



First Session of the Thirteenth Republican Parliament

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

**On the Conduct of a Member of the Committee
regarding an Inquiry into the State's Acquisition of
Pharmaceuticals as it relates to the current processes
applicable to its importation and approval.**

**Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex Cabildo
Building
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

Table of Contents

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PAAC	3
COMPOSITION OF THE PAAC	3
OBJECTIVES OF INQUIRY	5
FACTUAL BACKGROUND OF SOLE ISSUE IN THIS SPECIAL REPORT	5
ISSUE TO BE REPORTED	7
NECESSITY FOR FURTHER WORK AND PUBLIC HEARINGS	8
RECOMMENDATION	8
APPENDIX I	10
<i>Minutes of Proceedings.....</i>	<i>10</i>
APPENDIX II	25
<i>Correspondence received from Member John-Bates</i>	<i>25</i>
APPENDIX III	31
<i>Memorandum of Evidence received from Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh.....</i>	<i>31</i>
APPENDIX IV	44
<i>Minority Report of Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis</i>	<i>44</i>

Establishment of the PAAC

1. The PAAC was established in 2015, further to amendments to the Standing Orders of Parliament. PAAC is a Joint Select Committee established by Standing Order 102 of the House of Representatives and 92 of the Senate to consider and report to the House on:
 - a. the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with Parliamentary approval;
 - b. the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs, keeping Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and
 - c. the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improving public administration.

The PAAC is a Standing Committee, appointed for the duration of a Parliament.

Composition of the PAAC

2. By motions approved in the House of Representatives on June 27, 2025¹ and the Senate on June 30, 2025², the following Members were appointed to serve on the PAAC:

Mr. Jagdeo Singh, MP	Chairman
Mr. Devesh Marajh, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Saddam Hosein, MP	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP	Member
Mr. Leroy Baptiste	Member
Dr. Marlene Attzs	Member
Ms. Jerlean John, MP	Member
Prof. Prakash Persad	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	Member
Mrs. Janelle John-Bates	Member

¹ Office of the Parliament website, *Hansard from The Fifth Sitting of the House of Representatives held on June 27, 2025*. Accessed on April 17, 2026: <https://www.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/hh20250627u.pdf>

² Office of the Parliament website, *Hansard from The Fourth Sitting of the Senate held on June 30, 2025*. Accessed on April 17, 2026: <https://www.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/hs20250630u.pdf>

Election of Chairman and Determination of Quorum

3. At its First Meeting held on Monday September 15, 2025, your Committee elected Mr. Jagdeo Singh, MP as its Chairman. At that meeting, your Committee also agreed that the quorum would constitute Three (3) Members, with representation from either House inclusive of the Chairman.

4. The PAAC has the power, *inter alia*:
 - a) to send for persons, papers and records;
 - b) to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House;
 - c) to adjourn from place to place;
 - d) to report from time to time;
 - e) to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available, or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference;
 - f) to communicate with any other Committee on matters of common interest; and
 - g) to meet concurrently with any other Committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports.³

Secretariat Support

5. The following Officers were assigned to assist the PAAC:

Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	Parliamentary Research Specialist
Ms. Asha Edmund	Parliamentary Research Specialist
Ms. Anesha James	Administrative Assistant
Ms. Natoya O'Neil	Administrative Assistant

Chronology of Meetings thus far

6. Your Committee held Nine (9) meetings to date in the Thirteenth Parliament, three (3) in camera and six (6) in public as follows:

³ Standing Orders 101 of the Senate and 111 of the House of Representatives

- Monday, September 15, 2025 - Arnold Thomasos (East) Meeting Room, Level 2, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain.
- Monday, September 22, 2025 - Arnold Thomasos (East) Meeting Room, Level 2, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain.
- Monday, December 1, 2025 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Monday, January 26, 2026 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Monday, February 23, 2026 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Monday, March 9, 2026 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Wednesday, March 25, 2026 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Monday, April 13, 2026 - J. Hamilton Maurice Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain
- Thursday, April 16, 2026 - Linda Baboolal Meeting Room, Ground Floor, Cabildo Building, Port of Spain

Objectives of Inquiry

7. The main objectives of the inquiry were:
 - i. To determine and assess the effectiveness of the procurement systems utilised for pharmaceuticals in the public healthcare system;
 - ii. To determine the effectiveness of the management of the public health institutions supply chain; and
 - iii. To determine the factors affecting the foreign exchange allocation for pharmaceuticals.

Factual Background of Sole Issue in this Special Report

8. At the Committee's sixth meeting held on March 9, 2026, Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh former Minister of Health was invited to appear before the Committee. At the meeting, the Chairman

informed Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh that he was required to submit a written Memorandum of Evidence before being permitted to make oral admissions of evidence.

9. At the Committee's Eighth meeting held on April 13, 2026, concerns of apparent bias and interference were raised by the Chairman of the Committee regarding a written memorandum of evidence submitted by the former Minister of Health, Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh via email dated Wednesday, April 8, 2026. The Committee intended to invite Mr. Deyalsingh to appear before the Committee as a witness, subsequent to the Committee's review and consideration of his written memorandum of evidence. Of particular concern was the revelation that the document submitted included 'tracked changes' that were made by a sitting Member of the Committee, Mrs. Janelle John-Bates. The metadata also indicated that Mrs. John-Bates might have advised Mr. Deyalsingh on his memorandum of evidence entitled "*Deyalsingh-Public Inquiry- Statement – Draft Three*" prior to the March 25, 2026, meeting of the Committee. Your Committee was concerned and troubled that such action of Member John-Bates placed a negative outlook on the Committee's proceedings and, as a result, the Member should be recused from the inquiry or replaced as a Member of the Committee after admitting on April 13, 2026, to making material changes and assisting in the preparation of Mr. Deyalsingh's written memorandum of evidence. Member John-Bates indicated that she would seek advice, explore her options and provide a response to the Committee by Monday April 20, 2026. The Committee agreed and the proceedings were adjourned to Monday April 27, 2026.

10. On April 15, 2026, there was a cause for concern by your Committee regarding the apparent disclosure of the Committee's in-camera proceedings to the public, which was in contravention of Standing Order 113⁴ and 103 of the House of Representatives and Senate respectively. In response to the Committee's in-camera proceedings being revealed to the public via publications from national media houses, your Committee decided via Round Robin to hold an emergency in-camera meeting on April 16, 2026 to protect the integrity of the work of your Committee and the public's interest in the inquiry thus far.

