



Summary of Proceedings

Public Hearing

Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA)

Friday June 3rd, 2016

[10:11a.m. to 12:47p.m.]

Venue: 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.

Subject matter: Inquiry into certain aspects of the Administration of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) [with focus on the state of Tobago's Tourism Sector and Inter-Island Transportation]

Committee Members

The following Committee members were present:

- i. Mr. H. R. Ian Roach (Chairman)
- ii. Ms. Ramona Ramdial, MP (Vice-Chairman)
- iii. Mr. Darryl Smith, MP
- iv. Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, MP
- v. Mr. Nigel De Freitas
- vi. Mr. Daniel Solomon

Witnesses who appeared

The following officials of the THA appeared before the Committee:

- i. Mr. Raye Sandy - Chief Administrator, THA;

Division of Tourism and Transportation

- ii. Ms. Cherryl-Ann Solomon - Administrator
- iii. Mrs. Frederica Brooks-Adams - Director Tourism

- iv. Mr. Samuel Henry - Transportation Coordinator
- v. Ms. Gwen Toppin - Management Accountant
- vi. Ms. Deokie Ramnarine - Senior Research Officer

Division of Community Development & Culture

- vii. Mr. Wendell Berkeley - Chairman, Heritage Committee;
- viii. Ms. Glenda Rose Layne - Coordinator, Culture;

Division of Infrastructure and Public Utilities

- ix. Mrs. Wendy Guy - Hernandez, Administrator; and
- x. Mr. Henry Cook - Assistant Deputy General Manager- Operations.

The following officials of the **Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association (THTA)** appeared before the Committee:

- i. Mr. Chris James - President;
- ii. Mrs. C. Birchwood - James, Vice-President;
- iii. Mr. Carlos Dillon - Honorary Director;
- iv. Ms. Kaye Trotman - Associate Member; and
- v. Mrs. Shirley Cooke - Secretary to the Board

Key Issues Discussed

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

Issues raised with officials of the THA

- The statements made by the Chief Administrator at the last meeting with respect to the submission of the THA's Financial Statements to the Auditor General for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014;
- The Division of Tourism and Transportation's main expenditure items under the Sub-head *Current Transfers and Subsidies* for the current fiscal year;
- The standards used to rate hotels in Tobago;
- The marketing and promotion strategies used by the Division of Tourism and Transportation to promote Tobago as a destination;
- The status of Tobago's tourism industry in comparison to other Caribbean Tourist destinations;
- The role of the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC) of Trinidad and Tobago and Central Government in the development of Tobago's Tourism Industry;

- The inadequate facilities at the A.N. R. Robinson International Airport;
- The implementation of a Comprehensive Plan for Sports Tourism in Tobago;
- The effectiveness of the “Heat Map” used by Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL) and the THA to deal with peak periods of travel between Trinidad and Tobago;
- The continuous shortfall in revenue derived from the Jazz Festival from 2012 to 2016;
- Tobago’s level of international tourist arrivals and hotel room occupancy in comparison to other Caribbean territories;
- The lack of an internationally recognised hotels franchises/brands in Tobago to generate tourist interest;
- The lack of a proper Marketing Plan to attract foreign investments;
- The poor state of the docking facilities at the Port of Scarborough and its adverse impact on Cruise Ship arrivals;
- The Development of Marina(s) to accommodate the international, regional and local boating community;
- THA’s failure to inspect and approve the quality of Hotel / guest rooms over the past four years;
- The inconsistency in the gathering of data on the arrival of International and Domestic flights;
- The contingency measures in place to compensate for the loss in passenger capacity in the inter-island ferry service when vessels are undergoing maintenance;
- The plans to revive and/or revamp failed tourism projects;
- The need to increase the Hotel room stock on the island.

Issues raised with officials of the Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association (THTA)

- The impact of state incentives such as financial grants and room guarantees on the development of tourist accommodation in Tobago;
- Provision of Land Licences for foreigners to purchase land;
- Difficulty experienced by the Private Sector to find adequate and suitable employees to work within the tourism industry;
- The significantly large amount of money spent by Caribbean destinations such as Barbados on destination marketing compared with Tobago;
- The long and short-term benefits of festival Tourism;
- The need for the THA to engage in the advanced advertising of festival and events;
- Placing priority on the improvement of the ANR Robinson Airport compared to other tourism projects in Tobago;
- The need for non-stop flights from Europe and North America to Tobago;
- The working relationship between the THA and the THTA;

- The positive growth experienced by the Caribbean region in terms of tourist arrivals and spend.

View the Hearing

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:

<https://youtu.be/NR3QYQydTT8>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

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

Committees Unit

June 3rd 2016