

Primera airline scales down Canada plans amid engine shortage

GREG KEENAN > AUTO AND STEEL AND AIRLINE INDUSTRY REPORTER

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A budget European airline has scrapped plans to expand its flights between Canada and Britain this summer amid delays in new airplane deliveries caused by troubles at aircraft engine makers.

Primera Air has suspended scheduled flights between Birmingham, England and Toronto because Airbus SE has not delivered A321neo planes that the Sweden-based company was expecting to be delivered in time for the service. The flights between Birmingham and Toronto were scheduled to begin June 21.

The move follows that of low-cost carrier Norwegian Air SAS, which applied for a licence to fly to Canada from Europe this summer but has experienced delays in receiving Boeing Co. planes. Norwegian Air has put off its plans to begin service to Canada.

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About 5,000 people are affected by the cancellation of the Primera flights. They have been offered a refund or the option of flying out of London's Stansted airport because Primera's existing A321 fleet is operating between that airport and Toronto as well as Paris-Toronto.

"We did not anticipate such severe Airbus delays and the prolonged hold-up has forced us to make this difficult and disappointing decision," Andri Mar Ingolfsson, chief executive officer of Primera Air, said in a statement.

The airplane maker was scheduled to deliver six Airbus A321s to Primera this year.

Long-haul operations out of Birmingham to Toronto and New York will take place in 2019 when the Airbus planes have arrived, Primera said.

Engines are not being delivered fast enough for Airbus production, said industry analyst Addison Schonland, a partner in consulting firm AirInsight.

The delays affect both the Pratt & Whitney geared turbofan engine and the Leap engines supplied by CFM, a joint venture between General Electric Co. and Safran Aircraft Engines of France.

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