



Air Canada Component of CUPE Briefing Note - August 2025

Approximately 10,000 flight attendants at Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge are currently in negotiations with Air Canada on a new contract, following the expiration of their 10-year agreement. Flight attendants have lost significant purchasing power over the life of this agreement with stagnant wages and skyrocketing inflation. In this round of negotiations, the union is negotiating for fair wages and an end to the abuse of unpaid work by Canada's national airline and largest carrier.

Mandatory unpaid labour

- Flight attendants at Air Canada are required to perform unpaid duties every day before and after flights. This includes critical safety checks, boarding and deplaning procedures, assisting passengers with special needs, and preparing the cabin. Flight attendants are not paid for a significant portion of their time on the job.
- This practice persists because flight attendants' compensation is based on "block time" (takeoff to landing), not from when the employee begins work. Unlike most workers, flight attendants are not paid when they report for duty, even though they are expected to be in uniform, on-site, and performing job-related duties, including critical safety-related duties mandated by Transport Canada.
- Systemic, gendered injustice: the majority of flight attendants in Canada are women. Requiring hours of unpaid labour entrenches gendered wage gaps, and subsidizes the company's profits at the expense of frontline workers.
- Fairness and safety: requiring hours of unpaid labour also leads to high turnover, fatigue, and declining morale in a safety-critical role. Paying flight attendants at their regular rate of pay for all hours worked is not just a matter of fairness – it's a matter of public safety.

Poverty wages

- Since 2000, in Canada...
 - Inflation has increased 169%
 - Average full-time wages have increased 210%
 - Minimum wage has increased 253%

- Wages for entry-level Air Canada flight attendants have only increased by 10% - they earn just \$3 more per hour than they did 25 years ago
- A full-time worker earning federal minimum wage earns approximately \$36,000/year; due to their low hourly rates and the volume of mandatory unpaid work, **a full-time entry-level Air Canada flight attendant earns less than minimum wage – just \$27,000/year before taxes.**
- Air Canada is one of Canada's most profitable companies. They have posted billions in profits in recent years, and executive compensation has surpassed pre-COVID levels. They can afford to pay flight attendants fairly without raising costs to passengers.