

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE SECOND PUBLIC MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ANR ROBINSON MEETING ROOM (EAST), NINTH FLOOR, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2016, AT 2.15 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Miss Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Maxie Cuffie	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Miss Allyson Baksh	Member
Miss Melissa Ramkissoon	Member
Miss Keiba Jacobs	Secretary
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoie	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member

INDUSTRIAL COURT

Mr. Noel Inniss	Registrar
Mrs. Kathy-Ann Alexander-Fraser	Assistant Registrar
Mrs. Youland Robinson	Court Administrator
Ms. Lydia Glasgow	Accounting Executive I
Ms. Yvienne Lawrence	Communications Officer
Mr. Roger Belcon	Information Tech. Specialist

Ms. Hetty Burke

Auditor I

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone and I wish to welcome all the officials, the members of the media and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who have joined in on television and on the radio stations to participate in this second public hearing of the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee. This Committee has a mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- (b) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies as it occurs and keep Parliament informed to how the budget allocation is being implemented and;
- (c) The administration of government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this second public hearing of the Eleventh Parliament is to examine the 2016 expenditure of four entities: the Industrial Court, the Tax Appeal Board, the Environmental Commission and the Integrity Commission, under the Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund.

The Committee is therefore desirous of hearing from the accounting officers of the four Departments to discover the challenges being faced and determine possible solutions to these challenges.

The role of the Committee is to assist the Departments to achieve efficient delivery of services, while ensuring that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval. Of course, this meeting is being held in public and there would be a delayed broadcast on the Parliament Channel, Channel

11, radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament's Youtube channel, *ParlView*.

The first entity, therefore, that we are going to begin our conversation with is the Industrial Court. I welcome the representatives, the Registrar and his team to this meeting. I would therefore invite the Registrar to introduce himself and the members of his team. Thank you.

[Registrar introduces himself and other Officials from the Industrial Court]

Madam Chairman: Might I ask Ms. Glasgow if she could shift because the Committee cannot see you behind Mr. Belcon. So maybe if you can shift to the—yes, thank you very much. Therefore, may I ask the members of the Committee to kindly introduce themselves, starting with my extreme left.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

Madam Chairman: And I am Bridgid Annisette-George, Chairman and the Committee is being ably assisted by Miss Keiba Jacobs, who is the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary, Miss Sheranne Samuel.

So maybe—the Committee has received your submissions and maybe I can lead of the discussion with asking the Registrar to make an opening statement to the Committee, sort of giving a context about what you all do, what your overall challenges are.

Mr. Inniss: Thank you, Chairman. The Industrial Court, well the mandate of the Industrial Court is the stabilization, improvement and promotion of industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a superior court of record. It deals with the hearing and determining of trade disputes. Trade disputes are disputes between the employer and the worker. The union represents the workers in court. Industrial Court is a specialist court. It comprises of judges from various disciplines: Persons who are experienced in industrial relations, persons who are economists, persons who are accountants and persons, of course, who are attorneys-at-law.

The support staff of the Industrial Court are public officers and the public officers are charged with the responsibility of dealing with the Development Programme. Before you today are the senior public officers. The challenges for us in terms of the Development Programme—and we have broken it down into three for you, which is, computerization, improvement works and Tobago Court—are really funding overall, but let us start with the computerization.

Computerization. It took a little while for us to actually get moving with that particular project. I think in my submissions I indicated that presentations had to be made, presentations as at today's date were made and we are now to get written proposals in terms of cost, of how much it will cost us to go forward. So we wait to see what is going to take place there.

I think, in terms of the funds we should have sufficient; we will look to see if the time period in which they are going to be able to do the upgrade of the website. With regard to the improvement works which is the reconfiguration of the Registry, that project is on target. NIPDEC, which is the state agency dealing with that particular project, they are waiting, I think it is, just for board approval before we just move ahead and that should be executed sometime in the month of May.

The Tobago court, which is a project that is quite a large project, we have realized that the funding that we were given is completely insufficient for us to be able to proceed at this juncture in terms of moving forward. A rough estimated cost is \$11 million or \$11million plus. The amount that we were allocated, \$600,000. In our request for releases last year we did ask for \$4.9million but all that we received was \$600,000. We thought we could have at least started the process but we have been told that that is insufficient to be able to engage an architect to handle this particular project.

So, what we have done is we have requested the Ministry of Planning and

Development to take over that particular project or at least let the Government take over the project if possible. That is our main challenge at the moment.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Registrar. I just, maybe, would like to start off from a point you had made with respect to the computerization. In your submission, and I think this may have come in some time after, where you gave details of estimates of the Development Programme under the computerization. Could you tell us what is the scope of this project and the life of this project?

Mr. Inniss: In terms of the computerization and I think one of the things I mentioned in computerization is that it deals with different aspects. So for the upgrade of the website, that will probably finish within a four-month period. The computerization project itself will probably continue because there would be other things that we will deal with. The actual scope in terms of what we need to deal with is really making it more functionable. We need to make sure that we can manipulate the data and manipulate it in a good way in terms of being able to input information.

Right now our website is too static and therefore we cannot at this point in time input data that would be, we think, of great assistance to the public out there. And what we have realized, at least in terms of persons looking at the website for the court list, we realized that persons look at it with a certain amount of regularity.

So, there are other things that we need to put on the website. The Communications Officer, she has a number of ideas which she has already discussed with the persons who have indicated an interest in terms of being able to provide us with an upgraded website.

So, in terms of life span, I do not expect the project to take long once it gets started, with that aspect of the project. It does not mean that the computerization

would not continue for another year, but with something else.

Madam Chairman: So would I be correct in understanding that the main aspect of the computerization is over and therefore these, I will say, upgrade works that will come from time to time?

Mr. Inniss: Not quite. Let me go back a bit in the past. The computerization project dealt with a number of things. So it first dealt with providing judges with computers. That was in the early days. Then it started to the next stage, which was cabling of the whole building in terms of making sure that we could get Internet and all of those things. Then we moved to another stage where we were providing the courtrooms with the relevant court reporting technology which is for us called the FTR, For The Record. So we provided all of the courtrooms with that particular technology.

So each year in our particular proposed method of moving forward we have different things. Like two years ago, I think we dealt with the kiosk and what we call an electronic signage which is in the court and I am proud to say that it is the only court, so far, that has those particular display monitors. So different things are done but under the computerization project. An upgrade of the website is one aspect.

Madam Chairman: And that is precisely why I asked the question, because I understand, from all you have said, it is something ongoing and therefore my concern was, I had looked at the Call Circular from the Ministry of Finance, dated March 2015 for the financial year 2016. And I had looked at one for the financial year 2015. I think the Call Circular is out for 2017 and I have observed in all of them there was this particular statement:

Criteria for Exclusion of Projects/Programmes from the PSIP.

And the very first one is:

Annual/Legacy, (Long-standing) projects: Multi-year programmes and projects for which there are no discernible end-dates and which are deemed to be annual;

Therefore my question was, whether you would describe your computerization programme as an annual project with no end-date and sort of multi-year, and therefore if it would not fall into this description?

Mr. Inniss: I will agree.

Madam Chairman: It would. And therefore if it did, I would conclude that it is most probably what we are doing here as far as your computerization programme may be at variance with the Call Circular.

Mr. Inniss: It may be at variance in terms of not having what they considered a project life, in terms of one project life and finishing. We have looked at our computerization under that particular title as one for the computerization of the Industrial Court and everything that we considered an aspect that would add to the technology of the court. We have put under computerization and though it is done annually we consider that a PSIP project. We submit our request every year to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development under that basis.

Madam Chairman: Well then, may I suggest though, that maybe as Registrar you do look at this particular provision which is a stipulation and which defines what is a PSIP, what qualifies as a PSIP project and maybe it may call for a reconsideration by the Industrial Court of where the upgrading of its computerization project over time should come from.

Okay, so at this stage I am ready to allow members, and therefore I will call on member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and let me also welcome Mr.

Inniss and the team from the Industrial Court. I know that the call and cry for a court in Tobago, an Industrial Court or a branch of the Industrial Court, has been a long-standing matter for the workers who are located and who are based in Tobago, so they do not have to travel to Trinidad to adjudicate or have their matters adjudicated upon by the court.

I wanted to ask a few questions surrounding that matter. First of all, the \$11 million estimated for the construction of this court and the allocation of \$600,000, would you want to share with us, first of all, the initial estimated cost of this project and has it shifted over the period of years? And maybe, you can tell us how long has the Industrial Court been attempting to commence this project, and how much it began at for us to arrive at \$11million today? That is the first question I would like you to raise and to clarify with us—

Madam Chairman: Member, might I just suggest, because the question had a number of sub-questions—

Mr. Mark: Okay.

Madam Chairman:—maybe we should allow the Registrar the opportunity to answer.

Mr. Mark: No problem.

Madam Chairman: You will be permitted to proceed.

Mr. Inniss: Thank you. Let me start, the court in Tobago, that project was one which was on the books since 2003/2004; it is on the books and the difficulty was to identify a building. When we got a building sometime in, I think it was 2005, the persons who were the owners decided that the state agency required too many approvals and therefore they then rented it out to another private agency. So we went back on the hunt to look for a building.

We actually identified a building, I think it was in 2014 and the building is

Sandy Hall. We got, I think it is an allocation of probably about \$400,000 or \$500,000 in 2015.

Now, that was an allocation to do X things with the court. We actually utilized the funds to do a demolition of certain things in Sandy Hall; that was the internal partitions.

For 2015/2016, our request was \$4.9 million because we now needed to do a number of things with the building,—outfitting it, there was some internal construction, painting, you needed to make sure electricity, air conditioning, a number of things.

So at that time we had estimated that that cost of that project should be about \$4.9 million. A more recent estimate ensure, that, no, that is going to come up to about \$11million. So it was a question really of assessing it at a particular point in time. And our most recent assessment of what needs to be done, it came up to that particular figure. And that is where we are at the moment.

Mr. Mark: So, are we saying that in the not too distant future, given the rate and pace at which the goalpost is being shifted in terms of cost, this project, if we are not careful in the next year or two, if it is not constructed, can shoot up to \$20 million to \$25 million. So it seems to me that there—something is wrong with this whole exercise and you may need to really go back to the drawing board so we can really budget properly. Because I cannot understand, we will start off with a couple hundred thousand in terms of repairs and then we got a new building and we went to \$4 million to \$5million and then a couple of years later it has gone to \$11 million.

So something appears to be a bit strange in this one. I am not accusing anyone of anything, but something is wrong. And it seems to me that you have also recognized that it is very difficult for you to continue along this line, so you have

now given up and said the State must now take charge and responsibility for the implementation of this project, for the accommodation of an Industrial Court.

Could you share with this Committee what is the estimated time frame for the Industrial Court to commence operations in Tobago given the fact that you have now passed on this project to the Ministry of Planning and Development?

Mr. Inniss: Well, first of all, we have not given up. We have actually recommended to the Ministry of Planning and Development that it is either that they increase the allocation to us or that the State takes it over. Now, because the capital expenditure is so high it, to me, seems wise—and, for our team, seems wise—that you have a state agency, perhaps, manage a project of that particular size.

We cannot now say when the project would be completed because, first of all we need to have the allocation which we do not have. If indeed—and we need to meet with the Ministry of Planning and Development—if indeed the Ministry of Planning and Development agrees that a state agency should actually take over, then at that juncture we can say we would want the court to be operational by early next year. But, of course, it depends on what they allocate and how they actually mobilize their resources.

Mr. Mark: That has to do with—what is happening to workers in Tobago who would need to access the courts? What kind of mechanisms do you have in place in Tobago for workers to access the Industrial Court and whether you are giving consideration to the establishment of some form of temporary accommodation while we look for this long-term permanent solution?

