

Answers to your questions

A list of questions has been circling among WestJet Frontline Airport Workers over the last few weeks.

This is a very good thing! The flyer asks some excellent questions.

Unifor has brought in added staff this week, in fact, to help answer these questions – because as you consider whether to form a union, these are exactly the kind of things you need to know.

Below are some of our answers, but please also come and talk to us. We can help with any questions you might have.

Why should I sign a union card?

There are so many answers to this question, but it comes down to one main thing – having a voice in your workplace. WestJet has shown its willingness in recent weeks to arbitrarily change basic conditions of your work experience, and only consulting with you – such as on the seniority scheduling question – when it sees fit, for whatever reason.

Your working conditions need not to be left open to such randomness. Signing a union card is the first step to gaining a voice in the workplace so that the company must consult with workers before making any change.

To get that voice, you need a union. To get that union, you need to sign a membership card. Keep reading, the reasons to sign a union card keep adding up.

How many members do we have and how many cards need to be signed in order to have the union come in without a vote?

This is an excellent question. Legally, there are no members of Unifor at WestJet until a union is certified by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB). Because airlines are federally regulated, labour relations and unionization are governed by federal law. That means that once more than half of the workers have signed a card and paid the \$5 fee required by the

board, Unifor applies to the CIRB for a certification. As long as the cards check out and the board decides more than half the workers have signed a card, the union is certified. There is no further voting, because the CIRB considers your signature on a card and your willingness to pay the legally required \$5 as evidence that you want to join the union.

How many cards have been signed? Which bases? Which base has the most cards signed? Is it a one-time cost or do you have to pay every year until the union comes in and then you pay the dues? How much are the dues?

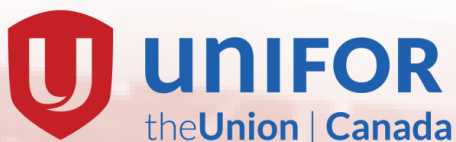
Lots of questions here. Unifor is actively signing cards at every WestJet location. For strategic reasons, we do not disclose how many cards have been signed so far, but can say that we are happy with the responses we have been getting. The \$5 fee required by the CIRB needs to be paid within 6 months of the union filing for certification to demonstrate to the board that you continue to support joining Unifor. Once the CIRB has certified Unifor as your union, you do not pay any additional fees, and dues do not begin until 30 days after you have ratified your first collective agreement. Dues are set by Unifor's national constitution at 1.35% of your gross monthly income, and cannot be changed without a vote of the membership. Your dues are 100 per cent tax deductible.

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If the union comes how long will it take to come up with a collective agreement? Does it get voted on by members and/or how does it get ratified?

Unifor will begin preparing for contract talks as soon as the union is certified by the CIRB. How long it takes to negotiate a first contract will depend on how quickly progress can be made in talks with the company. With flight attendants, pilots and dispatchers having already begun negotiations, we know that WestJet has gained experience in contract talks, so there is no reason for talks to drag on. Once a deal is reached, it will be put to a vote of the membership. No contract can go into force until it is ratified by the members by a confidential and democratic vote.

What if I sign a union card and then retire? Do you remain a member if you retire? What kind of benefits would be available to retirees?

Unifor has a very active retiree council, with retiree chapters at locals across the country. We have an annual retirees conference every year in Port Elgin, Ontario, over the Labour Day weekend. Each local has the option to set up a retiree chapter, and to send delegates to the conference. Benefits for retirees are determined in collective bargaining for your workplace, and ratified by the members along with the rest of the contract.

Are we officially represented by the union if it does come in and what happens if we have a concern? Do we go through union reps? What does it look like?

More great questions. Yes, once Unifor is certified by the CIRB, you are officially represented by the union. If you have a concern with your workplace or a specific manager, you can approach any of your elected local leaders or shop stewards. They can walk you through your options and help resolve your concerns. Unifor has a leading education program, and provides all the training your local leaders need to handle your concerns, and provides the support through staff reps and national departments specializing in such issues at pensions, benefits, human rights, health and safety, women's rights and more.

Does the union have any political affiliation? Do they have any organizational affiliations? What do our dues pay for?

Unifor does not have any political affiliations, and we do not require any members or staff to belong to any political party – or restrict them from doing so. It probably comes as no surprise that some of our members are NDP supporters, but we also have members who support the Liberals and the Conservatives. In past elections, Unifor has encouraged “strategic voting” in which voters support whatever party in their riding best represents the interests

of workers and has the best chance of beating a politician who does not. Organizationally, Unifor is a member of several international union federations. Many of the employers where we have members are international, so we work internationally, as well. A portion of your dues stay with the local to support your needs in the workplace. The rest is used to support the departments and staff.

What are the benefits for us having a union?

That's a big question! The big advantage is having a voice in the workplace. All other benefits stem from this. With a union, the company cannot arbitrarily change your working conditions – it must work with the union on such things. Your collective agreement, in fact, sets out the rules for your workplace on such issues as scheduling, hours of work, compensation, benefits, harassment protections and more. And if there is ever a dispute over how those rules are being followed, or not followed, there is a grievance procedure to settle the question. Your local and national Unifor representatives will represent your interests throughout such proceedings – you are not alone!

What do you envision the union doing for employees especially since all the bases are different and have different needs? The seniority vote did not pass so how likely is it that we will have enough to get a union?

Unifor is a member-driven union, which means the needs and desires of the members determine what is in a collective agreement. Collective bargaining will be driven by what the members envision. Unifor has the bargaining experience and expertise to help your elected bargaining team achieve those goals. We also have extensive experience negotiating national collective agreements that also address the local concerns of specific work bases – including at Air Canada, CN Rail, phone companies and more. Unifor also has experience conducting large membership votes. Your bargaining team will approach contract talks with your desires firmly in mind and will hold membership meetings to answer any questions you might have before you are asked to vote on a new contract. In short, the entire process is based on presenting you with a contract that you want to support. We are confident we can get there.

Have I got anything to lose by signing a union card?

No, you do not! You have everything to gain, in fact. Union members in Canada make up roughly 31% of the workforce and make on average \$5.17 more per hour than non-union workers. Women union members will make on average \$6.89 more and young members (15-24) make on average \$3.16 more. The union advantage is directly connected to a union's ability to negotiate a collective agreement on behalf of their members. This agreement will cover wages, hours of work, health benefits and many other provisions which positively affect the member and their communities. By having all workers in a workplace in the same bargaining unit, workers have a stronger voice to set out terms and conditions of working there.