



Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Annual Report 2019



100th Annual General Meeting

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President's Message



Our meeting tonight is not only a special event, but it is also a moment of time laden with historic significance. I am sure you all may be wondering the reason for this historic significance, but we will get to that very soon!!!

Every two years we come together, as mandated by our constitution, to select by secret ballot members to our Executive Council. This is the time when we return to you to report and give an account of all we have done on your behalf; and naturally of course, to also refresh our mandate. This in itself makes our meeting tonight a very special one. However, this 2020 AGM is extra special, because tonight marks the beginning of our Centennial year and this adds to the preeminence of our meeting tonight.

Our Chamber came to life in 1920, the same year that the League of Nations held its first general assembly meeting in Geneva. For our media members, 1920 was also the year the mass media was born when the first commercially licensed radio station began broadcasting live results of the presidential election.

As an organization, we find ourselves in the wake of recent events destined to reshape the landscape and history of our nation. Technology and the media have made us effective witnesses of the events, the developments, the revelations, the admissions and the schemes that leave many of us, with more questions than answers. In the midst of these transformational events, we will select a new President and a new Executive Council to lead us into our Centennial year, and this, ladies and gentlemen, provides the historical significance of our meeting tonight.

Our general membership can be assured that we find ourselves stronger than ever, in our commitment to advocate for and champion the business interest of the private sector, with the strength, the determination, the vision, and character of 100 years of experience, zeal, and drive. This is what we do via our Triple C philosophy – to Connect, to Capacitate, and to Champion.

As I look back over the past 12 months to summarize the key activities and achievements, I do so with an immense measure of gratitude for your support, and the steadfast commitment of our

Executive Council, our CEO, and our Secretariat. To these teams, and team of teams I say a special thank you! I say thanks not only on my own behalf, but also on behalf of our general membership.

The achievements and milestones that we highlight are not only an enduring testament to the vision, character, and talent of this team of teams, but also evidence of the generosity of the member organizations that have allowed us time and resources to champion the interest of the private sector. It is impossible to repay such kindness.

From its initial announcement in March 2018 to its coming into law in January 2020, your Chamber has supported Government's eco-friendly policy aimed at phasing out single-use plastics. We believe that our development must not come at the sacrifice of our environment nor at the expense of our natural heritage. Through consultations with the Department of the Environment, we kept our members informed regarding the general rationale, objective and direction of the Phasing-Out of Single-Use Plastics, and about green alternatives. We also had consultations with our member in this industry Tu'Kan Manufacturing to provide them with recommendations to be able to sustain this change.

There is also the Front of Packaging Label (FOPL) Regional Standards that the Caribbean Regional Organization for Standards & Quality (CROSQ) is currently working on to bring into regional effect. These standards provide for mandatory warning labels for food products that summarize their nutritional facts for easy understanding. This would apply to all manufacturers, importers, distributors and other entities engaged in the production and or trade of pre-packaged food within any CARICOM Member State. The business concern is not only the incremental cost of the labels themselves, but also the potential reformulation or repackaging of packaged food products.

We provided private-sector feedback to CROSQ. Which was in full support of providing consumers nutritional information, our feedback highlights the incremental cost to business, which will translate into higher prices for consumers. The Chambers of Commerce in the Caribbean have also made similar representation to CROSQ and work is still ongoing at the local and regional level.

Our next item is in relation to the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations, 2019. This Statutory Instrument allowing only one "direct in transit" class of International Bus Service Provider to enter Belize per day had the potential to exclude Belize from a well-developed Guatemala-Belize-Mexico tourist route. To avert potential industrial action by the Belize Bus Association, we immediately appointed an in-house Committee headed by our VP for Services, Ms. Marissa Longsworth, along with other members of the EC, our CEO – Mrs. Kim Aikman and our Chief Policy Analyst – Mr. Dyon Elliott. This team's charge was to meet with representatives from the Belize Bus Association, Belize Hotel Association, and the Ministry of Tourism in a concerted effort to find an acceptable solution.

The result of this and several other follow-up meetings was a revised Statutory Instrument that satisfied stakeholders' interests, and that continues to benefit our tourism industry. We maintain however, that the Comprehensive National Transportation Master Plan, extensively reviewed and approved by all stakeholders, provides a suitable framework to address all the fundamental concerns in a strategic and sustainable manner.

A very important achievement this year was the success we had in refinancing our bank loan with far more favorable terms and conditions. Last year we reported on the loss of the tenancy agreement and the resulting strain on our financials and cash flow. This refinancing arrangement is of great help to the improvement of our financial position. Four years ago, the Executive Council had written to the Board of Trustees requesting approval to advertise for sale, the BCCI's property on Regent Street. The Trustees granted approval for all three plots to be sold as one unit and for no less than the appraised value previously received. Whilst there have been very few interests in purchasing the entire property as one unit, or even at the appraised value, we nonetheless continue to work with our realtor to sell, which will further improve the Chamber's financial position.

Leading up to the national referendum of May 8, 2019, and as part of the education process thereof, we held a business mixer on February 19, 2019 discussing the "Belize - Guatemala Dispute" with Guest Speaker Ambassador Alexis Rosado. There were 51 persons in attendance who participated in an entrance and exit poll. The result showed that the "unsure" votes reduced significantly to a "yes" vote after the presentation by Ambassador Rosado. The San Pedro and Punta Gorda Chapters hosted similar mixers on March 8, 2019 and March 14, 2019, respectively.

I am happy to say that the BCCI teamed up with the Belize Network of NGOs to support the Referendum as 'referendum monitors'. We provided financial and in-kind support, while the BNN provided the on the ground human resources. Together we had consultations with other observers from CARICOM and the Commonwealth mainly on the education process, the integrity of the voters' list and other issues surrounding the referendum.

In May 2019, the BCCI participated in the third National TVET Conference. For those who may be wondering, TVET stands for 'Technical and Vocational Education Training'. The theme of the conference was "Improving TVET: creating higher standards through quality and innovation for improved productivity, employment and sustainability". Several board members of the BCCI participated: EC member Andree King gave remarks at the conference; Past President Kay Menzies was a panelist on the topic: "Effective leadership and management for improved quality standards and productivity", and your President Nikita Usher presented on "TVET and industry engagement from a private sector perspective". We share the view that TVET is an important cornerstone in the development of any nation, as it enhances the potential of our workforce and uplifts their lives and that of their families.

This past year we have continued to advocate for more urgent and decisive actions to formalize and implement the UNCAC legislative framework. Along with other Civil Society Organizations,

we believe that we should be further ahead on the road to implementation than where we are today. We verbally and through correspondence engaged the Prime Minister requesting his intervention to re-energize the UNCAC implementation process and help drive it into high forward gear.

We do not expect that the UNCAC legal framework will eliminate corruption, but we believe that it certainly provides for clear recourse against those who use their positions of public trust for their own enrichment or that of their families and friends. We participated in the Anti-Corruption Training that the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the Attorney General Ministry provided in July 2019. The training focused on “Advocacy for Civil Society Organizations on Anti-corruption”. Great training! However, we need more implementation urgency of the UNCAC legislative framework. The litany of corruption related events is further proof of this.

An important discussion for the business community and for Labour is that of the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, more commonly referred to as the OSH Bill. This is of keen interest to the BCCI as the official Employers representative, and the NTUCB which is the umbrella organization representing the unions of workers in Belize. While the specific interest for each stakeholder is unique, both organizations understand the value of having effective and efficient OSH legislation in place. At a joint meeting between BCCI and NTUCB, both teams agreed for each organization to nominate representatives to a small joint team to review the OSH Bill and bring it to a final Bill format, supported by the general membership of both entities. Work is ongoing on this comprehensive review of the bill by the joint team.

I now turn to something very dear to us – the BCCI Manifesto. I must admit that the term ‘manifesto’ is generally and popularly associated with political parties. We are not a political party, nor do we pretend to be one, or are we aligned with any political party. Our agenda is strictly a business agenda aimed at the sustainable growth, development, and strengthening of the private sector. We worked on our Business Manifesto 2020/21 under the banner of “Improving the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem”. The Executive Council reviewed and accepted the final draft, which we are to present and share with all stakeholders, including the leadership of all political parties. I repeat... we are not a political party... nor do we play politics!

One of the fundamental components of our business manifesto focuses on the issue of taxation in all its shapes and forms. In the past year, members of the Executive Council, the CEO and Chief Policy Analyst met with a visiting team from the IMF to discuss tax policy matters, including the on-the-ground impact of Belize’s International Tax Regime. Of keen interest was the impact certain tax regimes such as the International Business Companies Act, the recent amendments to the Income and Business Tax Act, and the change to the Designated Processing Areas (DPA) Act, had on foreign investment.

Although we are making progress, we are a long-way from having a tax regime designed for socio-economic growth and development, devised to encourage investment and entrepreneurship. While

we continue to call for better tax administration services, we are also mindful that we also need timely, fair and objective tax audits, collections and refunds... Yes, REFUNDS!

If you have logged onto our website, you would have noticed in the menu options one called Policy Tracker. The development of this Policy Tracker was possible by way of funds from an OAS grant. It enables the public to access Bills and Statutory Instruments published in the Gazette, and gives a brief synopsis on how these Bills and SI's affect them. It also offers a subscription feature linked to PolicyTracker.bz. Persons subscribed to this website receive updates in the specific areas of interest, given that the subscription page allows subscribers to select the category of content they would like to receive. This is one more way your Chamber continues to improve its services to you and the business community.

Mindful of our commitment to external trade and recognizing its value to our economy, the BCCI responded to a call from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade to assist by inviting our members to a consultation meeting on a Partial Scope Agreement for trade between Belize and Taiwan. It was groundbreaking with one session held in Belize City on September 25, 2019 and the other in the City of Belmopan on September 26, 2019. We are happy to be part of these initiatives that promise to open the Taiwanese market to 'made in Belize' products. BCCI had a representative on the Belize negotiating team with Taiwan.

Finally, among the notable activities of the past year, is our continued push for the establishment of a viable stock exchange / stock market in Belize. We participated in the fact-finding mission of the Jamaica Stock Exchange. This meeting gave local stakeholders the opportunity to appreciate the framework needed to establish a successful Stock Exchange in Belize. After a two-hour discussion, the group—which included representatives from IFSC, CBB, BCCI, Heritage Bank, Scotiabank, and the National Bank – agreed on two priorities. The first priority is to pursue a joint venture with JSE that establishes a type of Belize-centric JSE-subsiary; and secondly, to request technical assistance to help us “leapfrog” the traditional and lengthy steps that would normally precede the development of a stock market.

