

Transportation District 140

President's Message

Québec Decision an outright Betrayal of Aveos Workers!

Montréal, QC – Disgusted doesn't begin to describe how I feel about the Government of Québec's decision to drop its litigation against Air Canada for violating the Air Canada Public Participation Act. Twice the courts have ruled against Air Canada on this matter, the most recent decision was in late 2015. The rulings made it clear, Air Canada would have to retain maintenance operational and overhaul centers in Canada – in Montréal, Mississauga and Winnipeg, as outlined in the 1988 Act. The IAM is of the opinion that the Vancouver overhaul maintenance base is protected by the ACPPA by default due to the 1999/2000 airline merger as this base became an Air Canada maintenance overhaul center.

But the government of Québec walked away from the litigation, walked away from its partner in the litigation, the Government of Manitoba, walked away from the largest interest group in the litigation, the 2,600 former IAM members at Aveos who performed that work until their employer went bankrupt.

That decision overshadowed the news that Air Canada agreed to purchase 45 new Bombardier C Series 300 narrow body airliners with options for 30 more. Air Canada also announced it would have its C Series airframe heavy maintenance work performed in Québec by a recognized maintenance provider for a minimum of 20 years following the delivery of the first aircraft in 2019. Air Canada said it would also commit to helping establish a Centre of Excellence for C Series aircraft maintenance in the province. On the surface, this sounds like great news.

But then the other penny dropped! In return, the Québec Government said it would drop the litigation against Air Canada for violating the Act. This government knew how important this legal case was to the former Aveos members. The IAM and the Government of Manitoba were not involved in this decision nor were they consulted. The IAM would never have agreed to this.

Now the federal government is considering changing the Act to eliminate the overhaul maintenance centers and operational provisions at the request of Air Canada so that it can remain competitive. The Federal Transport Minister calls the promise of future heavy maintenance on the C Series in Québec in return for dropping the litigation as a good compromise for Québec! What about the operational and overhaul maintenance on the current fleet of Boeing, Embraer and Airbus aircraft which are still conducted outside of Canada? The first delivery of a C Series 300 won't occur until 2019 and its first heavy overhaul maintenance check won't happen until 2025 at the earliest. That's nine years from now, these workers need work today.

We had Air Canada down for the count and the Québec Government let the airline get back up. The litigation is dead now that Québec has thrown in the towel, but the fight is not over. We have to convince the Federal Government not to change the provisions of the Act, Air Canada must be held accountable and the IAM will continue on with this fight, as it's the right thing to do for the 2,600 former IAM Aveos members that lost their jobs!

Fred Hospes

President & Directing General Chairperson

Transportation District 140, IAMAW