



Employers Consultative Association  
of Trinidad and Tobago

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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## The Recognised Voice of Employers in Trinidad and Tobago

### Our Partners



International Organisation of Employers  
Organisation Internationale des Employeurs  
Organización Internacional de Empleadores  
*The Global Voice of Business*



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# NOTICE OF 58TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



## NOTICE OF 58th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 58th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Employers Consultative Association (ECA) will be held as follows:

**THURSDAY JANUARY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2020 | 9:00AM**

*(Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.)*

**ECA CONFERENCE & TRAINING FACILITY**

#17 Samaroo Road, Aranguez Roundabout North, Aranguez

### **AGM AGENDA:**

Reading of the Notice convening the 58th AGM

Chairman's Remarks

Minutes of the 57th AGM

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Auditor's Report

Financial Statements

Appointment of Auditor for 2018

Election of Directors

Other Business

Vote of Thanks

For registration, please contact:

**Mrs. Rita Best-Paul | 675-5873/9388 ext. 222**

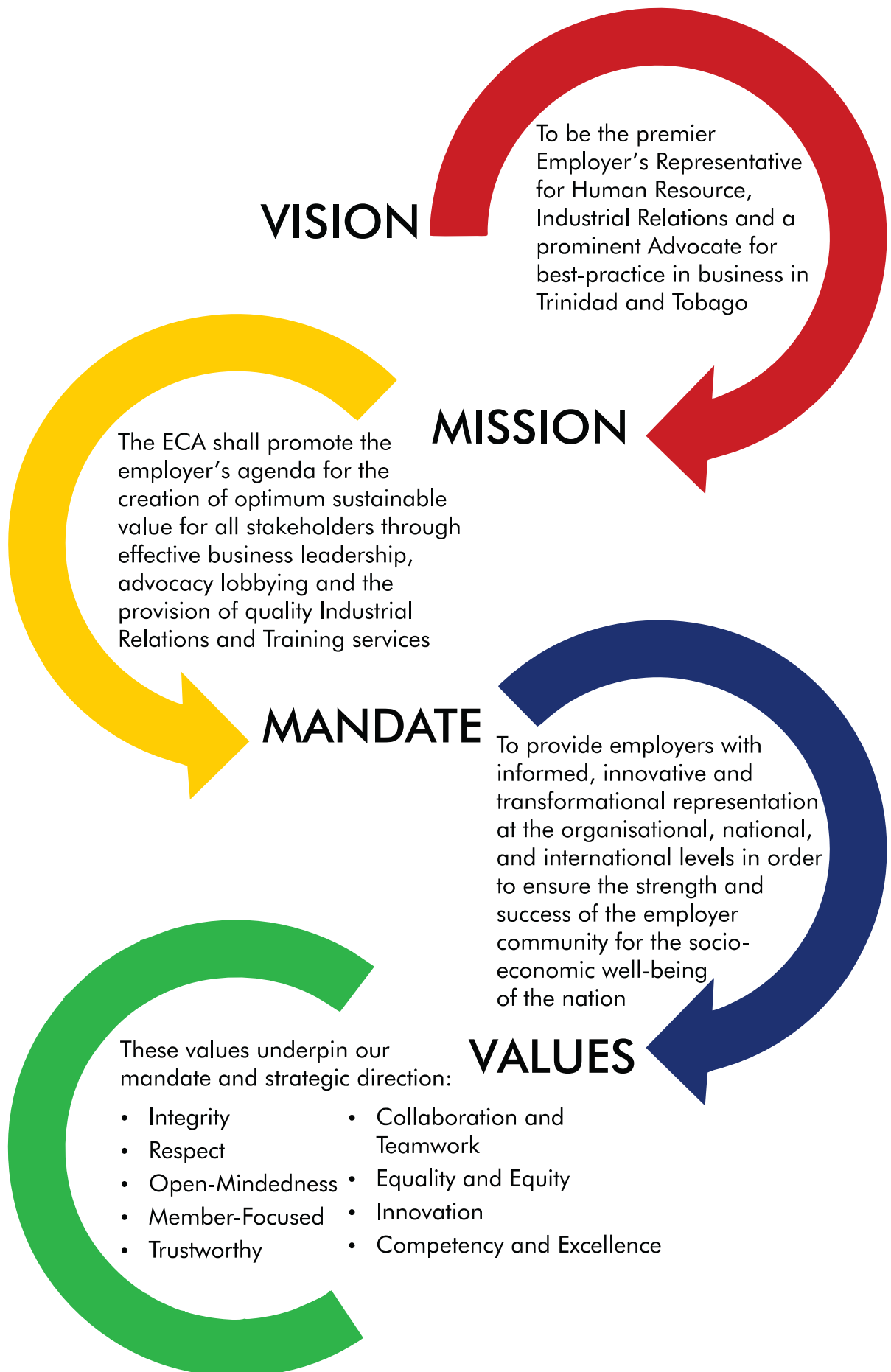
**Email: [rbest-paul@ecatt.org](mailto:rbest-paul@ecatt.org) | [communications@ecatt.org](mailto:communications@ecatt.org)**

Register Online: **<https://ecatt.org>**

*Registration is Required*

*By order of the Board of Directors, ECA  
Stephanie Fingal, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary (Interim)*

# FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS



## CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

It is a distinct pleasure for me to bring you greetings on behalf of the Board of Directors as Chairman of the Employers Consultative Association (ECA).

