# Ministry of Education's Response to the Eighth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an Examination into the Ministry of Education

JULY 16, 2018

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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| **1. a) Inventory Control**<br>Written and oral evidence received by the Committee indicated that all of the Ministry's assets were not adequately tagged. A pilot project was started in 2008 but was never completed, due to the deliverables as understood by the contracted firm were not in keeping with the Ministry's security protocols and funding requirements. As such, the final payment was not made to the contractor and the data was not made available to the Ministry. In an effort to circumvent the aforementioned issues, the Accounting Officer informed the Committee that the IT Department was developing an electronic tagging system. | The Ministry of Education should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the electronic tagging system by March 14, 2018. | The Department is exploring the possibility of regaining access to the Web TMA platform that was purchased in 2008 but was halted in 2010. The cost for reactivation and access for forty (40) users is $168,849.00 TTD. The possibility exists that legal recourse may have to be taken to regain access at no cost since the implementation fee in 2008 was paid and the platform was never handed over to the Ministry of Education. |
| **1. b) Inventory Control**<br>Additionally, the Ministry's Inventory Register was not being adequately maintained. The Ministry therefore depended on each school to properly maintain its registers. This approach was unfortunately later determined to be inaccurate by the Ministry's Internal Auditor. As a result, the Accounting Officer indicated that talks were expected to be held with the Internal Auditor to determine the best approach to treat with the Ministry's and schools' Inventory Register. | The Ministry of Education should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the initiatives being undertaken to treat with the Inventory Registers at the Ministry and schools by March 14, 2018. | The Ministry retains current registers for the ICT Department. A data collection drive on furniture in primary schools was performed during the period July 1 to October 6, 2017.<br><br>Seven (7) training sessions were also conducted during the period May 8 to June 15, 2018 to inform Principals of primary and secondary schools as well as District Offices as to correct procedures for the management and disposal of government assets. |
| **2. Internal Audit**<br>Written evidence indicated that the Ministry's Internal Audit Unit was inadequately staffed. The Unit comprised twenty-two (22) | The Ministry should submit a report to Parliament on the status of the initiatives being taken to fill | • A memorandum dated February 14, 2018 was sent to the Director of Personnel Administration (DPA) requesting replacements to fill vacancies as follows: |

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| persons out of the established twenty-nine (29) positions. The Accounting Officer indicated that through the Service Commissions Department, attempts were being made to fill the vacancies within the unit.<br>Additionally, evidence received indicated that Internal Audit staff performed administrative roles. As a result, the staff assigned to the Internal Audit Unit have less time to focus on the auditing of systems and controls. To address this issue, the Ministry indicated that it intends to separate the Internal Audit from General Administration. | the vacancies within the Internal Audit Units by March 14, 2018. | ○ Three (3) Auditing Assistants; and<br>○ One (1) Auditor I.<br>• A memorandum dated April 23, 2018 was sent to the DPA requesting replacements to fill the following vacancies:<br>○ Four (4) Auditing Assistants.<br>• Frequent calls have also been made to the Service Commissions Department requesting staff, with the most recent having been placed on May 21, 2018. |
| | The Ministry should seek to separate the administrative duties from the Internal Audit Function and acquire the services of administrative staff to assist the Internal Audit Unit by March 14, 2018. | The new structure of the Internal Audit Unit entails the retaining of a Clerk Stenographer II, who will be assisted by a Clerk I, to address this issue. |
| **3. Training**<br>The Committee learnt that formal training was not provided for persons involved in Internal Audit nor Inventory Control. Evidence received by the Ministry indicated that there was no schedule for training but Internal Audit staff were sometimes trained in-house. The Accounting Officer gave the assurance that staff engaged in the Internal Audit and Inventory Control functions | The Accounting Officer should develop a training schedule for Internal Audit and Inventory Control staff and submit to the Committee, a Report on the Progress made in training internal audit and inventory control staff by March 14, 2018. | Two (2) persons were nominated in 2016 for Inventory Control training and one (1) person in 2017 for Internal Audit training provided by the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. Of these nominations, no persons were selected for training. Nominations continue to be made for officers as and when opportunities arise.<br><br>The Ministry of has also engaged the Ministry of Finance via memo to enquire about the various training opportunities available for Internal Audit staff and the |