Mr. Inniss: Thank you. This is exactly why we want to have a court in Tobago because there is the difficulty of many of them having to come to Trinidad to access justice in the Industrial Court, either in Port of Spain or in San Fernando.

What we do, and what we have done for a number of years, is during the period that the Supreme Court is on vacation we utilize the Supreme Court to hear a number of matters and we have done that for a number of years. So that is how we try and treat with a number of the Tobago matters.

Sometimes we might have as many as 30 matters being heard during the particular period that the Supreme Court is on vacation which is the August period. But that does not bar persons from coming to the court all during the year in Trinidad and, of course, for the obvious reasons of expense, inconvenience, we would like to have a permanent place in Tobago to be able to treat and deal with all of the matters for persons who reside in Tobago.

Miss Ramkissoon: Good afternoon everyone. My question is in relation to the submission for No. 8 which relates to the projects for the financial year 2016. I am seeing a cost given on part (f), the total approved cost of projects for the improvement works to be \$461,000. And I am not exactly sure what that is related to because in the ensemble there are talks about the Tobago office and there are also talks about the website, but we did not speak about that figure prior, so if you could shed some light on that please, thank you.

Mr. Inniss: Certainly. There are three projects: one being the upgrade of the website, one being the Tobago Court and the other one which falls under the improvement works is the reconfiguration of the registry, the Court Registry in Port of Spain. We have indicated that that registry needed to be expanded, to be able to accommodate staff and also accommodate the number of files that are in the particular registry. We have already engaged a state agency to deal with that particular project. The cost of that project is \$461,000 and that is why we put that particular figure down there. So that is for the improvement works registry.

I should just indicate that when we say a registry, because I know many

Ministries have registries, it is not your usual registry. This is a Court Registry. So matters are filed at court and it deals with everything in terms of matters going to court. So from filing to disposition, all those files are held in the registry. So it is not a registry that deals with HR files or your office management files, it only deals with court files.

Miss Ramkissoon: Okay, just for a clarification then, so we are having this amount for the improvement works then you have another amount for the website and your budget is already that, that is your total budget there? So what is going to happen to the Tobago office, no funds allocated to that?

Mr. Inniss: No. There are different allocations, okay? So, may I? So you have \$500,000 allocation for computerization, that is the website. You have \$500,000 allocation for improvement works, which is the registry, which is the \$461,000 will come out of that and then you have \$600,000 allocation for Tobago, all separate and apart. So altogether you have one point, so much million, okay?

Mr. Cuffie: Good afternoon and welcome. I have two questions. The first deals with Item 4. Now, when I look at the allocations under computerization, the amount released is \$120,000, the amount spent is nil. Under improvement works, the allocation is \$500,000, the amount released is \$200,000, the amount spent is nil. Under accommodation, the amount released is \$600,000, the expenditure is nil. Now we are in the seventh month of the year and is there a capacity problem? I understand the problem with the Tobago office, but what I am seeing here is that no money has been spent although you already have funds released to you. So what is behind that?

Mr. Inniss: So, we have to look at it under each heading. Under the computerization it actually does deal with a certain amount of capacity, the ability of us to be able to mobilize and engage certain persons to deal with that particular

project, because your Communications Officer and your IT person who are the ones who are the lead persons on that project have a number of other things that they also deal with. So we have to sometimes stop doing the core duties to be able to actually now concentrate on these other projects which they had to do over the last two weeks.

The improvement works, that is actually ready to move ahead. We were ready, the Court Administrator is the lead person for that. She was actually already dealing with the technical people from NIPDEC in terms of the drawings, getting everything ready, all the measurement, so we are nearly ready to go with that, though it is the seventh month. And, of course, we have already indicated to you the hindrance with Tobago, because Tobago we do not have sufficient funds to be able to engage an architect.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Chairman. Let me get to my second question on the accommodation for a Tobago office. Now, you said this project dates back to 2003?

Mr. Inniss: In terms of years.

Mr. Cuffie: Okay. Now, given that we are now operating in a different economic environment to back then, and even when the allocations would have been made, is there any consideration being given to working with the Supreme Court or shared accommodation rather than going for the \$11 million construction, given that you said there are 30 cases. I take it that is in the court advocacy. But given the number of cases that you would expect to have annually, is there any consideration being given to sharing accommodation in light of the economic situation?

Mr. Inniss: The short answer would be, no. There is no consideration to sharing accommodation. The fact that we mentioned 30 cases in one particular

year does not mean that there are not more cases. We also believe that once the court is operating you will see a greater utilization of the particular court, because we have the research, we have library and, of course, once persons know that a court is there that they will use it. The working together or in partnership with the Supreme Court would have some challenges. That would have to be a policy decision. We at this juncture have not given that any sort of consideration.

Miss Olivierre: Thank you, Mr. Inniss. In response to member Cuffie's first question, you did indicate that you have some certain capacity challenges with respect to implementation. Now in particular, in terms of the upgrade of the website, do you currently, well once the upgrade is completed, do you currently have on your establishment an officer who will be responsible for maintaining that website or do you intend to at least put in some sort of structure and engage an additional person perhaps as the website maintenance.

Mr. Inniss: Thank you. We do not have someone who we could say, we could dedicate to the website. We do have persons who actually, even currently, do a certain amount of work in terms of trying to put information or make recommendations and those persons would be, again, your Communications Officer, your library people, the librarians. They are also very active in trying to make sure that the website is one that is appealing.

The thought of bringing on someone in this current economic time, we would not suggest that we would do that or engage someone like a webmaster and I am not sure; my discussions with IT is that we are not sure that that would be practical for the amount of things that we would have to do in our website to engage someone full-time to do it. So it would be a question of different persons actually manipulating the data to put it on and make sure that persons are able to access it and see certain things that we hope are appealing to them.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Inniss, I just wanted to follow up on that but the upgrade alone is \$500,000?

Mr. Inniss: The allocation is \$500,000.

Madam Chairman: And that is the allocation for this upgrade, yes? And according to you it may continue in another fiscal year then?

Mr. Inniss: The computerization project may continue, not the upgrade—sorry.

Madam Chairman: I may not have been clear. I am just talking about the upgrade, this particular upgrade with respect to your website and I am just following on the questions that member Olivierre asked. You have already been released \$120,000, the allocation that you asked for or that you obtained was \$500,000. So that, in terms of, you just said that you did not think that it may have been practical to hire full-time somebody like a webmaster. But I was just following up in terms of the question of the cost for this one-off upgrade which very likely may be functional for a certain period of time. Then you will have to do another upgrade and at \$500,000 I wondered whether any sort of comparison would have been done with respect to employing full-time a webmaster and what that would cost on an annual basis and doing some sort of comparative analysis with what, going out to tender to some third party provider which is going to be for a limited duration of time.

Mr. Inniss: Thank you, Chairman. No consideration was given in terms of engaging someone full-time. The comparative analysis we did not give that a particular thought. I suppose, if indeed the submissions by the persons who we have contacted to provide us with the particular upgrade, I suppose if indeed that is extremely high you may then look at engaging someone full-time. But that was not a consideration. It is something that for us we felt would be completed during

this particular financial year in terms of having to go back and upgrade again. We are not looking at doing something like that, that is why we said we wanted to be able to have the ability to—I do not want to say manipulate but let me use the particular word—“manipulate” the information so that we can input and do the changes for ourselves. So it is not something that we are looking at in terms of having someone full-time in terms of doing that. We will actually have our relevant officers inputting the information as they see it necessary.

Miss Baksh: Through you, Madam Chair. As you said, under improvement works the allocation is \$500,000, the amount released \$200,000. You stated also that NIPDEC is the state agency handling the project. My question to you is, what is the role of the accounting officer in NIPDEC’s tendering process?

Mr. Inniss: The role of the accounting officer in NIPDEC’s tendering process is really—let me start from a different angle. NIPDEC will actually tender. They will indicate to us what the cost is in terms of the person who is the successful tenderer. It will be for the accounting officer at the Industrial Court now to say, yes, they agree to pay this amount or not. And that would be the role that the accounting officer will have in that particular process.

Madam Chairman: I will allow member Baksh to follow up on her question. And then you, member Mark.

Miss Baksh: What is the Internal Auditor’s role in monitoring this project?

Mr. Inniss: The Internal Auditor will generally in terms of—and we are talking about, in terms of NIPDEC’s actual function here. So they will only be involved in this process when we come to invoices being submitted by NIPDEC and also in terms of any documentation that might flow from NIPDEC in relation to the contract requirements and any sort of other approvals that needed to be submitted. They will not have input until actual invoices start flowing in from

NIPDEC, the state agency.

Miss Baksh: Are there any controls implemented to ensure that the projects are completed within budget and within schedule.

Mr. Inniss: Our controls are really from, in terms of that particular project you will have your court administrator who will monitor that particular project. She will know what the actual cost is. She will know what the particular terms and conditions and requirements are and she would be the one to make sure that there is compliance with relevant documentation and to ensure that what they are asking for is what should be actually paid. And, of course, the accounting process would kick in once the actual invoices reach the accounts department.

Mr. Mark: In your procurement process, do you have, or should I recast and ask, what are the guidelines and regulations that are employed by the Industrial Court to prevent the occurrence of fraud in this procurement exercise?

Mrs. Robinson: Youland Robinson, Court Administrator. What we do, we follow the Central Tenders Board Regulations in terms of procurement so that in terms of big projects we will go to, well liaise with Central Tenders Board, or go to them and follow the procedures there to do our projects. But this is a small project. So as we have handed it over to NIPDEC what I will be doing is like monitoring and controlling. So I will know what kind of materials they are going to be using, whether they would be following the rules in terms of materials they say they are going to use and that kind of thing before we sign off on any of the invoices that they may submit.

Mr. Mark: What mechanisms and measures would you employ to prevent any occurrences that may take place of a fraudulent nature? Do you have some system in place that would guide you or mechanisms or measures to prevent occurrences of fraudulent activities in that area?

Mrs. Robinson: In what sense? What do you mean?

Mr. Mark: What I am saying is that if you are engaged in procurement and you have projects that you are undertaking you have to be monitoring, you have to be measuring and you have to be ensuring that everything is being done within time and brought in within budget. But there are always possibilities for occurrences of fraud. So I am asking what mechanisms and measures do you have in place to detect occurrences of that nature at the level of the Industrial Court. That is the point I am asking.

Ms. Robinson: In terms of this project we are speaking about, in terms of the improvement works?

Mr. Mark: Projects.

Mrs. Robinson: Oh! Projects on the whole. Oh! Well we follow the Central Tenders Board rules in terms of procurement so that you will put things in place in terms of how you will look at things for small items, for three quotes. You will get your three quotes, you will analyze it, you will do the right things, you will suggest which is the best quote you will take and you will move from there. You will look at what you received in terms of, if they say they will supply you with X, did they supply us with X and that kind of thing in order to ensure that we are not being defrauded or anything like that. But in terms of persons hiking up their prices, we would not be able to monitor that per se, unless we compare it with other prices.

Mr. Mark: Madam Chair, if I may ask Mr. Inniss, in the areas that you have mentioned as your main challenges inclusive of the Tobago court computerization, I think you mentioned another one. What recommendations would you want to proffer to this Committee and through this Committee Chairman, for assisting and helping the Industrial Court in the way you do things in the future and in trying to improve the level of efficiency, effectiveness and economy in your operations as a

court. Would you want to proffer possible recommendations that the Committee could consider when it is submitting its report to the Parliament?

Mr. Inniss: Thank you. I would say that one of the things we think should always be considered is the amount of money that we may request in our estimates. Our estimates are done in April of a particular year for the financial year starting October of that same year going on to the next year. Many times what happens is that you do have certain changes that could take place from April to October and therefore I think it might be prudent for the Ministry of Finance at least to find out if indeed there is any sort of variation to the amounts that we have put down in the month of April when they are allocating the month of October. And I think we should give consideration to that because you do have sometimes some variations and you run into the difficulty where you are saying, “but you ask for this and now when we come to the relevant financial year the amount has changed”. So that would be my particular recommendation really for this Committee to put in its report.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to the response given by the Court Administrator in relation to procurement, just for clarification, I would like to know if you have a process which is an open bidding process or a selective bidding process where you have a sense of value for money in relation to your projects that you are undertaking.

