

Guyana Public Service Union

National Budget Proposal 2024

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Guyana Public Service Union Budget proposal for the Year 2024.

1. Public Service - Wages, Salaries, Allowances and De-bunching

(a) Wages & Salaries

It is evident that the cost of living has increased astronomically and workers in Guyana are not paid a living wage. Workers are being paid a minimum wage which is by far less than a livable wage which is required to take care of basic family needs without reliance on remittance from friends and family. The Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) for decades has been calling on the Government of Guyana to pay to the Workers a **living wage**.

Additionally, the Union for decades has been representing that the disparity in the salary scales between GS 1 to 3 be address urgently and the necessary funds be made available to correct this disparity. Therefore the Union calls on the Government of Guyana to allocate adequate funds in the 2024 National Budget to undertake the rationalization of these salary grades retroactive to the year 2020.

Further, the Union insists that increases in remuneration should also take into consideration the inadequacy of wages, salaries and allowances. In comparing the remuneration of Guyanese Public Servants as against Public Servants throughout the Caricom States, there is grave disparity in pay, well to the disadvantage of the Guyanese Public Servants.



(b) **Allowances/De-bunching/Advances**

Bunching exists within the Public Service. Employees regardless of their qualifications and years of service are receiving the same salaries and other benefits. The GPSU is representing this situation be corrected and funds be made available in the 2024 National Budget to allow in scale upward movement of Public Servants.

The GPSU also urges the reintroduction of payment of increments, together with incentives, to Public Sector Workers which will prevent a reoccurrence of bunching and maintain relativity within the salary scales.

Public employees continue to personally invest in self-development by obtaining tertiary education at universities in and out of Guyana. After attaining higher qualifications of BSc, MSc and PhD, which exceeds set requirements according to the job specification, merited recognition is not given to the employees for improved or higher qualifications.

The Union is supporting the payment of additional increments to workers with higher qualifications.

Despite this commendable effort and personal financial sacrifices, several of these employees are not compensated with in-scale increments. The Union is of the view that this issue should be addressed as an integral part of the de-bunching exercise and that adequate budgetary allocations be made available to cover this cost.

The Union is also renewing its call for provisions/allocations for substantial increases to provide realistic advances to Public Officers, who are eligible to procure loans to purchase motor, vehicles to be used in the discharge of their duties and substantial provision/allocation for increases in allowances. Also the Union is proposing that a Tripartite Committee be establish to determine the realistic rates of motor car advance and allowances.

2. **Public Sector Modernization Project**

In this age of emerging technology where virtual engagements are becoming the norm, there is need for radical changes in our methodologies which necessitates new skillsets. Hence training and development are urgently needed in the Public Sector to build the necessary core competences.

The Union again reiterates its call that adequate funds be made available in the 2024 National Budget to complete the Public Sector Modernization Project with specific focus on the following areas:

- (a). Human Resource Development
- (b). Career Development
- (c). Technological Enhancement

3. **Tax Reform**

The Union wishes to reiterate that comprehensive Tax Reform in Guyana is both needed and necessary. Government's access to a major new source of revenue from the oil and gas industry, the high cost of living and inflationary trends necessitate this action. The Government of Guyana should review the level of taxation on both income and consumer items. These exercises should be undertaken with the involvement of stakeholders, which include, Trades Union Movement, Business Community and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations in a process of meaningful consultations.

The Union re-submits the following proposals for consideration.

- (i). The increase of the income tax threshold to two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00) per month or one-third of the individual income, whichever is higher.
- (ii). The income tax rate be further reduced to 10% on the first taxable \$200,000 and 20% on the balance of taxable income, instead of the current methodology of 28% and 40%.
- (iii). A non-taxable allowance of seventy five thousand dollars (\$75,000.00) per month for dependents.
- (iv). A non-taxable allowance of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) per month for students, who are dependents and are pursuing tertiary level education (eg. University of Guyana, Guyana School of Agriculture, Guyana Technical Institute etc.)
- v). A reduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) to six percent (6%).
- (vi). Reduction of taxes on building supplies to assist low-income earners to build their own homes.
- (vii). Provision of low interest loans for Public Servants to acquire lands and to build their own homes.

