



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **PRIME MINISTER HOSTS MEETING WITH TRADE UNION COUNCIL**

**ST. GEORGE'S, GRENADA, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2011**\_ The leadership of the Grenada Trade Union Council (GTUC), on the invitation of Prime Minister Tillman Thomas, on Friday discussed areas of concern and issues of national interests with government officials.

The meeting, which was held at the Cabinet room at the Prime Minister's Botanical Gardens Office, was attended by Minister of Labour -- Hon. Glynis Roberts, Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing, Community Development & Lands -- Sen. Glen Noel, GTUC President -- Madonna Harford, GTUC Treasurer -- Elliot Bishop, GTUC General Secretary -- Ray Roberts, Technical and Allied Workers Union's (TAWU) - Chester Humphrey, Bert Paterson, Camille Thomas and Gordon Raeburn, Grenada Union of Teachers, Kenny James and the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union's (SWWU) Finbar Linton.

Prime Minister Thomas welcomed the attendees and expressed his willingness to listen to and have dialogue with all stakeholders.

"We must see ourselves as partners and stake holders who must work together to do whatever we can to benefit the people of our nation," said the Prime Minister.

The meeting discussed a wide range of issues, including:

- the passage of new minimum wage legislation;
- a national health insurance programme;
- the removal of VAT on severance payments and funerals costing up to \$12,000.00;
- the need to have workers/union members on boards of statutory bodies;
- a comprehensive, transparent policy for the issuance of employment permits;
- payment to police officers for security services at sporting events staged by schools;
- using idle/under-utilized government farms as teaching grounds, linked to Youth Upliftment Programme, where unemployed persons can engaged in the production of food to meet the needs of the tourism industry.
- The need to comprehensively address the transportation problems affecting students

The union leaders proposed a number of solutions to the issue of school transportation, including the establishment of a national school bus service and/or the effecting of arrangements with bus owners who obtain concessions when purchasing their vehicles for transportation of tourists. The unions suggested the transportation of school children should also be an obligation during the tourist off-season.

Government ministers attending the meeting pledged to follow-up on the issues discussed and the solutions proposed by the union leaders.

Prime Minister Thomas promised immediate action on the establishment of a consumer affairs agency, minimum wage legislation, and the inclusion of employee representatives on statutory boards.

“These initiatives are in keeping with our focus on improving transparency and accountability in the governance process,” he said.

The Grenadian leader expressed his appreciation to the TUC and trade unions leaders for their “candid sharing of concerns and recommendations for improving the quality of life” for the people of Grenada, in general and for workers in particular.