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PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General to File Request for Injunction to Stall Implementation of Redundancy at Port of Belize Limited

Belmopan. July 21, 2020. 6:15 p.m.

The Attorney General, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, is seeking to file a request to the Supreme Court on Wednesday, July 22nd, 2020, for an injunction to restrain the Port of Belize Limited (PBL) from implementing terminations of employees, majority of whom are members of the Christian Workers Union (CWU), also scheduled for July 22nd, 2020.

The PBL and CWU are in a labour dispute in relation to the implementation of a 10% salary reduction by the PBL. This has been sent to the Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal for its consideration beginning tomorrow.

In a separate matter, in an email dated Sunday, July 12th, 2020, the PBL informed the Labour Department and the CWU of the company's impending redundancies and requested a tri-partite meeting of the CWU, PBL and the Ministry of Labour to discuss the matter. On that same day, the Labour Commissioner responded to PBL advising that the company should follow the redundancy process outlined in the Collective Agreement, and in the absence of such a process in the Agreement, there should be strict compliance with the requirements outlined in the Labour Act, Chapter 297, Revised Edition 2011.

Subsequently, on July 15th, 2020, the PBL wrote advising that the redundancies would take effect on July 22nd, 2020 and provided a list of 36 workers that the company planned to make redundant. Once again, the Labour Department advised the PBL of the need to comply with the requirements of the Labour Act. In particular, the company's attention has repeatedly been brought to Section 45 (3) of the Act, which outlines the requirements, processes and protocols that must be followed. Even though any employer has the prerogative to make a redundancy decision, a key requirement is that of due process under the law. The role of the Labour Department in the implementation of redundancies is to ensure that the law is followed and that workers receive due notice.

The Labour Department continues to request the PBL's compliance with the provisions of the Labour Act.

Ends