

Bearskin

Pilots Raise the Bar on Contract Improvements For Canada's Turboprop Pilots

By Lynn Konwin, ALPA Senior Communications Specialist

The nature of Bearskin flying has changed since the airline sold its Northern Division to Wasaya a few years ago, and though there are no announced plans to expand operations in 2010, the airline has established an indelible niche, offering daily scheduled passenger service throughout Ontario and Manitoba.

Bearskin's main pilot base is in Thunder Bay, Ont. (CYQT). There are two smaller pilot bases in Sioux Lookout, Ont. (CYXL) and Winnipeg, Man. (CYWG). "Bearskin has found its place in the commuter world and appears to be doing well," says Capt. Danny Parnham, the Bearskin pilots' Master Executive Council chairman.

Today, the "Bear" continues to offer more than 100 departures daily to 17 destinations in Ontario and

relationship," says Parnham.

Advancements to the current contract focused greatly on quality-of-life issues. "Contract No. 4 was also successful in negotiating advancements to Transport Canada's current flight-time/duty-time regulations," says Parnham. "When the time comes to negotiate our fifth contract, we will strive to reach a settlement that will benefit not only the pilot group, but also our airline's business plan."

In 2010 and beyond, the Bearskin MEC plans to take a lead role in pushing for improved flight-time/duty-time regulations for Canadian pilots. As an appointed member of ALPA's Flight Time/Duty Time Committee for Canada, Parnham says he is 110 percent committed to bringing science-based improvements to the current Canadian flight-time/duty-time regulations. "I will advocate to the best of my ability the concerns of 703 and 704 pilots in Canada," says Parnham.

For the Bearskin pilot group, as with many other Canadian and U.S. pilot groups, fatigue is a critical factor of daily operations.

Bearskin pilots fly as many as 12 legs per day in 704 aircraft without the assistance of autopilot.


"As exhausting as this is, many more carriers have no limit to cycles and routinely do more than 12 legs per duty day. Fatigue is an issue that doesn't affect just our personal lives but those of our families and the flying public as well. An accident should not be the catalyst for changing our country's flight-time/duty-time regulations," says Parnham. 



PHOTO BY BZUK

A Bearskin Metroliner.

Manitoba. No other airline offers more service between northern Ontario's key cities.

Thunder Bay and Sudbury combined feature more than 25 departures daily and act as Bearskin's major hubs, linking northern Ontario's five largest cities to Winnipeg, Ottawa, Ont., and a number of smaller communities.

The pilots fly routes as far south as Kitchener/Waterloo, Ont., to as far north as Flin Flon, Man. East/west operations extend from Ottawa to Winnipeg.

Bearskin's fourth contract was ratified 3 years ago, and to date no grievances have been filed. "Our contract is starting to reap the rewards of maturity and a positive labour-management

BRS at a Glance

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

Number of Pilots: 61

Pilot Bases: Thunder Bay, Ont.; Winnipeg, Man.; Sioux Lookout, Ont.

Headquarters: Sioux Lookout, Ont.

Operations: Daily scheduled passenger service between Flin Flon, Man.; Kitchener Waterloo, Ont.; Ottawa, Ont.; Winnipeg, Man.; and communities in between

Fleet: 14 Metroliners