

Kelowna Flightcraft

Intense Negotiations Result in Ratified Pilot Contract

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The Kelowna Flightcraft Master Executive Council (MEC) and its Negotiating Committee spent the beginning of 2013 preparing for contract negotiations that were slated to start in 2014 and instead ended the year with a ratified collective agreement. Ninety-six percent of the pilots who cast ballots voted in favor of the agreement, which was reached after three and a half months of intensely focused negotiations.

"We opened our negotiations earlier to show our commitment to the company and to our customer," says Capt. Derek Porter, the pilots' MEC chairman. Kelowna

needed cost certainty to be more competitive when it submitted its bid in response to the Canada Post Group of Companies [CPGoC] Request for Proposal due in late 2013."

The company approached the MEC in April with a request to begin early negotiations, so Capt. Brett Chanin, the MEC Negotiating Committee chairman, the team of pilot volunteers, and ALPA staff set about preparing to open in June.

"The company expressed a desire to participate in interest-based negotiations [IBN]," notes Chanin, a type of negotiating that has been successfully employed in

Canada for a number of years. "Since this was a style of negotiating we hadn't previously used, the MEC Negotiating Committee and company negotiators attended an IBN workshop in June, just before the start of negotiations." IBN training was conducted by experienced federal conciliation and mediation officers from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services.

The MEC Contract Study Committee worked with ALPA staff to develop a pilot survey that guided the Negotiating Committee's priorities. "The five-plus-two-year agreement, among other things, provides increases in allowances and pay, and provides long-term labour stability for the airline," Chanin says. Kelowna Flightcraft is Canada's largest cargo airline and flies for Purolator and Canada Post, both components of CPGoC. The agreement provides an opportunity to open sections of the contract for negotiations in five years, while others will remain intact for the seven-year duration.

"We could not have gotten through this process without the support of ALPA staff," acknowledges Chanin. "In particular, our labour relations advisor, Bert Leger, and the staff of the Communications and Economic & Financial Analysis Departments kept our pilots informed and our Negotiating Committee focused on the job at hand."

And while negotiations were the primary focus for most of 2013, the MEC also continued to keep an eye on what changes the new Canadian flight-time/duty-

time rules will bring to their operations if those rules go into effect in 2014.

Transport Canada's Canadian Aviation Regulations Advisory Council (CARAC) Technical Committee publicized the proposals and recommendations contained in a 125-page report issued by the CARAC Flight Crew Fatigue Management Working Group in August 2012. That report advocates for modern, science-based fatigue rules that would apply to all pilots in Canada.

"The proposed rules are of great interest to the Kelowna pilots who primarily operate overnight, domestic, next-day delivery freight," says F/O Tim Wynn-Williams, the pilots' MEC vice chairman. "Our MEC has repeatedly engaged management to institute a fatigue risk management system; however, management is not willing to participate in meaningful discussions until the proposed rules come into effect." Of particular concern to the Kelowna pilots is whether the final rule contains a cargo "carveout," as is the case in the United States.

Staffing levels at Kelowna held steady during the year, says Wynn-Williams, with hiring conducted only to offset attrition due to retirements, pilots on long-term disability, and pilots who resigned to pursue careers elsewhere.

Kelowna Flightcraft transports 1,000,000 pounds of air freight nightly across Canada, and the pilot group hopes the newly ratified agreement provides the company the stability to maintain that status through the coming years. 

KFC at a Glance

Pilots joined ALPA: 1997 (became an ALPA-represented pilot group when CALPA merged with ALPA)

Number of pilots: 135

Headquarters: Kelowna, B.C.

Pilot bases: Hamilton, Ont.; Vancouver, B.C.; Halifax, N.S.; Thunder Bay, Ont.; Saskatoon, Sask.; Calgary, Alb.; and Kelowna, B.C.

Fleet: Boeing 727s, Convair 580s, and DC-10s



From left: Capt. Derek Porter, MEC chairman; F/O Tim Wynn-Williams, MEC vice chairman; Capt. Serge Fortier, MEC secretary-treasurer; and Negotiating Committee member F/O Kris Kanigan answer questions during the road show in Hamilton, Ont.