



## **MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

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**Friday, January 31st, 2020**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Minister of Labour presents Evidence of PSA President's Dishonesty**

The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MOLSED) Senator the Hon. Jennifer Baptiste Primus is refuting what is best described as dishonest and misleading statements made by Public Services Association (PSA) President Watson Duke during an interview with Morning Edition's host, Mr. Fazeer Mohammed on Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2020.

Mr. Duke was quoted as saying that the "PSA had been ready and willing to audit its accounts and the lack of auditing since 2014 was not its fault. The books are there. The reason it's all at once (now), there was a time the Ministry of Labour failed to send any single auditor. They didn't send any." He further went on to publicly challenge the Minister to produce the letters which appointed auditors to audit the books of the PSA as was stated by the Honourable Minister in the media released dated 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2020.

Minister Baptiste Primus believes that the integrity of the Ministry and its hardworking Public Officers must be preserved and as such has produced these letters as evidence that correspondence was indeed sent to the PSA on four separate occasions (these documents are attached in this release).

In a previous media release, dated January 13<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Ministry categorically stated that it appointed Auditors annually, within a four-year period between 2016-2019, to review the financial statements of the PSA for the years 2015-2018.

The dates of the correspondent are as follows:

- March 19<sup>th</sup> 2016
- February 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

- January 29<sup>th</sup> 2018
- January 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

These letters were in fact delivered to the PSA by the Ministry's Messenger service.

Further, in that same Media Release issued on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Ministry indicated that the last audited statement submitted by the PSA was for the year 2014 and it was received on August 13, 2019, five (5) years late.

Moreover, the Minister wishes to commend Mr. Mohammed for his spontaneous and vehement rejection of Mr Duke's unbecoming, unprofessional and unethical conduct regarding personal attacks on the Minister which reflected his total disregard for the station's journalistic standards and the uncaring disrespect shown towards the programme's viewers. That one of our Labour Leaders could so unashamedly compromise the personal and professional integrity of his labour sector colleagues in the full glare of the public domain was an act of betrayal of no insignificant dimension.

It defies imagination that the remarks made were in response to a simple, straightforward and honest question which was asked of Mr Duke by the host of the Morning Edition Programme, stemming from a statement which, in my capacity as Minister of Labour, I had previously made categorically refuting misleading impressions which Mr Duke had falsely created when he was quoted as alleging that the Ministry of Labour had **"failed to send any single auditor"** to audit the accounts of the Union.

It is clear that something of a substantial nature must be amiss that Mr Duke would go out of the way to degenerate to such a level as to utter such uncomplimentary and uncouth remarks in the public domain when making reference to the first female Executive President of the PSA and the nation's first female Minister of Labour.

In expressing himself the way he did, Mr Duke has left a distasteful mark of disrespect toward and disregard for all the honest, hardworking, dedicated and committed women and girls of Trinidad and Tobago: mothers, sisters and daughters of Trinidad and Tobago who treasure their dignity and rightfully hold themselves in high esteem. He has portrayed the women and girls of our nation in a light that denies them the true measure of their virtue and value and has set in motion a conversation which could have the regrettable effect of robbing them of unfettered recognition of the unquantifiable contribution which they make to the welfare and wellbeing of all our citizens and to the overall socio-economic development of our beloved Nation.

It is therefore evident that when challenged to tell the truth, Mr. Duke resorts to untruth, personal attacks and distractions.

These two pearls of wisdom are meant for Watson Duke to ponder upon.

“Whenever you think about disrespecting a woman, think about how you were born into this world”

“Being a male is matter of birth. Being a man is a matter of age. But being a gentleman is a matter of choice.”

**Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

**Corporate Communications Unit**

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