⁴ Office of the Parliament website, House of Representatives Standing Orders. Accessed on April 17, 2026: <https://www.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2245.pdf>
Office of the Parliament website, Senate Standing Orders. Accessed on April 17, 2026: <https://www.ttparliament.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2412.pdf>

11. On April 15, 2026, the Secretariat received correspondence via email from Member John Bates addressed to the Chairman of your Committee Re: Disclosure of Confidential in-camera Proceedings of the Committee.
12. On April 16, 2026, your Committee held a meeting to discuss the issue of apparent bias and conduct of Member John-Bates, concerns in the public interest and the way forward regarding the work of your Committee. Your Committee identified specific areas of concerns as well as to continue the inquiry going forward. Your Committee also reviewed Member John-Bates' correspondence, and noted Member John-Bates' request for an inquiry be initiated to determine whether there had been any breach of the applicable Standing Orders or Committee protocols. Your Committee finds it important that you also note that Member John-Bates requested she be supplied with the following information:
 - i. "The Specific particulars of any breaches that it is alleged that I have committed; and"
 - ii. "The sections of the Standing Orders, it is alleged that I have breached, if any".
13. During the Committee's deliberations, your Committee was informed that Member John-Bates would be removed from your Committee and will be replaced by another Opposition Senator. Your Committee was subsequently informed that the Clerk of the Senate had received correspondence from the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate, Dr. Amery Browne, regarding Member John-Bates removal from the Committee.
14. Your Committee discussed the question on the way forward in light of the removal of Member John-Bates from your Committee. On the matter of the leaking of the in-camera proceedings of your Committee being revealed to the public, your committee will continue to look into the leak. However, your Committee therefore strongly recommended that a Special Report on Mrs. Janelle John-Bates' conduct be prepared for presentation in the House of Representatives.

Issue to be reported

15. The necessity to report at this stage arose because of a concern that a sitting Member of the Committee compromised the duty of impartiality and further, that the said sitting Member

participated in what can be fairly described as a conspiracy to commit contempt of the Parliament. Upon being confronted with the electronic evidence, the said Member admitted to the said conduct. The factual matrix need not be reported in any detail in this Special Report; for the sake of brevity it has been further particularised or adumbrated.

16. In making a recommendation to the House by way of this Special Report, your Committee is obligated to apprise the House of the information before it that supports the importance of the inquiry and to inform the House on the status of the inquiry.
17. Your Committee is in the process of evidence taking and therefore in this report no findings nor conclusions have been presented. Having regard to the evidence before your Committee, there is further work to be undertaken in relation to this inquiry. Upon resumption, the process of evidence taking will include both oral and written submissions. However, your Committee is of the view that, given the evidence presented, the conduct of Senator Janelle John-Bates should be reported to the House and Senate, for that reason.
18. Your Committee notes that the said Member will be removed from the Committee and the continued involvement at this stage in the Senate could make other Members uncomfortable to the point of negatively affecting the work of the Parliament.

Necessity for Further Work and Public Hearings

19. The Committee was of the view, by way of majority, that the conduct of the said Member was of such an egregious nature that it necessitated a Special Report to the House and Senate.

Recommendation

20. Your Committee therefore recommends to the House and Senate that consideration be given to the conduct of Senator Janelle John-Bates.

Respectfully submitted

Mr. Jagdeo Singh, MP
Chairman
Sgd.

Mr. Devesh Maharaj, MP
Vice-Chairman
Sgd.

Ms. Jerlean John, MP
Member
Sgd.

Mr. Saddam Hosein, MP
Member
Sgd.

Dr. Marlene Attzs,
Member
Sgd.

Mr. Leroy Baptiste
Member
Sgd.

Mrs. Camille Robinson Regis, MP
Member

Mr. David Nakhid
Member
Sgd.

Prof. Prakash Persad
Member
Sgd.

April 17th, 2026.

APPENDIX I

Minutes of Proceedings

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FIRST SESSION, THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026 AT 10:04 A.M.
IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE MEETING ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CABILDO
BUILDING, PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF
SPAIN**

Present were:

Mr. Jagdeo Singh	-	Chairman
Mr. Devesh Maharaj	-	Vice-Chairman
Mr. David Nakhid	-	Member
Mrs. Janelle John-Bates	-	Member
Ms. Jearlean John	-	Member
Mr. Saddam Hosein	-	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	-	Member
Dr. Marlene Attz	-	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist
Ms. Asha Edmund	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist

Excused were:

Prof. Prakash Persad	-	Member
Mr. Leroy Baptiste	-	Member

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 At 10:04 a.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. Prof. Prakash Persad and Mr. Leroy Baptiste were excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING

- 3.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Sixth (6th) Meeting held on March 09, 2026.
- 3.2 The following correction was made on page 2:
- Item 5.5 1st line the word **‘Dr.’** replaced the word **‘Mr.’**

- 3.3 There being no further corrections, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Mr. Saddam Hosein and seconded by Dr. Marlene Attzs.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING

- 4.1 With reference to 5.5, page 2: the Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat was directed to re-invite the following persons to the Committee's meeting:
- Mr. Farz Khan – Executive Manager – Analytical Services CARIRI (Former Chief Chemist and Director of Food and Drugs Chemistry Food and Drugs Division, Ministry of Health); and
 - Mr. Imtiaz Hydar Ali - Chief Chemist and Director of Food and Drugs Chemistry Food and Drugs Division, Ministry of Health (former Food and Drugs Inspector II).
- 4.2 The Chairman indicated that by letter dated March 17, 2026, Dr. Pattron indicated his inability to attend the Committee's meeting.
- 4.3 The Chairman informed Members that the former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Health, Mr. Asif Ali was invited to the Committee's meeting.
- 4.4 The Chairman informed Members that a request for additional information was sent to the Ministry of Health on March 11, 2026. On March 20, 2026, the Ministry requested an extension to March 24, 2026. The request was facilitated.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION: A CONTINUATION INTO THE STATE'S ACQUISITION OF PHARMACEUTICALS AS IT RELATES TO THE CURRENT PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ITS IMPORTATION AND APPROVAL

- 5.1 The Chairman reminded Members that the purpose of this meeting was to continue the inquiry into the State's acquisition of pharmaceuticals as it relates to the current processes applicable to its importation and approval.
- 5.2 The Chairman invited Members to review the issues paper based on the written submissions from the various stakeholders with possible questions that can be used during the public hearing.
- 5.3 Members discussed the issues of concern and the general approach for the public hearing.
- 5.4 The Chairman indicated that Mr. Imtiaz Ali provided a further written memorandum of evidence to the Committee.

SUSPENSION

- 6.1 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

RESUMPTION

7.1 At 10:37 a.m., the Chairman resumed the meeting in public.

A CONTINUATION INTO THE STATE'S ACQUISITION OF PHARMACEUTICALS AS IT RELATES TO THE CURRENT PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ITS IMPORTATION AND APPROVAL

8.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 10:37 a.m.

8.2 The following officials joined the meeting.

Ministry of Health (MoH)

Ms. Erica Fortune	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mrs. Mala Kowlessar- Tagallie	Legal Advisor

Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division- MoH

Dr. Jeanine St. Bernard	Chief Medical Officer (Ag.)
Mrs. Anesa Doodnath-Siboo	Principal Pharmacist

National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC)

Mr. Vyas Ramphalie	General Manager
Mr. Alvin Solomon	Medical Supplies Coordinator
Mr. Jabari Cozier	Head Finance and Accounting

Private Pharmacy Retail Business Association (PPRBA)

Mr. Glenwayne Suchit	President
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Additional Witnesses

Mr Asif Ali	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Imtiaz Hydar Ali	Food and Drugs Inspector II
Mr. Farz Khan	Executive Manager- Analytical Services (CARIRI)

8.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, the media and the public.

8.4 The Chairman stated the purpose of the public hearing. Introductions were exchanged.

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The remit and regulatory process of the CFDD which includes the following:
 - Submission of completed dossiers;
 - Review by the Drug Registration Unit (DRU);
 - Review by the Drug Advisory Committee (DAC);
 - Further review by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO); and
 - Final approval by the Minister of Health.

