



Public Hearing Summary

Wednesday June 17, 2020

Inquiry Subject:

Examination of the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year 2019.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie - Chairman
- Mr. Taharqa Obika - Vice-Chairman
- Ms. Charisse Seepersad - Member
- Mr. Adrian Leonce - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Auditor General's Department

- Ms. Lorelly Pujadas - Auditor General
- Ms. Jaiwantie Ramdass - Deputy Auditor General
- Mr. Gary Peters - Assistant Auditor General
- Ms. Nela Drawika Ali - Audit Director

Ministry of Finance – Treasury Division

- Ms. Catherine Laban - Comptroller of Accounts
- Ms. Joycelyn Thomas-Vialmosa - Deputy Comptroller of Accounts
- Ms. Avonelle Browne - Treasury Director (Ag.)
- Ms. Naleisha Bally - Treasury Director

Key Topics Discussed:

1. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic on the audit scope of the Public Accounts and the measures in place to address these challenges;
2. The status of the Business Continuity Plan of the Auditor General's Department (AGD);
3. The significant increase in revenue collection by the Board of Inland Revenue in the financial year 2019 when compared to the financial year 2018 from natural gas and crude oil Production Sharing Contracts;
4. The pervasive issues identified across the public service;

Auditor General's Report 2019

5. The gaps in the implementation of the fleet card facility for the procurement of fuel and lubricants at the Fire Services Division, Ministry of National Security;
6. The effect of the non-provision of documents including contracts on the conduct of the audit of the Public Accounts;
7. The challenges posed by the data storage weaknesses observed at numerous Ministries, Departments and Agencies;
8. The status of the overdraft facility on the Exchequer Account;
9. The status of statue barred scholars and the measures recommended by the Auditor General to avoid scholars' debts from becoming statue barred;
10. The changes necessary to better align the timeframe of the payment cycle of the CAPE scholarship programme with the academic calendar;
11. The reason for the use of the Extraordinary Expenditure Vote and the measures to be taken to address this issue;
12. The role of the Comptroller of Accounts in the monitoring of withdrawals from the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF);
13. The audit relationship between the Auditor General and the HSF;
14. The concerns raised by the Comptroller of Accounts regarding the need for a coordinated policy approach to address Central Government Debt and Contingent Liability;
15. The continued manual processing of transactions at the Customs and Excise Division;
16. The risk culture across the public service;
17. The weak compliance with financial directives across the public sector;
18. The effect of the high turnover of accounting staff in the public service on the level of compliance achieved;
19. The need for training of Accounting Units to enhance compliance with the financial instructions and directives;
20. The status and challenges of the audit of the financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly for the year 2016;
21. The need for effective oversight by Line Ministries of entities under their purview;
22. The intention to write off non-performing loans owed by Statutory Bodies and other Governments;
23. The need for a strong information technology governance framework, policies and procedures and business continuity planning for the entire public service;
24. The slow rate of progress in the implementation of biometric systems in the public service;
25. The status of the implementation of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS);
26. The improvements that would be facilitated by the implementation of IFMIS;
27. The status of the AGD's audit of the Government's procurement of patrol vessels from Australian shipbuilder Austal for use by the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard;
28. The status of the green fund; and
29. The allocation to Carifesta and the cost of Carifesta 2019.

Auditor General's Report 2019

View the Hearing:

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzNhZFoqpn4>

PAC Secretariat

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