



# **PARLIAMENT**

**REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**FIRST SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT (2010/2011)**

**FIRST REPORT**

**OF**

**THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**PARLIAMENTARY ACCOMMODATION**

**Paper No:**

**Date laid in the H.O.R.:.....**

**Date laid in the SENATE.:.....**

## **Executive Summary**

The Red House is the home of Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament. Despite a turbulent history, this Organisation of American States (OAS) listed monument stands today as a symbol of the persistence and strength of our democracy, grounded in the heart of a nation and built with its sweat and tears. However, it urgently requires restoration and adaptation to modern use.

This First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Accommodation, (2010-2011 Session), focuses on Member and staff accommodation during the imminent restoration effort.

It raises serious concerns about the state of this building that has been battered and neglected for far too long and reports the committee's observation about the condition of the building and the spaces currently occupied by members and staff.

The Report concludes with the following main recommendations:

- ❖ that all efforts should be taken to ensure that the Red House Restoration Project is completed within the shortest possible time;
- ❖ that, there should be a complete evacuation of the building during the restoration exercise;
- ❖ that appropriate temporary accommodation should be identified and suitably outfitted for parliamentary purposes during the restoration project.

## **Introduction**

### **Members of the Committee**

The Committee is comprised of 12 Members from the House of Representatives and the Senate, as follows:

#### **House Members**

Mr. Stephen Cadiz (Chairman)  
Dr. Keith Rowley  
Dr. Delmon Baker  
Mr. Colm Imbert  
Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh  
Ms. Ramona Ramdial

#### **Senators**

Mrs. Mary King  
Mr. Faris Al Rawi  
Mrs. R. Nan Gosine-Ramgoolam  
Mr. Elton Prescott, SC  
Mr. Embau Moheni  
Dr. James Armstrong

### **Establishment of the Committee**

On October 08, 2010 and October 12, 2010, the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively, agreed to the following resolution:

***“Be it resolved that a Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Accommodation be established:***

***And be it further resolved that this committee be mandated to consider essential guiding policies related to Member and staff accommodation during the restoration of the Red House project and report to both Houses from time to time.”***

Following the establishment of the Committee, the House of Representatives and the Senate by resolutions of October 29, 2010 and November 2, 2010, respectively, made appointments to the Committee.

### **Election of Chairman and Determination of Quorum**

At its First Meeting held on Friday November 12, 2010, the Committee elected Mr. Stephen Cadiz, MP as Chairman. At that meeting, it was also agreed that a quorum would comprise five Members, to include one Member from the Government, one Member of the Opposition and one Independent Member.

### **Secretarial Assistance**

Ms. Keiba Jacob, Procedural Clerk Assistant (House of Representatives) was appointed to serve as Secretary to the Committee with Ms. Chantal La Roche, Legal Officer as Assistant Secretary.

## Report

The Red House was originally designed and built as the Court House and Legislative Buildings and completed in the 1840s. Following the devastating fire during the Water Riots of 1903, the Government enlarged the building making it more monumental in the process. Over the ensuing decades, the Red House was adapted to also house numerous Ministries of the Executive branch of State. However, within the last 9 years, only the Parliament has occupied this space.

2. In the course of time, the physical structure of the Red House has deteriorated and today desperately requires restoration. Such works became more critical due of the damage caused by the attempted coup in 1990. Over the years, incomplete planning and the execution of ad hoc renovations have resulted in the following problems with this building:

- ❖ Random modifications of the original design
- ❖ Ad hoc renovation and haphazard appearance
- ❖ Loss of the building's historical features
- ❖ Use of unsuitable decor/replacement material
- ❖ Inappropriate design/location of services.

3. Inadequate maintenance of the building has resulted in many problems, including:

- ❖ Increase in the number and severity of roof leaks
- ❖ Inadequacy of services/space to fulfill the users' requirements
- ❖ Deterioration of the building's structural and architectural elements
- ❖ Mosquito and other insect infestation in neglected areas as well as in spaces occupied by staff.

4. Despite this, the Red House and the adjacent Woodford Square provide a constant reminder to Members of Parliament as well as the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago of the responsibility vested in our system of democratic governance and in those elected to office.

### **The Decision to Restore**

5. It followed therefore that for quite a while now it was acknowledged that the Red House, which is listed as an OAS Monument, required urgent restoration.

