

Pilots of Canada's biggest airliner stage protests over pay

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Toronto, October 1 (RHC)-- Pilots of Canada's biggest airliner have staged a protest in the city of Toronto to demand better pay and benefits as talks over a new contract continues. North American airlines have been grappling with challenges in recruiting enough trained pilots and crew members in the aftermath of the COVID-19 fallout.

Air Canada's pilots have received a 2% wage increase per year since 2014, but the country's inflation rate was running at 4.3% in March.

The pilots for the Montreal-based carrier, represented by the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) union which covers 4,500 pilots, began bargaining for new labor terms this summer.

On Friday, they staged a silent picket at Terminal 1 of the Toronto airport to draw attention to their concerns and to put pressure on the airline to make a fair deal.

Charlene Hudy, who heads its Air Canada contingent, said some co-workers leaving for better pay in the United States, calling the wage gap across the border "unacceptable."

In late May, the union invoked a clause to end its 10-year collective agreement a year early and launch negotiations for a new one. It served up a bargaining notice to company management two weeks later, the first step toward hashing out a new deal.

The Air Canada talks also play out as airlines face intense domestic and cross-border competition from ultra-low-cost carriers such as Flair Airlines and Lynx Air and as labor shortages continue to plague the sector.

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