If you visit our website, under the Policy Tracker option, you will find a comprehensive report “A Blueprint for Capital Market Development in Belize”, published in November 2019. Additionally, keeping on the theme of finance, while it is not yet something we can share publicly, I can tell you that the Central Bank of Belize has produced a draft of the Capital Market Bill as well as one for Credit Reporting Systems. These two pieces of legislation, although in their draft form, brings us several steps closer to addressing that access to finance constraint that we have discussed so many times over the years.

I must emphasize, as well, that one of the greatest contributions of the BCCI EC is representation on various standing boards and committees. The BCCI has representation in over 50 such boards and committees, as well as representation in ad hoc meetings and negotiations. Through these

representations, we maintain and promote the interest of the private sector grounded on transparency, accountability, and good governance.

The BCCI continued with the weekly Business Perspective (BP) TV/Radio Show to inform and educate our members and the public on matters of concern to Business. We continue to receive great reviews and feedback. Thanks for your support.

We cannot forget the different Expo's that we have had over the past twelve months: The Made in Belize Expo held in May 2019 at the National Agriculture Show Grounds; the Expo Belize Market Place Expo in September 2019, and others. The feedback and support have been enormously encouraging.

These are the highlights of the past twelve months. We are an open organization fully committed to the principles we preach – transparency and accountability. We welcome your input and constructive comments on how we can serve you better. Our Vice Presidents have opened communication channels with you to address sector specific issues and concerns. We thank you for your continuing support.

At this time, I also wish to remember along with these achievements the hard work, the kind words, the laughs, the discussions, the excitement, and the moments of joy that we the EC, Ex-Officio, CEO and the Secretariat have enjoyed. It is certainly a great gift and a wonderful experience that we will always remember and treasure.

Chamber members, thanks for having us onboard, and for allowing us the opportunity to look after your interest. Your confidence and trust in us is reassuring, and we unwaveringly commit to continue serving you with dignity and respect. As my term as your President ends tonight, I leave more optimistic than when I started, because I know that our hard work has not just helped a few companies, it has inspired so many more businesses and SMEs, as the records show that our membership has grown by nineteen percent (19%) since my taking office in 2016. I am eternally grateful to have served you and it does not stop here, as I will serve in the capacity of Immediate Past President. In parting, I do have one final request, that you remain steadfastly supportive of our new President and our new Executive Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen let us make our centennial year 2020-2021 a memorable and impressive one, a fitting start for the next 100 years.

God Bless us all, and God Bless Belize...

Overview



The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Mission "As the voice of the Business Community, we are the Country's leading advocate for private enterprise, promoting economic vitality & quality of life in Belize," has held through for the past 100 years. As we celebrate this centennial year the Chamber has seen great success in its programs to advance enterprise in Belize.

Formed in 1920 named the British Honduras Chamber of Commerce, with the first President being the Hon. G.E. Grabham M.L.C. who was the Manager of Belize Estate and Produce Company Ltd. Fast forward to 2020 where in the chaos of a pandemic we are about to elect the youngest female President in the history of the BCCI.



It has been a privilege to be able to review the old copies of the Chamber Reporter 1966-1967 courtesy of a Past President of the Chamber Mr. Harry Lawrence, and look at the issues they were facing back then, same as now. Agriculture and Tourism being the two most important sources of revenue for Belize, the sugar prices, how much should we open up our country and still maintain the integrity of our culture, the push to export were on the forefront of the business men back then and remains the issues that this present-day Chamber is grappling with.

In 2019, the BCCI joined a network of Chambers of Commerce in the region, which was inaugurated on 1 April 2019, this grouping boasts participation from 22 countries, and is called CARICHAM. Through this group we are able to draw on best practice and advocate as a regional block on issues affecting all our jurisdictions. We were able to each contribute to our respective Bureau of Standards the impact that a proposed Front of Package labelling policy would have had on our members. This grouping also supports each other in times of natural disasters as collectively we provided financial assistance to assist the victims of hurricane Dorian which devastated the Bahamas.



As the only recognized Employers Representative by the International Labour Organization, the BCCI was able to receive support to conduct several skills gap assessment reports in specific sectors such as Agriculture, Information Communications Technology, Agro-Processing and Tourism. As a result, our Chief Policy Analyst was solicited by the ILO Caribbean to undertake a

related exercise for the region. Our Manager Member Relations was also the recipient of an ILO certified training in Occupational Safety and Health in the workplace. As a result of that certification we were able to pass this training to our members.

The BCCI as a tripartite member was fully engaged with the Social Security on the issue of the contribution schedule amendment. We made some representations of different scenarios, which resulted in a more phased in approach of the increase that was inevitable for the survival of the fund. The SSB also approached the BCCI to get our opinion on the use of biometrics to identify the insured.

In trying to assist members to formalize their accounting systems, the BCCI is in the process of negotiating with an accounting firm to provide accounting and auditing services to members of the Chamber at a special member rate.

The BCCI also was a part of a Fact-Finding mission by the Jamaica Stock Exchange to determine Belize's readiness to piggyback on the expertise of the JSE. The Chamber participated in a business mixer in November the objective of which was to look at the possibility of having a Belize –centric JSE Subsidiary.

The quest to find an equitable Trade License assessment formula continued into 2019. The Ministry of Local Government advised that they were restarting the consultation process as it pertains to the Trade License Regime.

The BCCI was invited by the Referendum Commission to participate in ICJ referendum by monitoring at the polling stations. Given our limited human resources, the Chamber partnered with the NGO's by contributing cash donated by our members to enable them to be able to provide monitors in the Polling Stations and Counting Rooms.

Creating a favourable business environment is the reason we exist, hence the third C in our triple C philosophy, Champion! Seeing the impasse between the bus operators and the Belize Hotel Association, the Chamber invited the two parties and the Ministry of Tourism to a sit down where the issues were ironed out. We made some recommendations, which were accepted for the most part to develop a Statutory Instrument to address the bus issue.

The existence of harmonious labour relations is vital to the business ecosystem; the Chamber therefore has three seats on the Labour Advisory Board, which serves as an advisory body to the Minister of Labour. We have discussed at this level a vast array of Labour issues including but not limited to hours of work and Child Labour. To ensure that we represent the views and experiences of you, our members, we have formed a Labour Sub Council which is made up of members of the Chamber from all sectors.

As we embark on the beginning of our centennial year, we at the chamber would like to thank you for your continuous support and engagement. Through all the challenges if we work together, we can continue to accomplish our mission and make Belize the best country to live in and do business in! Buy in Belize, Build Belize!

Connect



The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry Connects members nationally, regionally and internationally. The BCCI organized several trade missions, which connected our members to different buyers and sellers to introduce their products, increase their sales and to improve their competitiveness.

Made in Belize

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry's second "Made in Belize" was held on June 1st, 2019 at the National Agriculture & Trade Show Grounds in the City of Belmopan. The purpose of this tradeshow was to promote "Made in Belize" products and services that are available within the country of Belize.



This event was an exceptional showcase of creativity and innovativeness of our people! It brought together entrepreneurs, micro businesses owners, wholesale and retail buyers and customers from all over the country at one key location. The Guest Speaker Ms. Rebecca Stirm, founder and designer of Twig & Pearl, spoke of some of the challenges and opportunities she faced while being a young woman entrepreneur. Ms. Stirm spoke about her successes and accomplishments over the past years. She stressed on the importance of other entrepreneurs and microbusinesses to work together and

support each other.

Made in Belize 2019 was definitely a resounding success. Visitors to the grounds expressed their amazement at the quality of the goods and services that our home Belize produces. Exhibitors proudly displayed their best, showcasing a wide variety of arts & craft, furniture, cosmetics, plants, agro-processed products, pepper sauces, communication & financial services, food and beverages and much more that are all locally made. A panel of judges selected DML Bamboo Straws with the coveted “Best Booth” award. We also raffled the Gate Prizes at the Trade Show and the winners of the round-trip tickets to the USA sponsored by United Airline were Mr. Peter Sanchez and Mr. Santos Velasquez.



Expo Belize Market Place

The Expo Belize Market Place celebrated its 23rd Anniversary on September 14th and 15th at the Marion Jones Stadium, Princess Margaret Drive, Belize City, with 110 companies participating in 185 booths and with more than 13,000 Expo visitors to the Expo. This year's Expo shared the usual focus which, was to offer BCCI's membership a wonderful opportunity to update the Belizean public of their accomplishments and services throughout the past years. Expo Belize Market Place is known to be Belize's largest business Expo where local businesses showcase their finest products, offer deals and much more.





The Expo has evolved over the years into a vibrant market place, where businesses have an audience to test and develop business ideas. This year's Expo consisted of businesses coming from as far North as Corozal Town and as far south as Punta Gorda and the Cayes. The BCCI invited the public to take advantage of the local food, drinks, giveaways, handicrafts and amazing deals that was offered only at the Expo Belize Market Place and also exciting entertainment by Ernestine Carballo, Youth Connection Band with special host, DJ Dalla.

To express our gratitude to companies that have participated and supported its Chamber since the expo was first initiated in 1996, the Chamber presented awards to companies at the Opening Ceremonies on Saturday, including DML Bamboo Straw who won Best Booth competition at the Made in Belize Trade Show that was held in June 2019.



Black Friday

On November 15th to the 19th, 2019, the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) coordinated its third ever Belizean Black Friday. Black Friday marks the unofficial beginning of the Christmas shopping season where customers descend on stores all over the country to take advantage of the season's biggest holiday bargains. There's more to a Black Friday than just shopping but also when companies have the opportunity to move from the red "into the black" (i.e. make a profit).

More than forty different businesses agreed to give back to the Country of Belize. They offered deals, discounts, coupons and huge savings on home appliance, paints, airline tickets, insurance packages and much more.

BLACK FRIDAY
deals

NOV 15th-19th
Come together & give back to the community

Get **10%**
20% and even
bundle deals

Offer attractive discounts on your goods/services.
BCCI will promote the event countrywide and tagline your company to this community initiative.

