

# Guyana Public Service Union

"RIGHTS AT WORK - ENDING POVERTY & INEQUALITY"

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Established 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1923.

IN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE DATE  
HEREOF AND No. PSU: 125/135

DATE: September 6, 2018.

Hon. Winston Jordan, MP  
Minister of Finance  
Ministry of Finance  
Main & Urquhart Streets  
Georgetown.

Dear Minister Jordan,

**RE: GPSU Budget Proposals 2019.**

Thank you for your letter dated August 24, 2018. The Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) is delighted to take part in the preparation of the National Budget and will attend at the time and place as suggested. The GPSU takes this opportunity to submit to you proposals which were discussed at several of our Executive Council Meetings and the General Council Meeting. The membership of the GPSU is of the view that these initiatives will enhance tremendously the development of public servants and the country at large.

Please see the proposals attached.

Yours respectfully,

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**Patrick M. Yarde**  
**PRESIDENT/CEO**

**Hon. Winston Jordan, MP**  
**Minister of Finance**  
**Ministry of Finance**

**September 6, 2018**

His Excellency Brig. David Granger, MSS  
President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana,  
Ministry of the Presidency

Hon. Mosses Nagamootoo, MP  
Prime Minister,  
Cooperative Republic of Guyana,  
Office of the Prime Minister

Lt Col. Rtd. Joseph Harmon, MP  
Minister of State

Mr. Reginald Brotherson, AA  
Permanent Secretary  
Department of Public Service

## **GPSU PROPOSALS FOR 2019 BUDGET.**

### **It is proposed that the 2019 budget include:**

1. The Guyana Public Service Union reiterates that Tax Reform in Guyana is both needed and necessary and that the Government of Guyana should review the level of taxation on income and consumer items. Further, these exercises should be undertaken with the involvement of the major stakeholders; the Business Community, the Trade Union Movement and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations etc. in a process of meaningful consultations.

In this regard, the GPSU re-submits the following proposals for consideration and inclusion in the 2019 National Budget.

- i. The increase of the income tax threshold to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) per month.
  - ii. The income tax rate be further reduced to 20% on taxable income.
  - iii. A non-taxable allowance of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) per month for dependents.
  - iv. A non-taxable allowance of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000.00) per month for students who are dependents and are pursuing tertiary level education (eg. UG, GSA, GTI etc.)
  - v. A reduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) to eight percent (8%).
2. **A number of Semi-Autonomous and Government Agencies/Public Corporations need urgent and special attention in their performance and capacity building capabilities.**

### **Highlighted below are some agencies that requires Government's urgent attention:**

#### **a. Revenue Authority –**

The GPSU desires that special attention be given to GRA employees. The records would revealed that although the operations of the Authority has significant challenges and all the eligible tax payers are not in the tax net, the Authority each year surpassed its targeted revenue collection which contribute to the consolidated funds.

Improvement in performance and contribution should be encouraged and recorded. The Union wishes therefore to posit the following areas, though not exclusive for consideration:

1. Improved emoluments for the employees of the Authority. This is a premier organization and the largest revenue collection agency which contributes to the economy and even the border protection to prevent smuggling in and out of the country and other related issues. The employees' efficient and effective performance is important to the development of our nation and ought to be recognized with improved benefits which will be a motivational factor for continuous improved performance.
2. Resuscitation and introduction of the Revenue Protection for staff.

3. Tax free bonus, the Revenue Authority has been substantially surpassing its revenue collection for a number of years. It is posited that a tax free bonus equivalent to ten percent of the excess revenue achieved over target be shared annual to the staff at all levels.
4. Risk allowance for staff where there are exposed to risk in performing their duties. Enforcement officers by virtue of the nature of their duties are exposed to greater risk to their life. As such they ought to be encouraged to perform their duties without fear of favour.

It is important to note that the risk on these Officers lives has increased significantly in view of the hostile environment in which they operate. Accordingly, the Union wishes that consideration be given to the payment of risk allowance to officers who are exposed to danger in the execution of the duties.

Safe and conducive work environments for the employees of the Authority. It is noted that the working condition is not in keeping with the Occupational Safety and Health Act #32 of 1997. This workplace can be viewed as hazardous since it posed treats to the employee's safety and health. It is important that immediate attention be given to the work place to make it safe for the workers. Not forgetting that safety is everybody's business.

5. There is also inadequate storage for confidential records.

**b. Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation –**

GPHC is the only referral hospital in Guyana with a capacity of a few hundred beds as against double that amount previously housed. The few number of beds compromises quality health care. This resulted in patients sharing a single bed eg the maternity ward, the Union understands that at times two mothers and two babies shared a single bed and also in the other areas patients sit on chairs waiting for a patient to be discharged. The Union was also informed that inadequate equipment and medical supplies are not available for the delivery of quality health care.

