



ELEVENTH REPORT OF THE

THE COMMITTEE ON

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS

THIRD SESSION OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT

INQUIRY

Examination of the administration and expenditure of the
Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.



Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) is established by Standing Order 102 and 92 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. The Committee is mandated to consider and report to Parliament 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 and keeps 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 improvement of public administration.*

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Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
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Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	Member
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	Member

Committee Staff

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Publication

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Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee



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Vice Chairman



Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-
George
Chairman



Mr. Clarence Rambharat
Member



Mrs. Ayanna
Webster-Roy
Member



Mr. Wade Mark
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Ms. Jennifer Raffoul
Member



Mr. Daniel Dookie
Member



Brig. Gen. (Ret.)
Ancil Antoine
Member



Ms. Nicole Olivier
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the PAAC for the Eleventh Parliament contains the details of the examination of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. The objective of the Inquiry is to examine the following areas of administration and expenditure for the Financial Year 2018:

- Accountability and Transparency,
- Merger of the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications,
- Ministerial response to Third Report on Inventory Control,
- Ministerial response to Fourth Report on Internal Audit,
- Sub-Head 02 - Goods and Services,
- Sub-Head 09 Development Programme Consolidated Fund; and
- Infrastructure Development Fund.

In undertaking this examination, the Committee employed two (2) mechanisms: written submissions and public hearings. The Committee made a call for written submissions to stakeholders and thereafter focused on a review and analysis of the written submissions. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with the Ministry. The approach adopted by the Committee took into account concerns identified by the public and the written responses received. The Committee made recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in chapter 2.

It is however, noted that subsequent to the inquiry but prior to this report the Ministry was again separated on June 7, 2018 to form the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Public Administration. This is a source of concern for the Committee given the challenges faced as a consequence of the merger.

The Committee is particularly concerned about the issues regarding the maintenance and completion of pensions and gratuities records. The split in Ministries can potentially create further setbacks due to the lack of proper record keeping and the transfer and rotation of staff. Even though the recommendations may no longer apply to the merged Ministry at the date of the report, the Committee still thinks that the recommendations should be considered in any

future mergers. Where the context permits the recommendations shall apply and be responded to by both the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications.

1. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

The PAAC of the Eleventh Republican Parliament was established by the revised Standing Orders to:

- examine current public expenditure, thereby capturing the full budget cycle by providing Parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the budget; and
- conduct a real time examination of the expenditure of Ministries and Departments.

Membership

1. In the 11th Parliament the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 13, 2015 and Tuesday November 17, 2015 respectively.
2. By resolution of the Senate On November 3, 2017, Ms. Jennifer Raffoul was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Dhanayshar Mahabir.
3. By resolution of the House of Representatives on November 24, 2017, Brigadier General (Ret.) Ancil Antoine was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Maxie Cuffie.
4. By resolution of the Senate on November 28, 2017 Mr. Ronald Huggins was appointed as a Member of the Committee in lieu of Ms. Allyson Baksh.
5. Mr. Ronald Huggins ceased to be a Senator with effect from September 27, 2018.

Chairman and Vice-Chairman

By virtue of S.O. 109(6) and 99(6) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively, the Chairman of the Committee is the Speaker. At its First Meeting held on January 27 2016, Dr. Lackram Bodoë was elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Quorum

In order to exercise the powers granted to it by the House, the Committee was required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum. A quorum of three (3) Members, inclusive of the Chairman

or Vice-Chairman, with representatives from both Houses, was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

METHODOLOGY

Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday November 16, 2017, the Committee agreed to commence a follow-up inquiry into the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

Review of Documents

The Committee deliberated on the following documents, namely:

- i. MPAC's Ministerial Response to the Third Report;
- ii. MPAC's Ministerial response to the Fourth Report; and
- iii. MPAC's Statements of Expenditure as at October 2017.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outline the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC for its inquiry into the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications:

- i. Identification of entity to be examined - MPAC;
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
- iii. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposal by the Committee;
- iv. Request for Written Response sent to the Ministry on January 31, 2018. Responses received from the Ministry on February 15, 2018.
- v. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the Ministry. The Issues Paper identified and summarised matters of concern in the responses provided by the Ministry;
- vi. Based on the responses received and the issues identified, the Committee agreed to have a Public Hearing. The relevant witnesses were invited to attend and provide evidence on February 28, 2018.
- vii. Following the Public Hearing, a request for further details was sent to the Ministry on March 6, 2018. The additional information was received on March 20, 2018.

2. ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUES

1. Merging of the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Public Administration

I. Staffing Issues

The Committee questioned the Ministry on its ability to handle the merging of the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications. The Ministry explained that it experienced issues with delays in approvals and/or authorisations from the Service Commissions Department (SCD) regarding the transfer of employees from the two former Ministries to the new Ministry. However, as at the date of the Public Hearing officials acknowledged that some progress was being made by the SCD. Given the June 7, 2018 separation of the two Ministries, the Committee is of the view that new challenges will be experienced in relation to the transfer of staff to the newly separated Ministries.

Recommendations:

- *The SCD should provide a status update on the progress made for the transfer of staff to the newly formed Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications.*
- *The SCD should develop standard procedures for approvals and authorisations of staff in instances in which Ministries are merged or realigned. A document outlining these procedures should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2018.*

II. Cultural Challenges

The Committee learnt of the cultural challenges experienced by the Ministry. The operations of the Ministry were hampered by:

- record keeping;

- communications and accounting;
- punctuality; and
- lack of respect for the chain of command.

The Committee sought to determine whether the cultural challenges identified were due to bad practices or the lack of proper training. The Ministry explained that the cultural challenges in relation to the merging of the two Ministries were because each Ministry developed different ethics and values over time and there existed varying degrees of compliance with public service policies and regulations. The Permanent Secretary further explained that the varying approaches to ethics, values and abiding by necessary policies and regulations existed across the entire public service which created inconsistency throughout the service.

Recommendations:

- *The Public Service Academy (PSA) must develop a training programme exclusive to staff of merged Ministries to reinforce uniformity in ethics, values and compliance with public service policies and regulations.*
- *A status update on the development of training programmes for merged Ministries should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2019.*
- *The PSA should develop continuous training to familiarise public servants in all Ministries and Departments with the “Civil Service Regulations Chapter XI Code of Conduct”. An annual report should be submitted to Parliament at the end of every calendar year including information on the number of persons trained, the rank of the persons trained and remarks or identifiable improvements made.*

2. Ministerial Response to the Third Report of the PAAC

I. Asset Management System

The Committee questioned the status of the Public Administration's branch of the Ministry, Asset Management System and was informed that it had not advanced beyond the pilot phase. This resulted from the re-assignment of the dedicated Human Resources to an ongoing project on inventory records which was in the development phase. The Committee was of the view that one project should not be sacrificed for the other.

Based on additional information submitted by the Ministry, it was noted that this project was conceptualised prior to the Ministries being split on June 12, 2018. The Asset Management system was being implemented at the Ministry of Public Administration's Head Office and the Government Printery. Implementation of system at the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago (NATT) was completed.¹

Status of each sub-project:

- a. Asset Management System (MPA)
 - Project started on June 26, 2018. Estimated end date – March 31, 2019. Tagging, the final phase of the project was commenced on October 30, 2018.
- b. Asset Management System (Government Printery)
 - Project started on June 26, 2018. Estimated End Date – December 1, 2018
- c. Asset Management System (NATT)
 - Project started on July 13, 2018. Estimated end date – August 22, 2018

Recommendations:

- *The Ministry of Public Administration should take immediate measures to ensure the asset management system be developed and implemented and report on the measures designed and the status of the project by January 31, 2019.*
- *The Ministry of Public Administration should approach the SCD to fill existing vacancies. In the interim, the Ministry should consider using*

¹ As at June 12, 2018, the Government Printery and the NATT are Divisions of the Ministry of Communications.

short term employment arrangements to ensure continued progress with the Asset Management System.

- *The Ministry should submit a report to Parliament on the status of the initiatives being taken to fill the staff shortage by January 31, 2019.*

II. Tagging of Inventory

The Ministry indicated that inventory tagging at its Head Office and satellite units was completed manually by clerical staff in each Division maintaining inventory as there was no central Inventory Management Unit. The Ministry had plans to convert to an electronic system in the future, as the proposed staff was occupied with software development in Archives and the Project Management Information System.

The Committee learnt that the accuracy and timeliness of the inventory registers were verified by the Internal Audit Unit which conducted site visits to the various Divisions to determine whether the Ministry's inventory registers at satellites units were accurate and up-to-date. The Unit ensured that records were maintained and coincided with what was submitted to the Head Office. Site Visits ranged from monthly to quarterly to more remote locations. The Committee was informed that while some discrepancies were noted, these were minor and the causes were identified and corrected.

Recommendations:

- *The Ministry should submit a report to the Parliament on the status of the establishment and staffing of the Inventory Management Unit by January 31, 2019.*
- *The Ministry should provide a status update on progress made in converting to an electronic tagging system by January 31, 2019.*

3. Ministerial Response to the Fourth Report of the PAAC

I. Training Programmes

In its written submission, the Ministry indicated that on average 3,000 public servants were trained annually. For the most part evaluation of the effectiveness of the

programme is limited to feedback at the end of a session. However, officials acknowledged the need to strengthen the evaluation mechanism by assessing on-the-job application.

The Committee sought to ascertain the impact of training in Customer Service Delivery. The Committee was informed that the Ministry adopted several strategies to boost the impact of its training programmes. It was indicated that for fiscal 2018, training in Customer Service Delivery would be provided. The intended programme would incorporate a 'train the trainer' initiative to allow the trained to return to their respective Ministries and conduct Customer Service training.

The Committee learnt that the Ministry embarked on online training which extended the reach of training provided to the public servants. A pilot project of online training started through the Strategic Human Resources Management Division. Officials highlighted that the full expansion of online training would require additional funding.

The Committee sought to understand the defining characteristics of an ideal public servant and to determine whether the PSA played any role in terms of providing training based on this definition. The Ministry indicated that a public servant is a person who is on the public service establishment in order to facilitate the provision of services to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. A public officer is guided by regulations, policies and practices to ensure effective and efficient performance of duties and responsibilities. Officials indicated that orientation was conducted by individual Ministries and Departments should include an understanding of Public Service values, Public Service attitudes and the code of conduct. The officials also indicated that the PSA played a role in assisting Ministries to develop their respective orientation/induction programmes. Additionally, the PSA conducted training for all categories of staff including Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries. Training included regulations and policies relevant to the Public Service such as financial management procedures.

Recommendations:

- *The PSA should develop and submit by January 10, 2019 a training schedule for public servants for fiscal 2019 identifying specific programmes with objectives, target groups, intended delivery dates and post-training evaluation plans.*
- *The Public Service Academy must provide a status update to the Parliament on the roll out of its online training initiative by January 31, 2019.*
- *The Public Service Academy should develop a standard training programme with an implementation schedule on public service values, attitudes and code of conduct with specific emphasis on “Civil Service Regulations Chapter XI Code of Conduct”.*
- *The PSA should routinely monitor and evaluate the delivery of the orientation programmes by the various Ministries and Departments to consistency of training.*

4. Fiscal Year 2017-2018

I. Contract Employment

The Committee queried the reliance on Contract Employment and the efforts being made to update the Public Service establishment. Ministry officials spoke of plans to make a “public service-wide change” in which key support areas such as ICT, Communication, Facilities Management, Programme Management, Procurement and Legal will eventually be placed on the permanent establishment. .

Observations:

- *The Committee notes the efforts made by the Ministry to reduce the reliance on Contract Employment within the Public Service.*

Recommendation:

- *The Ministry should submit a report to Parliament on the progress made to update the permanent establishment for each Ministry and Department to include the key support areas as identified by January 31, 2019.*

II. Recruitment of Tertiary level Graduates

The Committee sought clarification on the Outreach Programmes undertaken by the Ministry, specifically programmes to inform tertiary level graduates of the vacancies within the Public Service. Officials stated that it did not have such a programme rather its outreach programmes focused on providing general information on the Public Service, and the various Ministries and Departments; and other public sector agencies. The Committee learnt that the Ministry was considering partnering with the Ministry of Education to target tertiary institutions with the aim of attracting persons who may be interested in entering the Public Service.

Recommendations:

- *The Ministry should develop a tertiary level recruitment programme designed to attract suitably qualified young persons to the public service as a career based on the periodic analysis of the needs of the Ministry. A report of the progress made on the programme design and implementation should be submitted to Parliament by January 31, 2019.*

5. Auditor General Report 2016 and 2017

I. ICT Strategic Plan and ICT Security Policy

At the Public Hearing the Committee questioned the Ministry on the issues identified in the 2016² Auditor General's Report. The Auditor General (AG) reported that the monitoring and oversight of the IT function in the Public Service by the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications was not evident at the entities which were examined by the Auditor General's Department (AGD). The IT Units appeared to operate without clear direction and defined goals and objectives. The AG further stated that the lack of ICT plans and ICT Strategic Plans would result in complications in future.

Officials indicated that the Ministry had since met with the AGD regarding its findings and a report was submitted. One of the initiatives to improve the Ministry's oversight

² The Auditor General Report 2016

role will be the filling of contract positions to provide monitoring and evaluation of IT Units across the public service.

The Committee learnt that the National Information and Communication Technology (NICT) plan was being finalised and once approved it will become the policy and framework to be adopted by each Ministry. Relatedly, it was stated that funding for the Ministry's ICT Plan was hinged on the approval of the NICT. It is expected based on information received from the Ministry of Planning and Development that funding would be provided later in the fiscal year. The Committee questioned the lack of an ICT Security Policy in light of the move to provide online services. The Ministry assured that the policy was receiving the active attention by iGovTT.

Subsequent to the Public Hearing the Auditor General's Report 2017 was laid on May 4, 2018 in the House of Representatives and May 1, 2018 in the Senate. The AG 2017 Report stated as follows:

- i. The Draft National ICT Plan was approved by Cabinet. The draft plan at the time of reporting was being revised for validation and subsequent submission to Cabinet for approval by the end of March/ early April 2018.
- ii. Public Management Consulting Division and the Personnel Department conducted an exercise in December 2016 – January 2017 on the standardisation of ICT positions. The Draft Note was being finalised and was expected to be completed by end of March 2018.

Observations:

- *The Committee notes the progress made by the Ministry in developing an ICT Plan. A copy of the plan should be submitted to the Parliament by January 31 2019.*

Recommendations:

- *A progress report on the ICT Security Policy should be submitted to the Parliament by January 31, 2019.*

- *The Ministry should provide a status report on the filling of vacancies to support its monitoring and evaluation of IT Units across the public service by January 31, 2019.*
- *The Ministry should provide a status report on the Cabinet's approval of the standardisation of ICT positions by of January 31, 2019.*

CONCLUSION

During the Third Session of the Eleventh Parliament, the PAAC conducted an examination into the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications with particular reference to the Accountability and Transparency, Recurrent Expenditure, Development Programme – Consolidated Fund, Infrastructure Development Fund, recommendations from the PAAC's Third Report on Inventory Control, Fourth Report on Internal Audit and the Ministry's Monthly Expenditure Report for the period October – December 2017. During the course of the examination which consisted of written submissions and a Public Hearing, the Committee followed up on a number of issues from the responses received from the Ministry. Issues arising from the merging of the Ministry, the Auditor General's Report 2016 and the implementation of recommendations of the Committee were discussed. The Committee also delved into issues relating to outreach to tertiary level students, reliance of contract employment, training for Public Officers and the lack of ICT Security Policy and ICT Strategic Plan.

Additionally, the separation of Ministry in June, 2018, is a source of concern for the Committee given the issues which arose due to the merger such as the maintenance of assets and the processing of pension and leave. Any progress that was made since the realignment in 2015 was possibly undone and a period of adjustment may be needed. The Committee is of the view that every effort should be made to mitigate any adverse effects of the change while ensuring that both Ministries continue to function effectively and efficiently.