To join Black Friday contact us at
☎ 223-5330 ☎ 614-3138 ✉ bcci@belize.org

BCCI Chamber Card

It has been 16 years since the Chamber Discount Card was implemented. A start with 12-member sponsors in 2004, grew to 31 members in 2019 agreeing to offer discounts on goods and services at their businesses whenever the card is used.



The Chamber discount card also validates businesses as members of the Chamber.

The card is valid for discounts on a wide range of goods and services such as construction, groceries, poultry, printing, marketing and advertisement, Wines & Spirits and medical services, to list a few.

Florida International & Cultural Expo (FITCE) on 9th & 10th October in Fort Lauderdale, U.S.A



The Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC) had a Call for companies in the Caribbean, including Belize to participate in a Buyer Inward Mission at the **Barbados Manufacturers Exhibition (BMEX)** which was held from June 7th – 10th, 2019 in Barbados. Lauren International Duty Free, a member of the Chamber, responded to this Call and was successfully accepted to participate in the Barbados Manufacturers Exhibitors Show. The BMEX is Barbados' premiere event which showcases their products and services and attracts over 160 local exhibitors and several regional companies.

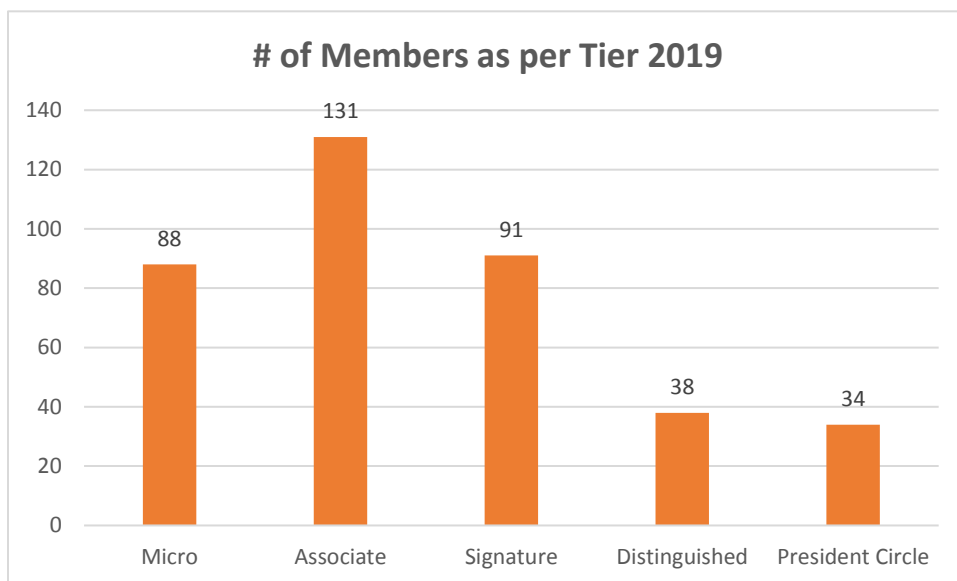
The **Tri-County Regional Black Chamber of Commerce** conducted an International Trade Mission to Belize from July 23rd to July 26th, 2019. A welcome event, "Doing business in Belize" presentation and one on one meetings were organized. The BCCI shared the invitations with our members and attended the sessions.

The Taiwan Embassy hosted a **Taiwan Expo** in Belize at Caribbean Tire from November 1st – 3rd. The BCCI supported in connecting participating Taiwanese businesses with our members.

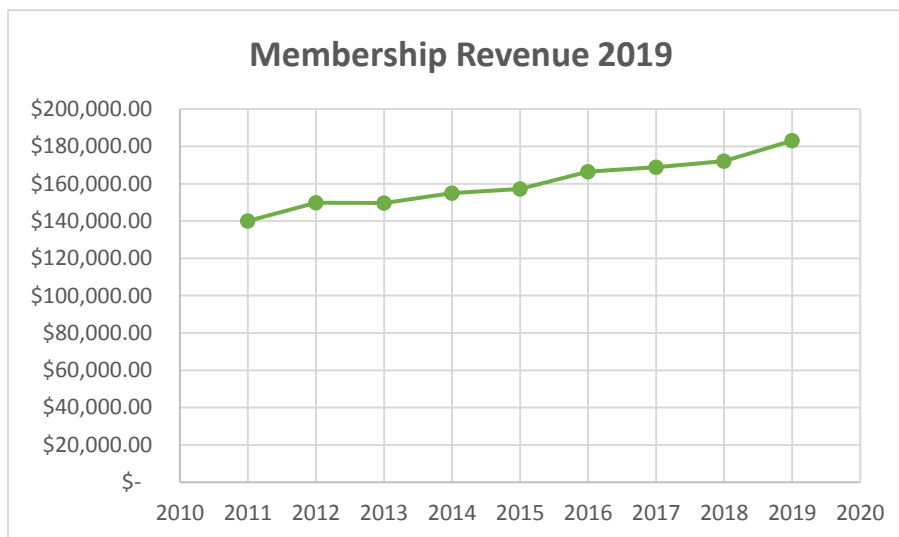
Capacitate



Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry is very much happy to have you celebrate with us our 100th Anniversary!



In 2019, we had a total of 382 members. This was a growth of 8.4% from 2018. The Micro level of membership continues to grow as we embraced many new businesses. About 47% of the 88 Micro members were as a result of the Made in Belize expo as they were new associates to the Chamber. Some 17% of the Micro members came from the Expo Belize Market Place. The remaining 36% were those who renewed from the prior year or individuals. At the middle, the Signature tier is where many businesses choose to join the Chamber as this offers engagement and more commitment to supporting the cause of the Chamber.



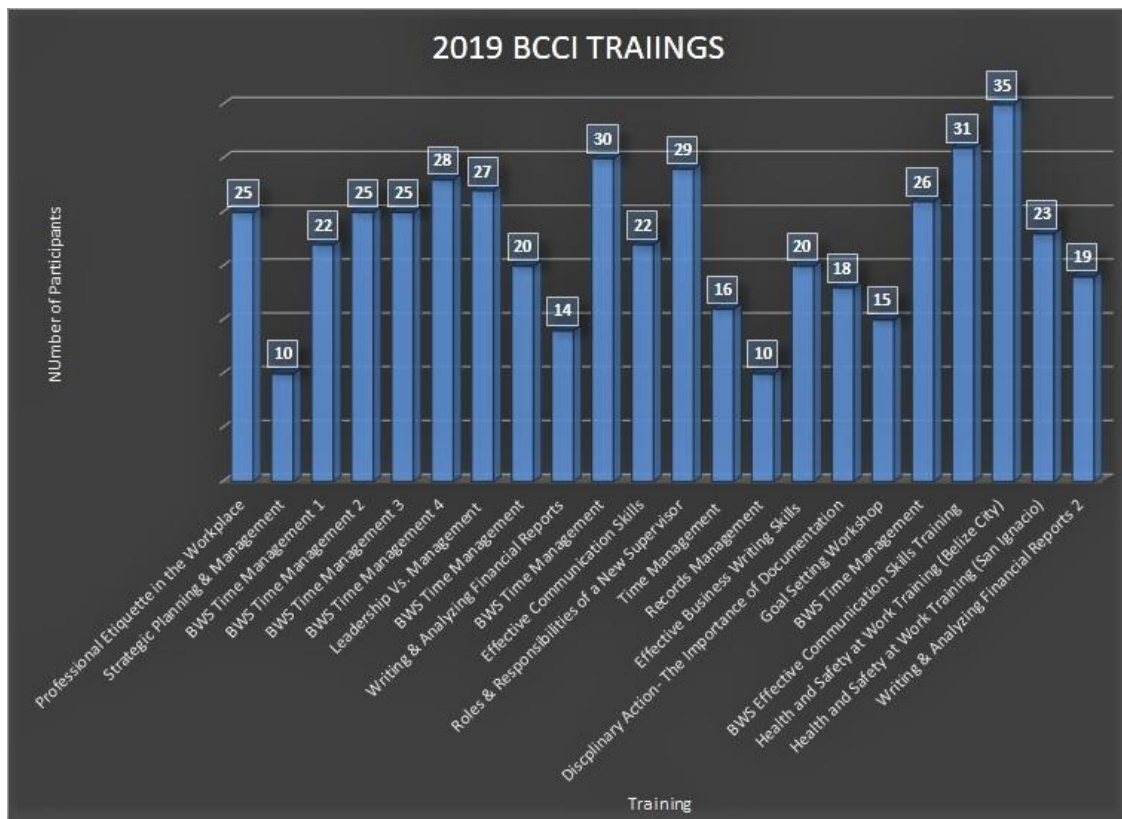
Our membership revenue rose steadily as depicted in the chart above. The revenue comes from the annual membership subscription that businesses contribute to join or renew their membership with the Chamber. We are happy to report that we now have 6 Association bodies and 8 Groups of Companies that signed up at the Association and Group of Companies tier. These tiers allow all their members and sub companies respectively to experience the benefits of the Chamber rather than each one signing up and each paying a separate member fee. Businesses who sign up at the Association and Group of Companies tier have contributed to an increase in revenue collection and representation of a broader sector of the business community.

Members were categorized into sectors and directly consulted by their respective Vice Presidents and Councilors of our board to find out their needs and concerns. On September 6th the first consultation meeting was held at the Chamber with our members who are automobile dealers. Our second meeting was held on the 5th October with members in the hardware/wholesale/ retail and trade areas. Wholesalers and retail trade establishments for food and personal care partook in the roundtable discussion on 13th November.

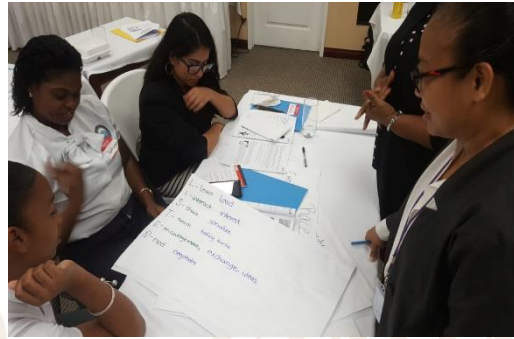
Presentation: What can the Chamber do for you? (BCCI Membership Recruitment) June 25th



Capacitate



Professional Etiquette in the Workplace Training (BTEC) 24th January



Leadership Vs. Management Training (Carib Coaching) 26th March



Writing & Analyzing Financial Reports Training (UWI) 14th May



Effective Communication Skills Training (BTEC) 23rd May



ILO and Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business certified course - Macroeconomics for Social Negotiators, March 4th – May 24th. BCCI participates along with other Caribbean employers' organization.



