



**Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing**

**Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and
Statutory Authorities (including the THA)**
held on Wednesday June 28th, 2017

Subject Matter: Inquiry into Certain Aspects of the Operations of the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA).

Objectives of the Inquiry

The objectives of the inquiry are as follows:

- i. To determine what policy and Development Plans are presently guiding the development of the North-West Peninsula;
- ii. To assess the processes and criteria which are being applied by the Authority to allocate and designate land for the various developmental activities;
- iii. To understand the operational constraints and challenges that are affecting the performance of the Authority.

Venue: The hearing was held on Wednesday June 28th, 2017 from 10:22 a.m. to 11:42 a.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 Members were present:

- Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP (Vice-Chairman)
- Ms. Khadijah Ameen
- Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus
- Mr. Nigel De Freitas

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) appeared before the Committee:

- Mrs. Deowattee Dilraj-Batoosingh, General Manager (Ag.)
- Mr. Robert Cezair, Board Director
- Mrs. Susan Russell-Edwards, Manager Human Resources (Ag.)
- Mr. Sheldon Gibbs, Draughtsman/Estimator, Project Team
- Mrs. Kelly Jackson-Baynes, Manager, Legal & Compliance Audit Services (Ag.)

The following officials of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation (DMRC) were in attendance:

- Mrs Beverly Haywood - Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Albert James- Building Inspector
- Mr. William Lutchman - County Superintendent

The following official of the T&T Tour Guide Association (TTTGA) was also in attendance:

- Mr. Wendell Griffith, President

Key Issues Discussed

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

The Role of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation in Relation to CDA

- i. In keeping with its mandate, the Diego Martin Regional Corporation (DMRC) is a service provider to the CDA;
- ii. The role of the DMRC in the development of CDA lands;
- iii. The DMRC does not have a statutory obligation for the development and maintenance of the tourist sites located in the Chaguaramas area;
- iv. The informal working relationship that exists between the CDA and the DMRC;
- v. The type of services rendered to the CDA by the Building Inspector of the DMRC;
- vi. The role of the DMRC in regulating development within the North-West region;
- vii. The DMRC has on occasions served demolition notices because of building violations;
- viii. The rate of compliance with demolition notices served by the DMRC is approximately 50-60 percent;
- ix. The challenges which arise as a result of the absence of a Corporate Secretary at the DMRC to treat with building violations;
- x. The maintenance of parks, beaches and other public spaces within the jurisdictions of the CDA by the DMRC is based upon requests made by the CDA;
- xi. The role of the DMRC in events held in the Chaguaramas area;
- xii. Only five (5) out of thirty-eight (38) applications made by CDA tenants were granted the necessary statutory approvals by the DMRC during the period 2000-2017.

- xiii. The 32 outstanding applications are pending the required documents necessary to complete the compliance process;
- xiv. Some CDA leaseholders are operating without the necessary statutory approvals;
- xv. The DMRC's willingness to work with the CDA as a first responder for emergencies;

CDA and the Trinidad and Tobago Tour Guides Association

- i. The rationale for the discontinuation of the use of licenced / certified tour guides by the T&TTGA to service CDA's tourism sites;
- ii. The CDA currently has one licenced tour guide who trains the other Customer Service Representatives;
- iii. The T&TTGA highlighted the legal implications of using uncertified Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) as tour guides;
- iv. The CDA advanced that the Authority intends to review the previous MOU with the T&TTGA in order to restore the relationship between the two organisations;
- v. The CDA stated that outsourcing tours is expensive and due to the financial constraints being experienced by the Authority it would be difficult to hire licenced tour guides at the present time;
- vi. Approximately \$7,000 to \$9,000 is generated from tours on a monthly basis by the CDA;
- vii. The CDA intends to expand the tour guide package and to further engage tour stakeholders;
- viii. The CDA has developed a marketing strategy to attract more patrons to participate in tours of the North-Western peninsula;

Tourism in the North-West Peninsula

- i. The T&TTGA proposed that a separate entity be established to manage tourism development in the peninsula;
- ii. The role of the Ministry of Tourism in marketing tourism on the peninsula.
- iii. The CDA indicated that normally there is an increase in activities in the Chaguaramas area during the July/August vacation period.

The CDA's Operational Issues

- i. The failure of CDA to take more decisive action to ensure that tenants pay their rental fees in a timely manner;
- ii. The CDA's Senior HSE Officer's failure to attend DMRC coordinating meetings during the past five months. The last meeting attended by the CDA's Senior HSE Officer was on January 26th, 2017;
- iii. The need for more formalised working relationship between the CDA and DMRC;
- iv. The role of the CDA's Superintendent of Estate Police in ensuring that the necessary approvals are obtained for events held in the North-West peninsula;
- v. The lack a disaster management or evacuation plan to guide the Authority's response in the event of an emergency in the north-west peninsula;

- vi. The dysfunctional telecommunication and internet systems/infrastructure at the CDA thwarts public engagement;
- vii. The potential legal implications of increasing rental values in order to increase revenues;
- viii. The viability of establishing public and environmental health violations as grounds for the withholding of lease renewals;
- ix. The failure of the CDA to deal with breaches in leases in an efficient manner;
- x. The reasons for the retrenchment of four (4) employees of the CDA.

Maintenance of CDA Facilities and Sites

- i. The CDA's inability to properly maintain some CDA's tourism sites due to financial constraints;
- ii. The possibility of partnering with stakeholders such as the DMRC for assistance to conduct maintenance works within the North-West region;
- iii. The CDA's Business Development Committee is trying to develop a feasible solution that would assist the Authority in the maintenance of the Boardwalk, the vendor's booths and other facilities;
- iv. There are eight (8) booths at Phase 2 of the Boardwalk facility, none are occupied due to a lack of electricity;
- v. The CDA has to seek legal advice on whether the Authority can enter into public-private partnerships as a means of augmenting its resource base.

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:
<https://youtu.be/pJqvvhq00vg>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jsclasasc@tpparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2283

*Committees Unit
Thursday 29th June 2017*