



## **Summary of Proceedings**

### **Public Hearing**

Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs

Held on Friday February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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

**Venue:** A public hearing was held on Friday February 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016*

Contact the Committee's Secretary at [jscfla@tparliament.org](mailto:jscfla@tparliament.org)