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Rex fury erupts again

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Fury and disbelief has followed the announcement by Regional Express (Rex) that it will not be resuming the service between the Snowy Mountains and Sydney.

A company announcement stated that the airline would withdraw from the route indefinitely and put the blame on pilot shortages saying that it had lost over 50 per cent of its pilots in the last financial year.

A renewed licence between Rex and the State Government, for the route, had only been signed in March but Warwick Lodge, Sales and Network Strategy General Manager at Rex said that applications had to be submitted by December. Mr Lodge said that the airline had been hoping to see a lessening of recruitment by the major carriers over the winter but at a network review last Friday and Saturday the company decided it didn't have enough pilots for the route.

Reaction to the announcement was swift and angry.

Snowy River Shire Mayor, Richard Wallace said: "I am totally disappointed. We have third world transport facilities here."

Cr Wallace hinted that he believed there was another agenda behind the withdrawal of service and said that both parties (Rex and the Snowy Mountains airport) should come out publicly and say what's going on.

But Mr Lodge denied there was any motive other than the lack of pilots.

In the meantime, Member for Monaro, Steve Whan, who yesterday was introducing the Expanded Cloud Seeding Bill into Parliament, is hoping that an alternative carrier can be found.

"I have asked Ministers to see whether Rex is in breach of its licence conditions and whether there are any other airlines to fly this route."

Mr Whan added: "I'm very disappointed and quite annoyed; the Government signed an agreement with Rex in good faith. I find it very odd that they wouldn't have known about this situation then."

Mr Lodge told the Summit Sun that he hoped an alternative carrier could be found.

However when submissions for the licence were requested, Rex was the only carrier that applied.