Having now been existence for almost sixty (60) years, it is my firm belief that the ECA, as the recognised voice of Employers, continues to be a relevant institution and an important social partner within the wider socio-economic construct of Trinidad and Tobago.

The ECA has demonstrated its capacity to engage with its constituents at a professional level and we continue to place high significance on the strengthening of key relationships at the national, regional and international levels.

Moreover, we remain committed to the provision of expert guidance to our members and the wider Employer community in accordance with our legal context, best-practice approaches and the international Conventions and Protocols to which Trinidad and Tobago has assented and ratified.

I am pleased to advise that our strategic plan for the period 2017-2019 was launched in the second quarter of 2017. This plan was developed following several staff engagements in 2016 and early 2017 and with feedback from our membership via various membership and customer satisfaction surveys. In general, this document was centred around three (3) main themes:

1. Securing the financial viability of the organisation;
2. Stabilisation and growth of the membership, and;
3. Implementation of an effective advocacy strategy.



**KESTON NANCOO**

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

While we have seen some improvements over the past five (5) years, and especially over the last year, there is still much to be done. However, we are of the firm belief that with the continued support of you our members and the commitment of our dedicated staff members and management team, the best is yet to come!

## A YEAR OF CHALLENGES

The year 2017 was a difficult one, not just for the ECA but indeed, for the national and global economy. We saw the continued fragility of energy prices, steadily rising commodity prices, conflicts over land use and national borders, continued domestic and international terrorism, and a growing refugee crisis in many territories. These dilemmas were accompanied by a significant number of devastating natural and man-made disasters, the degradation of forests, lakes and soils, and the unrelenting challenge of stabilising global environmental conditions.

Moreover, many countries, much like our own, were forced to face these challenges with an economy, fundamentally broken and in urgent need of rebuilding and reenergising. In such circumstances, any notion of business as usual is not an option.

In the midst of the many challenges, we saw a number of significant changes with the Company. What has not changed however, is the resilience and the unique ability of this organisation to adapt to an environment characterised by uncertainty, complexity and volatility, and to respond in a manner that reflects not only our resilience, but more importantly, our experience and relevance as the voice of Employers in Trinidad and Tobago. We have done this for over 58 years and will continue in this vain for a very long time to come.

Unfortunately, we were not spared from the difficulties experienced by many other organisations. Our net position before taxation continued at a loss by the end of 2017. We saw a small reduction in our asset base by almost 10%, due in large part to a reduction in the value of our fixed assets and a 50% reduction in accounts receivables due to the writing off of uncollected debts, including debts related to services rendered to some of our members as well as unpaid annual membership fees.

## TOWARDS FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

It is my firm belief however that our turnaround is very close. We have seen increases in our cash resources and investments and we have steadily reduced the gap between revenue and expenses over the past three (3) years and by all indicators, evidence of this turnaround should be seen as early as 2018.

Our unaudited year-end data for 2018 has shown both the ECA and its subsidiary to be in a profit position. This is due, in no small way, to the dedication and resolve of our management team and an exceptional team of staff members that have continued to work hard and display maturity and commitment in the face of organisational and economic challenges.

The ECA is now a much leaner organisation and we have reinforced those areas in which we continue to perform well, as well as those relating to the organisation's core mandate and *raison d'être*, which has as its primary objective, to assist and support organizations manage their human capital risks. Additionally, we have placed a renewed focus on our membership and relationships with key stakeholders. Moreover, we have sought to leverage those relationships to improve our relevance and service delivery to members and



customers.

In a real sense, we have been forced to reassess our position and redefine our path to prosperity in what has now become known as the “new normal”. This, I believe, is an important lesson, even for our country.

## THE FUTURE

Economic recovery is vital, even as the concept of governance itself stands in urgent need of renewal, both for current survival and future sustainability. However, one of the most important lessons one should learn is to never waste a good crisis. In this regard, the ECA believes that the current economic crisis presents us as a nation with a unique opportunity to invest in the type of change required to overcome our characteristic short-term thinking and replace it with considered people-centered policy positions capable of addressing the enormous challenge of delivering on the dream of lasting prosperity.

At the end of the day, we must remember that true prosperity transcends material pleasures and concerns. It must also reside in the quality of our lives, the health and happiness of our families, the strength of our relationships, our trust in national leaders and institutions, our satisfaction at work and our sense of shared meaning and purpose. In a real sense, prosperity is evidenced by our ability to flourish as human beings. The most urgent task of this generation is to create the conditions under which this is possible.

As a start, we must be able to consistently **“treat people well; treat them fairly and with respect”**. This is a simple philosophy by which I live and this has allowed me to navigate and overcome many challenges, even in the most difficult times. In the same way, it is imperative that social partners – Government, Business and Labour commit to a process of reengagement and collaboration within

the context of our National Watchwords given to us by our first Prime Minister, Dr Eric Williams - Discipline, Production, and Tolerance. This means that we must commit to a common sense of purpose, to the principles of good governance, mutual trust and respect.

Redefining our paths to prosperity must begin by rebuilding our relationships, overcoming adversarial histories and building a system of fairness in the distribution of and access to an expanding pool of resources. At the end of the day, we must remember that our collective and individual futures are connected to one another, and, so to, our collective successes or failures are inescapably linked to one another as we tackle the challenges ahead of us with vigour and determination.

The ECA is resolute in its commitment to improve its performance for our members and clients and I once again encourage you to support us in this endeavour. As a membership-based organisation, we thrive on the participation of our membership in the activities of the organisation and we encourage our membership to continue engaging with us even as we provide much needed support to you.

