
PRESS RELEASE

Air Transat flight attendants ratify contract

Montreal, Wednesday, August 3, 2011 – After a series of general meetings and an electronic vote, 65% of Air Transat flight attendants voted in favour of a new collective agreement, dispelling the possibility that pressure tactics might be used this summer. The agreement in principle, reached on July 8, will be valid for five years, from November 1, 2010, until October 31, 2015. Union representatives, who refused concessions demanded by the company, claim to have obtained their major negotiating points, namely substantial retirement plan improvements and adequate wage increases.

As a result, the defined benefit retirement plan for flight attendants will be bolstered. Employee and employer contributions to the Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP) will both improve from 2% to 5% of annual salary. As for salaries, total lump sum and recurring increases will rise to 12% over five years.

The maximum shift length will remain at 14 hours, as the airline jettisoned its request for 15 hour shifts. *“Keeping a limit on working hours is good not just for passenger safety but for our members who seek work–life balance,”* said Nathalie Stringer, president of the Air Transat Component of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

“When a company is in good health, it’s normal for its first-line employees to have attractive working conditions. Thanks to the support and involvement of our flight attendants, our union was able to attain its negotiating goals. We’re particularly pleased with the improvements in our retirement plan,” Ms. Stringer added.

In mid-June, 95% of Air Transat flight attendants rejected their employer’s previous offer, and voted 93% in favour of a mandate for a general strike “to be launched at the appropriate time.”

The Air Transat flight attendants are emergency specialists whose primary role is to ensure passenger safety. 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 airlines, 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 care, education, municipalities, libraries, universities, social services, public utilities, transportation, emergency services, communications and airlines.

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SOURCE: CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

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