6. In a recent decision, Cabinet agreed that the Red House should be restored and dedicated to the sole use of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Committee's Mandate**

7. It was as a consequence of this decision that your Committee was appointed to:

***“consider essential guiding policies related to Member and staff accommodation during the Restoration of the Red House Project and report to both Houses from time to time”***

### **Meetings**

8. Your Committee met 3 times. During its last meeting held on Friday February 4, 2011, your Committee undertook a comprehensive tour of the Red House.

9. The Committee visited the following offices/areas:

- **The Office of the Speaker of the House**

- **The Office of the President of the Senate**
- **Secretariat Services**
  - The Office of the Clerk of the House**
  - The Office of the Clerk of the Senate**
  - The Committees' Office**
  - The Office of the PAC/PA(E)C**
  - The Projects Office**
- **The Hansard Offices**
- **The Parliament Library**
- **The Parliament Chamber**
- **The three existing Committee Rooms**
- **The Members' Dining Room and Lounge and its adjacent kitchen facilities**
- **The Staff Dining Room and Lounge and its adjacent kitchen facilities**
- **The Staff Gym**
- **The day care facilities**
- **The sick bay facilities**
- **The Financial Management Unit**
- **The Administrative Support Services Unit**
- **The Corporate Communications Unit**
  - Communications and Media Relations**
  - The Parliament Channel Control Centre**
  - The Parliament Radio Broadcast Room**
  - Video Editing**
  - Digital Archiving**
- **Human Resource Management**
- **Information Technology Unit**
- **Internal Audit Unit**
- **Pension and Leave Unit**
- **Building maintenance**
- **The Office of the Marshal**

**Housekeeping Services**

**Food and Beverage**

**Courier and Messaging**

**The Parliament's Security Unit**

- **Printing Services**
- **The Southern Wing and Chamber which are currently unoccupied.**

### **The current accommodation arrangements**

10. The Committee took careful note of the state of the Red House and the conditions under which staff are required to work in the building.

11. The main objective of the Parliament's administrative staff is to enable the Houses and their Members to carry out their parliamentary functions effectively by essentially:

- providing the Parliament and its committees with the advice and services they need for the effective conduct of business;
- providing individual Members of the House and the Senate with the advice and services they need for the effective performance of their parliamentary duties regardless of party or office;
- making the Parliament and its work accessible to the public.

12. The duties of the 240 permanent, contracted and seasonal employees of the Parliament are quite varied and they take great pride in their work. The Houses work unusual hours, more so the House of Representatives but due to the high regard that staff has for the Parliament as an institution and their strongly developed sense of public service, there has long been an emphasis on completing work to the highest standard, on time, regardless of formal office hours.



13. During the tour of the Red House, the Committee recognized that the space currently allocated for parliamentary staff in the building is untenable, as is the space available for the multifarious needs of Members who also utilize the building for a number of activities. Additionally, Members of the Committee observed a number of serious health, safety and emergency issues, including, but not limited to the following:

- Overcrowding, with either too many staff in a small area or with staff in inappropriate spaces;



- Some staff Members are currently accommodated in vaults which have been converted into office space. There appeared to be no safe exit routes from these areas, which were not designed to be utilised as offices in the first place;



- Several corridors double as storage areas, creating cramped conditions as well as unsafe emergency evacuation routes;
- Ad hoc office arrangements with some departments being split and housed in different areas of the building;
- Work areas lacking in privacy with many people sharing work spaces and traffic circulating through offices or amenities;

- The limitations of available space for critical services provided by the Office of the Parliament;



- The building is not outfitted with fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, hose wheels or a sprinkler system. There were also no visible muster point signs and there were very few Emergency Exit signs;
- Although the South Wing of the building is not being used, there is still live electrical wiring in this area which is exposed to the elements due to the incomplete state of the roof;

- The electrical wiring for the cramped services being provided to the Parliament on the Northern Wing poses serious hazard to the users and the building as a whole;



- Severe water-related deterioration problems posing severe threats to the architectural and structural integrity of the building. In fact, in the southern chamber there appears to a total deterioration of the building's structural and architectural elements;



- Visible cracks and loose masonry material obviously due to water being trapped within the masonry system itself;



- Critical roof leaks throughout the building and ad hoc temporary solutions to stem the ingress of rain water or minimize the negative effects.

