



SEVENTEENTH REPORT OF  
THE  
**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

( ENTERPRISES ) COMMITTEE

FOURTH SESSION OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> PARLIAMENT

Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of Export Centres Company Limited (ECCL) for the financial years 2008 to 2011.



## Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (P.A.(E).C) established under Section 119(5) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is mandated to consider and report to the House of Representatives accordingly on:

*“(a) the audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the state; and*

*(b) the Auditor General’s Report on any such accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements.”*

### Current membership

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh	Member
Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Mrs. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	Member
Mr. Foster Cummings	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member

### Committee Staff

The current staff members serving the Committee are:

Ms Keiba Jacob	Secretary to the Committee
Ms Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary to the Committee
Ms. Vanna Jankiepersad	Procedural Officer Intern
Mr. Darien Buckmire	Graduate Research Assistant
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### Publication

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## MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE



Mr. Wade Mark  
**Chairman**



Dr. Tim Gopeesingh  
**Vice-Chairman**



Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly  
**Member**



Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste -Primus  
**Member**



Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds  
**Member**



Ms. Amrita Deonarine  
**Member**



Ms. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn  
**Member**



Mr. Foster Cummings  
**Member**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C) is the Parliamentary Financial Oversight Committee tasked with the responsibility of examining the audited accounts of all State Enterprises that are owned or controlled by the state. The Committee examined **the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheets and other Financial Statements of the Export Centres Company Limited (ECCL) for the financial years 2008 – 2011** and produced this report to highlight its findings and recommendations.

This report details the issues, endorsements and recommendations made by the Committee to improve ECCL's performance. The issues identified in this report were found during the period under examination (2008 to 2011).

During this inquiry, the following issues arose:

1. The oversight role of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.
2. The monitoring and oversight role of the Ministry of Finance –Investments Division.
3. The delay and status of the outstanding financial statements for the years 2012 to 2017.
4. The reduction of the subvention received by the ECCL.
5. The recent changes in the ECCL's annual budget.
6. The mandate and relevance of the ECCL.
7. The collaboration between the ECCL and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO).
8. The challenges experienced by the ECCL.
9. The role of the ECCL in securing support for artisans from the NEDCO.
10. The financial constraints of the ECCL.
11. The importance of recruiting a financial accountant.
12. The high turnover of persons in executive management positions.
13. The lack of an approved updated organizational structure.
14. The number of ECCL Centres.
15. The number of business opportunities and jobs created as a result of the ECCL's training programmes.
16. The planned expansion of ECCL activity in Tobago.
17. The potential for partnerships with other training institutions.
18. The other craft-related entities with which the ECCL has a relationship.

19. The Incubator Programme for development of artisans' export readiness.
20. The rationale for the establishment and the closure of the 'Hand Made Creations TT Store' formerly located at Gulf City Mall.
21. The establishment of a permanent craft market and the most suitable location for it.
22. The Artisans' challenges in accessing raw materials.
23. The size and potential for the expansion of the craft market.
24. The emergence of a new kind of craft producer with entrepreneurial drive.
25. The conditions and motivating factors necessary to create successful artisans.
26. The shift in the market from purely decorative to utilitarian, purposeful craft.
27. The need to ensure artisans practice competitive pricing strategies.
28. The ECCL's collaboration with the tourism industry stakeholders, both public and private.
29. The diversification of the types of craft being produced.
30. The important role of the ECCL's Research Department in innovation.
31. The status of the ECCL's Strategic Plan.
32. The status of the ECCL's marketing strategies.
33. The ECCL's target group.
34. The results of the ECCL's 2008 – 2009 Tracer Study.
35. The need for the ECCL to expand its activities beyond training.
36. The potential need for rebranding of the Company.
37. The ECCL's planned presence at the upcoming Carifesta 2019, which is being held in Trinidad and Tobago.

Based on the Committee's examination, the following recommendations were proposed:

- *The MCDCA should conduct an assessment to determine whether the ECCL's programmes add value to the existing training provision infrastructure of other publicly-owned entities providing equivalent programmes to those of the ECCL, and the extent of the added value. The findings should be reported to Parliament submitted by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should provide a time line for the auditing of its financial statements for Financial Year 2012 to Financial Year 2017 by July 31, 2019.*

- *The ECCL should develop a framework as well as institutional arrangements which can enhance the financial management transparency of the Company and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should submit a progress report on the work of the External Consultant, by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should submit the status of the funding request to the MOF including the date and amount by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should develop policies to enhance employee retention and protect its institutional memory and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should develop an employee operations manual specific to each department and submit to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should examine the reasons behind resignation or termination of employees so as to reduce the frequency of such instances through methods including exit interviews and report its findings by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should provide a status report on the ongoing recruitment of an Internal Auditor and Financial Accountant by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should write to Parliament explaining the relationship between its Internal Audit Unit and the Audit Committee by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should have the MCDCA and the MOF review the Internal Audit Function and provide guidance as to the arrangement of the same by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should provide a road map for the approval of its draft Internal Audit-related policies and the implementation of measures to address the shortcomings identified by the former Internal Auditor by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should provide a time line for the development and implementation of the Incubator Programme by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should report to Parliament on the scope for enhanced collaboration with other training agencies by July 31, 2019.*
- *The ECCL should re-evaluate its Strategic Plan within the context of outcome-focused strategic planning as described in the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual to ensure that the Plan is best suited to the Company's priorities, resources and capabilities in the area of training and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*

- *The MOF– Investments Division should urgently undertake an assessment of the areas in which assistance can be rendered to the ECCL to achieve its strategic goals and fulfill its mandate and submit its conclusions by July 31, 2019.*
- *The MOF– Investments Division should report to Parliament on the measures it plans to adopt to ensure effective oversight of the ECCL by July 31, 2019.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Establishment

The PA(E)C of the Eleventh Republican Parliament was established by resolution of the House of Representatives and the Senate at the sittings held on Friday November 13, 2015 and Tuesday November 17, 2015 respectively.

### Mandate

The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago mandates that the Committee shall consider and report to the House on the audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by, or on behalf of the State.

In addition to the Committee's powers entrenched in the Constitution, the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives and Senate also empower the Committee (but not limited) to:

- a) send for persons, papers and records;
- b) have meetings whether or not the House is sitting;
- c) meet in various locations;
- d) report from time to time; and
- e) communicate with any other Committee on matters of common interest.

### Ministerial Response

The Standing Orders<sup>1</sup> provide for the Minister responsible for the Ministry or Body under review to submit within sixty (60) days a paper to the House responding to any recommendations or comments contained in the Report which are addressed to it.

### State Enterprises Performance Standards

The PAEC used the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual as a benchmark to examine the performance of State Enterprises. The manual outlines the framework for compliance with official policy and the monitoring mechanisms to be used in assessing such compliance. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago monitors the performance of State Enterprises to ensure that these enterprises successfully execute their mandates and maximize value for money for the national stakeholders and shareholders.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Standing Order 110 (6) in the [House of Representatives](#) and 100(6) of the [Senate](#).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.finance.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/State-Enterprise-Performance-Monitoring-Manual-2011.pdf>

## **Election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman**

In accordance with section 119(6) of the Constitution, the Chairman must be a member of the Opposition in the Senate. At the first meeting held on Wednesday December 2, 2015, Mr. Wade Mark was elected Chairman and Dr. Tim Gopeesingh was elected Vice Chairman of the Committee.

## **Establishment of Quorum**

The Committee is required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum so that decisions can be made. A quorum of four (4) Members, inclusive of the Chair or Vice-Chairman), with representatives from both Houses was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

## **Change in Membership**

On December 1, 2017 a decision was made at a sitting of the House of Representatives to replace Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe as a Member with Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly.

# METHODOLOGY

## Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At its second meeting on Wednesday January 13, 2016, the Committee agreed to prioritize thirty-four

(34) State Enterprises as follows:

1. Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL)
2. Caribbean New Media Group (CNMG)
3. Caroni Green Limited
4. Community Environmental & Protection Enhancement Programme Company Limited (CEPEP)
5. Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL)
6. Estate Management and Business Development Company Ltd. (EMBDC)
7. Evolving Tecknologies and Enterprise Development Co. Ltd (eTECK)\*
8. National Commission for Self Help Limited
9. National Entrepreneurship Development Company Ltd. (NEDCO)
10. National Enterprises Limited (NEL)
11. National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC)
12. National Infrastructure Development Company Ltd. (NIDCO)\*
13. National Insurance Property Development Company Ltd. (NIPDEC)
14. National Quarries Company Limited (NQCL)
15. National Schools Dietary Services (NSDSL)\*
16. Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Ltd (PSAEL)
17. Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago (PETROTRIN)
18. Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Ltd. (PLIPDECO)
19. Port of Spain Waterfront Development Ltd.
20. Rincon Development Ltd.
21. Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd.
22. Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago (SporTT)
23. Telecommunication Services of Trinidad, Tobago (TSTT)
24. Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Company Ltd.
25. Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTMF)\*

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\* Examined in the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament. The Report can be accessed via the following link:  
<http://www.ttparliament.org/reports/p11-s1-j-20160913-PAEC-R1.pdf>

26. Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Limited (NP)
27. Tourism Development Corporation (TDC)
28. Union Estate Electricity Generation Company Limited
29. Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDECOTT)
30. Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL)
31. Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT)
32. National Flour Mills Limited\*
33. Community Improvement Services Limited
34. Government Human Resource Services Company Limited (GHRS)\*

At a meeting held on November 15, 2017, the Committee identified the following entities for examination in the Third Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament:

- i. National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO);
- ii. National Maintenance, Training and Security Company (MTS);
- iii. National Training Agency;
- iv. Union Estate Electricity Generation Company Limited;
- v. National Commission for Self Help;
- vi. Export Centres Company Limited;
- vii. National Helicopter Services Limited;
- viii. Youth Training & Employment Partnership Programme Limited;
- ix. Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited;
- x. Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP); and
- xi. Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company Limited.

# THE INQUIRY PROCESS

The Inquiry Process outlines steps taken by the Committee to conduct the inquiry into the operations of the ECCL. The following steps outlines the Inquiry Process agreed to by the PA(E)C:

- I. Identification of issues in the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the ECCL for the financial years 2008-2011;
- II. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the ECCL. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
  - a. Background;
  - b. Objective of Inquiry; and
  - c. Proposed Questions.
- III. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposal by the Committee, when approved, questions were forwarded to the ECCL on April 5, 2018. Written responses were received from the ECCL on April 24, 2018;
- IV. Written request for additional information was sent to the ECCL on January 17, 2019 to which written responses were received from the ECCL on January 29, 2019;
- V. Preparation of an Issues Paper, based on written responses received from the ECCL. The Issues Paper identified and summarised any matters of concern in the responses provided by the ECCL;
- VI. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions. In this instance, a public hearing was held on Wednesday January 16, 2019.
- VII. Written request for additional information was sent to the ECCL after the public hearing on January 17, 2019. The responses were subsequently received on February 1, 2019.
- VIII. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.

## PROFILE OF ECCL

The ECCL was established in 1994 and then incorporated as a Limited Company on July 3, 1996 in accordance with the Companies Ordinance Chap 31:1 of Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>3</sup> As reflected in its 1995 Cabinet Minute, it was agreed that the ECCL should be responsible for:

- The identification of market opportunities;
- A continuous design of a range of craft items with a Caribbean aesthetic; and
- Sourcing raw materials locally and internationally.

Throughout 1996 to 2001 the ECCL produced and manufactured craft items to which profits were generated from the ECCL's craft retail stores and Export Market. In 2002 the mandate of ECCL was altered to provide Training Programmes which were geared toward "training single mothers – head of households with children to educate, to become micro entrepreneurs capable of producing and selling high quality craft".<sup>4</sup> Subsequent to this, the Programmes of the ECCL were broadened to encompass citizens in various craft entities. These Programmes were aimed at reducing crime and poverty.

According to the ECCL's Policy and Procedure Manual, the ECCL's vision and mission was to "promote and empower, future growth and development of small scale local industries through our distinct and various craft programmes".

