



Twelfth Meeting of the PAAC, Third Session, 12th Parliament

Public Hearing Summary

Wednesday November 16, 2022

Inquiry Subject:

A follow-up inquiry on the Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee based on the examination of the implementation of the recommendations in the Twenty -Fourth Report on the Processing of the payment of Pensions and Gratuities of Retired Public Officers and Contacted Employees.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present at the meeting:

- Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George - Chairman
- Dr. Lackram Bodeo - Vice-Chairman
- Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julien - Member
- Mr. Randall Mitchell - Member
- Mr. Laurence Hislop - Member
- Mr. Hassel Bacchus - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Personnel Department

- Commander Dr. Daryl Dindial - Chief Personnel Officer
- Ms. Hazel Villafana - Deputy Chief Personnel Officer (Ag.)
- Ms. Lorris Alfred - Director Human Resource Management
- Ms. Susan Rajnauth-Houllier - Senior Human Resource Specialist

Auditor General's Department

- Ms. Lorelly Pujadas - Auditor General

Ms. Jaiwantie Ramdass	-	Deputy Auditor General
Mrs. Brenda Ragbir- De Jean	-	Audit Executive I (Ag.)
Ms. Anita Mangra	-	Senior Legal Officer
Mr. Brian Noel	-	Network Administrator

Ministry of Finance

Ms. Catherine Laban	-	Comptroller of Accounts
Mrs. Avonelle Rostant	-	Treasury Director, Pensions Management Branch (Ag.)
Mrs. Vashti Maharaj	-	Treasury Director, Financial Management Branch (Ag.)

Ministry of National Security

Mr. Gary Joseph	-	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ms. Denise Phillip	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) General Administration & Human Resources
Ms. Enez Moore	-	Director of Human Resources (Establishment) (Ag.)
Ms. Indira Harripaul	-	Director of Human Resources (Contract) (Ag.)
Ms. Tricia Lakhansingh	-	Senior Human Resource Officer (Ag.) Employee Relations
Commander Anil Gosine	-	Assistant Chief Staff Officer Sustainment, Defence Force
Ms. Camille Palmer	-	Assistant Chief Staff Officer Sustainment, Defence Force (Ag.)
Mr. Glen Deverteuil	-	Prison Officer II
Mrs. Sherma Maynard-Wilson	-	Senior Superintendent Human Resource Branch (Ag.)
Mr. Seon Raphael	-	Fire Sub Officer
Mrs. Angela Ramlagan	-	Director - Human Resource Department
Mr. Ian Caldeira	-	Legal Officer, Finance Branch
Mr. Clint Arthur	-	Superintendent - Finance Branch (Ag.)

Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Ms. Natasha Barrow	-	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Solange De Souza	-	Senior Legal Advisor
Mr. Ian Macintyre	-	Chief Parliamentary Counsel
Mr. Reynold Price	-	Senior Legal Officer
Ms. Cher Augustine-Hamilton	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary

Key Issues Discussed:

Personnel Department

1. The number of Ministry and Departments (M&Ds) the Personnel Department targeted for participation in its pension and leave processing training sessions (24) and the number that actually participated (17);
2. The reasons M&Ds did not participate in the Personnel Department's training sessions and the Department's intention to encourage those M&Ds;
3. The anticipated roll out of the Personnel Department's next training sessions;
4. The participatory statistics from the Personnel Department's training Evaluation Questionnaire and its intention to make filling out the questionnaire a mandatory requirement to complete its next training sessions;
5. The Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) belief that priority should be placed on those officers whose retirement dates are closely approaching over those officers who have lodged incremental advice requests with many years still to service as a way to improve the pension, leave and gratuity processing process;
6. The CPO has noted a reduction in the number of requests for advice from M&Ds as an indicator of the combined success of the Personnel Department's training session and the Changes in administrative arrangements in respect of contract employment in the Public Service - November 29, 2019, Circular;
7. The timeline for the completion of the Personnel Department's job evaluation exercise of the Public Service and the intended submission date of the Report to the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
8. The requirements of the Personnel Department to conduct pension, leave and gratuity process compliance testing across the public service;