Mrs. Robinson: You are speaking about any type of projects or just the three projects we are speaking about?

Miss Ramkissoon: Well I know you have—you listed that you have a procurement regulation and guidelines—

Mrs. Robinson: Yes, Central Tenders Board.

Miss Ramkissoon:—right, and submission. So just guide us on what you have

and thank you.

Mrs. Robinson: Oh, whether it is an open bidding or selective. It depends on the nature of the project. If the project is one that you have to look for selective bidding, then you will look for the contractors or suppliers who actually supply what you required and then from there you would do the normal process, you will send out to the parties to respond, to send in their quotations, whatever, and then you will get a team to evaluate it and do a report based on the evaluation and then make recommendations and then you move forward in terms of the funding.

Miss Ramkissoon: So you have a department that deals with this?

Mrs. Robinson: Well we have a small, all Ministries now depending on the amounts, you have several committees, well, several committees that you put together. So for very small amounts it is just the person who is actually looking at really three quotes in terms of—between a million, you have a small committee that comes together where you have a tenders box. So you will ask people to submit their tenders, put it in the tenders box and then you would go through your process of the evaluation. And go through the normal Central Tenders Board process.

Miss Ramkissoon: Is that department able to capture value for money?

Mrs. Robinson: Yes. Yes, definitely.

Miss Ramkissoon: And in relation to that, what is the frequency that you receive your internal audit report?

Mrs. Robinson: That, the auditor is better able to answer.

Mr. Inniss: The internal audit reports are actually submitted to the accounting officer on a monthly basis. So we receive it and if they indicate their findings not just for projects but other things in any areas of concern.

Madam Chairman: So Mr. Inniss your last internal audit report would have

been when?

Mr. Inniss: The last internal report would have been—we are in April, would have been March.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted to ask something in terms of your internal policies. You said that the internal audit is not only informed by the Comptroller of Accounts but best practices and so on and they are exposed to training. What is the staffing component of your internal audit department?

Mr. Inniss: The staffing, it comprises of an Auditor I and at this juncture two Auditing Assistants. The work of the internal audit is not just for the Industrial Court, I might say, it is also for four other sub-accounting units—Public Service Appeal Board, Environmental Commission, Equal Opportunities Tribunal and the Tax Appeal Board.

We have already had discussions with the Comptroller of Accounts and we have made a submission or recommendation to the Public Management Consulting Division for two more positions. One being an Auditor II and the other one being an Auditing Assistant. So that they can better able, in terms, better be able to cover the number of agencies and do the detailed kind of examination that we would like them to do.

Madam Chairman: Just for further clarification, Mr. Inniss, in terms of—in your submission you said that the auditors were exposed to seminars and training and I wanted to know how often this was done and, secondly, when was the last training or seminar conducted for the auditors?

Mr. Inniss: The auditors and all of them, they will go not necessarily to the same training, they will be actually selected for various training. We normally have about, I would say, two to three sets of training per year. The last one was in February this year.

Madam Chairman: And we are going to allow one more question and this is from member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Chair. I just want to go back to the computerization. Now, you have already identified several capacity constraints in the organization in terms of the execution of your project. In terms of the computerization of the Industrial Court, how did you arrive at the scope of the project? Is it just an internal wish list or was there any outside analysis done to arrive at the scope of the project and what is needed by the Industrial Court?

Mr. Inniss: Thank you. It is generally done internally. And what would normally happen is we will do a sort of IT, sort of plan and the IT section will look to see what things they think should be done over a year or two-year period and it would have been based on the recommendations of IT together with discussing it with the communications department.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I would like to thank the representatives of the Industrial Court—Ms. Glasgow, Ms. Lawrence, Ms. Burke, Mr. Belcon, Ms. Alexander-Fraser, Mrs. Robinson and the Registrar, Mr. Inniss, for coming and assisting this Committee. You will all at this time be discharged. We may have some further questions, Registrar, which the Committee would send and ask you to respond in writing. But we thank you all for the assistance and for a very engaging conversation. Thank you.

Mr. Inniss: Thank you.

[Officials from the Industrial Court exit the Committee Room]

3.15p.m.

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon. We now have before us the representatives of the Tax Appeal Board and I wish to welcome them on behalf of the Committee. I would ask the Registrar of the Tax Appeal Board to introduce his

members of staff who have accompanied him.

OFFICIALS OF THE TAX APPEAL BOARD

Mr. Dushant Persad-Maharaj	Registrar
Mr. Keith Joseph	IT Specialist
Mrs. Gayvelle Davis	Librarian II

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Good afternoon to you My Lady. My name is Dushant Persad-Maharaj. I am the Registrar of the Tax Appeal Board. To my immediate right I have Miss Gayvelle Davis who is our Librarian, and to my immediate left I have Mr. Keith Joseph, who is our IT Specialist.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr.Registrar. As you know, the Committee is here to examine your allocation and expenditure under the Development Programme Consolidated Fund and I will invite you at this stage to make some brief opening remarks about the Tax Appeal Board.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Madam Chair, thank you very much. The Tax Appeal Board is a Superior Court of Record. It was created in the year 1966 to adjudicate on appeals from assessments from the Board of Inland Revenue on a host and variety of matters, including the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01, the Corporation Tax Act, Chap. 75:02; the Petroleum Taxes Act, Chap. 75:04; Stamp Duty Act, Chap. 76:01; the Lands and Buildings Taxes Act, Chap. 76:04; Customs Act, Chap. 78:01; and more importantly, the Value Added Tax Act that came into being in 1989. Also, we are involved in Anti-dumping and Countervailing Duties Act, 1992, and the Financial Institutions Act.

We sit as a court. We are based at Frederick Street. We have a Chairman. The name of the Chairman is the hon. Justice Anthony Gaffoor, and in addition to the Chairman we have other members of the court who serve on a contractual basis.

The Chairman is appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and

so too is the Registrar. We deal with appeals basically, in terms of petroleum matters, in terms of the energy sector. Of course, we have the individual Income Tax Act, and so on. But, in terms of the appeals we deal with appeals as a court. We sit and we hear appeals.

Unless I can be of further assistance, that is the briefest, unless you want me to elaborate on anything further, Miss.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr.Registrar. I just wanted to get an idea of your stakeholders, because when I looked at your DP programme it is basically the upgrade of the library and installation of your UPS. So that, in terms of the upgrade of the library, I am trying to get an idea of the size then of your external stakeholders.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: In terms of our stakeholders—first of all let me say, Madam Chair, that the Tax Appeal Board library has been dormant since February 2006. Due to the efforts of Miss Davis and Mr. Joseph and their staff as well too, and our Chairman, we have resuscitated the library and the library is now on board. Because of the moving of the Tax Appeal Board from first of all George Street and then the Winsure Building and then the Sterling Brothers Building on Richmond Street, we are now on No. 27 Frederick Street in the heart of the city. So we have some issues there, in terms of not only accommodation, but in terms of the attorneys having to reach to the Tax Appeal Board.

Our stakeholders are mainly those who, at least not from the Board of Inland Revenue side, but in terms of the attorneys themselves, they come from most of the firms: Fitzwilliam, Stone & Morgan. We have Mr. Daly. Right now we have a matter which is going on involving two senior counsels.

Madam Chairman: Sorry, Mr. Registrar, I might have miscommunicated. I really did not want the identity. I am trying to get in terms of numbers and types.

So if you have attorneys, if you have firms, I am trying to get an idea of the size of your external stakeholders. Again, I will tell you why. Just as you said, it is almost 10 years that you have not had a library so it means that the court existed and I guess the services of the library were provided to your external stakeholders in some way.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: It was dormant but we tried in our own way.

Madam Chairman: Yes. What I am concerned with is, having regard to the sort of different times the national economy has found itself in, whether these services could not be provided as a subset of another legal library, or in conjunction let us say, with NALIS? So I am trying. There is where I am leading.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Because the Tax Appeal Board is a Superior Court of Record, we are a specialist library and in terms of matters being done there—like our Act, our Act came from the Supreme Court of Canada. We also deal with—our books and cases are basically from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, India and other parts of the Commonwealth. But in terms of numbers, I would say maybe it depends, because in terms of lay litigants who have access to our court, I would say maybe, in terms of, like each year I would say maybe we have about 400 matters.

Madam Chairman: That would be applications, applicants?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Applicants, yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but not necessarily using your library?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Not necessarily using.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and the other thing that I wanted to be assured of is that in any event your jurisprudence comes from other Commonwealth countries?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: That is so My Lady.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and, therefore, again it goes back to my point, a

superior court of record with, yes, a specialist jurisdiction. Yes?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: And I ask again, having regard to all the challenges, whether it may not make sense in your library service being provided by, let us say the Supreme Court Library or say in conjunction with NALIS?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: My Lady, I agree with you but we tried. We tried but they do not have that repository of books that we need so very often, in terms of the Whitecroft and Whiteman on taxation, in terms of those specialist petroleum and oil and gas books that we have, in terms of the value added tax books and so on that come from South Africa. It was a specialist library. Because we were dormant for so long we have to resuscitate that library from that aspect. It has taken us quite a while because of the various moves and transitions that we have had to go through in that span.

We have been at the Fredrick Street building. I would not say it is the best accommodation that we have but I would say it is the best that can be devised in the circumstances.

Madam Chairman: Might I just ask one thing, your Frederick Street location, is that a Government-owned building?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No, no.

Madam Chairman: It is rented?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: It is rented.

Madam Chairman: So again it is subject to some tenure.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: It is possible.

Madam Chairman: And I just wanted to ask, in terms of your library staff, how large is your library staff?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Well we have Miss Davis here and she has two

assistants.

Madam Chairman: They are not librarians, they are just like library assistants?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes library assistants.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I would just invite some questions. Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Hi, welcome Mr. Persad-Maharaj.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Good day, Sir.

Mr. Cuffie: I want to get back to the library issue. Now, I see one of the things you are looking at paying for is access to Webstore and a legal database. I know across the state sector NALIS has MOUs with all Ministries, all agencies, do you have a—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: We have a contract with NALIS right now, in terms of the LexisNexis system.

Mr. Cuffie: Okay, and the librarian is also a NALIS?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes.

Mr. Cuffie: So the integrated library system, the purchase of the software, was it done in conjunction with NALIS or you have gone off on your own?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: What happened in this particular case, no, no, we never do anything on our own. What happened is that we had a meeting with NALIS and as a result, what we did is that we came up with this proposal here, the integrated library system.

Mr. Cuffie: Through you, Madam Chair, you can get economies—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Economies of scale.

Mr. Cuffie:—from sharing licences with NALIS and the other libraries. There

are similar arrangements with UWI and libraries all across the state sector. So I am trying to get to what extent you are using these opportunities or is it that you have gone off and—

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No, what has happened is that because—the fact that we were dormant for so long—actually Mr. Joseph and I, before Miss Davis came on, we went to NALIS for the services of a librarian. We met with the person for about three hours and after that she said no, we cannot have a librarian. So what we did, we got an OJT, and on-the-job trainee and I trained myself in the MINISIS system to document each book and whatever, and so on. So as of now the library is operational. But in terms of the synergies that are possible it can be looked at. I take your question, Sir, in terms of the other organizations, in terms of value for money.

Miss Olivierre: Thank you. I certainly would like to compliment you for getting a library operational despite all the challenges that you obviously have had over the years.

Now I know that you seem to be interested in implementing a tax judgment database. You indicated that you recently completed a free trial of a particular software.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes.

Miss Olivierre: So my question is: Have you also evaluated other similar type software or is this particular brand the only software of its type to provide this service?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Is this the Cipher?