I thank you, our members, for your continuing commitment to the ECA - your Association - and for your support to those in whom you have entrusted its care. I thank the Board of Directors, management and staff of the ECA for their hard work and commitment both in 2017 and for many years to come. The ECA pledges its commitment to always be assiduous, rational and impartial in its engagement with stakeholders as we seek to contribute to more productive relationships and more prosperous outcomes for our entire membership and the wider citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

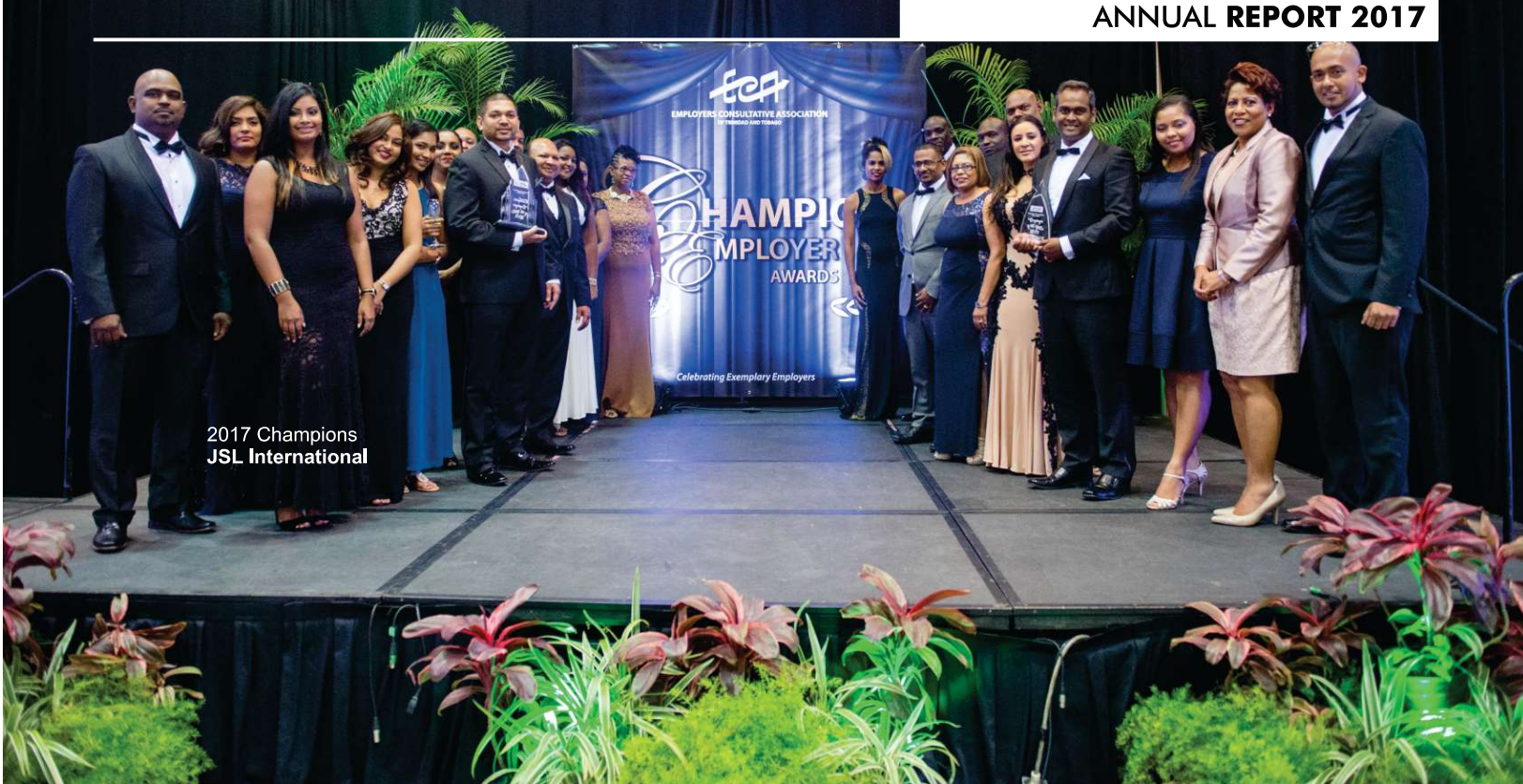
# CHAMPION EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR 2017 Awards Ceremony

Unleash  
your Potential

## Embracing Opportunities for Business Growth







The Champion Employer of the Year competition was successfully held in 2017, culminating with an awards ceremony and cocktail reception on Friday May 12, 2017 at the Hyatt Regency.


A total of seventeen (17) applications were received for this competition which recognises employers who have demonstrated excellence in areas relating to business administration and management, progressive and proactive human resource management with a proven commitment to healthy employee relations, best-practice industrial relations standards and who support the communities in which they operate.

For the first time, the ECA added a new award to recognise small companies and family businesses

with less than fifteen (15) employees, called the *Micro Champion of the Year*, which went to **Manuchar Trinidad Limited**. Other winners on the night included **RHS Marketing** (Employer of the Year - Small), **Crews Inn Hotel and Yacht Club** (Employer of the Year - Medium) and **JSL International** (Employer of the Year - Large and Overall Champion Employer of the Year 2017).

Category awards went to **Scotiabank Trinidad Limited** (Award for Excellence in Staff Development and Industrial Relations), **RHS Marketing** (Award for Excellence in Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Engagement).