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| would be formally trained pending the acquisition of the adequate funding. | | possibility of this training taking place in the Ministry of Education Towers targeting MOE staff.<br><br>Internal training schedules are also currently being developed/updated for all Divisions/Units of the Ministry, including the Internal Audit Unit. When developed, these schedules will be used to address the training needs of officers and contact will be made accordingly with relevant training providers to solicit the requisite training. |
| **4. Indebtedness to the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS)**<br>Oral evidence received by the Committee revealed that the Ministry of Education owes MTS substantial amounts of funds. The Ministry was not able to ascertain the exact amount of money owed to MTS but averaged the figure to be approximately ninety-nine million dollars ($99 million). The Accounting Officer gave the assurance that the issue was being dealt with but believed that a special Unit should be assigned the responsibility of debt management. | The Ministry of Education should establish a Unit or designate specific persons with the sole mandate to treat with all matters concerning the debt owed to MTS by March 14, 2018. | The Ministry of Education notes this recommendation. |
| | The Ministry of Education should submit a report to the Committee on the status of the payment of the debt owed to MTS by March 14, 2018. | The debt owed to National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) in the current year stands at $52 million.<br><br>In the current year, bills have been paid up to November 2017 and Invoices have been submitted for payment by MTS for the period March and April 2018. |

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<td>5. Understaffed Monitoring and Evaluation Unit*<br>The Ministry's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit consisted of only two (2) persons and was therefore understaffed. This severely hindered the Ministry's ability to adequately monitor and evaluate the Ministry's programmes and projects. The Ministry indicated that ideally, the Unit should comprise of eight (8) persons and therefore efforts were being made to recruit six (6) additional persons on contract for the Unit.<br><br>Footnote: Monitoring is carried out in order to track progress and performance as a basis for decision-making at various steps in the process of an initiative or project. Evaluation, on the other hand is a more generalised assessment of data or experience to establish to what extent the initiative has achieved its goals or objectives.</td>
<td>The Ministry should submit to Parliament a report on the progress made in the recruitment of the additional staff by March 14, 2018.</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education now consists of the former Ministries of Education and Tertiary Education and Skills Training, and the Scholarships Division formerly attached to the Ministry of Public Administration. The Ministry of Education, in seeking to rationalise and restructure its Divisions, sought the advice of the Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD). They advised that no Contract Units will be approved/renewed by the PMCD or the Cabinet until the Ministry of Education completes this restructuring process.<br><br>The life of the fully contract Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education has expired and the approval of the Cabinet is needed for its renewal. The MOE therefore is not in a position to renew this Unit.<br><br>In the interim <u>monitoring</u> is being carried out as follows:<br>
<table>
<tr><th>Type of Project</th><th>Monitoring Body</th></tr>
<tr><td>Infrastructure Development Fund Projects and other construction based projects.</td><td>Projects and Programmes Management Unit (PPMU) and Education Facilities Planning and Procurement Division (EFPPD).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Curriculum based projects.</td><td>Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD).</td></tr>
<tr><td>ICT based projects.</td><td>Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD).</td></tr>
<tr><td>The School Improvement Project (Laventille/Morvant).</td><td>Chief Education Officer's Secretariat.</td></tr>
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| | | All the Ministry's major projects — Business Planning Unit of the Educational Planning Division (EPD). |
| **6. Absence of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework***<br>The Ministry was not in possession of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. A clear framework is essential to guide monitoring and evaluation. The Accounting Officer indicated that the Ministry aimed to complete the framework by September 30, 2017.<br><br>**Footnote:** An M&E framework explains how the programme is supposed to work by laying out the components of the initiative and the order or the steps needed to achieve the desired results. A framework increases understanding of the programme's goals and objectives, defines the relationships between factors key to implementation, and articulates the internal and external elements that could affect the programme's success. | The Ministry should submit to Parliament a status update on the completion of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework by March 14, 2018. | The Ministry has not finalised the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to date. This document, currently in draft, is to be aligned with the Ministry of Education's Policy Paper 2017-2022. This document was approved by Cabinet on June 28, 2018 and the Ministry of Education was instructed to host public consultations on the document by October 2018. In the interim, the Ministry will seek to finalise the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in alignment with its policy. |
| **7. Rental of Buildings**<br>During the examination of the Ministry, the Committee learnt that despite occupying a new building in Port of Spain, the Ministry was still occupying other buildings. Given the economic climate and the Ministry's need for funding, the funds used for rent could have been used more effectively and hence could have funded other priority areas. | The Ministry should submit to Parliament, a status update on the vacation of the Ministry's buildings by March 14, 2018. | It should be noted that the property located on London Street is owned by the Ministry of Education, and so does not incur a rental cost.<br><br>The following properties were returned to landlords on the following dates:<br>• 17-19 Pembroke St, Port of Spain - March, 31, 2017<br>• Chepstow House, 56 Frederick St, Port of Spain - April 18, 2017<br>• 33 Pembroke St, Port of Spain - June 30, 2017 |