Miss Olivierre: The Cipher, yes.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: This was one which was recommended to us through NALIS and as a result of that we are using it in tandem with them. We see how it

works, in terms of the use of the judgment and in terms of the output of the court.

Miss Olivierre: Okay, so since it was recommended by NALIS, then I assume that economies of scale that we spoke about would be applied here.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, Madam.

Miss Olivierre: So you are getting—okay.

Miss Baksh: My question to you is who monitors the expenditure for this project?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: In terms of the Tax Appeal Board, in terms of the monitoring and expenditure, where we are a sub-accounting unit of the Industrial Court. As a result of that, we are also subject to the external audit.

What we do, in terms of our evaluation, is that we get synergies from other organizations who are better able to, in terms of IT, understand and equip themselves with that repository of knowledge that they are able to evaluate. I do not know if that answers your question.

Miss Baksh: It deals specifically with the project on hand, which is the update of the library.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: The library itself is something—the Tax Appeal Board library is a peculiar library. Peculiar in the sense that the users of it are mostly the attorneys, the lay litigants, myself, members and the Chairman. So what we are trying to do is trying to get the streams of revenue flowing, in terms of the adjudication of matters for the Tax Appeal Board. Because what lawyers go on, they go on what is called what cases were decided before in the doctrine of precedent. So if it is decided before they are able to better grasp the issue.

For example, we are doing an issue, in terms of methanol and the basket of prices, how best we are able to measure the feedstock into those plants down in Point Lisas and value the price of natural gas at that point in time, in that particular

year. So I would say that the library is not only critical, it is crucial and inimical to the operation of the board, the Tax Appeal Board. That is it.

Madam Chairman: But Registrar, you said precedent. There is no binding precedent that obtains in the Tax Appeal Board?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Or course, My Lady. What happens is that, like any other court, we are susceptible to appeal. An appeal goes to the Court of Appeal and then to the Privy Council.

Mr. Mark: Good day, Sir.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Good day, Sir.

Mr. Mark: You talk about lay appellants as one of your external stakeholders.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mark: Just for my own edification, taxpayers who pay personal income tax, if they feel that they have been unfairly dealt with by the Board of Inland Revenue, would they be able to come to the Tax Appeal Board for justice, ordinary taxpayers of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, or is this court only set up to deal with corporate clients?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: The Act?

Mr. Mark: The Act.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No, the Act stipulates that we deal with matters as they pertain, not only to income tax because most of the lay litigants come in terms of income tax. We hardly get any lay litigants in terms of corporation tax. You would not believe, Sir, after coming through the eight years from the Board of Inland Revenue, these litigants, they stand a very good chance. Most of them, I would say from where I am sitting in the court, they have experienced a high measure of success.

In terms of appeals, the corporations would pay—the oil and gas companies, the

methanol companies, the other corporate entities, and so on.

Mr. Mark: Yes, but are you saying Mr. Persad-Maharaj that when it comes to income tax, the taxpayers who pay income tax, they have some relief through the Board of Inland Revenue or can they come to the Tax Appeal Board if they feel that they have been aggrieved or they have some challenges that they would like to address through the Tax Appeal Board? Can ordinary income taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago come to the Tax Appeal Board for justice? That is what I am trying to say.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, Sir. One quarter of your salary is taxed. That is the 25 per cent. In addition to that, you have VAT, value added tax. So it is 25 plus 12. So what is your disposable income? Your disposable income, so in terms of the person who comes there we look at that, what is their disposable income. Because the threshold as it is, is \$72,000 a person a fiscal year. But the first port of call is the Board of Inland Revenue. After two years, it is possible to come to the Tax Appeal Board if no reply has been given.

Mr. Mark: And would they need to have a lawyer or can they come on their own strength, or do they need to have an attorney-at-law to appear before the Tax Appeal Board?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: I would seriously advise any person to have an attorney-at-law. I would seriously advise any person, but each individual can come on their own and these persons are very well versed in issues of accountancy, in issues of structuring of the balance sheet, in what allowances that the Board of Inland Revenue refuse. If your son is going to university and you were refused by the Board of Inland Revenue, how best you come to the Tax Appeal Board.

What I can say is that it is a pity that they take so long at the Board of Inland Revenue to decide these cases because some of the times when persons come to

the Tax Appeal Board the external auditor is there, the auditor is not there, has moved on, that sort of thing. So, if there is any way to transform the Board of Inland Revenue, not really to transform it but to allay the—especially in terms of lay litigants. I think I agree with you on that point.

Madam Chairman: Just so that we can give other members, I just want to ask one question before I invite member Ramkissoon. In terms of the number of litigants you see per year, could you give us a slight percentage of how many would be the layman? I know we said ordinary but I understand member Mark saying somebody who qualifies for tax. What percentage of the litigants you see in a year would be the individual. I think that might be the better word.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: My Lady, I do not have the figures at hand but I would say off the cuff maybe about 10 per cent.

Madam Chairman: About 10 per cent, fine.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon to the panel. I am just seeking some clarification on the submission that was submitted and if you can turn with me to page 14 of 14 in your submission. I saw you sent an update. I just want some guidance on where I can find the information, if this is incorrect, what I am going to ask of you. Okay?

So I am looking at the library project before we move to the UPS, and there is approved cost project of \$1,000,210. Of that, you have a breakdown of your expenditure, your outstanding commitments the percentage of your project completed which, I do not know how you got that percentage and then the initial cost. Now of that breakdown, there is an unaccounted \$878,996. For that I would like to know where is that money allocated to?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: On signing a contract one does not pay the entire fee. One pays the initial fee, initial down payment, which may be about 30 per cent in

certain cases and then there is a mobilization fee and then there is completion a fee. So that would account for most of the money not being spent at this point in time.

Miss Ramkissoon: So the \$878,996 is allocated to what phase of the project right now?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: What stage? Well we have the breakdown here.

Miss Ramkissoon: This is dealing with the library project.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: In terms of each of the items here, save and except the physical upgrade, we have another upgrade to library because we wanted to add a window to the library. We were based on two floors on Frederick Street and the security for the Tax Appeal Board is not really safe, in terms of Miss Davis there and we wanted to add a part, in terms of a window. But the second floor, which is the upper floor, is where the members are. What I am saying My Lady is that the building was configured for a mall.

Miss Ramkissoon: This is a table.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Registrar, do you have your submission with you? It is page 14 of your submission, written submission.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Okay, this would have been some time ago. This details each of the items here, the collection development programme, upgrade to library, physical upgrade, and so on. But if you look at the spreadsheet it gives a more accurate depiction of what is going on in each of the items there.

Miss Ramkissoon: Just to turn to the next page of your submission, which is page 1 on the UPS project, a written submission. How are the funds for the subhead being utilized? There is a missing 10 per cent. Would you please like to advise us?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Ten per cent?

Miss Ramkissoon: Yes, there is 10 per cent for the provision of services by a

company.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: On this document here?

Miss Ramkissoon: Yes, the written one.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: What page?

Miss Ramkissoon: Page one of the UPS section, the supply and installation of the uninterrupted power supply. Right after the page we were looking at prior, it is the next page.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: It is the installation configuration, implementation? Supply of UPS?

Miss Ramkissoon: Yes.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Okay, yes.

Miss Ramkissoon: The first point, how are the funds utilized? There is an initial outlay of 10 per cent. There is a 50 per cent towards the installation of cables, breakers, configuration, electrical panels and so forth and then there is 30 per cent for your termination services and training of your staff. I am saying that adds to 90 per cent.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: That is a typographical error. It should be 50/50.

Miss Ramkissoon: Okay, what is written here is 10, 50 and 30, which adds up 90. So there is a 10 per cent missing. So if it is a typographical error, it cannot be 50.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: I am sorry, it should have been 50, 40 and 10. I would advise my IT person. Sorry about that.

3.45p.m.

Madam Chairman: So it would be 10, 50 and 40 per cent. Might I just ask though, in the 40 per cent, therefore I am correcting it to be: "The 40 per cent will be providing termination services and training for Tax Appeal Board staff"?

Maybe I would like if you could just assist us in understanding how that is tied up to installation of an uninterrupted power supply.

Mr. Joseph: The UPS is part of the latest state-of-the-art technology and it requires the installation of some software on the system. In order for it to be utilized there is some training that is involved in that aspect. The training is not just to maintain the system but also to ensure that we do not have breakdowns later on. So the amount is towards that.

Madam Chairman: What would be termination services?

Mr. Joseph: The termination services in this case would be initially the completion of the project. What happens is that at the end of the project it would be signed off, but because of the nature of the project we have a maintenance feature—a maintenance contract—where every six-month period the contracted person would come in to us, and at that point again we go through the system. So the termination services is not just simply at the end of the project, but it continues for the period of the maintenance, so that is part of the termination services.

Madam Chairman: Let me ask something. You already have UPS on the first floor?

Mr. Joseph: Yes, that is true.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: We have two floors.

Madam Chairman: But the UPS system is already installed and operationalized on your first floor. Would I be correct in saying that?

Mr. Joseph: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Who are the occupiers of your second floor?

Mr. Joseph: The second floor we have a library and then we have the executive members, which would be the Chairman, the hon. Members of the panel who sit in the court.

Madam Chairman: Are your members full-time? All your members are full-time?

Mr. Joseph: Yes.

Mr. Mark: I just have two questions, Madam Chair. The upgrade, Mr. Persad-Maharaj of your library, we have a figure of \$1.2 million. Is that right?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: That is correct.

Mr. Mark: Is that a moving target or is that a final figure for the overall upgrade of the library? I know that you would need to provide your library with more up-to-date material every year, because obviously we live in a dynamic environment, but in terms of a final figure for the upgrading after nine years, would you be able to tell this Committee whether this figure is a moving figure and it can go up beyond \$1.2 million or whether this is the final figure for the overall upgrade of the library, pending for instance recurrent expenditure or cost to bring new books into the library that is required, because of the specialist nature of the court.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Sir, with all due respect, I think you should visit the library. If you visit the library you will be able to see what is in motion in the library. That whole floor was packed with boxes. Mr. Joseph and I picked up each box, took each book put it on the shelves: the All England Law Reports, the South African Task Cases, the New Zealand Law Reports, the Australian Law Reports. It was a task by itself. To see where it was to now, I am advised by my librarian that it is a fixed figure.

In other words, the other issues in terms of the books would be under recurrent. But we have not been able, because of the fact that some of the books come from South Africa, New Zealand and wherever, and because it has been dormant for 10 years, the books are in transit.

Mr. Mark: I will talk to my Chairman about possibly paying an onsite visit to your library. May I ask, you do have an internal audit unit within your organization's operations? I would like to ask whether the internal audit unit produced a report at the end of the first quarter of fiscal 2016, and if it is possible you can provide this Committee with some highlights of the findings of that report, of your internal audit report.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Our internal audit—for the past, since 2009 we are a sub-accounting unit of the Industrial Court. Our Chairman, as My Lady would know, had an issue with that but be that as it may everything that we do is subject to the Industrial Court. Our salaries, we have to go through the Industrial Court. So the Industrial Court, while we think ourselves as independent, we want to believe ourselves as independent, we want to strive to be independent, but the fact is we are not really independent. The fact is we are a Government-based institution, and therefore the issue of accountability arises. That is central to my tenure as Registrar of the Tax Appeal Board so, far. Until somebody else is there, My Lady. So I will undertake to submit through the hon. Chair the reports that are submitted to us via the Industrial Court.

Mr. Cuffie: I just had two questions for Mr. Joseph, the IT specialist. How much of the projects 005, the supply and installation of the UPS has been completed? That is the first question. The second question is: how was this project scoped and implemented? Did you, for example, look at the requirements of the Judiciary, the Industrial Court, iGovTT? What informed your procurement and the needs that you have identified here for the UPS and the IT system?

