



BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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

Thursday, May 14th, 2020

PSU-GOB DELIBERATIONS

- For Immediate Release-

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry reminds the public, as we watch the debate between the Government of Belize (GoB) and both the Public Service Union (PSU) and Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU), that according to the latest budget it costs **\$92,360,747.17** per month in recurrent expenditure, majority of which is personal emoluments, pensions and other benefits to the public service.. That is approximately 50% of the annual recurrent budget, and on average this breaks down to **\$250.00** each month per Belizean man, woman and child.

In an economic scenario where COVID-19 has shut down the largest part of our economy for the next several months, where as a country we have effectively lost millions of revenue in cattle exports, where the tax burden is falling almost completely on a grievously wounded private sector, such that the government is projecting revenue collection for the last month at perhaps **\$30 million dollars**, this debate is totally unacceptable. Similarly, it is unacceptable that in the present pandemic this ongoing uncertainty should lead to additional debt to meet GoB's recurrent costs.

As the taxpaying public, as investors in our economy, we the private sector and our employees expect that government and the public sector would unite with energy to discover answers for slashing its costs of operation to the barest minimum, as the private sector has been forced to do to survive. Many suggestions have been given before by many social partners including the BCCI, and none -or very few- taken.

To now witness a debate about pay increases, to see public sector workers' refusal to relinquish their increment (or any other form of compensation) at a time when thousands are losing their jobs completely; when businesses are having to close their doors, suggests that too many involved in this debate are out of touch with the current reality we are universally facing.

The Chamber strongly suggests that both sides of this debate immediately reorient their approach and come together to discuss making government less costly so that each member of the population -including the unemployed- doesn't have to carry the additional burden of paying \$250 each month to maintain a government that is far too costly for our population's size, unemployment and poverty rates.

- End -

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