These measures the Union believe would increase disposable income and reduce the burden on consumers due to increased cost of living.

4. **Uniform Allowances for Public Servants.**

Over 25% of the Public Servant's meagre annual salary is used for the procurement of working clothes. The Union calls on the MOF to subsidize this clothing bill by making substantial provisions in the 2024 National Budget for clothing allowance for all Public Servants. This allowance will also lead to uniformity in the workplace.

5. **Insurance for Government Employees**

(I). A non-contributory Health Insurance Policy should be funded for Public Servants and their immediate families.

(II). A non-contributory Life Insurance Policy for Public Officers, who travel extensively to perform duties under extreme conditions, eg. traverse interior trails, waterways, live under camp conditions, exposed to many dangers seen and unseen or travelling in uninsured Government vehicles. The Union is calling on the GOG to set up a committee (GPSU/PSM/MOF) to urgently address these concerns.

6. **Superannuation Benefits**

Retirees having made sterling contributions to the development of Guyana, many of whom today continued to live in abject poverty. Many of these retirees are forced to seek employment in the security sector after retirement since their monthly pensions are grossly inadequate.

The Union is therefore proposing that a review of the monthly pension be done without delay and the Pension Act be amended to include the review. On the other hand, it is important for the GOG to make the necessary provisions in the 2024 National Budget for realistic increases monthly pensions payable to retirees. Additionally, the Union strongly supports an amendment to the National Insurance Scheme Act.

The Union is proposing that persons who resign from employment receive gratuity for those years of service exceeding five years, and a pension and gratuity after 10 years.

7. **Housing**

Land complete with necessary infrastructure throughout the ten Administrative Regions should be made available for housing projects for Public Servants, particularly those in the low and middle-income groups.

Additionally, the cost for these house lots should be subsidized for Public Servants, based on their salaries and years of service. Special emphases should be given to the country's heroes, the Health Care Workers, who provided quality Health Care throughout the pandemic. It is observed that a number of these workers are migrating, in order to earn a better incomes to support their families. The Union strongly supports that house lots and building materials at subsidized rates be provided for this category of workers. This assistance will assist in the retention of their services in the provision of quality health care to the nation.

Accommodation for Public Servants working away from home

In order to motivate and support Public Servants, who are appointed or transferred to perform duties away from their homes, provisions of adequate and comfortable accommodation should be made. It is noted that Officers are appointed or transferred away from their respective homes without any proper system in place for their accommodation at new locations. These ad hoc decisions force officers to live in hardship by having to travel daily without any financial assistance, whilst maintaining two homes.

The Union is therefore suggesting that proper systems be put in place to remove such hardships from Officers appointed or transferred to new locations.

8. Critchlow Labour College (CLC)

The Union is representing that substantial funds be made available in the 2024 National Budget as a subvention for Critchlow Labour College, which will assist in the liquidation all existing liabilities and adequately meet all expenses for the effective administration and functioning of the College in 2024 and onwards.

9. Guyana Public Service Union

I. The GPSU is celebrating its Centennial Anniversary during this budgetary cycle. It is the expectations of Public Servants for the Government of Guyana to get involved in providing recreational facilities for related public servants activities throughout the country. This could be financed and regulated in a similar fashion as the Government have financed and regulated the upgrade and managing of cricket grounds in the 10 Administrative Regions. Alternatively, a head could be created in the Estimates of Expenditure 2024 for "Recreational Facilities for Public Servants" and provisions made for funding the development of games facilities, its operations, maintenance, security, transportation, staffing, electricity, telephone, internet, other overhead expenditure, etc. The Government **SHOULD** also honour the outstanding agreements between the Government of Guyana and the GPSU for the rehabilitation, operations, maintenance and staffing of the GPSU Sports Complex. Please see copy of Agreement attached.

ii. That at least one hundred (100) government scholarships be allocated to public service workers annually on the recommendation of the GPSU for the University of Guyana. Scholarships should include the cost of tuition, transportation, books, equipment, such as, computers, other necessary materials and related costs that is intended for the programmes.

