



Canada Aviation
Museum

Musée de l'aviation
du Canada

January 24, 2007

Ingunn Løyning
Spitsbergen Airship Museum
P.O. Box 644
9171 Longyearbyen,
Svalbard, Norway

Dear Mr. Løyning:

My colleagues and I wish to thank you for your letter.

We are of course happy to support your efforts to set up an aviation-related museum in Svalbard.

This region of the world has played its part in the history of Arctic aviation for more than a hundred years, ever since the tragic balloon flight made by Swedish engineer Salomon August Andrée and his colleagues, in 1897. This was followed by the attempts to reach the Pole by airship made between 1907 and 1909 by American journalist Walter Wellman.

Indeed, airships have most definitely left their mark in the history of aviation in Svalbard. In the 1920s, two of these giants flew North in order to explore the vast expanses of the Arctic. Both were designed and piloted by Italian engineer Umberto Nobile. In May 1926, a Norwegian-Italian-American expedition flew from Svalbard to the Pole and all the way to Alaska aboard the *Norge*, a remarkable feat given the technical limitations of the airships of the time. The reaction in Italy was such that a purely Italian expedition was launched. Sadly, the *Italia* crashed on the ice in May 1928 on its return flight from the Pole. The disaster sparked a massive search and rescue operation, the first ever in this region of the world, in which half a dozen countries took part.

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Even though the hope that the airship would prove itself to be a reliable form of transport and exploration remained unfulfilled, the story of this most remarkable flying machine deserves to be told. The Spitsbergen Airship Museum is a most interesting project, well deserving of support. My colleagues and I wish it, and you, the best of luck.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony P. Smyth', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Anthony P. Smyth
Director General