## **The Restoration Effort**

14. The Committee considered three possible options for Member and staff accommodation during the restoration project. These are as follows:-

- (i) Continued occupation of the Red House during restoration by utilizing a system of internal relocation as the project progresses;

- (ii) Relocation of the entire Parliament to a building to be identified and outfitted for the purpose;
- (iii) Continued occupation and utilization of the North Chamber and the relocation of the support services and staff to a nearby building to be identified and outfitted for the purpose.

**OPTION I - Continued occupation of the Red House during restoration**

15. This proposal would require the restoration effort to be broken into phases while the Parliament continues to occupy the building. The restoration will commence on the South Link and Chamber. Upon completion, there will be the internal relocation of Parliament from the North to South Link. Thereafter, restoration will commence on the North Link and Chamber followed by the restoration of the Rotunda.

16. There was general agreement by the Committee that, given the condition of the building, restoration of the Red House should not be undertaken while occupied. The Committee was advised that a recent structural survey of the building had revealed serious concerns about the structural strength of the building and that CARIRI had indicated that certain walls of the Red House require strengthening. Additionally seismic studies by CEP Ltd. confirmed the need for seismic reinforcement of the building<sup>1</sup>.

17. However, quite apart from the dangers related to the structural integrity of the building, it was clear to committee members that serious health and safety issues would attend any effort at restoring the building while the staff of the Parliament as well as Members were in occupation.

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 Report to the Speaker of the House on the status of building repairs by the UDeCOTT

18. Your committee paid regard to earlier ad hoc Red House renovation efforts and agreed that the staff should not be constrained to work in the building while major restoration works are being undertaken. They noted that experience to date has shown that attempts to effect works to the building, although minor, resulted in excessive noise, as well as substantial infiltration of dust and other pollutants into staff areas, including biological contaminants.

19. The Committee also believes that there will be significant work interruptions consequent on the need to work around the parliamentary schedule resulting in prolonged construction periods and exacerbated overall project costs.

**OPTION II- Relocation of the entire Parliament to another Building**

20. The Committee also considered the possibility of the relocation of the entire Parliament to another building in order to enable the unimpeded progress of the Red House Restoration effort.

21. There was agreement that any temporary relocation will involve costs associated with outfitting the designated areas sufficient to reflect the dignity of the Parliament. It was appreciated that any such move to a building not designed for Parliament would involve a degree of discomfort to Members of Parliament and staff. However, the Committee noted the following:

- a) External relocation would ensure earlier completion than internal relocation;
- b) Members and staff will be in a healthy and safe environment during the restoration project;
- c) With the entire building vacant, the approach to restoration could be more comprehensive utilizing economies of scale and the related cost effective processes;

- d) The required structural retrofitting and upgrading could be undertaken in a logical and efficient manner

### **OPTION III - Partial relocation**

22. A third option considered by the Committee was partial relocation. This option proposes the relocation of the administration (Office of the Parliament) to a nearby building while the parliament chamber located in the North Wing continues to operate on sitting days. Upon restoration of the South Wing, the South Chamber would be utilized while the North Chamber is under restoration.

23. The Committee noted that for this option to be viable, in addition to the Chamber, the offices of the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, Clerk of the House and Clerk of the Senate must remain in the Red House. Other services that would be required to remain at the Red House would include:

- a) The Hansard Offices
- b) The Parliament Library
- c) The Members' Dining Room and Lounge and its adjacent kitchen facilities
- d) The Staff Dining Room and Lounge and its adjacent kitchen facilities
- e) The day care facilities
- f) Communications and Media Relations
- g) The Parliament Channel Control Centre
- h) The Parliament Radio Broadcast Room



- i) Video Editing Services
- j) Food and Beverage Services
- k) Courier and messaging Services
- l) The Parliament's Security Unit

24. Members noted the comments of the Clerk of the House that, given the duration of the project (estimated at three years), such partial relocation would restrict the functioning of the Parliament since delays would be experienced as Members and staff traversed the streets of Port of Spain moving between the units. Additionally, with the Chamber and critical offices remaining in the north wing of the Red House, construction work on the restoration project would be prolonged and costs aggravated. For these reasons, the Committee rejected this option.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

25. The Committee felt that the time was long past for the unhindered restoration of this important building and recommends the early commencement of works in this regard. There was unanimous agreement that all efforts should be taken to ensure that the Red House Restoration Project is completed within the shortest possible time.