The adoption of the Committee's proposed recommendations will lead to greater accountability, transparency and value for money in the use of public funds and greater efficiencies within the Ministry. Moreover, the Committee intends to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations proposed in this Report.

This Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

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Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Chairman

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Vice-Chairman

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APPENDIX I

Questions to Ministry

Questions submitted to Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

Accountability

Questions:

1. How does the Accounting Officer (AO) ensure there is an appropriate framework in place to provide him/her with the necessary assurance and controls?
2. What is the process used by the AO to measure outcomes, evaluate performance and demonstrate value for money?
3. How does the AO determine whether projects and programmes are feasible and provide value for money at the start and throughout life of these projects and programmes?
4. How does the AO determine whether the framework for accountability, transparency and value for money at the Ministry is working?
5. Are there systems in place to determine whether this framework is reliable and efficient?
6. What is process for dealing with failure or underperformance in programmes and projects?
7. How does the AO provide meaningful oversight of state enterprises, statutory bodies and other agencies receiving funding from the Ministry?
8. How does the AO ensure accountability and value for money, transparency in satellite centres and Divisions of the Ministries/Departments?
9. Is there a framework for conflict of interest? If yes, please identify.
10. What measures are used to prevent conflicts of interest?
11. Have any strategies been implemented to assess the Ministry's expenditure?
12. Given the current economic climate, has any consideration been given to the employment of cost savings controls?

Issues Arising from the merging of both Ministries

The Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications was merged into one Ministry on March 17, 2016.

Questions

1. What challenges has been faced since the merging of both Ministries?

In the 2014 Auditor General's Report the Auditor General stated that: "There was no clear separation of accounting records, responsibilities and staff. As at 6th September

2013, the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs was renamed Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and a new entity, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources was created. Financial reporting for the new Ministry began during the financial year 2014. Accounting services were shared between these 2 Ministries and also with the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. This resulted in numerous errors in the accounting records and posed challenges for the audit. An example is referred at paragraph”.³

2. What challenges has the Ministry faced in conducting audits since the merger?
3. Are records accessed easily? If no, provide the reasons for this?
4. Describe record keeping of the Ministry since the merger.
5. With reference to the issue of paying pensions to employees, are these records accurate and up-to-date since the merger?
6. In terms of fixtures and furniture’s being removed due to relocation of both Ministries, what steps were taken in deciding which items were retained over the other?
 - i. Were any items disposed of?
 - ii. What was the procurement process used in purchasing and disposing of furniture’s or fixtures?

Ministerial Responses

Updated responses on the Third and Fourth Reports were received from the Ministry. The following are questions arising from the response

Third Report on Inventory Control - Inventory Control Management

Asset Management System

Questions:

1. Provide a status update on the performance of the Asset Management System (an Open Source solution) as at January 2018.
2. Has an assessment been conducted on the Asset Management System to determine its capability to handle other types of current assets? If yes, when? If no, why not?

³ The Auditor General’s website: Auditor General’s Report 2014, accessed on January 24, 2018: <http://auditorgeneral.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Auditor%20General%27s%20Report%202014.pdf>

3. When was this system evaluated to determine its compliance with Financial Regulations?
4. Has the stakeholder involvement and rollout plan been finalised? If yes, when? If no, why not?
5. Was the Software Solution made available and accessible to the Ministry? If, yes when?
6. Has the Ministry devised appropriate processes and mobilised suitable personnel to initiate and operate the system?

Tagging of assets

Questions:

1. Are all assets tagged at the Ministry? If no, why not and when will it be done?
2. Provide a list of all assets tagged at the fourteen (14) of Ministry's twenty-two (22) locations:
 - Printery
 - PRES D
 - NICT
 - PMCD
 - Information Division (Morvant)
 - 8 StarrTT access centres:
 - Penal
 - Marac
 - Guayaguayare
 - Cumana
 - Barackpore
 - Sisters Road
 - Waterloo
 - Navet
 - Federation Park
3. Has the Ministry completed the tagging of Furniture and Furnishings at the Head Office? If no, what are the reason for the delays?
4. State the form of tagging used. Are issues faced with this form of tagging?
5. Is the Inventory Unit fully staffed?

6. State the total number of employees in the Inventory Control Unit.

Fourth Report on Internal Audit

Training and Staffing of the IAU

Questions:

1. Has the Ministry filled the vacant positions in its Internal Audit Unit?
2. Are the staff of the Internal Audit Unit properly trained?
3. What training has staff received within the last three months?
4. Has the Ministry completed the review on its Organisational Structure?
5. Has the Ministry acquired the services of administrative staff to assist the Internal Audit Unit? If no, what are the reasons for this?
6. Provide a list of the owners of the properties that are earmarked to be rented or leased by the Ministry?

Issues Arising from Recurrent Expenditure Allocation

Sub-Head: Goods and Services - \$723,939,700

001 General Administration

Sub-item: 08 Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage

Questions:

1. How will the decrease from **\$30,450,000** in fiscal year 2017 (Revised), to **\$20,000,000** in fiscal 2018; an eventual reduction of **\$10,450,000** affect the Ministry's ability to fund items of expenditure under this sub-item?
2. How many properties are leased or rented and what is the monthly cost of each of these properties?

Sub-item: 10 Office Stationery and Supplies

Questions:

There was an increase in the sum of \$680,000.00 for Office Stationery and Supplies between fiscal years 2017 and 2018.

1. What additional expenditure does the Ministry anticipate under this sub-item for fiscal year 2018?
2. What are the reasons for the drastic increase of \$680,000 in just one year for this sub-item?

Sub-item: 12 Materials and Supplies

Questions:

There was an increase in the sum of \$1,230,000.00 for Materials and Supplies between fiscal years 2017 and 2018.

1. What additional expenditure does the Ministry anticipate under this sub-item for fiscal year 2018?
2. How does the Ministry ensure value for money when procuring materials and supplies?
3. Provide a list identifying all Materials and Supplies expected to be purchased for fiscal 2018.

Sub-Item: 16 Contract Employment

Questions:

1. What is the total number of persons employed on contract at the Ministry?
2. What contract positions are expected to be created for the 2017/2018 fiscal year?
3. State the positions of person on contract employment?
4. What are the positions of the persons hired?
5. How many new persons were hired on contract for the fiscal year 2017?
6. How many additional persons were hired or are expected to be hired in fiscal 2018?
7. How is the performance of the persons hired on contract measured?
8. How does the Ministry ensure value for money with contract employment?
9. Are there any measurable or tangible benefits that can be identified as a result of the work of Contract employment?
 - i. How do citizens benefit from the employment of contract officers?
10. Have any attempts been made to update the public service establishment, to reduce the reliance on contract employment?

Sub-Item: 22-Short Term Employment

Questions:

1. What type of work is done by short-term employees?

2. Is short-term employment done on a contract basis as well?
3. 'Short- term employment should not exceed six (6) months'. Have any of these persons been employed in excess of (6) months on a consistent basis?
4. How does the Ministry measure the performance of these persons?
5. What are the tangible benefits of this type of employment?
6. What are the direct benefits to citizens that can be identified from the employment of these persons?

Sub-item: 37 Janitorial Services

Questions:

1. What is the reason(s) for the **increase** in the allocation for this sub-item in fiscal year 2018 as compared to fiscal year 2017?
2. Is there a system for the procurement of janitorial services?
3. What is the process of selection for the provider(s)?
4. What determines the allocation for janitorial services?

003 National Information and Communication Technology Centre (ICT) Secretariat

Sub-Item: 23 Fees

Questions:

1. What do these funds apply to?
2. How did the Ministry identify the need for this? Was it through any statistical data or study?
3. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the AO carries out regular reviews and checks with which to assess and manage these funds?
4. Are checks and balances carried out by the AO? Provide details.
5. What challenges and good practices exist, related to the financing of this sub-item?
6. How often are internal audit reports for items considered under this sub-item produced to ensure that there is some evidence of transparency and accountability? Provide a copy of the latest report.
7. Have any strategies been implemented to assess the Ministry's expenditure and the potential to reduce the cost related to this sub-item?

Sub-Item: 28- Other Contracted Services

Questions:

1. In light of the \$99,991,370 increase in allocation for fiscal 2018, what changes are anticipated for this sub-item?
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be procured in fiscal year 2018.
3. What is the procurement policy for obtaining goods and services under this sub-item?
4. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in monitoring expenditure for this sub-item?
5. Are Internal Audit reports produced to ensure there is evidence of transparency and accountability under this sub-item?
6. Are there appropriate mechanisms to monitor expenditure under this sub-item Other Contracted Services? If yes, provide a copy of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure.

005 Property and Real Estate Management Services

Sub-item: 21 Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings

Questions:

1. How does the Division plan to utilise the allocation received?
2. What systems are in place to review, prioritize and monitor the repair and maintenance of buildings?
3. Are Maintenance and Repair works carried out by staff? If no, what evaluation process is used for the selection and approval of contractors for same?
4. What buildings are being repaired and maintained under this sub-item?
5. What controls are in place to monitor the expenditure for this sub-item? Please provide detailed list.
6. What is the role of the Internal Auditor in the procurement function for goods and services under this sub-item?

Sub-item: 37 Janitorial Services

Questions:

1. What is the reason(s) for the **increase** in the allocation for this sub-item in fiscal year 2018 as compared to fiscal year 2017?

2. Is there a system for the procurement of janitorial services?
3. What is the process of selection for the provider(s)?
4. What determines the allocation for janitorial services?

Sub-item: 43 Security Services

Questions:

1. What changes can be expected for this sub-item in fiscal year 2018?
2. Is there a system for the procurement of security services?
3. What determines the allocation for security services?
4. What is the process of selection for the provider(s)?

007 Public Service Academy

Sub-Item: 17 Training

Questions:

1. Does the Ministry have a Strategic Plan for training?
2. What are the major training objectives identified by the Ministry?
3. Is this allocation sufficient to achieve defined objectives?
4. Does the training improve the value and efficiency of service to the public? If so, what data is used to show that it does?

011 Transfers to State Enterprises

Sub-item: 03 Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG)

Questions:

1. The allocation for Caribbean New Media Group decreased by \$1,500,000 in fiscal year 2018. How would this decrease in allocation affect the work and performance of the Group?
2. What good or services were specifically cut from CNMG
3. How does the Permanent Secretary provide oversight of the Caribbean new Media Group?
4. How often are audits conducted under this sub-item to ensure that there is some evidence of transparency and accountability? Provide a copy of the latest audit report.

09 Development Programme Consolidated Fund

005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services

06 General Public Services

A. Administrative Services

022 Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme - \$7,758,000

Questions:

1. Provide the following details for this programme in the 2018 financial year:
 - a. Programme start date;
 - b. Total cost;
 - c. Total cost to date;
 - d. Programme expected completion date;
 - e. Initial cost and the current revised cost; and
 - f. Programme expected outcomes.
2. How would this programme benefit the Public Sector long term?
3. How is this programme expected to improve the level and quality of service to the public?

062 Strengthening Internal Communication Capacity Sharepoint - \$500,000

Questions:

1. Briefly explain the benefits of this project?
2. Are there systems in place to ensure effective compliance, proper management of assets and adequate performance for these projects? If yes, provide a detailed description.
3. Provide the following details for this project in the 2018 financial year:
 - a. Project start date;
 - b. Total cost;
 - c. Project expected completion date; and
 - d. Project outcomes.

APPENDIX II

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outlines the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC:

- i. Identification of entity to be examined;
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - Background;
 - Overview of Expenditure
 - Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
- iii. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposals by the Committee and when approved, questions are forwarded to the entity for written responses;
- iv. Issue of requests for written comment from the public are made via Parliament's website, social media accounts, newspaper and advertisements;
- v. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entities. The Issues Paper identifies and summarises any matters of concern in the responses provided by the entity or received from stakeholders and the general public;
- vi. Review of the responses provided and the Issues Paper by the Committee;
- vii. Conduct of a site visit to obtain a first-hand perspective of the implementation of a project (optional);
- viii. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions and the site visit (if required). If there is need for a public hearing, the relevant witnesses will be invited to attend and provide evidence. There is usually no need to examine the entity in public if:
 - ix. the Committee believes the issues have little public interest; or
 - x. the Committee believes that the written responses provided are sufficient and no further explanation is necessary.
- xi. Issue of written request to the entity for further details should the Committee require any additional information after the public hearing.

- xii. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.

APPENDIX III

Minutes of Meetings

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE –
THIRD SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-SECOND MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 28,
2018 AT 1:33 P.M.
IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS (EAST) MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 6 AND THE J. HAMILTON
MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, TOWER D, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT,
INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE,
1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN.**

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	-	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	-	Member
Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Ancil Antoine	-	Member
Ms. Jennifer Raffoul	-	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacob	-	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Brian Lucio	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Absent were:

Ms. Nicole Olivierre	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Ronald Huggins	-	Member (Excused)
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	-	Member

**EXAMINATION OF THE EXPENDITURE AND INTERNAL CONTROLS OF THE MINISTRY
OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:30 p.m., in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room, Mezzanine Floor.
- 6.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Joan Mendez	-	Permanent Secretary
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Mr. Claudelle Mc Kellar	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Catherine Romain	-	Executive Director, NALIS
Mr. Charles Bobb- Semple	-	Chief Executive Officer (Ag.) iGovTT
Mrs. Shelley Sultanti- Maharaj	-	Coordinator, Property and Real Estate Services

- 6.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, members of the media and the public.
- 6.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were then exchanged.
- 6.5 The following issues arose from the examination of the Expenditure and Internal Controls of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications:

Accountability and Transparency

1. The number of Divisional heads reporting to the Accounting Officer (AO);
2. The submission of Quarterly Reports;
3. Staffing of the Internal Audit Unit;
4. Existence of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at the Ministry;
5. Clarification on the Project Review Board and its effectiveness;
6. Risk Management and the existence of a Risk Policy;
7. The effects of the current economic climate on the expenditure of the Ministry;
8. Cost saving measures undertaken by the Ministry;
9. The mandate of the Strategic Services Division;

Merger of the Ministries

1. The expenditure for the first quarter of the fiscal year;
2. The cultural challenges facing the Ministry and the Public Service Academy's role in addressing these challenges;
3. Issues with the delay in obtaining authorisations and approvals for employees from the Service Commissions Department (SCD);
4. The number of employees that awaiting authorisations and approvals from the SCD;

Ministerial Response to the Third Report of the PAAC

1. The status of the Asset Management system;
2. The quantum of resources needed for the Asset Management pilot exercise;
3. Tagging of inventory since the merger of both Ministries;
4. The challenges faced by the Ministry when tagging all inventory;
5. The frequency of auditing inventory records;

Ministerial Response to the Fourth Report of the PAAC

1. The status of the Strategic Plan sent to Cabinet for approval;
2. Evaluation of training programmes provided by the Public Service Academy (PSA);

Fiscal 2017-2018 Expenditure

1. Status of the Public Sector Preparation Programme;
2. Proposed changes to reduce the reliance of Contract Employment;
3. Measures implemented to reduce the level of short-term employment;
4. The number of persons employed in excess of 6 months;
5. The renewal and approval of contracts;
6. The status of Cabinet approval of the Ministry's Organisational Structure;
7. The recruitment of undergraduates and graduates at the Ministry;
8. Collaboration with the University of Trinidad and Tobago for the recruitment of staff;
9. Public awareness outreach conducted by the Ministry;
10. The status and expenditure to date for the Strengthening Internal Communication Capacity Sharepoint Project;
11. The status of the repair and maintenance of the Siparia Administrative Complex sewer system;
12. The status of the replacement of twelve (12) condensing units at the Siparia Administrative Complex;
13. The outcomes and timeline for the Next Generation Project;
14. Landscaping services conducted by the Ministry;
15. Renegotiations of rental rates paid by the Ministry;
16. The effects of the limited training provided to public servants by the Public Service Academy;
17. The methods used to derive benefits and conduct evaluations post-training by the PSA;
18. Innovative strategies developed to expand the reach of the training provided;

Auditor General Report 2016

1. The impact of the lack of an IT Security Policy on the Public Service;
2. The status of an IT Strategic Plan;

General

1. The role of contract employment in the Public Service;
2. The definition of a Public Servant;
3. Culture as an organisational issue within the Public Service;
4. Pension and Leave records at the Ministry;
5. Details of the project undertaken by the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance to reform the pensions and leave process;

6. The move from a labour driven Public Service to a ICT driven Public Service;
7. The introduction and benefits of Mystery Shoppers at public offices;
8. The success of e-TAX;
9. Expenditure for the Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG);
10. The 2017 Audited Financial Statements of CNMG;
11. The number of warranty and legal claims against CNMG;

6.6 The Chairman thanked officials for attending and they were excused.

[Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission of the witnesses]

ADJOURNMENT

- 9.1 The Chairman indicated that the Committee's next meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday March 14, 2018 at 1:30 p.m.**, when the Committee would continue its inquiry into the Administration of Disaster Relief in Trinidad and Tobago.
- 9.2 There being no other business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.
- 9.2 The adjournment was taken at 5:20 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

March 13, 2018

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED

**RE THE EXPENDITURE AND INTERNAL CONTROLS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

Merger of both Ministries

Questions:

1. What initiatives have been undertaken to receive and recover misplaced records and files?
2. Can the Ministry indicate when the exercise to integrate all files will be completed?
3. What methods were used to class items as “unserviceable”?
 - i. State the unserviceable items.
 - ii. When will the list of unserviceable items be completed?
4. Has the Ministry been able to source up-to-date records from the previous Ministries?
5. How many records/files remain inaccessible?
6. Presently what is the status of employees who are unauthorised/unapproved?

