

# AIR ONTARIO

## GREAT LAKES AIRLINES



Air Ontario Dash-8, C-GJMI

### ALLIANCE:

*Air Canada Connector*  
(75% owned by *Air Canada*)

### HEADQUARTERS:

380 Wellington Street, Suite 1100,  
London, Ontario, N6A 5B5

### MAIN BASES:

London, Sarnia, hub at  
Toronto International Airport

### FLEET 1989:

2 - F28-1000s;  
5 - Convair 580s;  
13 - DASH-8-100s;  
3 - HS748s;  
9 - DASH-8-300s on order;  
7 - Catpas 200s.

### COLOURS:

*Air Canada Connector* colour scheme as described for  
*Air BC* aircraft but with *Air Ontario* titles.

### ROUTES:

Toronto – London – Sarnia – Windsor – Ottawa –  
Montreal – Trenton – Kingston – North Bay – Sudbury  
– Sault Ste Marie – Thunder Bay – Dryden – Winnipeg  
USA:

Hartford/Springfield – Cleveland – Minneapolis

### AUSTIN Routes:

Toronto – Elliot Lake – Timmins – Kapuskasing –  
Cochrane – Moosonee – Rupert House – East Main –  
Weminkji – Paint Mills – Chasasibi/La Grande 2 – Great  
Whale – Fort Albany – Kashechewan – Attawapiskat –  
Winisk/Peawaniuck – Fort Severn – Big Trout Lake –  
Kasabonika – Bearskin Lake – Sachigo – Round Lake  
– Muskrat Dam – Cat Lake – Pickle Lake – Webequie  
– Lansdowne – Fort Hope – Geraldton – Manitouwadge  
– Hornepayne – Mara-thon – Sioux Lookout – Kenora/  
Minaki – Red Lake – Pakangikum – Deer Lake – Sandy  
Lake

## HISTORY:

Great Lakes Airlines was formed in January 1961 to provide executive transport for the Homes-Blunt Company of Sarnia. Most of the traffic was to Toronto and back utilizing light twin engine aircraft.

Two DC-3s were purchased in 1967 to supplement the company's Cessna 310 and tri-gear Beech 18 as it began a scheduled service between Sarnia and Toronto.

Two Convair 440 aircraft were bought in 1969 from *Swissair*. Called the *Metropolitan*, the piston twin engine Convair 440 carried forty-four passengers and bore a colour scheme with a broad red cheat line running through the windows of the white aircraft. The upper three quarters of the tail was red and displayed a white map of the Great Lakes within a white circle. Once the Convairs arrived, the Beech 18 was sold to *Air Windsor* and the two DC-3s sold to *Pem Air* of Pembroke.

When London, Ontario, was added to the Sarnia to Toronto route in 1973, four more Convair 440s were purchased from *Linjeflyg* of Sweden. These white aircraft had a broad blue cheat line above a thin white cheat line and a thin dark blue cheat line below both and had an all-white tail. One of a variety of symbols was found on the tail, including a map of the Great Lakes in blue but with no circle, a stylized 'GLA' or no symbol at all.

With the additional aircraft, Peterborough, Ottawa and Kitchener were added to flights from Toronto. This rapid expansion of routes using old, unreliable equipment proved to be uneconomical and the three cities were quickly dropped. For a short period in 1975, all operations were halted except the Sarnia to Toronto route. An analysis of the problems faced by the airline showed that many flights had to be unexpectedly cancelled due to aircraft unserviceability; the new routes had not been properly publicized; and no feasibility studies had been made before opening new routes.

A group of Toronto businessmen bought the airline in 1975 and started to rejuvenate it. They moved the Toronto operations from Terminal One to Terminal Two and turned over the flight handling to *Air Canada* in Toronto and London. *Air Canada* also handled all Great Lakes' ticket sales and reservations on its computerized system. The Toronto to Ottawa via Peterborough route was resumed in April 1976 but Kitchener was never re-introduced to the schedule.