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| The Accounting officer gave the assurance that the Ministry would vacate the Wrightson Road building by September 30, 2017. Additionally, the Ministry was still occupying various buildings at London Street and St. Clair to name a few. As a result, the Accounting Officer gave the assurance that the Ministry would investigate the rental of all buildings. | | • 18 Abercromby St, Port of Spain - July 31, 2017<br>• 37 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain (2nd floor) - September 30, 2017<br>• 37 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain (1st floor) - October 31, 2017<br>• 15 Wainwright St, St Clair - November 30, 2017<br>• 49-51 Henry St, Port of Spain (Car Park) - January 31, 2018<br><br>The majority of the Divisions of the Ministry of Education moved into the Education Towers during the period August to September, 2016. However, Alexandra St, St Clair property is still utilised by the Ministry for storage of miscellaneous items. |
| | The Ministry should submit to Parliament, a report on the occupation of its offices at locations other than the Government Campus by March 14, 2018. | Ministry of Education leased/rented properties as follows:<br>• POS & Environs District - 50A Jerningham Ave., POS<br>• North Eastern District - Corner Savi St. & Boodooville Circular, Sangre Grande<br>• South Eastern District - High Street, Rio Claro<br>• Student Support Services - Medical Dispensary Bldg., Main Rd, Chaguanas<br>• Education Warehouse - Trade Zone, El Socorro Rd Extension No 1, San Juan<br>• St. George East District / San Juan Boys & Girls Primary - Eastern Main Road, Tunapuna<br>• ECCE Centre - 51 Gopie Trace, Penal<br>• Parkade - Richmond Street, Port of Spain |

