

## US\$12m operating profit for CAL

Caribbean Airlines has recorded an operating profit for 2024 of US\$12.1 million, excluding debt service, Finance Minister Colm Imbert said yesterday.

Speaking at the airline's Welcome Home to Love and Loyalty celebration event at Queen's Hall, Port of Spain, he said: 'In 2023, we witnessed a remarkable turnaround in the performance of Caribbean Airlines, moving from an operating loss of US\$36.7 million in 2022 to an operating profit of US\$24.7 million, excluding debt service.

'In 2024 the operating profit fell to US\$12.1 million, excluding debt service. This was due to the following factors-increase in maintenance costs, handling costs and security flight operations.'

However, Imbert pointed out that total revenue at the airline grew from US\$306.4 million in 2022 to US\$430.9 million in 2023, an increase of 41%.

'For 2024, the airline recorded revenue of US\$444.6 million, an increase of 5.2%. This was despite a decline of US\$15 per passenger on the international routes due to competition. This achievement underscores the resilience and dedication of the entire Caribbean Airlines team.'

Central to this success is the airline's approved strategic plan, which is guiding its actions through to 2027, Imbert stated.

'A key pillar of the plan is growth, which Caribbean Airlines continues to pursue with vigour and focus. In alignment with this strategy, the airline has been exploring strategic collaborations, such as discussions with Saudi Arabia's Air Connectivity Programme, aiming to enhance its network and reflecting its dedication to connectivity between Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean, and the global community.'

### **Airbridge, Covid support**

As the majority shareholder, the Government has supported the airline, Imbert said. 'This support touches every traveller on the domestic airbridge. Currently, each adult passenger travelling on the domestic airbridge pays \$400 per return ticket, and \$300 for a return ticket for each child. Without Government subsidisation, each passenger, whether an adult or child, would be required to pay approximately \$870 for return airfare, give or take market fuel prices and other charges.

'Maintaining affordability on the domestic airbridge is such a key transportation policy position of this Government that in 2019 a policy decision was taken to increase the ticket subsidy by \$105 per adult airfare and \$155 per child each way. In total, this subsidisation ranged between \$40 million and \$73 million per year, over the period July 2015 and July 2024, normalising for the much-needed Government interventions over the Covid-19 epidemic,' he recalled. 'In that challenging Covid-19 period, Government assisted CAL with its obligations to its lessors amounting to approximately \$285 million, as well as with payments to National Petroleum Marketing Ltd for fuel,' he added.