When *Air Canada* retired its Viscounts, there was a hockey charter market for a forty to fifty passenger aircraft in Southern Ontario. Professional hockey teams, however, refused to fly in old piston equipment and the decision was made to purchase Convair 580 aircraft from *Allegheny Airlines*. The Convair 580 was a Convair 340 piston aircraft re-engined with twin Allison jet props. The interior of this aircraft was the same size as the Convair 440 except that the galley and lavatory had

been moved to the front of the plane permitting two additional rows of seats to be added, thus increasing the capacity to fifty-two passengers.

These aircraft were all white with a brown cheat line through the windows. Below this an orange cheat line broadened downwards as it swept aft. Below this was another brown cheat. The new company logo was displayed on the white tail and the airline's name appeared in brown on the upper fuselage. The Convair 440s were kept for a short time as backup aircraft before being sold or broken up.

The Convair 580 entered service with the company in March 1976 using experienced *Allegheny* pilots as co-pilots. Four aircraft were purchased within a year and the company was once again on solid financial footing. In October 1976, Great Lakes took over all but one flight per day between London and Toronto from *Air Canada*.

In January 1977, the company moved its headquarters from Sarnia to London, Ontario, and later that year purchased *Flightexec Ltd.* of London, which operated executive aircraft charters in southwestern Ontario using a Piper Aztec. The company continued to operate *Flightexec Ltd.* as a separate airline.

Great Lakes applied for the Toronto - Sault Ste Marie - Thunder Bay - Dryden - Winnipeg route relinquished by *Transair* when it merged with PWA, but the route was awarded to *Nordair*. In need of expanding its routes, Great Lakes also hoped that *Air Canada* would phase out its short DC-9 routes in Ontario (such as Toronto to North Bay and Sudbury), but it would be another decade before these routes would come available to the airline. Thus the company continued to operate with only Sarnia, London, Toronto, Peterborough to Ottawa route, with the London to Toronto segment being the most profitable.

During the summer of 1979, Great Lakes began flying small package charters from Toronto to Western Canada. The aircraft involved were stripped of their normal passenger seats and soon Great Lakes Convair 580s were seen frequently in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. In October of that year, *Flightexec* added Cessna Citation C-GJTX raising the fleet of this subsidiary to seven aircraft based in London and Windsor.

A fifth Convair 580, added in December 1979, carried the registration C-GJRP, JRP being the initials of the company President, James Robertson Plaxton. Regular scheduled flights and charter flights kept the airline so busy during February 1980 that it was necessary to drop the flights to Western Canada for *Purolator Courier* until April 1980.

In January 1981, the company again dropped its Toronto to Peterborough and Ottawa service which was picked up by *Air Atonabee*. In February, *Great Lakes* introduced its direct Toronto to Ottawa service operat-

ing Monday to Friday only. *Great Lakes* also formed an off-shore helicopter support division which included five Sikorsky S76As. The S76s were delivered in 1985.

The company changed its name to AIR ONTARIO on 27 April 1981. Convair 580 C-GDTC was the first aircraft flown in the company's new colour scheme: a white aircraft with no cheat line, the title 'AIR ONTARIO' displayed in dark purple on the upper fuselage. The purple tail was broken by a horizontal green stripe with a narrow white strip above it.

Purolator Courier services were reduced in March 1981 and discontinued altogether in April 1981 being taken over by *Kelowna Flightcraft* Convair 580s. In December 1981, 50% of the stock of the parent holding company was purchased by the Deluce family of Timmins who were the owners of *Austin Airways* and *White River Air Service*.

In April 1982, an interline agreement was arranged with *Wardair* permitting passengers in Ottawa or London to connect on *Wardair* flights at Toronto.