2. The use of detention slips under the Customs Act Chap 78:01 and the need for the importation of pharmaceuticals to follow strict adherence to established procedures and regulatory processes.
3. The lack of authority by the DAC to review or issue Special Permission permits despite being the sole authority empowered to approve drug registrations.
4. The CMO assuming the authority to approve and grant Special Permission permits despite the absence of a legislative framework supporting the CMO's role in reviewing and issuing approvals for Special Permission permits.
5. The admission that the CMO was designated the 'Chief Technical Officer' in the drug registration process.
6. The conflict of interest that arises where the CMO acted as both registrar and regulator in the issuance of Special Permission permits.
7. The former policy and criteria utilised by the MOH when issuing Special Permission permits and whether such was taken to Cabinet and approved.
8. The explanation that the terminology "*unavailability of drug from the registered manufacturer*" may reference instances of the drug being unavailable from a specific location.
9. The CMO's role in the approval of 157 Special Permission permits for which documentation was missing.
10. The Principal Pharmacist's direct interface with suppliers during the drug registration process.
11. The permitted use of abridged dossiers.
12. The MOH's inability to provide a reason for "Individuals" approval for Special Permission permits to supply Government.
13. The misuse of Special Permission permits for the approval drugs outside of the stringent drug registration process and the provision's subsequent cessation.
14. The Minister of Health being the sole authority to grant approval for the importation of narcotic drugs under the Dangerous Drugs Act.
15. The misuse of Special Permission permits for the approval of supplemental drugs.
16. The details of the 2761 instances where drug approvals were done ultra vires the Food and Drug Act for the period 2015-2024.
17. The importance of disclosing the type of ink and language used on pharmaceutical labels.

Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission by the witnesses.

8.5 The Chairman thanked the representatives from Ministry of Health, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division: Ministry of Health, NIPDEC and the Private Pharmacy Retailers Business Association and the additional witnesses for their attendance at the Meeting. The witnesses were excused from the meeting.

8.6 The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the stakeholders present.

ADJOURNMENT

9.1 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to **a date to be fixed**.

9.2 The adjournment was taken at 1:18 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

March 25, 2026

Request for Additional Information

Questions for Ministry of Health (MOH)

1. With regards to the Special Permission applications, provide the following information:
 - all emails sent by the Principal Pharmacist and Mr. Farz Khan to applicants and /or suppliers;
 - The total number of importers who were contacted via email by senior Ministry of Health (MOH) officials regarding the special permissions registration process for the period 2015 -2025.
 - All the formal and informal forms of communication (such as email threads etc.) in which the previous Chief Medical Officer (CMO) issued directives and subsequently participated in actions that undermined the pharmaceutical registration process for the period 2015-2025.
2. Provide the minutes of the 244th and 245th meetings of the Drug Advisory Committee (DAC).
3. Provide the duties and responsibilities held by the former Director of Chemistry Food and Drugs and Division -Mr. Farz Khan.
4. The email correspondence dated October 11, 2024 between the Principal Pharmacist and Mr. Vishal Singh of Smith Robertson & Company Limited concerning requirements for supplemental registration and special permissions.
5. Provide a detailed breakdown of the 2,761 special permission grants issued between January 2015 and May 2025, disaggregated by year, name of company, name of manufacturer, name of drugs and cost (in both USD and TT\$).
6. With regards to the new drug submission registration fee of \$750.00 and supplemental registration fee of \$100.00 for drugs, provide in details the following for the period 2015 to 2025:
 - the factors used to determine the cost of \$750.00 and \$100.00;
 - provide the application and invoice for each company that paid the fee of \$750.00;
 - validity periods for the new drug submission registration fee of \$750.00 and supplemental registration fee of \$100.00 for drugs;
 - explain how the Ministry accounts for the \$750.00 registration and \$100.00 supplemental registration fees received.

7. Provide all policy documents for the establishment of the Special Permissions permits as well as the provision's allowed use for the importation of new drugs.
8. Provide all the internal memos or circulars and guidelines created for the establishment and administration of Special Permissions permits.
9. Provide the step-by-step application process for Special Permissions.
 - Who reviews and approves the application for Special Permissions; and
 - What are the conditions for approval?
10. Provide the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Medical Officer, as well as the specific legislation that outlines the powers and authority granted to the Office of the CMO.

Questions for Ministry of Finance –Treasury Division

1. With regards to the new drug submission registration fee of \$750.00 and supplemental registration fee of \$100.00 for drugs, for the period 2015 to 2025, provide the following:
 - the dates each registration payment for the new drug submission registration fee of \$750.00 and supplemental registration fee of \$100.00 for drugs were received from applicants per receipt;
 - the receipt for each company that paid the fee of \$750.00 and \$100.00;
 - the list of companies that made new drug submission registration and supplemental registration fees; and
 - how many registration and supplemental registration payments each company made.

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FIRST SESSION, THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2026 AT 1:18 P.M.
IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE MEETING ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CABILDO
BUILDING, PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF
SPAIN**

Present were:

Mr. Jagdeo Singh, MP	-	Chairman
Mr. Devesh Maharaj, MP	-	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Jearlean John, MP	-	Member
Mr. Saddam Hosein, MP	-	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	-	Member
Mrs. Janelle John-Bates	-	Member
Dr. Marlene Attzs	-	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist
Ms. Asha Edmund	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist

Excused were:

Mr. Leroy Baptiste	-	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP	-	Member

Absent was:

Prof. Prakash Persad	-	Member
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COMMENCEMENT

- 1.2 At 1:18 p.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. Mrs. Camille Robinson Regis and Mr. Leroy Baptiste were excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Seventh (7th) Meeting held on March 25, 2026.
- 2.2 The following addition was made on page 4:

- Item 8.4, bullet 7, insert the words ‘**and whether such was taken to Cabinet and approved**’ after the words ‘special permits’.

2.3 There being no further corrections, the Minutes were confirmed as amended on a motion moved by Mr. Saddam Hosein and seconded by Dr. Marlene Attzs.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING

3.1 With reference to 5.5, page 2: The Chairman informed Members that the outstanding written responses from the MOH were received on March 24, 2026.

3.2 With reference to 8.6, page 4: The Chairman informed Members that questions for additional information was sent to the Ministry of Health on March 26, 2026 with a deadline of April 02, 2026. The Ministry requested an extension to April 10, 2026. The Chairman indicated that the Ministry’s response was received and circulated to Members via email on Sunday April 12, 2026.

4.3 The Chairman informed Members that questions for a written submission was sent to the Treasury Division, Ministry of Finance, on April 01, 2026. By email dated April 02, 2026, the Comptroller of Accounts indicated that the questions directed by the PAAC does not fall within the remit of the Treasury Division.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION: A CONTINUATION INTO THE STATE’S ACQUISITION OF PHARMACEUTICALS AS IT RELATES TO THE CURRENT PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ITS IMPORTATION AND APPROVAL

4.1 The Chairman reminded Members that the purpose of this meeting was to continue the inquiry into the State’s acquisition of pharmaceuticals as it relates to the current processes applicable to its importation and approval.