A new mission was developed which was to provide "guidance, research, training and support to producers of craft and fashion throughout Trinidad and Tobago in order to develop, promote and sustain the handicraft industry."<sup>5</sup>

Line Ministry – Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts

Minister - Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Permanent Secretary (Ag.) – Ms. Angela Edwards

Chief Executive Officer (Interim) – Ms. Susan Narine

Chairman, Board of Directors – Ms. Volneitha John

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<sup>3</sup> ECCL Written Submission dated January 29, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p 1

<sup>5</sup> Policy and Procedures Manual – Export Centres Company Limited, p 1

# ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following an examination of the oral and written evidence presented to the Committee, the following issues were identified and the corresponding observations and recommendations proposed:

## 1. **The Mandate and Relevance of the Export Centres Company Limited (ECCL)**

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (MCDCA) has a role in ensuring that the ECCL is achieving its goals. ECCL's mandate was briefly described as being centred on "production and export".<sup>6</sup> The Chairman of ECCL clarified that the mandate was to revitalize craft for export purposes. The Company was geared towards education, export and entrepreneurship. On the basis of its new Strategic Plan, the Company was focused on training individuals in several areas which included craft, entrepreneurship and business management. This training was done in conjunction with other organizations such as the National Export Facilitation Organization of Trinidad and Tobago (exporTT) and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO).

The primary reason for providing Training Programmes was to facilitate learning and development and create job opportunities. Given its modest monthly budgetary allocation relative to the cost of putting on Training Programmes, it may be inefficient for ECCL to continue upgrading its Centres<sup>7</sup> and providing training in fulfilment of its mandate. Moreover, ECCL indicated that one of the challenges faced was the reduction in its subvention – from eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000) to six million three hundred thousand dollars (\$6,300,000). Such a situation could lead to an erosion of the overall perception of the Company's usefulness.

Research has shown that a company cannot afford for its payroll to exceed the expenses required for its operation. Having two employees doing the work of one results in inefficiency with valuable resources being absorbed by salaries.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, where two State Enterprises perform the same function, this results in a duplication of roles, responsibilities and functions; several other public entities provide training similar to the ECCL course offering.

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<sup>6</sup> ECCL Written Submission dated April 24, 2018

<sup>7</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated January 29, p 4

<sup>8</sup> Jerry Jensen, Employee Evaluation: It's a Dirty Job But Somebody's Got To Do It"  
<[https://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Employee%20Evaluation\\_1.pdf](https://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Employee%20Evaluation_1.pdf) > p 1

The issue of duplication of roles, responsibilities and functions of several State Enterprises has been existing for some time, for instance where the same training courses were being offered by two publicly-owned companies.<sup>9</sup> The latter instance was illustrated in the Twelfth Report of the PAEC concerning the National Training Agency (NTA) whereby a recommendation was made to determine whether the same training services offered by NTA were offered by other training agencies<sup>10</sup>. Accordingly, the continued existence of the ECCL in its current form may prolong a situation of duplication of roles or overlapping of responsibilities as it pertains to the existence of other similar State Enterprise Agencies.

**Recommendation:**

- *The MCDCA should conduct an assessment to determine whether the ECCL's programmes add value to the existing training provision infrastructure of other publicly-owned entities providing equivalent programmes to those of the ECCL, and the extent of the added value. The findings should be reported to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*

**2. Lack of Transparency**

The disclosure of information is of pertinent importance in promoting transparency (**per Guideline 3.2 of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual**). Good public governance entails the efficient and effective use of public finance for attaining policy objectives. Accordingly, State Enterprises must implement good practices in transparency in order to deliver effective services.

Citizens should have access to detailed information of the operations and use of public funds of a Stated - Owned Company by virtue of the Company's Audited Financial Statements being published in a timely manner (**per Guideline 2.2.5 of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual**). The determination of a State Enterprise's accountability would be based on the Company's public reporting practices, audit provisions and conflict of interest protections.

There has been a lack of transparency by the ECCL based on its failure to submit its financial statements to Parliament for fiscal 2012 to 2017. The ECCL indicated to the Investments Division of

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<sup>9</sup> Hebe Verrest Home-Based Economic Activities and Caribbean Urban Livelihoods: Vulnerability, Ambition and Impact in Paramaribo and Port of Spain 2007 p 98

<sup>10</sup> Twelfth Report of the Public Accounts Enterprise Committee on an Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheets and other Financial Statements of the National Training Agency (NTA) for the financial years 2008 to 2011 < <http://www.tparliament.org/reports/p11-s3-J-20180427-PAEC-R12-NTA.pdf> >

the Ministry of Finance (MOF) that one of the main reasons for not updating their financial statements of audited accounts was because of the issue of funding as well as not having a Financial Accountant in the Accounting Unit.<sup>11</sup> The Investments Division expressed its intentions of making a concerted effort with the Permanent Secretary of the MOF to assist ECCL in having their financial statements audited.

**Recommendations:**

- *ECCL should provide a time line for the auditing of its financial statements for Financial Year 2012 to Financial Year 2017 by July 31, 2019; and*
- *ECCL should develop a framework as well as institutional arrangements which can enhance the financial management transparency of the Company and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*

**3. Audited Financial Statements**

ECCL recognized that its submission of audited financial statements was not in compliance with the provisions of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual<sup>12</sup>. The Company has been unable to bring the submission of its audited financial statements up to date. One reason was the lack of funds to hire External Auditors<sup>13</sup>. The last External Auditor retained by the Company was Deloitte and Touche, who audited the financial statements for the years 2010 and 2011. The Company explained that quotations were received and negotiations were held with auditing firms to secure a cost effective option for the auditing of its statements. The absence of a Financial Accountant was also pointed out as a contributing factor. Recruitment to fill this post for the first time since 2016 was ongoing. The ECCL requested assistance from the MOF towards the cost of completing outstanding audits. Pending the hiring of an External Auditor, the ECCL brought in a consultant to deal with the backlog.

**Recommendation:**

- *The ECCL should submit a progress report on the work of the External Consultant, by July 31, 2019; and*
- *The ECCL should submit the status of the funding request to the MOF including the date and amount by July 31, 2019.*

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<sup>11</sup> Verbatim Notes of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee dated January 16, 2019 p 10

<sup>12</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated April 24, 2018, p 10

<sup>13</sup> Verbatim Notes of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee dated January 16, 2019 p 10

#### 4. High Employee Turnover

As evidenced, there was a high turnover of Financial Accountants for the period 2010 to 2015.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the post of Financial Accountant, there were five other vacant positions at the ECCL which included Chief Executive Officer, Human Resource Manager, Internal Auditor and Marketing Manager. The position of Financial Accountant at the ECCL has been vacant since 2016. Frequent staff replacements lead to high costs related to replacement, training, selecting and recruiting, in addition to loss of institutional memory,<sup>15</sup> as employees move on before ongoing projects are completed. Additionally, while the posts were vacant, a large volume of work remained undone. The ECCL stated in its Tracer Study that “some critical historical training information is not available”<sup>16</sup>, for example.

The ECCL employees would have been exposed to confidential data specific to their post. Hiring several persons for these positions over a short period of time would have amplified the risk of confidential information being divulged by these employees both prior and subsequent to their departure. This can harm the Company in a number of ways. The confidentiality clause in the ECCL’s contracts of employment provided legal protection to the Company, however if the Company were to take legal action against every employee who breached this clause, exorbitant legal costs can be incurred.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *The ECCL should develop policies to enhance employee retention and protect its institutional memory and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019;*
- *The ECCL should development an employee operations manual specific to each department and submit to Parliament by July 31, 2019; and*
- *The ECCL should examine the reasons behind resignation or termination of employees so as to reduce the frequency of such instances through methods including exit interviews and report its findings to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*

#### 5. Internal Audit

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<sup>14</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated January 29 p 11

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, *Too Good to be Forgotten – Why Institutional Memory Matters*, accessed on April 8, 2019: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-35821782>

<sup>16</sup> ECCL, Tracer Studies 2008-2009 (Wave 1), p 8.

Internal Audit has not been prioritized by the ECCL. The role of Internal Audit is to provide objective assurance and insight on the effectiveness and efficiency of risk management, internal control and governance processes.<sup>17</sup> Although the ECCL was established in 1994, the Company had no Internal Audit Unit for the first seventeen (17) years of its existence, until 2011<sup>18</sup>. The Internal Audit Unit has a staff complement of one (1), which the Company sees as sufficient<sup>19</sup>. This single position of Internal Auditor has now been vacant since February 2018<sup>20</sup>, and efforts are underway to fill the vacancy.<sup>21</sup>

The ECCL established an Audit Committee to monitor internal controls. The Company recognizes that all its Internal Audit policies are at the draft stage, that no audit investigations were ever carried out and that, in the absence of a fully constituted Board, the exercise of oversight through internal audits has been negligible since 2015.

### **Recommendations:**

- *The ECCL should provide a status report on the ongoing recruitment of an Internal Auditor and Financial Accountant by July 31, 2019;*
- *The ECCL should write to Parliament explaining the relationship between its Internal Audit Unit and the Audit Committee by July 31, 2019;*
- *The ECCL should have the MCDCA and the MOF review the Internal Audit Function and provide guidance as to the arrangement of the same by July 31, 2019; and*
- *The ECCL should provide a road map for the approval of its draft Internal Audit-related policies and the implementation of measures to address the shortcomings identified by the former Internal Auditor by July 31, 2019.*

## **6. Training**

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<sup>17</sup> Internal Auditing's Role in Corporate Governance < <https://na.theiia.org/about-ia/PublicDocuments/Internal-Auditing-Role-in-Corporate-Governance.pdf> > p 1

<sup>18</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated April 24, 2018 p 13

<sup>19</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated April 24, 2018 p 11

<sup>20</sup> ECCL Updated Written Submission dated January 29, p 11

<sup>21</sup> Export Centres Company Limited Employment Vacancies

<[20 | Page](https://www.facebook.com/molsedtt/photos/a.125357780867131/2141250209277868/?type=3&eid=ARB-YLU27fsaukThX4AcBklN4M3hsK-YrjzHVzV_azrmqBK5vwwcJrKQKeK87VC7-sqozPUo5zhCsR3-&__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARDwHr-e9gf1yqX0mG47dwIy1L3Jwv2TMIInJHqXzeChKIXrVV0R1Nbd6xeexA6HutFKNWvevnb2pdpP2JQMw7gAYKnDfUZRHtmqKiulgqwhgxl_r7IfO0P7xh2pRmxOtXlSiFaoTp_M8uKWWG1LnljKeQ3CAL95XM0xhI0-CsXVKTI6ABoFWSFEAKG5Ck5ZlnpGMLxXd6dW9zk6TEDJEEZh9n49m85TZaIgdS3n5JTesEz61e_PzsJ0bw3EZYKhAVCBAPeIBxtJhdbGE9iG1Aa4l1sa0wg9hB5qAl2IYTlnQsdNG9YxQx1SOcY-jlLmafQ4y6KJDQogVjk7fKQCbjIy8A&__tn__=EEHH-R></a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

In 2001, there was a shift in the ECCL’s mandate towards prioritization of training to develop artisans with the skills to produce quality items that could be exported. This entrepreneurial and production training was integrated into the Company’s Strategic Plan. The emphasis is on intermediate and advanced level training, which the Company is aware, that smaller numbers are attracted in comparison to the numbers at basic level training. Though in some years no training took place, the ECCL has trained five thousand (5,000) people at its sixty-seven (67) training centres across Trinidad and Tobago. Of these, approximately two hundred (200) started their own businesses. The Company’s training is offered to various socially disadvantaged categories in society. This target audience lacked much of the necessary tools to succeed as entrepreneurs, which made the ECCL’s work more challenging. ECCL partnered with other public bodies in locating target audiences for training and to facilitate outlets for entrepreneurial activity by recipients of training. Plans are in the works to have an incubator programme for graduates of the ECCL’s training to provide them with a venue and other infrastructure for their sales activities.

Based on the ECCL’s Tracer Studies, the number of trainees for 2008 to 2009 was initially two hundred and six (206). The ECCL attempted to increase its capacity of trainees from two hundred and fifty (250) to two thousand five hundred (2500) for the period 2008-2011 in its Strategic Plan but this was not achieved.

The tables below show the statistical summary of ECCL’s Graduates for the periods 2008 to 2018:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Graduates</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Persons in Business</b>	<b>Jobs Created</b>
2008-2009	206	70 persons	11	6
2010	336	137 persons	17	9
2011-2012	428	182 persons	22	3
2013	35	24 persons	24	-
2014-2015	405	88 persons	13	2
2014	148 City & Guilds Certified graduates	110 persons	18	3

2014	Handicraft Groups in Trinidad & Tobago	1427 Items Produced	1166 Items Sold
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2012-2013	Baseline Handicraft Survey	71 craft business persons interviewed	Sales \$170,000 US	98 jobs
2017	Craft Market Survey	63 artisans	\$57,481 Revenue	2 days
2018	Carnival Craft Market Survey	47 artisans	\$60,005 Revenue	3 days

**Recommendations:**

- *The ECCL should provide a time line for the development and implementation of the Incubator Programme by July 31, 2019; and*
- *The ECCL should report to Parliament on the scope for enhanced collaboration with other training agencies by July 31, 2019.*

**6. Strategic Plan**

For a Strategic Plan to be properly implemented, the management structure of the Company must be in place. The ECCL enhanced its strategic goals for the immediate and long term future in its last Plan by emphasizing training and development. However, based on the statistics, not many persons are being trained as anticipated. The development of the Draft Strategic Plan for the period 2019 – 2021 is ongoing.

