



LYNN GALL, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Tim Timmins, left, and Robert Holmgren are forming a group of skilled volunteers to restore the 55-year-old North Star, the first Canadian-made plane capable of transcontinental flight.

Volunteers assure a bright future for classic plane

Citizen columnists

Randall Denley now appears on the Citizen's City front Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Jim Watson appears Mondays and Ron Corbett Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.

The paint on the North Star is faded and peeling. Some gaps in the wings are closed with wire to keep out the birds that have made it home for years. The engines are protected with pieces of plywood. The interior requires a complete renovation.

It's a shame to see an important part of Canada's aviation history slide into this kind of ruin. Thanks to the efforts of two Ottawa men, however, the North Star finally has a bright future.

Robert Holmgren and Tim Timmins are forming a group of skilled volunteers to restore the North Star. This kind of volunteer effort will be a first for the museum, says director general Anthony Smyth, who is

can't afford that kind of work, and that's one of the reasons the plane has been sitting there for more than 35 years.

This is no small undertaking. The 55-year-old North Star is a sizeable plane, nearly 30 metres long and with a wingspan of 35 metres. Restoring it will be a yearlong process that would cost \$1 million if it were done by paid staff.

The North Star is an important plane in Canada's aviation history, the first Canadian-made plane capable of transcontinental flight. It's considered the plane that launched the postwar Canadian aviation industry; 70 of them were built. Brought into service after the Second World War, North Stars

carried passengers for several airlines and troops for the Canadian military. North Stars served to airlift Canadian troops to Korea and provided transportation for VIPs visiting Canada. The plane at the museum belonged to the RCAF.

Holmgren is a retired Air Canada maintenance expert, and Timmins is a former RCAF navigator who flew on the North Stars. Timmins's former squadron had taken an interest in the North Star, and Holmgren, who was giving his time as a volunteer at the museum, pushed it forward.

"We'd like to see it brought back to something like its former self," Holmgren says. A temporary structure, per-

haps a bubble like the one over the playing field at Lansdowne Park, will be necessary before the restoration can begin. The plane is too large to fit inside the museum's existing building and also too big to be easily transported elsewhere.

Holmgren and Timmins need about 200 volunteers to make the project a success. Holmgren has approached Air Canada, Bombardier and Boeing to get the help of past and present employees. About 40 volunteers have already come forward.

The key need is skilled craftsmen with up-to-date large aircraft experience who live in or near Ottawa.

See DENLEY on page D2



RANDALL DENLEY

The world's last Canadian North Star sits, forlorn, on the tarmac at the Canada Aviation Museum. It's been parked there since 1966, along with half a dozen other orphans of the museum, planes that it has no money to restore and that are too big to bring inside the crowded