Ministerial Response to the Fourth Report of the PAAC

Questions:

1. Is the Clerk Typist sufficient to handle the administrative work of the Internal Audit Unit?

Issues Arising from Recurrent Expenditure Allocation

Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage

Questions:

1. In light of the high rental costs incurred, has the Ministry sought to purchase a property?
2. Has the Ministry considered renting/leasing more economically affordable properties as a cost saving measure?
3. Has the Ministry considered the possibility of the rent-to-own option for a property?

Short-term Employment

Questions:

1. State the number of persons who are on continuous contracts in excess of six months short-term.
2. What strategies are used to reduce contract employment at the Ministry?

005 Property and Real Estate Management Services

Questions:

1. What are the reasons for the acquisition of the 39 units?
2. How has this affected the Division?
3. What tasks are to be completed on the 39 units?
4. What is the time period for maintaining these units?

Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings

Questions:

1. Provide a breakdown of the outstanding commitments.
2. What is the sum of the reimbursable payment to UDeCOTT?
3. Who monitors the sign-off of job tickets from the supervising officer?
4. Who monitors the supervising officer to ensure transparency and accountability in the supervision of work?

Security Services

Questions:

1. In the light of the conclusion of contracts, how are the various locations of the Ministry secured?
2. Who currently secures the Ministry's various locations?
3. When will the implementation of new contractual agreements be completed?
4. When did the existing contracts expire?
5. How will the completion of contractual agreements assist in developing a better management system and save costs?

007 Public Service Academy

Training

Questions:

1. Is priority given to individuals who never accessed training by PSA as opposed those who have?
2. Has the PSA considered other measures to assist in fulfilling the its training objectives?
3. What interventions does the PSA plan to undertake to determine the impact on performance and service to citizens?
4. When will the PSA conduct an evaluation of its activities to determine the impact of service delivery?

062 Strengthening Internal Communication Capacity Sharepoint

Questions:

1. Provide further details on the cost to date and the status of the Strengthening Internal Communication Capacity Sharepoint project.

Issues Arising from Auditor General Report 2016

Questions:

1. Has the Ministry submitted all required documents to the Auditor General as at January 31, 2018? If no, state the reasons for the delay.
2. Has the Ministry addressed the issues stated in the last two Auditor General Reports? If no, what are the reasons for the delay?

3. Has the Ministry liaised with the Ministry of Finance to develop and implement guidelines and procedures for the proper disposal of IT equipment including storage media?
4. Has the Ministry actioned the other recommendations proposed by the Auditor General?

General Questions:

1. Provide details on the Public Sector Preparation Programme.
2. State the intended date for the submission of the financial statements of the Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG).
3. State the number of warranty and legal claims against CNMG in fiscal 2016.
4. Provide the percentage of the Ministry's allocation expended for the period October 2017 – January 2018.

Appendix IV

Verbatim

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE TWENTIETH PUBLIC MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS (EAST), (IN CAMERA), AND THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2018, AT 2.30 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Miss Jennifer Raffoul	Member
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Mr. Robert Huggins	Member
Miss Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Miss Melissa Ramkissoon	Member

Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

Ms. Joan Mendez	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Claudelle Mc Kellar	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ms. Catherine Romain	Executive Director, NALIS
Mr. Charles Bobb-Semple	Chief Executive Officer (Ag.) iGovTT
Mrs. Shelley Sultanti- Maharaj	Coordinator, Property and Real Estate Services Division

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone, I wish to welcome the officials of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and their agencies, members of the media and members of the listening public.

I am Brigid Annisette-George, Chairman of the Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations has a mandate 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 and keeps 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 improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this 20th public meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee for the Eleventh Parliament is to examine the expenditure and internal controls of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications as it pertains to the following: accountability and transparency; Subhead 02, Goods and Services; Subhead 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Subhead 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Subhead 09, Development Programme/Consolidated Fund; Infrastructure Development Fund; the Third Report of the Committee on Inventory Control in the Public Service; the Fourth Report of the Committee on Internal Audit in the Public Service and monthly expenditure record for the period October to December 2017.

This Committee is desirous of hearing from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to discover any challenges being faced. The Committee hopes that the meeting will be fruitful and provide workable solutions to improve the expenditure and internal controls of the Ministry.

This meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel 11, Radio 105.5 FM and the Parliament YouTube channel ParlView. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's enquiry by email Parl101@tpparliament.org, [facebook.com\tpparliament](https://www.facebook.com/tpparliament), [Twitter@tpparliament](https://twitter.com/tpparliament).

I now will invite the representatives of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to introduce themselves. I start with Madam PS.

[Introductions made]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Might I ask the members of the Committee to introduce themselves starting with my extreme right.

[Introductions made]

The Committee is ably assisted by its Secretary Miss Keiba Jacob, its Assistant Secretary, Miss Sheranne Samuel and we have also assisting us our two research assistants, Mr. Lucio and Miss Nunes.

Madam PS, may I now invite you to make a brief opening statement with respect to your Ministry.

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Chair.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Communications is the central agency with the responsibility for improving service delivery to citizens. Much of our work occurs in what is known as the back end, through the strengthening of the human resource management system, the structures, training of public officers, the development of human resource management policies and practices. We also improve business processes and public service delivery and infrastructure, such as office accommodation and ICTs.

With regard to the information portfolio, we have oversight for freedom of information and data protection along with the provision of various information and communication services through NALIS, Archives, Government Printery, iGovTT, CNMG and TATT.

Good governance is not only about the service delivered, and how timely it was and whether it satisfied the citizen's need. The entire chain is part of delivery, and in public administration value for money, transparency and accountability all play key roles. We are always aware that what we do and how we do things are equally important.

The Ministry recognizes that systems built on transparency and accountability promote trust in public service agencies and public officials. This Ministry is committed to ensuring that public resources are used in an accountable way, and that decisions and public dealings are not only transparent, but based on integrity and due diligence and consistent with policies and laws.

The Ministry manages its assets both physical and human in a manner to ensure best value for money, and elimination of waste of public resources. In the spirit of

transparency and accountability, my team and I stand ready to answer this Committee's questions into our operations. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam PS. I would just like to start off our conversation with a statement coming out of your own statement, which I think finds favour with the Committee in terms of systems built on transparency and accountability to promote trust. Therefore I wanted to jump off the conversation with respect to looking at accountability and transparency, and particularly in light of your own written submissions.

In looking at your written submissions, I have seen that in the discharge of your responsibility as accounting officer you depend on your Internal Audit Unit. I wanted to find out firstly in respect of the number of divisional heads who report to you.

Ms. Mendez: Certainly, thank you very much. Yes I am dependent on my internal audit which usually at the beginning of the year would produce their work programme, but who report to me would be my Director of Public Service Academy, the Coordinator of Property, Real Estate and Services Division, the Executive Director of the national ICT Division, who has not assumed duty as yet, but we do hope soon, the ICT Director, the Government Communications Specialist, the Director of Information Division, Director of Finance and Accounts and certainly the Auditor II.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. So that would mean there are eight divisional heads who are to report to you, but in fact there are seven reporting right now. Would I be correct in saying that?

Ms. Mendez: I omitted the Government Archivist.

Madam Chairman: So there are nine. But you say that one, I think it is the Executive Director ICT, that post has not yet been filled?

Ms. Mendez: We did carry out the recruitment selection. We are in consultation with respect to the package offered by the Chief Personnel Officer.

Madam Chairman: So that in terms of that post there is no reporting function at all or does somebody else report under that division?

Ms. Mendez: What we have is a shared service, shared responsibility. The ICT Director, the Executive Director of External ICT Relations and management specialist in collaboration with the Acting CEO of iGovTT will manage that portfolio.

Madam Chairman: So roughly eight or nine quarterly reports are prepared.

Are they prepared at the commencement of the reporting period, commencement of the quarter or at the end of the quarter?

Ms. Mendez: At the beginning of the year, all—and this is the entire Ministry—what we would do through the Human Resource Management Division is have all the heads with their staff develop their position descriptions. We will either undertake quarterly reports for those fairly new officers who may need that additional supervision and coaching, but for the mature officers we would do half yearly reports.

Madam Chairman: So that, just so that I can understand, in terms of your submission what we are told is one control measure is the preparation of quarterly returns of delegated expenditure by divisional heads to the accounting officer. That is different to the reports of which you speak?

Ms. Mendez: Yes. What has happened, I have delegated authority in terms of expenditure. So from the Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Directors they would have been delegated authority in terms of expenditure limits. So every quarter they do submit what expenditure they would have approved.

Madam Chairman: And in terms of those returns, how many do you get, two, three, I am not certain?

Ms. Mendez: One hundred per cent.

Madam Chairman: One hundred per cent?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So in terms of all the divisions, we are now in fiscal 2018, when would have been the last quarterly return of delegated expenditure you would have received?

Ms. Mendez: Well I was out on vacation so I would have received at the beginning of February the quarterly returns for the period October to December.

Madam Chairman: And when these returns are received, what happens with them?

Ms. Mendez: Certainly, as the accounting officer I will have to ensure that the expenditure limits that were delegated are contained and abided by in terms of the necessary regulations. I should add, because of the economic climate the expenditure for the delegated has not been very hefty for the past quarter.

Madam Chairman: What that means is that the expenditure has been low or

there have been no instances of excess?

Ms. Mendez: No excess because of lack of releases in some of the areas.

Madam Chairman: In the event that there is an excess in expenditure over the limits, what should ideally happen?

Ms. Mendez: The Accounting Officer would have to write to the officer indicating that they would have gone over their limit and seek an explanation.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Your Internal Audit Department what role does it play in monitoring this?

Ms. Mendez: The internal audit as I said would have prepared work programmes, and the various heads who would have gotten delegated authority would be of established offices. So the Director of Public Management Consulting Division, the Director of Public Service Academy, Government Archives. With the Director of Finance, the auditor would ensure that the necessary limit would have abided by the necessary estimates and the releases and in accordance with the financial regulations.

Madam Chairman: So might I ask, what is the size of your Internal Audit Unit?

Ms. Mendez: At this time we have one Auditor II, two Auditing Assistants who would be acting and a clerical assistant who would have been assigned to give that administrative support.

Madam Chairman: Are you satisfied that the size of your unit, as currently configured, is adequate to give the support that you require and to fulfil their responsibilities for this merged Ministry?

Ms. Mendez: At this time we are undertaking an organizational review, which you would have seen in the submission is in draft, because we are awaiting the approval of our strategic plan. From the review it seems that we are overstaffed, but I am not in agreement. So I still need to have some discussion with the Public Management Consulting Division.

Madam Chairman: So that in terms of your audit unit, are you satisfied that it is sufficiently resourced to provide you with the support you require for your staff as currently configured. Not what it is supposed to be ideally, but what you have now.

Ms. Mendez: It is adequately staffed; what we would need is some development of certain skills and competencies.

Madam Chairman: So that is training?

Ms. Mendez: Particularly training, particularly with the ICT audit. We know there are some areas that need some development in the Internal Audit with respect to that type of audit function.

Madam Chairman: So we will leave that for when we come to training.

As far as the strategic plan, you said it is in draft. What is the status of that? Because it seems that so many other things would flow from the approval of your strategic plan?

Ms. Mendez: It is before Cabinet and we will get a response soon; however, that has not constrained us in terms of preparing our work plans in sync with the strategic plan, because it all supports our portfolio with respect to human resource management, ICT development, communications. So not having official approval does not stymie the operations of the Ministry. We proceed as if it has been approved.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Do you have a monitoring and evaluation unit?

Ms. Mendez: Through the Strategic Services Division, which is under the purview of my Deputy Permanent Secretary, we have offices within that unit who undertake monitoring and evaluation, but that is one area that we hope to do some more recruitments in order to enhance the delivery of that particular service.

Madam Chairman: So the Strategic Services Division, what is the remit of that? Because I get the impression that it is wider than just a monitoring and evaluation unit. So what is the remit of that?

Ms. Mendez: My Deputy Permanent Secretary can add some further information, but it is used as our policy formulation, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of our own work programmes, but also monitoring and evaluation and oversight for my state agencies. For example iGovTT, NALIS, TATT, so they would deal with the collation of administrative reports, ensuring that the strategic plans produced by these agencies are in line with the government thrust, national development strategy, as well as the strategic plan of the line Ministry.

I do not know if the DPS would like to add.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Chair, I think PS adequately covered it, but suffice it to say the division does provide policy support, both to the Ministry itself as well as external agencies who may come to us from time to time to seek advice, support in their own

policy development initiatives, and we willingly do so. In addition to that, the division also prepares responses to parliamentary questions for example, and even this request for information submission.

Madam Chairman: So then maybe, Mr. Deputy PS, you could assist me, because I saw reference to this Project Review Board, and this is what led to the questioning about the existence of a monitoring and evaluation unit. So that I wanted to find out what therefore is this Project Review Board, how is it constituted, how does it differ from a monitoring and evaluation unit? Now I understand you do not have a monitoring and evaluation unit, but the function is carried out by your Strategic Services Division, and I think therefore the question is really: What is this Project Review Board, how does it fit into your Strategic Services Division, what does it add or what mischief is it intended to prevent?

Mr. Mc Kellar: I was hoping that the last word would have been “prevent”. The Project Review Board does not fall under the purview of the Strategic Services Division. It is actually an entity that was created by the Permanent Secretary to provide oversight for new projects that are being conceptualized and put forward within the Ministry, particularly with respect to our PSIP projects.

So for example, any division within the Ministry that wishes to put forward a new project, let us say for the upcoming estimates budget cycle, their initial project proposal, project documents, concepts would be presented to the Project Review Board. Let me just say what is the composition of the Project Review Board. It is currently chaired by myself, the Deputy Permanent Secretary. Other members include the Director of Finance and Accounts, our Administrative Officer IV who is responsible for office management, the Director, Legal Services and the head of our Strategic HR Management Division.

So like I said, it is essentially that entity that would examine projects for feasibility, ensuring that projects are well conceptualized, designed, that the objectives are clear, all of the relevant documents, information that would be required by the Ministry of Planning and Development are in place. So that is the first post/gate that projects would have to go through.

Madam Chairman: So that your Project Review Board will be sort of a filter before you go on to the other stage? So this is a relatively new creature in your

Ministry?

Mr. Mc Kellar: No it is not, Madam Chair. We have probably had a project review board for at least the last five years, thereabouts.

Madam Chairman: And that would have been in which Ministry?

Mr. Mc Kellar: In the Ministry of Public Administration.