## ABOUT OUR COMPANY

The page features a large, dark blue diagonal graphic element that starts from the top left and extends towards the bottom right. The background of the lower half of the page is a photograph of a green tree in a field, with a body of water visible in the distance.

The ECA is committed to representing, with excellence and professionalism, the interests of Employers as they relate to labour and social policy at the national and international levels.

As a representative body, the ECA's Board of Directors comprises professionals from its member organisations, however, representation is not confined to a voice on a board. As a recognised social partner, the Employer community is also represented on a number of State Boards and National Committees while at the regional and international levels, the ECA has established a number of strategic associations with organisations like the ILO, strengthening its ability to serve and represent the Employer community. In this regard, the ECA remains committed to the Tripartite mechanism and to advancing for the development of Trinidad and Tobago through responsible representation, advocacy and meaningful social dialogue.



## OUR SERVICES AND EXCLUSIVE MEMBER BENEFITS



TELEPHONE ADVISORY



RESEARCH SERVICES



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
SERVICES



ADVOCACY AND  
REPRESENTATION



FACILITY RENTAL



EXCLUSIVE E-CONTENT



PUBLICATIONS



SENSITISATION SESSIONS



INDUSTRIAL COURT  
JUDGMENTS



PROFESSIONAL TRAINING  
SOLUTIONS

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1



**1. Keston Nancoo | Chairman**

Vice President, Human Resources  
Guardian Group

2



**2. Farzan Ali | Vice Chairman**

Director, Talent & Government Affairs  
Grand Bay Paper Products Limited/  
Trinidad Tissues Limited

**3. Neil Derrick | Director**

Vice President, Human Resources  
and Corporate Services, PETROTRIN

3



**4. Ruben Mc Sween | Director**

Founder/President, Eve Financial  
Services Limited

**5. Dexter Charles | Director**

Manager, Group Corporate  
Communications, First Citizens

**6. Giselle Estrada | Director**

Industrial Relations Manager,  
Republic Bank Limited

4



**7. Lennon Ballah-Lashley | Director**

General Manager, Human Resources  
National Petroleum Marketing Co. Ltd.

**8. Gwendoline Mc Laren | Director**

Human Resources Director,  
Massy Stores

**9. Narendra Kirpalani | Director**

Director, Interior/Exterior Decorators  
Limited

5



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**10. Russel George | Director**

General Manager, Hyatt Regency  
Trinidad

**11. Grace Maharaj | Director**

Corporate Secretary, T&TEC

**12. Umesh Rampersad | Director**

Chief Executive Officer, West Shore  
Medical Private Hospital

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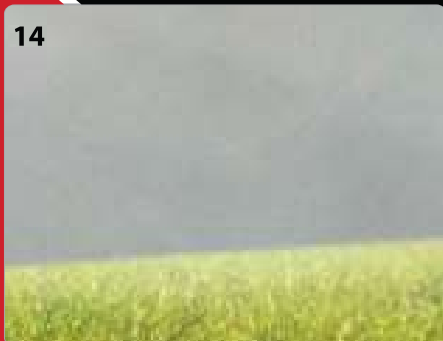


**13. Hayden Newton | Director**  
General Manager, Airports Authority  
of Trinidad and Tobago

**14. Earl Wilson | Director**  
Managing Director, Business Equipment  
and Interiors

**15. Suzanne Daniel | Director**  
Managing Director, Beautiful Buffets

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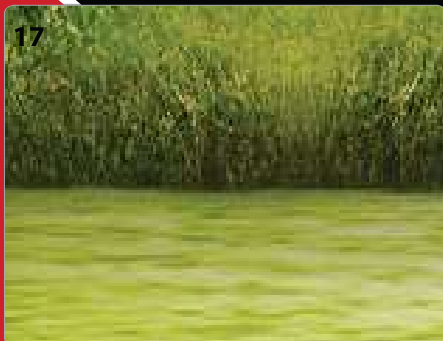
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17



**16. Carmella Sargeant | Director**  
Group HR Director, Association Brands  
Industries Limited

**17. Jacquelline Allamani | Director**  
Senior Manager - Recruitment, Selection  
and Leadership, Scotiabank

**18. Stephanie Fingal | Chief  
Executive Officer (Interim)/  
Secretary**

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## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We are certainly in interesting times.

Indeed, our theme for this year's annual general meeting is certainly in alignment with that of our current reality, both on a national and organisational level. It is my firm belief that we are at a watershed moment in the history of this prestigious organisation, much like our nation, and the decisions we make now will undoubtedly echo long into the future. If I were to summarise the year 2017 in one word, it would be turbulent. However, the ECA remains resolute in its mandate and purpose and is committed to seeking the best interest of Employers in Trinidad and Tobago. It is therefore vital that we capitalise on opportunities in the midst of continuous turbulence to ensure the long-term success of our organisation.

The year 2017 began with a clear mandate from the Board of Directors of a dual focus on income generation and member activities geared towards ensuring achievement of our purpose, the survival and success of the ECA. It was clear that the organisation needed to do things differently if it was to survive what can only be described as a "perfect storm". A drastic overhaul of our core service - industrial relations management - was required, with immediacy.