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<tr><td></td><td></td><td><ul><li>Funding and Grants - 16 Warner Street, St. Augustine</li><li>Nursing Assistant Training School - 5A Lord Street, San Fernando</li><li>School of Nursing - Palms Club, San Fernando</li><li>Nursing Community Health and Post Basic Training and School - 43-45 Frederick Street, Port of Spain</li><li>TEST Warehouse - Trade Zone, El Socorro Rd Extension No 1, San Juan</li></ul>Ministry of Education Government owned properties:<ul><li>Former Head Office - 18 Alexandra Street, St Clair</li><li>Ibis Building - London Street, Port-of-Spain</li><li>Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre – Couva</li><li>St. Patrick District Office - 101 Farrah Street, San Fernando</li><li>Victoria District Office - 16-22 Sutton Street, San Fernando</li><li>Caroni District Office - 14 Camden Court, Couva</li><li>St George East District Office - El Dorado Road, Tunapuna</li></ul></td></tr>
<tr><td>8. Noncompliance by Heads of Divisions<br>The Committee learnt that the Ministry had difficulties with its Heads of Divisions not submitting monthly project reports in a timely manner to the Ministry of Planning and Development. To resolve this issue, the Accounting Officer implemented quarterly Heads of Divisions meetings to remind the Heads of Divisions of this request. Despite this attempt, the Accounting Officer lamented that she saw little improvement and assured that the situation would be monitored.</td><td>The Ministry of Education should submit to the Committee a status update on the timely submission of the Ministry's monthly reports to the Ministry of Planning and Development by March 14, 2018.</td><td>The Ministry of Education is endeavouring to provide the Ministry of Planning and Development with the requisite monthly reports. In this regard, reports with respect to Tertiary projects are up to date. Reports on construction/repairs on ECCE, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools for March, April and May 2018 have also been submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Development.</td></tr>
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| **9. Vacancies**<br>There were two thousand, eight hundred and twenty-one (2,821) contract positions at the Ministry. Of which, one thousand, four hundred and sixty (1,460), accounting for approximately 48% of contract positions were vacant. Additional evidence received attributed the following reasons for the substantial amount of vacancies:<br>• Shortage of persons with the requisite combination of qualifications and experience;<br>• Dis-continuation of programmes by the Ministry; and<br>• Budgetary constraints that restricted the Ministry's ability to filling contract positions that were absolutely necessary for the day to day functioning.<br>The assistance of the Public and Teaching Service Commissions were requested to fill positions on the permanent establishment of the Ministry. | The Ministry should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the initiatives being taken to fill the contract vacancies within the Ministry by March 14, 2018. | For the period March to July 2018, contract positions have been filled as follows:<br>• **Corporate Communications Division (CCD)**: 3 hired.<br>• **Early Childhood Care and Education Division (ECCE):** 79 hired. Interviews were conducted and 125 successful candidates were placed on an order of merit list and will be hired with effect from August 2018.<br>• **General Administration (GA):** 2 hired.<br>• **Health, Safety and Security Unit (HSSU):** 17 hired.<br>• **Information and Communications Technology Division (ICTD):** 98 hired.<br>• **Scholarship and Advanced Training Division (SATD):** 163 hired.<br>• **Student Support Services Division (SSSD)**: 92 hired.<br>• **Textbook Management Unit (TMU):** 2 hired.<br>• **B.O.A. Positions for all divisions:** 71 hired.<br><br>Progress has also been made in filling contract vacancies in the following Divisions:<br>• **Funding and Grants Administration Division (FGAD):** A Note was prepared for the renewal of positions.<br>• **Legal Unit:** Interviews completed. |
| **10. Decrease in Funding for the Faculty of Medical Sciences**<br>The subsidy to Mt. Hope Students was reduced by $19.5 million in fiscal year 2017. The Ministry indicated that the decrease resulted in the Faculty of Medical Sciences operating at a loss. Staff cost | The Ministry should submit a status report to the Committee on the solution for the Faculty of | In response to the question "Where has the Ministry reached in determining the best solution to the problem?" asked in a Request for Additional Information dated July, 07, 2017, the Ministry responded with the following statement: "Thus far, discussions are preliminary and require comprehensive research in a holistic |