**Recommendation:**

- *The ECCL should re-evaluate its Strategic Plan within the context of outcome-focused strategic planning as described in the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual to ensure that the Plan is best suited to the Company’s priorities, resources and capabilities in the area of training and report to Parliament by July 31, 2019.*

**7. Oversight by the Investments Division of the Ministry of Finance**

The Investments Division of the MOF manages, monitors and advises on the rationalization of the Government’s equity holdings in commercial enterprise (**Guideline 2.2.3 of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual**). The Investments Division monitors ECCL’s adherence to performance criteria, prepares economic and financial appraisals of the Enterprise and ensures consistency between Enterprise performance and GORTT’s macro-economic policy objectives.

The Financial Statements as well as the Strategic Plans of a State Enterprise must be submitted to the Investments Division (**Guideline 3.2.1 of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual**). The Investments Division wrote to the ECCL on several occasions as a result of the

Company's failure to submit audited statements for the remaining years.<sup>22</sup> The ECCL indicated that non-submission of statements was due to an issue with funding to employ auditors as well as to fill key vacant positions. The Committee pointed out that the Investments Division is bound to see to it that audited financial statements are up to date and that the Division should have been taken more initiative in this regard.

**Recommendations:**

- *The MOF – Investments Division should urgently undertake an assessment of the areas in which assistance can be rendered to the ECCL to achieve its strategic goals and fulfill its mandate and submit its conclusions by July 31, 2019; and*
- *The MOF– Investments Division should report to Parliament on the measures it plans to adopt to ensure effective oversight of the ECCL by July 31, 2019.*

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<sup>22</sup> Verbatim Notes of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee dated January 16, 2019 p 10

## 4. CONCLUSION

During the Third Session of the Eleventh Parliament, the PAAC conducted an inquiry to examine the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheets and other Financial Statements of the Export Centres Company Limited (ECCL) for the financial years 2008 – 2011.

During the course of the inquiry, the Committee discovered that the issues of understaffing hinges on slow productivity growth as well as non-compliance with regulations as stipulated in the State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual.

It is hoped that the aforementioned proposed recommendations will correct the shortcomings and bolster the success of the Company by providing a better framework to which its strategic goals can be achieved. ECCL, through its training and entrepreneurial facilitation, has targeted a specific social strata. It is also hoped that through the implementation of the proposed recommendations that a wider scope of socially disadvantaged persons, especially those subjected to crime and poverty, are afforded greater opportunities.

The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

Sgd.  
Mr. Wade Mark  
**Chairman**

Sgd.  
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh  
**Vice-Chairman**

Sgd.  
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds  
**Member**

Sgd.  
Mrs. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn  
**Member**

Sgd.  
Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus  
**Member**

Sgd.  
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly  
**Member**

Sgd.  
Mr. Foster Cummings  
**Member**

Sgd.  
Ms. Amrita Deonarine  
**Member**

# APPENDIX I

## Minutes of Meetings

**THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS ENTERPRISES COMMITTEE –  
FOURTH SESSION, ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT  
MINUTES OF THE THIRTY- THIRD MEETING HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019 AT 9:39 A.M.  
IN THE A.N.R ROBINSON (WEST) MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 9 AND  
IN THE A.N.R ROBINSON (EAST) MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 9,  
OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN  
INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD,  
PORT-OF-SPAIN.**

Present were:

Mr. Wade Mark	-	Chairman
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh	-	Vice Chairman
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	-	Member
Mr. Foster Cummings	-	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	-	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	-	Member
Mrs. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn	-	Member
Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus	-	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacob	-	Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Vanna Jankiepersad	-	Procedural Officer Intern
Mr. Justin Jarrette	-	Graduate Research Assistant

**COMMENCEMENT**

- 1.1 At 9:39 a.m. the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.
- 1.2 The Chairman informed the Committee that he would recuse himself from the in-camera and public hearing. The Vice-Chairman would chair the meeting.
- 1.3 The Committee agreed that it was not necessary that Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, the Minister with responsibility for ECCL, to recuse herself from the inquiry.

**THE EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE THIRTY- SECOND MEETING**

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Thirty- Second (32<sup>nd</sup>) Meeting held on Wednesday December 5, 2018.

- 2.2 There, being no omissions or corrections, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly and seconded by Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-SECOND MEETING**

- 3.1 With reference to items 5.2, Members raised concerns with respect to the Committee's approved Work Programme for the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament. After some discussion, the Committee agreed to review the approved Work Programme for the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament at the next meeting.
- 3.2 With reference to item 6.1, the Vice-Chairman informed the Members that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Reports of the Committee were laid in the House of Representatives on December 7, 2018 and in the Senate on December 11, 2018.
- 3.3 With reference to item 9.4, the Vice-Chairman informed the Members that a letter was sent to the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) on December 11, 2018 requesting additional information. The responses to the additional information were received by the Secretariat on January 4, 2019 and used to draft the Committee's Sixteenth Report.

### **PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION RE: THE EXPORTS CENTRES COMPANY LIMITED (ECCL)**

- 4.1 The Vice-Chairman reminded the Members that the purpose of the meeting was to examine of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheets and other Financial Statements of the Exports Centres Company Limited (ECCL) for the period 2008 to 2011 and to make recommendations to help the ECCL improve its delivery of services in an efficient, effective and economic manner.
- 4.2 The Members discussed the issues of concern and the general approach for the public hearing.
- 4.3 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Vice-Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

### **THE EXPORTS CENTRES COMPANY LIMITED (ECCL)**

- 5.1 The Vice-Chairman called the public meeting to order at 10:28 a.m.
- 5.2 The following officials joined the meeting:

#### **Exports Centres Company Limited (ECCL)**

- |                      |   |                                   |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Ms. Volneitha John | - | Chairman                          |
| • Ms. Anna Thompson  | - | Deputy Chairman                   |
| • Ms. Susan Narine   | - | Chief Executive Officer (Interim) |
| • Mr. Mark Ragbir    | - | Facilities Manager                |
| • Ms. Marla Makhan   | - | Board Secretary                   |

- Ms. Sharsa David - Assistant Accountant

### **Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts**

- Ms. Susan Shurland - Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel - Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) /  
Director, Human Resource
- Ms. Desiree Modeste-Bascombe - Research Officer I

### **Ministry of Finance – Investments Division**

- Ms. Yvette Babb - Director Social and Economic  
Transformation (Ag.)
- Ms. Mala Mohammed - Senior Business Analyst (Ag.)
- Ms. Salie Ramesar - Business Analyst
- Ms. Margarette Edwards - Senior Audit Analyst

### **5.3 Key Topics Discussed:**

38. The oversight role of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.
39. The monitoring and oversight role of the Ministry of Finance –Investments Division.
40. The delay and status of the outstanding financial statements for the years 2012 to 2017.
41. The reduction of the subvention received by the ECCL.
42. The recent changes in the ECCL’s annual budget.
43. The mandate and relevance of the ECCL.
44. The collaboration between the ECCL and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO).
45. The challenges experienced by the ECCL.
46. The role of the ECCL in securing support for artisans from the NEDCO.
47. The financial constraints of the ECCL.
48. The importance of recruiting a financial accountant.
49. The high turnover of persons in executive management positions.
50. The lack of an approved updated organizational structure.
51. The number of ECCL Centres.
52. The number of business opportunities and jobs created as a result of the ECCL’s training programmes.
53. The planned expansion of ECCL activity in Tobago.
54. The potential for partnerships with other training institutions.

55. The other craft-related entities with which the ECCL has a relationship.
56. The Incubator Programme for development of artisans' export readiness.
57. The rationale for the establishment and the closure of the 'Hand Made Creations TT store' formerly located at Gulf City Mall.
58. The establishment of a permanent craft market and the most suitable location for it.
59. The Artisans' challenges in accessing raw materials.
60. The size and potential for the expansion of the craft market.
61. The emergence of a new kind of craft producer with entrepreneurial drive.
62. The conditions and motivating factors necessary to create successful artisans.
63. The shift in the market from purely decorative to utilitarian, purposeful craft.
64. The need to ensure artisans practice competitive pricing strategies.
65. The ECCL's collaboration with the tourism industry stakeholders, both public and private.
66. The diversification of the types of craft being produced.
67. The important role of the ECCL's Research Department in innovation.
68. The status of the ECCL's Strategic Plan.
69. The status of the ECCL's marketing strategies.
70. The ECCL's target group.
71. The results of the ECCL's 2008 – 2009 Tracer Study.
72. The need for the ECCL to expand its activities beyond training.
73. The potential need for rebranding of the Company.
74. The ECCL's planned presence at the upcoming Carifesta 2019, which is being held in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Please see Verbatim Notes for the detailed oral submission by the witnesses.**

- 5.4 The Vice-Chairman thanked the representatives from the Ministry of Finance – Investments Division, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, ECCL, members of the media and the public for their attendance.

### **SUSPENSION**

- 6.1 At 12:11 p.m., the Vice-Chairman suspended the public meeting to resume *in camera* for a post-hearing discussion with Members only.

### **RESUMPTION**

- 7.1 At 12:15 p.m. the Vice-Chairman resumed the meeting *in camera*.

### **POST-HEARING DISCUSSION**

- 8.1 The Vice-Chairman sought Members' views on the hearing with stakeholders.
- 8.2 The Committee agreed that additional questions for written submission should be sent to the ECCL, the line Ministry and Ministry of Public Administration.

[Please see Appendix 1]

**ADJOURNMENT**

- 9.1 The Vice-Chairman indicated that the Committee’s next meeting would be held on **Wednesday January 30, 2019 at 9:30 a.m.** when the Committee.
- 9.2 There being no other business, the Vice-Chairman thanked the Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.
- 9.3 The adjournment was taken at 12:23 p.m.

**We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.**

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

*January 16, 2019*

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED**

**Additional Questions arising from Meeting of the Public Accounts [Enterprises] Committee**

**Ministry of Public Administration**

The Committee was informed that a note for the restructuring of the ECCL was submitted to the Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD). In this regard please provide the following information:

**Questions:**

1. Has a note been submitted? If yes, what was the date of submission?
2. What is the status of the note?

**Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts**

**Question**

1. What is the status of the ECCL's Strategic Plan?
2. What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that the ECCL remains responsive to the evolving needs of the economy?
3. What is the process used by the Permanent Secretary to monitor the effective delivery of services provided by the ECCL?
4. In the absence of audited financial statements, how does the Ministry ensure that ECCL is managed in line with the principles of transparency, accountability and value for money?
5. Is the ECCL reporting on its objectives and performance on a timely, accurate and reliable basis? If no, what is being done to rectify this?
6. How often were Board Minutes submitted to the Ministry for review? When were Board Minutes last submitted to the Ministry for review?
7. What internal control measures were applied to ensure that resources were efficiently and effectively utilized?
8. What were some of the challenges encountered by the Ministry in the oversight of ECCL and how were these challenges addressed?
9. Does the Ministry conduct site visits to the ECCL? If yes, how often and when was the last site visit conducted?

**Exports Centres Company Limited (ECCL)**

**General Questions**

10. Provide a breakdown of the following:
  - the number of jobs and business created as a result of the ECCL's training;
  - the number of craft items produced by the ECCL;

- a list of the ECCL's craft markets; and
  - the challenges experienced by the ECCL and the measures in place to rectify these challenges.
11. What is the size and potential of the ECCL craft market?
  12. Briefly explain the rationale for the selection of the Queen's Park Savannah as a suitable location for the planned permanent craft market.
  13. What are the financial and economic benefits to be realised from collaboration with the tourism sector?
  14. How has the ECCL's training contributed to the reduction in crime and poverty and the development of social and human capital?
  15. To what extent have the ECCL's programmes advanced the diversification of the economy?
  16. What is the status of the Draft Accounting Policy?
  17. What is the way forward for the persons who completed the 2018 In-House Intermediate Training Programme?
  18. What is the status of the planned Advanced Training Programme?
  19. What is the status of the planned Incubator Programme?
  20. What are the completion timeline and cost of the upgrades to ECCL Centres?
  21. Briefly explain the ECCL's marketing strategies.
  22. Briefly explain the reasons for the high turnover of financial accountants during the period 2010 to 2015.

