NordSpace Awarded $20 Million Contract with Department of National Defence for Launch from Atlantic Spaceport Complex

Landmark contract gives DND priority access to a dedicated launch pad at Canada's largest spaceport, the Atlantic Spaceport Complex in Newfoundland and Labrador



Hon. Minister David McGuinty Announcing $20M Contract with NordSpace in Ottawa

ST. LAWRENCE, NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR, CANADA, October 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- NordSpace Corp., Canada's only vertically integrated space missions company, today announced that it has been awarded a $20 million, 10-year Facility Access Agreement (FAA) with the Department of National Defence (DND) at the Atlantic Spaceport Complex (ASX) in St. Lawrence, Newfoundland and Labrador. The agreement was announced by the Honourable David McGuinty, Minister of National Defence, at the Space Bound Conference hosted in Ottawa by Space Canada. Under the FAA, DND secures priority access to a dedicated launch pad at ASX, Canada's largest spaceport being constructed for light, medium and heavy lift vehicles. The agreement uniquely positions NordSpace in Canada's sovereign launch effort, as it is the first contract of its kind between the Department of National Defence and a Canadian commercial launch company developing both launch vehicles and spaceport infrastructure to enable a truly sovereign capability for the nation.

> A sovereign spacefaring Canada must be able to launch payloads into orbit from its own soil, on its own rocket. That vertically integrated capability is exactly what NordSpace is building for the DND."
>
> *Rahul Goel, CEO & Founder*

The FAA is designed to maintain and continuously harden the ASX facilities and sustain operational readiness required to execute secure responsive sovereign launch across the 10-year term. The $20 million base covers the minimum cost of maintaining the relevant facilities, systems, and standby readiness over the term, and does not

cover the cost of individual missions themselves, which are contracted separately as they are called. Over the next several years, NordSpace will prepare its facilities, vehicles, spacecraft, and operations for secure responsive launch, with the goal of delivering a fully Canadian, fully sovereign capability that DND can leverage on demand, from Canadian soil, on Canadian timelines, under Canadian control.



NordSpace's Engineers Preparing the Taiga Rocket for Launch at the Company's Atlantic Spaceport Complex (ASX)



NordSpace – Team Photo at Rocket Factory 1 (RF-1) Prior to Terra Nova's Launch

NordSpace intends to go beyond the baseline commitments of the FAA by building towards on-demand launch from ASX, achieved by maintaining a launch-ready Tundra-class launch vehicle paired with several of its Aquila-class spacecraft buses available and on standby at the Atlantic Spaceport Complex. This standing posture is designed to allow any independent DND satellite, or any DND payload without a dedicated satellite host, to be integrated onto the Aquila bus, launched aboard Tundra, and operated on orbit within a target window of 24 to 72 hours from call-up, depending on the scope and complexity of the mission. The target responsiveness is only possible because NordSpace is vertically integrated and designs, builds, and operates the rocket, the spacecraft bus, the propulsion, the mission control systems, and the spaceport itself. A truly sovereign responsive launch capability cannot be assembled on short notice from a chain of foreign suppliers and third-party operators; it has to be owned, end to end, by a Canadian company operating under Canadian control.

NordSpace is working closely with 3 Canadian Space Division (3 CSD) to understand DND's responsive launch requirements and to plan the specific mission profiles, orbital regimes, payload interfaces, integration procedures, and operational timelines that the capability will support. 3 CSD represents the Canadian Armed Forces' operational space authority, and the ongoing collaboration ensures that NordSpace's responsive launch capability is being purpose-

built around the real operational needs of the Canadian space community rather than assumed requirements.

"Canada's sovereignty doesn't stop at the edge of our atmosphere. This agreement is a concrete step toward ensuring Canada can launch critical defence capabilities from Canadian soil, on Canadian timelines. We're backing Canadian innovation, strengthening our national security, and building the sovereign capabilities our Armed Forces need to defend Canada." said the Honourable David McGuinty, Minister of National Defence.



BGen Chris Horner, Commander of the 3 Canadian Space Division (3CSD) Visits NordSpace Corp.'s Manufacturing Lab



Atlantic Spaceport Complex - SLC-02

"A sovereign spacefaring Canada needs the ability to launch a payload into orbit on its own schedule, from its own soil, on its own rocket when national security demands it. That capability is only possible if a Canadian company owns the full stack from launch vehicle to launch pad, and that vertical integration is exactly what we are building at NordSpace and our Atlantic Spaceport Complex in Newfoundland and Labrador." said Rahul Goel, Founder and CEO of NordSpace. "NordSpace is grateful for this agreement with the Department of National Defence, and we are proud to be of service to Canadians to ensure that there is a Canadian-made rocket on a Canadian-owned launch pad with a Canadian-made spacecraft bus waiting, when the Canadian Armed Forces need it."

