



Toledo Association of Businesses

Punta Gorda Town * Toledo District * Belize CA
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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate Release: October 19, 2009

The thirty-three member delegation comprising of members of The Toledo Association of Businesses and the Punta Gorda Sister City Committee returned to Belize on Sunday, October 18, 2009 after a successful and historic five-day Trade Mission to the Cities of Houston and Prairie View, Texas, U.S.A. The purpose of the Trade Mission was twofold: one, to attend and participate in an International Trade and Commerce Symposium and Exchange and two, to participate in the official signing of a Sister City relationship between the City of Prairie View, Texas and the Town of Punta Gorda, Belize.

The International Trade and Commerce Symposium was held under the theme, “Bridging International Borders” and included three important events. Firstly, participants were given presentations by notables such as the Texas Secretary of State, Hope Andrade, Members of the U.S. Congress, Hon. Alexander Green and Hon. Shiela Jackson Lee, State Senator, Hon. Rodney Ellis and Houston City Councilman, Ronald Green. Presentations were also made by international resource partners from U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Export and Import Bank of the United States, Overseas Private Investment Corporation and United States Small Business Administration Office. The international resource partners’ presentations gave valuable information and tips for the facilitation of trade and commerce between the U.S. and Belize as well as opportunities available to obtain financing and credit support for the promotion of such trade and commerce.

The second event was the inauguration of the Tri-County International Chamber of Commerce. The guest speaker for this event was Belize’s Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation, Hon. Peter Eden Martinez. During the inauguration, the Board of Directors of the Tri-County International Chamber of Commerce was sworn in by Judge Clarease Rankin-Yates of the U.S. Department of Justice. Among those appointed to the Board of Directors of the Tri-County International Chamber of Commerce was Mr. Darius Avila, President of the Toledo Association of Businesses. The third event of the International Symposium was the business match meetings where members of the Toledo Association of Businesses met U.S. based businesspersons, investors and representatives of financial institutions who are interested in doing business in Toledo and Belize. During the match meetings, members of TAB discussed viable business concepts and initiatives and joint-venture possibilities with

their U.S. counterparts. This resulted in various investors taking keen interest in business opportunities and partnerships in Toledo.

The official signing of the Sister City agreement between the City of Prairie View, Texas and the town of Punta Gorda, Belize was also a major milestone accomplished during the five-day visit. The agreement is one that was brokered by the Toledo Association of Businesses. Its official signing concretizes a relationship that will bring significant benefits to both municipalities. Mayor Floyd Lino signed on behalf of Punta Gorda Town and Mayor Frank Jackson signed on behalf of the City of Prairie View. To commence the building of the Sister City relationship members of the Sister City committee of both municipalities met and started discussions on bilateral and mutually beneficial projects and activities. The Sister City Committee of Punta Gorda is comprised of Dr. Ludwig Palacio, Chairman, Mr. Jack Nightingale representing business, Mr. Stanley Nicholas representing Education, Ms. Martha Woodye representing Health, Nurse Hazel Cayetano representing culture, Ms. Fern Gutierrez representing youth, Mr. Allen Zuniga representing Sports, Ms. Jasmin Tzul-Faber representing Development and Mr. Barry Palacio representing Agriculture. Mr. Darius Avila serves as Advisor and Mayor Floyd Lino is Honorary Chair. At Prairie View, the delegation was hosted by the City Council and Mayor Frank Jackson who personally gave the delegation a guided tour of the city and Prairie View A and M University and pledged to work hard at realizing the objectives of the Sister City Relationship.

All in all, the delegation was well received and recognized in Texas. As part of the official recognition and appreciation, all members of the delegation were awarded honorary citizens of Texas by State Senator Rodney Ellis. Also, Mayor Bill White of the City of Houston proclaimed Thursday, October 15, 2009 as Toledo Association of Businesses Day. Darius Avila, President of the Toledo Association of Businesses comments that “this initiative (the Trade Mission and resulting accomplishments) is unprecedented and as such it is of historical significance. It paves the way for the pursuance of bilateral trade and partnerships between the state of Texas and the District of Toledo in particular and Belize in general. We have created significant strategic alliances and linkages that can potentially bring great economic and social benefits to our area during these economically challenging times”.

For more information regarding the above release kindly contact Darius Avila at above telephone number.