

Tour operators to get a fuel subsidy

Licensed tour operators will receive a fuel subsidy courtesy of GOB and BTB for six months.



Abil Castaneda, the Belize Tourism Board's Director of Quality Management and Capacity Development

by Charles Gladden

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In an effort to reduce the severity of the impact of ever-rising fuel prices on the operations of tour operators, who purchase considerable amounts of fuel to power the vehicles and water vessels that they use to transport tourists to various destinations within the country, the Government of Belize and the Belize

Tourism Board (BTB) have partnered to launch a fuel subsidy program designated for licensed tour operators.

A total of 1.5 million dollars in fuel subsidies will be provided to tour operators for a six-month period, and according to Abil Castaneda, Director of Quality Management and Capacity Development for the Belize Tourism Board, licensed tour operators are being urged to submit their applications for the subsidy program.

“What we are doing right now, and in fact, we are making a call out to all our licensed tour operators to submit their applications. The application is there so

that we can understand what their level of fuel consumption is in the past and also to look at some projections for the future so that we can finalize in reality a formula that we can use to provide the subsidy in a very equitable manner. The initial thought process was we would give everyone a cap; however, every tour operator — unlike other sectors they have different use of fuel; you know, [there] are some that are in the marine area, some that are terrestrial, some that do tours all the way to Xunantunich, some that only do tours in Altun Ha, so we have to be very, in terms, considerate of all those elements, and that is why we are making this call for all licensed tour operators to kindly submit their

application,” explained Castaneda.

The size of the fuel subsidy apportioned to individual operators will thus be proportionate to the scope of their operation, and the amount of fuel used for the transportation of tourists during that operation.

Castaneda noted that the subsidy is also being offered to tender operators. “So those operators that bring our cruise visitors off the ships onto the mainland, we are also extending it to them, because, in reality, the objective of all of this is to soften the blow in terms of the increase in fuel prices that we are seeing across the board,” he said.

The deadline to submit applications is this Friday, May 13. Licensed tour operators can visit the BTB’s Facebook page or call the BTB at 227-2420.

Notably, some tour operators are viewing the proposed subsidy program with a considerable degree of skepticism — even cynicism. At a press conference held by the Federation of Cruise Tourism Associations of Belize (FECTAB) on Thursday, May 12, the president of FECTAB, David Almendarez, voiced his views about the fuel subsidy program and called it a “scam”.

“The BTB is hustling us. We, tour operators and tour guides, that is the thanks we’re getting after the pandemic. They have a thing that is called ‘fuel subsidies’. I laughed. First of all, when we needed the fuel subsidies during the high season when gas was peaking, they didn’t help us. Now that no business is going on, fuel subsidies. Who got the most buses? Which company has the most buses? Who uses the most buses? [Does] any local tour operator uses the most bus? [Does] any Belizean use the most bus? So who the hell benefits? Mister Minister, we’re not stupid! Don’t play with our bread”, remarked Almendarez.

Coastal Road upgrade near completion

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environmentalists, and we made some structural changes to the culvert so that they can follow the specifications that were recommended. That financing, we did on our own. So we are listening to people. We go out and we consult. And even though the projects have already been signed, if there is a way of bettering it, we do,” said Minister Espat.

He further noted, “The supervisors are the same supervisors from here at Polytechnica. The contractor is different, and the supervisors from the Ministry of Work are still a project execution unit. The update report that I have received, they’re on the schedule. They had a couple of setbacks when we had some of the floodings. They had a couple of setbacks during COVID, but they have made the time, and they’re on schedule.”



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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Central Bank Responds to Dispute at St. Francis Xavier Credit Union

Belize City, 11 May 2022: The Governor of the Central Bank of Belize (Central Bank), in his capacity as Registrar of Credit Unions, advises that pursuant to section 26 of the Credit Unions Act, 2011, Chapter 314 of the Laws of Belize, the Board of Directors shall hold, or the Registrar shall call or direct the calling of, an annual or special general meeting of a credit union. The Board of Directors of St. Francis Xavier Credit Union Limited nor the Registrar has made such calling. The Registrar, therefore, advises that the press release issued by some members of St. Francis Xavier Credit Union dated 9 May 2022 and titled “Long Overdue Annual General Meeting,” contravenes the Law.

The Registrar was also notified of the decision taken by the Board of Directors of St. Francis Xavier Credit Union to not renew the contract of the former General Manager, Mr. Rafael Dominguez Sr. Further, the Registrar is aware of the resulting dispute between the Board of Directors and the former General Manager and the persistent unauthorized actions of some members of St. Francis Xavier Credit Union Limited.

The Registrar reminds all parties involved in the ongoing dispute of his primary objectives, which are to safeguard and preserve members’ funds. Additionally, protecting the financial sector from disruption and risks are consistent with these objectives.

In accordance with the Credit Unions Act, the Registrar will take decisive action in a situation where he deems that the well-being and interests of the members of a credit union are being compromised.

The Registrar, therefore, urges all parties involved to effectively resolve the ongoing dispute.

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ISSUED BY:
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