Roles & Responsibilities of a New Supervisor Training (UWI) 5th June



Time Management Training (BTEC) 13th June



Records Management Training (UWI) 27th June



**Presentation: Importance of Maintaining a good health for a Healthy Workforce 12th July
Facilitated by the Natural Holistic and Wellness Centre**



Disciplinary Action - The Importance of Documentation Training (UWI) August 8th



Goal Setting Workshop (Success Bully) 3rd September



The BCCI and **Birches Group** held a roundtable discussion in October with business owners, HR managers and supervisors on the topic of “Compensation, attracting, motivating and retaining staff”. The BCCI also signed a working agreement with the Birches Group to offer compensation surveys, reports, trainings, and consultation for our members.



The Belize Guatemala Dispute Business Mixer 19th February



Belize Investment Forum in Houston, Texas, USA (BACC) 28th February



San Pedro Chamber Chapter Business Mixer March 8th



Public-Private Sector Dialogue- Challenges to Banking in Belize Business Mixer 14th March



Toledo Chamber Chapter Business Mixer 14th March



Capacitate

BCCI's Annual General Meeting 25th April



Roundtable: Harnessing the Value of Open Data by the Private Sector (OAS) 26th April



June 17th, 2019, marked the closing of an 18 months first phase project: “Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem in Belize,” funded by the U.S.A Government and managed by the Trust of the Americas and the Organization of American States (OAS). The project aimed at lobbying for Open Government in our jurisdiction and collaborated with officials from the Government of Belize, civil society, social actors, private sector, and academia. From the start to the end of this project, the BCCI worked diligently with the OAS to connect and capacitate our members.

Capital Market Development in Belize Business Mixer 25th November



This event was organized by the Economic Development Council & the International Financial Services Commission in partnership with the BCCI

The **Entrepreneurship Conference (EntreCon)** was held on November 29th and our CEO Mrs. Aikman participated as one of the panelists speaking on behalf of employers and the private sector. We were also a promotional sponsor of this event. “EntreCon brought together key stakeholders and experts in the international, national and local entrepreneurial ecosystem to engage, exchange and empower.”

Labour

The BCCI is uniquely serving dual role as a Chamber and an Employers Organization in Belize. For 22 years, we have been serving as the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) official employers’ representatives, being the voice of employers on Labour and Industrial Relations issues. We play a key role in the nation’s tripartite and social dialogue mechanism.

We have demonstrated our proactive position to policy and legislative reforms for the betterment of our social and economic environment. With your representation, we actively participated in over 60 committees, coordinated by the Government of Belize. Two of those active committees are the Tripartite Body and the Labour Advisory Board. The Labour Sub Council, an inhouse committee of the Chamber held monthly meetings. Sometimes additional meetings were coordinated during the month, to review labour laws, policies, conventions and proposals to make recommendation on behalf of our members to these two Labour Bodies, which in turn reaches the ears of the Minister of Labour. We were able to submit position letters to the Minister on topics relating to “Child Labour, Labour Administration and Women and Labour”.

In February, we welcomed our new Labour Commissioner, Ms. Ann Marie Thompson. The working relationship has been incredibly good, and we applaud her smooth transition in steering the team!

Thank you to all members of these committees who dedicate much time in reading, researching, providing invaluable input and in showing up for the meetings.

WE COULDN’T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU! THANK YOU!

Training on **Child Labour for Employers** (Winrock International) March 4th in Belize City & March 5th in Belmopan



Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at Work Training delivered on 20th August in Belize City & 13th October in San Ignacio. This was organized and facilitated by the BCCI utilizing a certified programme of the ILO.



Local Staff Compensation presentation in Belize (Birches Group) 1st October

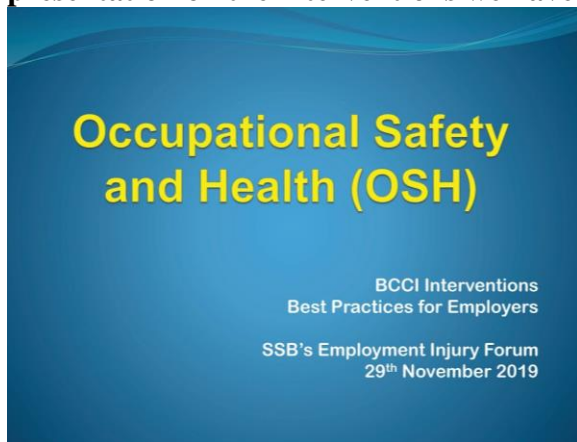
Purpose – To strengthen working relationship between Employers and Employees. Participants learnt what the compensation market has to offer and how businesses can be a part of a compensation survey to see where their company falls.



HIV Sensitization Workshop (Civil Society Organization – HUB) 21st November



Belize Social Security organizes OSH Forum, 29th November 2019. BCCI made presentation on the interventions we have engaged in.



In August, the Chamber was nominated and accepted to participate in the National Steering Committee to oversee the: “**Skills to Access the Green Economy Program (SAGE)**” programme. The Colleges & Institute Canada (CICan) is executing this 5-year programme across 6 Caribbean countries. For Belize, the direct beneficiary partners of the programme are the University of Belize, ITVET Toledo and ITVET Stann Creek with the purpose to create new demand-driven programs at the preparatory level (ITVETs) and the associate level (University of Belize) in Agriculture & Agro-tourism.

The Labour Department through the help of the World Bank worked on several consultations to develop **Belize’s National Labour Employment Policy (NLEP)**. The BCCI participated in some of these consultations to provide input to the development of this policy.

The Chamber as an Association body would not have survived without you, our members. Congratulations to you, the commitment, drive and support you have given the Chamber to survive all its hurdles and to be here today. We proudly celebrate a century strong and vibrant private sector representation, protecting and conserving our economy and a better quality of life for all!

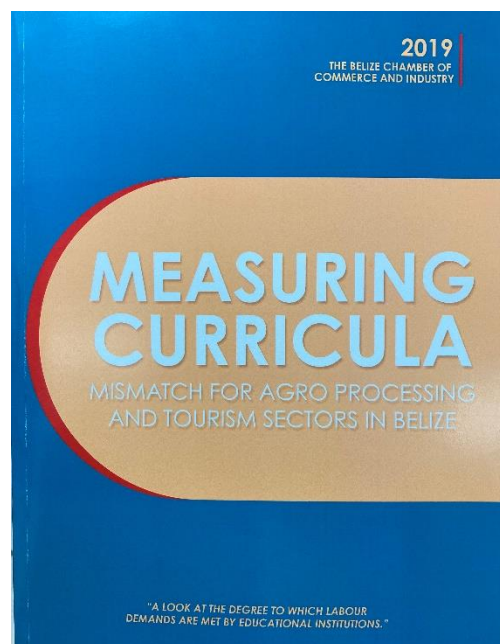


Skills Gap

In partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry completed the second Skills Gap Study. As was reported last year, the first study looked specifically at the Information and Communication Technology (ITC) and Agriculture Sectors. In 2019, Skills Gap Two examined the curricula mismatches for the Agroproductive and Tourism sectors. The findings shine a bright light on the areas with the widest gap that need to be addressed if we are to boost productivity. We are also happy to report that the methodology employed in both Skills Gap studies has also inspired the ILO to utilize the Belize Chamber's approach throughout the region. That's right! We are well on our way to becoming regional trend setters.

Open Government Project—BCCI Policy Tracker

In 2019, in keeping with the BCCI's long-standing anti-corruption campaign that seeks to promote, among other things, increased transparency, the Chamber's Secretariat participated in the OAS and Trust of the Americas' *Open Government Initiative* via which we received funding to launch *PolicyTracker.bz*. Fundamentally, access to public information is pivotal for any well-functioning democracy. However, unlike other jurisdictions where changes to laws and regulations are updated almost daily via online platforms, Belize still operates a paper- and subscription-based system. This cannot continue. Therefore, the Policy Tracker is one way the BCCI has sought to fill this gap, and ensure that you, our Members, are kept up to date with legislative and regulatory changes.





As we come to the close of another Financial Year, the Finance, Administration & Human Resources Department encountered several challenges, but we also had rewarding times in 2019.

We continue to work on building our staff capacity by creating the opportunity to enable them to partake in several training sessions and receive certification in these various fields. Some of these trainings were one day or weekly sessions; whichever it was, staff were more than willing to participate and enhance their skills. Our Manager of Member Relations and Mr. William Usher attended Green Climate Fund Caribbean Private Sector Engagement workshop in Jamaica in April 2019. The Manager of Member Relations also participated in a panel presentation and spoke about Belize's public private partnership in driving climate investment. Our Compliance Officer and a Customer Service Representative attended a presentation entitled: "*Key Finding of the National Risk Assessment Report for Remittance Service Providers*" that was facilitated by the Financial Intelligence Unit on 15th May. Our Manager of Member Relations successfully completed the Macroeconomics for Social Negotiators in Trinidad from May 20th to May 24th. This course was facilitated by ITC – ILO in Italy who partnered with UWI in Trinidad. Our Manager of Member Relations also attended CLiP Best Practices workshop on the 07th June 2019. This workshop was facilitated by Commonwealth Litter Programme; it's a joint programme between the UK and the GOB. Our Marketing Public Relations Officer attended the "*2nd Innovation and Tourism Talk*" marketing training on 30th September; this training was facilitated by BTIA. Our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Policy Analyst attended IDB E-Government workshop on the 28th November which was held in collaboration with the OPM and CITO. The main speaker was the consultant Mr. Mike Bracken who is an expert in the digital transformation of Governments. Our Compliance Officer also attended an anti-money laundering training for businesses on 3rd December. The training was facilitated by Moore-Magana and BIFSA. Our Project Coordinator attended CDEMA 11th Caribbean Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management from 3rd – 9th December in St. Maarten. Some of the topics focused on were: Early warning systems, community resilience, safeguarding people, livelihoods and communities.

Throughout the year we did several staff "get togethers". We had staff meetings to share concerns and update on our progress as a team. These meetings were very interesting and intense at times as we discussed various ideas in working together daily as a BCCI family. Throughout the year we celebrated birthdays and farewells. We welcomed four new staff members – Mrs. Anirdi Briceno (Accounts Clerk), Ms. Bibiana Paquil (Senior Accounts Clerk), Ms. Genesis Tucker

(Project Coordinator) and Ms. Silvia Novelo (Customer Service Representative). The staff activities were concluded for 2019 with a grand Christmas Dinner provided by the staff.

