



Public Service, Purpose, and National Transformation

Founders Day Lecture, National Union of Public Workers

January 23, 2026

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Why Founders Day Still Matters

Legacy, standards, and the next chapter

Opening

- Founders Day is not just a look back, it is a moment to take stock.
- Institutions are sustained by people, culture, and choices.
- Barbados has repeatedly faced hard moments and held together through partnership.
- Partnership is not ceremony or a press release
- Partnership is a discipline: face hard truths, make hard decisions, hold together as a society
- My argument today: Barbados stabilised, recovered, and grew because we chose national ownership and partnership, and because the public service delivered.



Roadmap

Five parts for the lecture

Structure

**Partnership helped Barbados stabilize and grow.
Partnership must now help Barbados deliver.**

Today's five parts:

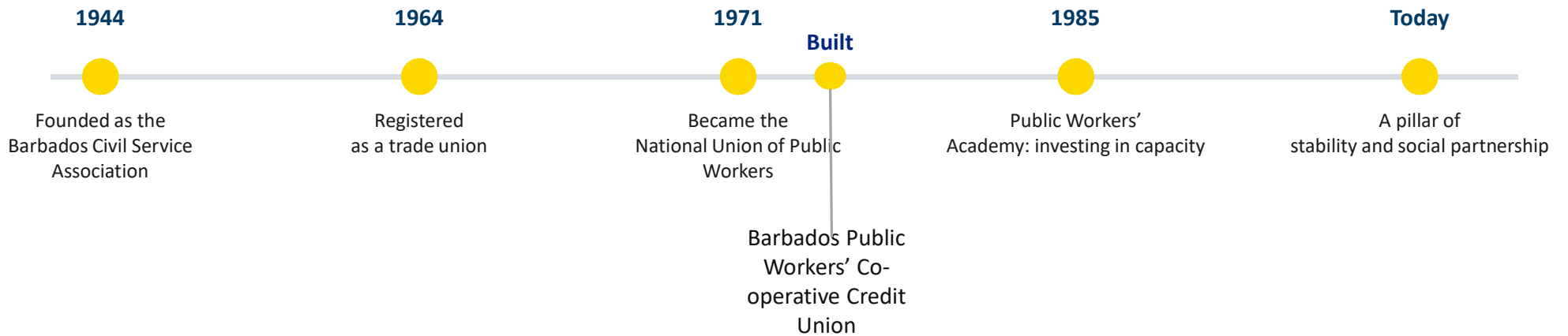
- What the NUPW built, and why it matters beyond the workplace
- The Social Partnership as a Barbadian tool for stability, and the 1990s lesson
- The BERT journey since 2018, why it had to happen, and what it achieved
- What BERT 2026 demands now, especially on productivity and delivery
- A call to action, to public servants, the Union, and all social partners



Becoming a National Institution

Key milestones that shaped purpose and professionalism

NUPW



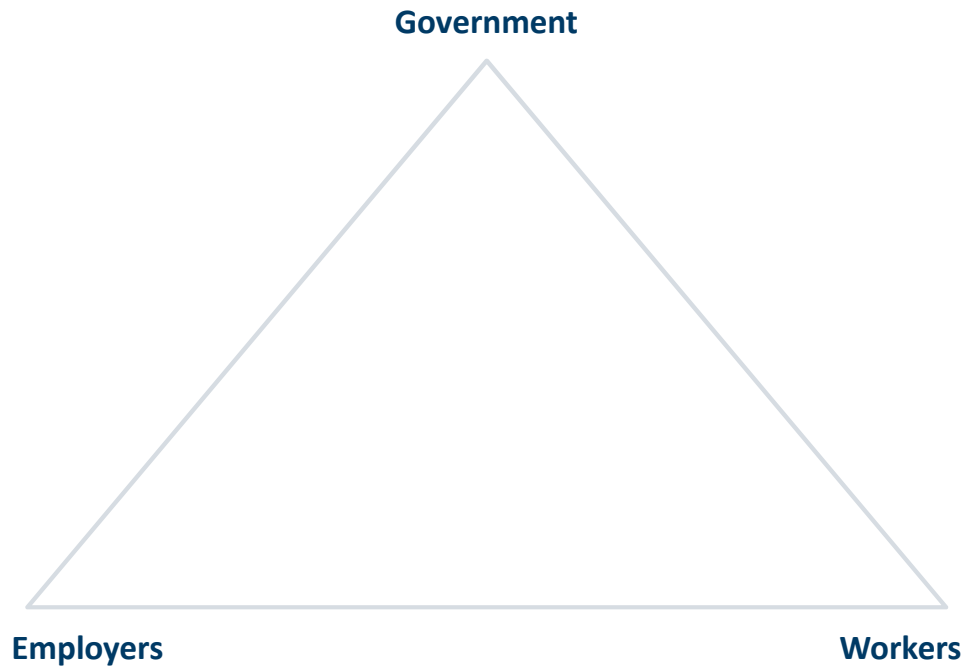
A strong union protects workers, and also lifts standards, builds capability, and supports national stability.