**Deplorable Working conditions at GPHC and other Health Care facilities**

Employees at these facilities especially Doctors and Nurses are forced to work under adverse and deplorable conditions. There is inadequate and in some cases no rest / lunch room at these facilities which would force the doctors to take their meals in their vehicles and other areas where contamination can take place. Doctors cannot take a shower after working in excess of twenty four consecutive hours out of a thirty six hours shift. Nurses take their meals at the same work station in the presences of the patients.

The Guyana Public Service Union supports that quality health care be provided to the nation and it is equally important as providing a safe and conducive working condition for the workers.

**New Amsterdam Psychiatric Hospital** - The Union wishes to urge that appropriate funds be allocated for the enhancement of the New Amsterdam Psychiatric Hospital. The security system must be improved immediately as workers lives are at stake. Adequate funds be made available for security lights around the building and the employees must be protected from the patients. Some patients were taken to the institution under heavy police guard but remains at the institution for health care in the hands of the doctors and nurses without any guard. This is certainly a risk for the workers. Communication is very important and there is no communication system available at this institution. Immediate attention should be given to have telephones installed in all the departments / wards. Workers ought to be paid a special allowance and life insurance provided.

**Outstanding difference in salaries for technicians.**

Health Care professionals in the past years were not treated with respect but they continued to perform their duties with pride and dignity. It was because of the dedication and commitment that these workers performed their duties even when they were physically and verbally abused by members of the public and are not being adequately compensated for work done.

There are a number of Nurses who were trained as Technicians and placed to work in the operating theater but to date these workers are still being paid as Nurses and not Technicians.

The Union is suggesting that these positions be corrected and the necessary arrangements be made in the 2019 National Budget for the correct salaries be paid to them with effect from the date of appointment.

The Union is therefore recommending that the Government provide adequate accommodation for these workers or in the absence of the accommodation adequate allowance (travelling and other related allowance) be reviewed annually and paid to the workers.

**c. Guyana Civil Aviation Authority –**

The staff of the GCAA has over the past few years, significantly improved Guyana's level of compliance with international standards and recommended practices and the quality of Air Traffic Services provided to aircraft transiting Guyana's airspace. These improvements have resulted in a significant increase in revenue collection. Further, additional significant increases in revenue generating aviation related activity is anticipated in the near future.

In acknowledging the increasingly complex and expanding duties and responsibility of the GCAA Staff, the GPSU is making representation for increase remuneration, more specialized training at the senior technical level, especially for staff within the Air Navigation Services Directorate, increased remuneration as a result of increased responsibility.

**d. State Audit Department**

It is important for us to stamp out corruption in this country. It is important that we all work together in the fight against corruption therefore we must first attract qualified and competent staff to the department by offering attractive benefits. The Union was informed that some audits were contracted out to private Auditors since the Office of the Auditor General was short of staff. The Union is therefore suggesting that the staff complement at the office of the Auditor General be increased and allocation be made available in the 2019 National Budget to address the salaries and other related benefits for additional staff and to provide the necessary tools to carry out the job.

**e. Anna Regina Town Council –**

A subvention be given to the Anna Regina Town Council to help offset wages and salaries deficit since 2013, and to improve the Council's ability to pay wages, salaries and allowances consistent with what obtains in the Public Service, and to ensure that there is sustainability with regards to the emoluments paid to the workers in addition to necessary and important works in the community.

In addition, the Union is extending its representation to all other NDCs and municipalities throughout the ten administrative regions that similar consideration must be given, so that all workers are able to earn at least the minimum wage, and be given same within a given timeframe.

**f. President's College –**

This College is the brain child of Guyana's first Executive President with the aim of molding high school students at a very high standard in preparation for higher learning and the world of work. Today it is sad to say that this College is in a deplorable condition. It is time that collectively we work together in restoring this college to its former glory. Adequate resources be allocated so that the original staff structure can be reinforced to have the required qualified and skilled personnel, improvement in the structure, and adequate accommodation with modern facilities to house our students.

The Union is therefore requesting that adequate funds be approved in the 2019 National Budget for the improvement of the President's College.

