

Pair beat thousands to join Canada's space program

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The logo for the Canadian Space Agency. A doctor and a fighter jet pilot were welcomed into the Canadian Astronaut Corps on Wednesday, beating out 5,351 applicants who underwent a year of intense evaluations.

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Jeremy Hansen and David St-Jacques are the first Canadians to join the astronaut corps since 1992.

They also become only the 11th and 12th to join the elite corps in the Canadian [space](#) program's 25-year history, a statement said.

"Today, a mad dream, an off-the-wall dream has come true," St-Jacques told a press conference.

"I see a very promising future for Canada in space," Hansen said as he was introduced. "I think the exploration of space needs Canada."

The two new astronauts will undergo training at the Canadian Space Agency headquarters in Saint-Hubert, Quebec, and at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

They will also support the launch activities of fellow Canadian astronauts Robert Thirsk and Julie Payette.

Thirsk is set to launch on May 27 from Baikonur, Kazakhstan, on a six-month mission to the International Space Station. Julie Payette will join him after launching from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on June 13.

"It will be the first time that Canadian astronauts will actually meet in space," noted Industry Minister Tony Clement.

Canadian [astronauts](#) have made a total of 13 voyages into space so far, including five to the International Space Station.

Hansen, 33, is married with three children.

He served as a CF-18 fighter pilot and combat operations officer at 4 Wing Operations in Cold Lake, Alberta, ensuring the effectiveness North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)'s air defense operations.

He earned a master's degree in physics for his research in satellite tracking.

St-Jacques, 39, is currently engaged to be married. He speaks five languages including Inuktitut, spoken by northern aboriginals, and

practiced medicine in Canada's far north before joining the space program.

He also earned a doctorate in astrophysics from Cambridge University, in Britain, doing theoretical work on astronomical observation and design, fabrication and commissioning of instruments for telescopes.

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