By 1982, the Toronto to Ottawa route was proving to be very successful as the flights were scheduled between *Air Canada* flights, thus creating very good load factors. The rights for an Ottawa to Montreal service (with no local traffic) were obtained early in 1982 but never used because the company had also received the rights to fly London – Ottawa and London – Montreal direct. Aircraft on the London to Montreal route arrived in Montreal from London early in the morning and would sit unused all day before returning to London at night. When *Eastern Provincial Airways* was on strike in January 1983, Air Ontario Convair 580s operated Montreal to Charlo and Chatham daily services.

The company became an international airline in 1983 when it was awarded flights from London to Cleveland. London, Ontario, was now the hub of operations for Air Ontario, with flights to Sarnia, Cleveland, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal direct from that city.

Early in 1984, Delplax Holdings Limited, the holding company for Air Ontario, tried to buy *Nordair* but was unsuccessful. A major expansion of the company's fleet occurred that year when a Convair 580 was purchased from South Africa and five Convair 580s from *Freedom Airlines* in the United States bringing the airline's total to 11 Convair 580s. These aircraft were required for the new routes being opened by the company. Toronto – Hartford and Toronto – North Bay routes began in September, and Toronto – Sudbury was started in November.

The company changed its colour scheme in 1984, adding three cheat lines to the white aircraft. A narrow green cheat line running through the middle of the windows was separated from a broader dark purple line below by a white cheat line. The dark purple tail is split horizontally by a white band with a broader green band

below, which cross the tail approximately one-third from the top. The title 'AIR ONTARIO' appears in dark purple on the upper fuselage and the company's logo (linked spheres) is displayed forward of the title, in green. The white registration is on the purple cheat line at the rear of the fuselage and the last three letters of the registration are on the purple cheat line near the nose. The wing tips have dark purple, white, green and dark purple stripes.

A considerable expansion in routes within Ontario and its two neighbouring provinces occurred in 1985 with the addition of routes between Windsor, London, Ottawa and Montreal. Thunder Bay was also linked to Sudbury, Ottawa and Montreal and in mid-year this flight was extended to Winnipeg. Toronto to Atlantic City service was begun in the fall.

In October 1985, forty-nine percent of Air Ontario shares were sold to *Air Canada* and *Pacific Western Airlines* (each receiving half of the shares), while Delplax Holdings Limited, (owned by the Deluce Family), retained fifty-one percent of the airline. Air Ontario was now established as a commuter airline serving the large national airline (*Air Canada*) and the rapidly expanding regional airline (*Pacific Western*).

In May 1986, Sault Ste. Marie was added to the Ontario cities served by the company as it continued to take over many of the shorter *Air Canada* routes which could be better served by the smaller Convair 580s. The company announced plans to build a \$3 million hangar and new head office at the London Ontario airport by 1990. In October, the future aircraft plans of the company were announced with an order for 15 Dash-8-100s (plus four optional) and five Dash-8-300 aircraft. As the two national airlines lined up commuter airlines, *Air Canada* purchased Air Ontario shares from the Deluce Family and *Pacific Western*, resulting in *Air Canada* holding seventy-five percent of the company's stock.

The beginning of 1987 saw the first Convair 580s dressed in the *Air Canada Commuter* red and white colour scheme. One Convair, however, flew in an interim scheme displaying the Air Ontario logo on the tail rather than the red maple leaf. The first Dash-8 aircraft arrived in full commuter colour scheme in April and were used on the Sarnia – Toronto – North Bay and Toronto – Cleveland routes. The *Air Canada* designator replaced Air Ontario's designator (GX) for all flights shown in the schedule of either airline.

*Air Canada*, through the purchase of Air Ontario, also acquired 75% of *Austin Airways* which serviced more than thirty-five centres in Ontario (mostly in the north), and five centres in northern Quebec as well as Minneapolis and Toronto. *Austin* also switched to four digit AC flight designators in April 1987 and in June 1987, amalgamated with Air Ontario. At that time, *Austin Airways* was the longest-operating airline in Canada

having started operations on 1 March 1934. A complete history of this airline can be found in Canav Books' *Austin Airways* by Larry Milberry.