Mr. Joseph: Thank you for your question, Sir. First of all we already have a UPS system for the first floor which was done previously. In getting the research for that we had consulted with the Supreme Court, Industrial Court as well and a

couple of other agencies, before making that decision. So the decision for this one was simply just to follow on, because the company that did it for us they were excellent. Their contractual time with us was excellent and their feedback was good. For instance we can call them at 8.00 in the morning, and by 10.00 they are usually there. So it was just a matter of logics to continue with them, and so far we have found them to be excellent in the way they have done their job.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Especially as the electricity goes on Frederick Street very often, so what happens is that we have a courtroom where an FTR system is installed, For the Record, so we have a visual depiction of what is taking place in the court. Mr. Joseph set that up. We set that up a few years ago, and we have to maintain that as well. That is probably under recurrent as well.

The fact is that Mr.Edwin Watson—

Mr. Cuffie: Let me just get it clear. Is it that you all just re-engaged the previous supplier or given that this is a new project you had a procurement process?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No we had a request for proposal and an evaluation which was done, and then as a result a letter of award. That is how we do every single project here, Miss Davis and Mr. Joseph, because what we want to know is that—I think what you all would be interested in, My Ladies and Sirs, is it that you are getting or is it that the country is getting value for money in terms of all those issues that we have raised.

Doing a DP is not really an easy thing, simply because Miss Davis, Mr. Joseph and myself all of us have to sit in the court sometimes, and so it is really a matter of balancing our time. The fact is right now we have the draft estimates that is taking place, I do not know whether we will be able to submit it in time. But the fact about it is that we are trying our best, because it is a limited staff. It is a small

staff. Going through the travails that have been going on at the Tax Appeal Board, I would not want anybody to go through what I have gone through in terms of the library, in terms of the installation, in terms of our moving. You would not believe, Sir, what efforts Miss Davis, and especially Mr. Joseph, they put into moving. Mr. Joseph lifted up books and boxes by himself. Of course we could have paid somebody—

Madam Chairman: Mr. Registrar, if I may interrupt. We are certainly not at all questioning the dedication of the staff of the Tax Appeal Board, and if that impression was given I must apologize. So that if you would permit me, Member Ramkissoon has a question for you.

Miss Ramkissoon: Mr. Persad-Maharaj, I understand what your team is trying and what you have been doing. However, from your submission, when the question was posed how much money has been transferred to date and what sum has been spent, the answer was always none or nil. I know you have been speaking about in-house methods of trying to computerize your court, how then are we doing that with no transferred money or none spent for the financial year?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: I am not following you.

Miss Ramkissoon: For example, for the UPS projects—the installation, configuration and implementation of document management systems, and number four was asked: How much money has been transferred to date and of that sum how much has been spent. The answer from the Tax Appeal Board was none, but yet we have a new project under that same section to realize and fully computerize your court system, with a cost of approximately \$300,000. So I am trying to get the link. Another example is like the library. How much money has been transferred to date for the library, and again the answer is nil. I am trying to understand.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: What I would ask you to do, I am sorry about that, is to disregard this document and concentrate on our achievement report.

Madam Chairman: Mr.Registrar, is it that they are time specific, so is your achievement report later in time showing differences that may have occurred between your first document and the achievement report?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: I think that is what I was trying to say.

Miss Ramkissoon: Let us look at the achievement reports. If you see in your physical percentages planned and actual, you have percentages, for example, that we just spoke about which was the UPS project. You have zero per cent actual. Is that correct?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Is the number 005, supply an installation of a UPS?

Miss Ramkissoon: Correct, 005.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Allocation \$170, releases blank, planned expansion, \$170, actual expenditure \$170, projected expenditure, \$170, submission of tenders.

Sen. Melissa Ramkissoon: Is it that this project has not started yet?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: It is about to start. We did the initial meeting and system inspection, that is supply in terms of verifying all circuits and wires and panels requiring from the UPS system.

Miss Ramkissoon: I think what might help is if you can resubmit to the Committee your actual figures and what you have done and plans, so that way I can understand what you are trying to say, because if you are saying that we have no money to spend or have not transferred any of the funds, then I could understand you not having the infrastructure to do the work that you want to do. That is why I am asking it.

4.00p.m.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Persad-Maharaj, maybe, just to assist, let me see if I

understand it—for that UPS project in fiscal year, 2016, you plan to complete it entirely?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Entirely.

Madam Chairman: As of to date, you have not started it, save and except, forgetting the proposals for the review by an evaluation committee?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, we did a review by the evaluation committee.

Madam Chairman: Right. So you have not spent any money as yet?—

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No.

Madam Chairman:—but you expect within fiscal year, 2016, to complete the project? Yes? That is what the 100 is?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, that is correct.

Madam Chairman: And the actual is you have not done anything as yet in terms of physically implementing the programme, and that is why you have a zero there?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: One of the issues at the Tax Appeal Board—

Madam Chairman: No, if you could just answer.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, that is correct.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Well, we will ask you some other questions on the Library, we will most probably send those questions to you in writing. I just want to ask two other questions, and this is in terms of, again, the UPS, and in terms of your—under the question 8, provide the following details for the project, under the sub-head, this is for 2016 fiscal year, you said the initial cost of the project was \$178,000? Yes?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Yes, that is correct.

Madam Chairman: The revised cost of the project is \$89,899.75?—yet, when we ask for variations to the scope of work, none. So, I just wanted you to maybe

clarify for the Committee what was the cause of that variance.

Mr. Joseph: Thank you. After we did the evaluation we went again with the very same company, but we had already done the evaluation. I am sorry, Member Cuffie, if I did not explain that too well. And the company was able to negotiate a cost for us that was a lot lower than initially we were thinking about expending, which of course was to our advantage. So I must say, in this point in time, that we are able to spend a lot less than we initially targeted. I will say again, the company was able to do that. They were able to locate for us—and the equipment itself is even more updated than the previous one we had, and so I think it is to the advantage of the Tax Appeal Board, and, of course, the Government that a significant amount of savings will be had in this particular project.

Mr. Cuffie: I asked the question because I wanted to know whether, this being a new project, you had engaged a procurement process.

Mr. Joseph: Yes, we did.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and might I just ask to the Registrar one final question in the interest of time. In terms of, if you had any recommendations that you would like to advance which will improve the operations of the Tax Appeal Board, as it relates to the items under our examination, what would these be?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Milady, there is only one and one issue that comes to mind, and I really do not know how to say this. I do not know how best to put it forward, or to proffer it, but if we were based in a different location, a safer location, rather than Frederick Street, because what we do is that we, in the evening, we leave in the evenings, and I leave in the night, whatever, and we walk along Queen Street, and so on, and our car park is in the Anglican Church there, so we have a little walk along Queen Street. We do not mind, the issue is in terms of safety, and because we are based on Frederick Street we have a number of

instances of persons coming into the Tax Appeal Board, you know, and they create some issues that we have to call in some other agencies.

Madam Chairman: Would those issues relate to the Library and the UPS?

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No, those issues relate to security.

Madam Chairman: To security, yeah, but the question I asked was specific to the matters under our examination, which primarily is the Library, the installation of your UPS system, and your document tracking system.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: No, at this point in time I would say that once we are able to complete the projects, and we will try within the—well, we will have to do it within the fiscal year, we will manage somehow, and so on. But I do invite, not only take the opportunity to invite the member, and yourself, but, I just want to state, the whole team really, and so on, to visit the Tax Appeal Board and to see the Tax Appeal Board, and be aware of the Tax Appeal Board, and as Sen. Mark said, you know, to see what goes on there, you know, visit our Chairman, see the members, and so on, you know. I am sure that you would not refuse.

Madam Chairman: So, Registrar, I want to thank you and your team, Ms. Davis and Mr. Joseph, for coming and assisting us. I would like to thank you all for coming and advancing this very interesting conversation. There are a few questions, I believe, the Committee may still want to ask of you which we will send in writing, and we would ask you kindly to respond, giving you what we would think is a reasonable time to respond. So you are now relieved, we would like to thank you very much all for coming and assisting us, and we would give consideration to your invitation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Persad-Maharaj: Thank you. Have a good day.

OFFICIALS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Mrs. Gizel Thomas-Roberts Registrar

Ms. Stacy Alleyne	Administrative Officer II (Ag.)
Ms. Chrysten Dalrymple	Accounting Assistant (Ag.)
Mr. Troy Roberts	IT Consultant

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon, to the representatives of the Environmental Commission, and, again, I apologize for the delay. May I ask the Registrar to introduce your team to the members of the Committee?

[Officials of the Environmental Commission introduce themselves]

Madam Chairman: I want to thank you all for coming and, in the interest of time, Registrar, I will invite you to give some short opening remarks about the Environmental Commission so that you could give us some context. Thank you.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Madam Chair, members of the Committee, by way of background, the Environmental Commission was established by section 81(1) of the Environmental Management Act, Chap. 35.05, and it is a superior court of record established in the year 2000. The commission has jurisdiction as per section 81(5) to hear appeals, applications, administrative civil assessments from the Environmental Management Authority, and, in accordance with section 69(1), direct private party actions. The judicial arm of the commission is headed by a chairman, ably assisted by a deputy chairman, and four other members. The Commission has been at its current premises of E. F. Telly Paul Building, St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, for the past 16 years since our inception, and like many other public service organizations we are bursting at our seams. It is within this context, Madam Chair, that we requested \$1 million from the Government to aid in our relocation programme, and that is also in keeping with the objectives of our information strategic plan.

4.15 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Registrar. I will invite questions

from the Committee. I will first ask member Ramkissoon and then member Mark. Member Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Good afternoon to the panel.

Hon. Members: Good afternoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: I am looking at your submission which you sent on March 9, 2016 which is in line with our Committee's deadline, so thank you for keeping the deadline. In relation to No. 4, which states how much money has been transferred to date and the sum which is spent, your answer or response was, none. Is that accurate?—and if such, how does that affect your new projects, such as the Electronic Data Management System where you have allocated \$425,000, but I am seeing no money has been spent on that. So thank you.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Very accurate to date, member. We have not transferred any funds from this vote as yet. May I ask my IT representative to speak to the other aspects of the project?

Mr. Roberts: Hello, good afternoon. What information specifically were you seeking?

Miss Ramkissoon: I wanted to know what percentage, if you had started it and you are saying that you did not start any project—

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: This year, we have not, we have not started.

Miss Ramkissoon: So you have no funds, so all of the projects that you have in your proposal, in your submission, are something that you would like to start?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: We would like to start soon, very soon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Are there any ongoing projects presently under the Environmental Commission? Ongoing projects.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: In terms of IT or generally?

Miss Ramkissoon: General.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: No projects, Ma'am.

Miss Ramkissoon: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mark: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Registrar. When funds are transferred to address certain items of expenditure, would you or would the Environmental Commission establish the appropriate mechanisms in order to monitor the expenditure? In this instance, let us say, under Sub-Head 09, Project, Electronic Document Management System, you said that no funds have been transferred thus far. When funds are transferred to this project, before the end of fiscal 2016, could you share with this Committee what kind of mechanisms would the Environmental Commission develop in order to monitor expenditure under this sub-head?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Member, the Industrial Court is the accounting unit for the Environmental Commission. We are the sub-accounting unit and as such, in terms of expenditure, when moneys are transferred and projects are being done, we follow astutely the financial regulations. We deal directly with the Auditor who has hawk eyes with respect to our projects, et cetera. I do not know whether that would have satisfied you or whether there is anything else you would want me to explain?

Mr. Mark: That mechanism in terms of the Industrial Court having direct responsibility for these matters has been going on for how many years now?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Since the inception. I have been at the Commission for four years. So since the Commission has been there, but prior to the Industrial Court I think we were below the Ministry of Public Utilities because we need an entity to take our Notes to Cabinet. We cannot take our own Notes to Cabinet. So the Ministry of Public Utilities would have done that for us. The Industrial Court now functions as the accounting unit. So nothing passes without their permission,

without they having a say as to what we do in terms of spending government funds.