4.2 A Member raised a concern regarding the scope of the inquiry, indicating that the inquiry has gone beyond its initial scope, given the initial objectives. A discussion ensued. Members agreed that based on the evidence gathered thus far, it has warranted the Committee’s ongoing deliberations in fulfilling its oversight function and it is a matter of public importance.

4.3 The Chairman raised an issue of concern of apparent bias and interference by Mrs. John-Bates, regarding the written Memorandum of Evidence submitted via email by Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh, the former Minister of Health, who was to appear before the Committee as a witness, at a later date. A discussion ensued.

4.4 The Chairman sought the views of Members as to whether Mrs. John Bates should be recused from the inquiry or whether Mrs. John Bates should be replaced as a Member on the Committee after she admitted to making material changes to the written memorandum of evidence.

4.5 The Committee then agreed to the following:

- i. that Mrs. John-Bates be allowed to seek advice, explore her options and provide a response to the Committee by Monday April 20, 2026;
- ii. the public hearing be postponed to Monday April 27, 2026; and
- iii. the written Memorandum of Evidence with track changes be circulated to the Committee.

The Secretariat was directed to circulate the written Memorandum of Evidence with track changes.

SUSPENSION

- 5.1 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

A CONTINUATION INTO THE STATE'S ACQUISITION OF PHARMACEUTICALS AS IT RELATES TO THE CURRENT PROCESSES APPLICABLE TO ITS IMPORTATION AND APPROVAL

- 6.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:11 p.m.

- 6.2 The following officials joined the meeting.

Ministry of Health (MoH)

Ms. Erica Fortune	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mrs. Mala Kowlessar- Tagallie	Legal Advisor

Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division- MoH

Dr. Jeanine St. Bernard	Chief Medical Officer (Ag.)
Mrs. Anesa Doodnath-Siboo	Principal Pharmacist

National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC)

Mr. Vyas Ramphalie	General Manager
Mr. Alvin Solomon	Medical Supplies Coordinator
Mr. Jabari Cozier	Head Finance and Accounting

Additional Witnesses

Mr Asif Ali	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Imtiaz Hydar Ali	Food and Drugs Inspector II

- 6.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, the media and the public.

- 6.4 The Chairman informed the stakeholders that the meeting would be unavoidably and regrettably postponed to Monday April 27, at 1:30 p.m.

6.5 The Chairman thanked the representatives from Ministry of Health, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division: Ministry of Health, NIPDEC, the former Permanent Secretary, Mr Asif Ali, and Mr. Imtiaz Hydar Ali for their attendance at the Meeting. The witnesses were excused from the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

7.1 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to **April 27, 2026**.

7.2 The adjournment was taken at 2:14 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

April 13, 2026

UNCONFIRMED

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FIRST SESSION, 13TH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE 9TH MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026 AT 10:03 A.M.
IN THE DR. LINDA BABOOLAL MEETING ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CABILDO
BUILDING, PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF
SPAIN**

Present were:

Mr. Jagdeo Singh, MP	-	Chairman
Mr. Devesh Maharaj, MP	-	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Jearlean John, MP	-	Member
Mr. Saddam Hosein, MP	-	Member
Mr. Leroy Baptiste	-	Member
Prof. Prakash Persad	-	Member
Mr. David Nakhid	-	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP	-	Member
Dr. Marlene Attzs	-	Member
Mr. Brian Caesar	-	Clerk of the House
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist
Ms. Asha Edmund	-	Parliamentary Research Specialist

Excused was:

Mrs. Janelle John-Bates	-	Member
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COMMENCEMENT

- 1.3 At 10:03 a.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. Mrs. Janelle John-Bates was excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Eight (8th) Meeting held on April 13, 2026.

- 2.3 There being no corrections or omissions, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Dr. Marlene Attzs and seconded by Mr. Saddam Hosein.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

- 3.1 The Chairman invited feedback from Members on the way forward regarding the Mrs. Janelle John-Bates apparent bias and interference regarding a written memorandum of evidence received from the former Minister of Health, Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh.
- 3.2 The Chairman sought a vote on whether the Committee should submit a Special Report on the Conduct of Mrs. J. John-Bates to the House of Representatives. A Division was called. The results of the Division were as follows:

Member	Vote
Mr. Saddam Hosein	Yes
Dr. Marlene Attz	Yes
Mr. Devesh Maharaj	Yes
Ms. Jearlean John	Yes
Mr. David Nakhid	Yes
Porf. Prakash Persad	Yes
Mrs. Camille Robinson Regis	No
Mr. Leroy Baptiste	Yes

- 3.4 The Chairman indicated that based on the results of the vote, the Secretariat would draft a Special Report on the Conduct of the Member for submission to the House of Representatives.

Summary of Key Issues

1. The Memorandum of Evidence submitted by Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh contains metadata, which suggested further breaches of conduct by the Member.
2. Evidence indicated that Mrs. John-Bates may have colluded with Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh, former Minister of Health, a witness to appear at a later date and acted in a manner inconsistent with the impartiality required of Members. The Chairman informed the Committee that he was in receipt of a letter addressed to him from Mrs. Janelle John –Bates to which he would seek legal counsel and formulate a response for circulation to the Members via round robin.
3. There was an apparent contradiction between the statements made by Mrs. John-Bates at the Meeting held on Monday April 13, 2026 and the contents of her written correspondence dated Thursday April 16, 2026. In this letter, Mrs. John-Bates requested clarification on the specific breaches, if any, she allegedly may have committed and asked for references to the relevant Standing Orders or Committee protocols breached.
4. The Committee reiterated that Mrs. John-Bates was given until April 20, 2026 to explore her options and provide a response to the Committee.
5. Some Members raised the issue of Premature Publication of evidence that led to the breach of confidentiality resulting from the improper disclosure of in-camera discussions and documents to the public via the media.

6. The Committee should review the relevant Standing Orders, Erskine May's parliamentary practice and procedure to determine the appropriate process for addressing the conduct of Mrs. John-Bates, including the question of whether collusion constitutes contempt of Parliament.
7. The Committee must consider its authority to make a formal complaint and whether a response was required to Mrs. John-Bates' letter, particularly in light of her removal from the Committee.
8. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis indicated that she would not avail herself of the provision to submit a Minority Report to the Committee.
9. It was recommended that the Committee prepare a Special Report on the conduct issue for submission to the House and Senate.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chairman informed the Committee of the receipt of a letter from Dr. Roshan Parasram, ORTT requesting that all evidence provided to the Committee by the Ministry of Health in relation to Special Permits, be made available to him to facilitate the preparation of a comprehensive Memorandum of Evidence. The Chairman confirmed that the Committee would comply with this request.

ADJOURNMENT

- 5.1 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to **April 27, 2026**.
- 5.2 The adjournment was taken at 10:48 a.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

April 16, 2026

APPENDIX II

Correspondence received from Member John- Bates

15th April, 2026

The Honourable Jagdeo Singh

Chairman

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Parliamentary Complex,

Cabildo Building

St. Vincent Street

Port of Spain

Dear Chairman,

Re: Disclosure of Confidential in-camera Proceedings of the Committee

Given what has transpired over the past thirty-six hours in the public domain and within the Senate Chamber at its sitting on Tuesday 14th April 2026, I write to express serious concern regarding the apparent disclosure of confidential in-camera proceedings of the Committee to the public. This disclosure may prejudice the integrity of the Committee's processes and gives rise to an appearance of bias.



