Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing
Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA)
held on Wednesday March 28th, 2018

Subject Matter: Inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC).

Objectives of the Inquiry
The objectives of the inquiry are as follows:

i. Assess the efficiency of the operations of the RIC at this time.
ii. Assess the effectiveness of the RIC in promoting greater efficiency of services in public utilities.
iii. To determine the adequacy of the current legislative framework governing the operations of the RIC

Venue: The hearing was held on Wednesday March 28th, 2018 from 10:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.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:

- Mr. H.R Ian Roach (Chairman)
- Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
- Dr. Lovell Francis, MP
- Mr. Nigel De Freitas
- Ms. Khadijah Ameen
Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU) appeared before the Committee:

- Ms. Beverly Khan  Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Anika Sarah Farmer  Director, Legal Services
- Ms. Gale Dulal  Electrification Sector Specialist
- Mrs. Sara-Jade Govia  Water Sector Specialist

The following officials of the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) appeared before the Committee:

- Dr. Hyacinth Guy  Chairman
- Dr. James Lee Young  Executive Director
- Ms. Carol Balkaran  Deputy Executive Director
- Ms. Nadia J.A. John  Legal/Corporate Secretary

The following officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) appeared before the Committee:

- Mr. Keith Sirju  Chairman
- Mr. Kelvin Ramsook  General Manager
- Mr. Cortenay Mark  Asst. General Manager-Engineering
- Mr. Neil Balgobin  Chief Financial Officer
- Mr. Gerard E. Rodriguez  Head Corporate Services, (Ag.)
- Ms. Annabelle Bransnell  Corporate Communications Manager

The following officials of the Water and Sewage Authority (WASA) appeared before the Committee:

- Mr. Romney Thomas  Chairman, Board of Commissioners
- Dr. Ellis Borris  Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Dion Abdool  General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
- Mrs. Denise Lee-Sing Pereira  Director, Programmers & Change Management
- Mr. Sherland Sheppard  Director, Operations
- Mr. Alan Poon-King  Director, Customer Care
- Ms. Rachelle Wilkie  Director, Finance
Key Issues Discussed

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with **the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission**

i. The relationship between T&TEC and the RIC which includes the preparation and scrutiny of business plans for the determination of tariffs;

ii. T&TEC’s compliance with the Act when addressing complaints;

iii. The existing communication relationship between the T&TEC and the RIC with reference to complaints;

iv. The inadequacy of the Act to empower the RIC to mandate the T&TEC to enforce its suggested recommendations for addressing complaints;

v. The high cost of implementing new technology such as e-Tendering, RFID, pre-paid metering and remote disconnection;

vi. The improvements that can be materialised from a rate increase;

vii. The $900 M annual debt that is being incurred by the T&TEC for the supply of natural gas by the NGC, resulting in $2.5 outstanding debt to NGC;

viii. The role of the T&TEC to provide a service versus realise profits;

ix. The disparity between the cost to produce electricity and its retail price;

x. The status of the Feed in Tariff (FIT) policy and Phase 2 of the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Project which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs;

xi. The increased efficiency of electricity through improved gas supplies from the Trinidad Generation Unlimited (TGU);

xii. The possibility of implementing solar panels at public parks;

xiii. The existence of small scale renewable projects in rural Trinidad;

xiv. 2% of households are without access to electricity due to remoteness and the high maintenance cost;

xv. The inefficiency of the hotline;

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with **the Water and Sewage Authority**:

i. The role of the quality assurance officer to determine the quality of water;

ii. The inefficiency of the 800 – LEAK hotline and the long period for WASA to address these leaks;

iii. The need for the greater utilisation of modern technology platforms;
iv. Status of replacing aged pipelines;

v. The status of the Quality of Service Standards document which will be published after rates have been determined;

vi. The role of the RIC in advising the most prudent rate for efficient operations;

vii. The practice of benchmarking policies against other regional bodies to highlight inefficiencies with WASA;

viii. The utilisations of a water shortage rebate system;

ix. The increase in water reliability due to a pipe laying project which took place;

x. The inability of WASA to provide water for citizens who are elevated at 300M and above;

xi. The upgrade of the Trinity Power Plant;

xii. The cost of $70 000US to hire a foreign Consultant to assist WASA in the preparation of a business plan and to meet the other requirements of the RIC for the rate review.

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link: https://youtu.be/7tyxErzYjCc

Contact the Committee’s Secretary
You may contact the Committee’s Secretary at jsclascsa@ttparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2283

Committees Unit
April 03, 2018