The Social Partnership

A Barbadian tool for stability, fairness, and cohesion

Partnership



What partnership provides:

- A legitimate space to manage trade-offs in the open
- Fairness and consultation, even under pressure
- Lower conflict, higher stability, stronger confidence
- A way to protect jobs while supporting adjustment
- Not only peace, it is performance and delivery
- Model evolved through successive protocols and continued dialogue

1993 Protocol I: linking stabilisation, productivity, and employment security.



2018: The Choice Point

When stability became urgent

Context

The hard reality

- Debt had climbed to about 178.9% of GDP
- Reserves had fallen to under 4 weeks of import cover
- A risk to the exchange rate peg and everyday livelihoods
- Large financing gaps and eroding confidence
- Less space to protect social services

The Barbadian decision

Manage decline politely
OR
Stabilise, restructure, and rebuild
credibility

Stability was not the goal in itself, it was the platform for recovery and transformation.



BERT: Homegrown and Nationally Delivered

Supported by international partners, powered by public service and partnership

BERT

What this framing protects

- BERT was designed by Barbadians, implemented by Barbadian institutions, and carried by Barbadians
- International partners supported with financing, technical assistance, and reviews
- External support strengthened confidence and validated the path to the wider world
- But support did not replace national ownership
- The work was done across ministries, departments, statutory bodies, and state-owned enterprises

Public service is the delivery mechanism, partnership makes delivery possible.

Adjustment without partnership becomes punishment. Reform without partnership becomes brittle. Policy without partnership becomes theatre.



What BERT Delivered

Bottom line: stability created room, but the next phase is about raising productivity and delivery capacity.