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On Monday 13th April, 2026 I attended the 8th Meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC). At the start of the meeting, I was provided with a bundle of documents from the Ministry of Health which contained a flash drive. In the course of the in-camera meeting certain concerns were raised regarding my engagement with a draft statement prepared by former Minister of Health, Terrence Deyalsingh, who asked for the opportunity to address the PAAC, given that serious allegations were made against him that had found its way into the public domain. As the discussion ensued, I inquired as to what Standing Order I breached, and the Chairman of the PAAC, who also happens to be the Speaker of the House, indicated that there was no breach of the Standing Orders. It was agreed by all present that I would be given time to seek legal advice on the concerns raised.

Before departing the meeting, the Secretary to the Committee requested that I return the flash drive for what was described as “security reasons.” While I complied, the request, made in that context and not, to my knowledge, applied uniformly to all Members, gave rise to a perception that I was being treated differently from other Members. In circumstances where impartiality is essential, even the appearance of differential treatment is a matter of concern.



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On Tuesday 14th April, 2026, during the 27th Sitting of the Senate, I observed conduct which further heightened my cause for concern. In the course of the sitting, Senator Anil Roberts began speaking to members of the government bench in a loud tone of voice. While glancing in my direction, I heard him saying words to the effect of, “*Yeah she involve in witness tampering! She gone from zero to PNM hero*” in clear reference to me. For the record, Senator Roberts is not a member of the PAAC.

Shortly thereafter, I was informed that members of the media were contacting third parties seeking comment on allegations that I had improperly assisted a witness before the Committee. By the conclusion of the sitting, I too had received direct media inquiries from journalists, including Akash Samaroo and Anna Ramdass.

On Wednesday 15th April, 2026, I read with utter shock and dismay an article published in the Guardian Newspaper entitled “**PAAC Probe Rocked By Conflict Claim – Senator accused of coaching key witness.**”. The article referred to me by name and is accompanied by my photograph. The article contains assertions which could only have originated from persons who attended the Committee’s in-camera proceedings on 13th April 2026 and/or had knowledge of documents before it.



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TRINIDAD





Standing Orders 103 of the Senate and 113 of the House of Representatives provide that the proceedings and evidence of a Select Committee, as well as documents presented to it, shall not be published by any Member or other person prior to the presentation of the Committee's report. These provisions exist to safeguard the integrity of the Committee's work, protect due process, and ensure that Members are able to discharge their functions without external interference or reputational harm arising from premature or selective disclosure.

The sequence of events outlined above gives rise to a reasonable concern that confidential Committee material and/or discussions have been improperly disclosed, and that such disclosure has contributed to a public narrative which risks prejudicing both the inquiry and my own position as a Member of the Committee.

I emphasize that the strength of the Committee lies in the confidence that its processes are fair, even-handed, and conducted with strict regard to confidentiality. Where that confidence is placed in doubt, whether by premature public commentary or by the appearance of differential treatment, it risks undermining both the work of the Committee and public trust in its proceedings.



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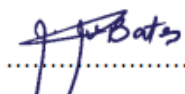


I therefore respectfully request that an inquiry be initiated to determine whether there has been any breach of the applicable Standing Orders or Committee protocols. Further, in light of the fact that this matter has taken this unfortunate turn and that I have been given until Monday 20th April 2026 to indicate my position, I must now also request the following information:

- i. The Specific particulars of any breaches that it is alleged that I have committed; and
- ii. The sections of the Standing Orders, it is alleged that I have breached, if any.

Kindly provide the above as a matter of urgency so that I may be able to acquire the appropriate legal advice.

Respectfully,



.....
Senator Janelle John-Bates



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APPENDIX III

Memorandum of Evidence received from Mr. Terrance Deyalsingh

I Terrence Devalsingh state as follows:

that

1. I served as the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph/ Aranjuez from November 4th 2013 to April 28th 2025 and during this period I held the portfolio of ~~was the~~ Minister of Health of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the period September 23rd 2015 to August 10th 2020 and again in the period August 19th 2020 to April 28th 2025. I have at all time discharged my duties as Minister of Health in accordance with the law in keeping with my oath of office, to the best of my knowledge and ability without fear or favour or malice or ill will and carried out my duties in accordance of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Upon reading reports in the media, I was alerted to the holding of an enquiry into the National Insurance Property Development Company ("NIPDEC") by the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee ("PAAC") of the Parliament which has been carried on television and over the internet to the world wide web on the Parliament channel.
3. On Monday February 23rd 2026 the PAAC held a public hearing at which Mr. Vyas Ramphalie the General Manager of NIPDEC appeared and was examined by the Committee with the Honourble Speaker Jagdeo Singh leading the majority of questions directed to Mr. Ramphalie with the assistance of members Senator David Nakhid and the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, now sitting Member of Parliament for St. Joseph/ Aranjuez.
4. The Chairman Speaker Singh asked Mr. Ramphalie a series of questions which were answered. The Chairman summarized to the Committee that the "General Manager of NIPDEC is telling us that he was instructed by the previous Minister of Health to make preferential treatment to one big player" who was "skillfully" named by Senator Nakhid as "Agents". The Chairman Speaker Singh then noted that a "serious line of inquiry" would need to be pursued including writing to "the previous Minister inviting him to come and

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clarify this evidence" carefully noting the need for fairness in terms of procedure cautioning that the Secretary to the PAAC would write to me and provide me with the evidence up to this point.

5. On March 4th 2026 I wrote by email to the Clerk of the House informing that Mr. Ramphalie had made several statements about me concerning procurement which I in the period whilst I was the Minister of Health with are false and which I have been advised should be confronted and addressed in the body of the PAAC particularly in light of the cover of parliamentary privilege covering Mr. Ramphalie's statements to the PAAC. Accordingly I requested an opportunity to appear before the PAAC at its next hearing to provide evidence and answer questions so that the truth of matters in relation to procurement in the period whilst I served as Minister of Health may be put onto evidence before the committee in observance of the principles of natural justice.

6. I received a reply from the Parliament which alerted me to an email of March 2nd 2026 inviting me to attend before the Committee which had been quarantined in Junk Mail.

7. On Friday March 6th 2026 I received four pages of the verbatim transcript evidence of Mr. Ramphalie's testimony by mail delivery.

8. On Monday March 9th 2026 I appeared before the PAAC. In the opening of the sitting of the Committee the Chairman stated that I would be required to make a written statement and no questions were asked of me despite the fact that I stayed for the entirety of the sitting.

9. At the hearing of the PAAC on Monday March 9th 2026 the Head of Finance and Accounting of NIPDEC Mr. Jabari Cozier appeared and was examined. He gave conflicting testimony as to whether I gave instructions as to preferential payments to

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suppliers to NIPDEC. I was not invited to give any responses to the said evidence despite being present.

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2-10. Reportage in the media carried in the Daily Express by Kim Boodram on page 8 of the edition published on March 10th 2026 relating to the public hearing of the PAAC held on Monday 9th March, 2026 under the headline “NIPDEC under scrutiny ...over payments to pharmaceutical companies” inter alia:

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(i) reports that “The National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) has come under scrutiny for possibly facilitating favoritism towards some big pharmaceutical companies, while smaller companies suffered.

