



December 7, 2018

CUPE 4060 – Flair Airlines Flight Attendants Backgrounder

- CUPE 4060's 139 flight attendants work from bases in Abbotsford, Kelowna, Calgary, Edmonton, and Toronto. Since the summer of 2018, when Flair shifted its business model from a charter to "ultra low-cost carrier" (ULCC) service, the company has offered regular flights to eight Canadian and six U.S. cities. Since CUPE organized Flair flight attendants in November 2017, Local 4060 has been in bargaining with the airline for nearly a year.
- In setting out its new ULCC business model, Flair initially called for existing members' starting wage of \$33/hour to be rolled back by \$10/hour. This strategy was admittedly part of a company plan to compete with other budget airlines in order to meet its bottom line. Plans for other cost-cutting measures involve Flair's impending switch to the new 737-800 planes, which will operate at 1:50 ratio—a reduction of the number of flight attendants per passenger.
- Under the original wage structure, existing flight attendants earn much less than the \$33.20/ hour they are paid, based on real hours worked. Compensated for 80 hours per month, they are paid only for actual flight time, not preparation (including boarding passengers) or post-flight duties. This work adds up to 166 hours of average duty hours per month.
- CUPE had already tabled a reasonable proposal—including two years of wage freezes—but Flair refused to consider it. The company made it sound like we were asking for more, which was never the case. The existing wage structure has been in place since September 1, 2016.

- When CUPE 4060 members responded to the company's attempted wage rollback with a 98-per-cent strike vote, Flair's next move was to try and set workers against each other by offering a two-tier wage and pension structure—less pay and no pension for future employees doing the same work as current employees. New hires would earn only \$23 per hour, which amounts to just over \$10 an hour when all non-flight duty hours are counted—less than the minimum wage for B.C., Alberta and Ontario.
- CUPE has made every effort to return to the bargaining table, but Flair has refused to reconsider its two-tier wage proposal, which pays lower wages to new employees. Two-tier is a classic Employer divide-and-conquer strategy aimed at directing everyone toward the same (lower) rate eventually.
- CUPE had made every attempt to resolve this dispute without resorting to job action. However, the company has rejected the union's proposal to settle the dispute fairly via interest arbitration.