



Summary of Proceedings

Public Hearing

Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs

Held on Friday February 19th, 2016

Subject matter: An Inquiry into Criminal Case Flow Management in the Judicial System

Venue: A public hearing was held on Friday February 19th 2016 from 10:31 a.m. to 11:48 a.m. at 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 for the meeting:

- Ms. Sophia Chote, SC (Chairman)
- Mr. Michael Coppin (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr. Randall Mitchell, MP
- Ms. Marlene Mc Donald, MP
- Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP
- Mr. Clarence Rambharat
- Mr. Wayne Sturge

Witnesses who appeared

Mr. Daniel Khan, Inspector of Prisons, appeared as a witness. He was supported by Ms. Ria Mankee-Sookram, Attorney-at-Law.

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the key issues raised by Members of the Committee:

- i. The ratio of Remand Prisoners and Convicted Prisoners;
- ii. The timeline for the Inspector of Prisons to submit his annual report in accordance with Section 9 of the Prison Rules
- iii. The challenges encountered by prisoners who may qualify for bail but are unable to secure same given their socio-economic status;
- iv. Alternative and innovative strategies which may be employed to reduce the backlog of criminal cases in the court such as:
 - Parole Boards
 - Video Conferencing
 - Decriminalising minor offences
 - Introducing a warning system for persons who commit minor offences
- v. The role of the Legal Aid Service in reducing the backlog of criminal cases in the court;
- vi. Obstacles preventing prisoners on remand from accessing legal aid;
- vii. Recommendations to make the regulatory framework governing the prison system more relevant to existing demands;
- viii. The lengthy lag time the accused normally endures between being charged with an offence and indictment;
- ix. The protracted nature of Criminal Matters before the courts;
- x. The procedures in place to assess prisoners with mental illnesses with a view to prioritising their matters before the court;
- xi. The need to improve communication channels between the Prison System and other stakeholders.

Committees Unit

Friday 19th February 2016

Contact the Committee's Secretary at jscfla@tparliament.org