During a meeting of the Public Administration on Appropriations Committee (PAAC) of the Parliament yesterday, which sought to examine the State’s acquisition of pharmaceuticals, focusing on the current process for importation and approval, the spotlight again fell on former health minister Terrence Devalsingh as NIPDEC officials were grilled on whether Devalsingh was present and aware when payments to certain big companies will be fast tracked.

The PAAC was told that NIPDEC, acting on instructions from the Health Ministry’s Permanent Secretary Asif Ali had prioritized payments to some companies.

NIPDEC officials admitted that in e-mail correspondences in 2023 and 2024, the agency was instructed to bypass small companies which had been waiting on the payments for months and years.”

(ii) quotes the Chairman of the PAAC, the Honourable Speaker Jagdeo Singh as “raising questions as to whether Devalsingh was present at a meeting in 2023 where statements were made that payments to certain companies be prioritized while others be left to languish”.

(iii) reports that “Cozier stated that NIPDEC had adjusted allocations, including removing smaller suppliers from the payment list, based on email instructions received from the Ministry of Health under the former government”.

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(iv) reports that “Committee member Works Minister Jearlean John, asked whether the former health minister had given any instructions on the prioritization of payments. Cozier said no. John then asked if Deval Singh was present at a meeting where such instructions were given.”

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(v) reports that “On being pressed Cozier said that instructions were given by past health minister at the meeting.”

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(vi) reports that “Nakhid had earlier provided Singh with documents including email communications from Ali instructing that priority be given to certain companies.” Singh”.

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A true copy of the said article appearing in the Daily Express published on March 10th 2026 is hereto annexed as “Annex A”.

11. The Editorial carried in the Daily Express on March 11th 2026 relating to the public hearing of the PAAC held on Monday 9th March, 2026 entitled “When rules meet political pressure” carried damaging take-aways from the PAAC enquiry worthy of full re-statement set out below:

“The revelation that officials from the National Insurance Property Development Company Ltd (Nipdec) kowtowed to the then-minister of health against their better judgment demonstrates the inherent problem with State-run agencies.

The disclosure came last Monday at a meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) of the Parliament. Nipdec's head of finance and accounting, Jabari Cozier, was asked whether, in 2023 and 2024, larger firms had been favoured for outstanding payments for drugs supplied from the Government over smaller companies. Cozier admitted Nipdec had recommended proportional payments out of a \$110 million loans facility, but was instructed by the Health Ministry's permanent secretary, Asif Ali, to favour specified companies instead.

"The pushback would have been always sending the ministry our recommendation to allocate it to everybody, to get a proportionate share of what was being paid," Cozier said. When pressed, he admitted former health minister Terrence Davaalingsh would have been aware of the contrary instructions.

Inevitably, questions will now be raised about kickbacks, political financiers, and cronyism. Yet, technically speaking, nothing illegal may have occurred. Nipdec's board, like all boards of State entities, must follow the instructions of the line minister, once such instructions do not contravene their obligations under the Companies Act.

Even from a purely political viewpoint, sidelining the smaller companies over one or two large ones wasn't necessarily good political strategy. After all, offending more business people is more likely to damage the Government's image and, by extension, the party occupying office. Corruption only occurs if the party in office arranged to favour larger firms over smaller ones in return for campaign contributions, or if government officials were linked through friends and family to the firms that got paid. In any case, the committee was told the smaller companies were eventually paid through the Consolidated Fund.

Two issues nonetheless arise. The first is whether Nipdec's officials, as well as the permanent secretary, did their duty as public servants or whether they gave in to political pressure from the minister. Even if public servants are obliged to follow the minister's or

the permanent secretary's directives, such matters must always be recorded. That alone provides a legal defence for the public servants if anything untoward is later revealed.

As the late Reginald Dumas, a former head of the Public Service, noted in a 1992 conference, "political interference might not be direct; the government of the day can influence indirectly, if it so wishes".

The second issue is whether citizens needing a reliable supply of medications were better served by overriding Nipdec's recommendation. This goes back to the question of whether a monopoly exists in the pharmaceutical industry in Trinidad and Tobago, rather than a few firms being dominant simply because they are more efficient.

Unfortunately, lack of transparency from both ministers and State boards only clouds such matters."

3-12. I have since received a request for a written statement from the Secretary to the PAAC however I have not received any further evidence of any of the proceedings of the PAAC nor have I received copies of emails and communications referred to by the Government members of the PAAC despite seeming relevance.

4-13. Accordingly, I make this statement to provide a background to my duties and responsibilities in relation to the subject under enquiry by the PAAC and in particular to address the false and misleading evidence provided to the PAAC by Mr. Ramphalie and Mr. Cozier.

14. Without prejudice to the aforementioned and to my rights in general all of which I hereby reserve, I now request provision of the materials, documents, communications and correspondence provided to the PAAC which may require response from me and/or which may directly or indirectly impugn my good name – so that I may make a further submission to the PAAC and or the Speaker in writing, in proper adherence to the rule of law and in

keeping with natural justice and so that my reply may be incorporated into the parliamentary record.

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Role as Minister of Health

15. As Minister of Health I was not at any time ever responsible for procurement or for payments in respect of same. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago I was charged with the general direction and control of the Ministry of Health subject however the supervision of the Ministry by its Permanent Secretary ("PS") who is the Accounting Officer of the Ministry of Health.

16. In the period whilst I served as Minister of Health the procurement of pharmaceuticals was effected by NIPDEC pursuant to the Central Tenders Board Act Ch. 71:91 up to 2023 and thereafter also by NIPDEC pursuant the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act, 2015.

17. As Minister of Health my role was to engage the Ministry of Finance to request allocations for the operations of the Ministry of Health and the departments and bodies ~~7326~~ to me as Minister of Health. All communications in this regard were undertaken by the PS of the Ministry of Health to the PS of the Ministry of Finance and the PS of the Ministry of Planning. In the event of short fall in funding requests would be prepared by the Ministry to the Ministry of Finance and where cabinet approval was required I would take a note to Cabinet prepared by the PS and have discussions with the relevant Ministers of Finance and Planning as to allocations and approvals for funding in general. At no point in time was I ever involved in the direction of payments to specific individuals.

5-18. In the period whilst I was Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health has always been the client of NIPDEC which undertook procurement of pharmaceuticals. Funding to the Ministry of Health was provided by the Ministry of Finance. Approvals for payments

[by way of certification have always been provided by the PS as the accounting Officer of the Ministry of Health.](#)

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Expired ~~Drugs~~ Pharmaceuticals


6.19. NIPDEC is the procurement agency for both pharmaceuticals and non-pharmaceuticals for use in the public health sector. NIPDEC is also responsible for storage and distribution to all points of usage. I note that NIPDEC falls under the Ministry of Finance with the Ministry of Health as a customer.

7.20. Manufacturers of pharmaceuticals impose minimum production quantities for their products, and as a result, smaller markets like Trinidad and Tobago are often compelled to procure volumes that exceed actual demand. Failure to meet these minimum thresholds can lead to supply disruptions and shortages, ultimately to the detriment of patient care and public health outcomes.

