



Ministry of Planning and Development
Office of the Permanent Secretary

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PL&D: 6/12/3 Vol. VI

November 26th, 2019

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
PARLIAMENT
Levels G-9, Tower D
The Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Ms. Sampson-Meiguel,

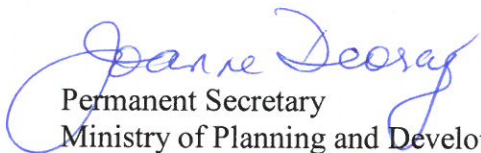
Re: The Twenty-Third Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the InvesTT Limited for the years 2014 to 2017

Your letter Parl.: 5/4/109 dated September 26, 2019 on the subject at caption refers.

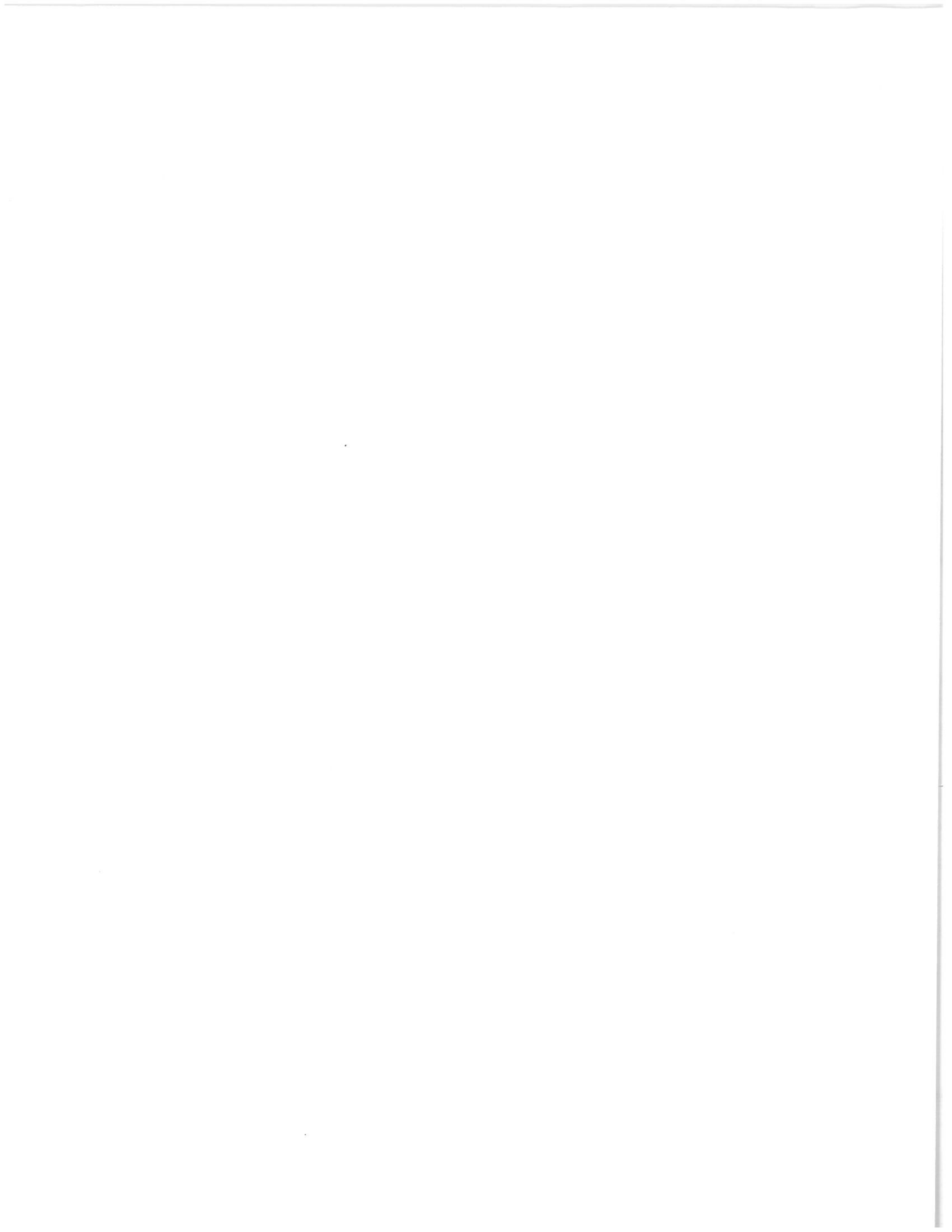
Please find attached the Ministerial Response to the recommendations/comments of the Committee as contained in the Twenty-Third Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the InvesTT Limited for the years 2014 to 2017.