## **Appendix X – Management Letter for the Years Ended September 2010 and 2011**

1. What is the status of the implementation of the recommendations from the Management Letter for the years ended September 2010 and 2011?

### **Status of Outstanding Financial Statement**

1. What is the status of the auditing of the financial statements for the period 2012 to 2017?
2. What was the reason for the delay in submitting the financial statements to Parliament;
3. State who has the responsibility to monitor and review the preparation of the financial statements?
4. What was the process used by the ECCL to select the external auditor?
5. What steps will be taken to submit the outstanding financial statements to Parliament in a timely manner; and
6. What steps/mechanisms will be implemented to ensure the financial statements are submitted by the statutory deadline in the future?
1. Briefly state whether:
  - Proper financial accounts and records have been maintained by the ECCL;
  - Internal controls were sufficiently robust to prevent detect or correct material error and fraud;
  - Financial management and related systems were operating effectively during the year;
  - Adequate quality control arrangements were in place as part of the financial statement preparation process;
  - There was adequate documentation supporting the financial statements, including lead schedules for every financial statement line item and note disclosure;

- The information required from other parties to complete the financial statements was received and reviewed for completeness and accuracy;
  - The approved accounting policies have been consistently applied throughout the financial statements; and
  - The financial statements present fairly the financial performance, financial position and cash flows of the entity.
2. What robust controls have been implemented by the ECCL to ensure proper maintenance of the accounting records and related documents?

### **Strategic Plan**

1. How has the training of staff members furthered the development of the goals of the ECCL?
2. What are the synergies that have been created with the external stakeholders?
  - a. How are external stakeholders chosen?
3. How many trainees are there currently at the ECCL?
4. What was the cost of hiring an HR consultant to review and guide the policy and procedures?

### **Appendix IV – Export Centres Company Limited – Tracer Studies 2008-2009 (Wave 1)**

1. With respect to the Tracer Study on graduates’ sustainable business / employment conducted:
  - Based on the comparatively small number of jobs and business opportunities created in relation to the number of graduates up to 2014, what systems have been implemented to ensure the fulfilment of the ECCL’s primary responsibility of promoting economic independence?
2. How does the ECCL plan to address the issue of participants’ reluctance to engage with the NEDCO to obtain financing for the development of business opportunities?
3. What measures have been implemented by the ECCL to widen the reach of its programmes to achieve age, ethnicity, civil status and education diversity?
4. What measures have been taken to provide the other types of support indicated by the survey - specifically access to quality raw materials and marketing assistance?
5. What is the status of the implementation of the recommendations highlighted in the Tracer Study?

### **Risk Management**

1. What is the timeline for completion of the ongoing development of a Risk Management Policy?
2. What is the cost of hiring an external consultant to address the issue of outstanding audited financial statements?

### **Government Subventions**

1. Briefly explain, how does the ECCL account for the excess funds that remain at the end of the fiscal year?

### **Appendix VI – Export Centres Company Limited – November 2018 Financial Management Report**

1. Has the sum of \$2.3 M remaining on the PSIP account been returned to the Ministry of Finance?

### **Audit**

1. Briefly state the measures in place to address the issue of the absence of an internal auditor.
  - a. How is the internal audit function being carried out in the absence of an internal auditor?
2. What is the basis for the Company's opinion that audit investigations may not be warranted?
3. To what extent have the shortcomings identified by the internal auditor been addressed?
4. What is the status of the draft internal auditing policies and procedures?

### **Property, Plant & Equipment**

1. Has any consideration been given to purchasing vehicles rather than renting them?

### **Inventories**

1. Does the Company have a centralized inventory register?
2. What is the reason for the inventory register not being updated on an ongoing basis?

### **Internal Fraud Policy**

1. Has the ECCL taken any steps to establish an official internal fraud policy beyond the current practice of investigations by the Internal Audit Department?
  - a. If so, what is the status of this?
  - b. If not, what is the reason?

### **Whistle Blowing Policy**

1. What is the status of the implementation the following at the ECCL?
  - a. A whistle-blowing policy;
  - b. A confidentiality clause; and
  - c. Incentives for individuals to testify with respect to fraudulent activities.

# APPENDIX 2

## Attendees

# Attendees

## Exports Centres Company Limited (ECCL)

- Ms. Volneitha John - Chairman
- Ms. Anna Thompson - Deputy Chairman
- Ms. Susan Narine - Chief Executive Officer (Interim)
- Mr. Mark Ragbir - Facilities Manager
- Ms. Marla Makhan - Board Secretary
- Ms. Sharsa David - Assistant Accountant

## Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts

- Ms. Susan Shurland - Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel - Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) /  
Director, Human Resource
- Ms. Desiree Modeste-Bascombe - Research Officer I

## Ministry of Finance – Investments Division

- Ms. Yvette Babb - Director Social and Economic  
Transformation (Ag.)
- Ms. Mala Mohammed - Senior Business Analyst (Ag.)
- Ms. Salie Ramesar - Business Analyst
- Ms. Margarett Edwards - Senior Audit Analyst

# APPENDIX 3

## List of entities falling under the purview of the PAEC:

1. Agricultural Development Bank (ADB)
2. Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL)
3. Caribbean Leasing Company Ltd (owned by ExporTT)
4. Caribbean New Media Group Limited (CNMG)
5. Caroni Green Limited
6. Clico Trust Corporation Limited
7. Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd
8. Community Environmental & Protection Enhancement Programme Company Limited (CEPEP)
9. Community Improvement Services Limited
10. East Port of Spain Development Company Limited
11. Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL)
12. Estate Management & Business Development Company Ltd. (EMBDC)
13. Export Centers Company Limited
14. Export Import Bank of Trinidad & Tobago (EXIMBANK)
15. ExporTT (formerly BDC: Business Development Company Limited)
16. Evolving TecKnologies & Enterprise Development Company Limited (eTecK) (formerly Property & Industrial Development Company of Trinidad & Tobago)
17. First Citizens Bank (FCB)
18. First Citizens Holdings Limited
19. Government Human Resource Services Company Limited (GHRS)
20. Government Information Services Limited (GISL)
21. Human Capital Development Facilitation Company Limited
22. InvesTT
23. Lake Asphalt of Trinidad & Tobago (1978) Ltd.
24. La Brea Industrial Development Corporation
25. Metal Industries Company Limited (MIC)
26. National Agricultural Marketing Development Corporations Limited (NAMDEVCO)
27. National Commission For Self Help Limited
28. National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
29. National Entrepreneurship Development Company Ltd. (NEDCO)

30. National Enterprises Limited (NEL)
31. National Flour Mills Limited (NFM)
32. National Gas Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (NGC)
33. National Helicopter Services Limited
34. National Information & Communication Technology Company Limited (NICTCL)
35. (iGovTT) (ttconnect)
36. National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO)
37. National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC)
38. National Maintenance, Training & Security Company Limited (MTS)
39. National Project Development Services Ltd
40. National Quarries Company Limited (NQCL)
41. National Schools Dietary Services Limited
42. National Training Agency (1997) Ltd.
43. Natpat Investments Company Ltd.
44. Oropune Development Ltd. (owned by UDECOTT)
45. Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited (PSAEL)
46. Petroleum Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (PETROTRIN)
47. Phoenix Park Gas Processors Ltd.
48. Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Ltd (PLIPDECO)
49. Point Lisas Terminals Ltd. (owned by PLIPDECO)
50. Portfolio Credit Management Limited
51. Port of Spain Waterfront Development Ltd.
52. Rincon Development Ltd.
53. Rural Development Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited
54. Seafood Industry Development Company Limited
55. Sports Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (SportTT)
56. Taurus Services Limited
57. Telecommunications Services of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (TSTT)
58. Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC)
59. Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited (TRINGEN)
60. Trinidad Northern Areas Ltd.
61. Trinidad & Tobago Entertainment Company Limited (TTent)

62. Trinidad & Tobago External Telecommunications Ltd.
63. Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Company Limited
64. Trinidad & Tobago Film Company Limited
65. Trinidad & Tobago Fish Processors Ltd.
66. Trinidad & Tobago Food Processors Ltd.
67. Trinidad & Tobago Free Zones Company Limited
68. Trinidad & Tobago International Financial Centre Management Company Limited
69. Trinidad & Tobago Marine Petroleum Company Ltd.
70. Trinidad & Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTMF)
71. Trinidad and Tobago Music Company Limited
72. Trinidad & Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP)
73. Trinidad & Tobago Solid Waste Management Co. Ltd. (SWMCOL)
74. Trinidad & Tobago Tourism Business Development Limited
75. Trintoc Services (owned by PETROTRIN)
76. Union Estate Electricity Generation Company Limited
77. Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (UDECOTT)
78. Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad & Tobago Limited (VMCOTT)
79. Youth Training & Employment Partnership Programme Limited (YTEPP)

# APPENDIX 4

## VERBATIM

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE HELD IN THE ANR ROBINSON (EAST) MEETING ROOM, LEVEL 9, (IN PUBLIC), OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019, AT 10.27 A.M.**

**PRESENT**

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus	Member
Mrs. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn	Member
Mr. Foster Cummings	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacobs	Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Vanna Jankiepersad	Procedural Officer Intern
Mr. Justin Jarrette	Graduate Research Assistant

**EXCUSED**

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
---------------	----------

**MINISTRY OF FINANCE – INVESTMENTS DIVISION**

Ms. Yvette Babb	Director, Social and Economic Transformation (Ag.)
Ms. Mala Mohammed	Senior Business Analyst (Ag.)
Ms. Salie Ramesar	Business Analyst
Ms. Margarette Edwards	Senior Audit Analyst

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,**

## CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Ms. Susan Shurland	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel	Director, Human Resource
Ms. Desiree Modeste-Bascombe	Research Officer I

## EXPORT CENTRES COMPANY LIMITED

Ms. Volneitha John	Chairman
Ms. Anna Thompson	Deputy Chairman
Ms. Susan Narine	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Mark Ragbir	Facilities Manager
Ms. Marla Makhan	Board Secretary
Ms. Sharsa David	Assistant Accountant

**Mr. Chairman:** A very good morning to each and every one, and welcome to the officials from the Ministry of Finance - Investments Division, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, and the Export Centres Company Limited, members of the media and the general public who are viewing and listening. I am Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, I am the Vice-Chairman of this Committee, and the Chairman for this morning's session. The Committee on Public Accounts (Enterprises), known as the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, has a mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) the audited accounts, balance sheets, and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State;
- (b) the Auditor General's report on any such a accounts, balance sheets, and other financial statements; and
- (c) whether your policy is carried out efficiently, effectively and economically, and whether expenditure conforms to the authority which governs it.

So the purpose of this meeting this morning of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee is to examine the audited accounts, balance sheets, and other financial

statements of the Export Centres Company Limited, ECCL, for the period that you have been asked to report on, 2008—2011, but to also examine on related matters up to the present time. The Committee is desirous of hearing the challenges being faced by the key stakeholders of ECCL in an attempt to determine some of the possible solutions to these challenges. The role of the Committee is to help the Export Centres Company Limited to improve its delivery of services in an efficient, effective and economic manner. This meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast on the Parliament Channel 11, and radio 105.5 FM, and the Parliament’s YouTube channel, *ParlView*. So, at this time, we will now introduce our Committee, and we can start from our right.

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Would members of the Ministry of Finance-Investments Division please introduce themselves?

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Would the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, the members who are here introduce themselves?

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Members of the board, would you be kind enough to introduce yourselves?

*[Introductions made]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Now, it is left for me to ask the Chairman of ECCL to make a brief opening statement.

**Ms. John:** Export Centres Company Limited programme was launched in 1994, but it was incorporated under the Companies Ordinance, Chap. 81:01, as a limited company on July 03, 1996 to establish and manage centres which shall engage in light manufacturing woodwork, craft, and any other business activity for export purposes. Export Centres is a state enterprise under the purview of the Ministry of Community

Development, Culture and the Arts. The company has 67 members of staff and an existing board of directors, comprising of six persons installed of May of 2018. The board is committed to leading the company in accordance with the guidelines of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual and to support the strategic direction of the company. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Would the Acting Permanent Secretary be kind enough, if you so desire, to make some statements.

**Ms. Shurland:** Thank you, Chair. The role of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is primarily an oversight role of the Export Centres Company Limited. Our responsibility as line Ministry is to monitor the funds being disbursed by the Ministry of Finance through our Ministry to the Export Centres Company Limited, and to ensure compliance with the requirements under the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual. To that end, we have a monitoring system in place to track the submission of the documents and the reports, and to ensure that as far as possible the documents are submitted and the ECCL is compliant with the requirements under the Performance Monitoring Manual. Thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. As I mentioned, despite the fact that we are looking at the audited accounts for 2008—2011, could the Acting Permanent Secretary and her team explain why is it that we are so delayed in not having audited accounts beyond that which we have to examine today? You want to give any answers to that?