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Distributors are contractually obligated to supply pharmaceuticals to NIPDEC with a minimum remaining shelf life of eighteen months. Where this standard is not met, NIPDEC is entitled to demand the provision of replacement stock or the issuance of a credit by the local distributor. ~~2. The terms of contract with distributors [I am advised by the Principal Pharmacist, Mrs Anesa Siboo, states that items supplied should have a minimum of eighteen months expiry date, failing which NIPDEC can and should receive either replacement stock or credit by the local distributors. I am not aware that the Committee has been appraised of this.~~

 Janelle John-Bates

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were you informd of this by Ms. Siboo during your tenure as Minister of Health or due to a recent cnversation with Ms. Siboo. If you were not aware of this as Minister I would be cautious of including it now.

9.21. ~~3. I am also advised that as a small country we are forced to accept quantities in excess of our needs to comply with the minimum production quantities as determined by manufacturers. To do otherwise will result in shortages to the detriment of our patients.~~

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10.22. The public health system operates its public sector formulary on a list of drugs classified as Vital, Essential and Necessary ("the VEN list").

11.23. All efforts must be made to keep a stock of Vital and Essential drugs in supply at all times. This is crucial in light of supply chain issues and global shortages of key items These shortages manifest themselves but are not limited to the following categories of drugs: anesthetics, oncology, critical care, antibiotics, sterile injectables, IV dextrose solutions.

12.24. ~~5. Strategic stock.~~ As Minister of Health, I ~~must always~~ was always be cognizant that in times of emergency and natural disasters, a strategic stock of drugs above baseline and historical use must be readily available to save lives.

13.25. ~~I put to the committee that as~~ As a small country we are competing with the entire world for scarce resources which cannot be supplied to us on short notice. This was brought to the fore during the Covid pandemic when we were well stocked. In my experience, I have come to hold the view that ~~The~~ the public health care system cannot and must not operate on a Just In Time, (“JIT”) basis. To do so will not be in the public’s best interest.

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Refutation of Allegations of Issuing Direct Instructions to Mr. Vyas Ramphalie, General Manager NIPDEC to Favoritism in Payments Smith Robertson Co. Ltd

~~I state for the record that the~~ The following persons representing the Ministry of Health were always present with me at meetings with NIPDEC to allocate funds:
~~the then PS. Mr. Asif Ali, Permanent Secretary (“PS”)~~
~~and Principal Pharmacist Mrs Anesa Siboo.~~

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26. The payment mechanism for suppliers operates as follows:

- (i) the PS obtains from NIPDEC the total value of receivables due to suppliers and submits a requisition to the Ministry of Finance for analysis and approval through a number of processes including through the budgets and planning divisions as well as in coordination with the Comptroller of Accounts.
- (ii) Disbursements are made only as funds become available and are approved by the Ministry of Finance, and At any one point in time it must be recognised that all Ministries are competing for limited fiscal resources.
- (iii) Accordingly, the Ministry of Health receives ~~allocations~~ disbursements in respect of request for payment in line with the Ministry of Finance's cash flow constraints, typically representing only a percentage of the sums requested.
- (iv) Following receipt of these funds, the Ministry engages with NIPDEC to inform of the sums received from the Ministry of Finance.
- (v) Thereafter approvals and instructions for payments are provided by the PS to NIPDEC ~~apply on a general pro-rated distribution~~ basis subject to any exigencies that the PS may consider in respect of ensuring supply to meet demands.

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14.27. As Minister of Health my understanding was that the ~~ensuring that payments are~~ were made across all outstanding supplier claims on a case by case basis to meet the situation at hand at the time, as payments and satisfaction of accounts payable always depended on the cash flow from the Ministry of Finance and approvals by the various divisions in the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the Ministry of Health ~~an equitable, proportionate basis~~. For completeness I put on record the following. The PS will get from NIPDEC the quantum of receivables owed to suppliers. PS makes a requisition to the Ministry of Finance and will disburse funds if and when available. It is important to

~~note that all ministries make similar claims. The Ministry of Health will receive funds as the Ministry Of Finance cash flows allow. Health will receive some percentage of funds requested. The meetings with NIPDEC them follows a pro-rated system to satisfy on that pro-rated basis all claims.~~

28. Each supplier of pharmaceuticals would no doubt have terms and conditions that may affect supply to meet demands. As Minister of Health I have never been involved in the particulars of procurement and payment as I was not and have never been the accounting officer of the Ministry. The many departments of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Health that consider and approve requests for payment will have established systems and processes that are relevant to the PAAC's instant enquiry.

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29. I categorically deny the ~~express and implied assertions and assertion-allegations~~ made by Mr. Ramphalie ~~and Mr. Cozier~~ that I instructed ~~him~~ NIPDEC to preferentially pay ~~and~~ one supplier or any supplier at all ~~in priority~~ and ~~above any other supplier of pharmaceuticals~~. I note that ~~neither~~ Mr. Ramphalie ~~or Mr. Cozier~~ provided ~~no-any~~ evidence or proof to support ~~his-their~~ claims. ~~This calls into question the veracity of his claims and violates the principles of natural justice.~~

30. The following persons representing the Ministry of Health were always present with me at meetings with NIPDEC to allocate funds:

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(i) The PS – Mr. Asif Ali; and

Ⓣ(ii) The Principal Pharmacist – Mrs Aneesa Siboo.

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~~Further~~ Violation of the Rules of Natural Justice

31. I note with deep concern that during the proceedings of the committee of Monday 9th March, 2026, that the Chairman made reference to bundles of documents that only Senator Nakhid possessed which were passed to the Chairman. I am concerned that members of the Committee, especially the minority members had no previous sight of these documents as Senator Nakhid and the Chairman had.

32. As noted above I have not been provided with documents, materials, correspondence and other material referred to in the course of the PAAC's deliberations which I observed. To date I have only been provided with the four page transcript of Mr. Ramphalie's testimony by mail delivery. I am concerned that I should be provided with all and or any material which may require my consideration and response so that I may receive advice and take such action as may be appropriate. To then distribute those voluminous documents during the proceedings can be seen as biased.

APPENDIX IV

Minority Report of Mrs. Camille Robinson- Regis

**SPECIAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE**

MINORITY REPORT

1. Introduction

This Minority Report is submitted in response to the Special Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee concerning the *conduct of a Member Member of the Committee regarding an Inquiry into the State's Acquisition of Pharmaceuticals as it relates to the current processes applicable to its importation and approval*, dated April 17, 2026. While the Majority Report focuses on the conduct of a single Member, it is the considered view of the undersigned that the issues arising cannot be fairly assessed in isolation from the broader conduct, tone, and procedural approach of the Committee itself.

2. On the Treatment of the Alleged Conduct (Paragraph 8)

The Majority records that it was “concerned and troubled” by the actions of the Member and that recusal was sought. However, it is noted that the Member indicated an intention to seek advice and respond within a defined timeframe. This request was ignored by the Committee.

The Minority finds it necessary to state that the repeated disclosure of detailed in-camera proceedings, in a manner strongly suggestive of communication from Members within the Committee itself, coupled with the undue haste in the escalation of this matter, represents a troubling and disquieting aspect of the Committee’s conduct. This pattern undermines confidence in the integrity of the Committee’s processes and raises serious concerns as to whether proper standards have been maintained.

2. On the Alleged Leak of In-Camera Proceedings (Paragraph 9)

The Majority notes the apparent disclosure of in-camera proceedings and acknowledges that such disclosure constitutes a breach of the applicable Standing Orders.

