

# Bombardier close to clinching approval to land C Series at London City Airport

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Last updated Friday, Mar. 24, 2017 4:19PM EDT Bombardier Inc. is close to clinching approval to land its C Series airliners at London City Airport, a key development in its strategy to market the plane to carriers flying into some of the world's most challenging airfields.

The Montreal-based plane maker on Thursday completed a series of eight validation test flights at the airport, which safety agencies require because of the airport's unique operating characteristics. London City is considered one of the most difficult airports to fly into because of its short 1,500-metre runway, steep 5.5-degree angle of descent and location near a dense urban centre.

## Geographical range of the CS100 model from takeoff at London City Airport



THE GLOBE AND MAIL | SOURCE: AIRINSIGHT

Bombardier said it expects to receive the paperwork for formal certification allowing the operation of its smaller CS100 model at the airfield before the

end of June.

“For an airport like London City, we sort of think of that as a proxy for more challenging airports around the globe,” Fred Cromer, president of Bombardier commercial aircraft, said in an interview. “The fact that the CS100 can perform and actually gain the certification there is something that the industry has kind of been watching since the airplane was designed.”

For Bombardier, targeting London City is part of a strategic bet that the C Series will appeal to operators looking for a commercial aircraft that can get into tight, urban-environment airports where noise sensitivity is an issue and still have the range to cross a continent. Other challenging sites include Washington’s Reagan airport and Toronto’s Billy Bishop island airport. Showcasing the plane’s advanced technology and lower noise footprint with London City capability could also help the company negotiate better pricing for the aircraft. That has now emerged as a crucial issue to watch following the steep discounts given to early buyers like Delta Air Lines and Air Canada. While the C Series is performing well in service and is largely sold out through 2019, analysts say more orders at better pricing are needed for the program to gain more credibility. Bombardier has not won an order for the plane since Delta announced it would buy 75 units in April, 2016, a dry spell that has put pressure on its stock.

The shares have dipped 27 per cent since hitting a 52-week peak of \$2.76 on Jan.17. They closed up 1 cent to \$2.02 Friday on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

Mr. Cromer predicted that winning certification at London City will energize sales conversations with customers. “For us, it’s a very exciting moment, something that’s very meaningful to the program and actually will add to the momentum in the conversations in our current [sales] campaigns and campaigns that now might come to us because of this certification.”

Bombardier says the 100- to 130-seat CS100 will have the capability to fly roughly 2,200 nautical miles from London City with a typical two-class seat setup, which would allow the plane to reach as far as Moscow, Tripoli or Reykjavik. Arranging the cabin with fewer seats in a business-class configuration would allow it to take on more fuel and fly about 3,500 nautical miles, or across the Atlantic Ocean. The C Series offers double the payload range operating from the airport than any other comparable aircraft, the company says.

Bombardier designed the smaller CS100 model from the beginning to be able to operate out of London City, notes Chris Murray, an analyst with AltaCorp Capital. Among other things, the airport’s special requirements

determined the size of the wing, some of the flight-control surfaces and the engine thrust settings.

"If you look at the range of CS100, it lets you cover the majority of continental Europe and as well it has transatlantic capability," Mr. Murray said. "It offers a number of airlines some very unique opportunities and certainly I think could lead to orders."

Located in the Royal Docks, a short drive from the City of London and Canary Wharf financial centres, London City Airport is heavily used by bankers and other business people. Declan Collier, chief executive of the airport authority, has said the C Series will help support the airfield's growth by offering carriers 25 per cent more capacity while using the same number of takeoff and landing slots.

Swiss International Air Lines, a subsidiary of German carrier Deutsche Lufthansa AG, plans to use the CS100 to fly from London City to Zurich in a replacement for its aging BAE 146 jets. Another Bombardier customer, startup Odyssey Airlines, says it is also on track to use the C Series to fly from London City later this year. At the moment, British Airways is the airport's biggest user.

London City served about 4.5 million passengers in 2016 and has nearly doubled its traffic over a decade. It is owned by a consortium of investors including the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Alberta Investment Management Corp.

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