

Important settlement in Winnipeg

The issue of the right of WestJet workers to discuss forming a union and receive information about unionization was recently raised by Unifor in an unfair labour practices complaint brought before the Canada Industrial Relations Board against the Winnipeg Airport Authority and WestJet.

Unifor reached a settlement with WAA that sets out protocols for discussing unionization and distributing information to WestJet employees. No settlement was reached with WestJet.

A Unifor organizer was accused by the WAA of trespassing because they were handing out organizing materials to WestJet frontline airport workers and talking to them on their own time (before and after work, and on breaks) about the benefits of joining Unifor. As part of the settlement, the trespass notice was withdrawn by the WAA.

WestJet, however, refused to settle and continues to claim it has not told WestJet workers they cannot talk to Unifor or discuss forming a union. In fact, the company's own affidavits recognize your rights.

In his sworn statement, for example, WestJet Regional Manager for Western Canada Arvin Nagules said, "I have never told a WestJet employee that they were not allowed to accept union literature while on the Airport premises or that they would be reprimanded if they did so. I am not aware of any other WestJet manager telling a WestJet employee anything of that nature either. I would not approve of such a statement being made to any WestJet employee as it would not be accurate."

This statement attesting to your rights to discuss joining a union on your own time and at the airport, which Unifor has asserted all long, is in itself a victory for all WestJet workers.

The settlement with the airport, reached after Unifor met with the airport authority and the labour board, was a significant victory for WestJet workers because it sets out protocols for discussing joining a union on your own time. Under the settlement:

- Unifor organizers are allowed in the airport to hand out leaflets in agreed-upon areas.
- Organizers can walk around the rest of the airport, but not leaflet or approach WestJet workers outside agreed-upon areas.
- Organizers must wear a Unifor shirt when in the airport. That's okay, we love our Unifor shirts!
- Organizers can set up a table in the airport, and put a Unifor flag on it. Any coffee or snacks handed out must be purchased from airport vendors. We are happy about this one, too. We are always glad to support local businesses.

This settlement was reached with the Winnipeg Airport Authority after a respectful meeting in Winnipeg, in which both groups came to a better understanding of the concerns of the other. It was, in fact, the kind of thing Unifor does on a daily basis to meet the needs of our members.

Unifor will continue to stand up for your rights as WestJet workers. Please let us know if any manager tries to restrict your rights to discuss forming a union. If you have any questions, please contact your local organizer:

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