Madam Chairman: And therefore from the Ministry of Public Administration you would have had, say five years to assess its effectiveness, and therefore I want to know in your view how effective a mechanism you found it.

Mr. Mc Kellar: I think objectively it has been rather useful. I think it is well regarded by all of the divisional heads, and it has really helped us as one of the mechanisms for developing a sound project management culture within the Ministry. Heads are fairly certain that in order for their projects to go forward they must put forward sound project proposals, so I think we are in good place in terms of how it has operated and, you know, what it augurs to do for the Ministry in the future.

Madam Chairman: So once it has your sign-off, it goes to the next stage, the Ministry of Planning and Development, yes?

Ms. Mendez: I wanted to add that for the past year and five, six months that I have been there with the Project Review Board it has been helpful, because this is the first stage before I can sign off and say yes, I am comfortable, I am confident that this project will get funding. So in my evaluation I thought that it is a good team. The DPS was just recently added, because he joined the Ministry a couple of months ago, but since I have been there I thought it has helped me. I know some people would not have been pleased because some of the projects did not go forward, if the board did not accept in terms of what they would have provided.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much, Madam PS, and I thought that maybe you had anticipated what next I was going to ask. You had said that you feel pretty confident that once it gets the sign-off, it is a project you would get funding for, and therefore to me the test of its success would be a question of—on a percentage basis, a good guesstimate, what per cent of those projects would have been successful in meeting the approval of the Ministry of Planning and Development and getting funding, in your year and a half?

Ms. Mendez: In my year and a half, I would say, well for the new projects,

about 90 per cent. We just have one which is hinged on our national ICT plan. So once we get the plan approved, Ministry of Planning and Development has confirmed that they would provide the funding later in the year.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, and just one more question on this. In terms of your Strategic Services Division which you said monitors your agencies in terms of compliance, their budgets, annual financial statements and so on, of the agencies under your remit, do they all have, say, risk management policies and plans?

Ms. Mendez: I would say some agencies, some it is a work in progress. So may I ask my heads of the state enterprises to probably speak more on that issue, thank you.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Madam Chair, actually we do. We actually just completed an exercise, in the final stages now, to have an entire risk portfolio for iGovTT. Of all the risks that we observed, how they would be mitigated or accepted in some cases where it would add value. So that project is in phase three. We have one more phase to complete and it is carded to end at the end of next month, March. But we do have things in place.

Madam Chairman: So that is just for iGovTT?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Yes, iGovTT.

Madam Chairman: But that is not the only agency and therefore I am just using, say, risk management as an example of saying how your Strategic Services Division meets its mandate.

Ms. Romain: In the case of NALIS, NALIS is a statutory authority with its own board. Within NALIS there is an internal audit department with a board audit committee, and there are regular, frequent reports and audits done throughout the organization and most aspects of the organization. I think the concern at this point for that department—one of the major concerns would be its staffing because since NALIS started as an entity, NALIS in 1998, because NALIS came into being around then, there are some issues still needing monitoring and controlling, but it is a work in progress and it is one that is actively engaging the board's attention.

Madam Chairman: So maybe I should really go back to the PS with respect to this question. Where I am really getting at is, according to the submission—I am going to say SSD, okay—it monitors the agencies to ensure that they comply with the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*. So I have just picked out one aspect. I

therefore ask you as PS, in terms of, say, risk management, and it could be anything, but this comes out of the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*. In terms of the agencies, and I think you listed them in the beginning, all of which have not remained in my mind, but I know NALIS is one, iGovTT is one and so on—in terms of all of them, which is about seven, how many of them have a risk management policy as set out in this *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*, which sets out what it is supposed to look like? I think it is page 118 which talks about strategic risk, operational risk, reporting risk and all those risks. I want to know how many of them are compliant, if you have a whole division ensuring compliance of your agencies in accordance with the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*.

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, we would have to really get some more information from the division, but from where I sit I know we have plans, both from iGovTT and from NALIS and through monitoring of the administrative reports. I cannot say safely about CNMG because that is the other state enterprise, so we may have to provide some more information in writing.

Madam Chairman: You could give us that in writing. Thank you so much. And in terms of your underperforming programmes and projects, again this comes in with your Internal Audit Unit function, and you had indicated in your response that underperforming projects are identified during monthly reviews and so on—and I just wanted to know if you could give us a recent example of an underperforming project and in terms of what sort of appropriate assistance would have been given and corrective action taken with respect to the deliverables?

3.00 p.m.

Ms. Mendez: I would have highlighted the development of the ICT plan that would have been underperforming, because we would not have received releases due to the non-approval as yet of the national ICT plan.

We also have the Digitization of Media Assets which was a project under the former Government Information Services Limited. Due to lack of reports, and having an idea of the scope, and what was achieved in that project, we have had challenges. So I have put together a team led by the Government Archivist to re-scope and to make the project align to some of our information services and archival needs in order that we can move that

project later in the fiscal year.

Madam Chairman: This project would have been identified through the structures you all would have put in place in terms of the function of your internal audit, because I believe it is the Internal Audit Unit which does this sort of function according to your submission?

Ms. Mendez: In collaboration with, of course, Accounts and our Strategic Services. The Digitization of Media Assets would have been a PSIP project that we inherited from the Government Information Services Limited under the former Ministry of Communications.

The ICT Plan that would have been a project through the former Ministry of Science and Technology, which would have been incorporated within the new portfolio of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. However, the funding is hinged on the approval of the National Information Communication Technology Plan which is now going through its final consultation stage before returning to Cabinet for approval.

Madam Chairman: And Satellite Units, what are these?

Ms. Mendez: These will be really, the various divisions—they use that term which will include the PMCD, Information Division, PRES D and Archives.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so that the monthly Heads of Divisions meetings are with all your divisions?

Ms. Mendez: All the Heads; Deputy Permanent Secretary, the line Minister, who will chair. In the absence, I would chair. We have monthly meetings to keep abreast of the operations, the challenges and how are we moving particularly with PSIP.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and the monthly meeting for February 2018, has that taken place as yet?

Ms. Mendez: We had one late January, the DPS would have chaired that, so the next meeting is the second Tuesday in March.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. So I will invite other members, Dr. Bodoë.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair and welcome again PS. I just

want to put our discussion into perspective and refer back to your own statement and, of course, the goals at the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, and if you will permit me to refer to your budgetary allocation for financial year 2017-2018. And just to ask whether you can indicate the percentage of the allocation that would have been expended, let us say, for your first four months of the financial year from October to January, under the subheadings; perhaps of Goods and Services, the Development Programme and the IDF. Would you be in a position to give us some idea of what would have been expended so far?

Ms. Mendez: I will have to provide the percentage in writing. However, for the first quarter, the releases would have focused on personnel expenditure—salaries. We would have received in the latter part of the financial first quarter, December, releases to treat with outstanding payments, our, utilities, rent, electricity, water rates, and janitorial and security services. So we are trying to clear backlog and at the same time run with the current bills that we are, of course, receiving every day and, of course, receiving calls for the payment of the services provided. We are, let us say, in a catch-up all the time.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. In terms of your development programmes going forward, what sort of impact has it had on the programmes?

Ms. Mendez: A great impact. Because we have not really received releases under the Development Programme with the exception of our project that deals with the property management and information system. Where we are creating a database at this first stage of our leases and rentals. So we have received releases under that project.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, I just wanted to raise an issue with regard to some of the issues that arose from the merging of the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communications; that merger would have taken place when?

Ms. Mendez: The first merger would have been in 2015 and then in 2016 the merger of the Ministry of Communications.

Dr. Bodoë: From your submission I note that you have had some

delays in obtaining approvals and/or authorizations from the Service Commissions Department regarding the transfer of employees from the former Ministries to the new Ministry. My question to you would be, has there been any progress in obtaining these approvals and authorizations from Service Commissions Department with regard to the transfer of the employees?

Ms. Mendez: There has been great improvement—up to yesterday, I received a batch of transfers for persons under the Public Management Consulting Division and other areas in the Ministry. So, we are seeing improvement because our Human Resource Management Division is in daily contact with the Service Commissions Department personnel for outstanding approvals.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you then indicate perhaps the number of employees who would still be awaiting this authorization/approval, do you have an idea?

Ms. Mendez: I do not have the figures right now. But, I will say it is minimal because I would have signed for the Government Printery, Information Division throughout the last three or four months. So it will be a minimal amount.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay, thank you. Just one more question, in terms of the Strategic Plan which you alluded to, can you indicate when this plan was submitted for approval?

Ms. Mendez: Towards the end of the last financial year.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate whether you have sought any feedback from the Cabinet with regard to the status?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, we are in touch with the Cabinet and actually we have done a revision, so we have submitted a revised version, just some tweaking here and there. What we did, based on the economic climate, we thought there were some programmes we needed to probably shift, you know, for further [*Inaudible*].

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Permanent Secretary, I too would like to refer to your opening remarks where you

highlighted a few items which caught my attention. You addressed briefly the issue of value for money and the elimination of waste, which I look at as one construct. You also spoke to the issue of building public trust and service delivery and you also highlighted the issue of the management of assets, both physical assets and human assets, and in your submissions as we would have heard also in our discussions so far, the strategic plan. How are these issues: value for money, elimination of waste, public trust, how are these variables addressed in your strategic plan?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Member, for that question. In respect of the strategic plan—I do not have the plan here with me, but these will be governance issues, in terms of what policies; internal policies, operational policies, we will put in place.

You will see we are moving towards developing an acceptable code of behaviour, code of acceptable business practices within the Ministry, which we disseminate through our orientation, through our intranet. We have constant communication with staff through our meetings, our Heads' meetings, the Deputy Permanent Secretary and I will apprise people—this is the approach in terms of value for money.

How we can achieve it through our best procurement practices: We have

an internal procurement unit, which at this time is a pilot test in order to get ourselves ready for the full proclamation of the procurement Act. So the Procurement Unit is staffed by two administrative assistants, a clerical staff and I must say it is very commendable, they have prepared operational policies, practices in terms of how approvals must be obtained. We have centralized the approach in terms of acquisition of goods and services, our janitorial and security, with the exception of PRESO who would treat with some of the issues under their portfolio.

So generally, these are some of the—in terms of our systems, our policies and best practices, we are doing internally to ensure that we can achieve value for money transparency, accountability.

We also have the Freedom of Information Unit, we get many

requests for documents and we are able to share because you know in terms of our openness and transparency of our operations. We can provide documentation as requested.

Mr. Dookie: Further, Madam Chair. In the context of your Strategic Plan, and I am sure there would have been a strategic planning exercise. If I am to ask you, what is the vision of the Ministry, the overall vision of the Ministry which I expect would speak to some of the issues that you just articulated, what would you say?

Ms. Mendez: We are striving to be the premier public service agency, in terms of good governance. We are also looking not only within Trinidad and Tobago because many of our Caricom territories look to us for assistance in policies in achieving certain delivery. For example, I have been invited through Webinar to share some of our programmes; we have launched an e-based competency, an online training, so, you know, the Ministry has been asked to share the practices and the experiences.

Mr. Dookie: So you are striving to be what?—the premier—

Ms. Mendez: —public service agency in terms of public administration in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Dookie: And in terms of the strategic planning exercise, could you tell me, who were the key people involved in the exercise? And the level of participation and involvement?

Ms. Mendez: When I joined the Ministry, the exercise was in train, because it started under the Ministry of Public Administration. It was led by the Deputy Permanent Secretary at that time and three stakeholders from the Strategic Services Division and other divisional heads, who would have met with the various stakeholder staff and have staff meetings, staff retreats, of course, the involvement of the Minister was crucial.

We carried it through in terms of having further engagements with the heads of divisions and getting feedback from the staff through the use of our intranet and so on.

Mr. Dookie: And you would say that there is a high level of buy-in to the plan?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, it is a high level of buy-in, and what we are doing, from March, the Deputy Permanent Secretary and I will be meeting in the staff divisions, sharing the plan and getting feedback. Again, because things change within a year or two, people may have different thoughts, different ways. For example, I am getting a lot of emails from staff—they come and meet me and they say, PS you know we can save money by doing this or doing that. So, you know, we have people who want to give feedback, so we are looking at how we can have that engagement and feedback mechanism—because staff, they are engaging, they want to really contribute in terms of, you know, making the public service, of course, the Ministry more efficient and effective.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam PS, in your written submission you noted that on average 3,000 public servants are trained annually. How has this affected the overall performance of the public service?

Ms. Mendez: This is one area that we need through the Public Service Academy to strengthen and that is our evaluation mechanism. We do the first-level mechanism in terms of evaluation where at the end of the programme we get feedback in terms of the delivery, the presenters, and the course; actually how the course would have been in terms of the content.

We are trying now to move to the second level, where we are going to be engaging the supervisors to assess whether learning took place. Okay, you had your staff exposed to certain programmes, how is the skill level, the behaviour, their attitude, did you see a change? So we are really trying to move to that level of evaluation in this year.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The reason why I asked the question is that most times when we examine entities, the issue of training and development always comes up—so it might be need for training, internal audit or training in different areas and you are only managing to do 3,000 persons per year. I know the public service is made up of more than 3,000. The fact that you cannot capture everybody, how is that impacting on our ability to serve the

people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, it will have an impact and we have devised certain strategies, for example, for the current year we are training in customer service delivery. We had embarked on a train the trainers, in that we have pulled facilitators from various Ministries who are going back to their Ministries and undertaking customer service training.

We are also moving into a mechanism of online training. We are doing a pilot project through the Strategic Human Resource Management Division and it has been overwhelming, because we have engaged certain Ministries at this time in computer training, business writing and we are going to move into other modules, for example, customer service training.

So we are seeing the need in terms of capturing more and the means through online training. This also is dependent on getting certain funding because we would need to put certain systems in place and personnel in order to carry out that training.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: I know oftentimes people refer to iGovTT as the backbone. What role if any, are you playing to help the Ministry with their human capital development thrust?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: So, iGovTT, you are right, one aspect is the backbone. So we provide the backbone for Government to be able to communicate that is referred to as "GovNet"; we also provide the portal which is the citizens interacting. With regard to training, we have arrangements in enterprise agreements where part of the arrangement is to provide online training.

So specifically this is for ICT though, so we provide the ICT training for the various Ministries, IT managers on a regular basis at each seating, it takes approximately 20 persons and training occurs, a minimum every two months on different aspects of the SharePoint and so on.

So, we do have that part and we also provide assistance to Ministries who may require business process reengineering and so on, we have that capability in-house, and we will have knowledge sharing with them. So when we do, it will also share the knowledge to assist them as well.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Madam PS and also to iGovTT, have you considered any innovative strategies, for example, maybe to process or tools to further enhance our ability to reach the training needs and training demands and also to ensure that we have better connectivity across the different entities? So, for example, if a training programme is developed at one organization but it may benefit people in another, how they could leverage from that. What have you all considered along that line please?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: So right now we are considering how we can improve certain aspects of our infrastructure, both infrastructure, the portal and GovNet. We are in final discussions in terms of having a mechanism where we could—more or less, what you are referring to is collaboration and improve the collaboration amongst the various Ministries, divisions and agencies.

Upon completion, it would have a budgetary aspect to it, and we would liaise with the Ministry in terms of advancing and moving forward. However, there are things currently that Government has—and we are in discussions with those Ministries who would have procured those items and probably not using it to its fullest capacity, to be able to leverage on those things and act as, for the want of a better word, a go-between so that we could all benefit from this purchase, or this infrastructure, this technology that this Ministry or division has purchased.

So we are advancing on both streams in terms of improvement on infrastructure as well as having a landscape of all the ICT that exists and how we can improve the efficiency and use of certain technology—that was really purchased for one—but for all.

Mr. Mc Kellar: And Madam Chair through you. Just to add to what the CEO, iGovTT, added from on the Ministry's standpoint, two initiatives: we have embarked on soliciting from Ministries and Departments a listing of their transformation reform innovation projects. So that would allow us at the Ministry to not only have a greater sense as to what are the initiatives on the ground, but being able to provide coordination, technical support and as you indicated if there are best

practices or good innovations taking place in one agency, particularly with respect to training, those could be applied elsewhere.