Mr. Mark: Is it a relationship that you are comfortable with as an Environmental Commission or is it a matter that the Commission has been looking at in an effort to give it more space to address its own requirements?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: I have had to manage the relationship between our organization and the Industrial Court since my sojourn. It has improved. I think none of us is happy being friends with each other but we have no choice. We would prefer to have our own accounting unit but we cannot because we are very, very small. Inclusive of the members, it is only 40 of us are members. So we would like to manage our own affairs, but we are small. So therefore that cannot be done. In terms of how it is being done now, as I said, I have managed that relationship so therefore we have come to a place where we understand each other and where things can go forward without much acrimony or much delay.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome Madam Registrar. I wanted to ask a question on Item 2 and the communications backbone of the Environmental Commission. Probably Mr. Roberts can answer. Is this the government backbone?

Mr. Roberts: No. At present the Environmental Commission does not have a GovNet kit. In terms of our physical infrastructural connection, it is over fiber provided through Digicel.

Mr. Cuffie: But you understand that it would be cheaper and more cost effective to get on to the government backbone and utilize the Electronic Document Management System provided for all state agencies.

Mr. Roberts: I have not solicited quotes to get on the government backbone. At the time we were just exchanging one Internet connection for another Internet

connection of a similar price. And as well as, for the past few years as well there have been ongoing discussions about moving. So in terms of deploying significant infrastructure on site seemed premature if we were just installing it to pack up and move to another location.

Mr. Cuffie: But since this is a new project, are you thinking about moving? Why have you not considered the cost saving of employing the government backbone rather than another provider?

Mr. Roberts: I do not know the scope of the savings involved with the government backbone. Like I said, we have replaced one Internet connection provided through TSTT for another one, for a similar price. The scope of the savings—currently, I believe, our monthly Internet bill is around TT \$1,200, so annual cost of \$12,000. I do not know how much the scope of saving with the backbone would be with regard to that if absolute spending per annum is TT \$12,000.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I would like to ask the Registrar what therefore, having regard, to what was just explained about the role of the Industrial Court Accounting Unit and you being a sub-accounting unit, what therefore is the role of the Registrar as the accounting officer of the Environmental Commission?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: My role is similar to that of a Permanent Secretary. We have the full powers of a Permanent Secretary. Again, this anomalous situation with respect to the Industrial Court is something that I met there and both Mr. Inniss and myself, we have been trying for years to rid ourselves of each other.

I do have a lot of independence in terms of how government money is spent. It is not that he is a big stick, but they offer guidance as to what procedures and whether things can be done and I do welcome the guidance from my senior colleague at the Industrial Court.

Madam Chairman: So you are not as hamstrung as a sub-accounting unit as it may suggest?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Not in that way, Madam Chair. We just do not print our own cheques, et cetera. They will print the cheques and do all the monitoring. But we are not that hamstrung. It is not that bad, but there are times when the relationship could be acrimonious.

Madam Chairman: So that in terms—their involvement is just purely advisory and printing the cheques, but all the procedures in terms of determining, spending, seeing about releases and so on, will be done by you—

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Correct.

Madam Chairman:—as the accounting officer?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted, I am sorry, just as I have the attention, I just wanted to ask, particularly with respect to your responses to question 8, and this is to provide the following details for the project under the sub-head in 2016, financial year. This is the Electronic Document Management System. And while we see that it appears as if it is a new project, we have seen from the estimates from 2014 to 2016 that this project was listed as a new project since 2014.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: That is so because we—since 2012 we have been knocking at the doors of different administrations wanting to relocate and that has not yet happened. So what we do in the event that we relocate during a financial year we request the funds. Also there may be aspects of this project that we will commence where we sit right now, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so there is not really any project start date then?

Mr. Roberts: Not for—we do not have any project start dates identified for this fiscal year at this point, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And there has been no work done at all on the project in any of the fiscal years?

Mr. Roberts: Which project are you referring to?

Madam Chairman: This same—it is only one project we are talking about. This is the electronic documentation—

Mr. Roberts: Electronic Document Management System.

Madam Chairman: Yes, yeah.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, that has been implemented as it stands.

Madam Chairman: Well then, I am a bit confused because in your responses it is still—if it is implemented, how it is still an ongoing project? The contract terms, not applicable; project start date, upon approval; total approved cost of project, not applicable; total expenditure to date, nil; total outstanding commitments to date, nil; project completion date, two months from the start. So it started and completed?

Mr. Roberts: For that specific project, as most ongoing large scale or document management projects, will proceed in phases. So what was identified for possible attempt in this fiscal year were merely expansion phases upon that one.

Madam Chairman: So, let me just see if I understand. So it is a big project with maybe subsets of the project identified in different fiscal years?

Mr. Roberts: It would be in terms of—as for an electronic document management and content management system is an overarching system that seeks to catalog, manage and secure and dispense the knowledge-based information within an organization. That often cannot be attempted in one simple stage.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask this, Mr. Roberts. When did it start, the first simple stage, when did that—

Mr. Roberts: The first simple stage was initiated in 2014.

Madam Chairman: Okay, good. Maybe this is to the accounting officer. Again, and you know we are starting to see a lot of this. I go back to the Call Circular, because you are guided by this too, and I have looked at the Call Circular for the financial year 2015. I have looked at it for 2016 and it just came out for 2017. I have not gone back further, but I suspect the statement remains the same. Criteria for exclusion of projects or programmes for the PSIP.

- (1) Annual/legacy, long-standing projects, multi-year programmes and projects for which there are no discernable end dates and which are deemed to be annual.

Would you describe this document management system as being fitting this description?

Mr. Roberts: In terms of the project itself, once the scope is implemented the project can be considered complete. Any expansions or enhanced capabilities that are desired at a future time would be construed as a new project.

4.30p.m.

Mr. Roberts: So, in terms of, say you were to implement an email system, you set up an email server, you have created the mailboxes and you have deployed it.

Madam Chairman: But Mr. Roberts, I understand that from a technical point of view. What I am trying to find out, really from your accounting officer, is if that understanding is consistent with this provision of the Call Circular, or if it is in contradiction. That is really—I am not looking at the technical project. I am saying this is a statement in the Call Circular and if it is that your description of your project fits this caveat it may be that this needs to be migrated out of the PSIP.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Madam Chair, you may be very well correct. Hearing

you now, it may very well fit into what is there. As I indicated earlier, the project has been ongoing. It may mean that we just did not follow directly what is there. So that it may need to be migrated now, Madam Chair.

Mr. Mark: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I just would like to ask the Registrar, according to the estimates of the Development Programme for 2016, this same project received approval for \$1 million. However, the cost stated in your response is \$425,000. Would you like to explain to this Committee the reason for the difference in cost?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Member, again, I would speak to us moving. And one of the issues with respect to us moving is that the Chairman would want to have two courtrooms and there is going to be an expanded jurisdiction for the Environmental Commission. With all that in mind, the \$1million would have been requested last year. I do not see if we do not move that we are going to use that \$1 million so that there will be savings for and on behalf of the Government in that respect.

Mr. Mark: Okay. Madam Chair, may I also ask the Registrar, how is this system, the electronic document system, expected to improve productivity within the organization?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: May I ask my IT specialist to respond to that question on my behalf?

Mr. Mark: I am not talking about productivity. I am talking about staff productivity.

Mr. Roberts: Absolutely. The purpose of any Electronic Document Management System, the goal will almost always point to efficiency. So, in terms of the Electronic Document Management System, it is a framework for capturing the print documents at the commission and then storing them and delivering them

to the users in a very, very timely basis. So what we are trying to get away from is stacks of files on the user's desks, difficulties in locating files, missed files, the ability for—many of the members work outside of the office, the Chairman, and whatnot, they travel; so to be able to gain access to the documents and forms that they need to. It is envisioned at some point that the system itself would be expanded to a full court case management solution where every single piece of documentation or recordkeeping, with regard to ongoing cases, is stored within the system and delivered to users in a timely fashion and/or possibly both internal and external users as required.

So, in terms of efficiency, we can move away from a user making a request for a file, someone going to the file room, because as Ms. Roberts mentioned they are bursting at the seams to the point where storage is extremely, extremely tight and as such files are just stacked on top of each other. So retrieving any one particular file is unduly burdensome. So now, from their desk within the client, with the appropriate security permissions, if they have access to the file, they can pull up any file within seconds. So as such, the ongoing business of the commission becomes improved through improved moving of documents within and without of the commission.

Mr. Mark: Is this possibly going to lead to redundancy and maybe redeployment of staff? Because if this is going to improve, as you rightly said, greater levels of efficiency and productivity, would you see arising out of it redundancy, and if that is so, redeployment and not necessarily people being laid off because of this very important and efficient piece of technology that has now been established?

Mr. Roberts: Every single Electronic Document Management System has the potential for improving efficiency and as such can lead to the situation you

described. The quantum of such would be determined after the fact. It is kind of difficult to determine before the fact.

Miss Olivierre: Thank you. While we are on the topic of the Electronic Document Management System, I would like to ask a question about the HR capacity within the Commission. I know that a number of the representatives here are in acting positions. I know that you have an IT consultant. From that title I assume that your person is hired by the commission and not a permanent part of the commission's establishment.

Mr. Roberts: That is correct.

Miss Olivierre: So, I am really concerned about—if you get the Electronic Document Management System up and running, do you have the IT personnel within the establishment of the commission that would be able to manage and maintain it, or do you have capacity challenges within the commission?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: We do have capacity challenges, member. We have approached prior to today, the PMCD to have our own IT specialist. That is presenting some challenges because we must justify our workload and that has some challenges. So that we would want to have someone on board permanently, so to speak but, again, it is not within my purview as such. I must get that permission from PMCD and from the Cabinet.

Mr. Cuffie: Madam Chair, I wanted to get back to the three-quote system. Now, do you have a prequalified list or is it that you just arbitrarily choose three persons to send your requests to? The next thing, could we get an idea, maybe you can provide it in writing at another point, of an examination of using the government backbone as against the system that you have now, that you have procured?

And, in terms of the hardware and software purchases, you said you use

whatever is used by the Office of the Prime Minister. But I am not sure. There are several software agreements that the Government is party to and licences are shared around state agencies. So I would like to get some kind of assurance that we are using those for efficiency rather than just—there does not seem to be a formal process, in terms of accessing the IT services, and just seeing what somebody else is doing does not lead to the best process for getting hardware or software.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: I would just answer the first part of your three-part question, if I remember, member. We do not have a prequalified list. We seek after persons who are in the business and we get the three quotes. That is how it is done.

In terms of, I think Mr. Roberts would be able to respond to the software licensing agreement because I know for a fact that we do subscribe to some of them.

Mr. Roberts: We have solicited and received licences from iGov with regard to—all our Microsoft licences are now acquired through iGov. We do have an iGov rep and we do liaise with them constantly. Just yesterday I spoke with our rep, actually.

Miss Baksh: Good afternoon. My question deals with ensuring effective compliance, proper management of resources and adequate performance. What measures are in place to ensure that there is an effective compliance and proper management of resources, and also how does the Environmental Commission measure performance?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Would I be able to give a response to that at a later date? Not that I do not know what you are asking but I want to present the best possible answer to the question. Because I do not know whether you are talking

about—because I was just conferring with IT, are you talking about the Financial Regulations? What exactly are you asking me?

Madam Chairman: Registrar, I think in the interest of time, we would allow you to present your full submission to that question in writing and we would ask, today is Wednesday, if you could do so by Monday, please? Thank you.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is actually very related to Sen. Baksh's question. In relation to the submissions that were presented by the Environmental Commission on numbers 14, 15 and 16 and now that you have shed light on that you have ongoing projects in the system, I would like to know how do you actually measure the milestones, as I would call it, but you call it phases, of this IT project? Because you gave a list here to upgrade the core network switches, to upgrade your firewall, all these things would be phases. Now, I am not sure what phases have been completed or what has been submitted in this package was completed to date, but it would be nice to know how you intend to or how you measure and evaluate these projects and the value.