We are pleased to inform you that we renewed our service agreement with Belize Healthcare Partners Limited to provide medical services to our staff and family members.

In the month of January, we had one intern who assisted the Secretariat - Ms. Ivanna Villanueva from Edward P. Yorke High School, Belize City. Ms. Villanueva assisted us from 17th December 2018 – 4th January 2019. At the end the Intern received a small token of appreciation for her contribution to the Chamber. Ms. Villanueva expressed her appreciation for the opportunity granted.

As mentioned, we were not without some challenges as banking restrictions continue to put a strain on our Sub-agents in the Southern Districts. This gave us some challenges in settling payment with our Sub-agents.

In October, the BCCI signed an agreement with BelizeOn to be a collection agent for their products and gift cards. The launch was held on the 23rd October.

BCCI renewed the collection agreement with BEL from January – December 2019 and also continued our relationship with Credit Masters System.

BCCI and IDB signed an agreement in October 2017 for the MIF project; the detailed Financial Plan, the Annual Operations Plan and the Operations Manual for the Pro-adapt Climate Resilience Project were approved by the IDB. On the 7th August 2019, BCCI received the second disbursement from IDB. This project is for a term of three years, our Project Coordinator and Project Assistant are currently spearheading this project.

In November, the Secretariat relocated to the second floor leaving two private office space available to rent. Since June 2018 the conference room was made available for rent. In 2016 the Board of Trustees gave permission to list the Regent Street Property for sale; after a bidding process it is listed with Century 21.

In August 2018 we requested proposals to complete BCCI's website/billing system project. We received five proposals; Mr. Demian Solano from Idealab Studio was the selected Web Developer; the project was completed in December 2019. In November BCCI requested the assistance of Mr. Solano is creating an App for BCCI. The project is ongoing.

We renegotiated the terms of our loan with Atlantic Bank Limited. The bank agreed to lower the interest rate over a year period. This was accepted by the Executive Council at a special meeting held on the 13th December 2018. The loan facility agreement was signed 26th July 2019.

In conclusion, the year 2019 was prosperous through working with our partners who were there for their Chamber, listening and negotiating with us through the challenges. We are grateful for all their support. Once again through this medium we would like to salute our employees for all their hard work and dedication as we join together to meet the demands of the day-to-day operations of

the Chamber. We look forward to a successful new year with the support of the employees and our members.

HR

HR

Western Union



Culmination of the 25TH Anniversary

2019 marked the culmination of our 25th anniversary celebration. To make this event spectacular, BCCI WU teamed up with Courts Belize to offer one lucky winner a gift package worth \$5000.00. Two candidates were selected to compete in a game. The candidates were tasked with choosing items from Courts that came close to the \$5000.00. Mr. Gillett was the lucky winner and the second - place winner got a gift basket from Caribbean Tires and Western Union.



Executive Council



Mr. Nikita Usher
President



Mr. Arturo Vasquez
Immediate Past President



Ms. Marissa Longsworth
V.P. Services



Mr. Marcello Blake
V.P. Commerce



Mr. Allen Reimer
V.P. Industry



Mrs. Ashanti Martin
Secretary



Mr. Giacomo Sanchez
Treasurer



Ms. Katherine Meighan
Councilor



Mr. Gilbert Canton Jr.
Councilor



Ms. Andree King
Councilor



Mr. William Usher
Councilor



Mr. Ted Tejada
Councilor

BCCI *Secretariat*



Kim Aikman
Chief Executive Officer



Dyon Elliott
Chief Policy Analyst



Yorshabell Caltonse
Manager of Membership
Relations



Venesia Neal
Manager, Finance &
Administration



Ruth Gillett
Senior Administrator/HR
Officer 34



Akemar Codd
Western Union
Supervisor/Compliance Officer



Christopher Dech
Membership Program
Administrator



Viannie Reyes
Marketing & Public
Relations Officer



Danette Burns
Western Union
Operations Supervisor



Genisia Tucker
Project Coordinator



Bibiana Paquil
Senior Accounts Clerk



Anirdi Briceno
Accounts Clerk



Danielle Reneau
Membership/Conference
Officer



Silvia Novelo
Western Union Customer
Service Representative



Ruby Fuller
Western Union Customer
Service Representative



Delwin Soberanis
Office Assistant



Dorothy Goff
Office Custodian



Reports 2019

**MINUTES OF THE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
of the
BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY (BCCI)
April 25th, 2019
at the BCCI's McField's Conference Center**

1.0 Call to Order

The meeting was chaired by Councilor, Ms. Marissa Longworth, V.P. Services and commenced at 5:48 p.m. with the singing of the national anthem by Mr. Leslie Jenkins which was followed with a prayer by Canon Leroy Flowers.

2.0 Welcome

Ms. Marissa Longworth – VP Services gave the welcome address.

3.0 Video Presentation

A video presentation was shown to members on the Year in Review – 2018.

4.0 Introduction of Guest Speaker

The Guest Speaker Ms. Mary Beth Goodman was introduced by the Mistress of Ceremonies, Ms. Marissa Longworth. Ms. Goodman is an International Development and Anti-Corruption Policy Expert.

5.0 Presentation by Guest Speaker

“Thank you very much for inviting me to be here today. I am especially glad to be back in your beautiful country and speaking with some of the business leaders who drive this country’s economic future.

I had the pleasure of working for President Obama at the White House on the National Security Council for 5 years and prior to that served at the US State Department as a diplomat.

While working at the White House, I had a unique position on the NSC staff to lead the team that worked to promote democracy, development and coordinate humanitarian affairs. It was truly the honor of a lifetime.

Defense, diplomacy and development were recognized as mutually reinforcing and complementary approaches to U.S national security and throughout all our work, development was a core pillar of American power.

National security is advanced by the development of stable nations that are making progress on social development, economic growth and good governance; by countries that enforce the rule of law and invest in the health and education of their own people. In short, all of our common interests are served by nations that give their people hope for a more prosperous and safe future.

I am thrilled that your national discourse here in Belize is now focused on how to advance your efforts to promote good governance, economic prosperity, and build a new basis for engagement between citizens and the government that serves them.

You may not yet be thinking along these lines yet- but one of your most important economic assets- especially for creating the jobs of tomorrow- lies with utilizing your government datasets.

Data are a valuable national resource and strategic assets to any government, its partners, and the public. Managing this data as an asset and making it available, discoverable, and usable – in other words-- open – not only strengthens our democracies and promotes efficiency and effectiveness in government, but also has the potential to create economic opportunity and improve citizens' quality of life.

The global economy is beginning to operate truly in real time, with constant streams of data. Big data analytics make it possible to work through massive amounts of real- time and historical information to find unseen patterns and discover anomalies that can indicate opportunities for new products and services and new ways of operating more efficiently.

Open data—the release of information by governments and private institutions and the sharing of private data to enable insights across industries—provides additional depth to big data applications and makes possible entirely new ones- such as the smartphone apps that most of us use every day. This trend for open data has profound implications for companies, governments, and individuals.

I learned long ago when talking to business leaders that it's best to cut straight to the chase and get to the bottom line. McKinsey- the global consulting firm- estimated that open data had the potential to enable more than \$3 trillion in additional value annually across these 7 domains in a 2013 report on open data.

So let me just give you a few examples of those sectors where open data is expected to have the biggest impact – and in fact already is for many countries' economies:

Education

The largest potential benefit comes from using open data to:

- improve instruction by identifying the most effective strategies and tools for teaching specific skills and knowledge; students who acquire higher skills can expect higher lifetime earnings.
- Open performance data can also be used by students and parents to make more informed decisions about choices of schools and academic or vocational concentrations.

Transportation

The greatest potential source of value is:

- increased productivity and time saving for individuals from using open data to reduce travel times.
- Additional value can be gained by using open data to improve the efficiency of public transportation and freight operations.
- Open data can also inform infrastructure investments.

Electricity:

Use of open data in the generation, distribution and consumption of electricity is already the norm in many countries.

By providing consumers with detailed data about their energy consumption and showing how other similarly situated consumers (or businesses) use electricity, customers can discover energy-efficiency opportunities.

Utilities can also benefit from sharing benchmarking data to improve project management (e.g., streamlining permitting processes) and operations.

Oil and gas

Across the oil and gas value chain, open data could help improve investment decisions about where to explore for new reserves and build downstream facilities. Openly sharing benchmarks can improve investing processes and operations.

Sharing consumption data can help consumers make better-informed decisions about energy use (reducing natural gas consumption, for instance).

Health care

- Potential sources of value include enabling people to take an active role in disease prevention and treatment;
- helping providers determine what is the most timely, appropriate treatment for each patient;
- matching patients with the most appropriate providers;
- ensuring the cost effectiveness of care;

-and identifying new therapies and approaches to delivering care.

Consumer finance

The potential impact of open data in three areas of consumer finance: banking, insurance, and real estate.

In banking and insurance, there are significant opportunities to increase value through use of open data to improve product design and underwriting. In particular, open data can be used to assess risks for consumers who do not have a credit history, opening up a large potential source of new business (worldwide, half of adults have no banking relationships).

Open data can also be used in fraud prevention and detection: affiliations revealed in social media connections have been used to uncover insurance fraud rings. Consumers can also use open data to choose among a confusing array of complex financial products.

In *real estate*, open data can help match buyers and renters with properties and inform development and infrastructure investments.

Consumer Products:

Consumers benefit from price transparency, as well as access to additional open data about products (the provenance of packaged food, for example) and suppliers (such as environmental and labor practices).

Open data can help manufacturers and retailers generate sales and increase loyalty, by more finely segmenting consumer types and customizing store layouts and assortments for specific neighborhoods.

Manufacturers can harness open data in the form of social media chatter or “likes” to inform product design decisions and improve after-sale interactions.

Colleagues and I doubted if the \$3 trillion per year figure was an accurate estimate but there is no doubt that there is a vast value increase. My question to you all is what sectors matter most to Belize?

As the business leaders of this country, you know best how to answer that question. More importantly, how can government and private sector collaborate on the open data for those sectors to spur the economy?