The other thing that we have done—and it is probably not in the submission, but mindful of the current financial challenges with respect particularly to being able to source training providers, the Ministry recently wrote to all PSs and Heads requesting their submission of technical professionals in their Ministries who might be able to serve as adjunct lecturers, facilitators to the Public Service Academy.

So one, that would certainly allow trainers who are from within the public service understand the public service environment, the policies, procedures, and even public officers themselves. So we see those at least two initiatives that we have embarked on to assist in that training area.

Miss Raffoul: Thank you Chair. PS, I really appreciated what you said about staff members having ideas on cost-saving opportunities. I am curious to hear a few examples of what staff members have said?

Ms. Mendez: For example, you know, they would have come because we would have had some problems with short-term employment, some of the staffing levels would have decreased because of allocation. So they will give examples; “well PS instead of purchasing X or Y for executives, [*Laughter*] probably you can eliminate some of that, half that and probably utilize the funding to get more staff on”. You know, they come with certain things, let us have more programmes within, rather than sourcing outside and you have to pay a service provider.

We have people with certain talent. For example, for our last activity for Christmas, staff came together, they did not have to rely on the Ministry to have activities, they did things; they do team building things amongst themselves.

We have, of course, the sense of duty in terms of you turn off the lights, you turn off your computer, we share resources, instead of having a lot of paper we tend to do things through our Internet, email—some submissions, before they come on file, I will review them and have the necessary changes and then the final version will come for approval because

of our public service regulations that you need to have hard copies. So, you know, staff would have been providing different areas.

Training, we have Heads of Departments, they pull together because of their knowledge competencies and they carry out, they conduct programmes, free from ourselves. Right now we are doing a lead-in for results for our staff led by our staff members. So these are some of the strategies.

Miss Raffoul: Okay, thanks a lot. I have a few other questions.

Ms. Mendez: Another area, and I think this is one I am very proud of, in terms of our property management information system. When it was conceptualized it was through a service provision of an IT provider. That did not, you know, was not fulfilled in the last financial year. We have on-the-job trainees who are software developers, who actually developed the programme in-house.

Miss Raffoul: Excellent.

Ms. Mendez: That, of course, has caused a saving in terms of that system. So these are some of the areas that we have really, you know, seen the talent and opportunities emerge.

3.25 p.m.

Miss Raffoul: Excellent, I am really happy to hear that. I have a few other questions. One of the questions I have is on the cost of property rentals. The allocation in the last fiscal year was \$30 million, this year was \$20 million, and you said in your response in the written submission, that that drastic change in the allocation did not affect the Ministry significantly. You were able to save, I think, \$250,000 by not continuing to rent a storage unit in Arouca, as well as there was an amount owing, I think of about \$2 million—I will find the exact figure. So I am curious as to the reason for being able to operate with the same rental properties with a third of the budget reduced. So I am curious as to how such a significant savings was able to be executed.

Ms. Mendez: I would have my Coordinator, PRES D give you some more information, but we did do some realigning in terms of our relocation of staff where we were able to bring staff into other areas that were none—well free rental office accommodation. We also looked at our storage spaces. We would have used other

entities and free office space in order to store.

We had Ministries who were now developing certain divisions. So, where we would have been storing our computers or furniture furnishings, these Ministries would have accessed—instead of going and having to purchase, we were able to transfer some of these assets. So all these sorts of areas were able to help us reduce in terms of our expenditure, but I am sure the Coordinator will be able to provide some further information.

Miss Raffoul: Thank you.

Mrs. Maharaj: Okay. Also, well we did give up a few properties, so that the rental sums would have declined, but we have also been able to renegotiate some of our rental rates so that some of the rental rates may be less than they were previously, yes.

Miss Raffoul: As a follow-up question to that.

Mrs. Maharaj: Sure.

Miss Raffoul: Currently, you only rent two properties, the NALIS Building as well as one on Mary Street. So were those two renegotiated or other ones were given up? I know that there was only one that was mentioned that was given up and that was the storage facility in Arouca.

Mrs. Maharaj: Yes—

Ms. Mendez: The votes that we were responding to, only provide for funding for NALIS and Mary Street, but we do have other votes from which we pay office rental. It would not have been included. So Mrs. Maharaj would be able to speak to PMCD, PRES D and that is it. The Information Division now is in our state-owned building, so we do not pay any rent for the Information Division.

Miss Raffoul: Okay.

Mrs. Maharaj: So, certainly, the rents for PRES D do not come out of the vote that you are referencing at the moment. We have not yet renegotiated the rents but we anticipate that they will be reduced. We are awaiting the advice of the Commissioner of Valuations to formalize the arrangements, but we have already signalled that intent with the landlord and the landlord does appear to be agreeable.

And in the case of the PMCD, their offices were relocated. They were in Chaguanas, so they were relocated to Port of Spain, again, an existing office for which rents were already being paid by the Ministry. So that would have been a cost saving,

and now we hope to relocate them shortly within a few weeks which will help us to realize a further saving.

Miss Raffoul: Excellent. I am curious because you have done so well with being able to renegotiate rents so far. How much more do you think you can reduce current expenses by and having the same outcomes and outputs?

Mrs. Maharaj: This is in reference to other Ministries, rental—

Miss Raffoul: To your Ministry and your overall expenditure, whether that be administration side or rental side or your other major costs.

Mrs. Maharaj: I can speak to the issue of rents particularly. Unfortunately, a major part of our rental expenditure has to do with subleasing agreements for the International Waterfront Complex, so those we are really not in a position to renegotiate and also for the Ministry of Education Tower. Again, we are not really in a position to renegotiate those. Those are subject to terms and conditions contained in a sublease agreement. So that certainly all those that we can renegotiate, we have successfully been renegotiating. If I may say, not just for this Ministry, but for all Ministries that may be appearing before you. We have been actively trying to renegotiate rents.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. So there is some opportunity for things that are not within the Ministry of Education or the International Waterfront Complex but for other properties?

Mrs. Maharaj: For other Ministries, because under this Ministry we really do not rent a significant number of properties, but for other Ministries yes and, in fact, we have been vacating quite a few properties, again, because we have been rationalizing the use of space. Under PRESID, we also have the government office outfitting policy which speaks to the space requirements of offices and it takes into consideration the number of staff, the different levels of staff and the functions of the particular office, and we determine space requirement. So that we have been trying to rationalize the quantum of space that is rented.

Very often we find that from one office to another there are significant differences, a great disparity in the amount of space that is allocated to a particular officeholder. So through our office outfitting policy we are trying to rationalize that and bring greater equity. We are requiring that Ministries adhere to the policy in any new

refurbishment works or in any new rentals. So that the standards are being applied.

Miss Raffoul: The office that is located at the International Waterfront and the Ministry of Education Tower, who owns those? Are those UDeCOTT or are those owned by individuals?

Mrs. Maharaj: So it is a sublease agreement that we have with UDeCOTT.

Miss Raffoul: Thank you. There was another question I had on the project that was started in 2006—I will find the exact name—but it is the one that was on the strengthening of the Ministry, and it was projected to cost \$6,250,000 I think, but in the end cost \$48 million. I was curious as to why such a large increase in +expenditure and what the outcomes were. I saw the list of objectives, but I did not see outcomes per se or any defined metrics on them.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Madam Chair, through you, we would like to make a written submission as to the details that would have contributed to that increase.

Madam Chairman: So let us just make sure. So what we are talking here about, is it the multi-sectorial and other services, public sector reform preparation programme? It is the Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme. Is that it, member Raffoul?

Miss Raffoul: I am looking for the exact title. There were two projects. I do not know exactly which one this was—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so this would be the one started in 2004?

Miss Raffoul: 2006, I believe, but it could have been 2004.

Madam Chairman: It should have been completed in 2006. Let us just make sure we—

Miss Raffoul: Yes, 2004.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that is the one we are talking about with respect to making a written submission and, therefore, if I might just interject here to ask, if this would not be considered a legacy project. If it is, why is it still under PSIP? So I do not know if that could be responded to or that is going to be in the whole amplified response, but I think member Raffoul is also asking about deliverables.

Miss Raffoul: Thank you.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Okay, may I, please?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Okay. Admittedly, the project did start as far back as 2004. It was on a loan agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. While it did have probably, I think, it was approximately a three-year projected project life, the project was not actually closed off until 2012, 2013 thereabouts. It is not a legacy project, one of those that goes on indefinitely.

In terms of the key objectives of the project, it was not by design an actual reform project to target particular things, but rather it would inform what were the specific items or issues within the public service that should be addressed to bring about reform. So, for example, prior to the loans negotiation, it was acknowledged that there had been 10 to 14—I think 14 is the actual figure quoted—14 public service reform initiatives over the years with varying degrees of success. A review of those initiatives identified that there were structural system-wide issues that may have affected their successful implementation. So maybe whether it would have been staffing issues, public service capability, capacity issues, policies and legislation.

PSRPP was intended to identify and address those structural system issues so that future reform efforts would be successful. I think there was some fair amount of work done, because there were a number of studies that did take place to identify some of the issues. Madam Chair mentioned, well, the issue of outputs. So there would have been issues of training which were conducted under the PSRPP—leadership development, communication issues. Admittedly we did not get too much into the issues of legislative reform, which in many areas is a key concern because we are dealing in many instances with legislation, policies that need to be updated and brought into the modern scenario but, essentially, that is what PSRPP was about.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that we still want the written submission because bringing this unaccounted-for \$7 million, bringing that—I think really needs some explanation and, certainly, I think there needs to be some explanation. If I understand it, well it was supposed to cost \$6.25 million and I am not sure if it is completed at eight times the cost. I am not sure if that is what is being communicated, and I think all of that is what is causing some sort of confusion in the minds of the Committee. So I would really await a written submission further elucidating on this and explaining some of these issues. Member Raffoul, are you finished?

Miss Raffoul: For now.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so I would allow member Bodoë just to follow up on this, and then I will invite member Antoine into the conversation. Thank you.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chairman. With regard to that project, I just want to be clear. It was completed in September 2013, you are saying. So is there like a final report from that project? Is that what is going to be submitted to the Committee or is there going to be a report about a report?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Chair, through you, yes member, there was an evaluation of the project commissioned by the IDB. We do have a copy of the evaluation report that summarized what eventually were the outcomes, the outputs, the successes and shortcomings.

Dr. Bodoë: So we could expect that report together with a report regarding the delays and so on—

Mr. Mc Kellar: The expenditure issues.

Dr. Bodoë:—on this project?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: So, we are to receive two separate reports.

Mr. Mc Kellar: That is correct.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Good afternoon, once again. I want to look at the area that you responded to in terms of contract employment to fill vacancies in the organizational structure. I would like to ask, what attempts have been made to update the public service establishment? You mentioned some proposed changes, what are the proposed changes that may reduce your reliance on contract employment?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you member. As I would have indicated, we do have our draft organizational structure. It is proposed—and this is a public service-wide change—as we attempt to reduce our reliance on contract employment that there are some key support areas, structures in the entire public service that will eventually be on the permanent establishment, and those areas are—expertise would be required in ICT, communication, facilities management, programme management and procurement, as well as legal. We do have legal in terms of state counsels but, you know, we may have to do some tweaking of the job descriptions. So eventually we are going to be having

structures in terms of our permanent establishment in those expert areas.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: In addition to your contract, you made a distinction between contract labour and short-term employment. With a six months duration for the short-term employment, I want to know, are their people who are still employed in excess of six months, because now that there is no longer short-term employment is beyond six months? If so, are their contracts being renewed every six months and if there are currently people who have gone over six months and awaiting renewed contracts?

Ms. Mendez: We have reduced in terms of our short-term employment. Regarding the actual short-term employment, it should not exceed six months, but what we would have are persons who may be waiting for renewal of contracts, and at this time we have about two areas where we have contract positions that were recently approved, and we are going through the recruitment and selection process. So these persons have applied and will go through the recruitment process, and we do hope that they may be successful so they will eventually be in fixed-term employment contracts which roughly would be three years.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: So they are going from short-term employment to fixed contracts?

Ms. Mendez: Once they have gone through the recruitment and selection process, yes.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: Another question involves, obviously, short-term employment but involving our undergraduates and our graduates. How many undergraduates or graduates do we have in the Ministry on short-term employment and is this being done on an individual basis or is it being done in collaboration with UWI, UTT and USC?

Ms. Mendez: At this time we do not have any undergraduates because they are usually available after their exams, usually May to September, which is a Cabinet authority that all Ministries can engage undergraduates and graduates. It would have been limited due to the financial constraints. We are hoping that we are able to bring in persons particularly in areas of communications and ICT, because we see it as an area of exposing the graduates and undergraduates to the world of work in terms of career in the public service and, hopefully, wooing them at some time to come into the public

service. So it is a developmental tool and mechanism that all Ministries can utilize in terms of their own mandate.

I would say about two months ago we did have a collaboration with COSTAATT, and we had certain interns assigned to our radio unit and they did very well in terms of helping with the work and doing research and even voicing some of our radio programmes. So it is a success story in bringing in our graduates and undergraduates.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: There are some undergraduates, some graduates, who have gone on careers that there are very limited prospects for future employment. Is there any collaboration between the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications and the universities so that students can be guided into what careers they are preparing for, based on the availability of employment in the public service?

Ms. Mendez: We have embarked on a public service awareness through our Corporate Communications Unit. We had our first outreach during the Carnival period where we had exhibits for the archives and our NALIS, and this is one part of our programmes in terms of our outreaches, ensuring people are aware what the public service is about, not only the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, but the various public sector agencies and through collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we do hope that we would be able to do an outreach in the various tertiary institutions.

Brig. Gen. Antoine: I am an alumni of UWI, so I can speak for UWI. At the beginning of the academic year, UWI normally has a programme where you have booths where you can encourage students to come and get displays from the public service as the case may be, so that you can guide them in terms of their career. Is the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications participating at that level, not only in UWI but also with UTT and USC at that level?

Ms. Mendez: This is one engagement we can embark on, but we are doing our separate outreach in tertiary institutions but, certainly, I am aware of the world of work because at times I would assist in helping students with how they prepare for interviews for the public service or generally. So certainly we will look into that in that we can be part of that career outreach during the start of the semester.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted to ask a follow-up from a question that

member Antoine asked and, again, it is with the short-term employment. I understood from a response that some people will graduate from short term to contract. I think that what I would really like to ask is—and if you do not have the information, Madam PS, we can get it later in writing—how many people would be doing a continuous set of short-term employment? So your six months is up, you get another six months. So it is not that you are graduating to contract employment, but you are consistently doing six-month terms.

Ms. Mendez: As I indicated, we are reducing the level of short-term employment that is surpassing the six months. And how we were able to do that is getting the approval of contract positions which we would have advertised, and these persons who have been qualified will go through the recruitment and selection process. With respect to other short-term employment, we can provide some information on that, but we do have a mechanism and strategy that we want to implement in the new financial year.

Madam Chairman: So if you could share with us the numbers, because that is what I really want, a definite number. And in your further responses, if you can share with us, what is the strategy that will aim to reduce that because I appreciate that short term being graduated to contract can work, but that is provided that the person has applied and succeeded. What I am looking at is really if there are people who have not applied or who not succeeded, but who get a next six months and a subsequent six months and how many are those.

Ms. Mendez: Yes Chair. Certainly.

Madam Chairman: And thank you. So can I go back now to member Bodoë?

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam PS, I just wanted to go back to the outreach programmes and that is commendable, but my question really is, in your outreach programmes you are saying what are the various areas that are available for employment, but do you have any statistical data in terms of the vacancies that are actually available in the public service and within Trinidad and Tobago in those various areas? I am not sure you understand what I am asking. Is it a data or information-driven outreach so we can go out there and citizens can be told, okay you have a hundred vacancies in this area or potential vacancies. Are we anywhere close to that kind of information?