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| was the major cost factor, and immediate reduction in faculty staff was not possible, as they were needed for the next few years to support the student population that is already in the system.<br>According to the Ministry, there were two possible solutions to the problem i.e. increased direct cost to the current and future student body, and the sourcing of full fee paying non-regional students as a revenue opportunity. Unfortunately, both solutions may result in a reduction in the enrolment of local students. Additional evidence indicated that discussions on the solutions are preliminary and require comprehensive research. | Medical Sciences by March 14, 2018. | manner. Any increase in direct cost to the current or future student body essentially means increasing tuition fees, which is an unlikely option at this time. The possibility of attracting more full fee-paying non-regional students could be a more viable option especially since it is not only likely to generate income to the Faculty and the University but it will also generate foreign exchange."<br><br>It is critical therefore to note that the two possible solutions provided above were not the only solutions available/discussed. As such, the Ministry is engaged in deliberations with the University of the West Indies regarding finding a sustainable approach to funding the Faculty of Medical Sciences, which will minimise any negative fall-out to the student body. Proposals have been recommended by the University and these are currently under consideration by the Ministry. A number of the recommendations proposed also require consultation with the Ministry of Health, which is ongoing. |
| **11. Construction of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE)**<br>The Ministry was allocated $40 million to construct/complete Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. The Ministry indicated that four ECCE Centres in highest demographic demand were expected to be completed in the 2017 fiscal year; and continue the construction of a fifth. These were:<br>1) Egypt Oasis ECCE – 99% completed<br>2) Marabella ECCE – 98% completed<br>3) Wallerfield ECCE – 98% completed | The Ministry should submit a status report to the Committee on the following:<br>• Progress made in completing the four (4) ECCE Centres by March 14, 2018. | There was no further progress on the construction of the schools; as such, the percentage completion remained the same. Details are as follows:<br>• Egypt Oasis ECCE – 99% completed<br>• Marabella ECCE – 98% completed<br>• Wallerfield ECCE – 98% completed<br>• Springvale SDMS ECCE – 98% completed<br>• Belle Vue ECCE – 11% completed<br><br>All the invoices pending to the contractor and consultant in the following three (3) schools were released and the contractor is expected to re-commence works. |

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| 4) Springvale SDMS ECCE – 98% completed<br>5) Belle Vue ECCE – 11% (construction to continue in fiscal 2017 with completion carded for fiscal 2018).<br><br>Additionally, the Ministry indicated that it will settle the final accounts owing for the St. Sylvans, Chinapoo and Cunjal ECCE Centres by the end of fiscal year 2017. | • Construction of the Belle Vue ECCE by March 14, 2018.<br>• Payment of the final accounts for the St. Sylvans, Chinapoo and Cunjal ECCE Centres by March 14, 2018. | • Egypt Oasis ECCE<br>• Springvale SDMS ECCE<br>• Belle Vue ECCE<br><br>The following reflects the status of payments of the following final accounts:<br>• St. Sylvans: Cabinet approval needed to settle final accounts<br>• Chinapoo ECCE Centre: Awaiting final accounts from Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL).<br>• 3) Cunjal ECCE Centre: Awaiting final accounts from Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL). |
| **12. No Allocation for the Construction of Secondary Schools**<br>The students of Parvati Girls' Hindu College, Shiva Boys' Hindu College and Siparia East Secondary were being temporarily housed at alternative locations pending the completion of their respective schools since 2000 (Parvati Girls' and Shiva Boys') and 2004 (Siparia East).<br><br>Additional evidence indicated that the Parvati Girls' Hindu College and the Shiva Boys' Hindu College were 72% and 74% completed whereas the Siparia East Secondary was 48% completed. In total, the Ministry requested $317,705,487.00 for the completion of the schools. However, due to financial constraints, allocations were not made. | The Ministry of Education should liaise with the Ministry of Finance in an effort to find the appropriate funding to complete these schools and report to the Committee on the progress made in allocating funding for these schools by March 14, 2018. | The status update on the aforementioned schools are as follows:<br>• Parvati Girls' Hindu College – 72% completed, no further progress as the works have been suspended by the contractor.<br>Cost of Completion: $81,533,502.77<br>• Shiva Boys' Hindu College – 74% completed, no further progress as the works have been suspended by the contractor and consultant.<br>Cost of Completion: $106,555,080.13<br>• Siparia East Secondary – 48% completed, no further progress as the contractor has been terminated by the Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL).<br>Cost of Completion: $125,241,914.71<br><br>The Ministry of Education is actively seeking to request substantial allocations in the upcoming budget for the respective schools in an attempt to make measurable progress in construction of these schools in the next fiscal year. |