Results that restored space for investment and reform

Outcomes

Public debt to GDP

178.9% → 101.1%

End-Sep 2025

Reserves

31.6 weeks

Import cover, End-Sep 2025

International reserves

\$3.3B

End-Sep 2025

Growth momentum

17 quarters

Continuous expansion

Credibility signal

US\$500M bond

International issuance in 2025

Social protection

Protected

Critical social spending

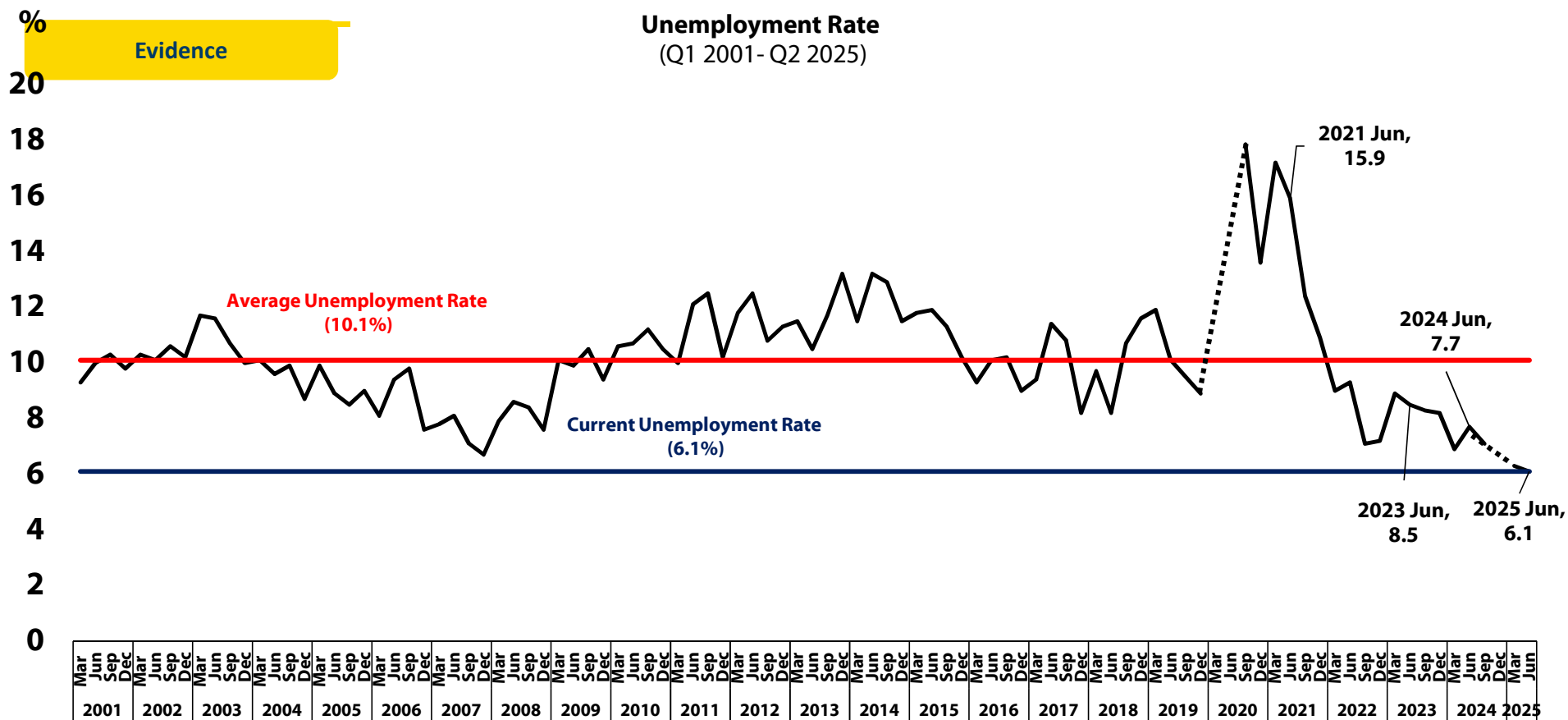
Why these matter

Stronger protection for the exchange rate peg, lower vulnerability to shocks, more room to maintain social services, and restored confidence for investment and job creation.



Employment strengthened with recovery and growth

A visible markers of regained stability



Implementation: What Delivery Really Means

From announcement to execution

Delivery

Delivery is:

- Budgeting and controls
- Procurement and value for money
- Accurate reporting and transparency
- Tax and customs administration
- State-owned enterprise oversight
- Data, systems, and workflows that work
- Public communication that prevents fear and rumours becoming crises

Partnership in the next phase must become partnership for performance: not comfort, delivery.

Implementation: What Delivery Really Means

Ownership, transparency, and standards

Delivery

Three delivery disciplines:

- Partnership as performance: negotiate fairness, and insist on service standards - credibility through discipline.
- Structural fixes, not short-term cuts: strengthen how government works.
- Trust through transparency: clear monitoring, reporting, and accountability.

A country cannot reform in silence.



BERT 2026: From Stability to High Performance

The next phase is daily improvement, not crisis management

Next phase

Stability is the floor. Transformation is the work.

Challenges remain: productivity, investment gaps, climate risk, contingent liabilities, and external volatility.

Five strategic pillars:

1

Productivity and
Competitiveness

2

Debt and Fiscal
Sustainability

3

Financial Market
Deepening

4

Climate Resilience
and Green Economy

5

Human Capital
and Inclusion



Productivity and Delivery Agenda

Work smarter, reduce friction, raise service quality

Focus

Labour productivity growth: about 0.8% per year since 2018

Digital Productivity State

- Once-only data principles and shared registries
- Automated licensing and permits
- Digital payments and reduced manual processing
- Key delivery reforms: Electronic Single Window, Trusted Trader, Single Digital ID + Business Identity, modernised Business Barbados platform
- A small, empowered Productivity Delivery Unit to drive end-to-end redesign and KPI reporting
- Pro-worker outcome: better tools, clearer processes, fewer backlogs, and more pride in service



Partnership for Delivery

Defend rights and drive results

Action

Public Service

- Excellence as a personal and professional standard
- Continuous improvement, ethical conduct, national interest
- Invest in development, embrace training and technology
- Connect daily work to national outcomes

The Union

- Advocate fiercely: fair compensation, secure employment, dignity
- Worker welfare and national progress are interdependent
- Support modernisation designed with workers, not imposed on workers
- Insist on service standards while negotiating fairness

National Leadership

- Build on progress already underway: modern systems and service delivery focus
- Sustain and deepen tools, training, and clear processes for staff
- Delivery discipline: clear priorities, realistic timelines, published standards
- Transparent reporting and fair performance management



Public Sector Example: Central Bank

Excellence, innovation, and public engagement

Example



- Mandate: maintain the 2-to-1 exchange rate peg and promote financial stability
- Supported national recovery during BERT through policy work, debt operations, and monitoring
- Helped rebuild reserves from critically low levels to over \$3 billion and restore confidence
- Innovation: BiMPay aims to enable secure, low-cost, real-time digital payments
- Public engagement: publications, outreach, and financial literacy to strengthen trust

Point: deliver competently, innovate responsibly, and engage the public.





Closing

Partnership helped Barbados stabilise.
Partnership must now help Barbados deliver.

Thank you, and happy Founders Day to the National Union of Public Workers.

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