Ms. Mendez: I should clarify. The public awareness was not a recruitment drive. Actually, it is meant to educate, inform the public of what the public service is about, what are the various Ministries, what are the Departments and what are the public sector agencies. However, we are looking in partnering with the Ministry of Education and going to the tertiary institutions to entice, encourage, attract persons who may be interested in coming into the public service—these are the careers, these are the areas of need—and certainly it would be attuned and linked to our national development strategy. These are areas of growth. As you start your career in the university, as you start your course of study, these are areas eventually that there will be instances —

Dr. Bodoë: I understand and that is commendable, but the point I am making is that there are many graduates who are out there without jobs. So that is fine. But what I am saying, what I am asking, are we in a position to provide information as to the jobs that might be available?

Ms. Mendez: Well, with our partnership with the various Ministries they will be able to do that. So when we go out on the outreach, in particular, one week, we will have the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and they will be able to provide persons, these are some areas that we have vacancies. But I must remind you that the vacancies have to be advertised by the Service Commissions Department. So, you know, we need to ensure that the information that we are providing will be in line with what the Service Commissions Department will eventually advertise. So we do need some communication and collaboration but, in the first instance, it is really a sharing and informing people about the public service. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So, member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. With your permission, I would like to revisit the issue of training and the Public Service Academy. In your submission you identified as a major objective of the PSA—I am reading from the submission:

Reposition the PSA as the preferred agency of learning and development for public sector employees.

And that sounds really beautiful. And that is the “what”. Let me ask the “how”. How is this going to be accomplished?

Ms. Mendez: And this is part of our whole strategic review and organizational

structuring. At the moment, most Ministries, all Ministries we are finding difficulty in accessing funds for training. In previous years, Ministries were able to apply for programmes delivered by the Public Service Academy, but they would also access training through other institutions. However, with the downturn, we are seeing more applications coming to the Public Service Academy. So we are looking in terms of reengineering our processes.

As I indicated, we are looking to get other facilitators. I would say Deputy PS would have indicated that we are sourcing facilitators, subject matter experts from various Ministries, so they can assist the Public Service Academy. We are also reengineering our process in that we want to provide more online training. It is going to be a transition which will take roughly two to three years. We are not going to be increasing the establishment, because of the difficulty in the allocation and funding, but there are different approaches.

Also we want to be linking with other Caricom agencies. We have the Caribbean Development Administration which also provides training and they want to partner with the Ministry in terms of training to be offered, not only in Trinidad but regionally. So we are looking at various mechanisms in broadening our training approach.

Mr. Dookie: Okay. You mentioned the cost of training and that might be straightforward in terms of how it is measured, but the challenge oftentimes comes in terms of measuring the benefits of the training. So that, to say that the training intervention works, you have to measure something. How you go about determining—because I see you trained 3,000 public officers. How do you know that that intervention is worth more than the cost of training? How do you measure that?

3.55 p.m.

Ms. Mendez: I would have indicated that there will be a first-level evaluation which is the reaction level. We are hoping to move to the other levels of evaluation which will be treating with the learning, the behaviour, and the results. We have to take it step by step because of the constraints but, certainly, in working along with the human resource management units of Ministries we can be able to enlarge in terms of how we do measure what training had been provided and the impact. And it is not only at the

individual level but at the level of the group, and the results of the organization.

This is not being done now, but we do hope that these are the various levels of evaluation that we can move towards. Certainly, there are different evaluation strategies, but we think, probably, through ICT, some sort of engagement of e-type of evaluation we would be able to measure, but these are just talks in progress, we have not finalized how we would approach.

Mr. Dookie: But you do see the need to ensure that—

Ms. Mendez: Definitely. We need to have an idea of our return on investment, because, yes, we are providing the training through the Public Service Academy, but if we count the cost we have to provide in terms of the payment of salary of our advisor, the salary of the participants who are away for two or three days, the materials that we provide, which we are trying now to move towards online type. So, yes, we need to look at the return of investment.

Mr. Dookie: So that is one aspect of evaluation, evaluating the outcome versus the benefit, I do not know what you could share with us in terms of evaluating the training intervention itself in determining that that is the right intervention to the training need that you are trying to satisfy.

Ms. Mendez: And that aspect talks about the methodology that would have been used, whether it was a lecture, case study, role play. And it is appropriate really to the content: How do you want to deliver the particular material? Would you want to develop a decision-making skill through a case study? Or, in terms of our customer service we do a lot of role plays. So, really, it will actually be the training facilitator having the supervisor looking at the approach and seeing if that particular methodology was appropriate for the material, and giving the appropriate evaluation report at the end. DPS may wish further, because both of us were former trainers so we can relate to what you are asking.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Chair, through you—member, I just wanted to probably add, what you are speaking about might refer to an instance where

a training intervention or development intervention may have been geared towards a specific entity, rather than much of what we do right now is providing training to a broad-based number of participants drawn from a number of Ministries, so you are not really in a position to say exactly what is the impact of the training in all of the 20 agencies that these persons may come from. But if we had an instance where agency A came to the academy, came to the Ministry and said, “hey, we are having a specific problem, could you design an intervention?” And we went in with a targeted approach, it might be a bit easier to do all the levels of evaluation that PS referred to in that entity, rather than to measure the impact of one person from an agency staffed by 300 persons to look at the impact.

Mr. Dookie: So you are saying that the Public Service Academy training approach is very generic as opposed to strategic and focused?

Mr. Mc Kellar: I am not saying that at all. The Public Service Academy has gone through a number of incarnations over the years. It has been in existence since the 1960s. We have done training where we provide to a broad number of persons. We have done interventions to specific agencies, but oftentimes those types of interventions are based on invitation and request. We may not necessarily pick up and foist ourselves on an agency, all right? So it is not about being strategic or not.

Mr. Dookie: All right, thank you. I think the question might be better posed to the various Ministries themselves. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Raffoul.

Miss Raffoul: Thank you, Chair. I had one follow-up question on iGovTT and the GovNet, next-generation network. The written submission that was provided said that there was a—it is just under \$100 million, it is \$99,991,370 increase in allocation for fiscal 2018 under the subheading, Other Contracted Services, and that the reason for that increase in allocation was for the GovNet, next-generation network. Can you elaborate on that particular project and what the objectives are, and the metrics for measuring those objectives and the outcomes? Thank you.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Sure. GovNet NG is meant to advance the ICT infrastructure within Government into a full-cloud environment. It is comprised of several lots, and it will allow for multiple service providers. The current state is, at present we are unable to advance because of funding challenges, so we are currently looking at what we have in terms of how we can make what we currently have best suited. Within the terms of reference, and so on, when we do have the funds, all of the KPIs are indicated in terms of the service level agreements that are intended to take place, for example, the uptime that we expect in terms of redundancy, and so on. So all of those things are elaborated and clarified within the terms of reference and, however, as mentioned, we have not advanced beyond the terms of reference for the reasons identified previously.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. And the entire cost of the project is \$100 million or is that just the increase for this year?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: That will be the increase.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. What is the entire cost of it?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: The entire cost is an estimate, yeah, and we would provide it in writing because there are several lots as well for consideration. So the details will be provided in writing.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. And what is the timeline for it?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: It depends on the situation with funding. Yeah.

Miss Raffoul: Do you have an anticipated timeline? So if the funding does not come through by a certain time, and then if it does?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: If funding does not come through, essentially we will have to keep doing what we are doing now with the mindset of small increments, small incremental improvements which we are currently doing. So we will continue like that until a decision is finally made with regard to that project you mentioned.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. So the \$100 million allocation is going to fund the current activities, but if it is approved will the total cost increase? So right now you are doing the incremental work so that \$100 million allocation that has been granted would continue to fund the continuation of

that?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Yes, correct. And so the current incremental increases we are doing, we are trying for it to be at no additional cost, and that it will remain within that identified \$100 million that you mentioned, just under \$100 million.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. So it is not a project with a defined timeline per se, it is an ongoing continuum to improve the expediency of services?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Right. Okay. So let me back up a bit, GovNet itself is a closed project, however, it is an operational item because persons, similar to your use of email, and so on, within Government we connect all the Ministries and divisions, and so on. So it is in operational mode, and the intent was to upgrade this via the project GovNet NG. So what we are doing now is, okay, looking at what we have operationally, and how can we improve this without the need for additional expenditure in the meanwhile until a decision is finalized.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. So the current \$100 million will continue to fund the current activities, and then if there is an expansion in the project what could that total cost be?

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Right. The expansion will be the GovNet NG cost, which we will provide the breakdown on by lot.

Miss Raffoul: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Sure, welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy, might I invite you now.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam PS, I just wanted an update on the SharePoint project and the expenditure to date, please.

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, member. Our Executive Director, NALIS, will share on that project.

Ms. Romain: Could you, please, remind me exactly what you would like?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The SharePoint project, I wanted the status of the project and the expenditure to date.

Ms. Romain: Okay. To date we have not expended any funds in it because no funds have been released. However, we have gathered all the—we have done all the infrastructural work, we have done the consultation with iGovTT, we have had some training for our ICT support, and we have provided quotations—well, we have quotations in hand for the various licences that we need, but we are awaiting the release of funds.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: When did you start the project?

Ms. Romain: The project started in November, 2017. However, it is not the first time that NALIS would be using SharePoint, it is basically an upgrade in that previously we had SharePoint 2010. However, SharePoint 2010 is no longer applicable, it cannot be upgraded. It is not supported again. So we do need to be able to provide a secure vehicle of communication for our staff. NALIS has approximately—well, about 1,000 positions, more or less, and most of our staff reside outside of the National Library building, because we provide services in approximately 400 locations. So we need to be able to communicate with the staff in a secure way. The project was meant to be able to share documents, work in groups, eliminate the need for paper and transportation and messengers in many cases in terms of the administrative communication with staff throughout the NALIS network.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: One more question. So this upgrade, what would be the lifespan on it? You had 2010, how long did 2010 last, for seven years?

Ms. Romain: It was in 2015 that most of the support for 2010 went through, in that we were no longer getting security updates, we were no longer getting the patches, and if it is we had a problem then it came at a cost, whereas when it was being supported fully those are things that we got complimentary.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: This upgrade, how long that would last, another five years before you need to upgrade the software again?

Ms. Romain: iGovTT will help in that.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Right. Member, it is really dependent on how

often the vendor will provide the changes. It is similar to, for instance, if we use Office, and they may be using Office 2010, but a new version comes out, and at a certain point they will indicate they are no longer supporting that version. And if you need support, as in the case of NALIS, you will need to pay an extra fee, but because we have an enterprise agreement with Microsoft, and the latest version of SharePoint will be part of it, hence it will only make sense to transfer onto, and that is the reason why. So, essentially, it is difficult to say how long it will last because it is really dependent on how often, for instance, Microsoft will upgrade and, secondly, how long they will support the previous versions.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I just wanted to ask a few questions to Madam PS. In your submissions you would have identified some issues which would have resulted from the merger. One, you discussed with respect to not getting the approvals and how that has been improving. You had identified cultural challenges, and I wanted, therefore, for us to give you an opportunity to explain what are cultural challenges and how have you dealt with resolving the cultural challenges which would have arisen from the merger?

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair and members, in joining the Ministry in 2016 these were some of the issues that were brought to my attention by the various heads of departments. As the Ministry merged in different systems, whether it is the record keeping, the staffing, the accounting, the audit, we would see, unfortunately, various Ministries will have different approaches and operating systems, and the Ministry would have certain policies in terms of how public administration would have operated.

So you would have had some sort of differences in understanding—this is how we want things approached in terms of our record keeping in our registry regarding our communications, regarding our accounting; this is how the documents should be kept, and where they should be maintained. So these were some of the areas of cultural differences and, again, through

our heads meeting we were able to share: “these are some of our operational policies, we have to conform”, and our various heads would help. This is what I see happening a lot.

Our head of Strategic Services would offer to help a particular division that is new in the Ministry. Our Director of Finance would meet with the staff, will call regular meetings: “this is the approach in terms of the reports I would need, this is how you should do it, this is the time frame you should submit it.” So those were some of the cultural. There were some human resource practices that were not, let us say, congenial in terms of discipline, so we had to undertake some disciplinary proceedings regarding how people would perform; punctuality was a problem, taking instructions. So where we had acts of misconduct we initiated disciplinary proceedings. In some areas we had people who had personal problems so we were able to guide them to access Employee Assistance Programme. So those are the areas that we really would have highlighted as cultural challenges.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask, the lovely description of cultural challenges, are these really challenges of bad practices, or is it that, because Ministries are a little different, things may be done differently, okay? So is it a disciplinary problem that is being described as cultural or noncompliance with operating practices that should apply across the public service? And, therefore, if it is, where is your Public Service Academy, that training academy, in that? Or is it that it could be excused, because I was in a particular Ministry and our needs were different things were done in a particular way, and therefore now I am in this Ministry and there are different needs, I now have to learn practices that fit these needs? Which one it is, more of which than what?

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, it is a combination in terms of the approaches of the whole public service ethics, values, abiding by necessary policies and regulations, we have inconsistency across the board.

Madam Chairman: I just want to stop you there, because where is the Public Service Academy in addressing that? I have seen lovely programmes for internal audit, and whatever, but where is the academy in

terms of dealing with, what is a public servant, how do we describe a public servant, what defines a public servant? Where is the Public Service Academy in addressing that basic issue?

Ms. Mendez: In terms of the needs assessment and when we discussed what are some of the requirements of the public service, the Public Service Academy has engaged in “train the trainers”, orientation programmes. When you have orientation conducted in your Ministries, these are the steps. These are some of the areas that you should include in terms of the public service values, what is the public service attitudes, what is your code of conduct. Some of the other programmes that we have been launched into, financial management for non-accounting officers—so these are the financial management procedures. We are just completing, when we prepare estimates, these are the requirements when you prepare estimates, so bit by bit we are looking at the whole and some of the areas of need that we need to ensure that we do not have that lack of conformity and inconsistency in practices.

Madam Chairman: And the basic question, who is a public servant? What defines me as a public servant? Who addresses that? Who monitors that? Who evaluates that? Who ensures continuity in that? Because it is okay for me to be skilled, but if I do not know who I am supposed to be, then what? And that is what I am trying to get from all this training that I am hearing.

Ms. Mendez: In my view a public servant is a person who is on the public service establishment in order to facilitate service, provide service to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. And once you are a public officer there are certain regulations, there are certain policies and practices that you are exposed to in order to ensure you perform your job effectively and efficiency. There is a structure so you will have public officers starting from your manipulative, your messengers, your secretaries, right up to the Permanent Secretary, and there are certain expectations and accountabilities that you carry in respect to the office you hold as a public officer.

Madam Chairman: I am sure a lot of people would ascribe to your

definition. What ensures that X, Miss Clarke, in whatever entity understands that and fulfils that? Because there may be a view that a public servant is somebody who is on the public service establishment who draws a salary, who comes to work at 8.30, who does not begin to work—when he comes to work at 8.30 he is now having his breakfast; when he finishes breakfast then he goes and he speaks to his other co-workers about what happened in the last 12 hours, and then may begin to work at 11.00, but at 11.30 he is getting ready for lunch, okay, and so on. Therefore, what deals with that ethic and promotes the correct ethos and philosophy, measures it and re-enforces it? Where is that course or how is that delivered?

Ms. Mendez: That would deal with our supervisory, middle management, even treating with disciplinary procedures, but an officer who comes in at 8.30 and is chatting instead of doing work has a supervisor who would have certain deliverables and results that they have to achieve for that particular section. So I will want to ask the question, where is the supervisor?

Madam Chairman: And, you know, Madam PS, it may mean that if that question is asked, and asked at the other level it comes right up to the accounting officer; it may mean that. So that as the premier, that lovely description of “what you all aspire to?”—the question still remains to be answered: how do we get to be this premier if it appears—because what I am saying is not something I have heard, it is something I have seen, okay, and I am sure I am not wearing special lenses. How do we treat with that, I think is what, to me—I am not hearing any discussion with respect to the Public Service Academy, if it is that, or maybe with the—what do you call the committee of the PSs again?