**Ms. Shurland:** Thank you, Chair. We have our representatives present, and I would like to ask our CEO interim to give a little bit more explanation on that account, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure.

**Ms. Narine:** Chair, one of the challenges being faced by Export Centres with regard to submitting these audited financials is finance. Export Centres has been given a reduced subvention for the last five years, and, with that being said, it has become near impossible for us to make these audits available to you, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We will have some questions from our Committee members now. I believe Minister Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn wants to ask the first question.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Good morning, once again. The name suggests, Export Centres Company Limited, that the company is engaged primarily in export, but reading of the material suggests otherwise. In your opening statement the Chairman did not indicate what is the mandate of the company, so could you please indicate to the Committee what is the mandate of the company so we can understand what, you know, you are primarily engaged in?

**Ms. John:** The initial mandate of the company was the revitalization of craft for export purposes. Initially, in the early stages, the company did have export of mainly fabric design, and I believe it was for the islands, exports to the islands. Now, I do not know, the CEO may be able to assist me with regard to when that had stopped, but presently, and in our strat plan we are now educating, or we now have plans in place to take our artisans to the level of export readiness and entrepreneurship. Presently, we are now putting a programme in place to train our artisans to take them to that level. I do not know if the CEO would be able to assist with when we had stopped and the reason to it.

**Ms. Narine:** So, initially, the Export Centres Company Limited was launched as a manufacturing company, however, in 2001 we got a new mandate which was to train single female heads of households. So we went from manufacturing to a training institution.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So the Committee is to understand that the company is basically a training entity?

**Ms. Narine:** Yes.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So could you just—

**Ms. Thompson:** May I add something there? While the company, between the last

elections to date, has been primarily involved in training, the board, upon being installed, we went back to the Articles of Association and we realized that—and it was a question we asked when we got in—we realized that the mandate is training with a view to developing artisans who are capable of producing quality goods that can be exported. As such, this is the first strat plan that we have worked on as a board and management and we have revisited that mandate. So, therefore, if you were to refer to our strat plan, you would see training, yes, but not just training in craft, training in entrepreneurship, training in business management, and you would also see a number of alliances being established with organizations such as exportTT, such as NEDCO to be able to move the artisans who are so capable to be able to produce craft that is export ready, especially in light of the number of people we have on the job market now who would probably have a higher level of academic achievement, and would be more readily able to convert to artisans who can export.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** So are you in a company to indicate to the Committee how many persons you would have trained and have been able to bring to that level and how the company's involvement in training artisans to that level has been able to impact the whole development, the developmental thrust of the Government?

**Ms. Narine:** To date Export Centres has trained over 5,000 persons, and of these 5,000 persons we have had over 200 persons forming registered businesses. And, in addition to this, we have also had persons, approximately 200 persons as well forming businesses in-house, businesses at home, small businesses, unregistered. Export Centres, we have also added to the job market because some of these persons who established businesses created jobs as well. So we had approximately 98 jobs being created.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is my last question for now. I note here that the company, through its programme, was supposed to contribute to the reduction in crime and poverty, are you in a position to indicate how you may have impacted those two

areas?

**Ms. Narine:** So some of the institutions that we reached out to with regard to our training were institutions such as the Goodwill, and also we did some training in the YTC, the Youth Training Camp, and those were very successful training programmes. We have seen persons, after being rehabilitated in the prisons, come out and continue with some of the training that they would have gotten from us. In addition to that, we have some of our centres are situated in, what we call, the high-risk areas, Laventille, Morvant, La Brea, Fyzabad, and these areas we have seen persons, I mean, committed to coming to Export Centres to better themselves. So, Export Centres, I would say, has made an impact with regard to that, alleviating crime, because we have touched a lot of lives. Our tutors, to that point where our tutors have now become councillors, so, yes, to that question.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, thank you. Minister Baptiste-Primus has some questions for you.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman. Madam CEO, I just want to continue that thread of conversation, with regard to the organizational relationship with NEDCO, is there a collaboration with NEDCO, and if so, what is the span of collaboration taking place? And I would want to link that, once I get the response, I would want to link that to your planned incubators programme for artisan.

**Ms. Narine:** So, initially, Export Centres signed an MOU with NEDCO. NEDCO was one of our partners. We partnered with them so they assisted us. They also came to some of our training programmes and they would deliver information to our candidates with regard to setting up business, financial aid, providing financial aid. In moving forward, though, there were some breakdown with regard to that relationship. In 2013, I think it was, in 2013, we re-engaged NEDCO. They went out to some of our classes and some of our trainees were able to access some funding from them to start their businesses.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** May I enquire, how long have you been with this company?

**Ms. Narine:** I have been with Export Centres for the past 12 years, not in the capacity as interim CEO, I started as a tutor and then I was promoted to the Quality Assurance Coordinator, after which I was promoted again to the Training Manager, which is my current position, my substantive position, and now, interim CEO.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So that you have longevity in the organization?

**Ms. Narine:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** And perhaps that that forms the basis of my next question, from where you sit, why is it that the accounts are only up to 2011? Earlier you made mention of finance, but I do not think I have been able to quite interpret what that means. The population must understand that if the organization is being hamstrung, in what way the organization is being hamstrung.

**Ms. Narine:** Okay, so in addition to the financial constraints, ECCL has faced—one of our biggest challenges is the high turnover in executive management. So, at present, we do not have a Financial Accountant, and this has been since 2013, 2014, around there. We have had six CEOs to date in the space of seven years, five to seven years. The HR Manager, we do not have at the moment. So most of the key players to push Export Centres forward, those positions are vacant.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** What do you think is responsible for the high turnover and the fact that critical positions have not been filled? Because this Committee may be in a position to assist the company if we understand clearly the challenges that you all are undergoing.

**Ms. Narine:** So if you will allow me to ask the Deputy Chair to respond to that question?

**Ms. Thompson:** Okay. Although we have only been here—probably what, eight months?—based on the information that has been shared with us and our interaction with staff, it seems that, well, from 2015 to date—not it seems that, from 2015 to date

the company has been in a bit of a holding position. So when we came in, in May, we recognized the number of vacancies to be filled. One of the challenges we faced was getting and/or finding an approved org structure. The only approved org structure that the organization had was from when it was initially set up. So one of our priorities as a board was to prepare an org structure and to get it approved. That is currently awaiting approval in the hands of the Ministry. But what we have also made a decision of as a board is that for us to be effective as an organization, we need to start to fill those positions. So, as we speak, advertisements are being prepared for some of the key positions in the organization so that we would have the relevant personnel to take the organization forward.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** I pause for now, Mr. Chairman. I will come back a little later on with regard to the question on the artisan and the development of their entrepreneurial spirit.

**Mr. Chairman:** Can I ask the Investments Division, in terms of monitoring of these enterprises and the role of the Investments Division in requirements of having these audited statements completed and made up to date, can we get an understanding why this situation remained only up to 2011 when the Investments Division has the monitoring capacity for dealing with some of these enterprises? Ms. Babb.

**Ms. Babb:** Thank you, Chair. With respect to Export Centres, Export Centres has been—their financial statements has been outstanding for a while. They have indicated—well, we have written them on several occasions. They did make efforts to improve it to bring it up to 2011, but I think what they had indicated about, probably 2017, is that they did not have a Financial Accountant, and that was one of the main reasons why they could not bring the financial statement. They did not have anyone to prepare it, plus the issue of funding to employ auditors to audit the financial statements, plus the issue of funding to fill key vacant positions, including the Financial Accountant.

**Mr. Chairman:** In your Investments Division, do you have the capacity and the

institutional capability and a requirement to ask some of these state enterprises and give some help to them to bringing these audited accounts up to date?

**Ms. Babb:** In our role as Investments Division, we have the role of shareholder, so we cannot prepare the financial statements. The companies account to us through their financials, letting us know what they do through the financial statements. But what we may be able to do—well, I will have to talk to the Permanent Secretary about that, in if there is any way that we could assist them by probably having—I do not know what mechanism they could use to getting someone to prepare the financials if it is the company is having funding issues, as such.

**Mr. Chairman:** Miss Babb, this our Thirty-Third Meeting since we have been appointed as a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. We have posed this question to the Investments Division, we have had a number of state enterprises coming in, with the repeated issues of not having up-to-date financial statements or the audited accounts, from our understanding it is the responsibility of the Investments Division, through the Ministry of Finance, to ensure that this is done, and it is your responsibility to move purposefully in getting the state enterprises to have these things sorted out and committed. And it is not for us to, as a Committee, now to hear the Investments Division will be speaking with the Ministry of Finance to get some help for these companies. That should have been forthcoming long ago. So, notwithstanding that, I hope that you will move purposefully to help the country to understand what has been happening between 2011—2018, and to move expeditiously, not only in this company, but many others, and we have found that in our analysis of a number of companies in the past.

**10.55 a.m.**

We look forward to your quickening your purposeful support for the organization, and helping them to get their audited statements.

Members of the ECCL, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, could you give us

an understanding of the overall—how many centres you have across Trinidad and Tobago training people, citizens? That is one question. How many employees do you have?

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Sixty-seven, they said that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sixty-seven. All right. How many positions do you see vacant from your new organizational chart that you have brought forward. How many centres? What is your total budget per year?

**Ms. John:** In terms of the number of centres, we have 13 centres across Trinidad. One of the objectives in our strat plan is to establish a relationship with the THA so that we can also expand our reach to Tobago. In terms of the number of vacant positions, I am trying to find the org structure. HR Manager, vacant—

**Mr. Chairman:** Just give us an understanding of how many that are vacant from the top position down.

**Ms. John:** About five to eight persons.

**Mr. Chairman:** And most of these are in the senior administrative positions?

**Ms. John:** Senior, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. And your total annual budget?

**Ms. John:** May I ask the CEO—would you be able to assist with regard to the budget? The annual budget?

**Ms. Narine:** The actual budget?

**Mr. Chairman:** The budgetary allocation. It may vary from year to year, but how much you have been—

**Ms. Narine:** How much we have been allocated, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Ms. Narine:** \$6.3 million, annually.

**Mr. Chairman:** And you do not have an understanding of previous years?

**Ms. Narine:** Previous years we have been allocated \$11 million, \$11.1 million,

sometimes \$10 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Just last from the Chair and my colleagues would certainly ask. We have a number of training institutions in the country, and specifically your institution is for arts and other allied crafts as well. There are other institutions like YTEPP and so on which do training as well. Is there any relationship with other stakeholders, which do training, to help you improve the amount of people you are bringing into the programme and helping them to become much more efficient and productive, and then therefore widen their businesses, help to employ more people? And the name of your company is “Export”, so—I would not go into that for the time being, but reading your notes, you have not done much export from anything like here. So could you give us some comments on that, your relationship with other stakeholders, how do you see yourself in terms of training and where you want to go, based on your new strategic plan?

**Ms. Narine:** So, Chair, based on our new strategic direction, the Export Centres would start our training from the intermediate into the advanced stage. Reason being, the basic level training is already being offered at our line Ministry, from our line Ministry, so it is the intention of Export Centres to take the capacity of persons being trained at a basic level phase into our intermediate and advanced phase. The advanced phase would then produce persons who would be experienced and qualified to get into business.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, since 1994 this company was formed, on reading your answers, but it is taking a long time to really bring about the required objective, fulfilment of the objective of the company in terms of helping the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago with training in arts and craft, and being able to focus these young entrepreneurs into export. But we are not seeing that. How is that going to be done? That was the intention 24 years ago and still not being fulfilled 24 years later.

We read your tracer studies, where you had 200-plus “X” in your training

programme, 200 completing, et cetera, some dropping out, but when you look at the amount of people they have employed, there have not been any substantial, nor have they progressed with their businesses. What can you do and what can we do as a Committee in our recommendations to help you to improve that situation?

**Ms. Narine:** I am glad that you asked that question. It has been a fight, a challenge for Export Centres with regard to reaching our maximum, with regard to the potential of the company. Export Centres has faced challenges with regard to how we are being measured. Whenever we start a training programme, be it from the basic level to get into the intermediate and advanced level, the challenge has always been probably change in government, high turnover in management. So we stop, we regroup. We have had years where no training has been done, nothing has been done. We have been sitting and waiting for a directive; we were absent of a board. So the challenges have been numerous, but the main thing I would like to see being changed with regard to Export Centres is how we are measured.