iii. That at least twenty (20) Post Graduate scholarships be allocated to public service workers annually on the recommendation of the GPSU. Scholarships should include airfare and required boarding and lodging, tuition fees, books, other necessary materials and miscellaneous expenses.

iv. That Government provides the GPSU 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 facilitate training and orientation for public service workers.

v. That Government, in collaboration with the GPSU, should establish child-care centers for the children of public officers in all Regions and the City of Georgetown.

vi. 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, such as:

- (a) Agricultural and Poultry Farms;
- (b) Art and Craft Production;
- (c) Furniture and Manufacturing etc.
- (d) Construction of Houses;
- (e) Transportation and Maintenance of vehicles;
- (f) Communication and Corporate Transport; and
- (g) Information Technology/Electronic Document Preparation Management.

vii. A subvention of G\$10,000,000 to fund Trade Union Education programmes throughout the country.

10. Recommendations specific to individual Government Agencies,

Revenue Authority

Revenue collection should be seen as an important Government activity. Workers should be encouraged to execute this function in a professional manner with very high standards. However workers executing this function must also be seen as an important and valuable assets to the Organization. Thus they should be treated with respect and allowed to work under conducive working conditions.

The Union therefore is suggesting that the following areas be improved without delay:

(a). **Improved emoluments for the employees of the Authority.**

Taking into consideration that this is largest Governmental Revenue Collection Agency.

(b). **Resuscitation and introduction of the Revenue Protection for staff.**

(c). **Annual Tax free bonuses for employees within the Authority.**

It is noted that the revenue collection for the past ten years has surpasses its projected targets. Certainly, this was due to the commitment and dedication of professional employees within the Authority. The Union therefore is strongly representing that a one month tax free bonus be paid annually to all employees of the Authority.

d. **Risk Allowance for employees with the Authority.**

Some Officers by virtue of the nature of their duties are exposed to greater danger to life and limb; as such they should be satisfactorily protected from any danger seen or unseen.

e. **Provision of a Headquarters:** - The Union supports that all buildings provided by the Revenue Authority for occupancy by employees are safe and conducive for work.

f. **Improve training at acceptable universities Local, Regional and International**

This should include areas that support the developmental trust of the country, for example, taxation, oil and gas, auditing and other relevant areas.

11. **Public Healthcare Institutions and Employees**

The only referral hospital in Guyana is the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. This hospital once had the capacity of one thousand (1000) beds. However today the number of beds have been drastically reduced to less than half which is the policy of the

Government. This policy sometimes finds two patients sharing the same bed and also patients sitting for hours on a chair waiting for a bed.

Unsuitable working conditions at Health Care Facilities – Health Care Workers are forced to work under adverse and deplorable conditions. The working environment, including rest and lunch rooms are not in keeping with the standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Workers are often forced to use private and government vehicles as the lunch room or an alternative the work stations in the presence of patients and their families. Such working conditions can be considered as unhealthy, hazardous and contaminated areas. It is very unacceptable for Health Care Workers to consume meals under these conditions.

It can be viewed that these working conditions are among the contributory factors that are forcing health care workers to migrate in large numbers. It is important at this stage more than ever for the Government and the Union to work in harmony to improve the working conditions, to provide more benefits such as scholarships, house lots etc, and to motivate workers to reduce the migration rate.

The Union is therefore representing that the Government of Guyana updates its travel register and include the various categories of Nurses to be eligible for duty free concessions.

National Psychiatric Hospital - The Union notes with much concern the comments made by the Hon. Minister of Health, Re: the intention of the government to close the only Psychiatric Hospital in Guyana. The Union is not in support of such decision and is calling on the Government of Guyana to rethink its position.

The Union is therefore urging that adequate funds be made available in the 2024 National Budget for the proper up keep of this institution which includes the enhancement of the environment, adequate security system and the provision of proper protection for the workers of the institution.

Note, some patients are taken to the institution under heavy police guard but remain at the institution for healthcare in the hands of Health Care Workers without any security / protection.

The Union is also representing a special risk allowance be given to Health Care Workers attached to the Institution. The Union will strongly support a non-contributory life insurance for all workers with in the Institution.