**g. Sweepers / Cleaners –**

This matter is long outstanding and it is very troubling to the Union and our Sweeper / Cleaners. These are the people who prepare the environment, make it conducive for

learning sometimes they perform the duties of teachers, mothers even councilors while at school. This Administration after realizing that these workers were not properly treated in relation to the condition of service promised to make the necessary correction and allow them to enjoy the ‘**Good Life**’. Unfortunately years after that promise was made it has not been fulfilled to date, leaving these workers to continue to face economic hardships. Mothers give birth to babies but could not enjoy NIS nor any other benefits. Some of them worked for years and are now off the job without a **dime** for their service. Today, some are working as security guards to make ends meet; others are just going one day at a time. **Is this what we want for our people? No pension, no gratuity, punish them for making babies.**

It is time that a conscious decision and arrangements be made to have economic relief for our Sweepers / Cleaners and remove them from the poverty line as promised. The 2019 National Budget must address this problem immediately by paying the outstanding NIS contributions for these workers making it restorative for at **least ten** years or more where necessary. This will allow persons to benefit from a NIS pension. Pay to Sweeper / Cleaners payment in lieu of annual leave for at least the last five years. Appoint all these Sweeper / Cleaners permanent pensionable employees. Take into consideration the years of service to commence from the date of employment for the calculation of superannuation benefits.

#### **Accommodation for Public Servants working away from home**

More often than ever workers were appointed / transfer to performed duties away from their homes and little or no accommodation is provided. This forced these workers to face excess economic, social and psychological burden. There are cases where workers were appointed after a scholarship in a region outside where he / she lives. These workers are severely affected to the extent were they were forced to acquire accommodation, travelling and other related expenses on their own.

### **3. Public Service – Wages, Salaries, Allowances & De-bunching.**

#### **Wages & Salaries**

Sufficient funds are allocated in the Budget for the realization of a living wage by 2019. In 1993 the Minister of Public Service referred to the Public Servants as the “employed poor”. To this date, they still fall into that category and are unable to get out of that state of the present wages and salaries they receive. In pursuit of this goal the GPSU proposed the following for the period 2016-2019:

#### **2016**

- a) Effective January 1, 2016; a flat increase of seven thousand dollars five hundred dollars (\$7,500.00) per month added to the salary at December 31, 2015 of each person employed in the public service as well as to the amount payable at the minimum and maximum of each of bands 1-14 of the Schedule of Salary in the public service.

- b) A 25% increase across the board to the salary of each person employed in the Public Service as well as to the amount payable at the minimum and maximum of each of bands 1-14 of the Schedule of Salary in the public service.

### **2017**

a) Effective January 1, 2017; a flat increase of seven thousand five hundred dollars (G\$7,500) per month added to the salary at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 of each person employed in the Public Service as well as the amounts payable at the minimum and of each of bands 1 – 14 of the schedule of salary in the Public Service.

b) A 20% increase across the board to the salary of each person employed in the Public Service as well as to the amount payable at the minimum and maximum of each of bands 1-14 of the schedule of salary in the Public Service.

### **2018**

a) Effective January 1, 2018; a flat increase of nine thousand dollars (\$9,000) per month added to the salary at December 31, 2017 of each person employed in the public service as well as to the amount payable at the minimum and maximum of each of bands 1 – 14 of the Schedule of Salary in the Public Service.

b) A 20 % increase across the board to the salary as at December 2017 of each person employed in the public service as well as to the amount payable at the minimum and maximum of each of bands 1 – 14 of the Schedule of Salary in the Public Service.

### **2019**

In respect of each of years 2016-2019, there shall be an additional increase to cover the inflation as determined by the Bureau of Statistics.

We continue to insist that remuneration increases take into consideration the inadequacy of salaries when compared with the cost of living and remuneration of public workers throughout CARICOM States, the negative disparity in pay as well as the disadvantage of the Guyanese worker.

### **Allowances/De-bunching/Advances**

We are requesting that sufficient provision of funds be made available to deal expeditiously and comprehensively with the in scale de-bunching of public workers.

We are also urging that allocations be made for the payment of increments.

We wish to urge that allocations be made for the payment of increments in the Public Service, facilitating upward movement in pay bands and thus, justly and meritoriously rewarding performance, therefore maintaining relativities in Salary Scales. It will also be a morale booster, and subsequently improved relations, motivation and increased productivity.

These two matters were addressed in the 1999 Armstrong Arbitration Award where the Government approved the introduction of increments. The previous Government made a commitment to fully



honour the Arbitration Award which was a final and a legally binding agreement. However, they reneged on this commitment.

i) Provisions/allocations for substantial increases to provide realistic advances to Public Officers who are entitled to loans to purchase motor vehicles in discharging their duties.

(ii) Substantial provision/allocation for increases in allowances, viz

- a) Travelling Allowance - last increased in 1995
- b) Subsistence Allowance - last increased in 1995
- c) Meal Allowance - last increased in 1996
- d) Uniform Allowance - last increased in 2001
- e) Housing Allowance - last increased in 2009
- f) Reintroduction of key and critical allowances
- g) And other allowances as a condition of service

#### **4. Insurance for Government employees**

- a) A non-contributory Health Insurance Scheme should be funded for public servants and their families.
- b) A non-contributory life insurance for Public Officers who have to travel extensively to carry out their duties – traverse interior trails, waterways – live under camp conditions and are exposed to many dangers seen and unseen.