Mr. Roberts: With regard to the projects listed, these would not be considered part of one project. As envisioned, they are discrete projects. They fit part of a larger programme of the IT strengthening of the organization. But each of them individually would be effectively discrete. For example, the upgrade of the core switches. The existing switches at the Environmental Commission are close to a decade old and that presents an operational risk in that they are far out of warranty and if they were to fail, the network of the Commission would go down. So that is an infrastructural upgrade that has a very, very simple start and end. It is old equipment. It should have been changed years ago. In fact it was outlined to be changed as part of the IT strategic plan from 2008 and it is 2016 and we are still using the same switches.

So, for the hardware-type components, those are—in fact everything on the list can be viewed as a discrete project and not part of a phase or anything like that.

Miss Ramkissoon: Okay, so for the six items listed under the upgrade, none of these items were done yet.

Mr. Roberts: No, these are projects that have been identified that could be done within the next fiscal.

Miss Ramkissoon: All right, and how do you intend to evaluate when you have completed it? How do you measure it?

Mr. Roberts: Well, for the hardware upgrades, that is very, very simple. It is a direct replacement. So once the item has been sourced and deployed in production, it would be considered complete.

Miss Ramkissoon: So it is an in-kind replacement.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, exactly.

Miss Ramkissoon: Exactly similar. Okay, so you do not have a department or like an audit section that reviews work done and completed and signs off on it? We do not have that external body existing?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Yes we do, member. Again, the Industrial Court provides internal auditing and the Auditor General's Department, they would visit and they would do their oversight and their checks as per legislation.

Miss Ramkissoon: So any of your 40-member staff, they are not involved in that process?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Of auditing?

Miss Ramkissoon: Well, of reviewing and measuring the value of your project that has been completed and the various stages?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: No, member, not that I know of, no.

Miss Ramkissoon: All right. The first part, which was numbers 14 and 15,

where it just states: following statutory guidelines and standard financial regulations, you would be giving us exactly what it is you are referring to?

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Yes, I would be doing that, yes.

Madam Chairman: I think, Registrar, we would send in writing specific questions for you to address your mind to answer those two items.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Thank you, Chair.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted, and I think this is the last question. We would deal with everything else in writing. The last question I would have liked to ask is that you had said, in answer to the question, how does the department measure or evaluate the outcome of each project under its remit in light of the stated objectives? And in your response, one of the things you said, paperless environment. I wanted to ask: how does a paperless environment assist in measuring or evaluating the outcome of each project under your remit?

Mr. Roberts: The paperless environment, I imagine, is one of the stated goals of the commission from, again, the IT strategic plan from 2008. I do not believe it specifically assists in the measuring of completed projects in and of itself but it is merely an administrative tool for use.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Roberts. And, therefore, I want to thank you Registrar and your team, Miss Alleyne, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Dalrymple for coming and assisting us in understanding how you operate in one aspect of your financial allocation. We would be sending some further questions, which you should get by tomorrow and we would really like if we can get some responses by Monday. So, we thank you very much and we look forward to continuing the conversation.

Mrs. Thomas-Roberts: Thank you Madam Chair and thank you members for having us.

[Officials of the Environmental Commission leave the Committee Room]

OFFICIALS OF THE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Ms. Jasmine Pascal	Registrar (Ag.)
Ms. Isha George	Accounting Assistant
Ms. Petal Alexander	Legal Officer II
Ms. Andella Ramroop	Legal Officer
Mr. Mervyn Crichlow	Manager, Corporate Communications
Mr. Richard Frederick	Director of Investigations
Ms. Candice Young	Senior Human Resource Analyst
Mrs. Natasha Elder St-Louis	IT Specialist/Webmaster

Madam Chairman: Pleasant good afternoon to the representatives of the Integrity Commission. We welcome you to this second public hearing of this Committee. May I invite your Registrar to introduce the members of her team.

Ms. Pascal: Good afternoon Madam Chair, first let me introduce myself, I am Jasmine Pascal, Acting Registrar, Integrity Commission and I would have the other officers introduce themselves.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: I know it is a bit late so we will try and see how quickly we could progress things, but still sticking to the objective. I would, therefore, ask your Acting Registrar to make some brief opening comments, which would sort of give some context to the discussion that we are about to embark upon.

Ms. Pascal: Sure, thank you. Madam Chair and members of the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee, on behalf of the Chairman, members and employees of the Integrity Commission, we thank you for this opportunity to explain the work of the Commission and look forward to your support.

The Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago continues to enhance the efficacy of its operations to ensure attainment of the organizational vision of promoting integrity and making Trinidad and Tobago corruption-free.

The Integrity in Public Life Act empowers the Commission to have an oversight of roles, of the ethics and integrity of public officials who are grouped into two categories—persons in public life and persons exercising public functions. Our objective continues to be three-fold: preventing and detecting corruption through the filing of declarations of income, assets and liabilities; maintaining oversight on persons in public life through the investigation of complaints; and winning wider public support through programmes of public education. We have a team of employees who are responsible, responding admirably to the restructuring of our operations and I am optimistic as to where that will take us.

We have a good mix of people skills and competencies. I recently assumed duty as Registrar of the Integrity Commission in place of Mr. Martin Farrell, who is now on preretirement leave. As Registrar it is my responsibility to administer the work activities of the organization, serve as Secretary to the Commission and above all to offer advice on the formulation of policies to ensure the effective implementation of the decisions of the Integrity Commission. I serve also as the accounting officer of the Integrity Commission as appointed by the Treasury Division, Ministry of Finance, where I ensure compliance to the Exchequer and Audit Act.

The Integrity Commission and the Office of the President utilizes the same internal audit unit, which is stationed at the Office of the President. We operate under an umbrella of confidentiality. The records of the Integrity Commission, as they pertain to declarations and investigations, section 35(1) and (2) of the IPLA are confidential. These statutory strictures of the Integrity in Public Life Act

clothe the Commissioners or any employee from divulging information from these records. I, nevertheless, take this opportunity to advise this Public Administration and Appropriation Committee that at the Integrity Commission we are committed to improving the operations of the commission and are eagerly currently engaged in a review of the Integrity in Public Life Act, with a view to proposing suitable amendments to existing legislation. These amendments, it is anticipated, will strengthen our compliance and investigation activities.

With respect to the reform of the Integrity in Public Life Act, I wish to advise that there is little I can share with this Committee as only last week the members of the Commission completed a review of the voluminous amendments to the draft Act. There is at this time no written document to share with members of this Committee. I wish to advise that as soon as the draft is updated we will be in a position to provide the Committee with details on the amendments.

With respect to the whistle-blower legislation, I wish to advise that the draft whistle-blower legislation emanated from the Office of the Attorney General. A policy document was initiated by the Law Reform Commission and the draft Bill prepared by the Office of the Attorney General. The Integrity Commission was in no way involved in the preparation of the draft Bill. I thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Registrar. I want to assure you I do not think we would really want the details of the draft of the Integrity in Public Life Act. I think it is outside the remit of this Committee.

But in any event, maybe I could lead off the discussion in asking if you could clearly outline for the Committee how you see your role as the accounting officer of the Integrity Commission, in terms of its accountability to the Parliament.

Ms. Pascal: I see my role as one that is very important, in that, with respect to all financial matters pertaining to the Integrity Commission my duties are to report

to the Auditor General, the Ministry of Finance and all relevant bodies, including that of Parliament, Public Accounts Committee.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and in terms of any of the Financial Regulations, your role in seeing how that is implemented, reviewed in your commission, how do you see your role as responsibility for that?

Ms. Pascal: To ensure that all financial matters are followed with respect to the Exchequer and Audit Act and the Financial Regulations; to ensure also that there is value for money, with respect to any votes under my charge; and to ensure that money is spent for what it is allocated for.

Madam Chairman: I thank you and, therefore, I would now open the floor to other members of the Committee. I call on member Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. Pleasant good afternoon to the Integrity Commission. I would just like to know for clarification on the answer submitted for number 2 on your submission, we know that you have been granted \$1 million, and from that you have made mention of a unit that is not yet operational for the dealing with the whistle-blower protection. I would like to know what is the intended cost of this new unit to house the whistle-blower protection? Thank you.

Ms. Pascal: I really cannot answer that as yet because I believe there will be some consultation with the various stakeholders and that has not taken place as yet. So we have not really looked at cost for that particular unit. No discussions have taken place with that as yet.

Miss Ramkissoon: Do you foresee that it will be more than the budgeted \$1million?

Ms. Pascal: It may be more, because let us take for example the amendments of the form of the IPLA, I know there will be costs with respect to—we intend to

hold public consultation. So that is a cost.

5.00 p.m.

Miss Ramkissoon: Do you foresee that it would be more than the budgeted \$1 million?

Ms. Pascal: It will be more, because let us take for example the amendments of the form of the IPLA. I know there will be costs with respect to—we intend to hold public consultations so that is a cost. If you look at the whistle-blower legislation they speak about a unit that houses the whistle-blower, but also the Schedule identifies 16 bodies. I suspect that will form a part, so we have not had any discussion yet with those bodies and how we will tease out those issues.

Miss Ramkissoon: Just for clarification and to share with this Committee, if you may, has the Integrity Commission ever embarked on any prior projects previous to the whistle-blower project?

Ms. Pascal: Let me let my IT person answer.

Mrs. Elder St. Louis: Not exactly like the whistleblower project, but we had in 2007 embarked on our IT infrastructure which was a large project in the sense that I think it was over \$2 million. I am not too sure, accounts could clarify that for me on the costing. So I say it is not like a unit we were forming, it was just that we were implementing a new IT infrastructure and that detailed we had to purchase over 12 servers and new equipment, so that the cost was, like I said, about \$2million.

Mr. Mark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and may I also welcome members of the Integrity Commission to this meeting.

I did hear you say, Registrar, that there was no consultation with the Integrity Commission as it relates to the whistleblower protection legislation. However, there is an allocation under subhead 09 of the Development Programme of

\$500,000 for the establishment of a unit—I guess a whistleblower unit—also a reporting unit under your jurisdiction.

Considering the lack of general knowledge of the public on matters of the nature that you are going to be embarking upon shortly, once things remain equal, what measures would you be embarking upon as a commission to implement the whole education process, so that members of the public would become more familiarized with the Integrity in Public Life Act, as well as this new unit that you will be establishing, given the allocation? What kind of measures do you plan to effect in order to educate the wider public on this matter?

Ms. Pascal: I will let my Manager, Public, explain.

Mr. Crichlow: First we need to understand what the legislation is all about, what is the whistle-blower going to be doing and what will be the role of the Commission. Once we have identified that, then internally we will have to decide how we go forward internally, in terms of informing ourselves about how we implement this whistle-blower legislation. Then of course one would need to look at the public. You need to have some general meetings with the national community, then we will have to identify who are the stakeholders, who is this legislation aimed at? Are we looking at individuals who are going to provide us with information? What are the levels of security that will be provided? So it is going to take a gamut of meetings with a number of stakeholders, people who have an interest in being whistle-blowers.

Mr. Mark: Madam Chair, the Registrar did say in her opening remarks that one of the objectives or goals of the Integrity Commission is to make TrinidadandTobago corruption-free. Could you share with this Committee what are some of the measures, what are some of the steps, what are some of the initiatives that the Integrity Commission of TrinidadandTobago plans to embark on

to accomplish this objective, this goal of making this society more corruption-free?

Ms. Pascal: Firstly I will let you hear from my public education person, then Investigative is going to play a part and Compliance after will educate you.