Ms. Mendez: Board of Permanent Secretaries.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. I do not know, but maybe in your function, in your line Ministry looking at HR, and so, maybe some of the more fundamental basic issues are not being treated with. But, again, according to culture, pension and leave records, and the challenge with that—

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, I would want to respond to that question, because in the approach—

Madam Chairman: It is really a statement.

Ms. Mendez: Okay, a statement. The Public Service Academy treats with training and development for all categories of staff, so we do have training for Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, which we just completed a first course and we are about to start a second course for another level of Deputy Permanent Secretaries, and we have supervisory training, but we also help Ministries in shaping programmes. It starts with the orientation as a clerk, a messenger, whoever walks through that door. How do we orient the staff, the officer to the public service? And that is also very crucial at the Ministries and line Ministries. Deputy Permanent Secretary also wanted to add.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Madam Chair, I think PS just took the “wind out of my sails”, because, yes, there is a suite of training courses that the Public Service Academy does provide, and PS touched on them, for all levels in the public service. Now, we also recently—within the suite of courses for 2017/18 we have included issues related to disciplinary procedures, the role of the investigating officer. So in those instances where there are disciplinary matters, public officers, whether at the supervisory/managerial level are given information on the “how to” in terms of treating with infractions that staff may commit.

But PS was right, a lot of the issues that you raised in your statement relate to supervisory issues where the first-line supervisor may have failed in addressing the matter or addressing it properly, and that is something that we cover in our supervisory development training. We have done a lot of work with Ministries in terms of the train the trainers, and helping them in terms of delivering and developing their own orientation and induction programmes. With the human resource management training, understanding that the first-line human resource manager is the supervisor. So there is a lot of work to be done, but there is work that has been done, and we continue to work.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. DPS. Member Bodoë.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to follow on the issue of the service that the citizenry, you know, gets at public institutions and public entities, and I want to go back to how we evaluate training, and in your submission on page 23 we speak about the Kirkpatrick evaluation model, which of course is four levels, and there is a statement here under point 4 in your response:

The academy intends to commence a structured evaluation of its activities to determine the impact on service delivery.

My question is, is it the first time that this kind of evaluation exercise is being undertaken of PSA activities or is it just for this financial year? Can I have some clarification on that?

Mr. Mc Kellar: The Public Service Academy—and I think PS hinted to it previously—the academy has always done an evaluation of its courses. It is one of the performance requirements of the human resource advisors who staffed the division, that at the end of each training activity a course report is done, and inside of that course report would have been an evaluation. Admittedly, thus far, and it is really because of staffing constraints—

Dr. Bodoë: Sorry. An evaluation of the course, not an evaluation of the impact on service delivery?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Correct. Right.

Dr. Bodoë: So I want to be clear on that.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Yes. The evaluations, unfortunately, that we have been able to do, thus far, are merely at the level one, which is the reactionary: Did the course meet the objectives that were stated? Did the participants have a good time? Did you learn anything new? What do you see as being applicable to your job when you get back? But to a lesser extent, and as I was saying, it is primarily due to staffing constraints. It is a committed bunch, but there is just so much that we could do. I think right now the academy, it is 14 persons to train a public service of over, probably, 50,000.

Dr. Bodoë: Well, I hear you, DPS and, you know, I suspect that there is quite a bit of enthusiasm for the training, but that in itself speaks to a problem. If you have a staff of 14 to train that many public servants, that is an issue that needs to be addressed, PS. But the follow-up question to that is that if you are only able to reach levels one and two— so the end result should be the impact on, you know, the behaviour of the public servant and the results, in other words, customer service is what we are looking for, then how can you be sure that the training that you are providing is really making a difference? Is it that we are spending the money on the training without really knowing the true impact of those training courses? I do not know if you are understanding where I am getting to? We might be doing the same thing over and over, but we might be doing the wrong thing or the inappropriate thing. So how do we go forward from this point?

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Mc Kellar: I think, just to piggyback on the question that Member Webster-Roy may have asked before in terms of innovations, it may lie in that to the extent that we are able to partner, collaborate with the Ministries, Departments who are the recipients of the training, and actually have them conduct the impact assessment at their end.

So as PS—the higher levels referred to the impact on the job, how has job performance attitudes changed on return to the office, what is the impact of the training on the actual, well, output of the Ministry, engage the Ministries to do that level of analysis for us and feedback, so that we would have a better idea of enterprise-wide how effective the training has been.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. Madam PS, if I may and I just want to go back to your definition of a public servant. And with the greatest of respect, you know, I would want to suggest that perhaps the requirements of the public should be paramount and perhaps preface the requirements of the public servant in that definition, and I mean that with the greatest of respect.

But my question to you in terms of the follow-up and we spoke about the issue of discipline and so on, and this is just a question that I am asking you broadly: Is it really

the goal of the public service to eliminate contract employment? And what are your views on the role of contract employment?—because, you know, some will submit that perhaps the best form of discipline is a contract.

Ms. Mendez: Member, if you do not mind, I would like to go back to the question regarding training and the human resources. As I had indicated, we are in the midst of doing our organizational structure which is in draft and we will treat with the staffing issues at the Public Service Academy. And with respect to the—

Dr. Bodoë: Sorry. The other was just your opinion as a very senior public servant who has been there for a while, as to what you feel might be the role of contract employment overall in the public service?—as opposed to everyone having permanent employment.

Ms. Mendez: I do not want to pre-empt the work of a committee that had been constituted to look at the whole issue of contract employment. There is a report before Cabinet. But in terms of practices globally, internationally, I should say regionally, and structures of public service, we are moving. You are seeing public service more moving into ICT-driven types of operation. So we will need in terms of specialized skills at times if they are not available on the public service establishment, we will need to have contract positions. And in an organization you will need core functions in order to fulfil the mandate of a government agency: your accounts, your HR, your policymaking, your monitoring and evaluation.

However, as I indicated we are seeing the move towards ICT-driven type of public service delivery. So we are looking at that approach in terms of e-government services, discussions and, you know, brainstorming sessions. How do we see the 21st public service for Trinidad and Tobago, the best practice? How can we be delivering efficiently, effectively and on-time service? There are certain areas that we can see that we can address through ICT. Immigration services, why can we not have persons applying online for passports? We have e-tax, it is a success story in terms of e-delivery services.

We have the single electronic window which we are expanding in terms of working with the Registrar General's Department. We are also looking at e-transactions, not only because of the security issues, but people are more using their cards. You can do your transaction; rather than paying in cash we can do

e-transactions. So these are some of the service delivery enhancement projects that we are looking at in collaboration with iGovTT and other agencies who are ready to move towards that service.

Dr. Bodoë: And I hear you; and I know also that there is an initiative at the Ministry of Works and Transport with regard to your driver's licence and so on. But my point remains and, again, I want, you know, to support what the Chairman is saying, that there remains an issue, a perception—well, it is more than perception, it is reality—that you go to a government facility and at the entry level, at the greeting level you encounter less than ideal service. And the question really is: How closer are we to changing that?

Ms. Mendez: And one mechanism, as I indicated quite early in the discussion, is that we have embarked on a customer-service delivery. It is only part of a whole service delivery improvement process, so we are engaging in training of our first line and other levels in the Ministries and Departments.

Dr. Bodoë: Do you have any programme in place in the initiatives, where you might have someone anonymous in the public entity monitoring and evaluating quietly the kind of service that is delivered? Because in a previous incarnation as Chairman of an RHA, we did have that initiative where you would have people just going into the emergency department, for example, or the clinics and trying to assess the kind of service that was delivered by the staff. Do you have anything in place like that or do you propose anything like that?

Mr. Mc Kellar: At present we do not. However, back in 2012, I think it was, during one of the previous initiatives of the Ministry to improve service delivery, we did have that initiative, the Mystery Shopper, where we did, in fact, have persons engaged who went out to Ministries and Departments, as you said, as anonymous seekers of services, and they, well, through their interactions/observations we had a very, if you want, objective and scientific approach to it whereby entities, their staff, their systems, well, processes were assessed. Actually, it was all part of, like as I said, a previous initiative that worked quite well.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you share the reasons then why that has not continued or do you feel there is a role for it again?

Mr. Mc Kellar: There is a role for it. It does not necessarily have to be

something that is initiated by the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. There is no reason why every agency cannot have a mechanism in place that incorporates the Mystery Shopper to assess and evaluate its own service delivery. Maybe what the Ministry can do from its end as a leader in terms of policies, is suggest how the thing can be done, what are the guidelines, provide some kind of monitoring support for it, but I think it is a workable effort.

Dr. Bodoë: Is it the policy for employees, front-line employees who interact with the citizens to wear name tags?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Not at this time. Many organizations do have ID cards/name tags and it is really up to those agencies to enforce compliance, but there is no stated policy.

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah. The problem with ID cards is that they are designed somehow that when you wear them they switch around so that you do not see the person's name. I am sure that we are all familiar with that. But do you think that there will be benefit into employees wearing name tags? Because, you know, certain studies have shown that the moment that somebody can be named it makes a difference in their behaviour and the quality of the services that they deliver, and this is a very simple, cheap, inexpensive initiative. Can you share your opinion on that?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Well, you are certainly right in that it is relatively inexpensive and not too difficult to introduce, but in terms of the compliance issue, that is most likely something that we have to enter into discussions with the representative unions, really.

Dr. Bodoë: No. I mean, certainly that could be something that could be built into terms of employment.

Mr. Mc Kellar: And therefore, it would be a negotiable issue.

Dr. Bodoë: Well, there we go, we are back to square one, eh.

Madam Chairman: Member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the issue of culture, not in the context of the merger and maybe cultural clashes that may have existed at that point in time and probably still do, but the whole issue of the Ministry's culture and the development of your strategic plan. Was the issue of culture from an organizational standpoint addressed at all in the Ministry's plan?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, member, and as I said, we can share the plan when it is approved, but we would have crafted the culture in terms of what are the values, and as I would have stated, accountability, transparency, quality of service, those are some of the areas that we would have identified.

Mr. Dookie: Okay. And in terms of performance, would you say that currently there exists a high performance culture in the organization?—I am talking about the Ministry.

Ms. Mendez: Generally, yes. We have very committed and dedicated and a very strong performance management culture.

Mr. Dookie: Okay.

Ms. Mendez: So, we would have, as I said, quarterly, half-yearly reports ensuring that our performance appraisals are prepared for both our monthly paid, contract and short term, so it is performance oriented.

Mr. Dookie: And in the context of performance and that culture we are talking about, what is the relationship between performance and progression and promotion and development?

Ms. Mendez: The performance appraisal would be utilized by, used by the Public Service Commission in respect to permanent employees. So before promotions are done, the performance appraisal plays a key role in that particular process at the commission.

Mr. Dookie: Okay. Also in the context of culture, and you would have identified the issue of high service delivery and public trust, and I am speaking to that with regard to the whole issue of organizational culture. How do you know that your customers are satisfied and that they are happy with the service that is rendered to them? In other words, I am getting to the question, is that measured?

Ms. Mendez: This area as I was going to indicate, will need to be strengthened, we need to have feedback mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, which we would have done in our strategic plan in our various consultations for development of an NICT plan, but we do need that approach in having a formal way, a formal mechanism. We will have feedback or questions through our social media, but an actual formalized feedback strategy, this will have to be strengthened in this area.

Mr. Dookie: So, currently you are saying that it does not exist—

Ms. Mendez: No.

Mr. Dookie:—or it exists in an informal way?

Ms. Mendez: Informal way and to various levels. For example, informally you will get feedback in terms of persons who are accessing the service of our property and real estate services division or who access the service of our public management consulting division, and Ministries would indicate some of their challenges, so that is a feedback to us in terms of how we should improve certain processes. But formal mechanism, this needs to be strengthened.

Mr. Dookie: And also in the context of culture, you mentioned the e-tax intervention which you described as a success story. So, I am thinking that you want this type of success culture in your Ministry. How is this story told to the public, in terms of this outstanding success being communicated to your customers as an encouragement to engage the intervention, and to also engage other interventions so that other interventions can become success stories and that success culture can be developed and become pervasive in the organization? Could you address that, please?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, member. And coincidentally, just prior to coming upstairs the acting CEO of iGovTT and I were chatting in terms of how we are going to collaborate with our communication strategies in sharing some of the programmes under the Ministry and probably the wider public service that are ICT related. Certainly the e-tax will be an area, although it falls under the portfolio of the Ministry of Finance, we will need to collaborate with the finance in sharing, certainly, the success of that particular e-service.

Mr. Dookie: So this success story, you are saying, is currently a secret. A story that has to be told, of course.

Ms. Mendez: Has to be told. Yes.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Right. Thank you. PS, I just wanted to find out, I was asking about the pension records which you all are trying to update consequent on the merger to get an idea of, you know, what success you have met with respect to that thus far?

Ms. Mendez: I would not have the data in terms of persons who would have gone through the public service and would have received their benefits. I can provide

that in writing. But what we have done through the intervention of the Ministry of Finance, who would have sent out circulars to all permanent secretaries, accounting officers and heads of departments, we have established a pension and leave unit within the human resource management unit. They would have done projections in terms of person who are to retire within this year and updated their pension and leave records. We also are doing a forecast for the persons who are to retire within the next five years. At the end of March we have to provide a report to the Ministry of Finance.

Also, every month I will get updates regarding the work that the pension and leave would have done in the Ministry, some of the challenges, and we would have shared, in accessing records of persons who would have served in other Ministries or even within the Ministry we might challenges in terms of when it went to accounts, how timely we got the response, although there has been greater improvement in audit. So, we are looking at the processes.

But I will like to invite my Deputy PS because we have been collaborating, and the Ministry of Finance through the Comptroller of Accounts has requested our assistance in helping reform the pension and leave process in the service. Deputy PS.

Mr. Mc Kellar: Thank you, PS, thank you, Chair. Yes. I think it has been voiced in this forum that there are a number of challenges with respect to the timely payment of terminal benefits, not only to established officers, but also contract officers as well. And the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications did receive as recently as, I think, December of last year a request from the Comptroller of Accounts to assist in moving forward a project that sought to address the processing of terminal benefits at the Treasury because that is where the pensions administration resides. So we have begun to work with the Comptroller of Accounts and her staff particularly those of the Pensions Branch in terms of mapping out a project that is really looking at a module of the IHRIS, the people-soft application for HR, that module that deals with pensions administration. So that actual module has been purchased some time now and we are really developing a project that would seek to have it properly implemented and operationalized in the pensions branch.

Madam Chairman: Could you give me a kind of time frame for the completion of the design of this project, the rollout of the project; if people have to be trained, if that is being done contemporaneously with the design, so that, you know, this project could

be implemented and people get some relief. You know, it is sad when you meet people and I am sure it happens to you more than it will happen to us, you meet people and say, “You know I have retired two years now. I am living on meh savings and I cannot get meh pension.”

Mr. Mc Kellar: Okay. Admittedly, like I said, the relevant module has been purchased, but if you want, we could describe that module as being plain vanilla. It has to be customized to meet the regulatory framework, the processes that exist within the pensions branch. So what is really being done right now, like I said, is to develop a project for implementation, for the customization. The pensions division is ambitiously looking towards making a submission for funding to be included in the next fiscal, that is 2018/19. So with much luck, much hard work we are hoping that a submission could be made when next estimates go forward which is really April of this year, and to be rolled out, to be fully rolled out, if successful, it will probably be a two-year period, thereabouts.

Madam Chairman: So we are looking at 2021 at best?

Mr. Mc Kellar: It will appear that way, Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Well I hope with much luck, much work we make it 2020, but we will see. All right.

So I just wanted to ask, though, about your asset management system which we are told is an open-source solution. Does that mean it is a free application?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Yes. It is an open source.

Madam Chairman: So it is a free application?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Right. So this is still in a pilot phase as resources have been directed to address an urgent matter. The resources would not be financial resources?

Mr. Mc Kellar: No. It is not finance, it is human resources.

Madam Chairman: Human resources. Might I ask, what is the urgent matter?

