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The Boeing Company on Friday celebrated the delivery of the first 737-700 to WestJet Airlines. With this delivery, Calgary-based WestJet Airlines becomes the first and only Canadian-based carrier to operate the Boeing Next-Generation 737-700 in Canada.

The delivery is the first of 10 Boeing 737-700s WestJet will lease through GE Capital Aviation Services (GECAS). The airline also has a firm order to purchase an additional 26 737-700s. Boeing will deliver all 36 airplanes between now and January 2006. The airline currently operates a fleet of 23 Boeing 737-200s.

"By operating only one airplane type - the Boeing 737 - WestJet can further enhance its operational efficiencies," said Seddik Belyamani, executive vice president of Sales for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "The features of the 737-700 - including improved fuel efficiency, reduced maintenance costs, and superior reliability -- will serve WestJet well as the airline enters the next phase in its growth. This is an exciting time to be partnered with one of Canada's most entrepreneurial companies."

WestJet is well known in the Canadian aviation industry as the most successful low-fare airline in the country's history. Since its inception in 1996, the airline has flown over 9 million passengers on its 17-city route network. The airline recently celebrated its 17th consecutive quarter of profitability during a period when many airlines have been experiencing decreased passenger traffic, and despite the fact that fuel prices are at their highest level in recent years.

"With the delivery of our first 737-700 aircraft, our people are celebrating an important and historic milestone for our company," said Clive Beddoe, WestJet's executive chairman, president and CEO. "Over the past five years, WestJet has become Canada's leading low-fare carrier on short-haul routes, and now we have our sights set on enhancing our network with longer flights. With the increased efficiencies and guest comforts of these new aircraft, the sky is the limit to what our team can accomplish."

WestJet will use its new airplanes to accommodate passenger growth on existing routes. The airline will fly its new 737-700s on non-stop routes between Calgary and Hamilton and between Edmonton and Hamilton, among others in Canada. As WestJet accepts delivery of more new 737-700 airplanes over the next few years, it will continue to add additional markets and increase frequency on its existing route system.

All new models of the 737 family (737-600/-700/-800/-900) feature all-new, more spacious interiors with more accessible overhead luggage bins, as well as the 737s superior high dispatch reliability. The 737 models also have advanced flight decks featuring the latest large flat panel display technology - one that permits operators to configure the display for maximum commonality with existing fleets. The airplanes are designed to fly higher, faster, farther, quieter and with greater fuel efficiency than previous 737 models and the competition.

The 737 is the best-selling commercial jetliner in history. To date, more than 3,900 737s have been delivered to more than 200 customers around the world.

GECAS is a global aviation solutions provider offering financing for short- and long-term equipment needs, acquisition financing, aircraft remarketing and sale/leaseback arrangements. GECAS is headquartered in Stamford, Conn., and has regional offices in New York, Miami, Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, Tokyo, Luxembourg, Vienna, Austria, and Shannon, Ireland.

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For further information:

Peter Conte

206-766-2041

mobile: 206-290-3460

Carrie Thearle

425-234-6194

mobile: 206-854-5021