26. The Committee acknowledged that restoration efforts are fraught with uncertainties and that, given the present condition of the Red House, there will be tremendous costs associated with this project. It is against this background that the Committee recommends that all necessary steps should be taken to minimize costs.

27. Option II (i.e. Relocation of the entire Parliament to another building) is preferred by the Committee. The Committee believes that this option would allow a faster and more efficient and cost effective completion of the Restoration Project.

28. Moreover, the Committee is very much concerned about the present condition of the building as well as the safety of Members and staff during the restoration effort soon to commence. It strongly recommends to both Houses of Parliament the temporary relocation of the operations of the Parliament to a safe and healthy environment as a matter of utmost urgency.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Stephen Cadiz  
Chairman

February 23, 2011

**DISSENTING VIEW ON THE USE OF THE RED HOUSE  
AS THE SEAT OF PARLIAMENT**

The Red House was constructed in the 1840s and remains one of the most iconic buildings in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. This senator is aware that the current terms of reference (TOR) of the JSC on Parliamentary Accommodation are limited to the consideration of “Member and staff accommodation during the restoration of the Red House Project” and are based on a resolution passed in the Lower House and the Senate, as well as a decision of the Cabinet, hence the submission of this dissenting view for further consideration.

Having toured the building twice since the above decisions were taken, this Senator is respectfully requesting some reconsideration of the TOR to also include the actual suitability of the building and the site for the accommodation of a modern Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago. This request does not preclude the considered relocation of Parliament in the near future and the task regarding optimal suitability could perhaps be included in the brief of the architects and preservation specialists, including city planning expertise, as well as further debate among parliamentarians and stakeholders.

The primary objective should include consideration of the preservation and optimal use of this historic “monument” which is also listed by the Organisation of American States. Whether the building could be adequately preserved internally and externally, and still serve the needs of a modern Parliament for many years to come, seems questionable. The expenditure of further considerable funds on the restoration should be informed by the adequacy to satisfy the functions – whether of a parliament or an alternative suitable use. While it is agreed that “form follows function,” the required functions in this instance may be constrained by the fact that this adage is not being applied to a new structure. Forcing “modern functions” into historical architectural forms has resulted in the less than optimal use or the demise of many historical buildings around the world.

The site tours indicated that the building is already being defaced and the architecture compromised owing to space constraints. Vaults have been converted to office space with inadequate emergency egress. Corridors and the eastern façade have been enclosed in order to increase the office space. Any proper renovation for preservation of this iconic building should include the consideration of these spaces reverting to the architectural style and intended safe use, thereby also perhaps resulting in no significant differential in available usable floor space once the restoration is properly completed and the southern wing also comes into use.

Parliamentary staff have also indicated that the filling of some vacancies is constrained by the lack of space. It has likewise been noted that any consideration to relocate sections of the staff during restoration must be informed by the consideration of certain minimal functions which should be housed together - a minimal critical functional mass for efficiency. This consideration will perhaps still apply after the restoration is completed and should thus be contemplated in the current terms of reference. Furthermore, there should be consideration of the additional functional on-site and location requirements of a modern parliament in a twin island State. No mention has been made of an actual museum of the Parliament itself, or possible installations such as a helipad, etc. Earlier assessments of a similar Committee indicated that the functions as outlined at that time could not be adequately accommodated even in a fully renovated structure. Interestingly, the list of those functions outlined earlier seems incomplete.

A secondary consideration is whether, owing to the historicity of this building and the multi-cultural composition of the population, this structure and the location could not be put to an alternative use which contributes to the recognition of our history and affords an opportunity for the redevelopment of Port of Spain. Could this facility more adequately serve as a museum and the nucleus of an urban “growth pole” for the revitalisation of the environs and the city? Quite apart from the form and function of the building, has the significance of the site/location in the city been contemplated?

This building has served us well and should be allowed to “breathe” and be traversed daily by thousands of our peoples and visitors in recognition of its internal and external magnificence and testimony to the imagination and skilfulness of past generations, as we also challenge ourselves to erect new edifices for the reflection of generations ahead.

Senator James Armstrong