



# BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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

Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## **BCCI DEMANDS STRICTER PROCUREMENT**

### **PRACTICES BY GOB**

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

The BCCI, once again, calls on the Government of Belize to adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance. The guidelines of its own *Public Procurement Procedures Handbook* (2013) are intended to steer any government away from transactions for goods and services which could be deemed as encouraging nepotism, preferential treatment, amongst other corrupt practices.

*Section 1* of the Government's Handbook establishes its purpose: to "provide guidance to public officials responsible for procurement... in their everyday business relating to public procurement. The Handbook is intended to guide the practice of public procurement, ***ensuring compliance with the current legislation of Belize and application of procurement international best practices.***" These international best practices urge adherence to fundamental principles of *Value for Money*, *Fairness and Equal Treatment*, *Transparency*, and *Integrity and Ethical Behavior*.

The Government continues to operate within the grey areas on matters of *conflict of interest* in matters of procurement, and its failure to satisfy the principles of *Fairness and Equal Treatment* and *Transparency* leaves the public no certainty that their public service has gotten them 'the best bang for their tax bucks.'

The BCCI notes that there have been instances when just before an election, the government of the day awards -without any attempt at transparency- employment and real estate rental contracts that extend far beyond their term in office. This unduly burdens an incoming government and

saddles taxpayers with costs which outweigh the value of the good or service as well as contractual agreements with penalties for early termination. Such contracts are typically entered into with no tendering process even though Section 6.5 of the *Handbook* advises that there should be “**Advertising Opportunities**” that have wide circulation either via newspapers or the government’s procurement websites, and that **awarded contracts ought to be made public**.

The BCCI calls on the Government to be reasonable and refrain from entering into any further longstanding contracts without a transparent tendering process. The BCCI and other responsible citizens have long called for robust resourcing of, and increased respect for, ‘watchdog’ offices such as the Auditor General, the Contractor General, the Public Accounts Committee and the Integrity Commission. Belizean taxpayers are weary, overburdened and faced with an accelerating economic crisis which dictates that irresponsible behavior with public funds will no longer be tolerated.

**- End -**

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