



## Government of Antigua & Barbuda

Ministry of Education, Sports & Creative Industries

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### PRESS RELEASE

**TO: All Media Houses**

**DATE: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**RE: EXTENSION OF EASTER VACATION**

The Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers in a correspondence dated 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023, has signaled their intention to “engage in industrial action starting April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023”. The reason given for their planned course of action is that the membership of the Union is dissatisfied with the progress made by the government on outstanding issues raised. In light of this and because children cannot be left unsupervised or undersupervised, particularly at this time of immense challenge with antisocial behaviour among young people, the Ministry of Education has taken a decision to extend the Easter Vacation by four days, resorting to the traditional two weeks. This will allow additional time for the Ministry to work closely with the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers and other agencies to arrive at an acceptable position.

Listed below are the grievances of the A&BUT and the progress made to date by the Ministry of Education on the issues.

Concern	A&BUT Issue	Progress Made
Lighting	14 schools (priority list) should receive lighting of premises	12 schools completed; remaining 2 schools will be completed before 11 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
Fencing for Sir Novelle Richards Academy	Requested a short-term solution for the erection of a temporary fence for the Sir Novelle Richards Academy.	Commissioned a team to include the MoE's Facilities Manager, representatives from the Board of Education, Public Works Department and the Lands and Surveys Department to develop the requested short-term solution. The team indicated the projected cost for the fence at SNRA was EC\$300,000. Funding was

		<p>previously arranged through a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank Third Basic Project for Education, EQUIP, and owing to the cost for a temporary fence, recommended an alternate short-term measure of three-day time security officers on plant until the fence is erected.</p> <p>In a meeting with the Cabinet on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, it was arranged that Cabinet officials, a team from Lands and Surveys, other officials and the Union will meet on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April at the SNRA to again highlight the boundaries of the school and begin erecting a fence shortly thereafter. The Cabinet has projected fence completion within one month.</p>
<b>Teacher Upgrades</b>	All upgrades should be completed by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	326 teachers were upgraded. Most of that number have received their upgrade instruments and corresponding remuneration; 53 upgrade instruments remain uncollected at the Ministry by teachers, 3 persons were outside of the upper time limit of the Cabinet Decision and will be addressed in the new cohort for upgrades. The Ministry is trouble-shooting the data for approximately 15 teachers who have indicated issues with their upgrades. Although most of the upgraded teachers have received payments, a few are outstanding as the Treasury continues to make payments as resources allow. A call has been made for teachers to reach out where there are issues. The Ministry continues to work with the Establishment Department and the Treasury to ensure that all outstanding teachers are upgraded and paid.
	Teachers' Retroactive Payments	In keeping with a previous agreement, the Special Upgrades Committee comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Establishment Department, the Ministry of Education and the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers will reconvene on 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 2:00 pm to address retroactive payments.
<b>Head of Department Ex Gratia Payments</b>	34 teachers acted as Heads of Departments	13 teachers received their Ex-Gratia payments on 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2023. The Treasury has indicated

		that the remaining teachers will receive their payments at the end of April 2023.
<b>Electronic Surveillance</b>	All schools on the priority list should receive camera surveillance (15 schools)	<p><b>August to November 2022</b> - Assessments done on school plants to determine the best solution. Sourcing and importing of equipment for the pilot phase.</p> <p><b>December 2023</b> – Installation of a wireless solution at the Princess Margaret School as the first pilot school.</p> <p><b>January to February 2023</b> – Pilot assessment stage and installation of wireless cameras at Clare Hall Secondary and All Saints Secondary Schools as part of the pilot stage.</p> <p><b>February 2023</b> - An agreement was made with a private donor to install wire-based solution in secondary schools. Wireless solution intended for smaller schools.</p> <p><b>March 2023</b> – Work began at the Ottos Comprehensive School. Assessment and installation work conducted at the Antigua Girls’ High School, Antigua Grammar School and Sir Novelle Richards Academy for a wire-based solution.</p> <p>The progress was reported to the A&amp;BUT in March highlighting the challenges and the need for a sustainable solution for schools on the priority list.</p> <p>The Ministry registered its concerns that much more time was needed to allow for a sustainable solution and for this process to be done properly bearing the need to ensure that the right solution is employed. It was reiterated that rushing the process may be disastrous for the education system in general.</p>
<b>Collective Bargaining Agreement</b>	Reconvene collective bargaining	A meeting with the Minister for Civil Service Matters and representatives of the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers will take place on Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> April. The proposal from the Government’s Negotiating Team will be brought before Cabinet on Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2023.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries remains committed to working with the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers to ensuring that learning environments are healthy, safe and conducive to learning and that all teachers receive their due worth.

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