



MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

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REVISED PRESS RELEASE

November 8, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Labour Minister urges Public Officers against “Rest and Reflection”

The Honourable Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development is strongly urging Public Officers against participating in the planned action of “rest and reflection” on Thursday November 9th and Friday November 10th, 2017 called by the President of the Public Service Association as there is no justifiable ground for such ill-advised action.

Public Officers attached to the Inland Revenue Division and Customs and Excise Division must be aware that the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Senator the Honourable Allyson West and Team met with the President of the Public Services Association (PSA) on 19th July, 2017. It is my understanding that the clear assurance was conveyed to Watson Duke that Public Officers, Contract Officers and Daily Paid Workers of both Divisions will be given the Option to either transfer to the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority (TTRA) on terms and conditions no less favourable than they are currently entitled or to remain in the Public Service and be redeployed.

In addition, the Minister of Labour is further informed that Minister Allyson West, subsequently met with the Officers from the Customs and Excise Division Staff and also the Board of Inland Revenue and gave the assurance that Public Officers will have the option to transfer to the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority (TTRA).

As a consequent of such assurances there is **ABSOLUTELY NO ISSUE OF PUBLIC OFFICERS’ JOB SECURITY** being at risk as stated by the PSA President. Under the circumstances, the Minister of Labour is advising Public Officers to pay careful attention and adhere to the advice issued by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance regarding the provisions of the Civil Service Act Chapter 23:01 and the Civil Service Regulations Chapter IX

Part I, in particular Regulation 81. Therefore Public Officers are reminded of their responsibility to report for duty on Thursday 9th and Friday 10th November, 2017.

Minister of Labour is also advising Public Officers to refer to the recent Judgement by the Honourable Madam Justice Margaret Mohammed delivered on May 5th, 2017 in the High Court of Justice case CV 2014-02908 of Cheryl Ann Lai Hing et al vs. Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. In this Judgement the Public Officers lost their lawsuit to recoup three months' salary while protesting alleged health and safety conditions at the Couva offices in 2014. Madam Justice Mohammed also stated in this Judgement that, "... the Claimants were ill-advised by their Representing Union, the PSA to invoke Section 15 of the OSH Act". These Officers are now required to pay huge legal fees of the employer.

Minister of Labour states that the issue of the transition from the Customs and Excise Division and the Board of Inland Revenue Division to the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority (TTRA) is similar to previous transitions in the Public Service which occurred and included the National Housing Authority (NHA) to the Housing Development Company (HDC); the decentralization approach in the Ministry of Health into the various Regional Health Authorities and the Civil Aviation Division to the Civil Aviation Authority. What is required is for the PSA to act responsibly and sit with the Government's Team to work out all aspects of this Transition to ensure that Public Officer's interests are protected. There is **NO ISSUE OF JOB LOSS**, therefore the planned Industrial Action is not warranted.

Minister of Labour holds the view that all issues with respect to this Transition can be worked out with dialogue and reassures Public Officers that in the present challenging economic times, the Government is doing all within its power to maintain jobs in the Public Service at this time. In addition, the national and international nature of tax administration has changed and we need an organization that is flexible and responsive to those changes to ensure that we have an effective tax management system for the benefit of all citizens in Trinidad and Tobago.

For further information please contact the Corporate Communications Unit at 627-5656

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