What is happening currently is Export Centres is being measured on how many persons we train. I have said, time and time again, the higher you go, the smaller the group gets. So when you offer a basic level training, you have capacity, you have a large number of people attending your classes. As you get into the intermediate and advanced phase, this is where the modules would change, so you would have technical skills being offered, but in addition to that you will have the design module, you will have the enterprise training. These would be more of a technical nature.

If we look at the persons that are our target group, our target group is, for want of a better word, a bit “challenged”, financially and to an extent academically. So it has been a very tedious thing for Export Centres to get to that point, when we are continuously being stopped and we regroup. So we stop, we regroup, so we cannot get to that point of having our advanced trainees get into the export market. So I guess that is one of the challenges we have. I am hoping that—not hoping—I know that the

intention of our directors is to get to this level, and with the assistance of our line Ministry and finance we would be able to make a difference this time around.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Minister Crichlow-Cockburn.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The question I had was dealt with to some extent. My concern was the attraction and retention of persons in these training programmes, because the submission suggested that they were not operating at full capacity at the respective centres, so my concern was what could be done to change that. I am wondering, I know my colleague would have asked about working together with NIDCO, the Chairman would have raised that. There are a number of organizations that provide training, and I was wondering whether the company could not have collaborated with them more. And really, is there need? I think the question is, is there need for a separate entity as exists currently, or could there be a greater collaboration so that we get more value for money?

**Ms. Thompson:** I would attempt to answer that question. In its old incarnation—because we have to appreciate that for the past two and probably two and a half years the company was, as I said earlier, in a holding pattern, meaning that the subvention from the Government did not facilitate training. When this board was installed, we became a little creative and we started training in September 2018.

As to your question of whether there is need for this additional training facility, I say yes, and I want to emphasize that our focus is not just training because, included in our strat plan and our goals going forward, we also have the establishment of craft markets, and we are actually looking to, and having talks with very soon, as early as next week, establishing permanent craft markets. So what that also does is it opens avenues for artisans in Trinidad and Tobago to continuously be able to showcase their craft. We have examples from places like China who have been able to monetize their craft, and we are being guided by those examples, and therefore we have some initiatives. It is not just about training.

We do recognize that it does not make sense to reinvent the wheel, hence the reason we are looking at partnering in different areas, as was stated earlier, NEDCO. We are looking at export. We are even looking at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries because one of the challenges that we faced in the past is the denuding of the forests, and some of the plants that are used in the craft no longer being available.

So in developing this most recent strat plan, which spans the period 2019 to 2021, we do not intend to reinvent the wheel. We do intend to partner, but our role is not just training. Our role is taking those people who have the capacity, both academically and from a craft standpoint, to move those people. We are really looking at various ways that we can collaborate to ensure that our objectives are met. If we were just focusing on training I would say maybe not, but that is not our only focus.

**Ms. John:** May I add, additionally in our strat plan we also have plans to establish an incubator programme for our artisans together with a production unit. And I know the training—she has previously trained, the manager would be able to explain more, but the incubator programme would assist artisans in utilizing a venue. After they are trained, they do not have a venue. They do not have access to the type of equipment that we would have. So that is a plan we have moving forward, the incubator programme, to assist artisans to further their development by the use of the incubator programme and the production unit. It is still in the embryonic stage, but these are plans we have moving forward, to take them to a different level and to get them ready for export.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I am happy to hear about those two developments. In terms of the establishment of permanent craft markets in particular it take me back to—the company had established a store in Gulf City. When was that store opened and what was the rationale behind establishing a store in Gulf City? Was it a success or was it a failure? Because I realize that the store has since been closed. So if you could give us some idea, what your experience was with that store, because it would then probably

guide you in terms of further establishment of craft markets in the future.

**Ms. John:** I know the store was opened in 2014. Our interim CEO will give us a little more details with regard to why it was closed and how long it was opened for.

**Ms. Narine:** The store was opened, Handmade Creations, at the Gulf City Mall. There was a launch in July. Let me just pass this question to the Assistant Accountant, she has a little more information.

**Ms. David:** Good day. I do not have the date the store was opened.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Just indicate the year; that is okay.

**Ms. Thompson:** We believe it was 2014, and based on—this is pass-it-on knowledge—we understand that the store was not a financial success, hence the reason for it being closed. We have taken that into consideration with regard to establishing a permanent craft market, and without being too premature we have held an initial discussion with the Chairman of the NCC because we are looking at a location that is more heavily trafficked in terms of throughout the year. When tourists visit Trinidad and Tobago, a lot of them do this Port of Spain tour, where they do the Magnificent Seven and stuff, and our intent is that we would establish our permanent craft market within the Savannah, and therefore add that to one of the places that tourists would stop. At that stage they would be able to purchase local craft.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My concern is the lack of management structure in the organization. Because the board could be well intentioned and exert a lot of energies and resources in capacity building by way of the development of a strategic plan, but if the management structure is not in place to implement then you would be spinning top in mud.

I have listened to the fact that there is no financial accountant. May I be advised as to when was the last financial accountant in place?

**Ms. David:** The last financial accountant would have left December 2015.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** 2015. Am I correct in my interpretation, Madam CEO, that

the Assistant Accountant is carrying out the functions of the financial accountant? Am I correct in that assumption?

**Ms. Narine:** Yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Right. Now, we have been advised that there are six management positions. Is it six? The CEO, the financial accountant, your HR manager, which is vacant, internal auditor. Yes, which are the other positions? All those positions are vacant?

**Ms. Thompson:** Marketing, yes, we do not have a marketing manager.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So you have an interim CEO, no financial accountant, no HR, no internal auditor, no marketing manager, and the organization is still existing. It means that you all have done a good job in holding up the organization, but much more is needed. I want to ask the PS, at this point in time, because these positions have to be filled. We all know the challenges. You all know the financial challenges, but have there been releases to fill these positions?

**Ms. Shurland:** Thank you, Minister; not to my knowledge as yet. The structure with the vacant positions and some of the suggested new positions are right now before the Public Management Consulting Division, so we are waiting on a response from them so that we can move forward.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So these positions are not approved positions?

**Ms. Shurland:** Some, yes, they are—

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** No, the top management positions that we are dealing with?

**Ms. Shurland:** Yes, they are all approved, yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** But why is it at PMCD then? Why are they at PMCD if they are already approved positions?

**Ms. Thompson:** Some new positions were identified, and some contract positions in terms of the approval for them. So the entire structure is now before the Public Management Consulting Division to look at a new structure for the organization, but

they can still, now that they have a board in place, go ahead to fill those approved positions which the board approved before.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** That means the top management positions have been approved?

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So, funds have to be identified to fill those positions? Are we to understand that funds have not been identified to fill those positions?

**Ms. Shurland:** I think what has happened, as the CEO did mention, over the years they have been given a reduced allocation, very tight reduced allocation. But they will, in terms of making representation to the Ministry and justification for additional funding if they need, but they too have to look at their funding to fill these critical positions now that the board is in place.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So it takes me back to you Madam CEO and the Chairman of the Board. Was a decision taken to advertise these top positions?

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes, I must say that actually we are at the point of getting quotations and we started with the positions of the CEO, HR Manager—

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** You mean quotations from the various newspapers?

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes, yes. CEO's position, the HR manager, financial accountant, internal auditor, to begin with. So we are at that process now. With regard to getting quotations, I think we have received just a few, and we would take it from there because we recognize how important it is—

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** What is the timeline you all are operating with, given the fact that obtaining the quotation is not a lengthy exercise?

**Ms. Thompson:** Two months; so we are looking at two months, let us say from now until like March to fill the positions.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** So by the end of the first quarter 2019—

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:**—the Board’s intention is to fill these positions, the CEO, the financial accountant, the HR manager, and the internal auditor?

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Okay. All right. I am satisfied at this point in time.

**Ms. Deonarine:** Good morning. I am looking at your Tracer Studies Report here and I see that there are two main challenges identified for the handicraft producers, the graduates from that programme, if that is the name of the programme. The two challenges are access to finance and accessing raw materials; two main challenges. Now, you have indicated and elaborated on the access to finance part of it. Can you elaborate on the ECCL’s role in helping these graduates with accessing the raw materials, that challenge that they face?

**Ms. Thompson:** In preparation for the strat plan we met with stakeholders including artisans, and one of their challenges was the cost of raw materials as well as the availability. So one of our plans is to work with one of the established cooperatives to see how we can source raw materials on a more wholesale basis, so that they could be able to purchase the raw materials at more reasonable prices.

**Ms. Deonarine:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hinds:** Thank you very much. I would like to get an indication, thank you, as to whether from your knowledge there are other informal, and by that I mean outside of your operation, centres where training is conducted, where sales are conducted for items of craft in Trinidad and Tobago, like an alternative market and operations, from your knowledge. In addition to that I would like for the benefit of the Committee and the citizens, if you would give us, as detailed as you reasonably can, an idea as to what sort of items we now produce as a nation within the definition or the rubric of craft. To my mind I used to see a lot more many years ago of all different kinds of things, today it seems rather limited. The world, the market might have changed. What do we have to offer the world in terms of craft now?—with a bit of a descriptor so we will get a little

idea of what you are talking about.

**Ms. Narine:** So with respect to the first question, there are a couple of markets out there, the Up Market and the Green Market. They assist some of the artisans with getting their products out there. But as you rightly said, the craft industry is dying. I think Export Centres, and by extension our line Ministry, is the last lifeline to our craft and artisans.

This being said, in moving forward with regard to getting some of the products out there, we are seeing now trending, the crochet, which has hit the market abroad. We are seeing a lot of woodcraft being done, and with the resurgence of HGTV, a lot of people are now looking at artefacts and craft items to decorate their homes.

The intention of Export Centres however, is to produce items that are not just decorative but are utilitarian, so it can be used; it is purposeful. The craft areas that we train in are wide, we have clustered them. So we have 10 clusters. We have clusters ranging from cloth craft, metal craft, woodcraft, and in each cluster there would be a range of craft areas that we would—for example, with the cloth craft cluster you would have fabric design, you would have garment construction, crochet. So we would have a range of the cloth craft areas in that cluster, likewise the other clusters.

So Export Centres is unique with regard to the training that we provide. Although we may say that other institutions provide training, but the areas in which we train are more unique to Trinidad and Tobago. We try to produce items, we try to instil in our artisans that they produce items that are unique to Trinidad and Tobago. So when persons come in they can take something back with them that is Trinidad and Tobago and not made in China or made in India. No pun intended.

**Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** If I may, Chair, just a question of clarification I want to ask to the Deputy Chairman or the Chairman. With respect to the size of the craft industry, the Chairman mentioned China and looking at different models. With respect to the size of the craft industry in some of the more developed countries as well as South America,

maybe you can elaborate as to what is the potential of the craft industry and therefore how Export Centres fits into that for Trinidad and Tobago?

**Ms. Thompson:** I just want to piggyback on what Ms. Narine said with respect to functional craft, and I want to also juxtapose that against the fact that currently in Trinidad and Tobago, there really is a challenge in getting local craft. So what we are looking at, is, in terms of the potential, we do—for example, we ran some training programmes recently and we did things like windows, like curtains and drapery, home furnishings. Those things are practical things and as she also said, the crochet and all that. Granted we do not have the size of a China, but we do have the talent and we do have the capacity to produce. That is the reason why we are setting up the production centres because the production centres are going to allow artisans who are probably operating within a very small space with limited equipment to produce on a much larger basis, and what is doubly good about that is that they are going to also have the support of the master craftsmen of the Export Centres Company Limited.

**11.25 a.m.**

So when I said we use the model, the model is that when you go to China, well, of course, China is a socialist country but they make sure that the tourists visit all the places that manufacture their stuff. You see it in manufacture, you see the process in manufacture, and then you go next door and you buy. And from my experience a lot of money was spent, and people want to take things back from the home country. They do not want things made—because I mean, China produces stuff and sells it all over the world. You do not want to come to Trinidad to buy something made in China.

One of the things that we have to emphasize however, with our artisans, is in terms of helping them to cost their goods properly, because we have this belief in Trinidad and Tobago that, you know, this take “rell” work to make, you know, so we have to charge plenty money for it, but we also have to be realistic in pricing. That is the kind of support that in terms we will do the research and give them the kind of

support that they need, and because they will have equipment that will facilitate producing larger quantities at smaller prices, we would be able to be more competitive.

So when the tourists come to Trinidad, as Minister Hinds said, they would not be buying made in China, they will be buying made in Trinidad and Tobago, and we will have very good craftsmen and artisans who are capable of producing such material. I do not know if I have answered your question, Minister.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Chairman, I just want to piggyback on my colleague's question. Based on the vision that you have just articulated for this Committee and by extension Trinidad and Tobago, it would assist if you could help us understand, if you all are building any relationship with the Ministry of Tourism, because to me that is a natural stakeholder.