Mr. Crichlow: Initially the commission decided to target the school-age population. We have been in the schools for last four or five years spreading the message and a conversation on do the right thing. We have been pretty successful in spreading that message among the primary and secondary schools. Last year we engaged the tertiary level institutions in having a debate competition where we sought to spread the message of do the right thing on integrity.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a consultation next door that brought together all the Integrity Commissions of the Caribbean, because the challenge that we have is a regional challenge. How can we work together with the other regional Integrity Commissions in spreading this message of ethics and do the right thing? Those are some of the steps that we have taken in terms of spreading the message.

We had a number of other initiatives planned for last year and this year, but because of budgetary constraints we have had to cut them back. While we were doing our projects in the schools you would recognize that we have issues of student violence, students using the social media. The challenges that we have in the schools, we engaged some non-profit organizations to work with us to do some interventions in the schools, and we have had to put that aside. We have had to put aside quite a number of other initiatives. But once the funding is there, the will is here. I am very sure we can carry them forward.

Mr. Frederick: We recognize that in order to achieve this goal or this dream of making Trinidad and Tobago corruption-free, it ought to be tackled on two fronts: prevention and detection. As Mr. Crichlow just alluded to, the public education is a means of enhancing the preventative aspect.

As a means of improving the detection aspect we are now embarking on a whole review of the Integrity in Public Life Act, because we recognize that the investigative capacity, where the laws are concerned, is not as strong as we would like it to be, and we are trying to have this addressed so that it would improve our ability to detect acts of corruption. We are hoping that by addressing these issues we will be able to come as close as possible to achieving that dream.

Mr. Ramsey: We hold a number of sensitization programmes with the persons in public life informing them of the requirements under the Act. We also have an open week which is planned for next month for those persons who have to file their declarations by May 31, 2016.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I have three questions, but they could be rolled into one. The project for the reform of the Integrity Commission, I heard the explanation of the Registrar in relation to the Act and the outreach that you are doing—and this is just from my pure ignorance—I do not understand how \$500,000 could be allocated to the reform of the Integrity Commission. You said you had collected all this information, this feedback. Is it to pay attorneys? I just need to understand that.

Then I go to question number one on the Whistleblower Act, the \$500,000 also allocated for the whistle-blower, and it says: For putting structures and systems in place to house a new unit. If it is simply a new unit and the positions, I would think those would be recurrent expenditure and not fall under the PSIP. I assume that it would not be housed in the same building. So I want to get an idea what exactly the \$500,000 would involve.

Then I go to question six, when we ask: Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of resources and adequate performance? If yes, provide a detailed description, and you say no. So there are no systems in

place to ensure proper management and efficiency, and then I see the vague answer to that. That is why a question went up.

Ms. Pascal: I know it was a bit vague when I made my submission, mainly because we had no information with respect to the whistle-blower legislation. We are now into discussions with the AG's Office and the AG indicated that he is going to share the information with us as soon as it is completed. That is why sometimes I may be vague. With respect to the reform, only recently last week the commissioners had completed the amendments—looked at the amendments to the IPLA.

Mr. Cuffie: In terms of the commissioners looking at it, I am trying to understand where the \$500,000 cost comes in. If the Commission is looking at it, what are we spending the money for?

Ms. Pascal: The \$500,000 is really to hire a legal draftsman to assist with the amendments and consultation thereafter, the different stakeholders, public consultation.

Mr. Cuffie: I mean, this is the Integrity Commission we are talking about, they have no effective compliance, proper management or resources are inadequate. How could you not have any system in place to prevent corruption or waste in the Integrity Commission?

Ms. Pascal: I think I had misinterpreted the questioning at the time, before I made the submission with respect to the particular areas that were needed. That is why I am here. If you all wish for us to write it or for us to appear again it would be no problem. I can provide that written for you.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you very much.

Miss Olivierre: If I could just get some clarity. Back to the first one, the drafting of the whistleblower protection legislation. That same \$500,000, when

asked how were the funds to be utilized it was for putting together structures and systems in place. But if you have not had the consultations, you have not had the discussions, so you are not sure exactly what you are putting in place, then how was the number arrived at? What was that number based on?

Ms. Pascal: That number was put against the IC development programme. It was not a request from the Integrity Commission. Discussions were held between AG and the Ministry of Planning without the information sent to the Integrity Commission. We were not aware.

Miss Olivierre: Okay, I accept that. But do you envision that you would need additional resources then to be able to act as a designated authority on the new Act, and how much additional staff and whatnot do you envision you would need? Would you have adequate space in your current location to house this additional staff?

Ms. Pascal: No, we will not have the current space. Presently we had a consultancy with respect to reorganizing the Integrity Commission and restructuring. That report will be sent to Public Administration for PMCD's consideration. By the end of the week we are looking at a review of the structure of the Integrity Commission. So we will need more space, yes, because we are presently housed on level 14; that is one floor.

5.15 p.m.

Miss Olivierre: So, in terms of that revised structure that you are submitting to PMCD next week, would you have contemplated then a unit to deal with the whistle-blower legislation?

Ms. Pascal: No, no, we did not at the time, we will have to take that—that is taken under advisement. Because with the structure, we are going to inform PMCD about this new remit, where to be considered, because too we have to

improve also with respect to a project unit—assign a project unit, request for a project unit also, which was not one of the recommendations in the consultancy report. When the consultants came in to work with IC, this was not part of consideration, this was something that is new.

Miss Olivierre: Well, in terms of occupying PMCD's time, I am wondering if it is—since you are aware that whatever you are sending right now, you would still need to go and have it reviewed and have additional units put on, I am wondering if there is any merit in submitting that to PMCD at this time knowing that it is not a final decision.

Ms. Pascal: No, it is not a final decision.

Madam Chairman: Member Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to the oversight mechanisms in place at the Integrity Commission, I saw on your submission, you spoke of a performance management system and there exists an organization of such. I would like for you to share with the Committee the function of this performance management system. As in the submission, it looks like it varies from monitoring and evaluation. If you could just share some insight on that, please.

Ms. Pascal: Yes, sure. I will let my HR person.

Ms. Young: The performance management system, well, we currently work with—it has to do with, based on the guidance from the CPO's office, with respect to contract employees. So that is the system we work—it is the performance appraisal system with respect to work, not organizational. That is the system that I think that was mentioned in the submission to you.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you for that clarification. So now that this is not the right spot for it, what are the oversight mechanisms in place at the Integrity Commission?

Ms. Pascal: Well, we follow the Financial Regulations and the Exchequer. We also have the audit department out of the President's House that provides oversight at the Integrity Commission.

Miss Ramkissoon: Are these two departments able to track the value for money, accountability and transparency? And under what policies and guidelines are they operating under?

Ms. Pascal: Well, with respect to audit, there is a bit of difficulty in the sense that there is no internal auditor attached at the IC. There is no position of internal auditor and the level of auditing, which is shared with the President's House, is that of Auditing Assistant which is the highest position. Therefore, that is why in the new structure, in the new request, it was recommended that the Integrity Commission has its own audit unit which will be housed by an experienced auditor within the department.

Miss Ramkissoon: Are there any other internal policies that you all utilize at the Integrity Commission?

Ms. Pascal: Yes, we have different policies such as employment policies—different employment policies. We have also with respect to transition policies, to name a few.

Miss Ramkissoon: Would you like to share some light on the Integrity in Public Life Act that you have mentioned in your submission?

Ms. Pascal: I will let my legal officer. What area of the Integrity in Public Life Act would you like to be shared, may I ask?

Miss Ramkissoon: That is in relation to number 11 where there are internal policies and procedures reviewed and revised to reflect current practice, and it was referred to there where amendments to the Integrity in Public Life Act, but I could not really understand the answer, so that is why I am asking.

Ms. Pascal: Yes, as I stated earlier, there was a bit of cross—so I will make submissions. As I had stated to Sen. Mark that I will make further submissions in writing.

Madam Chairman: To all.

Ms. Pascal: Yes, as much as possible.

Madam Chairman: Registrar, if you could just assist me, earlier in terms of explaining this \$500,000 allocation under drafting of whistle-blowing protection legislation, I understood you to say that this was almost like a gift given to the Integrity Commission in that you did not ask for it.

Ms. Pascal: Exactly, Chair.

Madam Chairman: You said it was something determined by the Attorney General and the Ministry of Finance.

Ms. Pascal: Yes. Planning, not finance.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Planning, thank you. Finance or planning?

Ms. Pascal: Well, finance.

Madam Chairman: Finance, that is what I heard. Thank you.

Ms. Pascal: Normally it goes down—you know, the AG will send it to planning department, PPRD division and then finance would allocate the moneys.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, in terms of the reform of the Integrity Commission and drafting of that legislation, was this \$500,000 visited upon you in the same way?

Ms. Pascal: That, too, as a gift.

Madam Chairman: Because I really wanted to ask the sort of authority for drafting to be done by or within the Integrity Commission, and I would think then, therefore, based on how this came by, that was the basis of the authority. You do not have any authority in statute or otherwise to do drafting?

Ms. Pascal: No, no authority.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Is it a normal practice—because one would imagine that we have the Development Programme, and one would imagine that any organization, any Ministry, statutory authority, independent body like the Integrity Commission, would submit to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development, development projects. Is it a normal practice or habit of any administration to offer gifts, as you would put it, where you have not—

Ms. Pascal: As Chair put it, Sir.

Mr. Mark: No, when I say “gift”, I am not saying it in any kind of negative sense because you are the Integrity Commission so I am not doing that. But what I find very strange, through the Chair, is that you can just be imposed with a sum of moneys without your requesting it. And I am just asking you if you could share with this body whether this is an unusual development, or is it a normal practice that you have experienced over the years, where you have not requested an allocation but you are given an allocation? And in this instance, I am literally shocked to hear that you did not ask for whistle-blower allocation but you were given, and then you have just given to the Chair another instance where the reform of the commission, you did not ask for an allocation and yet still you were given an allocation of \$500,000.

Now, could you explain to this PAAC, is this a normal practice? Is this the normal way the Integrity Commission receives moneys or allocation from the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Finance? That is what I am trying to get clear in my mind.

Ms. Pascal: I cannot say that, Sir, I am not sure. As you are aware, I recently attached to the Integrity Commission and I cannot say. I will have to do research

but I cannot say.

Madam Chairman: Member Baksh.

Miss Baksh: Good afternoon. My question really deals with the department's role in preventing, detecting and investigating fraud. Given that the unit is not functional at this time, how does the Commission detect and investigate fraud in its projects?

Ms. Pascal: I will have my Director of Investigations. Projects, oh sorry. Well, we do not have any projects per se at the moment.

Miss Baksh: But in the past, how was it detected?

Ms. Pascal: Can I have a written submission because I was not at the department—I only joined the department on February 19th.

Madam Chairman: Registrar, certainly, and any other questions we would have, we will ask you to give us written submissions. All written submissions must be in by Monday coming.

Ms. Pascal: Sure.

Madam Chairman: And just so that I can be abundantly clear, under these two projects, no releases were given and no money was spent?

Ms. Pascal: Yes, Ma'am, nothing was spent.

Madam Chairman: And nothing has been released?

Ms. Pascal: No, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. I want to thank you, Registrar, and your full team for coming to assist us in this conversation. Thank you for your cooperation and for really working beyond hours but that is what I guess duty calls at times for. We would be sending the questions that—further questions that we have and of course, you know those that you have given the undertaking to answer by Monday, and we look forward for those submissions that may assist us in doing

our report. So I thank you all very much: Ms. Alexander, Mr. Ramsey, Mr. Frederick, Ms. George and of course, my sight is limited going to the back there, I know there is a Ms. Young, but thank you all.

Ms. Pascal: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: And as the Integrity Commission representatives leave us, I want to thank the members of the media and the members of the public who have attended, in either physical form or virtual form, for their interest in the work of the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee. I now suspend the public hearings. I thank you all. Pleasant evening.

5.28 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*