

Public servants suffering, while Govt. discriminating in relief distribution – GPSU says

Aug 01, 2022 [News](#)



GPSU President Patrick Yarde (centre) flanked by other executives

Kaieteur News – The Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration has come in for heavy criticism from the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) over what they say is government's continued posture of ignoring the plight of public servants, even while it allegedly discriminates in the distribution of relief funds.

GPSU's President Patrick Yarde highlighted the situation during a press conference last Friday where he informed that a court challenge was filed to force the government into the legally required collective bargaining process for workers' wages and salaries.

Yarde told media operatives that “amidst spiraling price increases, Government has ignored its responsibilities to Public Servants, while embarking on costly political excursions, mostly within its traditional political constituents.” The union said that the government has committed public coffers to billions of dollars in grants, aid and other financial benefits for what appears to be carefully chosen segments of the population, while allowing larger masses of the population to suffer from the constantly rising prices.

“It is important to note that this Government following its ascension to office in the year 2020 did nothing to alleviate the pains and sufferings of its workforce, other than to offer a miniscule cash grant of \$25,000 in the year 2020 and a year later a paltry award of a taxable seven percent across-the-board increase, which taken as a whole, could not absorb the impact of COVID-19 price increases.” To worsen matters, the union said that there was a notable misrepresentation by Government about the lack of time to satisfy the legal requirement of meeting with the GPSU, hence the arbitrary imposition of the seven percent.

“The action of Government appears discriminatory, given that GPSU has written severally, since the year 2020, requesting collective bargaining on Public Servants wages, salaries and allowances, to no avail.” Additionally, there have been public outcries about the treatment of Public Servants, but Government has not shown any inclination to bring relief to its workforce, the union continued. It said twenty-four months after being sworn into office and seven months into a new financial year, there has been no movement by the administration towards its responsibilities and obligations under legally binding Collective Labour Agreements, Labour Laws, ILO Conventions and workers’ rights enshrined in the Constitution.

With this in mind, the union believes that government is very reluctant to better the lot of Public Servants, “as with a national budget of \$552.9B, backed by a [first] drawdown of US\$200M or G\$41.7B has not motivated it to engage the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) in the necessary process of Collective Bargaining towards an agreement for a living wage for Public Servants.”

GPSU said that government also approved supplementary provisions of \$44.7B recently to do a myriad of things, but none to alleviate the burdens of the employed poor. “As the largest employer in Guyana, Government is certainly setting bad and dangerous examples to the other employers it must administer through Government’s regulatory body, the Ministry of Labour.” The GPSU has thus deemed it “unbelievable that a Government that openly tries to sell itself as an upholder of democratic norms, so wantonly breach the rule of law, without redress from civil society and the diplomatic corps.”

Outside of that, the union said that one must consider too that the PPP/C Government, while in opposition decried the Granger’s Administration for its move to increase the salaries of the members of the Executive and Parliamentarians. However, “not only did they enjoy those increases in the opposition benches, but they continue to do so now as members of the Executive, without care or concern for other Public Servants that implement its policies and administer the agencies of Government.”

GPSU said that because of the circumstances outlined and the prevailing COVID-19 Pandemic, it seeks a legal avenue on the government’s continued disregard for the rule of law, including the Constitution of Guyana, and its obligation to ILO Conventions ratified by the Parliament of Guyana. The Union’s attorney has already filed the court document and set to serve it on the relevant government offices specifically, the Attorney General’s office and the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Ministry.