

CAL pilots express frustration on billboard near airport



The TTALPA billboard erected on BWIA Boulevard near Piarco International Airport.

PHOTO BY KEJAN HAYNES

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Tensions between the T&T Airline Pilots' Association (TTALPA) and Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL) have escalated, with the union making a bold public statement with a billboard erected on BWIA Boulevard, near Piarco International Airport.

TTALPA said the billboard, which was erected on Wednesday, reflects the pilots' growing frustration over unresolved salary issues and delayed collective bargaining negotiations. The union's industrial relations consultant, Timothy Bailey said it is an "innovative" and "creative" way of expressing the pilots' dissatisfaction with the handling of their concerns.

"Pilots are categorised as essential workers, which limits their ability to take certain industrial actions. This billboard is a means of raising public awareness about our situation," he explained.

The dispute stems from salary increases approved by Minister of Finance Colm Imbert on October 30. The approved increases included four per cent for the period 2015-2020 and an additional four per cent for 2020-2023. However, although a collective agreement was signed for 2015- 2020 on December 11, CAL has not completed the full payment of arrears owed to pilots. In addition, no progress has been made on the 2020-2023 period, despite TALPA's submission of a "no change" proposal aligning with the approved four per cent increase.

"The company has not prioritised addressing the second period, leaving pilots and the union with

no choice but to refer the matter to the Ministry of Labour,” Bailey said.

He added that the Finance Ministry has not yet responded with conciliation dates to facilitate discussions between TALPA and CAL.

“We are appealing to both Caribbean Airlines management and the Ministry of Labour to treat this matter with the urgency it deserves. Pilots’ duties are essential, but so too is the need for fair treatment and timely resolution of their industrial issues,” Bailey said.

Contacted for comment, CAL’s head of corporate communications Dionne Ligoure said negotiations between the airline and union are ongoing and the company continues to operate in good faith.