As a consequence, the Industrial Relations team was strengthened during the first and second quarters of 2017, by the addition of two (2) experienced industrial relations Consultants. These Consultants, with a combined experience of sixty (60) years, provided in-house services to the membership on a part-time basis, but jointly provided coverage as an additional resource for the entire week. This initiative added a tremendous measure of strength and technical expertise to the existing Industrial Relations unit. Over the course of the year, however, two (2) of our industrial relations advisors departed the organisation. For third



**STEPHANIE FINGAL**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (INTERIM)

quarter, the loss of the Team Leader of the Industrial Relations Unit created some setback for the industrial relations function. While the organisation was able to recruit replacement staff, the dearth of competent resources in the marketplace, especially those who would be willing to engage at a price that the organisation could afford, resulted in a tremendous strain on existing resources.

We were extremely thankful that one of the ESC's Directors and a former Chairman of the ECA, Mr Martin De Gannes, stepped up and offered his thirty-six (36) years of experience to the organisation free of charge for five (5) consecutive months. Mr De Gannes provided a measure of strength to the industrial relations consultancy function and was a welcomed addition to the team even as efforts to re-organise the industrial relations unit was underway to return the Industrial Relations team closer to the track of sustainability.

### Performance of the Company

Although the consolidated performance of the company was marginally better in 2017 from a revenue perspective with a slight increase in income earned, due mainly to a 45% increase in revenue from the Industrial Relations Unit, there



was a minimal increase in overall expenses resulting in a consolidated loss for the year of \$448,073.00 which was 19% higher when compared to the 2016 position. The company also saw revenue increases in its Training Department and Research Department. Admittedly, the very small increase in training activities was still a far cry from the levels the organisation would have seen just prior to the start of this current period of economic decline, falling by as much as 40% when compared to 2014 and 2015.

With such large increases in industrial relations services and declines in almost all other income sources, including membership subscriptions, this was clear evidence that the ECA was not insulated from the effects of continued severe economic difficulties in 2017 as its membership and other companies in all sectors sought to efficiently manage their resources and rationalise expenditure.

In 2018, the ECA adopted a similar approach by closely scrutinising its expenses and managing the organisation's human capital through attrition. Although this will be presented at a subsequent Annual General Meeting, I am pleased to advise that our unaudited end-of-year figures show both companies in a profit position thus far, and we are optimistic that this will be upheld once the audit process is completed. Credit must also be given to our dedicated members of staff who have stuck to the plough and demonstrated their commitment to seeing a positive turnaround in the operations of the ECA, and its subsidiary.

### **Board of Directors**

During 2017, the organisation also suffered the loss of its Chairman, Mrs Suzetta Ali who migrated to take up an overseas position with her company. Following the AGM in June 2017, a new leadership team was installed and Mr. Keston Nancoo was elected as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the second time following his term at the helm in

2011 to 2014, and Mr. Farzan Ali was elected as Vice Chairman. The organisation also welcomed six (6) new members of the Board, including a representative from Tobago.

The Board quickly settled into planning mode and with the approval of the strategic plan, they continued the task of re-focusing the ECA to its core mandate.

In total the Board of Directors met nine (9) times in 2017 with fourteen (14) additional meetings of the Executive Committee and other Board Committees. Various members of the Board also provided their expertise in respect of written pieces on matters of national interest as well as representing the organisation at various media interviews, consultations and national discussions.

### **Advocacy and Representation**

The following is a list of some key consultations and workshops for which members of the Board and staff of the ECA provided representation on behalf of the membership in 2017:

- National Stakeholder Consultation on the Workmen's Compensation Act, Chapter 88:05 | Ministry of Labour
- National Stakeholder Consultation on Amendments to the OSH Act, Chapter 88:08 | Ministry of Labour
- Dialogue on Unemployment - Stakeholders exploring solutions to alleviate poverty and social exclusion in the current economic climate | The Anglican Church in the Diocese of T&T (Board of Social Responsibility)
- American Regional Conference: Women in Business and Management | International Labour Organisation
- School-to-Work transition for the prevention of child labour: A review of experiences and good practices in the Brazilian Apprenticeship System | Ministry of Education

- Spotlight on Trinidad and Tobago's Financial Circumstances – The Road Ahead | Office of the Prime Minister
- Driving the Upturn – The Transformation to Longer Term Prosperity (Panel Discussion) | The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago (ICATT)
- Policy Working Group on Sustainable Development | International Organisation of Employers
- Policy Working Group on International Labour Migration | International Organisation of Employers
- Inter-American Development Bank Regional Study – Civil Service Diagnostics | Ministry of Public Administration and Communications
- The Future of Work in the Caribbean – Research Consultation | International Labour Organisation, University of the West Indies, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies

- An Inquiry into certain aspects of the National Insurance System of Trinidad and Tobago | Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs

Unfortunately, despite the dispatch of several correspondences to the Ministry of Labour, the ECA was not present at the ILO's annual International Labour Conference due to a decision of the Ministry to forgo this conference in 2017. While this decision meant that the voice of Employers in Trinidad and Tobago was not physically represented, the ECA did make submissions via the International Organisation of Employers for consideration at these important discussions.

