

HFI Scholarships: Career Assistance for the New Maintenance Tech

Louis Magnan has been around aviation for as long as he can remember. His father had his fixed-wing commercial pilot's license and is a Transport Canada-licensed aircraft maintenance engineer (AME).

Louis aimed to go to university to study engineering. However, college is mandatory before university in Quebec, so after high school, Louis began looking into different technical college programs. He chose a cooperative program focused on becoming an AME.

While enrolled in the co-op program, Louis alternated between work and school from one semester to the next. He had the chance to work for two helicopter operators during the program and really enjoyed the industry. The co-op program took a little longer to complete than others — four years instead of three — but it gave him the opportunity to gain valuable experience as an AME apprentice. This later proved essential as Louis graduated during the largest economic recession in recent history.

Before Louis graduated from his co-op program in 2009, he had the chance to work weekends for a fixed-wing maintenance, repair, and overhaul shop at an airport in Montreal. Although it wasn't the type of work he enjoyed the most, he considered himself lucky to have a job and started full-time as soon as school was over.

During that summer, the company began a series of layoffs. Louis next found a position at a small fixed-wing charter operator.

However, Louis missed the versatility and travel associated with the helicopter industry and heard about the HFI Bill Sanderson Aviation Maintenance Technician Scholarship. Thinking that having a type course on his résumé would be a good way to



Louis Magnan at work on a Bell 212.

have something to offer to a potential employer, Louis applied for the Bill Sanderson scholarship and was awarded one in 2010.

Louis used the scholarship money to offset expenses associated with attending his type training courses:

- An AS350/Arriel 1 course from Eurocopter Canada (Saint-Hubert, Quebec)
- A 206/RR250 course from the Bell Academy (Les Cedres, Quebec)
- A PT6T course from Westpoint Helicopter Services (Kelowna, British Columbia).

In addition, Louis recently took an AS355F difference course from Airbus Helicopters Canada in Les Cedres, Quebec.

Louis now holds Transport Canada aircraft certification authority for the AS350 series, Bell 206 series, AS355F series, and the Bell 212/412. This means he is qualified to sign off on maintenance for those aircraft. He also holds a specific ultrasonic nondestructive testing certification authority for Bell 212 main rotor blade grips.


Louis has been working for Canadian Helicopters Limited in

Les Cedres, Quebec, for the past five years. "I was what they call a pool engineer, somebody who travels with the aircraft on different job sites until last year, where they asked me to transition into a based lead engineer position. I am now working on their AS350 12-year inspections, although a lot of my time has been devoted to aircraft importations and exportations and other special projects."

Louis acknowledges that rotorcraft maintenance is a difficult business to get into. However, he recommends always being ready for the next challenge, even though it might not be one you're looking for. "I can truly say I've learned something from every situation I've had to deal with," he says.

HFI offers up to 19 scholarships each year to help support students studying to become part of tomorrow's vertical aviation industry. Applications for 2017 are now being accepted for:

- Bill Sanderson Aviation Maintenance Technician Scholarships
- Commercial Helicopter Pilot Rating Scholarships
- Maintenance Technician Certificate Scholarships
- Michelle North Scholarship for Safety.

Learn more and apply at helicopterfoundation.org/scholarships. The application deadline is November 30, 2016. 

Allison McKay is vice president of Helicopter Foundation International.

