



PR#389

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal**

*Belmopan. July 30, 2021. 8:00 p.m.*

On July 13, 2021, the Christian Workers Union (CWU) wrote to the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government pursuant to section 15 of the Settlement of Disputes in Essential Services Act, Chapter 298 Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 invoking 21 days' notice by its members who work at the Port of Belize Limited (PBL) to take industrial action against the PBL. Below is an extract of the letter:

“Despite various attempts, including with the involvement of your Ministry, a number of outstanding matters between CWU and PBL remain unresolved. Included in these matters are the redundancy package for Stevedores with the move of bulk sugar exports from the Belize City Harbour to the Port of Big Creek, filling of the Container Gangs and a date to resume stalled negotiations for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement for PBL staff.”

On July 14, 2021, the Labour Department responded to the CWU's letter and advised that in accordance with Section 12 of the aforementioned Act, the matter will be referred to the Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal for determination before the expiration of 21 days. By July 15, 2021, the Labour Department had again initiated contact with both sides in order to assist with and facilitate transparent dialogue and collaborative actions to resolve the matter. On July 21, 2021, there was a constructive and productive meeting, which positively reset the relationship with a firm commitment from both sides to negotiate in order to achieve specific deliverables for the mutual benefit of all within a reasonable timeframe.

The CWU and the PBL can confirm that the Labour Department has been providing guidance and facilitating the process for a successful and mutually beneficial outcome. Hon. Oscar Requena, Minister of Rural Transformation,

Community Development, Labour and Local Government, personally met with both sides at their offices in June and again on July 21, 2021.

At this juncture, the Labour Department wishes to congratulate the Christian Workers Union and the Port of Belize Limited for resuming discussions and negotiation talks on July 28, 2021. These interactions will continue to be held in the spirit of respect, goodwill, reciprocity, and transparency until the matters are concluded earnestly and swiftly. In this regard, the Labour Department will continue to engage and remain impartial in seeking a resolution of the dispute between the parties. It is in interest of the CWU, the PBL, and the country as a whole to have these matters resolved promptly.

Members of the Tribunal:

- Mr. William Lindo - Chair, nominated by the Minister
- Mr. Fermin Olivera - nominated by the Minister
- Mr. Wilfredo Galvez - nominated by the Minister
- Mr. Marcello Blake - nominated by the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Mr. Patrick Balan - nominated by the National Trade Union Congress of Belize

**Ends**