We continue to hold representative positions for Employers on the following National Boards through Directors or other duly appointed individuals:

- National Tripartite Advisory Council: Mr. Keston Nancoo

Consultation on the Workmen's Compensation Act | March 2017



- Industrial Relations Advisory Committee: Mr. Keston Nancoo
- National Productivity Council: Mr. Hayden Newton
- National Insurance Board (NIB): Ms. Gwendoline Mc Laren (Alternate: Mrs. Lennon Ballah-Lashley)
- Registration, Recognition and Certification Board: Mr. Neil Derrick, Mr. Keston Nancoo, Ms. Gwendoline Mc Laren
- National HIV/AIDS Advocacy Unit: Ms. Gwendoline Mc Laren
- National AIDS Coordinating Council (NACC): Ms. Joycelyn Francois
- Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago: Mrs. Lennon Ballah-Lashley
- National Training Agency: Ms. Joycelyn Francois
- Minimum Wages Board: Mr. Bryan Rooplal
- National Insurance Appeals Tribunal: Ms. Cheryl-Ann Jordan
- Occupational Safety and Health Authority: Mr. Farzan Ali and Ms. Nicole Simon-Thompson
- Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board: Ms. Renata Tam
- ILO 144 Tripartite Consultative Committee: Mr. Ruben Mc Sween
- PAN Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP): Ms. Gwendoline Mc Laren

In terms of directorship on the NIB, we were extremely disappointed to learn of the non-renewal of the appointments of two (2) of our Directors – Mr. Ruben Mc Sween, and Mr. Keston Nancoo, while Ms. Gwendoline Mc Laren's appointment was retained and Mrs. Lennon Ballah-Lashley appointed as an Alternate. The ECA made strong representation to the Minister of Finance over what it felt was a misguided decision, however the Minister upheld his position and changed the composition of the ECA's representation.

One of the key areas which the ECA committed to

improving in 2017 was representation of the interests of our members, and the wider Employer community, on matters of national interest. In 2016, we saw a 100% increase in the number of media releases issued over 2015. Even with this increase, it was felt that this was not adequate as a representative Association. In this regard, one of the key changes made in 2017 was to split the Public Relations and Membership Department into two (2) separate units comprising Public Relations and Research Department (PRRD) and Membership and Events Department (MED). This strategic move allowed for greater focus by the PRRD on matters relating to advocacy and lobbying on behalf of Employers while the MED gave more focus to membership recruitment and retention. This resulted in the production of a total of thirty (30) press releases in 2017, an increase of 200% over 2016, relating to various matters on labour, social policy, economic issues and other matters of national interest. The Association also participated in several interviews on both radio and television to discuss many of the issues for which we would have provided a perspective or commentary.

The organisation's weekly five (5) minute radio series, The Voice of the Employer, was aired for a total of twenty-one (21) programmes between June and October on 195.5FM. While the radio programme continues to be a valuable source of advice to membership and sensitisation to the wider public, sponsorship for the programme was very challenging and the programme duration was curtailed, ending prematurely in October 2017, instead of November. Additionally, our Voice of the Employer Magazine was successfully produced in 2017 with Issue One focusing on "Productivity" and Issue Two, which was released in January 2018, focusing on "The Future of Work". The ECA's membership was invited to make contributions to the magazine and we thank those who would have responded with written articles or by advertising in the magazine.





Tobago Membership Day | October 2017

## Membership

Renewal of membership continued to be challenging during 2017 as service to members was adversely affected by uncoordinated responses, loss of the Team Leader for Membership and Events and eventual loss of the lone Membership Officer due to migration. This drew various negative feedback and complaints from the members and resulted in a degree of membership erosion.

In June 2017, the organisation recruited a temporary resource to assist primarily with clean-up of physical membership files as well as information on our new customer management software. By the end of June, we were able to recruit a permanent resource as a dedicated Membership Officer with an additional resource added in October. This allowed the department to regain its focus in the second half of the year with a dedicated focus on recruitment and a renewed focus on retention efforts. I am pleased to report that both our recruitment and retention figures saw some improvement by the end of 2017 over 2016.

Despite this, the membership of the ECA remained relatively steady throughout 2017 due to continued member resignations. Based on membership feedback, the main reasons given for member resignations related to economic hardships and in some cases, business closures.

To buffer this phenomenon, several new initiatives for membership were sought out throughout the year and we hope to see more positive results in 2018. There were three (3) free sensitisation sessions held in 2017 for the exclusive benefit of members. These include:

1. Social Dialogue Workshop | December
2. Business Continuity and Disaster Management Workshop | December
3. Tobago Membership Day | October

## Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

The organisation's new CRM system went live in January 2017. Having not previously had any



customer tracking software, it was expected that this would prove most valuable, especially with regards to tracking and monitoring the organisation's service level to the membership.

By the end of the first quarter, it became apparent that a significant level of clean-up was required and the organisation engaged a temporary resource to assist with this process by the end of the second quarter.

The CRM is now fully operational and has been proving most useful in tracking service usage, subscription periods and managing demographic data for each member.

### **External Staff Training**

In March 2017, the Team Leader – Public Relations and Research, Mr. Ronald Ramlogan, participated in the ILO's inaugural Global Young Employers' Organisation Professionals Academy. This programme consisted of a three (3) week distance learning phase with online sessions and a one (1) week face-to-face workshop in Madrid, Spain culminating in a final examination. The programme provided valuable training in areas relating to membership retention, advocacy and lobbying, communication, understanding global changes and macroeconomic trends, building effective partnerships and project management. Mr. Ramlogan successfully completed the programme and has since been able to add significant value to the operations of the organisation to date.

In December 2017, two (2) Officers, Mrs. Sherri Belfon, Training Specialist and Mr. Christopher Yaw, Legal Officer, participated in ILO's Essentials of Occupational Safety and Health programme, also made up of a distance learning phase with a one (1) week face-to-face and final examination in Turin, Italy. Both Officers were successful and are now certified by the ILO to deliver this certificate programme, consisting of twenty-seven (27) different modules, as an addition to the

organisation's range of training topics.