The Minority considers this to be an issue of the utmost seriousness. The confidentiality of in-camera proceedings is a cornerstone of the Committee system, and any breach strikes directly at the integrity of parliamentary processes.

However, the treatment of this issue in the Majority Report is cursory and wholly inadequate, particularly when contrasted with the attention and severity directed toward the conduct of the Member. No findings are made, no process is outlined for determining responsibility, and no meaningful steps are identified to address or contain the breach.

More concerningly, notwithstanding the gravity of the breach, the Committee proceeded to take consequential decisions, including convening an emergency meeting and advancing recommendations, without first resolving or even properly interrogating the source and implications of the leak.

The Minority is compelled to observe that this apparent lack of urgency or rigour in addressing a clear breach of Standing Orders stands in stark contrast to the Committee's approach to the alleged conduct of the Member. A breach of the Standing Orders is not a matter to be lightly dismissed. The repeated disclosure of detailed aspects of the Committee's in-camera proceedings reflects a pattern of conduct which threatens the integrity of the Committee's work.

In those circumstances, the Minority is concerned that the handling of this issue gives rise to the impression that certain Members of the Committee may have been prepared to disregard or undermine the Standing Orders in furtherance of their own objectives. Such an impression, whether intended or not, is damaging to the credibility of the Committee and to public confidence in its processes.

This inconsistency raises serious concerns as to the even-handedness of the Committee's processes and priorities.

4. On the Handling of Correspondence and Requests (Paragraphs 10–12)

The Majority notes the receipt of correspondence from the Member. It further records that the Member requested particulars of any alleged breaches and the relevant Standing Orders.

The Minority considers those requests to be entirely proper. Any Member facing allegations is entitled, as a matter of natural justice, to be informed of the case against them with sufficient clarity to respond. A meaningful engagement with her request for clarity, and providing her with an opportunity to respond, may have clarified the circumstances which gave rise to the issue in the first place and assisted the Committee in arriving at a more informed and balanced position.

The failure to engage with those requests in any meaningful way represents a material omission in the Report.

5. On the Removal of the Member and the Committee's Recommendation (Paragraphs 12–13)

The Majority notes the removal of the Member and proceeds to recommend the preparation of a Special Report on the Member's conduct.

The Minority is concerned that this sequence reflects a process in which conclusions were effectively reached prior to the completion of any structured inquiry. The progression from allegation to public censure and the rapid production of this Report gives the clear appearance of a predetermined outcome rather than a balanced and evidence-based process.

6. On the Characterisation of the Issue (Paragraph 14)

The Majority advances the serious suggestion of conduct amounting to a "conspiracy to commit contempt of Parliament," while simultaneously indicating that the factual matrix "need not be reported in any detail."

Allegations of such gravity require careful particularisation. The absence of detail, coupled with the use of highly prejudicial language, undermines the integrity of the Report and risks unfairly influencing the House.

7. On the Broader Conduct of the Committee

The Minority is compelled to address the wider context within which these events occurred.

There has been a clear and troubling erosion of parliamentary standards within this Committee, under the current Chairman. In particular, the introduction of material into the Committee by a Member in circumstances that plainly blurred the line between evidence and advocacy was not only permitted, but relied upon. More concerning, that material was treated by the Chair as a proper evidential basis for questioning and deliberation, without any apparent regard for the procedural impropriety inherent in its introduction.

This approach represents a fundamental departure from established committee practice. A committee cannot properly discharge its mandate where evidential standards are compromised in this way, and where the distinction between witness evidence and Member participation is disregarded.

This concern is further compounded by the Committee's failure to treat with any seriousness the acknowledged breach of its in-camera proceedings, which was addressed only superficially despite its direct impact on the integrity of the Committee's work.

This was not an isolated lapse. It formed part of a broader pattern characterised by an increasingly adversarial tone, partisan positioning, and a willingness to pursue lines of inquiry shaped by predetermined assumptions rather than objective assessment.

Accordingly, the Minority finds that there has been a discernible breakdown in parliamentary standards within this Committee under its present leadership, reflected in:

- a) the introduction of material by Members in a manner that blurred the distinction between evidence and advocacy;
- b) the acceptance and reliance upon such material by the Chair without regard to proper procedure;
- c) the conduct of questioning on the basis of that material as though it were properly admitted evidence;
- d) an increasingly adversarial and partisan tone in the Committee's proceedings;
- e) the public disclosure of the Committee's work, which appears to have been made by a Member of the Committee with direct knowledge of its proceedings and direction; and
- f) a general departure from principles of objectivity, fairness, and procedural discipline.

8. On Paragraph 18 of the Majority Report

The Minority rejects, in the strongest terms, the conclusion that the continued involvement of the Member “could make other Members uncomfortable to the point of negatively affecting the work of the Parliament.”

This assertion is speculative, unsupported by evidence, and constitutionally unsound. Parliamentary participation cannot be curtailed on the basis of subjective discomfort. To accept such a proposition would establish a dangerous precedent whereby Members may be excluded not for proven misconduct, but for perceived inconvenience.

The proper functioning of Parliament depends on adherence to rules and tolerance of differing views, not on the avoidance of discomfort.

9. On Precedent and Proper Approach

The Minority draws the attention of the House to a relevant parliamentary precedent arising from the Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security (2019/2020).

In that matter, serious concerns arose regarding a Member’s participation in an inquiry, grounded in information provided by the Commissioner of Police and other evidence touching on issues of public confidence and parliamentary integrity.

Notwithstanding the gravity of those matters, the Committee’s recommendation was limited and proportionate. It recommended only that the Member should not continue to serve on that Committee for the duration of the inquiry.

No recommendation was made to extend that concern to the Member’s participation in Parliament generally.

The Minority considers this precedent to be instructive. It reflects a disciplined and proportionate approach, even in circumstances involving serious allegations.

Against that background, the conclusion reached in paragraph 18 represents a marked and unjustified departure from established parliamentary practice.

10. Conclusion

The Minority does not seek to excuse or diminish any improper conduct by any Member. However, such conduct must be assessed within a framework of fairness, proportionality, and procedural integrity.

In this instance, those standards were not met. The issues identified in this Report point not only to the conduct of an individual Member, but to a broader failure in the maintenance of parliamentary standards within the Committee itself.

The House is therefore invited to approach the Majority Report with caution and to reaffirm the importance of fairness, due process, and procedural discipline in the operation of its Committees.

Respectively submitted.

Camille Robinson Regis, MP
Member
April 17, 2026

April 17, 2026

The Secretary Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

Office of the Parliament

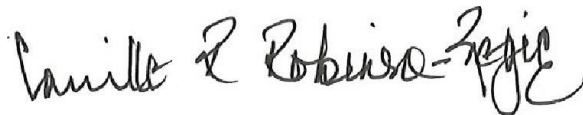
The Red House

Port of Spain

Dear Clerk of the House,

Please find attached my Minority Report as a Member of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, which is to be laid before the House alongside the Committee's Special Report dated 17 April 2026 on the matter under reference. This Minority Report is submitted in accordance with the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Representatives. Kindly take the necessary steps to facilitate its inclusion for presentation to the House.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Camille R. Robinson-Regis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP

Member

Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

Cc: Mr. Brian Caesar, The Clerk of the House