

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## MEDIA RELEASE

### BANKING, INSURANCE & GENERAL WORKERS UNION

In September 2022, the Banking, Insurance & General Workers Union (BIGWU), a union comprised of 60 Branches and 6500 members, held its National elections for the new Central Executive to lead the Union for the term 2022 – 2026.

This was the first time in the history of BIGWU in which the Union engaged in a National Election as, historically, the former past and only President, Vincent Cabrera, would present a slate that was never challenged and were thus always installed **without** the process of an election.

On this occasion, however, three (3) teams emerged and faced the polls. A six-member team led by the then 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of BIGWU Don Devenish. Another six-person team led by the former General Secretary of BIGWU, Trevor Johnson, and finally a one man (independent candidate) from the Guardian Media Branch, Emmanuel Downes, who ran for the position of Deputy President.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, the results of the elections confirmed the unanimous victory of the entire team led by Don Devenish. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, the new Executive was installed by the outgoing and retiring President (Ag), Mario Als at a General Council meeting.

However, from as early as this meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, Emmanuel Downes, the failed contestant for the position of Deputy President is recorded as raising objections against the installment of the duly and democratically elected leadership. His objections were immediately dismissed by Mario Als as the results of the elections were undisputed and the new executive was thereafter installed.

On that same day, the General Council, as per the Union's constitution, appointed three (3) trustees:

1. Mandy Clarke-Whitley, a candidate for Assistant General Secretary on the Trevor Johnson led team.
2. Melissa Aguillera-Greig, who during the recently concluded campaign period is recorded as rejecting any election material and messages from the Don Devenish led team, and
3. Catherine Robinson, who is recorded as the person that officially nominated and supported Emmanuel Downes to run (unsuccessfully) for the position of Deputy President.

It is in this context, the current Leadership of the Union is disappointed but not surprised that these individuals, led by Emanuel Downes, are campaigning (after the election) to remove persons who have defeated them democratically just weeks ago.

We also find it concerning that Guardian Media Limited, the employer of Emmanuel Downes is the ONLY media house carrying information to the public without seeking to present a balanced report by contacting BIGWU, and those against whom allegations are being made.

Further and in response to "unauthorized salary increases" the Union will unequivocally say that the salaries being paid currently are:

1. Via the same conventions which have compensated the three trustees who themselves have benefited from the same act that they now challenge,
2. Existing for the past decade and is within the approved structure of the salary scale of the Union as confirmed by its General Council, and
3. The current salaries being paid to each member / position on this current leadership of the Union is by direct comparison to every position, either on the lowest point of the scale and/or much lower than that which was previously being paid to the last Central Executive.

It has grown from coincidental to evidentially obvious that a very small faction of four individuals, whose aspirations failed at the September 2022 polls, are now seeking to create obstruction and discourse to embarrass and bring into disrepute an organization they ironically once wanted to lead.

The Union's leadership, however, is confident in the application of its decisions and welcomes any call for examination into these accusations as in so doing, these malicious and unfounded political attacks by these unsuccessful candidates will be exposed in the interest of transparency and for the sake of our proud membership.

To this end, on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 9.30 am.** the Media is invited to a physical conference, hosted by the Banking, Insurance and General Workers Union at #85 8<sup>th</sup> Street Barataria, where any allegations which are now circulating may be dealt with directly and frontally by the Union.

**END..... 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022**



**Jason Brown, Deputy President, BIGWU**

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