Outstanding difference in salaries for Technicians - Health Care professionals in the past years were not properly compensated base on their status of employment however as committed employees they continue to perform duties with pride and dignity and strongly believe that this issue will be amicably resolved. To date this matter is still outstanding resulting in these Technicians being demotivated.

The Union has represented this matter at various levels and is therefore expecting an amicable resolution where adequate funds be made available in the 2024 National Budget to adequately compensate these workers for they services.

Increased allocations to GPHC and the Regional Hospitals to house Abandoned Patients - in all of the health institutions there are several patients who have recovered and are released by the hospitals but whose relatives have refused to take them away. The continued presence of these discharged patients in the hospital is a drain on the hospital's resources and occupies, needed and scarce resources such as beds, food etc. that are sorely needed by sick patients. Hence an allocation should be made to cater for these people.

The Union is therefore recommending that the Government provides adequate accommodation for these discharged individuals until taken care by relatives.

Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA)

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

In acknowledging the increasingly complex and expanding duties and responsibilities of the GCAA Staff, the GPSU is representing that an increased in remuneration and, more specialized training at the senior technical level, especially for staff within the Air Navigation Services Directorate.

State Audit Department

It is important for us to stamp out corruption in this country. Therefore, we should all work together in this fight. To do this, qualified and competent staff should be recruited with attractive salaries and benefits. It is noted that audits were outsourced to private Auditors, who were paid superior rates (as compare to the salaries of the Government Auditors) for their work since the Audit Office of Guyana is short of staff.

The Union is therefore suggesting that the staff complement at the Office of the Auditor General be increased and allocations be made available in the 2024 National Budget to address the salaries and allowances increases for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 and other related benefits for additional staff and to provide the necessary tools to perform the duties within the Department.

Sweepers/Cleaners

This matter is long outstanding, and it is very troubling to the Union and the country's valuable workers the Sweeper/Cleaners. These are employees who prepare the environment, making it healthy, safe and conducive for learning. Sometimes they perform the duties of teachers, mothers even counselors while at school. During the year 2013 the then Administration, after realizing that these workers were not properly treated in relation to the Conditions of Service, promised to make the necessary correction.

Unfortunately, years after that promise was made it has not been fulfilled, leaving these workers to continue to face economic hardships. These Workers are all **FEMALE** and this treatment is viewed as discriminatory. Mothers give birth to babies but cannot enjoy NIS or any other benefits. There are Sweeper / Cleaners who worked for a number of years and attained the age of retirement and off the job without any benefits. This has since forced these workers to seek employment as security guards.

Is this what we want for our people? No pension, no gratuity, punishing them for making babies.

It is time that a conscious decision and arrangements be made to have economic relief for our Sweepers/Cleaners who are permanent employees in order for them to be removed from the poverty line as promised. The 2024 National Budget must address this problem immediately by paying the outstanding NIS contributions for these workers making it retroactive for at least ten years. This will allow persons to benefit from a NIS pension. Appoint all Sweepers/Cleaners currently employed on the permanent pensionable establishment, taking into consideration the years of service, commensurate with the date of employment for the calculation of superannuation benefits.

Anna Regina Town Council

A subvention should be given to the Anna Regina Town Council to assist in offsetting the outstanding payment of wages, salaries and other benefits since 2013. Also to improve the Council's ability to pay wages, salaries and allowances consistent with what obtains in the Public Service.

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 a living wage, and be paid wages and salaries within a given timeframe.

President's College

This College is the brainchild of Guyana's first Executive President with the aim of molding students 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 we work together in restoring this college to its former glory. Adequate resources should be allocated with full staff complement being acquired, thus there would be qualified and skilled personnel, as well as adequate provision of accommodation with modern facilities to house our students.

The Union is therefore requesting that adequate funds be approved in the 2024 National Budget for overall improvement of the President's College to achieve its stated objectives.

Bureau of Statistics

There is also need to address the issue of remuneration, allowances and duty-free concessions. Matters concerning superannuation benefits and entitlements for the staff should also be finalized, including improvements of the work environment.

October 2023.