9. The Personnel Department's discussions with the Public Management Consulting Division of the Ministry of Public Administration to restructure the department by creating a Monitoring and Compliance Division.
10. The Personnel Department's attempts to fill its technical positions in fiscal 2023;
11. The continuous need to conduct trainings given the continuous movement of public servants in the public service and whether M&Ds proactively approach the Personnel Department to participate in its training sessions when their trained staff are re-assigned;
12. The implementation of an annual training schedule
13. The ability of Department to use the feedback from the evaluation forms to improve the efficacy of the training sessions
14. The Accounting Officers' responsibility to accept, account for and address the pension, leave and gratuity issues present at their Ministry or Department;
15. The progress made in filling the currently vacant Senior Human Resources positions in the Personnel Department and the hiring of ten contracted Human Resource Specialists to alleviate the department's current staff shortages;
16. The improvements noted in service delivery from the creation of the ten contract positions and whether an assessment would be conducted to gauge improvements;
17. The status of the Note for the Revised Guidelines for Contract Employment and National Policy for Contract Employment in Government Ministries, Departments and Statutory Authorities;
18. The use of client feedback to develop future training workshops;
19. The anticipated use of Integrated Human Resource Information System (IHRIS) to improve pension and leave record keeping across the public service;
20. The phased implementation of IHRIS and the Minister of Public Administration's intent to report to Cabinet in March 2023 on the status of IHRIS's rollout;

Ministry of Finance

1. The improvements and changes noted by the Comptroller of Accounts in the submission of pension, leave and gratuity records from M&Ds following the Personnel Department's last training session;

2. The Treasury Division's process of monitoring the contents of submitted pension, leave and gratuity records;
3. The continued delays in the submission of returns as noted by the Comptroller of Accounts;
4. The factors that attributed towards the improvement in the timeliness of the processing and payment of pension in fiscal 2022;
5. The standard time given for a person's returns to be calculated and submitted to the Comptroller of Accounts prior to that person's retirement date;
6. The reasons for the increase in the number of files with queries at the Treasury Division despite the decentralised system for the payment of contract gratuities taking effect from October 1, 2020;
7. The current number of files on hand with queries at the Treasury Division;
8. The usage of the template disseminated to M&D's for the submission of returns and whether inquiries into non-compliance has been initiated;
9. The effectiveness of the submission of status reports to the Head of the Public Service and this control mechanism being used to ensure compliance;
10. The circulation of the 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) brochure and whether feedback received indicated that the brochure does not address current misunderstandings/ issues surrounding the preparation of pension and leave records;
11. The positive outlook should public servants look forward to from the training workshops with respect to the timely processing and payment of pensions and gratuities;
12. The communication process that needs to be improved between the Treasury Division and M&Ds;
13. The responsibilities within the pension processing process that could be done differently to ensure equality and equity of treatment of all public servants;
14. The root cause of all the issues and queries that arise with the processing of pensions and gratuities (Personal, Personnel or Process);

Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

1. The outcome of the discussions of the stakeholder meetings to propose legislative amendments to have each (M&D) responsible for its own pensions and gratuity records;
2. The legislative and regulatory frameworks that amendments would need to be made to effect each M&D being responsible for its own pensions and gratuity records;
3. The timeframe needed for these amendments to be effected once the Cabinet Minute authorising the drafting has been received by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel;

4. The amendments that would be subject to Affirmative and Negative Resolutions;

Auditor General's Department (ADG)

1. The improvements to the pension processing process the Auditor General's Department will attempt to make whilst the Department is still involved;
2. The number of files processed by the AGD for persons due to receive their pensions payments in 2023;
3. The change in the processing method from first in first out to date of retirement to better get persons what is rightfully due to them;
4. The AGD's worsening staffing challenges and attempts to lessen its impact on the Department's operations whilst the current legislation is in effect;
5. The number of files on hand for persons retired in years preceding 2022;
6. The AGD's opinion of the decentralised system for the payment of contract gratuities;
7. The AGD's approach to assess decentralised system for the payment of contract gratuities if required to;

Ministry of National Security

The capacity of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service to internally calculate their submissions without the need of the AGD and the challenges that will be experienced

Next Meeting:

The next Public Hearing of the Committee will be held on **Wednesday, November 30, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.** At this meeting, the Committee intends to commence a follow-up examination into the maintenance of community pools and sporting facilities.

PAAC Secretariat
November 16, 2022