### **Rebranding Exercise**

While the Rebranding of the ECA remains an important agenda item, yet again, the financial reality of the organisation prohibited any advancement in this area.

### **Social Dialogue Booklet**

One of the major areas for which the ECA would have consistently articulated its position is that of the need for more dialogue among social partners. This type of Social Dialogue has been proven to be of immense benefit to many countries around the world, including the Caribbean, for finding consensus on solutions to address economic and social issues.

The ECA was therefore honoured to be able to partner with the ILO's Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean to publish the first ever country-specific booklet on social dialogue – a first for our country and the Caribbean. This booklet, entitled "Different Views...One Goal: Social Dialogue in Trinidad and Tobago" is meant to serve as a resource for educating all stakeholders, including the general public, on what is social dialogue, its benefits and the role of each social partner in facilitating this process. This booklet was officially launched at a Social Dialogue workshop held in December 2014 at the ECA in collaboration with the Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC) and the ILO.

It is hoped that this will serve as the foundation for improving how we address many issues faced in Trinidad and Tobago and we sincerely thank the ILO's Caribbean Office for their support and guidance with this project.

## **European Union Funded CARIFOUM Project**

In 2015, a new capacity-building project to support effective implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in the Caribbean, was officially launched. Among the objectives of this project was to enhance the capacity of social partners to fulfil their EPA obligations, especially in respect of their role in the implementation, governance and monitoring of the effects of the EPA Social Aspects Chapter.

This project was funded by the European Union (EU), executed by the ILO and implemented by the CEC with both trade unions and national employers' organisations as beneficiaries.

The ECA was pleased to have participated in this project, which officially ended in 2017, and benefited from valuable training and capacity building opportunities in areas such as research methods, productivity improvement, social dialogue and other regional initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

As we look ahead, the ECA is optimistic that the best is yet to come. The year 2018 was not without its challenges, some major, but the organisation has been able to persevere and achieve positive results. This is a testament to the dedication of its staff members the determination they have demonstrated despite the difficulties faced. I must also recognise the commitment of my Chairman and the Board of Directors in their efforts to steer the organisation back to the path of profitability and sustainability. We are now looking to stabilise and consolidate on this position in the short to medium term.

The ECA's position as the largest and most recognised Association of Employers in Trinidad and Tobago has stood for over fifty (50) years and we remain resolute in our mandate to ensure the success and wellbeing of the Employer community. We understand that this is a crucial aspect of ensuring the economic and social prosperity of Trinidad and Tobago, both now and for generations to come.

## ANNETTE JOSEPH

### A TRIBUTE TO 40 YEARS OF SERVICE



In 2017, the ECA said farewell to one of its longest serving members of staff, Ms Annette Joseph. Although officially retired in 2014, Annette remained as part of the ECA team for another three (3) years before moving on to the next phase of her life. Annette faithfully served the ECA for over forty (40) years. Annette's career with the ECA began in 1976, having been hired by then Director, Mrs. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt to assist with administrative duties. She went on to serve in many capacities during her tenure in several departments.

She would have worked under seven (7) Executive Directors and fourteen different Presidents/Chairmen. She was part of many history making accomplishments of the organisation and was known for her warm spirit and professional demeanour. Even as staff compliment underwent significant changes over the years and the organisation experienced many changes in structure, size and management, Annette was one of those constants that stood resilient in the face of these changes. In 1995, the ECA was without a Chief Executive Officer for most of the year and Mr Garth Arneaud, who was an Industrial Relations adviser, took up the challenge to lead the ECA, supported by a total staff compliment of two (2) persons, one of which was Annette.

This was arguably one of the most difficult periods in the ECA's history - with limited staff, low finance, uncertainty surrounding payment of salaries and the real possibility of closure. However, it is due to the perseverance of employees like Annette and the visionary leadership that followed, which allowed the ECA to rebound and experience tremendous growth in its service offerings, membership and influence on the Industrial Relations and socio-economic landscape in Trinidad and Tobago.

The ECA extends best wishes to Annette in all of her future endeavours and is eternally grateful for her many years of service.



# COMPANY PROFILE

## EMPLOYERS SOLUTION CENTRE LIMITED



The Employers Solution Centre (ESC) is the subsidiary and business arm of the ECA. The ESC was incorporated in January 2008, just after the subprime mortgage market crisis in the United States and before the so-called “global financial crisis” began to take effect in many economies across the globe, including Trinidad and Tobago. The organisation was formed to provide services to all Employers, members and non-members of the ECA, in the following areas:

1. Industrial Relations Services
2. Human Resource Products and Services
3. Professional Training and Development

From all indicators, 2017 was a difficult year for the ESC. However, despite the prevailing harsh economic conditions the organisation was able to rally from a total loss position after taxation of over \$520,000.00 in 2016 to end 2017 at an almost break-even position with a loss of \$43,942.00. On a departmental level, the largest gain was realised in the Industrial Relations Solutions Centre (45%) with a small increase (7.5%) in the Training Department.

Following closure of the Human Resource Solution Centre in 2016, any business secured that could not be addressed with existing internal resources was serviced using individuals from a pool of suitably qualified consultants. This allowed the company to realise some revenue from HR services, though 31% less than the revenue generated in 2016 and 55% less than 2015.

