



BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 2019

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH BILL

- For Immediate Release-

The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) notes with grave concern the accident befalling the construction workers at the Belize City Civic Center. First and foremost we join with the rest of the nation in extending our sincerest condolences to the families of those who succumbed to their injuries and offering our prayers for the full recovery of the injured.

The BCCI fully supports and has always been committed to the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill. After the OSH Bill was tabled in January 2014, we wrote to the then Chairman of the Public Service, Labour, Industry and Trade Committee to point out several areas of the proposed law that either required clarifications or amendments. It is these same areas of concerns that also motivated us to actively engage with the National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB). While calling for those amendments, the record will show that *at no point has the BCCI ever opposed the Bill itself.*

From 2014 to present, the BCCI has been engaging in internal consultations with our members, conducting further analysis of the Bill at our Labour Sub Council, and even providing trainings on the importance of Occupational Safety and Health standards to our members of the private sector.

During that time, we have also exchanged numerous communiqués and held several meetings with union representatives regarding the proposed law. This includes inviting the NTUCB to a meeting in February 2018 that was followed by a joint BCCI-NTUCB press release in which it was announced that both parties had met, with the intentions of returning to the discussion table by April 2018. However, due to various matters internal to the NTUCB, this meeting did not materialize until Tuesday, July 2, 2019, when, among other things, both parties agreed to formulate a six-member working committee tasked with reviewing the Bill so as to obtain a satisfactory final draft by November 2019.

the BCCI-NTUCB joint working committee met on Wednesday, September 4th, 2019. The process, which has indeed been cordial and fruitful, is scheduled to continue in earnest, with at minimum twice-per-month sessions leading up to the November 2019 target date.

Consequently, the BCCI wishes to assure the public that both the BCCI and the unions have *indeed* been working towards finalizing this most important legislation. All parties, including the BCCI, fully support the intended purpose of the OSH Bill, and we continue to work to ensure that the final version that is passed in Parliament does achieve those stated objectives in the most efficient manner.

The BCCI further urges all employers and employees to practice good safety protocols at all times in the workplace even in absence of legislation to require it.

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