I hope that this is the beginning of conversations that you will be having on open data and in turn, open government efforts. Your government officials will have a wealth of support in the international community to undertake open data and open government reforms.

I hope that I have sparked your thinking about the economic opportunities that lay ahead with open data and what Belize may be able to do in this field. But most importantly, please remember- it is the opportunities that none of us in this room are thinking of --but which some young entrepreneur sitting outside of here – perhaps on a beach with a cocktail in hand and a laptop on his or her lap- that may just present the biggest boom for Belize’s economy of tomorrow.

Thank you again for having me here today.”

6.0 Opening of Business Session

The business session was opened by the CEO – Mrs. Kim Aikman.

7.0 Review and Confirmation of Minutes

Mrs. Kim Aikman reviewed the minutes of the 2018 AGM. The minutes were confirmed upon a motion by Mr. Edilberto Romero and seconded by Mr. Carlo Habet.

8.0 Presentation of 2018 Financial Statements & Motion to Appoint Auditors for 2018

The Treasurer – Mr. Giacomo Sanchez presented the financials. A motion was made to adopt the Financials and re-appoint BDO as our Auditors. This motion was adopted by Mr. Carlo Habet and seconded by Ms. Karen Diaz.

9.0 President’s Report

As we review and reflect on the past 12 months of business at the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), I am proud and happy for the progress we are making in pursuit of our vision “to contribute to the sustainable development of Belize through effective representation of the business community”. Our Triple C philosophy – to Connect, to Capacitate, to Champion - underpins our mission, which affirms that: “as the voice of the business community, we are the leading advocate for private enterprise, promoting economic vitality and quality of life in Belize.”

This has been an amazing year for us as an institution. Despite the events, circumstances, and developments that continuously pose challenges to us, we remain committed to our mission, unfazed and undaunted. In fact, I would say that every year new challenges emerge that make our advocacy efforts more exciting and, of course, more rewarding. In seeking to be better, closer, and more helpful advocates, our vice presidents, supported by their team of councilors, have reached out to you individually as part of the different core business segments of the BCCI: Industry, Commerce and Services.

Before I review the more noteworthy achievements of the past year, I want to present to you some fundamentals about our financial position and outlook. I wish to highlight two events that overshadow our financial position and performance: 1) the loss of the long-term tenancy agreement with AIBL, which was an important cash-flow generator for

servicing our long-term debt, and 2) the inability to cash-in our three non-performing real estate lots in (Ferrel Lane / Regent Street). We have not been able to find any long-term tenant for the office space vacated by AIBL, and this adds urgency to cash-in on the three (3) real estate lots to service our debt. Despite best efforts, we have been unable to attract interest for the three lots at the market-based price that we are asking for. Together, these two factors cast a long shadow on our financials, as you will see. I believe, however, that a different strategy could yield better results. We should consider marketing them separately or together as long as we, at the end of the day, still manage to realize the “full” market price we have been asking for as a single unit. We will present this strategy to our Trustees hoping to get their support and enthusiasm.

With this as prologue, let me now focus on the more exciting events we take pride in sharing:

Soon after election in April 2018, the EC immediately got together to plan the way forward. We had many returning Officers and Councilors from the previous council, but we also welcomed fresh faces as Councilors Andree King, Katherine Meighan, Ted Tejada, and Gilbert Canton Jr. It is an honor to lead such a talented team of professionals who have given so much of their time to represent you. I also thank their employing organizations for allowing them to engage so actively in the affairs of the BCCI. The success of the BCCI really rests on these merits complemented by the invaluable contributions of a dedicated Secretariat.

Soon after the installation of the Executive Council in April 2018, our executive vice-presidents were formally assigned their respective portfolios, so as to enable them to engage more directly with members with their respective sectors. This, as has been our Modus Operandi (MO), is done to ensure that we remain as close and responsive to the needs and concerns of each sector as possible. We also assigned councilors to support each vice president in their roles and responsibilities, and I am happy to see the progress we have made. We also appointed three (3) ex-officio members to serve along with the EC to take advantage of their expertise and institutional memory.

Taxation has been a perennial point of interest for the private sector. On its own it has attracted much discussion with the authorities at the highest levels, as we have continued to seek fairness and balance. We believe that while taxation is an unavoidable transaction, it ought to not only be fair and just, but also specifically designed to promote economic development through investment. For this reason, we worked with the Belize Agro-productive Sector Group (Bas GROUP) and the Association of Real Estate Brokers of Belize (AREBB) to sensitize the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on some inequities that existed in Law that governed their respective sector, as well as, the severe hardship that taxpayers endure when the GST Department takes forever to process GST refunds. The outcome of our meetings is that the MoF has committed, via written communication to make the necessary amendments and to ensure that refunds should follow within 90 days if an audit has not started, or a query on an extraordinary item been made. It further agreed for the payment of refunds to be made, if an audit goes beyond 180 days.

We recognize that taxation is an important revenue stream for government and can appreciate why refunds are so slow in coming, but tax money is also a critical factor in the development of new businesses and enterprises. Often this could swing the scales of success to failure. Over the past few months, we actively worked with BELTRAIDE and EPZ license holders to improve the EPZ framework, culminating in the new Designated Processing Area (DPA) Act. It is our expectation that this improved WTO-compliant framework, despite still having some challenges for some sectors, will serve the private sector in expanding export-related processing, allowing for meaningful employment for many, and the generation of much needed foreign exchange.

We were also in discussion mode with the Social Security Board (SSB) regarding the proposed changes to the employer-employee contributions. This, as the SSB officials had demonstrated, is a measure to stave off the arrival at the Fund's Point of Equilibrium, and to preserve the financial sustainability of the Fund. The BCCI proposed a Phasing-In approach with a gradual increase in the upper income bands between 2019 and 2023, and that adjustment beyond 2023 to move towards a higher employee share of the employee-employer split. The BCCI also called for improved administrative efficiencies as a fundamental step towards the sustainability of the Fund. After consultation with Labour, these proposals morphed into a hybrid that called for annual, rather than biennial changes.

One of the greatest contributions of the BCCI is its representation in various standing boards and committees. The BCCI has representation in over 50 such boards and committees, as well as representation on ad hoc meetings and negotiations. Through these representations, we maintain and promote the interest of the private sector grounded in transparency, accountability, and good governance.

The BCCI believes in continuous improvement, and actively looks for best practices in providing enhanced services to its membership community. This year the BCCI decided to adopt the Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) methodology employed by the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) in the UK. In fact, this BCC QES is the largest independent business survey in the UK and a significant economic indicator. Having completed our first draft, we were able to see important indicators and statistics:

1. Cash flow decline in 1Q18;
2. Employment strengthening 2Q18;
3. Positive outlook for Investment plans for the next 12 months;
4. Strong indications of uptick in prices for goods and services;
5. Taxation remains the strongest area of concern for the respondents.

All in all, these indicators corroborate the Central Bank's growth estimate of 3.1% for 2018, moving into 2019. We thank those of you participating in this survey, and I encourage those that have not done so, to participate. With time, the QES will become an important economic indicator for the private and public sectors.

One of the events of the past twelve (12) months, of pride and satisfaction, is the Made in Belize Expo held in May 2018 at the National Agriculture Show Grounds. The

attendance and feedback were very positive, leading us to incorporate it into our annual Expo events calendar. These are the highlights of the past twelve (12) months. We are an open organization fully committed to the principles we preach – transparency and accountability. We welcome your input and constructive comments on how we can serve you better. Our vice presidents have opened communication channels with you to address sector-specific issues and concerns. We thank you for your ongoing support.

Lastly, we remain engaged in national issues that have either direct or indirect impacts on doing business in Belize. For instance, our involvement in the UNCAC steering committees remains steadfast, despite its pace not being overly gratifying. We have held several business mixers to keep our members informed on Belize – Guatemala dispute and, particularly, on the question of going to the ICJ. BCCI have also continued with our weekly Business Perspective (BP) Show to inform and educate our members on matters of concerns to Business.

At this time, I also wish to remember, along with these achievements, the hard work, the kind words, the laughs, the discussions, the excitement, and the moments of joy that we, the EC and the Secretariat, have enjoyed. It is certainly a great gift and a wonderful experience that we will always remember and treasure.

Chamber members, thanks for having us onboard, and for allowing us to look after your interest. Your confidence and trust in us is humbling, and we here commit to continue serving with dignity and respect.

The 2019 year already got started with so many activities and engagements by your EC and, therefore, we look forward to much more, and a successful 2019-2020... when we celebrate our Centennial AGM.

God Bless us all, and God Bless Belize.

10.0 Closure of Business Session

The CEO introduced the Secretariat to the members and then declared that the Business session was closed.

11.0 Presentation of Award & Gift

The President presented the Secretariat's Award to Ms. Marissa Longsworth. A gift was also presented to the Guest Speaker Ms. Mary Beth Goodman.

12.0 Thank You

The official thank you and invitation to the Social was given by Ms. Andrée King – Councilor

Approved by: 
Mrs. Ashanti Arthurs-Martin - Secretary

Prepared by: 
Ms. Ruth Gillett – Senior Administrator

The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Financial Statements
Year Ending
31st December 2019

**BELIZE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**
Financial Statements

Year ended 31 December 2019

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry**Index to the financial statements**

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Independent auditor's report to the members of Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Chamber) which comprise of the statement of net assets as at 31 December 2019 and the statement of activities, statement of cash flows and statement of expenses by functional area for the year then ended and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry as of 31 December 2019, and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards for Small and Medium size Entities (IFRS for SMEs).

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Chamber in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (IESBA Code), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Emphasis of matter

As discussed in Note 17 to the financial statements, Subsequent Event, the extent of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Chamber's operating and financial performance will depend on certain developments, including the duration and spread of the pandemic and the impact on its members and its operations, all of which are uncertain and cannot be predicted. At this point, the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic may materially impact the Chamber's financial condition, liquidity or results of operations is uncertain.