Although principally a northern Ontario operator, *Austin Airways* was able to fly routes from Toronto International Airport beginning in 1984, first linking Toronto to Timmins and Kapuskasing and later to Marathon and Manitowadge. HS748 and Beech 99 aircraft were used on these flights, operating in a colourful scheme of yellow aircraft with a broad expanding cheat line of orange, red, black, red, orange that swept up the tail.

Geraldton and Elliot Lake were added to routes from Toronto in 1985. In June 1986, *Austin Airways* took over *Torontair's* flights between Toronto, Trenton and Kingston using HS748 aircraft. All of these routes will be merged into the Air Ontario schedule and the fleet of HS748s, Beech 99s, Twin Otters, Cessna Citation (operated as an air ambulance for the Ontario Ministry of Health), DC-3s and smaller aircraft assimilated over the next few years.

*Austin Airways* ordered eight Dash-8s at the time Air Ontario announced its order of twenty-two Dash-8s, so these *Austin* aircraft will join the Air Ontario fleet when delivered. *Austin Airways* began flying in *Air Canada's* red, white and grey colour scheme in mid-1987.

In 1988, a strike by Air Ontario pilots in early March grounded the airline until May 4. The new contract with the pilots, expiring in November 1990, provided for a newly-hired co-pilot on the new CATPASS 200 aircraft to make \$20,000 a year while a four year captain flying a Fokker F-28 would receive \$71,400 per year.

Flights to Trenton and Kingston and those to Kapuskasing were delayed in restarting following the strike.

Scheduled flights to Kasabonika, Round Lake, Sachigo, Bearskin Lake, Geraldton and Hornepayne were suspended indefinitely; and London – Cleveland was never restarted.

Air Ontario joined the other regional airlines in going to small jet aircraft early in 1988 when they acquired two Fokker F-28-1000 jets. These entered service in May on the Toronto – Sault Ste. Marie – Thunder Bay – Winnipeg route, with three flights a day. Some flights on this route would also stop at Dryden and/or Kenora. The airline also began operating the Toronto – Syracuse and Albany route at that time.

In addition to the new jets, Air Ontario purchased ten *Commuter Air Transport* Catpas 200 (CATPASS 200) aircraft. These modified Beech King Air 200s will replace the Beech 99s and Cessna 402s acquired in the takeover of *Austin Airlines*. Nine of the Cessna 402s were sold by the time the Cat 200s began arriving in June 1988. Eventually all the Beech 99s, Cessna 402s and Twin Otters will be replaced with these aircraft.

During the latter part of 1988, Air Ontario began selling off the Northern Ontario routes it had acquired from *Austin Airways*. Timmins-based aircraft and routes were sold to *Air Creebec*, including most of the company's HS748 aircraft. The Twin Otters and Beech 99s were sold and the newly-arriving CATPUS 200s would also be sold. Aircraft and routes based in Thunder Bay went to *Bearskin Lake Air Service*, and the company's Thunder Bay – Minneapolis route was dropped.

Air Ontario suffered a tragic accident on 10 March 1989 when its new F-28 jet crashed on takeoff from Dryden. Twenty-four passengers and crew were killed in the accident which was likely caused by ice on the wings. Convairs had to be brought back into service to replace the lost aircraft.