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes. For sure.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Tell us a little bit about that.

**Ms. Thompson:** So, we—well it is not, it is both the Ministry of Tourism, and there is also Tourism Trinidad Limited, the new company. So, yes, we do—now to be honest, our strat plan is fresh, and we have been preparing for this Committee, so we are going to be establishing—the CEO has already reached out to some of the organizations, the state enterprises, as well as private companies that we will be looking to collaborate with, so it is definitely one of the organizations, when you review our strat plan, you will see that the Ministry of Tourism is definitely there as one of the stakeholders with whom we will work, because we will need them to direct the tourists.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Exactly. And all these cruise ships that will be coming in.

**Ms. Thompson:** Yes.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Another area I wanted to highlight, we have the traditional craft, but a new type of craft is trending, and it has to do with cloth jewellery. I mean, I was very excited; for Christmas gone there, I was given two lovely necklaces with the accompanying, all made from cloth beautifully. Are we looking at the kind of arts that

are trending, although the longevity we do not know, it depends on demand and supply. Are you all looking, viewing, expanding the areas of the craft?

**Ms. Thompson:** Definitely that is our intention. We definitely do not want to do things by “vap”, to use a local term. So one of the positions that we also have to fill is a research officer, because I have done a lot of research—no, that is the Ministry’s research officer. So, I have done my own research, and you are right in terms of people want functionality; and the CEO also alluded to that.

But in terms of the specific areas, I would not say that my research has told me everything, but we do recognize that before we embark, we know definitely that the crochet is working. We know definitely that the home furnishings are working and therefore, when we have our research officer, they will be able to give us additional information and with supporting data as to what else is trending in the craft sector.

**Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** If I may, I just want to, same topic. I heard the Chief Executive Officer say, interim, that the craft industry is dying. And I wonder why she would say that being in the industry and knowing that may be changing and it is changing towards the utilitarian. I think it is of value. I do not think that, for the benefit of the public and the Committee, explaining exactly what craft looks like in 2019, because this company was formed a long time ago, and the impression of what craft is, I think, is different from what the reality is. And I would like if the members could just take a little time to explain in detail, what are the craft items you can expect to see when you go to a craft market now, as opposed to what you would have seen before?

**Ms. John:** I visited our Diego Martin outlet, our Diego Martin centre. Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus mentioned the fabric jewellery. And our Diego Martin centre we did have artisans producing jewellery out of fabric. I have seen it, I think the CEO was there with me, so, at least, that is a start. All right? And we saw earrings and necklaces out of fabric, very unique and innovative. Right? Innovation is the way we will be going. We do not want the normal run-of-the mill art, the napkin holders and those

things. All right? So that with research, and that is why our research department will be very important in helping us move forward to a different level.

**Ms. Thompson:** And just to add, I am praying that may be the Sandals deal can be saved, but we do recognize that the hotel industry in terms of they use a lot of local craft. All right? So what the challenge is because we were speaking to a hotelier recently and her challenge was, can we get consistent quantities and quality, and that is where the production centres come in. All right? Because with the production centres it facilitates producing larger quantities. So, I believe that the market is definitely here, but during the, I will call it a “lacuna”, you did not have that kind of production taking place. And it is the intention of this board to reinvigorate the market, the artisans to ensure that kind of production takes place.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** One last comment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sen. Cummings has been waiting a long time to ask something.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Okay.

**Mr. Cummings:** Thank you, Chairman. They mentioned that you are working on a strat plan, is it complete or how advanced is it?

**Ms. Thompson:** It is complete.

**Mr. Cummings:** Board approval?—is it at the Ministry? Where is it at?

**Ms. Thompson:** It has been submitted to the Ministry for approval.

**Mr. Cummings:** So that—and I asked that because earlier you mentioned that the company was on a bit of a hold. So now that you have developed this new strat plan and it is at the Ministry, is it that you are going to take off in a new direction now?

**Ms. Thompson:** I would not say new, I would say going back to the mandate of the company.

**Mr. Cummings:** Going back to the mandate; excellent. Somebody mentioned before, I think, it was the CEO, about the target group and certain vulnerabilities with the target group. What is the target group? What is the target group that you are aiming at? Who

are you trying to capture here?

**Ms. Thompson:** Traditionally, we captured single mothers and heads of households. We captured people from the lower socioeconomic background, because we were trying to give these people income earning potential so that they can take care of their families. That is still the target group. However, we do—if any you have visited craft markets, you would see that there is a different group, a different socioeconomic group that is now participating in the craft sector.

We also recognize that there are a number of people who traditionally after they have done their degrees they went to work in these traditional companies. They are now leaving organizations with a significant little money in their pockets, and many of them, and I know some of them who are involved in all sorts of craft, in design who are now getting the opportunity to do what they love, but what they would not have been able to do before, because, you know, you grow up, your parents tell you that you have to become this, you have to become that, you do it. So those people are also our target.

And why they are our target is because they would be already people who probably have a management background. They might not have an export background, but they are people on whom we can easily build and shorten that route, that pathway between production and export.

**Mr. Cummings:** Now, how do people know about you? How do you sell yourself? Is it, I cannot remember seeing any advertisements anywhere. Do you have extension officers?

**Ms. Thompson:** That is one of the goals of our strategic plan, to increase our visibility, and we are living in a social media world, so we do have a social media presence, we do recognize it is not adequate. So, we are looking at, one—one of the things that we are looking at is our branding, our logo. You look at the logo and it does not strike you as export, so we are looking at ways that we can increase our presence out there, because

people have to know about us to come to us. So that is one the goals that we have identified.

**Mr. Cummings:** You have, within the Caricom, the Caribbean region, any similar organization like this one doing similar work that you can reference, share your successes with?—anywhere, Jamaica, Barbados, Bahamas.

**Ms. Thompson:** Not that we know of.

**Mr. Cummings:** That you might want to—

**Ms. Thompson:** Explore.

**Mr. Cummings:**—to explore. I will pause for now, and come back.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Hinds.

**Mr. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In my assessment of this, and that question just posed by Sen. Cummings is very, very interesting. We have this formal structure here called the Export Centres and you mentioned Jamaica, a place where you would find a lot, a lot of craft everywhere you turn, being sold at 11.00 o'clock in the night as you are driving over a bridge somewhere, all over; and then somebody mentioned earlier China.

Two examples, to my mind where, and it underpins another point you made as to who are we attracting into the craft industry now? It is not that traditional fellow who just liked carving this and carving that, it is the businessman, the entrepreneur. He is the one with some money, as you said, and he is now getting involved strictly and largely driven by business considerations, and I think that is very, very critical.

But the China and the Jamaica, to my mind, render examples of circumstances where poverty and need is what drives people to entrepreneurship and tremendous success. Trinidad and Tobago, it appears to me, layman as I am, might have experienced a kind of well-being and access to money that did not make tourism and craft and all that as critical as it was to those other places.

And therefore, I want to conclude by asking whether one of the missing

ingredients here is this very banal or simple issue of consciousness, because when you buy a piece of jewellery or you buy a shoe or you buy something made elsewhere, you are creating employment and opportunity for faceless individuals in factories where they come from. If you were conscious as a Trinidadian and wanted a piece of jewellery made at home, as I am sure other people live, then that in itself, that consciousness, national consciousness, might have generated greater opportunities for the craft market in Trinidad and Tobago. Your thoughts, please.

**Ms. Thompson:** I want to agree with you, and I want to suggest that that starts with our curriculum and our education system. I mean, I did not do civics in school. I am happy to say I am too young for that. But I do appreciate what civics did, and what civics did is it created that pride, it created those guidelines of how you operate as a citizen of a country, and maybe we need to look at our education system, and ensure we return to some of those values, because when you start as a child it grows with you.

We already have adults who—it is harder to train somebody who already has habits and patterns. So, I agree with you and I would like to suggest that we go back to the school system, and we revisit some of those subjects that helped us to build a proud Trinbagonian, to build a group of people who understand that we need to spend to support our own. Yes, we support external, but we need to spend to support our own as well.

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes. Thank you, and I feel obliged to place on record, from my own human experience, recently driving through—not advertising for anybody—but I was driving through Macoya Road about a week and a half or two ago, and I saw some crafts, just past Centre of Excellence. And I was obliged to stop, and purchased an item, I mean, a really wonderful obviously mud, but properly well-glazed and designed, and because it was local I was inspired to purchase at a pretty reasonably priced, but I did.

And then recently I came to one of our craft markets and ran into a little

operation run by some sisters out in Manzanilla I think, solidarity, or something like that, and they made a lot of jewellery out to cloth, and I found it extremely impressive and wondered, why every women in Trinidad did not try to get a piece, but then, you know, it requires a certain amount of consciousness. So, I think that is something we have to focus on to create the opportunities for these crafts, the artisans to do their thing and have a market.

**Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Chairman, if I may? I was inviting the members of Export to expand on the types of craft. Member Hinds has spoken about the ceramics, spoken about the cloth jewellery. I am inviting the members, again, to speak about the soaps, to speak about the handmade cosmetics, to speak about the fashion industry and its entry into the craft market, to speak about the purchase of wares, ware plates and so on made in our local designs. So, I am inviting the team to give a little more detail. The public wants to know what does craft look like now.

**Ms. John:** The craft market that I attended at NAPA and it is something, I think, I shared with our team with regard to, I saw a clock and it was made from—you know, long ago we spoke about LP, the record. And I brought it to the team and I said, “This is really unique, it is just different”. I mean, the young people today do not know anything about a record, so to them it may look old fashioned, but I found it to be so creative, that they took an LP, a record, and they made a clock out of it, and it is something that we could have adopted, you know.

I saw woodwork, actually we have a table, a centre table, made in the shape of a steel pan and with the notes and all of that. All right? So these are some of the creative arts that we need to really get into, the creativity of doing things differently.

**Ms. Thompson:** But just to add to that, while these are new innovative ideas, we do have, we do do—here we do do—we have a lot of window, what do you call them?—window furnishings. We do woodwork, we do nice things like wine holders, things that you can use as gifts and that are popular. We do home furnishings. So, in other words,

you do things like—well of course, the crocket, a lot of batik, and batik is something that is desired and that can draw a good price. Lisa Faye’s Fabrics as an example of somebody, a successful artisan in that area, batik, tie dye.

And in addition to not just doing the fabric, but using that batik and tie dye to make not just clothing, but to also make home furnishings, so that your whole place can be coordinated, because we ladies are big on the coordination, the men not so much, but the ladies are big in that.

So, we do, in addition we did basket weave, making baskets, making trays, and that is one of the things that brought us to the fact of conservation, because while we want to do those things, we want to make sure that we are not denuding the forest, that we are taking extracting the raw materials in a responsible manner. Some of the other things we do are—

**Ms. Narine:** So if you allow me, I understand the question that you are asking, Minister, but one of the things that Export Centres has done is introduce a module in our training programme called the “design module”. Now, that design module leads you to what is trending, new items being produced. So what happens with the craft is that the techniques remain the same, it never changes, the design changes.

So, we in our technical skills training we teach the techniques, and then the design unit now modifies the product to produce, to allow the trainees to produce something that is more modern and trending. So you will get a variety of new crafts but using the same techniques.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sen. Cummings.

**Mr. Cummings:** Thank you, Chair. I want to focus on the craft market. You said that you are in discussions with NCC to utilize a location at the Savannah or the craft market, and that location you will be able to encourage tourists to come there to take part in the market.

The artisans, I think, will have to depend on access to the local market as well,

so that I do not know whether the venue you would have selected will allow or has that kind of traffic that you are hoping to have to encourage local participation. Would you or have you looked at possibly looking at another venue where you ready everyday traffic?—at the ports of entry, downtown Port of Spain and those kinds of things. I know cost is going to be a consideration, but if you are going to have a market, then you will need people in a market, and I do not think that you should only rely on when the ships come in or so forth, you have to position them to have a market that has ready customers.

**Ms. Thompson:** To answer your question, yes, we had considered other venues. In fact, we had a meeting with the Ministry of Tourism just last week with respect to setting up a craft market on the Waterfront, but that is for the cruise ship season. But we are also looking at, for example, we have a centre in Tunapuna, behind the Tunapuna market. So there is a lot of traffic in Tunapuna, so we are looking at that as a potential centre outlet as well where we can sell craft.

So, we are not only focusing on the Savannah, but what I would like to suggest to you is that the Savannah is a beehive of activity, and with all the sporting groups who utilize the Savannah, with all the fitness groups who utilize the Savannah, and because people come to the Savannah for shows, et cetera, you always have traffic that will then become aware, even local traffic, that, hey, we can get local craft here.

