



THE PUBLIC SERVICES ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



NOTICE TO ALL PSA MEMBERS

UPDATE ON SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

Public Officers have not received wage increases since 2013, and we understand that this has caused frustration and anxiety among our members, many of whom, are now in a position of financial desperation. Despite our continuous agitation and unrelenting persistence for an earlier settlement in years prior, negotiations only resumed in April 2022 at the behest of the Minister of Finance.

The Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) only held two (2) meetings with the Association for collective bargaining periods now ten (10) years past due and placed an unreasonable offer of 4% over six (6) years, which we rejected. Thereafter, the CPO hurriedly and prematurely reported the breakdown in negotiations to the Minister of Finance on 12th October 2022. The Minister of Finance then, without delay, reported the matter to the Special Tribunal on 17th October, 2022.

The dispute came up for hearing before the Special Tribunal this week on 14th and 16th March, 2023, while the hearing scheduled for 17th March, 2023 was vacated. The Association is scheduled to appear before the court again on 14th and 20th April, 2023. The Association is being represented by experienced Senior Counsel Douglas Mendes and Anthony Bullock of Chancery Chambers.

At this week's hearings, the Association submitted a preliminary objection that the matter as reported by the Minister of Finance was improperly before the Special Tribunal. It was argued that the Special Tribunal does not have jurisdiction to arbitrate on disputes regarding the Statutory Authorities, which should be adjudicated upon by the Industrial Court. The Special Tribunal and the Industrial Court are two separate legal entities pursuant to the Industrial Relations Act Chapter 88:01.

We raised a formal objection to the Special Tribunal's assumption of jurisdiction in this dispute, and issued a pre-action protocol letter to the Minister of Finance asking him to withdraw his referral to the Special Tribunal dated 17th October, 2022. The CPO's attorney, Seenath Jairam SC concurred that the Special Tribunal did not have jurisdiction with regards to the Statutory Authorities and asked that they be severed from the matter before the Tribunal. The Special Tribunal panel rendered a judgment upholding our objection and ordered that the Statutory Authorities be severed from the dispute.

Notwithstanding, the Special Tribunal upholding of our objection, and the consequential severing of the Statutory Authorities from under its jurisdiction, our attorneys are still in the process of reviewing whether or not the Special Tribunal's remedy of simply severing is suitable, sufficient and lawful, in the circumstances.

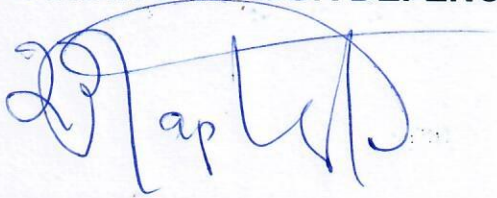
At the next scheduled hearing on 14th April 2023, the Association's expert witness Economist, Professor Dr. Roger Hosein, is expected to give testimony, in support of the Association's proposals, on behalf of public officers.

Additionally, we have also taken immediate steps, to refer the breakdown of negotiations for the Statutory Authorities to the Minister of Labour, and failing, a resolution at conciliation, the matter will be reported to the Industrial Court, which is the appropriate jurisdiction to hear this dispute.

We understand that our members are eager for regular updates, and we want to assure you, that we will provide them as frequently as possible. However, due to the sensitive nature of these disputes and the legal proceedings involved, we must exercise caution, in our communications strategy. We apologize for any inconvenience caused by this but rest assured that we will keep you informed of any material developments, as they arise.

We remain committed to advocating for a fair and just outcome to these negotiations, on behalf of our members, and we appreciate your continued support and patience.

STANDING IN YOUR DEFENCE:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leroy Baptiste', written over a horizontal line.

**LEROY BAPTISTE
PRESIDENT**

17th March 2023