NEWS

Ryerson University Reverses Course and Approves Rocketry Propulsion Group Funding

by **Marc Boucher**

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Balin Moher, founder and former Director, Ryerson Propulsion Group. Credit: SpaceQ.

The Ryerson Propulsion Group which had seen its funding partially approved, then frozen, has now seen its funding approved, after it became public.

In July we reported that a new student group, the Ryerson Propulsion Group, was in conflict with the university's Engineering School Administration and that their funding had been frozen after first being partially approved.

At the recent Montreal Space Symposium, Balin Moher, the founder of the Ryerson Propulsion Group, spoke on "Changing Perspectives", the story of how difficult it can be to make an institution understand changes in technology and the bureaucratic obstacles students can face when trying to innovate.

Rocketry is not new to Ryerson. The Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science has its own Propulsion Research Facility, and the university rocketry club had participated in competitions in the US.

What was different this time, is that the new Ryerson Propulsion Group wanted to go beyond using commercial off-the-shelf rocket engines and design and build their own liquid nitrous oxide/liquid ethanol rocket engine, something other Canadian universities were doing. According to Moher, this would be an innovative program. Over 100 students joined the group.

In his speech, Moher credited the media, including SpaceQ, for making the issue public. A few weeks after SpaceQ wrote the initial story, the CBC picked up on the story and featured it on their Friday night Toronto newscast.

Shortly thereafter, Moher says the university became aware of the news coverage and that's when things began to change.

The Ryerson Propulsion Group was still pushing to get funding for the 2019-20 academic year. The university worked out the issues, and according to Moher, the group was expecting a decent budget.

Moher told SpaceQ that "the faculty has agreed to allow us to build the engine. They've agreed to the plan proposed to them last year, where we will be conducting subsystem testing, and once we produce results from the tests that verifies our design and they approve, we will be allowed to move on to following phases. The budget they provided us will not cover much of the engine."

Moher has since graduated but is staying on as a co-director to the group.

Moher also said that “they (the university) believe that this project will take years, despite our drive to complete it in the time that the remaining students will still be in school. This poses an obvious problem as many of the hard working and capable students driving the team are in their latter years, so I hope that they will finish before they graduate, but also motivate future students to continue the team. I hope that this team will always exist at Ryerson so students have a professional and safe space to learn about rocket propulsion.”

The group still needs outside sponsorships to meet its financial goals and build their new engine before the current students in the group graduate.

While Moher’s talk focused on “Changing Perspectives”, after listening to his story, I think the title could have been “Changing Perspectives and Perseverance.”

Update Oct. 25 10:40 am ET – The Ryerson Propulsion Group informed SpaceQ that they were waiting on the expected email that their budget was fully approved. We’ve updated the story replacing “granted” to “expected” in the 8th paragraph.

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Marc Boucher is an entrepreneur, writer, editor, podcaster and publisher. He is the founder of SpaceQ Media. Marc has 30+ years working in various roles in media, space sector not-for-profits, and internet content development.

Marc started his first Internet creator content business in 1992 and hasn't looked back. When not working Marc loves to explore Canada, the world and document nature through his photography.

