



*Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities,
Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA)*

**Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing**

Held on Monday 24th June, 2024 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:54 p.m.

Venue: Linda Baboolal Meeting Room (in public), Parliamentary Complex, Cabildo Building,
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain.

Subject Matter: An Inquiry into the Status of Local Government Reform Initiatives

Objective of the Inquiry

The objective of the inquiry are as follows:

1. To examine the status of the implementation of the Miscellaneous Provisions (Local Government) Act, 2022 and related policy and administrative requirements.

Committee Members

The following Members were present:

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| • Ms. Sunity Maharaj | Chairman |
| • Ms. Khadijah Ameen, MP | Member |
| • Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian, MP | Member |
| • Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial - Ramdial | Member |
| • Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy, MP | Member |

The following Members were excused / absent:

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| • Mr. Esmond Forde, MP | Vice - Chairman |
| • Mrs. Renuka Sagrarsingh-Sooklal | Member |
| • Mr. Laurence Hislop | Member |



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Witnesses Who Appeared

The following officials appeared before the Committee:

Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

- The Hon. Faris Al-Rawi, SC, MP Minister
- Mr. Peter Mitchell Permanent Secretary (Ag.)

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the **Officials from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government:**

Status of Local Government Initiatives:

- i. Significant progress was made in relation to organizational process mapping, movements of funding heads, and the use of ICT infrastructure.
- ii. There is an aggressive push towards digitization and digitalization of data. This is anticipated to reduce demand for office accommodation and allow workers to adopt flexi-time work schedules.
- iii. The Privy Council's ruling that the proclamation of the law must apply to future councils and not the incumbent councils has presented a delay in implementing full-term councillors.

Training Initiatives Undertaken:

- iv. Efforts are being made at the head office to get the public service staff to execute change management initiatives. These initiatives have been cited as one of the most important aspects of the training programme.
- v. With respect to IT/ICT training, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government (MRDLG) are currently engaged with the Ministry of Digital Transformation.
- vi. Most training at the MRDLG is done in-house with a view that post reform, the Ministry will adopt a Monitoring and Evaluation and supervisory function.
- vii. Change Agents have been conducting training programmes within the municipal corporations.



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- viii. There is an emphasis on the training of Municipal Police. Some officers have undergone specialized training with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS).
- ix. Collaboration with the Ministry of Works and Transport and potentially the University of the West Indies (UWI) to improve the standards and quality of road officers.
- x. In-house training has also been conducted concerning the public procurement law.

Governance Manual:

- xi. The Governance Manual documents process and procedures for councils and CEOs.
- xii. The process of developing the Governance Manual began in 2023 and through an internal committee this is expected to be completed in August 2024.
- xiii. The manual focusses on procedures governing projects, planning and accounting that are in line with all existing and new legislation.

Collection of Property Taxes:

- xiv. Collection of property taxes are currently under the purview of the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR) which then goes to the Consolidated Fund. This will then be allocated to all the corporations thereafter.
- xv. After proclamation of Section 10 of the Miscellaneous Provisions (Local Government) Act 2022, collection of property taxes will be the responsibility of the corporations. Funds collected will then be transferred to a Statutory Fund.
- xvi. It is anticipated that collection of property tax by the corporations will take effect sometime after September 2024 subject to the completion of the distribution of Valuation Notices by the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR).

Change Agent Program

- xvii. This program was developed to supplement shortfalls in staff at the corporations.
- xviii. Their focus is on the reform agenda specifically but were found to assist Mayors and Chairmen in their day-to-day functions, particularly in IT.
- xix. The program has a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) system where performances are measured and outcomes are reported to the Ministry of Planning and Development and Ministry of Finance.
- xx. Change agents are also incorporated into teams to undertake enterprise-wide solutions and have been integral in guiding corporations into appropriate ICT solutions.
- xxi. The change agents are on track to complete their work by December 2024.



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Restructuring of the Municipal Corporations

- xxii. The scope of the work undertaken by the HR consultant involved process mapping the new organizational structure where the standing committees are populated by full-time councillors based on their new job functions.
- xxiii. Reclassification of jobs may be necessary and, if so, will be done through the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA).
- xxiv. Corporations will have the power to hire contracted positions.
- xxv. Unions have been engaged regarding the restructuring and reclassification exercise and consultations are ongoing.
- xxvi. There will be standardized terms and conditions across all corporations with regard to contract positions by the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO)/Salaries Review Commission (SRC)/ Public Management Consulting Division (PMCD)/MPA/Ministry of Finance.

Public Engagement with Local Government Reform Initiatives

- xxvii. The MRDLG launched the Local TT mobile app, an open-source data collection tool. The app allows the reporting of issues by the population and tracking and status updates of those reports.
- xxviii. The reform process is data-driven where information is shared with the public.
- xxix. There are plans to have online meetings with the public but this will be done within the law.
- xxx. Actively engaging in Local Economic Development (LED) which allows a deeper form of interaction with the public that includes business establishments, planning, and structures.

Recruitment of Municipal Officers

- xxxi. Currently there are over 1000 municipal officers and an intake batch of 250 to undergo training. A further 150 will be recruited which will bring the total to 1,400 municipal officers.
- xxxii. Introduction of mobile policing units in corporations to address accommodation concerns.



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The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyD4wdAFNq4>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jsclascsa@ttparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. [2277/2627/2427/2282](tel:2277262724272282)

*Committees Unit
July 15, 2024*