



## BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

---

# 4792 Coney Drive, 2nd Floor Withfield Tower, P.O. Box 291 , Belize City, Belize, Central America

Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

### **BCCI Clarifies Statements Made by DOE**

#### **- For Immediate Release-**

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (“BCCI”) issues this release to address statements made by the Department of the Environment (“DOE”) in its Press Release issued on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 in relation to the Port of Belize Expansion Project.

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 the National Environmental Appraisal Committee (“NEAC”) held a meeting to consider and vote in respect of the Port of Belize Expansion Project. The BCCI’s representative on NEAC was not able to attend the meeting due to urgent and extenuating circumstances. However, after consulting with an officer of the DOE who was in attendance at the NEAC meeting, the BCCI was informed that it could submit its vote by email and proceeded to do so. As such, when 2 media houses reported that the NEAC vote was unanimous, the BCCI issued a clarification statement to the news directors for those 2 media houses, informing them that the vote was not unanimous since the BCCI had voted in favor of the expansion project.

The BCCI was therefore greatly surprised when, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 the DOE issued a Press Release in which it stated that the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations do not permit members of NEAC to vote without attending the meeting, and so it was incorrect for the BCCI to state that it voted as part of its membership of NEAC. This statement by the DOE did not take account of BCCI’s consultation with DOE prior to emailing its vote, nor of the fact that the EIA Regulations do not mandate attendance or voting at meetings to be in person. Regrettably, the BCCI’s vote was not tabled at the meeting, a matter which the BCCI has recently discovered.

In view of the above, the BCCI takes issue with the insinuation in the DOE’s Press Release of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022 that the BCCI acted contrary to law, had misinformed the public, or that it acted contrary to good decision-making practices of a responsible committee member in exercising its vote without taking into account the scientific and technical reports shared at the meeting.

The BCCI's mandate requires it to be pro-development and pro-investment, save if the development/investment would harm the country or the economy. The BCCI therefore maintains that it voted in accordance with its mandate.

- End -

**Media Contact:**

Kory Leslie (Mr.)

Manager, Marketing & Public Relations

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Email: [mpo@belize.org](mailto:mpo@belize.org)

Telephone Number: (501) 223-5330