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Submitted by cjoseph on Thu, 2018-09-27 11:31

Castries, September 27, 2018 – St. Lucia Electricity Services Limited (LUCELEC) notes the Civil Service Association's (CSA) press release of September 21, 2018.

The CSA's name-calling and attack on LUCELEC is unfortunate but is typical of how the CSA has confused the issues surrounding this dispute.

The dispute arose over the parties' interpretation of the grade structure that should have been included in a schedule to a collective agreement between the CSA and LUCELEC for the period 2011 – 2013. That was after the parties had signed off on all the clauses (excluding the grade structure) and exchanged letters confirming they had reached agreement. On the strength of those letters, the Company in good faith, paid to its Grade 1 employees all increases, benefits and retroactive payments negotiated for that period while the agreement was being prepared for signing. Then, the CSA refused to sign the agreement, even after the Company had included **their** re-drafting of the section pertaining to the grade structure.

Despite several meetings and exchanges between both parties, including interventions by the Labour Department and the Minister for Labour, the matter could not be resolved, the collective agreement for the period remained unsigned, and the matter was eventually referred to the Tribunal.

The main thrust of the CSA's submission to the Tribunal was that LUCELEC provide it with the "Shorey Report" and that LUCELEC had failed to implement the wage structure recommendations in the report. David Shorey was a consultant LUCELEC hired in 2008 to undertake a job evaluation and compensation study and to make recommendations to the Company. Although it was under no obligation to, the Company has provided the CSA with the Shorey Report. The CSA insists it is not the 'correct' report, yet have produced no proof that there is another version which is correct.

The grade structure the CSA wants implemented does not exist anywhere else in the organisation, and is not contained in the recommendations of the same Shorey Report being referenced. To date, the CSA has failed to produce any conclusive evidence confirming LUCELEC's agreement on the specific grade structure that the Union wants. However, based on an exchange of letters between the Company and the CSA dated August 26 and 28, 2013, it is clear the CSA accepted the Grade Structure as proposed by the Company.

In fact, what the Company has been seeking to do is to implement the grade structure for its Grade 1 employees as it has done for the rest of the organisation since 2009.

Despite the CSA's attempt to confuse the issues, the main point of disagreement remains whether the parties

had agreed to the grade structure the CSA wants.

LUCELEC is on record as willingly and actively participating in all attempts at finding a solution to this impasse. Notwithstanding the specific issues in dispute, the Company has made various proposals to the CSA to find a negotiated settlement. The offers made to the CSA were in the spirit of compromise to resolve the issue. At no time has the CSA seemed amenable to a discussion on these offers. At every turn the response from the CSA has been to insist on inserting the grade structure that it wants into the collective agreement or for the Company to send information for populating the specific grade structure that it wants. In effect, it's the grade structure CSA wants or nothing.

To suggest that LUCELEC, in pursuing its legal right to clarify the issues before the Tribunal, is seeking to “derail the process and circumvent the outcome which they anticipate will not be favourable to them” is the CSA objecting to their attempts to muddy the waters being brought to light. In effect, seeking to be judge, jury and executioner in this dispute.

Suggestions that the Company has made “a recent payoff of millions to 30 high employees” are blatantly false.

In the absence of the evidence to support its case on the substantive issue, it appears the CSA has resorted to name-calling in “the court of public opinion”. This is nothing more than an attempt to gain emotional support and sympathy for its efforts to dictate to the Company what the staff structure should be.

The decision on this outstanding issue is not in the Company's hand. LUCELEC, like the CSA, is awaiting the ruling of the Tribunal.

LUCELEC continues to be a responsible employer in ensuring that all employees are adequately compensated for the positions they hold.

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