

Woman get chance to explore aviation at BFC

By Bill Rea

There's room for more women in any industry, and that certainly includes aviation.

In recognition of Women in Aviation Week last week, Brampton Flight Centre hosted a free event Sunday in which women got the chance to experience flight and explore aviation.

About 6.5 per cent of the pilots in Canada are women, according to Sam Meandro, a member of the Board of Directors of Brampton Flying Club, which operates the flight centre in Caledon. He added about 5.5 per cent of the commercial pilots in the country are women, and there is an effort to attract more to the field.

He also reported that the Institute for Women of Aviation Worldwide launched a program in 2010 called Fly it Forward/Women of Aviation with a number of flying schools across Canada. Since then, the number of female pilots has increased by more than eight per cent.

"It's a great career," he said, adding there are a number of different paths involved with aviation, including adventure travel, regional and private transport, medical evaluation, air reconnaissance, firefighting, etc.

There were 152 women who took advantage of Sunday's event. They got the chance to explore the flight centre's facilities, examine equipment like simulators and some even got to go up in a brief flight around the area.

Brampton Flying Club was established in 1946, and Meandro said there are currently about 1,000 members.

"We're one of the busiest airports in Canada," he said, citing current statistics that there are about 110,000 movements (meaning take-offs and landings) annually. He said that makes it the 16th busiest airfield in the country.

The centre also trains pilots, and there are programs for one to get their private licence, commercial licence, etc.

Veronica Draghici, flight training administrator at the facility, said a really dedicated student can obtain a private licence in about eight months, and a commercial licence going be earned in about a year.

Meandro added the regulations imposed by Transport Canada are pretty meticulous. "There's a lot of redundancy built into the whole system to make it safe," he remarked.

Brampton Flight Centre consists of about 240 acres on McLaughlin Road, south of King Street. Meandro said it's 940 feet above sea level. The field is equipped with two runways.



Stefanie Pemberton, who took her training at Brampton Flight Centre, was piloting participants in Sunday's Women of Aviation Week event. She was flying a Cessna 172P. Photos by Bill Rea



Instructor Bryan Halfyard was guiding Carolina Hephner of Cambridge as she got to try out one of the simulators.



There were fun parts of aviation, and Jim Walker was teaching these aviation skills to Chantelle Holmes, 6, of Mississauga.



The tours in the Cessna 172P explored the skies around Brampton Flight Centre. The craft was at about 1,500 feet above the ground, with an airspeed of about 110 knots, or roughly 125 miles per hour. It was flying over the Caledon Fairgrounds.



Brampton Flight Centre has two runways. The property on McLaughlin Road, south of King Street, consists of 240 acres.