Summary of Proceedings

Public Hearing

Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities
(including the THA)
held on
Wednesday April 26th, 2017

Subject matter: Inquiry into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Public Service Commission.

Objectives of the inquiry

The objectives of the inquiry were:

i. To evaluate the performance of the Commission in executing its mandate.

ii. To determine whether the resources, systems and procedures of the Public Service Commission are sufficient to allow it to operate efficiently.

iii. To determine the challenges affecting the operations of the Commission and the possible solutions for alleviating these challenges.

Venue: The hearing was held on Wednesday April 26th, 2017 from 10:10 a.m. to 11:55 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 committee members were present:

i. Mr. H. R. Ian Roach (Chairman)

ii. Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP (Vice-Chairman)

iii. Mr. Nigel De Freitas

iv. Ms. Khadijah Ameen

Witnesses who appeared
The following officials of the Public Service Commission appeared before the Committee:

- Mrs. Maureen Manchouck, Chairman, Public Service Commission
- Mrs. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir, Deputy Chairman, Public Service Commission
- Mr. Clive Pegus, Member, Public Service Commission
- Mr. Martin Franklin, Member, Public Service Commission
- Ms. Kay Charles, Member, Public Service Commission
- Ms. Anastasius V. Creed, Director of Personnel Administration
- Ms. Prabhawatie Maraj, Deputy Director of Personnel Administration
- Mrs. Marcia Pile O’Brady, Deputy Director of Personnel Administration
- Ms. Natasha Seecharan, Legal Adviser
- Mrs. Ramdai Sookdeo, Executive Director, HRM
- Mrs. Coomarie Goolabsingh, Executive Director, HRM
- Ms. Allison Hughes, Director of Corporate Services

The following officials of the Office of the Prime Minister were also in attendance:

- Ms. Sandra Jones, Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Nicha Cardinez-Rostant, Director, Legal Services

Officials of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications were also in attendance:

- Ms. Joan Mendez, Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Kurt Meyer, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)

**Key Issues Discussed**

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

i. The constitutional mandate of the PSC;

ii. The role of the SCD in providing technical advice and support to the PSC;

iii. There are approximately 27,000 to 30,000 public servants who serve an aggregate of 23 ministries;

iv. The inability of the PSC to be effective because it operates with a paper based system;

v. The negative impact the lack of financial resources has on the operations of the SCD;

vi. The number of officers acting in vacant positions;

vii. The lack of succession planning for senior officials within the public service;

viii. The relevance of the PSC;
ix. The need for oversight of the execution of delegated authority by Ministries and departments;

x. The need for a Comprehensive Study to determine whether the public service is overstaffed or understaffed;

xi. The number of contract positions in the Public Service is approximately 13,800;

xii. The PSC has to engage in the realignment of staff when a Ministry is restructured which is time consuming and adversely affects other areas of its operations;

xiii. The possibility of the reconciling of the Special project to fill vacancies with the existing environment;

xiv. The total number of vacancies stand at approximately 10,000 that comprises 4,551 Generic Offices and 4,636 Specific Offices;

xv. The re-integration of PSs and public servants into Ministries following the realignment of Ministerial responsibilities;

xvi. The measures being taken to prevent further instances of public servants being by-passed for promotion/acting;

xvii. The status of the revised regulations;

xviii. The lack of adequate consultations by the PSC on the revised Regulations particularly with the relevant Trade Unions and the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago;

xix. The timeframe for the validity of the PSC’s order of merit lists;

xx. The policy for a retired PS to be re-employed in the Public Service;

xxi. Whether there is a stipulated timeframe for training persons with regards to succession planning;

xxii. The reason for the regular reassignment of PSs to different Ministries;

xxiii. The length of time it takes to transition from an active employee to a pensioner;

xxiv. Whether officers are encouraged to track their records on a continuous basis to ensure smooth transitioning from employment to retirement pension;

xxv. The procedure involved in treating with complaints submitted by members of the public to the PSC;

xxvi. The inherent challenges involved in sourcing records to deal with complaints submitted by members of the public;

xxvii. The methods utilised by the SCD to manage pre-action protocol proceedings;

xxviii. The need for additional legal officers at the Service Commissions Department;
xxix. The need to complete the implementation of the SCD’s electronic database;

xxx. The measures taken to realise improvements in the submission of performance appraisals by Ministries and departments;

xxxi. Whether a timeline for submission of Performance Appraisal for PSs can be imposed;

xxxii. The delays in the payments of increments to officers who were exonerated following disciplinary proceedings;

xxxiii. Whether a policy specific to the differently-able exists within the public service;

xxxiv. The number of persons with disabilities who are employed in the Public Service;

xxxv. The reduction in PSC visits to Tobago due to a lack of funds;

xxxvi. The meagre funds allocated to the SCD’s Employee Assistance Programme;

xxxvii. The need for the PSC to be adequately resourced as a requirement for the body to improve its performance;

xxxviii. The need to implement a mental health policy for the public service given the increasing levels of stress among the work force; and

xxxix. Certain complaints levied against public officers should be addressed at the level of the Ministry/Department.

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link: https://youtu.be/LIPkSV2TZQg

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

Committees Unit

Friday 28th April 2017