Beat: Travel

Westjet Will Be In A Legal Postion To Strike

On Sunday August 2nd

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USPA NEWS - Canadian airports are bracing for major disruptions this weekend. Over 4,400 WestJet flight attendants are poised to go on strike as early as Sunday if a new contract is not finalized. The union points to unpaid work, particularly time spent on the ground before flights, as a key sticking point in the ongoing negotiations.

WestJet and the union representing some 4,400 flight attendants have agreed to an "operational wind-down" plan should a strike go ahead as soon as this Sunday.

On Tuesday a document was leaked that outlines procedures for grounding planes and repatriating cabin crew in the event of a work stoppage. Cabin crew working a flight when any job action commences would complete the trip to its destination. Those who cannot immediately return to their home city would receive hotel accommodation for up to a week or a plane ride back to another Canadian city, "subject to seat availability."

WestJet advises that passengers with flights scheduled between July, 30th and August, 4th can make a one-time change or cancel without incurring a fee. Travellers booked on WestJet Encore or code-share flights operated by partner airlines such as Delta Air Lines will not be impacted by a strike, according to the carrier.

The issue of compensation for work performed on the ground continues to be a significant challenge in the negotiations, less than a year after it sparked a work stoppage by 10,000 flight attendants at Air Canada. "For us, the main issue right now is unpaid work and how our wage is triggered, along with our actual wage rate," the union spokesperson explained.

John Gradek, an aviation management expert at McGill University, noted that WestJet is unable to afford a complete shutdown during its peak summer travel season. The airline operates over 600 flights daily, serving a substantial number of passengers, and more than 70,000 on certain days, as reported by the company.

According to Air Passenger Rights Act, president Gabor Lukacs, customers whose flights are cancelled prior to or during the potential strike have the right to rebook at no additional cost on any airline, not limited to WestJet. Furthermore, for flight cancellations preceding a job action, the airline is obligated to provide customers with up to $1,000 in cash as compensation for the inconvenience. Alternatively, for cancellations occurring during a strike, refunds are available as an option to rebooking.

To ensure a smooth travel experience, WestJet passengers flying in the next few days are advised to check their flight status before arriving at the airport.

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