction.

The parallel is straightforward: Canada already has a sophisticated aerospace industry. Keeping enough engineering, manufacturing, maintenance and production knowledge here helps ensure we remain a serious participant in that industry rather than gradually becoming a customer for work done somewhere else.

The Global 6500 is becoming more than a business jet

That matters because one of the aircraft supported by the Mississauga operation is becoming increasingly relevant to Canada's defence plans.

Canada has already awarded Bombardier a **$753-million contract for six Global 6500 aircraft** to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force's Challenger fleet. The new aircraft are intended for missions ranging from aeromedical evacuation and disaster response to transport supporting national-security operations.

GlobalEye adds another layer. Canada selected Sweden's Saab as preferred supplier for discussions on a new airborne early-warning and control capability earlier this year. Saab's proposed GlobalEye system uses the Canadian-manufactured Bombardier Global 6500 as its platform. Ottawa has been careful to stress that entering discussions with Saab is **not** a procurement commitment, so there is still a considerable gap between preferred supplier and operational Canadian aircraft.

Still, the industrial model is worth noticing. Canada supplies an aircraft platform in an area where we already have deep expertise, while a trusted partner contributes advanced surveillance and mission technology. Ottawa has also identified Canadian industrial participation, technology transfer and long-term support as part of the opportunity.

That's international cooperation strengthening Canadian capability rather than replacing it.

It also makes the industrial ecosystem behind the Global 6500 more interesting than it would be if the aircraft were simply another corporate jet. Final assembly is important, but so are the wings, engineering, tooling, systems work and people that make final assembly possible.

Standing on our own feet doesn't mean standing alone

Canada's aerospace sector was built through international relationships. American, European and Japanese companies are deeply woven into it, just as Canadian firms are woven into supply chains elsewhere.

That is a strength.

Problems arise when efficiency leaves a company or country with so few alternatives that somebody else's disruption automatically becomes its own. Price will always matter, but reliability, access and the ability to keep operating when circumstances change matter too.

Canada can remain deeply integrated with dependable allies and trading partners while becoming more deliberate about where critical capability resides. A healthy trading country does not need independence from its friends; it needs enough domestic depth and enough different friends that no single relationship becomes a permanent point of failure.

MHI Canada Aerospace is a good example of why that distinction matters. Foreign investment helped deepen Canadian aerospace capability. Bombardier's acquisition now gives a Canadian aircraft manufacturer more direct control over the operation.

Both chapters can be good for Canada.

Industrial capability is much easier to lose than rebuild

The harder question is what happens when sophisticated manufacturing disappears.

Factories and machinery can eventually be replaced; the slower work is rebuilding the ecosystem around them — engineers and skilled trades, qualified processes, tooling knowledge, supplier relationships, certifications and the thousand practical lessons that experienced people carry around in their heads.

MHI Canada already has that ecosystem. The company describes its Mississauga operation as a Canadian Tier 1 manufacturer of heavy aerostructures, and its employees already know how to build major structures for Bombardier aircraft.

Bombardier isn't bringing that capability back to Canada because Canada never lost it. It is bringing more of that capability directly inside the Canadian manufacturer whose airplanes depend on it.

That's a quieter industrial story than announcing a greenfield plant, but quiet doesn't mean unimportant.

Every advanced economy has to decide which kinds of knowledge it can afford to let disappear. Canada doesn't need to manufacture everything, and trying to do so would make us poorer rather than stronger. But in industries where we already possess hard-won expertise, treating that capability as easily replaceable is a good way to discover later that it wasn't.

Make the things that are hard to replace

Aerospace is one of the areas where Canada already has unusual depth: aircraft design, simulation and training, advanced manufacturing, components, maintenance, and a growing overlap between civilian aviation and defence applications.

That is worth protecting precisely because it took decades to build.

Sometimes strengthening an industrial base means a new factory and thousands of new jobs. Sometimes it means a Canadian aircraft manufacturer buying an operation that already employs hundreds of skilled Canadians and already builds major pieces of its airplanes.

No ribbon cutting required.

Bombardier is acquiring tooling, engineering capability, supplier relationships, manufacturing capacity and decades of accumulated experience. Most of all, it is gaining more direct control over its own ability to build aircraft in Canada.

In the world Canada appears to be heading into, **that kind of control is becoming valuable again.**