Responsibility of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with IFRS for SMEs, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Chamber ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Chamber or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Chamber's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we:

- (i) exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- (ii) identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- (iii) obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
- (iv) evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- (v) conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we should conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify the opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our report. However, future events or conditions may cause an entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- (vi) evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- (vii) obtain sufficient audit evidence regarding the financial information of the Chamber to express an opinion on the financial statements. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



BDO Belize LLP

3 March 2020

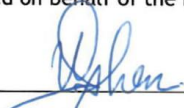
Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry**Statement of net assets**

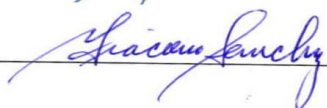
At 31 December

(In Belize Dollars)

ASSETS	Note	2019	2018
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		352,895	349,974
Endowment Fund account	4	100,000	100,000
Trade and other receivables	6	673,342	1,022,242
Prepayments		37,017	33,923
		<u>1,163,254</u>	<u>1,506,139</u>
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	7	2,585,555	2,653,664
		<u>2,585,555</u>	<u>2,653,664</u>
Total assets		<u>3,748,809</u>	<u>4,159,803</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
Current liabilities			
Bank overdraft	8	185,012	552,133
Trade and other payables	9	747,014	670,158
Borrowings	10	63,454	58,883
		<u>995,480</u>	<u>1,281,174</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Borrowings	10	597,680	661,134
Severance provision	11	77,322	86,874
		<u>675,002</u>	<u>748,008</u>
Total liabilities		<u>1,670,482</u>	<u>2,029,182</u>
Net assets			
Unrestricted funds		1,978,327	2,030,621
Endowment reserve fund, restricted	12	100,000	100,000
Total net assets		<u>2,078,327</u>	<u>2,130,621</u>
Total liabilities and net assets		<u>3,748,809</u>	<u>4,159,803</u>

Approved on behalf of the Executive Council:



President

Treasurer

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Statement of activities

For the year ended 31 December

(In Belize Dollars)

	Note	Western Union	General office	2019 Total unrestricted	2018 Total unrestricted
Supports & revenue					
Support					
Membership dues		-	183,050	183,050	173,075
Revenues					
BCCI's share of Western Union transfer charges		932,551	-	932,551	943,026
Collection fees		-	25,057	25,057	34,321
Gain on disposal		-	200	200	100
Interest income		-	523	523	527
Rental income		-	44,509	44,509	18,081
Net contributions from EXPO and other services		48	147,929	147,977	181,063
Sundry income		95	29,198	29,293	18,100
Total supports and revenue		932,694	430,466	1,363,160	1,368,293
Expenses					
Administration		(352,956)	(943,591)	(1,296,547)	(1,256,457)
Financial		-	(52,004)	(52,004)	(66,254)
		579,738	(565,129)	14,609	45,582
Business tax	13	(55,790)	(11,113)	(66,903)	(66,982)
Change in unrestricted fund		523,948	(576,242)	(52,294)	(21,400)
Unrestricted fund-1 January 2019				2,030,621	2,052,021
Unrestricted fund - 31 December 2019				1,978,327	2,030,621

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 December

(In Belize Dollars)

	Note	2019	2018
Cash flows from operating activities			
Change in unrestricted funds		(52,294)	(21,400)
Adjustments for:			
-Depreciation	7	99,523	108,545
-Bad debts	6	4,976	3,000
-(Gain) on disposal of property and equipment		(200)	(100)
-Tax expense		66,903	66,982
-Interest income		(523)	(527)
-Interest expense		52,004	66,254
-Severance pay provision	11	(9,552)	7,661
		<u>160,837</u>	<u>230,415</u>
Change in working capital:			
-trade and other receivables	6	343,924	(332,975)
-prepayments		(3,094)	499
-trade and other payables	9	76,856	102,804
Cash generated from operations		<u>578,523</u>	<u>743</u>
Tax paid		(66,903)	(66,982)
Interest income received		523	527
Interest paid		(52,004)	(66,254)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		<u>460,139</u>	<u>(131,966)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property and equipment	7	(31,414)	(19,731)
Proceeds from disposal of property and equipment		200	100
Net cash (used in) investing activities		<u>(31,214)</u>	<u>(19,631)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayment of borrowings	10	(58,883)	(113,486)
Net cash (used in) financing activities		<u>(58,883)</u>	<u>(113,486)</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		<u>370,042</u>	<u>(265,083)</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year		(202,159)	62,924
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year		<u>167,883</u>	<u>(202,159)</u>
Represented by:			
Cash and bank		352,895	349,974
Bank overdraft		(185,012)	(552,133)
		<u>167,883</u>	<u>(202,159)</u>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Statement of expenses by functional area

For the year ended 31 December

(In Belize Dollars)

	Note	Western Union	General office	2019 Total expenses	2018 Total expenses
ADMINISTRATION					
Advertising and promotion		110,924	7,656	118,580	107,147
Annual general meeting expenses		-	10,697	10,697	11,086
Audit		-	18,000	18,000	18,000
Bad debts			4,976	4,976	3,000
Bank charges		31,546	5,706	37,252	40,013
Depreciation		-	99,522	99,522	108,545
Donations and subscriptions		2,200	3,819	6,019	3,432
Electricity and water		13,559	19,152	32,711	29,663
GST input tax disallowed		-	1,657	1,657	1,591
IDB Project-climate change			7,300	7,300	-
Income tax & interest		-	1,744	1,744	18,039
Insurance		6,252	43,684	49,936	52,645
Members and board meetings		-	50,920	50,920	67,248
Miscellaneous expenses		2,565	3,530	6,095	8,768
Motor vehicle expenses		-	26,389	26,389	28,831
Office cleaning		-	12,712	12,712	12,685
Office expenses		385	4,783	5,168	3,937
Personnel costs	14	102,961	461,975	564,936	512,792
Professional fees		5,000	-	5,000	2,325
Property taxes		-	8,935	8,935	8,553
Rent		-	7,200	7,200	7,200
Repairs and maintenance		317	58,669	58,986	55,685
Security		20,446	32,002	52,448	52,142
Stationery, postage and office supplies		17,420	26,447	43,867	39,561
Telephone		38,980	18,925	57,905	57,669
Training		250	290	540	725
Travel, local and international		151	6,901	7,052	5,175
		<u>352,956</u>	<u>943,591</u>	<u>1,296,547</u>	<u>1,256,457</u>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements

(In Belize Dollars)

1. General Information

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Chamber) is a private sector initiative whose objective is to promote free enterprise development across all sectors of the Belizean economy including commerce, industry, manufacturing, agri-business, the professions and trades.

The Chamber is a private, non-profit, non-partisan, membership organization established by statute - the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry Act (the Act), Chapter 308 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000. This Act repealed and replaced the Chamber of Commerce Act of 1923. The office of the Chamber is located at #4792 Coney Drive, Belize City, Belize.

The Chamber and Western Union (WU) established domestic and international money transfer services for Belize under a joint agreement in 1993, whereby the Chamber and WU share transfer charges levied on money transfers. This activity continues to be the main source of revenue for the Chamber.

These financial statements were authorized by the Executive Council for issue on 12 June 2020.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements of the Chamber have been prepared in accordance with 'International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities' (IFRS for SMEs). They have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented, unless otherwise stated.

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFRS for SMEs requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgment in the process of applying the Chamber's accounting policies. Areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimations are significant to the financial statements are disclosed in Note 3.

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis which assumes that the Chamber will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The validity of this assumption depends on the continuing support received from the members of the Chamber, its Western Union partner and its bankers.

Foreign currency translation

Functional and presentation currency

Items included in the financial statements are measured using the currency of the primary economic environment in which the Chamber operates ('the functional currency'). The financial statements are presented in Belize dollars which is the Chamber's functional and presentation currency.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements
(In Belize Dollars)

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**Foreign currency translation (continued)***Transactions and balances*

Foreign currency transactions are translated into the functional currency using the exchange rates prevailing at the dates of the transactions. Foreign exchange gains and losses resulting from the settlement of such transactions and from the translation at year-end exchange rates of monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are recognized in the Statement of Activities. The official exchange rate for the Belize dollar is fixed at BZ\$2 to US\$1.

Foreign exchange gains and losses that relate to borrowings and cash and cash equivalents are presented in the Statement of Activities within "Loss on Exchange". All other foreign exchange gains and losses are presented in the Statement of Activities within the particular support, revenue or operating expense.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, demand deposits and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less and a bank overdraft which is presented in the statement of net assets within current liabilities.

Trade receivables

Trade receivables are recognized initially at the transaction price. They are subsequently measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. The Chamber makes use of a simplified approach in accounting for trade and other receivables as well as contract assets and records the loss allowance as lifetime expected credit losses. These are the expected shortfalls in contractual cash flows, considering the potential for default at any point during the life of the financial instrument. In calculating, the Chamber uses its historical experience, external indicators and forward-looking information to calculate the expected credit losses using a provision matrix. The Chamber assess impairment of trade receivables on a collective basis as they possess shared credit risk characteristics they have been grouped based on the days past due.

Property and equipment

Property and equipment is stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

The Chamber adds to the carrying amount of an item of property and equipment the cost of replacing parts of such an item when the cost incurred for the replacement part is expected to provide incremental future benefits to the Chamber. The carrying amount of the replaced part is derecognized. All other repairs and maintenance are charged to the statement of activities during the period in which they are incurred.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements
(In Belize Dollars)

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**Property and equipment (continued)**

Land is not depreciated. Depreciation on other assets is charged so as to allocate the cost of assets less their residual value over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method. The estimated useful lives range as follows:

Strata building	50 years
Office furniture, fixtures and equipment	4 and 10 years
Vehicles	5 years

The assets' residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed and adjusted prospectively if appropriate, if there is an indication of a significant change since the last reporting date.

An asset's carrying amount is written down immediately to its recoverable amount if the asset's carrying amount is greater than its estimated recoverable amount.

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing the proceeds with the carrying amount and are recognized within the classification 'Revenues' in the Statement of Activities.

Impairment of non-financial assets other than inventories

Assets that are subject to depreciation or amortization are assessed at each reporting date to determine whether there is any indication that the assets are impaired. Where there is any indication that an asset may be impaired, the carrying value of the asset (or cash-generating unit (CGU) to which the asset has been allocated) is tested for impairment. An impairment loss is recognized for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's (or CGU's) fair value less costs to sell and value in use. For the purposes of assessing impairment, assets are grouped at the lowest levels for which there are separately identifiable cash flows (CGUs). Non-financial assets other than goodwill that suffered an impairment are reviewed for possible *reversal* of the impairment at each reporting date.

Borrowings

Borrowings are recognized initially at the transaction price, that is, the present value of cash payable to the bank. Borrowings are subsequently stated at amortized cost. Interest expense is recognized on the basis of the effective interest method and is included in finance costs.