We can also work with, I do not know that we would have, especially in the initial stages, the money to set up a market in town, downtown Port of Spain, but we can certainly work with people who do have craft shops to sell our items on consignment in those craft shops.

So, I do not believe that we would want to go and compete where we have this albatross around our neck in terms of monthly rental for downtown Port of Spain, but we can certainly have our material available in some of those outlets.

**Ms. John:** May I add? I also believe that once the public is aware that there is a

permanent venue where they can purchase craft souvenirs, I think they will find it. You know, around the Savannah may seem out of the way, but it can create a very, very attractive venue. There are times when you may have visitors here or you may want to purchase something and you are not sure where to go. If it is we have a permanent location and it is publicly advertised and really showcased, I think the public will not find it difficult to get to that location, once they can get the quality of craft that they need, they will go all out for it.

**Ms. Thompson:** With parking.

**Mr. Chairman:** Can I now from the Chair help to redirect the thinking of Export Company in my assessment in terms of the original mandate of the Export Company. What we are discussing and describing here is excellent for Trinidad and Tobago to expand the craft market. And if I, from your strategic direction, you referred to the mandate of:

To develop the country's export capability.

That is why it was named Export Company. We are not hearing much about that at all.

Utilizing local skills and local raw materials indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago;—and your structure was twofold.

In addition to its production, which we are talking about, an export mandate. Another objective of the programme was:

To provide an opportunity for the training of persons in craft activities...—which you are doing, but we need to see it on a larger scale, and I will come to that—...that will have an economic appeal.

And so the Cabinet said—agreed on many occasions the Export Company should be responsible for identification of market opportunities. I want you to take your thinking to a higher level. It continues, design, which you spoke about:

Design of a range of craft items with a Caribbean aesthetic and sourcing raw materials locally and internationally.

In terms of your training when we have so many unemployed people and people in institutions who require some degree of things to do that could meaningfully impart upon them. I just want to refer to places like—you do not need to do much marketing to go there, St. Michael's Home, St. Jude's Home, Princess Elizabeth Centre, the Women Unemployment Relief Programme. So these are just, right away, areas where you can take your programmes to source people, to train them and to engage them and to prevent them from, and to give something meaningfully to them. So may I give you—it is in your documentation, but we need to focus there as well because you need to focus on the people, your arts, your craft, and also the export capability and creating employment for people.

In your trace of study, your employment levels have been very low although you have trained people, but the training could be wider, and that is why I am speaking to you in these areas.

Now, you have quite rightly indicated that your synergy should be Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, so to see what social development is doing and expand on some of their programmes in social development. The Ministry of National Security, like the Youth Training Centre and the women prison, so why are we not thinking of taking your training to these areas rather than just asking people in your different centres to come there. It will take no money, not much money for you to go to training to these centres. So, we need to refocus your direction, and it is probably going to be part—

What is your synergy with the National Training Agency to help you, because that is an agency, well we analysed them, and they had tremendous difficulties. The YTEPP training programme, and the engineering companies like MIC and so on to help to train people to produce these arts and crafts. So your possibility is big and wide, but I am seeing, I am not getting the picture that you are expanding your thinking to the wider horizon, and you are focusing inwardly.

And let me just conclude it. Are you giving certification for them? Well City and—well not City and Guilds, but the National Training Agency has certification, so people when they leave the training programme they will feel empowered.

The University Trinidad and Tobago, and you spoke about the school programme which any Minister will take that up as a challenge, and the Tobago House of Assembly with the school programme there as well.

So, I am just trying to you to refocus. You are thinking about it in your strategic plan, but we are not seeing—and then the export capability. You have to train thousands, and we are seeing from your trace of study, you trained in a particular year 200, and a certain amount has dropped out, and from them not much employment has taken place.

**11.55 a.m.**

So, in summary, I want to ask you to reconsider your mandates where the country wants to see you in terms of export as well, generating employment, training people. These are your three watchwords; train, train, train, thousands. Go with your designs and your material, your crafts and so on. Go to the centres where people will benefit from the training, and with the eventual issue of exporting, export in an economic situation when you are looking for diversification. So do not stay in a corner. Your mandate is Export Company Limited, the Export Centres Company Limited, and we are not hearing much about that. So that is my exhortation to you this morning in whatever you do in terms of your strategic direction, these are some of the wider, bigger pictures that you must think about. Thank you very much. Minister Primus.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have listened to the plans that have been articulated, and I am sitting and wondering why is the organization not filling the position of Marketing Manager, because your Marketing Manager becomes critical in this new thrust. But I only heard the CEO, the Financial Accountant, the HR Manager, the Internal Auditor, and—yes, those four, and not the Marketing Manager.

**Ms. Thompson:** I think that was just an omission, because in finalizing the strat. plan, one of the things we said is that the Marketing Manager has to be one. It was just an omission. Because we understand that to move the company to get the awareness that we want, that we do need a marketing person.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, from where I sit, the company has to engage in rebranding itself, and therefore from a strategic point of view your marketing manager becomes a critical functionary in the whole framework of operations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, just—I want to highlight the issue of, following-up from what Minister Primus is saying, your marketing strategies. Your marketing strategies should incorporate new players on the market, new teams of people on the market, new organizations to have synergies with. But not new alone, existing organizations. So widen your scope, you may get assistance from a number of them, and funding will not be a critical issue because they may be funding some of these programmes themselves. So just do not depend on your Minister to ask for subvention for you to increase your subvention.

So, you have it here in the general questions we asked you. In your answers to the questions you speak about “partnering with other agencies to highlight and showcase the innate talent of our people”. You also have, “supporting the tourism sector” which you spoke about, I have these here, “moving our clients from economic dependency to economic independence”. So we want to see much more micro entrepreneurs coming through, and we are not getting it. Minister Hinds spoke about two or three areas where he went to and saw the craft and so on, very well done, and Minister Primus spoke about the new type of designs that are occurring. We have to expand on that, and we want to ask you to consider the big picture on that, but you are on the right track. Good thinking. I support Minister Hinds in congratulating you on the way that you are looking at it. Fill your positions and so on, and we will see a better Export Centres Company Limited, and we want to see that at the highest level. We not

only speak about YTEPP, and MIC, and NSDP, and all the other agencies which are working. We want to see you there as well.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Chair, permit me? To the Chairman of the board, you have a number of years outstanding, I mean, we can all engage in growth and development, and creating new visions, but transparency and accountability are principles that we must embrace, and in that context would you give the Committee some idea as to what time frame you all are working with in getting your financials up-to-date?

**Ms. Thompson:** We have applied for—just this week we have sent a letter off for increased funding, and actually we have the unaudited accounts ready from 2012—2016, the unaudited, they are completed. However, once we receive the funding—and I know we would—we would be able to have these years audited. We would be able to have the audited accounts and we will also start 2017/2018 once we get the increased funding. We have applied for it and I think right now that is really what we are waiting to move forward.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** Mr. Chairman, in that context perhaps I would want to hear from the Acting Permanent Secretary in that regard with some kind of positive undertaking.

**Ms. Shurland:** Thank you very much Minister Baptiste-Primus. Certainly, we are supporting the submissions of the ECCL, especially to get the accounts, audited accounts up-to-speed, up-to-date. We are also supporting what they are proposing in its strategic plan 2019—2021. But, with regard to the audited accounts, of course we need that to even press forward, and with that we would be able to make sure that we get the moneys available for the auditor to do the books right on time and then move forward with the lovely plans that we have for the marketing of the company and so on. So, in terms of priority, I believe that you see the priority is actually to get the accounts in order.

**Mrs. Baptiste-Primus:** I really want to commend the company. I am quite pleased

to know that you have already completed 2012—2016 unaudited. So it meant that you all are heading in the right direction. And clearly this Committee can see a great effort being expended to bring the accounts up-to-date.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to talk directly to Ms. Babb, the Director, Social and Economic Transformation from the Ministry of Finance. There is need for greater oversight. We understand the issue of resources and filling of positions, and not having the full breadth of manpower specialists required, but there is need for greater oversight to ensure that all these companies and state enterprises, if they need help then to assist them in whatever way possible. Not saying for you all to do the accounts for them, because your role is a very clear role, an oversight semi-regulatory role. But a little more robustness coming out of the unit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Hinds.

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes, that is right. If the Government auditors did that there would not be a problem of finding money to pay anyone to do it. You see? Because essentially, this is the Auditor General's responsibility, although it has given authority to do it, to contract it out. Here we are, they are prepared. I suspect maybe the private contractor might have prepared them and not ready to sign until somebody else signs a cheque. There is where we are. It is also in my spirit to say, as we conclude, following on what Minister Baptiste-Primus just said, that you all maybe—again, Sen. Cummings alluded to it, some person or persons among you have to become more spirited and be the voice out there for this thing. You need to probably come out a lil more, talk a lil more.

**Mr. Chairman:** They need a Marketing Manager.

**Mr. Hinds:** Apart from that, apart from that, someone must drive the thing. Someone must take some almost personal responsibility for there to be success, a football team, a cricket team. There is usually an individual or two who is driving it and getting others to become excited about it, because you have much to be excited about. I think I can identify persons, but we will leave it there. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I think we have come to the closure of the introspection and the answers that have come forward from the various entities. So on behalf of the Committee, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, may I say a special thanks to the Investments Division of the Ministry of Finance, your—

*[Mrs. Baptiste-Primus confers with the Chairman]*

Okay, I have been advised if you would be kind enough to consider having some closing remarks before we wind up. Investments Division.

**Ms. Babb:** Okay, thank you, Chair. I would like to say that we are happy to be here and to hear, even though we have been in contact with the company and know of some of their challenges, at this meeting we also learned of further challenges, and wherever we can assist we shall assist. But I also want to say, the company, I know over the years has had challenges with preparing their financials, and they have been making efforts to bring them up-to-date. But the funding issue I know, and the issue with respect to filling key positions in the company, like the Financial Accountant and auditors, those were really the main, from where we sit, were the main issues really preventing. But I hope in going forward—there is a new board, and they are looking to fill the key positions that with this financial year and going forward we would not have that issue. But wherever we can assist we always do, and we are always in contact with all our companies. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Shall we go to the closing comments from the Export Centres Company?

**Ms. Narine:** I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the panel for the information and guidance that was shared this morning, and I can assure you that the Export Centres, we have been working tirelessly to get our books up-to-date, and we will continue to do so. I would just like to say in closing that the Export Centres Company has the potential to become the main driver to revitalize the craft industry. So, once given the chance, Export Centres is up to the challenge. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.

**Ms. Shurland:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to support the state enterprise, ECCL, in responding to the questions posed today. Quite interesting, and I note the need for more education, a Marketing Manager. I want to point out that that is a new position—so we have to get that one approved—on the establishment, the Marketing and Communications Manager. And also the need to focus more on export. And with my experience in the Ministry I have seen actually, a huge support to the ECCL in promoting its craft markets. And coming up very soon will be a huge promotion of the craft of Trinidad and Tobago through its CARIFESTA in August. Export Centres Company Limited, they have a place in CARIFESTA, so I believe that is going to jump high in terms of the recognition of the local art and craft of Trinidad and Tobago in the region, because that is a regional event to take place. So with that said, you know, we would continue to monitor, we would continue to look at the findings of the company as they get their books together. The audited books together. We want to improve the efficiency of the company, so we will do our utmost to support whatever submissions that come in with a view to getting the mandate of the company, original mandate of the company fulfilled. Thank you very much again.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Acting Permanent Secretary. I would just add the creation of micro entrepreneurship, widening that base, in addition to your expansion for export, and networking with your agencies, and getting support for your micro entrepreneurs with NEDCO, because funds are available there as well. So, thank you all very much.

*[Mrs. Baptiste-Primus confers with the Chairman]*

Chairman, any closing remarks from you?

**Ms. John:** I would like to say a special thank you to the Committee. Thank you to the export team. I must say that we have a very hardworking team. I want to thank the Board of Directors who have supported the management team with regard to

completion of the strat plan, reviewing it. I would like to say thank you for all the advice that we have received this morning from Mrs. Baptiste-Primus, from the Chairman. Moving forward, we need to showcase ECCL and put ECCL on the map. And we thank you for these words of advice. We certainly will return and start to implement measures to take ECCL to a very high—to a higher level. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. On behalf of members of the Committee, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, we want to thank each and every one of you sincerely for taking the time off to be with us here this morning, and to subject yourself through to the general public of the work that you are doing. We thank you very sincerely, and now this meeting is suspended for our in-camera. Thank you.

**12.12 p.m.:** *Meeting adjourned.*