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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Strike mandate for Air Transat flight attendants

**Montreal, Thursday, June 16, 2011** – Approximately 1,500 Air Transat flight attendants have voted by 93% in favour of a mandate for a general strike, to be launched at the appropriate time. They have also rejected the latest offer from their employer by 95%. Their union released the results tonight following a series of meetings in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. This means that the flight attendants could launch a strike at any time after July 19. However, their union representatives hope to negotiate an agreement and avoid a labour dispute. New bargaining sessions will take place next Tuesday and Thursday.

*“We’ve had 30 bargaining sessions since September 2010. Air Transat has continued to ask for cuts that simply are not justified by its financial situation. We certainly do not want to disrupt the operations of the company this summer and we are focused on negotiating a settlement as quickly as possible. At the same time, Air Transat needs to recognize the fair value of its flight attendants,”* said Nathalie Stringer, president of the Air Transat Component of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

*“Our members are sending a clear message. They want a pension plan that will allow them to grow older with dignity. They say no to concessions that would affect younger workers and their families. They believe that it is imperative to limit the duration of a shift to 14 hours if you truly care about passenger safety,”* said Stringer. *“I think we have never felt such support and unity in the entire history of our union. I am very proud of the solidarity of our members,”* she added.

On April 21, the union asked the Federal Ministry of Labour to appoint a conciliator to assist in the ongoing negotiations. Eight days after that request, a 60-day conciliation period began. If no agreement is reached during this period, it will be followed by another 21-day period, and finally, if there is still no agreement, the two parties may resort to a strike or a lockout, as of July 20.

The Air Transat flight attendants, mostly women, are emergency specialists whose primary role is to ensure passenger safety. They have been working without a contract since November 1, 2010. They are divided into three local unions corresponding to their three bases: CUPE 4041 (722 members in Montreal-YUL), CUPE 4047 (approximately 570 in Toronto-YYZ) and CUPE 4078 (226 in Vancouver-YVR). The Air Transat Component oversees these three local unions.

In total, CUPE represents nearly 9,500 members in air transport, including Air Canada, Calm Air, Canadian North, CanJet Airlines, Cathay Pacific and First Air.

CUPE is the largest union in Canada with 600,000 members working in health, education, municipalities, libraries, universities, social services, public services, urban and air transport, emergency services and communications.

– 30 –

SOURCE: CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES (FTQ)

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