

■ Wage dispute at CAL...

## Pilots urge PM to intervene

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THE Trinidad and Tobago Airline Pilots Association (TTALPA) says it is prepared to refer the wage dispute with Caribbean Airlines to the Industrial Court if ongoing conciliation efforts do not come to fruition within the stipulated 14-day timeframe.

During a news conference yesterday, Industrial Relations consultant Timothy Bailey said the CAL board and management have failed to implement the approved salary payments for the pilots.

'Unfortunately, even though a collective agreement would have been signed on December 11, 2024 between the parties, the payment between 2015 to 2023 period has not been satisfied; only a percentage of the payment has been given to the pilots to date,' he said.

Bailey said that for the subsequent period, 'even though the pilot body, being its usual self, being proactive, would have given to the company a no-change proposal and accepted the 4% proposal as approved by the Minister of Finance, the company today has failed to meet with the union, to counter-propose, and as a result of that the union was left with no option but to refer the matter to the honourable Minister of Labour for conciliation.'

According to Bailey, their team attended a conciliation meeting on Monday.

However, he said CAL was unable to present a position, offer a counter-proposal, or fully engage in the negotiations for the 2020 to 2023 period. 'The board has a responsibility to expeditiously and urgently deal with the matter as it relates to matters affecting the pilots, because these pilots are considered essential workers, they are barred from taking industrial action,' he said.

He said there is a stipulated 14-day timeframe to complete the conciliation. However, following a meeting yesterday, TTALPA decided it would not continue beyond the 14-day period.

'We are asking for an unresolved certificate for the matter to be referred to the Industrial Court,' he said, adding: '-although we are open at any time, even during the Carnival, to participate in conversation with the company to settle these negotiations.'

TTALPA is also calling on Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley to intervene in the ongoing dispute between its members and the airline's board.

Bailey said that last October, Minister of Finance Colm Imbert approved a 4% salary increase for the period 2015 to 2020, 'and then he also approved a subsequent 4% increase for the period 2020 to 2023.'

Bailey said while CAL is involved in Carnival activities, and the pilots embrace the company's marketing strategies and the Carnival culture, they are demanding that CAL urgently address the collective agreement.

'While we know you want to 'pardy,' our pilots want their money. We are saying: organise the pilots' salaries, sign off on the collective agreement, focus on the airline's core functions, and let us collectively ensure that Caribbean Airlines is a success. Against this background, we are calling on the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago (because the Minister of Finance has already done his job) to intervene in whatever capacity necessary and instruct the board and management of Caribbean Airlines to prioritise the negotiations with the pilots. This will ensure that our pilots are not stressed, that they are 100% focused on a job that is extremely important, and that we can move this airline forward in the manner it deserves,' he said.

Recently, the pilots erected a billboard that read: 'Welcome Home? Please settle 4% negotiations 2020 to 2023 with TTALPA pilots.' This message came as frustrated pilots continued to clamour for the 4% salary settlement promised by Finance Minister Colm Imbert last year.