

For the Air Transat pilots, contract negotiations are the main focus in 2010 as the pilot group bargains for a new contract. “We hope to see the pilots continue as a unified group and remain in a good position to execute a respectful and productive negotiations process,” says Capt. Sylvain

Aubin, the pilots’ Master Executive Council chairman. The pilots are committed to working through whatever challenges they may encounter with management.

One of these challenges is outsourcing. Air Transat’s parent company, Transat A.T., has in the past outsourced some of the group’s flying. However, in 2009 management significantly increased outsourcing to a level that is unsatisfactory to the pilot group. The pilots are now faced with a situation that could potentially jeopardize pilot seniority positions, which is why the MEC has filed a grievance against this outsourcing.

“We certainly recognize that we are in a competitive market and that our holding company, Transat A.T., needs some operational flexibility, but we are against it when it becomes a threat to our pilots’ careers,” says Aubin. Air Transat operates approximately 13,000 flights per year from gateways across Canada. Outsourcing the group’s

flying is emerging as one of the main issues the MEC will address going into its 2010 negotiations for the pilots’ fourth contract since Air Transat joined ALPA in 1999. “And to add insult to injury, some of this outsourced flying is being flown by foreign pilots, which has been made possible through Labour Canada’s Foreign Worker Program,” adds Aubin.

As Air Transat is largely an international charter operator, the pilot group anticipates many more challenges ahead; Open Skies agreements, carbon taxes, and fleet renewals are among the most pressing. “Since we are in the middle of an international market, we must look forward and be ready to work with our management as partners,” states Aubin, “but this partnership cannot and will not materialize if management continues to outsource our flying.

“Our past experience within the ALPA

family leaves us optimistic that negotiations will move along smoothly because of the resources and support available to our MEC,” he adds.

The collective bargaining agreement that Air Transat’s pilots ratified in February 2006 continues to provide an effective framework for planned improvements in areas the pilots consider to be top priorities, especially the issue of flight crew fatigue.


Using ALPA’s experience and lessons learned as a participant in the recent FAA Aviation Rulemaking Committee, the pilots are working with other Canadian pilot groups to bring about much-needed change to current flight- and duty-time rules that push the limits of on-the-job exhaustion.

Capt. Martin Gauthier, chairman of the ALPA Flight Time/Duty Time Committee for Canada, believes the time is right for Canada to amend its flight- and duty-time regulations. “We have some of the weakest and most liberal rules among the ICAO states and it is time for our government to take its responsibility seriously and establish regulations based upon scientific principles and knowledge,” declares Gauthier.

“We need a level playing field for everybody, and the Canadian aviation regulations need to fix that. We are also committed to entering into discussion with our management to establish a fatigue risk management system on our property in 2010.”

Air Transat specializes in both scheduled and chartered flights from several Canadian cities to global vacation destinations. The airline has a fleet of Airbus A330s and A310s. The pilots transport some 3 million passengers annually to nearly 60 destinations in 25 countries including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the U.K.

Air Transat has added several new routes, including a flight to Bale-Mulhouse on the French-Swiss border and new connections between Montreal and Dublin, Toronto and Nice, Vancouver and Paris, and Calgary and Paris.

In the span of just 2 years, the company has added two A310-300s, bringing the number of widebody jets in its fleet to 18. 

Air Transat

Air Transat Pilots Gear Up for Negotiations and Safer Regulations

By Lynn Konwin, ALPA Senior Communications Specialist



PHOTO BY ADRIAN PINGSTONE

An Air Transat Airbus A310-300 lands at London Heathrow Airport, England.

TSC at a Glance

Pilots Joined ALPA: 1999
Number of Pilots: 312
Headquarters: Pierre E. Trudeau International Airport, Montreal, P.Q.
Pilot Bases: Montreal, P.Q.; Toronto, Ont.; and Vancouver, B.C.
Fleet: 18 A330s and A310s