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**Summary of Proceedings  
Public Hearing**

*Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities  
(including the THA)*

Held on Wednesday March 23<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Subject matter:** Inquiry into the Administration and Operations of the Land Settlement Agency (LSA) in relation to Squatter Regularisation.

**Objectives of the inquiry**

The objectives of the inquiry are:

- To assess the current state of squatting on State Land in Trinidad;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Agency in executing its mandate, particularly in relation to the;
  - a. regularization of eligible squatters and
  - b. The containment of squatting.
- Determine whether the resources, systems and procedures of the LSA are sufficient to allow it operate efficiently.

**Venue:** The hearing was held on Wednesday March 23<sup>th</sup> 2016 from 1:44 p.m. to 3:12 p.m. in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor, Office of the Parliament, Tower D, The Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre, 1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain.

**Committee members**

The following committee members were present:

- i. Mr. H. R. Ian Roach (Chairman)
- ii. Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP (Vice-Chairman)
- iii. Mr. Stuart Young, MP
- iv. Mr. Darryl Smith, MP
- v. Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, MP

- vi. Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus
- vii. Mr. Nigel De Freitas

**Witnesses who appeared**

The following officials of the LSA appeared before the Committee:

- Mr. Hazar Hosein, Chief Executive Officer, LSA;
- Ms. Sasha Darbeau, Manager, Tenure Regularization Unit;
- Mr. Satchianand Bassaw, Senior Design Engineer;
- Mr. Everson Beeda, Land Use Planner; and
- Ms. Oma Moonoo, Senior Accountant.

**Key Issues Discussed**

The following are the key subject areas/issued discussed during the hearing:

- i. The manner in which the LSA interacts/cooperates with Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development;
- ii. Whether the LSA had acquired the requisite demarcations and plans for the “Designated Areas” set out in the Schedule of the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act Chap. 57:05;
- iii. The status of the Land for the Landless Programme;
- iv. The estimated number of squatters in the geographical regions of;
  - Sangre Grande
  - Point Fortin
  - Diego Martin- North East
  - Port of Spain South
  - D’abadie Omera.
- v. The number of squatters and squatters households in Trinidad;
- vi. The squatter containment measures that the LSA would administer if allowed and the fact that it is the Commissioner of State Lands and Municipal Corporations who have the authority to evict and contain squatters ;
- vii. The number of vacant job positions at the LSA. It was noted that all 193 positions at the LSA are contract jobs;
- viii. The reasons for the proliferation of squatters throughout Trinidad;
- ix. There is a need for more public education on squatting laws;

- x. The fact that the distribution of Housing Development Corporation (HDC) Housing Units has had a minimal impact on reducing squatting;
- xi. The options available to squatters who applied to be regularised but were unsuccessful;
- xii. whether the LSA collaborates with the Ministry of Public Utilities and utility providers to manage the provision of utilities to squatters such as water and electricity;
- xiii. The determination of land prices for land occupied by squatters;
- xiv. The efforts of the LSA to become more self-sufficient;
- xv. The fact that the LSA has developed 30 land sites in its 16 years of existence and whether such output should be deemed an underachievement;
- xvi. The inadequacy of funds allocated to the LSA to develop additional land sites;
- xvii. The proper definition of a squatter;
- xviii. The fact that squatting is less prevalent in Tobago and is different in nature compared to Trinidad;
- xix. The main contractors who the LSA has engaged to undertake land development;
- xx. The requirement of the LSA to undertake additional upgrades on land sites to comply with changes in statutory requirements;
- xxi. The option of imposing a levy or tax on squatters that are not regularised to raise revenue to support the operations of the LSA.

### **View the Hearing**

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:

[JSC LASCSA Public Meeting - Wednesday March 23, 2016](#)

### **Contact the Committee's Secretary**

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at [jsclasasc@ttparliament.org](mailto:jsclasasc@ttparliament.org) or [624-7275 Ext. 2283](tel:624-7275)

*Committees Unit*

*Wednesday 23<sup>th</sup> March 2016*