In terms of expenditure, the organisation sought to implement prudent expense management strategies consistent with prevailing economic conditions which allowed for further savings of 4% when compared to 2016 and 23% when compared to 2015 attributable to various administrative, overhead and discretionary expenses.

The following provides a brief report on each of the operating units for the review period.

### Industrial Relations Solution Centre

#### Equal Justice for Employers

Geared towards resolving workplace conflict between employers and workers, this centre is committed to mitigating risk by identifying problems, clarifying perspectives and concerns, while reaching mutually satisfactory agreements. It also encourages the right to justice by providing high quality dispute resolution and the promotion of the principles and practices of good industrial relations.

The Unit offers a comprehensive suite of IR Services, chief of which include:

- Daily Advice and Consultancy on employer-employee issues
- Industrial Relations Retainers
- Industrial Relations Audits
- Drafting Industrial Relations Correspondence
- Drafting Employment Contracts
- Review of Workplace Policies
- Conducting Disciplinary Hearings
- Representation at Ministry of Labour
- Representation at Bi Lateral Meetings
- Representation at Collective Bargaining
- Representation at the Registration Recognition and Certification Board
- Representation at Industrial Court

As previously indicated, The Industrial Relations Solutions Centre (IRSC) was especially challenged in 2017 with staffing issues and subsequent departmental changes. The unit would have lost a total of three (3) staff members at various times throughout the year, including its Team Leader. This would have impacted the ability of the Unit to manage its existing demands while seeking opportunities to expand its revenue base. However, the unit showed great resilience and perseverance and was able to contribute 40% of the organisation's total revenue, an increase of 11% when compared to the percentage

contribution revenue in 2016. The Unit also experienced a 45% year-on-year increase in total revenue generated between 2016 and 2017, representing a value of almost \$600,00.00. Unfortunately, this was eroded by a 220% increase in consultancy expenses due to the staff changes that took place during the year and resulted in a 15% shortfall of budgeted revenue.

Though less than anticipated, this increase was clear evidence of the turbulent times that many employers faced during 2017 and the relative impact on the human capital component of the organisation. The IRSC's main focus was to work with employers to minimise their exposure to human capital risk or the subsequent financial impact on the organisation's bottom line.

This was done by providing telephone advice to employers, as needed, via the ECA's free 15-minute service to members as well as through the conduct of various consultancies and retainer services throughout the year. The IRSC recorded a 150% increase in calls by members seeking advice on various people management issues and engaged in over 145 consultancies and other in-person services.

The Unit's main revenue earners came from consultancy services, disciplinary hearings and representation at the Industrial Court. The Unit's performance at the Industrial Court continues to be noteworthy having ended the year with a 92% "positive result rate" in matters for which representation was provided. This meant that 92% of our matters were either dismissed in favour of the employer or settled at amounts that were significantly less than what was initially being asked of the company. This is a testament to the dedication, competency and professionalism of the Unit's staff members, despite the difficulties faced.

## **Training and Development Solutions**

### **Building Stronger Institutions**

With continued economic difficulties in 2017, one of the first expense lines that many companies chose to reduce was that of staff training. This was especially evident among public sector companies and government agencies, who would usually account for between 55% and 65% of in-house training revenue annually. In 2017, we saw zero Government Ministries requesting training activities and a decline in income from other state/quasi state institutions to approximately 44% of in-house

training revenue.

However, the training department continued to deliver on its mandate and contributed 43% of total revenue realised by the ESC in 2017 with a 74 programmes, comprising of 45 national programmes, 26 in-house programmes and three (3) cycles of the Academy of Industrial Relations. Each of these units accounted for a total reach of approximately 1050 persons trained for the year when compared to 1,274 in 2016.

Some of the more popular training programmes in 2017 focused on leadership and supervisory training, customer service, and industrial relations topics with an emphasis on discipline, probation and company policies. Where possible, the organisation also sought to capitalise on emerging national issues and added some new programmes focusing on areas like sexual harassment, mental health and social media in the workplace.

Unfortunately, the department ended the year on a somewhat subdued note following the resignation of its Team Leader in December after fourteen (14) years of meritorious service to the organisation. Having had a major role in building the training department to its current status, this resignation will undoubtedly have an impact but the organisation will implement measures to minimise this impact and ensure continuity of operations.

## **Human Resource Solutions**

### **Practical Solutions...Exceptional Results**

We offer full consultancy in all areas relating to human resource management and practice, with an objective to optimise organisational performance through Human Resource Management strategies. In 2016, an operational decision was taken to officially discontinue the operations of the HR Solution Centre. This meant that while we continue to offer HR Services, these services were absorbed into the IR Unit under the ESC and HR Outsourcing Unit under the ECA, or serviced via a consultancy model on a project basis.

The ESC's people management solutions and services include:

- Producing, editing and/or reviewing of employee

handbooks and company policies

- Review or development of job descriptions and performance management systems
- Recruitment services
- Human resource audits
- Complete outsourcing of the human resource management function

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS (ESC)

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**1. Neil Derrick | Chairman**  
Vice President, Human Resources  
and Corporate Services, PETROTRIN

**2. Earl Wilson | Vice Chairman**  
Managing Director, BEI Limited

**3. Gwendoline Mc Laren | Director**  
Human Resources Director, Massy Stores

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**4. Dexter Charles | Director**  
Manager, Group Corporate  
Communications, First Citizens

**5. Hayden Newton | Director**  
General Manager, Airports Authority

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# CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION AND SUBSIDIARY 2017

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