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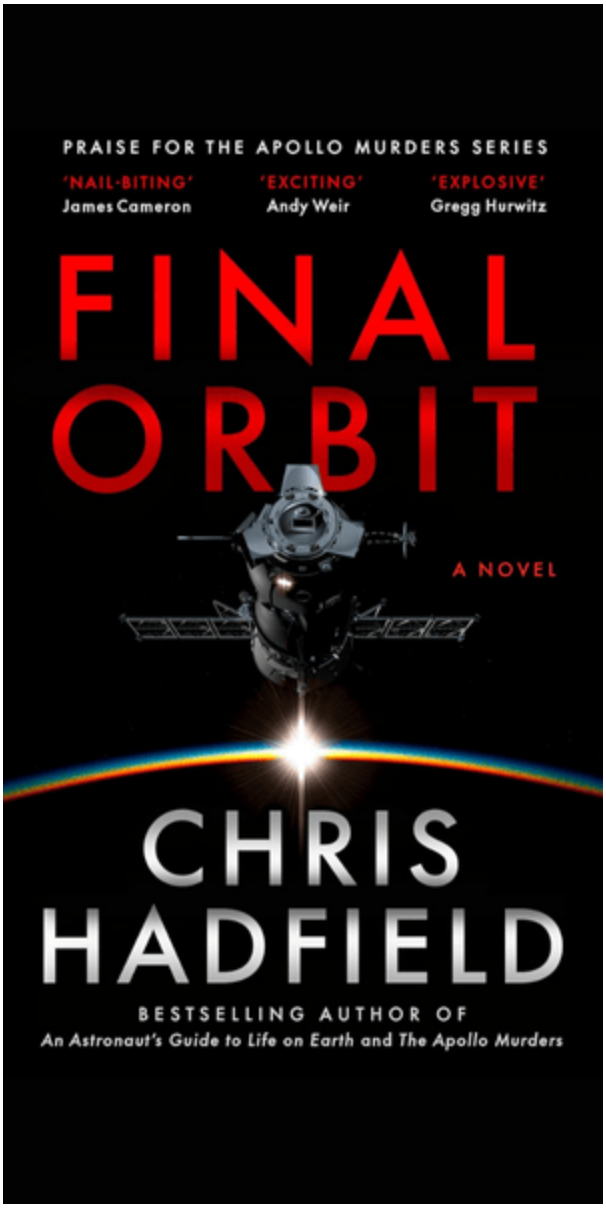
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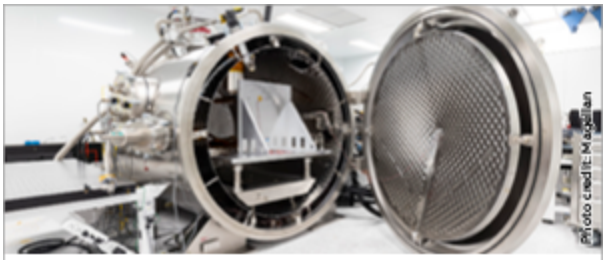

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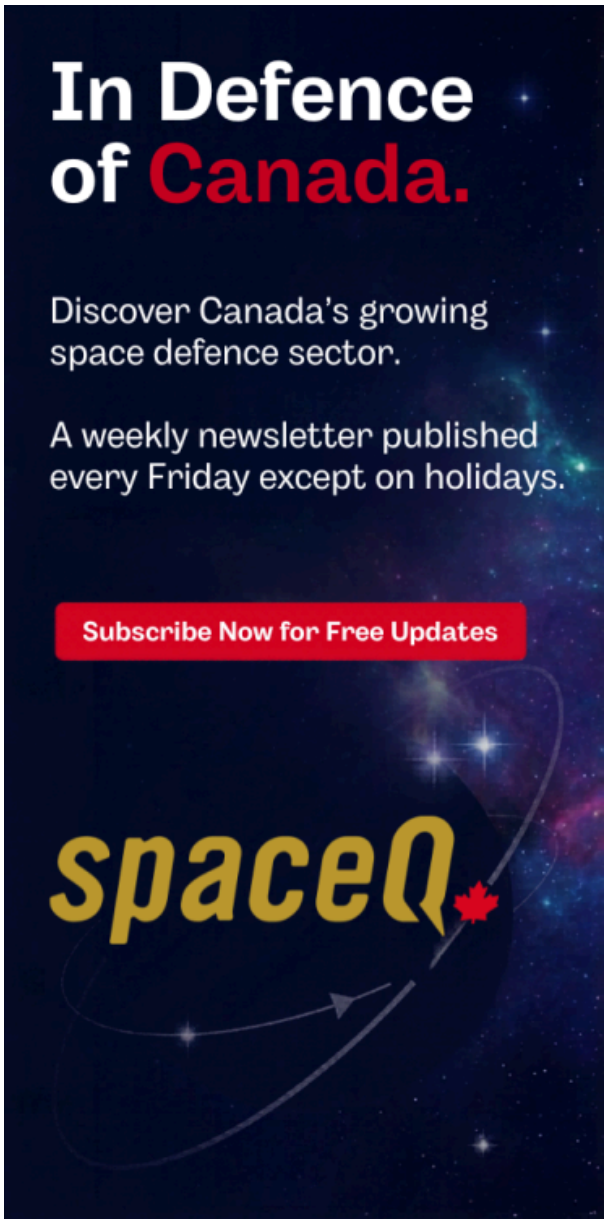

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