Mr. Mc Kellar: Well, we had another project within the Ministry dealing with the, if you want, the inventory, the records system for properties. So a lot of the emphasis was assigned to that project.

Madam Chairman: That inventory for properties, that project, is it completed?

Mr. Mc Kellar: We are still in the developmental process. Yeah.

Mrs. Maharaj: Yes. Madam Chair, we are, as the DPS was starting to say, we are still in the developmental stage. We did do a pilot exercise to test the open-main solution to determine whether in fact it can meet our needs in terms of our property management system. And coming out of that pilot exercise, I think it was determined that it will meet our requirements. We have started with the focus on the lease/rental properties, and it is intended that we will move on to state-owned properties being added to that database. The database is also supposed to—their system, sorry, is also supposed to allow us to design, continue to design in such a way to include other data fields which will speak to maintenance of the buildings, asset inventory of the buildings, all of that could be included into the system, and expenditure. Okay?

But for now we are doing the lease/rental accommodations, so these are privately owned properties that are rented by the State. And so far we have basic information entered in terms of tenant information, owner information and some property details, details on the rental. So information on the rental sum that has been negotiated and the statutory approvals that come with those properties, but we do hope to extent. So we continue to design out the system to include more data fields as we go along.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thanks. All right. So maybe I better ask this: what in terms of quantum of resources, what quantum was needed and its human resource? How many people were needed for this asset management system pilot in the first place?

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, we would have utilized our in-house software developers, OJTs who numbered about three persons, and we had a supervisor. The supervisor who was on contract had to proceed on contract leave.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So, you had four people—

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—and then you decided you were going to deal with the other project to do with properties?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, I might be a little confused because I thought from the submission that the asset management system was also, it was the same system that was being applied to capture properties and office stationery.

Ms. Mendez: It is, however, it had to be attuned to what are the fields, what are the data sets that would have been required under the property lease and rental which will be different from your inventory assets.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Mendez: And the same persons who would have developed the programme for Archives, were the same resource that were required to develop the PMIS. They were on short term. They only returned in February and they have been continuing with the PMIS. However, we have another ICT personnel who has been trained on the system, so he has been carrying through with the asset development and the training and whatever tweaking that needs to be done at Archives. That has not really stopped, and we are hoping that by April we can move into another division.

Madam Chairman: So, you have restarted your first pilot? That is what I understand?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So the technical meetings which were intended for February 2018, those have taken place?

Ms. Mendez: That would have taken place.

Madam Chairman: And would be dealing [*Crosstalk*]—just now.

Ms. Mendez: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: Please, thanks. So that allows for the continuing of the archives project?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Are we on track for the second pilot with Government Printery which you expect to start in April?

Ms. Mendez: Yes. Because our individual who is the supervisor will be back on contract by the end of March.

Madam Chairman: So that you would shortly have a complement that will allow you to run both?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thanks very much. All right. Now, I wanted to ask something about tagging, also, which I think with the good explanations we have been getting so far will help clarify us, the confusion in our minds. Now, what you told us is

that you have completed tagging everything at head office?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: What about your satellites?

Ms. Mendez: Yes. The internal audit confirmed through her report that the tagging has been completed.

Madam Chairman: Right. So that everywhere you have finished. And your tagging, is this an electronic system or are these manual?

Ms. Mendez: Manual, but eventually to be converted into an electronic system.

Madam Chairman: And eventually is how soon?

Ms. Mendez: That will depend on the—

Madam Chairman: Budget?

Ms. Mendez:—not the budget, the use of our human resources, because those are the persons who are treating with the software development aspect.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Ms. Mendez:—in Archives and PMIS.

Madam Chairman: All right. So give me an idea of time frame?

Ms. Mendez: I will certainly set a deadline by the end of this financial year.

Madam Chairman: For commencement or completion?

Ms. Mendez: To try and complete. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So let me ask another question. In terms of this, you have said to us that you, let me just get it, you do not have an inventory unit at head office? I understand that part?

Ms. Mendez: We utilize our clerical staff in each division to maintain the inventory. So whether they are in Archives which is computerizing information division, but this information is fed into our head office which will be managed. The corporate services is headed by an administrative office IV and we will have administrative staff.

Madam Chairman: Right. So who, therefore, is responsible to ensure that the information that is being fed from the divisions to your corporate services division is accurate and up to date?

Ms. Mendez: This would be the role of the internal audit who will make the visits to the various divisions and ensure the records that are maintained in the satellite

units will coincide with what is submitted and entered at the head office.

Madam Chairman: Right. And might I ask, how frequent is this cycle of visits?

Ms. Mendez: The work programme will show monthly visits in some areas and every quarter in the far-reaching access centres.

Madam Chairman: All right. Have there been reports of discrepancies?

Ms. Mendez: Minor, but we have been able to identify what would have transpired. It might have been wrong record keeping in the first instance. So when you went to rectify what was provided by the service provider, we saw where the discrepancy would have arisen.

Madam Chairman: All right. Has there been any experience of lost, misplacement?

Ms. Mendez: Yes. Unfortunately, a report came to me only last week, Archives division would have mounted a National Archives Awareness Week and we had theft of a laptop, but it is under police investigation at this time.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Mendez: Not inside, it would have been a visitor to the premises.

4.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So that now brings into play your security services?

Ms. Mendez: Fortunately there were surveillance cameras so we were able to pass that record to the police.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, in terms of movements, say, from one division to another; one department to the other, are there particular officers charged with the responsibility of recording that?

Ms. Mendez: At this time we are in the process of relocating a division from one area to another, and we would have assigned officers to have the inventory, ensure the internal audit signs off, and then when it is transferred to the other area, to receive and to get signed off.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. Dr. Bodoë.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam PS if I could direct your attention to Property and Real Estate Management Services, and that allocation for repairs and maintenance of buildings, it is on page 18 of the submission I have in front of me. And just to get an update, there are two projects there, repair and maintenance

of sewer system at the Siparia Administrative Complex, and replacement of 12 condensing units at the Siparia Administrative Complex, can we have an update as to whether these projects have been started, completed, or where they are, thereabouts?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, Vice-Chair, our coordinator would be able to provide you with those details.

Mrs. Maharaj: Vice-Chair, with respect to the sewer system at the Siparia Administrative Complex, we did receive proposals which were evaluated and a contractor was selected and approved by the Permanent Secretary. So at this point we are awaiting funding so that we can engage the contractor to undertake those works. And with respect to the change out of the 12 condensing units, the RFP has been prepared and we expect to issue it within a week or two.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate whether the current state of the sewer system is posing any public health hazard in that area at this time?

Mrs. Maharaj: Well, we have been experiencing a problem of, what I would call overload, ever so often, and we have been having to rely on the services of WASA to come in and pump it out for us so that we can continue operations. So, we have been monitoring it, so that we call in WASA to get it dealt with while we try to engage the contractor to do the longer-term works that are necessary.

Dr. Bodoë: So just to be clear, you said the contract has been awarded, but you are awaiting—

Mrs. Maharaj: No, it has not been awarded. We have evaluated it, we have selected a preferred contractor and it has already received the approval of the Permanent Secretary, but again we need the funding to be available before we can actually award the contract.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. I just want to move down that page with regard to landscaping services for state-owned properties. Are you in a position to tell us what state entities are housed at these addresses? I am speaking about bungalow No. 21602, that list going down.

Mrs. Maharaj: Yes. So, the description is a little bit misleading, in that much of these sites are now vacant. It is land only, the bungalows having been demolished with the exception being No. 9 Trinidad Crescent, Federation Park. There is still a structure on that site. The property is currently being utilized for storage by the

Ministry, but it is one that is earmarked for demolition.

Dr. Bodoë: These landscaping service are done in-house or contracted out?

Mrs. Maharaj: Right, so these are contracted out. And when we say landscaping really, here we are speaking about cutting grass and just keeping it clean so that it does not cause a public nuisance.

Dr. Bodoë: All right, I just wanted to clarify that.

Mrs. Maharaj: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: If I can just look at an issue that came about from the Auditor General Report in 2016, regarding the findings under IT governance, and if I can just quote from the report of 2016 where it says that:

The monitoring and oversight of the IT function in the public service by the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications was not evident at the entities examined. The IT units appear to operate without clear direction and defined goals and objectives. And the report goes on to express concern about the fact that IT strategic plans were not developed:

The absence of an IT strategic plan, and also the lack of an IT security policy with its implications.

So, Madam PS, would you want to comment on this?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, Vice-Chair, and only last week we did meet with the representatives from the Auditor General's Department, and we would provide responses to them, which we would make a copy available. However, we are in the process of filling contract positions which will provide that monitoring and evaluation. We have certain positions that we would have advertised and recruited and selected certain personnel, so we will be treating with that issue of the monitoring and evaluation. We, in collaboration with iGov, do have an ICT/GLAC, and our acting CEO would provide information in terms of that forum of ICT managers, where we share the best practices, the policies and the plans. The National Information Communication Technology plan is being finalized based on our consultations. Once that is approved that would be the policy and framework which each Ministry should develop, and their own ICT plan to ensure the deliverables that have been outlined in that plan. But I will ask our acting CEO to give you some information with respect to the network and the security compliance.

Mr. Bobb-Semple: Right, member, Vice-Chair, it is a forum where all of the IT managers are invited to participate. Most of them do come. One, it is meant to share ideas, best practice, and we also share with them some of the policies that we utilize within iGovTT. However, one of the things that you mentioned in terms of the overall monitoring of it itself, one of the elements as PS described that is being addressed, in terms of the position that they are waiting to fill, however the information is provided to the IT managers. We get a pulse of what they are doing, and we provide some advice. They also, as I mentioned earlier with regard to some of the training that is offered, they are also part of best practice training that is provided. However, as you rightfully mentioned, it is not subsequently monitored at this time, but the Ministry is taking measures to put those things in place at the moment that.

Dr. Bodoe: Madam PS, just for the assurance of the public and in view of the fact that we are increasingly moving towards online activities in provision of services and so on, the lack of an IT security policy, in terms of the impact, and for the public assurance, is it something that the public would need to be worried about at this point in time?

Ms. Mendez: The development of the ICT policy is an active engagement of iGovTT as well. Certainly, we will have to get the participation and engagement of the ICT managers. The policy will form, in terms of a whole approach, coming out from our NICT plan. But it is receiving active attention.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so, member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to the issue of inventory management and inventory control. How often do you audit your inventory records?

Ms. Mendez: As I indicated, this would form part of our work programme of the internal audit and it will vary monthly or quarterly depending on which areas that there might be needs or any issue.

Mr. Dookie: Okay, so accordingly, when was the last audit done?

Ms. Mendez: I would have received the last audit from last December from the external access centres.

Mr. Dookie: And what would you identify as the major findings in there?

Ms. Mendez: Well, it was a very positive audit in terms of what was found.

What would have been included in the inventory is what would have been audited and would have been seen physically there.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Madam PS, thank you. I just want to look a bit at CNMG. What we have been told is that even though there appears to be \$1.5 million decrease in its allocation that increases in revenue—it would not be hampered in its operation because increases in revenue are projected. Could you share with us on what factors are these projections based?

Ms. Mendez: I am speaking today as acting CEO, these would be programmes that they would have been able to engage in terms of just completed carnival programmes. So the CNMG would have been the station that would have won or had that particular contract; various local programmes, how they are able to attract the advertisements. What we are seeing in terms of management of expenditure, the programmes regarding news item have been moved from one hour to half an hour. In terms of staffing we have had some resignations, retirements, people going on to greener pastures. So, in terms of personnel expenditure that has been reduced. So, overall there have been some operating expenses that CNMG has been looking at in order to trim.

Madam Chairman: Right, so these are the administrative expenses?

Ms. Mendez: Administrative.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, you have also indicated to us that the Ministry conducts oversights through monitoring as set out in the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*. Do you receive monthly financial statements?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So, you would have received up to January 2018?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, every month they will give us the monthly financial statements. We have the last audited financial statement for CNMG of 2016. We would receive their board minutes which we use as monitoring, and of course their annual budget which they would be in the midst of preparing. So, these are the ways that we will monitor. We also have a very close link with the CEO and my office and the financial persons and our head of accounts.

Madam Chairman: So the 2017 annual audited financial statements are due?

Ms. Mendez: That is yet to be received.

Madam Chairman: They are due?

Ms. Mendez: They are due.

Madam Chairman: But they are overdue?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So that as accounting officer, what steps have you taken to ensure that they would be received shortly?

Ms. Mendez: Well, we are in communication and write to them when there are outstanding matters.

Madam Chairman: So, you have written to them on this matter?

Ms. Mendez: I spoke to the CEO up to this morning.

Madam Chairman: Yes. So, when is it likely to be delivered?

Ms. Mendez: He did not indicate that part, he just said the last statement was 2016, so I will have to follow up.

Madam Chairman: Please, and if you could share that with us in your further responses.

Ms. Mendez: Yes, I will do.

Madam Chairman: Now, if you could shed some light, there is a publication in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper, August 24, 2017, which says:

Financial losses at CNMG, the Government has decided to shut down state- owned CNMG and revive TTT.

Okay, what is the status of this?

Ms. Mendez: This report is still receiving the attention of Cabinet.

Madam Chairman: Oh, so that there has been no determination?

Ms. Mendez: No final determination.

Madam Chairman: And therefore business continues.

Ms. Mendez: With the CNMG.

Madam Chairman: And what steps are being taken? Those are the steps you have spoken about to deal with the financial losses, or what other steps to deal with financials?

Ms. Mendez: These are the steps that I have been advised that the company has taken.

Madam Chairman: So you expect it to be either in the black or break even by the end of fiscal?

Ms. Mendez: I am being positive, yes, that we should have good revenue generation.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay, so I move to member Bodoë, and then I will move to member Dookie.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. PS, just following up on a question with regard to the audited statement for 2016. On the last page under Contingent Liabilities, it is the last page of the audit report, the statement, and it says there that there are various warranty and legal claims that were brought against the company during the year 2016. Can you give us an update, perhaps, on how many claims are involved and perhaps the quantum that might be involved?

Ms. Mendez: Member, I will request that I provide that in writing in my subsequent submission.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So, Madam PS and other officials, I really want to thank you all for the light you have shed on, you know, the concerns the Committee has had. And therefore I want to invite the Permanent Secretary to make any closing statements or recommendations she would like to present, that maybe the Committee could consider to see how we could help you be more effective in facing the challenges and delivery of your mandate of your Ministry to the public of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Madam Chairman, Vice-Chair and members. We really thank you for the opportunity to be able to respond to this enquiry regarding our operations at the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, and in addition to our state agencies. We are continuing to ensure that the transparency and accountability framework and values of a public service are engendered and commissioned within the public service, and in particular in the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. It is a task that is not easy, but we are standing committed and ready to assist our fellow Ministries and Departments.

Certainly, when they appear before you we hear the challenges and we try back at home to see how we can help in fixing not only our internal systems, but developing policies and programmes, if it is in terms of increasing the capabilities, or in terms of

looking at staffing structures, or in various overall systems and policies in human resource management. In regard to service delivery, I want to reiterate that the move is really towards an ICT driven public service, and we need to harness the ICT that we have invested very heavily over the years. How can we really utilize the different programmes, applications to improve and enhance the delivery of our services to all our citizens?

We know it is a very demanding area in terms of various services that we have to provide, particularly in this slowing down of the economy. We are still required to provide the best quality service to citizens. So, certainly we will welcome your assistance in helping the Ministries understand that they can work with us, collaborate with us, coordinate with us in respect of enhancing delivery to the public of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.

Madam Chairman: So again, I thank you Madam PS, Mr. Deputy PS, the Executive Director of NALIS, the Executive Director of iGovTT, and Coordinator of PRES D for coming. I wish you all a safe journey home. I want to thank the members of the media who stayed with us, I want to thank the members of the listening public for their comments, their interest in this enquiry. I wish you all a safe journey home, and I now bring this public meeting to an end. This meeting is now suspended. Thank you very much.

5.14 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*