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PRESS RELEASE

Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal to Convene on Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Belmopan. July 21, 2020. 10:45 a.m.

On July 7th, 2020, the Christian Workers Union (CWU) wrote to the Ministry of Labour, pursuant to Section 15 of the Settlement of Disputes in Essential Services Act, Chapter 298 of the Laws of Belize revised edition 2011, invoking 21 days' notice by its members who work in the Security Department at the Port of Belize Limited (PBL) to take industrial action against the PBL. The letter intimated that this is due to unsuccessful efforts by the CWU to get the PBL to rescind a 10% salary reduction as well as address alleged breaches of the 2002 Collective Agreement between the Union and PBL.

On July 8th, 2020, the Minister responded to the Union'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. On July 10th, the Minister wrote the National Trade Union Congress (NTUCB) and the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry inviting the nomination of their members on the Tribunal.

The NTUCB has not yet submitted a name to the Ministry; however, given the urgency of the situation, the Ministry has moved to establish the Tribunal and all other members have been appointed. As soon as the representative of the NTUCB is provided, the nominee will be appointed.

The Tribunal is expected to convene tomorrow, Wednesday, July 22nd, 2020.

The Labour Department has been making efforts to bring both parties, the CWU and the PBL, to the table to speak and collaborate with each other to resolve the matter. Both parties can confirm that on numerous occasions, the Labour Department has provided guidance and facilitated the process for a successful and mutually beneficial outcome. The Labour Department will continue to do so and will remain impartial and unbiased in executing its functions in a confidential and respectful manner.

It is in the interest of the CWU, the PBL and the country as a whole to have these matters resolved.

Ends