The capability NordSpace is building under the FAA is aligned with the kind of responsive sovereign launch that allied space powers are now treating as a baseline national security requirement. The United States Space Force has demonstrated the model through its Tactically Responsive Space program, including the VICTUS NOX mission flown in 2023, in which a payload was integrated and launched within 27 hours of call-up, and the follow-on VICTUS HAZE mission currently underway, which will exercise rapid characterization and response against an on-orbit target of interest, as well as the planned VICTUS SURGO and VICTUS SALO missions that extend the model into higher cadence and more complex operational scenarios. These programs enable

in a contested space domain the ability to put a national asset into the right orbit, at the right time, without depending on allied launch manifests or foreign launch sites.

The FAA is announced on the heels of NordSpace entering Phase 2 construction at the Atlantic Spaceport Complex, the next step toward Canada's first fully sovereign orbital launch. Phase 2 opens with a six-kilometre launch access road at SLC-01 (Space Launch Complex 01), engineered specifically to carry NordSpace's Tundra light-lift vehicle and the Tempest medium-lift vehicle to the pad. Phase 1 began in 2024 and culminated in landmark environmental approvals, crown lands grants, construction of Pad 2A at SLC-02, and initial flight tests. Phase 2 is targeted for completion by Spring 2027, at which point installation will begin on the core systems that bring the spaceport online: two orbital launch pads, mission control, propellant storage, launch platforms and towers, ground stations for rocket and satellite communications, vehicle integration hangars, ground support equipment, utilities including power and water, and the first elements of a visitor centre.

The FAA sits inside a broader vision now being executed in parallel across every layer of NordSpace's integrated program. Terra Nova, the company's first satellite, launched earlier this month and is operating in orbit, testing common hardware and operations at TRL-9 across NordSpace's launch and space systems, making NordSpace the first Canadian launch company operating its own hardware in space. The Taiga suborbital launch vehicle is awaiting its first flight pending final regulatory approvals, after which the Taiga program will evolve into VERTEX (Vehicle for Experimental Rocket Testing and EXploration), a nationwide sovereign Canadian suborbital launch platform for government, academia, and industry customers. VERTEX is a critical sovereign asset in its own right. Beyond the vehicle, VERTEX is a test bed specifically for the end-to-end operations of orbital launch from Canada, exercising manufacturing and testing, procurement, payload integration, and mission operations, using liquid rocket technology that will be regulated as an orbital mission under Canada's new Commercial Space Launch Act. Follow-on Taiga missions under VERTEX, flown ahead of Tundra's first orbital flight, will specifically include a responsive launch demonstration in a joint exercise with details to be announced in the future, giving NordSpace and its government partners the opportunity to rehearse the integration-to-launch timelines, operational procedures, and command and control relationships that the DND responsive launch capability will depend on.

At Rocket Factory 1 in Markham, Ontario, the Tundra orbital launch vehicle is making rapid progress leveraging advanced manufacturing in metal additive and automated composites. At the Atlantic Spaceport Complex in St. Lawrence, the roads, pads, and systems that will host Canada's first sovereign orbital launches are now being physically built. The Atlantic Spaceport Complex is the largest spaceport in Canada. It offers the widest range of launch inclinations available in the country, the largest safety distances of any Canadian spaceport, and the highest approved launch cadence anywhere in Canada. NordSpace owns and operates the spaceport itself, which gives the company full autonomy over its launch site, regulatory posture, and operational tempo to meet the necessary cadence to build a sustainable launch program and business.

NordSpace is also working closely with Transport Canada on launch approvals and authorizations under Canada's new Commercial Space Launch Act and the associated regulatory framework, with further announcements on this front expected in the near term. The regulatory pathway is being advanced in step with the physical build of ASX and the ramp of the FAA capability, so that the spaceport comes online as a fully licensed, operationally ready, and security-cleared Canadian launch site capable of serving both commercial customers and the Department of National Defence. NordSpace will share further announcements in the coming weeks and months on additional investments and contracts across its launch, spacecraft, propulsion, and spaceport programs, as the company continues to scale the capability base required to deliver sovereign Canadian launch, including responsive sovereign launch for the Department of National Defence, at commercial pace.

About NordSpace

NordSpace Corp. is Canada's only vertically integrated space missions company, fully Canadian-owned and dedicated to launching Canadian vehicles, from Canadian soil, carrying Canadian payloads. The company develops and operates launch vehicles, including the Taiga suborbital pathfinder, the Tundra light-lift vehicle, and the Tempest medium-lift launcher, powered by the patent-pending Hadfield-150 engine, Canada's first orbital-class liquid rocket engine. NordSpace designs and builds its own spacecraft systems in-house at its Space Systems Lab in Markham, Ontario, and operates the Atlantic Spaceport Complex in St. Lawrence, Newfoundland and Labrador, with propulsion test operations at Area 66 in Eastern Ontario, headquarters and manufacturing at Rocket Factory 1 in Markham, Ontario, and a policy and government relations office in Ottawa.

Team NordSpace
NordSpace Corp.
contact@nordspace.com
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