



**BERMUDA TRADE UNION CONGRESS**  
Affiliated with International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

# 2017 WORKERS' AGENDA

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The Bermuda Trade Union Congress (BTUC) strongly believes that the next Government of Bermuda must establish and maintain a healthy balance between the interests of business and the interests of workers. For a number of years, Bermuda has been experiencing a declining Bermudian workforce, high levels of youth unemployment, wages below the low-income threshold, deteriorating quality of life due to stagnant wage growth, an increased dependency of able-bodied persons on social assistance. In order to tackle these issues, the BTUC is asking the next Government to adopt and commit to this agenda that will empower Bermudians as well as support and improve the lives of ALL workers in Bermuda.

The BTUC is specifically calling on the next Government to:

## **Develop and Implement a Living Wage**

The BTUC strongly believes that it is time for Bermuda to develop and implement a liveable wage in Bermuda. As the economy begins to stabilize, the call for a living wage is a necessary component of sustainable economic recovery as it will enhance the quality of life such as;

- enable workers to live decent lives;
- reduce income inequalities in Bermuda;
- aid in the country's economic development; and
- enable working families to have sufficient income to cover reasonable costs;
- reduce the financial stress of families;
- increase the Government's tax revenues.

## **Develop a Workforce Development Plan**

The BTUC believes a *Workforce Development Plan* for Bermuda is fundamentally critical as it will provide Bermuda with positive social and economic outcomes. The creation of a framework for an integrated system of Workforce development will:

- make full employment of Bermudians a national priority;
- expand closed job categories;
- create and develop increased employment opportunities that integrate knowledge, skills, and competencies while connecting education with current and future occupations;
- empower people to commit to re-tooling and re-training in areas that are in current and future demand;
- encourage all industry stakeholders to make a commitment to ensure that the employment needs of Bermudians are met in a changing workforce environment;
- ensure access to Government resources and funding as an effective workforce development system must have proper planning, adequate resources and financing from the Government.

## **Address Youth Unemployment**

The BTUC is alarmed by the high level of youth unemployment. We believe it is critical that the Government develop and implement a comprehensive youth employment strategy which focuses on employment while simultaneously fostering a smoother transition into the labour market through the following strategies:

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### MEMBER UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Bermuda Federation of Musicians & Variety Artists | Bermuda Industrial Union | Bermuda Public Services Union  
Bermuda Union of Teachers | Bermuda Fire Services Association | Electrical Supply Trade Union  
Bermuda Police Officers Association (Associate Member) | Bermuda Prison Officers Association

*Bridge Programmes:* Often referred to as a bridge or on-ramp programmes; designed to help people at the entry point through remedial education and training which helps students to meet pre-requisite requirements for college and technical education programmes.

*Education to Job Strategies:* Programmes designed to help move students along an educational programme that focuses on the students completing educational requirements and obtaining employment.

*Mentoring:* Young unemployed or under employed will be tied to work permit holders for mentoring in the fields in which they were granted a work permit.

## **Institute Unemployment Insurance**

The BTUC is advocating that the Government introduce an *Unemployment Insurance (UI) programme*. The program will provide temporary, partial income replacement to unemployed workers. Income provided directly to individuals will ensure that necessities such as food, shelter and clothing can be provided for while unemployed.

## **Establish Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for all Workers**

The primary aim of COLAs is to ensure that employees maintain their purchasing power. Inflation erodes an individual's purchasing power because as prices increase, the amount of goods and services a person can acquire with a fixed amount of money decreases. While Public Service employees have shared in the sacrifice for over half a decade, the cost of living has increased while their wages have remained stagnant. Public Service employees thanklessly contributed to improving Government's financial position by surrendering one day's pay per month for a two year period. It is now reasonable for COLAs to be granted to restore their purchasing power and improve the quality of life for ALL workers.

## **Establish May 1st (International Workers Day) as an additional National Holiday**

From its inception, the BTUC has insisted on the observance of the *International Workers' Day*. We have made presentation to former Governments. We are requesting that May 1st be recognised and celebrated annually as *International Workers Day*.

## **Address Age Discrimination in Employment**

The BTUC recognizes that age discrimination affects many people in Bermuda both young and old. The young are refused employment opportunities and are underpaid. Meanwhile, older workers are prevented from continuing employment after 65 or are not being granted employment opportunities as they approach retirement age. The BTUC requests that the next Government address age discrimination by completing the amendments to the Human Rights Act legislation which already establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment opportunities and continued employment now.

## **Reform labour and pension legislation.**

The BTUC recognizes there is a need to modernize and consolidate our current labour legislation. The BTUC is requesting that the next Government commit to actively participating in an exercise to modernize and consolidate our current labour legislation. Specifically, the BTUC are requesting:

- Modernizing the Employment Act;
- Consolidation of the Labour Relations and Labour Disputes Act;
- Ensuring all workers the right to Strike;
- Ensuring that all workers have the right to be represented by Unions.
- Reform pension legislation including vesting periods and eligibility.

The BTUC looks forward to seeing the recommendations made by the Labour Advisory Council's subcommittee on Labour Law Reform.

