



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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MEDIA RELEASE

PETROTRIN – OWTU NEGOTIATIONS

The Honourable Colm Imbert, Minister of Finance has taken note of statements made by the President General of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU), Ancil Roget, regarding negotiations between Petrotrin and the OWTU for a new collective agreement for the period 2014-2017, which have broken down and are currently at the Ministry of Labour for conciliation.

Mr. Roget has said that he believes that Petrotrin was mandated by the Minister of Finance to offer the Union a zero percent increase in salaries and wages for the 2014-2017 period. However, Mr. Roget is mistaken.

As stated by the Hon. Stuart Young, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, at the Post-Cabinet Press Conference held on Thursday December 22nd, 2016, the Government has not authorised Petrotrin to make any offer of any kind for the 2014-2017 period simply because the collective agreement for the previous period, 2011-2014, is currently before the Industrial Court and has not yet been settled or determined. As a result, it is impossible to quantify the cost of an agreement for the subsequent 2014-2017 period.

The Minister of Finance wishes to confirm that the Government was not informed by Petrotrin that it had commenced negotiations for the collective agreement for the 2014-2017 period and that Petrotrin acted unilaterally without informing the Government or seeking a remit from the Public Sector Negotiations Committee.

Further, it is well known by all concerned that all state enterprises must seek and obtain guidelines from the Public Sector Negotiations Committee, which is a Committee of Cabinet Ministers responsible for public sector negotiations, chaired by the Minister of Finance. This procedure has been in place for over 20 years.

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It was only when media reports appeared indicating that there was disagreement between the OWTU and Petrotrin over the collective agreement for the 2014-2017 period that the Government became aware that Petrotrin had commenced these negotiations. After becoming aware that these negotiations had commenced without authorisation, the Minister of Finance sought an explanation from Petrotrin and it was only on Wednesday December 21st 2016 that Petrotrin for the first time sought guidance from the Minister on this matter.

The matter is now addressing the attention of the Government and will be considered by the Public Sector Negotiations Committee at its next meeting.

However, it must be understood that Petrotrin has acted unilaterally and has no authorisation from the Government, the Minister of Finance, the Chief Personnel Officer or the Public Sector Negotiations Committee to make an offer to the OWTU of any kind for the 2014-2017 period.

As Minister Young said at the aforementioned Post-Cabinet Press Conference, it is the position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at this time that the collective agreement for the 2011-2014 period must be determined first before any consideration can be given to an offer for the 2014-2017 period.

It is to be noted that in Petrotrin's letter to the Minister of Finance of December 21st 2016, the company advised the Minister that any increase in manpower costs at this time will result in increased losses and further exacerbate its cash flow situation thus exposing Petrotrin to the risk of funds not being available to meet its operational expenses.