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| **13. Placement of Returning Scholars**<br>The Committee noted that many returning scholars, especially in the field of medicine were having difficulties in obtaining internships. Completion of internships are mandatory for medical graduates to become eligible for House Officer positions. However, due to the fact that House Officer is a public hospital position, graduates were encouraged by other parties to not undertake the internship to become a House Officer. Additionally, contract positions in the Private Sector are very limited. Therefore, returning graduates sometimes opt to apply for a deferral of obligatory service to pursue a specialty (obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics).<br><br>Additional evidence indicated that as at July 27th 2017, approximately ninety-two (92) scholars reported to the Scholarship and Advanced Training Division (SATD) and nineteen (19) requested deferral of obligatory service or have had such requests approved. The Ministry of Health reported that one hundred and eight (108) scholars were placed as interns, so far this year, inclusive of those whom had deferred in previous years.<br>The Ministry assured that at the end of August 2017, the SATD would have contacted the remaining eighty-five (85) scholars who are yet to report in. | The Ministry of Health should submit a status report to the Committee on the placement of all medical graduates by March 14, 2018. | A Memorandum was sent to the Ministry of Health, forwarding this recommendation for their response. |
| | The Ministry of Education should submit a status report to the Committee on the placement of all returning graduates (excluding medical graduates) by March 14, 2018. | For the period October 2017 to March 2018 there were seventy three (73) scholars who reported to the Scholarship and Administration Training Division (SATD). Based on the hard copies of the Ministerial Minutes, fifty nine (59) scholars were placed. |

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| **14. Funds Recovered via Breach of Scholarship Obligations**<br>The Committee learnt that as at June 30 2017, the Ministry recovered $3 million of funds owed by scholarship recipients who were in breach of their obligations. As at July 26, 2017, one hundred and forty-four (144) persons were in breach of their obligations. | The Ministry of Education should submit a status report to the Committee on the recovery of all funds due to breach of scholarship obligations by March 14, 2018. | As at March 31, 2018 the Ministry recovered $5,685,585.03 from scholarship recipients who were in breach of their obligations. Approximately eighty (80) scholars were in Active Breach, fifty-two (52) were re-paying their scholarship loan indebtedness and one hundred and seventy five (175) were considered statute-barred, that is, (legal) action cannot be brought after the expiry of four (4) years from the date on which cause of actions accrued. |
| **15. Late Payment of Scholarship Allowances**<br>Evidence submitted to the Committee indicated that there were instances in which scholarship recipients based overseas received their monthly allowances late. This resulted in added financial stress and hardship to students. The Accounting Officer indicated that in an effort to alleviate this situation, the Ministry was considering paying scholarship recipients three months' allowances in advance. | The Ministry of Education should submit a report to the Parliament on whether the practice of paying scholarship recipients based overseas three months' worth of allowances in advance had commenced and whether this practice is sustainable by March 14, 2018. | Personal Maintenance Allowance (PMA) is paid during the period of scholarship. Scholars pursuing studies abroad are advised to open a Visa/Debit Electron Account at the Unit Trust Corporation (US Account). The PMA for these Scholars are paid quarterly and should be paid prior to the beginning of the quarter. These payments are therefore made on time, subject to the availability of releases and the approval of Comptroller of Accounts to print cheques. |
| **16. International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre**<br>In the course of the Committee's inquiry, it was learnt that the Ministry was allocated $4.5 million towards the building of the International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre. The Centre was intended to be a transformational project aimed at modernising the Cocoa Industry in Trinidad and Tobago. However, the Accounting Officer indicated that Cabinet approval for the project was yet to | The Ministry of Education should submit the Note to Cabinet for approval by January 31, 2018 and thereafter submit an update to Parliament on the status of the Cabinet Note by March 14, 2018. | The Cabinet Note regarding the proposal for the Establishment of the International Fine Cocoa Innovation Centre by the UWI, St. Augustine Campus was submitted to Cabinet on 24th July, 2017 and is currently before Cabinet. |

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| be obtained, as the Cabinet Note was not finalised. Additionally, the Accounting Officer could not determine when the Cabinet Note would be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. | | |