## FLEET LISTING

## AIR ONTARIO

REG'N	C/N	F/N	IS	WFU	NOTES
<b>F28-1000</b>					
C-FONF	11060	281	5/88	3/89	W/O 10/03/89 on takeoff from Dryden, Ont.; 24 killed.
C-FONG	11070	282	4/88	C	
<b>DASH-8-102</b>					
C-FABN	044	---	9/86	3/87	LF C-FABN Air BC
C-GION	127	805	12/88	C	
C-GJIG	068	801	4/87	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GJMI	077	802	7/87	C	AC Cominuter c/s; LT Air Alliance 1988
C-GJMO	079	803	7/87	C	AC Commuter c/s; LT Air Alliance 1988
C-GJMK	081	804	7/87	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GJSV	085	805	7/87	C	AC Commuter c/s; LT Air Alliance 1988
C-GJSX	088	806	11/87	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GKON	130	815	1/89	C	
C-GLON	133	816	3/89	C	LT Air Nova 3/89-4/89
C-GOND	090	807	1/88	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GONH	093	808	2/88	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GONJ	095	809	3/88	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GONN	101	810	6/88	C	AC Commuter c/s
C-GONO	102	887	5/88	6/88	LF Air Nova (Air Nova c/s)
C-GONR	109	811	7/88	C	LT DHC 9/88-10/88
C-GONW	112	812	9/88	C	
C-GONX	118	803	10/88	C	
C-GONY	115	802	9/88	C	
<b>DASH-8-301</b>					
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
C----		---	----	OO	OO 1989
<b>CONVAIR 580</b>					
C-GDTC	089	546	4/81	C	EX N5846 Allegheny; full c/s 2/81
C-GDTD	028	540	4/81	7/87	ST OO-VGH European Air Transport
C-GDTE	052	545	4/81	12/87	ST OO-EAT; full c/s 5/81
C-GGWF	459	511	1/85	8/87	ST OO-DHL EAT; LT Time 5 - 9/85
C-GGWG	130	513	12/84	9/87	ST OO-HUB EAT; LT Time 5 - 7/85
C-GGWH	456	535	3/85	C	LT C-GGWH Soundair 5/88-8/88
C-GGWI	169	536	3/85	C	EX N5836 Freedom.
C-GGWJ	127	537	11/84	8/88	EX N5837 Freedom; LT C-GGWJ Gelco Express
C-GJRP	466	551	4/81	C	EX N21466 Time; full c/s 7/84
C-GQHA	147	538	4/81	5/88	ST OO-EAT; full c/s 4/82
C-GQHB	376	531	10/84	C	EX ZS-KRX Air Cape.
C-GTAO	116	560	12/87	8/88	LF C-GTAO DHC Canada; EX Time Air
<b>HS748</b>					
C-GFFU	1579		8/87	2/89	EX TR-0203 Venezuelan Navy; ST C-GFFU Air Creebec
C-GGNZ	1690	721	8/87	2/89	ST C-GGNZ Air Creebec; Air Canada Connector c/s 6/88
C-GGOO	1692	722	8/87	2/89	EX ZS-SBV South African Airways; ST C-GGOO Air Creebec
C-GLTC	1656	788	8/87	3/89	RT C-GLTC (Lessor)
C-GOUT	1621	724	8/87	2/89	ST C-GOUT Air Creebec
C-GMAA	1576		8/87	C	EX TR-LQY; Trans Gabon
C-GQSV	1618		8/87	2/89	LT OY-MBY Maersk 8/80-7/81; ST C-GQSV Air Creebec
C-GQTG	1619		8/87	C	EX CC-CEH Lan Chile
C-GQTH	1617		8/87	C	LT OY-MBY Maersk Air 4/80-4/81
C-GSXS	1674		8/87	2/89	EX XA-SAC SAESA; ST C-GSXS Air Creebec
C-GQWO	1597	723	8/87	2/89	EX T-03 Fuerza Aera Argentina; ST C-GQWO Air Creebec
<b>DHC-6 TWIN OTTER</b>					
C-GDAA	475		8/87	12/88	WFU
C-GNPS	558		8/87	2/89	ST C-GNPS Latham Island Airways
<b>Beech 99</b>					
C-FJEZ	U--15	917	8/87	10/88	EX N199G1
C-GDFX	U-123		8/87	3/89	EX C-GDFX Torontair; ST C-GDFX Bearskin Lake Airways