I do apologize for the delay in responding to the Committee's request and regret any inconvenience caused by the delay.

Sincerely,


Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Planning and Development

**PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT**



Ministerial response to recommendations/comments contained in The Twenty-Third Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the InvestTT Limited for the years 2014 to 2017

Recommendation:

- (i) *The CSO should liaise with InvesTT to develop a system to keep track of the overall and sector by sector contribution to GDP made by the investments it facilitates and report to parliament by November 30, 2019.*

Response:

The Economic Statistics Division of the CSO – Trade in Services (TIS) section - is currently developing a framework for the production and dissemination of Trade in Services Statistics. At present, the TIS section of CSO, can only produce preliminary, experimental estimates of Foreign Affiliates Trade Statistics (FATS) in accordance with international recommendations and guidelines. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) represents a major component of Trade in Services statistics and therefore substantial developmental work is being undertaken in this important area.

One caveat that should however be considered is that a National Statistical Office (NSO) such as the CSO is mandated only to produce Official Statistics for statistical purposes. The evaluation of the efficacy of InvesTT by monitoring “the investments it facilitates” is clearly an administrative purpose and may contravene Principle Six (6) of the United Nation’s Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, to which Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory.

In furtherance of the objective of evaluating the impact of investments attracted by the national economy, the CSO is quite willing to work with all applicable stakeholders (inclusive of InvesTT). Furthermore, the CSO supports the use of its data in the analysis of its impact and strongly supports the adoption of data analysis by decision makers.

Accordingly, the CSO recommends meeting with a team from InvesTT to discuss the way forward on this matter. However, the following issues should be noted here and will be raised at the recommended meeting with InvesTT:

1. The CSO operates under the Statistics Act Chapter 19:02. Section 4 (1) of the Act enables the CSO to:
 - (a) Take any census in Trinidad and Tobago;
 - (b) Collect, compile, analyse, abstract and publish statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, agricultural, mining, economic, social and general activities and conditions of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;
 - (c) Collaborate with other Government Departments in the collection, compilation, analysis and publication of statistical records of administration;
 - (d) Generally organise a co-ordinated scheme of economic and social statistics relating to Trinidad and Tobago, in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

2. Section 9 (1) and (2) of the Act prevents the CSO from disclosing information on firms without their consent and releasing information on a sector or industry if there are less than five participants as follows:
 - (1) No individual estimate or return or part thereof and no information relating to any individual undertaking obtained under the provisions of this Act shall, without the previous consent in writing of the person carrying on the undertaking which is the subject of the estimates, returns or information, be disclosed except for the purposes of any proceedings for an offence under this Act.
 - (2) The following shall have effect with respect to any report, summary or other communication to the public of information obtained under this Act:
 - (a) No such report, summary or communication shall disclose the number of returns received with respect to the production of any article if that number is less than five.

3. The CSO compiles GDP on an annual and quarterly basis in accordance with the methodology documented in the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008 and the data is presented using the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Revision 4.
4. The National Accounts Division (NAD) of the CSO which is charged with the compilation of the GDP uses the data collected from the Annual Survey of Establishments (ASE) as its main source. The sample for this Survey is approximately 2000 firms representing all sectors and industries in the economy. This data is supplemented with other indicators produced by the CSO and administrative data from various Ministries and Agencies. The sample data is then used in conjunction with the indicator data and the administrative data to estimate the GDP by sector and industry.
5. It is recommended that InvestTT provides to the CSO a list of all firms operating under its purview, with their contact information so that the NAD can include them in the ASE.