Borrowings are classified as current liabilities unless the Chamber has an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least *twelve* months after the reporting date.

Trade payables

Trade payables are recognized initially at the transaction price and subsequently measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements
(In Belize Dollars)

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**Employee benefit obligations****Termination benefit - severance**

The Chamber recognizes termination benefits in accordance with the Labour Act (the Act), Chapter 297 of the Substantive Laws of Belize.

The Act was revised in April 2011 to require that employees who have been employed for (a) five to ten years be paid severance pay of one week's pay for each year of service if retiring on or after 60 years of age or on medical grounds or if terminated for other than good or sufficient cause and (b) employees with more than ten years be paid *severance* pay of one week's pay for each year of service prior to April 30, 2011 and two weeks pay for each year of service thereafter. The revision became effective on May 1, 2011.

Support and revenue recognition

Support and revenues comprise the fair value of the consideration received or receivable from membership dues, grants and *revenues* from income-generating activities in the ordinary course of the Chamber's activities. Revenues are shown net of general sales tax and discounts.

The Chamber recognizes support and *revenues* when the amounts of such support and revenues can be reliably measured; it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the Chamber; and specific criteria have been met for each of the Chamber's activities, as described in the following page.

Grant support

Grants are recognized when there is reasonable assurance that the Chamber will comply with the conditions attached to the grant and the grant will be received.

Support for future periods is accounted for as deferred income or support.

Membership dues and revenues

Membership dues are recognized as income when received but, dues received in respect of future periods are deferred. All other revenue is recognized when earned.

Interest income

Interest income is recognized using the effective interest method.

Rental income

Rental income under an operating lease is recognized in the statement of activities income on a straight-line basis over the lease term and is recognized within the classification 'Revenues' in the Statement of Activities.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry**Notes to the financial statements**

(In Belize Dollars)

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)**Taxes**

The tax expense for the period comprises current tax. The tax charge is calculated on the basis of the tax laws enacted at the statement of net assets date. Management evaluates situations in which applicable tax regulation is subject to interpretation and establishes provisions where appropriate on the basis of the amounts expected to be paid to the tax authorities.

Taxes are based on monthly gross revenue receipts and are payable within the following month.

Complying with deferred taxation accounting pursuant to Section 29 of International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities is not applicable.

Leases

Leases in which substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership are retained by the lessor are classified as operating leases. Payments made under operating leases (net of any incentives received from the lessor) are charged to the statement of activities on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

Rental income from lease is recognized in accordance with the accounting policy described in Note 2.

Changes in accounting policies

No changes to the accounting policies were identified and the comparative information has accordingly remained unchanged since the prior reporting period.

3. Information about key sources of estimation uncertainty and judgements

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated. They are based on historical experience and other factors, including future expectations.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The organization makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year would be the estimated collectability of accounts receivable, particularly from Western Union sub-agents and management's assessment as to the impairment of assets.

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements
(In Belize Dollars)

4. Endowment Fund account

The Endowment Fund account which is a restricted cash balance, is held in a bank savings account. See Note 12 for more detail.

5. Financial risk factors

The Chamber's activities expose it to a variety of risks including credit risk and liquidity risk.

Credit risk

The Chamber has no significant concentrations of credit risk. Sales are made in cash or on credit terms. Credit sales are made to customers with appropriate credit histories.

Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk management involves maintaining significant cash and cash equivalents and having funding available through adequate and committed credit facilities.

6. Trade and other receivables

	2019	2018
Western Union and sub-agents	587,326	929,224
Western Union - shared cost on advertising	2,108	4,141
Others	89,147	88,053
Employees loans receivable	-	3,824
	678,581	1,025,242
Less: bad debt provision	(5,239)	(3,000)
	673,342	1,022,242

Movement in the bad debt provision:

	2019	2018
At 1 January	3,000	12,196
Additional provision during the year	2,239	3,000
Amounts written off during the year	-	(12,196)
At 31 December	5,239	3,000

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements
(In Belize Dollars)

7. Property and equipment

	Land	Strata land and building	Office furniture, fixtures, and equipment	Motor Vehicles	Total
<i>Cost or valuation</i>					
At 1 January 2019	853,848	2,045,938	474,716	166,871	3,541,373
Additions	-	-	28,886	2,528	31,414
Disposal	-	-	-	(4,795)	(4,795)
At 31 December 2019	853,848	2,045,938	503,602	164,604	3,567,992
<i>Accumulated depreciation</i>					
At 1 January 2019	-	(387,829)	(382,057)	(117,823)	(887,709)
Charge for the year	-	(41,087)	(28,332)	(30,104)	(99,523)
Disposal	-	-	-	4,795	4,795
At 31 December 2019	-	(428,916)	(410,389)	(143,132)	(982,437)
Net book values					
At 31 December 2019	853,848	1,617,022	93,213	21,472	2,585,555

	Land	Strata land and building	Office furniture, fixtures, and equipment	Motor Vehicles	Total
<i>Cost or valuation</i>					
At 1 January 2018	853,848	2,045,938	455,085	166,871	3,521,742
Additions	-	-	19,731	-	19,731
Disposals	-	-	(100)	-	(100)
At 31 December 2018	853,848	2,045,938	474,716	166,871	3,541,373
<i>Accumulated depreciation</i>					
At 1 January 2018	-	(346,742)	(347,114)	(85,408)	(779,264)
Charge for the year	-	(41,087)	(35,043)	(32,415)	(108,545)
Disposals	-	-	100	-	100
At 31 December 2018	-	(387,829)	(382,057)	(117,823)	(887,709)
Net book values					
At 31 December 2018	853,848	1,658,109	92,659	49,048	2,653,664

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Notes to the financial statements

(In Belize Dollars)

8. Bank overdraft

Bank overdraft and other facilities with the Atlantic Bank Limited are secured by a mortgage over the Chamber's strata titles 4792 (H1 and H3), Block 16, Caribbean Shores stamped to secure \$400,000 and mortgage over the Chamber's Regent Street property stamped to secure \$450,000.

9. Trade and other payables

	2019	2018
Trade payables	24,934	34,688
Western Union Settlements for sub-agents	355,558	376,060
Western Union sub-agents' share of transfer charges	66,623	60,645
Stamp duties on money transfers payable	59,805	56,978
Deferred revenue - membership dues	46,725	5,207
IDB fund	11,248	41,675
Gratuity payable	66,630	-
Other payables and accruals	115,491	94,905
	<u>747,014</u>	<u>670,158</u>

10. Borrowings

The Atlantic Bank loan is secured and repayable by way of 108 monthly blended payments to principal and interest of \$9,240.61 (previously \$15,500). The first payment under this new arrangement was on 27 December 2018 at interest rate of 7.5% (previously 8.5%) per annum.

	2019	2018
Atlantic Bank Loan	661,134	720,017
Less: current portion	(63,454)	(58,883)
	<u>597,680</u>	<u>661,134</u>

The loan balance is repayable as follows:

	2020	63,454
	2021	68,380
	2022	73,689
	2023	79,409
2024 and thereafter	<u>376,202</u>	
		<u>661,134</u>

11. Severance provision

	2019	2018
Employee benefit obligation		
At 1 January	86,874	79,213
Increase in provision during the year	20,739	7,661
Transfer to gratuity payable	(30,291)	-
At 31 December	<u>77,322</u>	<u>86,874</u>

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry**Notes to the financial statements**
*(In Belize Dollars)***12. Endowment reserve fund, restricted**

The Government of Belize and the United States of America were parties to a U.S. funded programme designated as the Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) Local Currency Programme, whereby assistance was provided to the country of Belize. In February 1993, an allocation of BZ\$100,000 of the Private Sector Development Fund was earmarked under the ESF for the Chamber as seed capital for the establishment of an Endowment Fund. In April 1996, an agreement between the Government of Belize and the Chamber was formally executed establishing the Endowment Fund. The purpose of the Endowment Fund is to assist private sector developmental activities.

13. Taxes

On 29 June 1998, the Government of Belize passed the Income Tax (Amendment) Act, (the Act). The Act which became effective 1 July 1998 replaced Corporate Tax with a Business Tax chargeable on gross trading receipts. The amendment made civic organizations such as the Chamber (which were wholly-exempt from taxation under the previous tax regime) chargeable to business tax on membership dues and receipts from revenue-generating activities.

Business tax is levied on the various categories of income at the rates set out from time to time in the Ninth Schedule to the Act.

14. Employees' salaries and benefits

	2019	2018
Wages and salaries	425,453	422,764
Social security costs	15,448	13,474
Severance	20,739	7,661
Gratuity	36,339	-
Staff benefits	66,957	68,893
	<u>564,936</u>	<u>512,792</u>

15. Key management compensation

Key management excludes the Executive Council (provides pro-bono services to the BCCI). Total compensation paid to key management for employee services was	2019	2018
	<u>96,000</u>	<u>96,000</u>

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry**Notes to the financial statements**

(In Belize Dollars)

16. Commitments and contingencies

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank in October 2017 for a project entitled, Pre-adapt Belize-Increasing Climate Change. Chamber is to manage project funding in the sum of US \$203,000.00. The Chamber will provide counterpart funding of US \$138,000.00 for this project. The duration is for three years.

On 12 October 2017, Belize Chamber of Commerce was appointed by Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as Executing Agency for the private sector focused project, *Pro-adapt Belize - Increasing Climate Change Resilience and Related Business Opportunities*. The Chamber received in 2018 and 2019 funding of \$100,400 (US\$50,200) and \$71,400 (US\$35,700), respectively, for the project. At 31 December 2019, \$11,248 (PY-\$41,675) remained undisbursed and is included in accounts payable in the financial statements. IDB funds disbursed in 2018 and 2019 have been included in the audit of these financial statements, and a compliance audit as required by IDB will be performed at project conclusion.

The BCCI may be subject to legal proceedings and claims that arise in the ordinary course of business operations. At 31 December 2019, no action has arisen that would have a material effect on the financial position or results of operations of BCCI.

17. Subsequent event

The extent of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our operational and financial performance will depend on certain developments, including the duration and spread of the pandemic and its impact, all of which are uncertain and cannot be predicted. At this point, the extent to which the coronavirus pandemic may materially impact our financial condition, liquidity or results of operations is uncertain.