#### **5. Public Sector Modernization Project**

We reiterate that funds be made available to continue and complete the Public Sector Modernization Project with specific focus on the following areas:

- a) Human Resource Development
- b) Career development
- c) Technological enhancement
- d) Implementing and maintaining established standards of Occupational, Safety and Health.
- e) General improvement of the work environment

#### **6. Pension**

GPSU believes that it is shameful that after working so many years in persistent poverty, senior citizens and retirees continue to live in abject poverty while in retirement. GPSU proposes that provisions be included in the 2019 Budget for realistic increases of all pensions payable by the State and that NIS do likewise.

There is need to review the Pensions Act. A proposal to this effect was submitted to the Public Service Ministry, now Department of Public Service, Ministry of the Presidency. However, this matter is still outstanding and should be addressed urgently. The proposal is for persons who resigned, to receive gratuity for the years of service in excess of five years and a pension and gratuity after 10 years.

Provision of infrastructure for housing projects, to the GPSU, for low and middle income public servants with specific emphasis on hinterland regional areas.

Government should subsidize the cost of acquisition of house lots for Public Servants based on individual salary scales.

7. **Critchlow Labour College (CLC)** - Substantial funds should be allocated to Critchlow Labour College in order that it can liquidate all existing liabilities and to adequately meet all expenses for the effective administration and functioning of the college in 2019.

## 8. **Guyana Public Service Union**

- i. The Government of Guyana facilitate recreational activities for public servants throughout the country. Create a head in the Estimates of Expenditure 2019 for “**Recreational Facilities for Public Servants**” and make provision for funding the rehabilitation, maintenance, security, transportation, staff, electricity and the development of games facilities at the GPSU Sports Complex. This was an undertaking given by the Government in 1982. In addition, His Excellency, Brig David Granger recently echoed similar commitments.
- ii. That Government provide recreational facilities in all ten administrative regions for Public Officers.
- iii. That fifty (50) government scholarships be given to the GPSU annually tenable for public service workers to attend the University of Guyana. Scholarships should include cost of tuition, transportation, books and other materials necessary for the programmes and other related cost.
- iv. That twenty (20) annual Post Graduate scholarships with allocations to cover airfare, boarding and lodging, tuition fees, books and other relevant materials and miscellaneous expenses to given to the GPSU for public service workers
- v. That Government provide the Union with a subvention for educational activities and its Industrial Relations and Personnel Management Diploma Programme, to cover the cost of lecture fees, materials and related expenditure. This would contribute to human resources development in the public service and to facilitate training and orientation for public service workers.
- vi. That Government in collaboration with the GPSU, establish child-care centers for public officers in all Regions and Georgetown.
- vii. Provisions in the form of a subvention to the Guyana Public Service Union for entrepreneurship training for public officers and pilot projects in economic ventures e.g.:
  - A. Agricultural and Poultry Farms
  - B. Art and Craft Productions
  - C. Furniture Manufacturing etc.
  - D. Construction of Houses
  - E. Transportation and maintenance of vehicles
  - F. Communication and corporate transport

- viii. A subvention of G\$15,000,000 to fund the Union’s attendance and participation at conferences, meetings (including ILO Meetings), and overseas engagements of a similar nature.
- ix. A subvention of G\$10,000,000 to fund trade union education programme throughout the country.
- xii. Subvention for a National/Regional Public Service Games
- xiii. Subvention of G\$6,000,000 to assist to offset the union’s BDC in 2019 and its two General Council Meetings for 2019. Members will be invited from the throughout the country to attend and participate in these important meetings.

**12. Local Government Election**

The Guyana Public Service Union in executing its civic duties after recognizing that many Guyanese were disenfranchise by not being the given the opportunity for one reason or another to exercise their democratic right at pervious general and regional elections. The Executive of the Union took a conscious decision for the Union’s participation in the elections as a domestic observe. The Guyana Public Service Union had acquired the Domestic Observer status from the Guyana Election Commission. The Union with members throughout the Administrative Regions was able, with some assistance from the Commission, to train persons to perform duties as observers before and on Election Day. The Union was able to place observers in at least seventy five polling stations across the country. The Union was so effective in observing the elections to the extent where matters of irregularity were reported to the Guyana Police Force and persons were arrested.

The Union is therefore seeking assistance in the form of three million (\$3,000,000) towards participation in the upcoming Local Government Election.

The Guyana Public Service Union is prepared to work with the Government of Guyana to execute any exercise that is evenhanded and fair. Large amounts of revenue could be saved and be available to be utilized otherwise if such actions are taken.

Yours sincerely,

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 Patrick M. Yarde  
 President/CEO