Recommendation:

- (iii) *The MALF, the MAGLA, the MoF, the MoH, the MPD, the MPA, the MOWT, the CED, the IRD, the Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency and the Treasure Division should provide a status update on the EODB initiatives with which they are involved by November 30, 2019.*

Response:

The Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) embarked upon the Automation of the Construction Permitting System Project, with the aim of improving efficiency and modernizing the processes involved in the submission, assessment and approval of development proposals. This project will streamline the permitting system by ensuring that all Regulatory Agencies involved in the construction process, receive submissions and contribute to the assessment and advisory process simultaneously. Inherent to the success of an Automated System is the integration of all legacy data of the Town and Country Planning Division (TCPD), in a digital format. The uninhibited access of legacy information is an asset to the Automated System, which is backed by a digitized, paperless information repository.

The above initiatives respond to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's strategic focus as articulated in the Vision 2030: National Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, 2016 - 2030, Development Theme 2: Good Governance and Service Excellence, which emphasizes 'strengthening the capacity and operations of the public institutions' in a bid to facilitate better service delivery.

The consultancy for the Automation of the Construction Permitting System commenced on March 1, 2018 and at March 31, 2018, a total of 19 stakeholder meetings have been held with staff of the TCPD, and the regulatory and advisory agencies involved in construction permitting. Meetings with stakeholders have been on-going to ensure that their processes and templates are implemented accurately. At present, the project is nearing completion of the User Acceptance Testing stage with the system being modified to rectify issues and comments made at the testing sessions.

The project is being executed in seven (7) phases over a period of fifteen (15) months with an estimated cost of US\$2.1 million. Table I. below provides a status of the project to date:

Table I.

Task	Phase	Actual end date
Project Initiation	Phase 1	March 2019
Business Process Re-engineering / Requirements Gathering	Phase 2 / 3	May 2019
System Design	Phase 4	Ongoing
System Development / System Integrated Testing (SIT)	Phase 5	Ongoing
Software Performance Test	Phase 5	Ongoing
Quality Assurance	Phase 5	Ongoing
Training and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) and Pilot testing	Phase 6	November 2019- January 2020
Production Implementation and Go Live	Phase 6	Tentative February 2020
Train The Trainer	Phase 6	November 2019
Support and Maintenance	Phase 7	3 years post implementation

For fiscal 2019, the Digitization Project has successfully facilitated the scanning of all layouts and plotting sheets (1,281 and 756 respectively) at the North Regional Office (NRO) of the TCPD and approximately 42,000 applications (with jurisdiction over Diego Martin, Port of Spain and Central). These records have been made available to staff via the creation of a web based document repository. This repository is accessible anywhere, any time by all users, thereby solving the problems associated with poor vault and

office conditions. The last batch of NRO Files (2,389) up to the year 2000 was sent to the Digitization Service Provider on October 29, 2019 and the scanning and indexing works were completed on November 4, 2019. Still outstanding is the completion of the GIS component of the exercise, which will be concluded by January 2020.

The First batch of files has been obtained from the South Regional Office (SRO) for the year 2017 and was sorted and batched in preparation for the commencement of SRO digitization on November 11, 2019.

From a practical perspective, the implementation of Automation and Digitization will have manifold benefit to staff of the TCPD by providing them with the tools to efficiently research, assess and determine development proposals, to sister agencies such as Environmental Management Authority (EMA), Electrical Inspectorate Division (EID), Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) and Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) who can work collaboratively with the TCPD in facilitating development through a shared virtual space and finally to the clients and external end users who will benefit from transparency in the policies and standards which regulate land - use in addition to faster application processing times. Faster application processing times will undoubtedly contribute to alleviating long lag times between the pre-construction phase and project completion.