



THE MINISTRY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

SECOND MINISTERIAL RESPONSE

The Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament, on an Examination of the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service.

I. Introduction

The Third Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament, on an Examination of the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service was presented in the Senate on May 02, 2017, and in the House of Representatives on May 05, 2017.

Standing Orders 100(6) and 110(6) of the Senate and House of Representatives respectively, require the Minister with responsibility for the Ministry/Body reported on by a Joint Select Committee to present to each House a paper responding to the recommendations/comments contained in the Report.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs submitted a Ministerial Response to the recommendations and comments as presented in the said Third Report on the 4th day of July, 2017. In the said Ministerial Response of the 4th day of July, 2017, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs promised to provide a further update to the Committee on the 30th day of July, 2017, on the progress made with respect to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs' consideration of the appropriateness and efficacy of the QR Code Label Printing System, currently used by the Parliament, for use within the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

The said 30th day of July, 2017, occurred on a day in which the Parliament was in recess and consequently pursuant to Standing Order 100(7) of the Senate and Standing Order 110(7) of the House of Representatives the Honourable Attorney General's Second Ministerial Response to update the Committee must be presented to each House no later than the third sitting day following that recess.

This report is the Second Ministerial Response to the recommendations and comments as presented in the Third Report, to be presented to Parliament, through the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and seeks to further update the Committee on the progress made with respect to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs' consideration of the appropriateness and efficacy of the QR Code Label Printing System, currently used by the Parliament, for use within the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. Further, this report seeks to update the Committee on the current inventory control measures which are being pursued within the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

II. Summary of Issues Identified, Recommendations and Responses

During the Committee's inquiry into the System of Inventory Control within the Public Service the following issues were identified and recommendations proposed that require written responses by the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

The updated responses of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs to these said recommendations are contained hereinafter in this report.

Issue Identified

Head 23 – Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs (pages 27-28 of the Third Report)

I. Tagging of the Ministry's Inventory:

- The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs were previously separate Ministries. Most of the Ministry of the Attorney General's assets were tagged whereas at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, much progress was not made in tagging the assets.
- Labelling machines were used to tag inventory and as a result, problems arose when the Ministry was carrying out its checks. Information about various items could not be ascertained due to the writings on the labels erasing or becoming faded.

II. Based on the public hearing at which the Ministry appeared, the Committee noted that:

- The Ministry did not consider other tagging systems as a means to avoid the challenges faced with the system the Ministry used.
- The Ministry recommended to the Public Service Academy (PSA) that staff involved in Inventory Control at the Ministry be trained in Stores Management in the Public Service. However, the Ministry advised that its staff were rarely selected to undergo training at the PSA.

III. Based on additional information provided to the Committee:

- The Ministry considered the possibility of using an updated system of tagging for inventory.

Recommendations:

- The Department should research more recent and practicable tagging systems. The Department may wish to consult the Office of the Parliament on its QR Code Label Printing System and provide a status update to the Committee on the progress made in this regard by July 30, 2017.

Response:

The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs' IT Unit has reviewed the Asset Management System utilized by the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and has determined that this system is **not** a viable Asset Management solution for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

The Parliament utilizes VimSoft Vimbiz which is an Enterprise-scalable software suite for Broadcast Resource Management. This solution is applicable to the Parliament; however it does not appear to be a feasible investment for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.

The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs has reviewed several other applicable “*off the shelf*” Asset Management solutions to determine its appropriateness and efficacy to the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs’ environment.

The Ministry is currently engaged in the review and trial of Sage Fix Assets as a possible Asset Management solution. Sage Fix Assets allows for the tracking and management of the Ministry’s fixed assets through each step of the asset lifecycle.



In order for the solution to be successful, it is important that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs begins with an accurate baseline of its assets, as this is critical to the effective management of fixed assets. Without an accurate fixed asset inventory, no amount of added processes, controls or systems can ensure the accuracy of fixed asset tracking. In this regard, the only reliable way to verify and validate the fixed asset information is to commence with a physical inventory.

The Sage Fixed Assets Solution:

- Utilizes bar code / QR code technology including Windows Mobile devices for tracking its physical inventories of assets quickly and efficiently to provide tighter control of the Ministry's assets.
- Conducts multiple inventories concurrently at various sites and reconciles data at one central location.
- Supports baseline inventories to add new assets and dynamic inventories to verify existing asset data.
- "Check-in/check-out" feature with a "check-out history" monitors mobile assets.
- Inventories can be conducted at remote locations by exchanging data over email.
- On-screen "virtual reader" provides the ability to perform a test inventory.
- Provides fully customizable fields with the ability to control data entry and notes, plus images to describe each asset record.
- Features "Groups," "templates," "Smart Lists," and "search-and-replace" to provide powerful asset management tools and streamline inventory methodologies.
- Features a "Detail view" to provide complete information on assets.
- Provides security profiles for individual users, ensuring that only those users that are allowed to change data are able to do so.
- Allows for the reconciliation of the status of the Ministry's assets – e.g. lost, missing, stolen.

The solution will also incorporate special high quality adhesive barcode labels designed for the environment of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. From our research, the labels recommended for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs' environmental conditions are the Polyester labels with over-laminate and Foil labels. The Polyester labels will be affixed to assets such as office furniture, fixtures etc. The over-laminate on the label protects the image from scuffing and mild chemicals. Foil labels are more durable, more visible and generally work well in almost any indoor or outdoor asset application where a label can be applied to a flat surface. The foil label is also resistant to scuffing, cleaning solvents, most chemicals and heat. The foil label also fractures if removed from its mating surface, providing tamper evident features.

The recommended solution will encompass the following:

1. Software
 - Sage Fixed Assets (Once Successfully Evaluated)
 - Zebra Designer Pro
2. Special High Quality Adhesive Barcode labels
 - Zebra Thermal Desktop Printer

➤ Portable Barcode Scanners

3. Special High Quality Adhesive Barcode labels.

The Committee may wish to note that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs' IT Unit already has a solution in operation for its IT Asset Management. The solution used is a combination of software and hardware, and includes a wireless handheld barcode scanner, Zebra GC420 thermal desktop printer and ServicePro. ServicePRO is a process-based IT related service suite intended to align the delivery of Information Technology (IT) and other business services with objectives of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. The focus of ServicePRO is delivery of IT Services using best practice processes. ServicePro has an Asset Management module that integrates with purchase order functionality, allowing the IT Unit to track all of the Ministry's IT equipment, from requisitioning to the end of the product lifecycle.



III. Conclusion

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs recognizes and accepts that addressing the issues identified by the Committee with regards to the implementation of a proper System of Inventory Control forms an integral part of the Parliamentary Financial Oversight which is necessary to ensure value for money in the expenditure of public funds.