# FLEET LISTING

## AIR ONTARIO

REG'N	C/N	F/N	IS	WFU	NOTES
<b>Beech 99 (Continued)</b>					
C-GEOI	U-152	988	8/87	2/89	EX C-GEOI Torontair; ST C-GEOI Bearskin Lake Airways
C-GFKB	U--55		8/87	4/89	EX C-GFKB Torontair
C-GFQC	U-120		8/87	2/89	EX HS-SKF; ST C-GFQC Bearskin Lake Airways
C-GGLE	U-207		8/87	4/89	WFU
C-GGPP	U-216		8/87	4/89	WFU
C-GQAH	U--58	914	8/87	2/89	EX C-GQAH Quebec Aviation; ST C-GQAH Bearskin Lake Airways
<b>DC-3</b>					
CF-AAM	9862		8/87	12/88	EX 10910 RCAF; ST CF-AAM Central Mountain Airways
CF-BJE	13453		8/87	11/88	EX CF-BJE Ontario Central; W/O 01/11/88 Pikangikum Lake, Ont., 2 killed
C-FQBC	27026		8/87	12/88	WFU; EX C-FQBC Quebecair
C-GNNA	12483		8/87	12/88	WFU; EX CF 12964
<b>Citation 501</b>					
C-GFEE	0169		8/87	11/88	EX C-GFEE Austin Airways; ST C-GFEE Voyageur Airways
C-GRQA	0374		8/87	11/88	EX C-GRQZ Austin Airways; ST C-GRQA Voyageur Airways
<b>Beech KingAir</b>					
C-GQXF	BB285	201	8/87	2/89	ST C-GQXF Central Mountain Airways
<b>CATPAS 200</b>					
C-FBWX	BB341	202	8/88	C	AC Connector c/s
C-FCGB	BB246	203	9/88	C	EX N183MC
C-FCGC	BB236	204	9/88	C	EX N46KA
C-FCGL	BB190	207	10/88	12/88	EX N190MD
C-FCGM	BB236	205	8/88	C	EX N200CD
C-FCGT	BB159	206	10/88	C	EX N47FH
C-FCGU	BB301	208	11/88	C	
C-FCGX	BB250	209	2/89	C	EX N1008J
C-F	BB342				
C-F	BB343				
C-F	BB344				
C-F	BB345				
<b>GREAT LAKES AIRLINES</b>					
<b>CONVAIR 580</b>					
C-GDTC	089	DTC	2/76	4/81	EX N5846 Allegheny
C-GDTD	028	DTD	4/76	4/81	EX N5840 Allegheny
C-GJRP	466	JRP	12/79	4/81	EX N21466 Time Aviation Services
C-GQHA	147	QHA	1/77	4/81	EX N5838 Allegheny
N5826	385		11/77	12/77	LF N5826 Allegheny
N5831	376		10/78	12/78	LF N5831 Allegheny
N580GN	376		12/79	3/80	LF N580GN Great Northern; CONVAIR 440
CF-GLC	360		12/69	9/75	BU 1976
CF-GLD	364		12/69	9/75	ST N30KA Sun Valley Key Airlines
CF-GLK	325		12/73	5/77	ST N21DR 324 Inc.; EX CF-GHQ
CF-GLM	393		2/74	5/77	ST N24DR 393 Inc.; EX Linjeflyg
CF-GLR	350		6/74	6/76	ST N25DR Onyx Aviation Inc.
CF-GLT	351		1/74	7/77	ST N26DR San Jaun International Airway
<b>DC-3</b>					
CF-GLA	2140		6/67	11/72	ST CF-GLA Pem Air
CF-GLB	1547		11/67	5/71	ST CF-GLB Pem Air
CF-YED	4433		1/71	5/71	LF CF-YED Greyhound Leasing
<b>PA-31-350</b>					
C-GQNC	52176		7/78	9/79	ST C-GQNC Flightexec Ltd.
<b>BEECH D-18S</b>					
CF-LLF	A352		4/60	1/72	ST CF-LLF Air Windsor
<b>CESSNA 310</b>					
CF-KAY	35624		4/60	5/68	ST CF-KAY Hughes Marine Sales Ltd.