

FIFTEENTH

REPORT
FROM

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

EXAMINATION
OF

A follow-up inquiry on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the Ministry of Sport and Community Development

Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

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

- (a) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;*
- (b) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and*
- (c) *the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.*

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Committee Staff

The current staff members serving the Committee are:

Ms. Keiba Jacob	Secretary to the Committee
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Darien Bukemire	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Rachel Nunes	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Anesha James	Administrative Support
Ms. Natoya O'Neil	Administrative Support

Publication

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Contact Information

All correspondence should be addressed to:

The Secretary
Public Administration and Appropriations Committee
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 624-7275 Ext 2125
Email: paac@ttparliament.org

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Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee



Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Chairman



Dr. Lackram Bodoë, MP
Vice-Chairman



Mr. Wade Mark
Member



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Member



Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy,
MP
Member



Mr. Hassel Bacchus
Member



Ms. Lisa Morris-Julian,
MP
Member



Mr. Symon de Nobriga, MP
Member



Dr. Sharda Patasar
Member



Mr. Laurence Hislop
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the Public Administrations and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) for the Third Session, Twelfth Parliament contains the details of the follow-up inquiry on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD).

The Committee in undertaking this examination employed two (2) mechanisms:

- i. Written Submissions; and
- ii. Public Hearing.

The Committee requested written submissions from the Ministry of Finance and the MSCD and thereafter focused on a review and analysis of the written submissions. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with the following stakeholders on February 8, 2023:

- i. Ministry of Finance (MOF);
- ii. MSCD; and
- iii. The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT).

The approach adopted by the Committee took into account:

- i. Issues identified in the submissions received; and
- ii. Reports in the media.

The Committee made recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in **Chapter 3**.

1. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

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

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

Change in Membership

1. In the Twelfth Parliament the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 9, 2020 and Tuesday November 17, 2020 respectively.
2. Senator Clarence Rambharat's seat in the Senate was declared vacant on March 16, 2022 as such he ceased to be a Member of the Committee.
3. Senator Yokymma Bethelmy's seat in the Senate was declared vacant on March 16, 2022 as such she ceased to be a Member of the Committee.
4. By resolution of the House of Representatives at a sitting held on June 13, 2022, Mr. Symon de Nobriga, MP was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Stephen Mc Clashie, MP.
5. By resolution of the Senate at a sitting held on June 14, 2022, Senator Laurence Hislop was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Senator Yokymma Bethelmy and Senator Randall Mitchell in lieu of Senator Clarence Rambharat.
6. Senator Amrita Deonarine ceased being a Member of the Committee on September 11, 2023.
7. By resolution of the Senate at a sitting held on October 24, 2023, Senator Dr. Sharda Patasar was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Senator Amrita Deonarine.

Chairman & Vice-Chairman

By virtue of S.O. 109(6) and 99(6) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively, the Chairman of the Committee is the Speaker and at its First Meeting held on November 25, 2020, Dr. Lackram Bodoë was elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Quorum

Additionally, in order to exercise the powers granted to it by the House, the Committee was required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum. A quorum of three (3) Members, inclusive of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, with representatives from both Houses, was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

2. METHODOLOGY

Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, November 2, 2022, the Committee agreed to conduct a follow-up inquiry on the Maintenance Of Community Swimming Pools by the MSCD.

Review of Documents

The Committee deliberated on the following, namely:

- i. Written Submissions; and
- ii. Media Reports.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting a follow-up inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outline the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC for a follow-up inquiry on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the MSCD.

- i. Identification of the MSCD to be examined;
- ii. Preparation of an Issues Paper which identified and summarised matters of concern in the Ministerial Responses provided by the MSCD and the MOF;
- iii. Based on the issues identified, the Committee agreed to have a Public Hearing. The relevant witnesses were invited to attend and provide evidence on **February 08, 2023;**
- iv. Following the Public Hearing, a request for further details was sent to the MSCD on **February 23, 2023**, and the responses were received on **March 15, 2022;**
- v. Report on the Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry;
- vi. Request for Ministerial Responses.
- vii. Review responses; and
- viii. Engage in follow-up.

3. ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Refurbishment of Community Swimming Pools

The MSCD has the oversight of the following Community Swimming Pools:

- i. Cocoyea Community Swimming Pool;
- ii. Couva Community Swimming Pool;
- iii. Diego Martin Swimming Pool;
- iv. La Horquetta Community Swimming Pool;
- v. Maloney Community Swimming Pool;
- vi. Morvant Community Swimming Pool;
- vii. Sangre Grande Community Swimming Pool;
- viii. Siparia Community Swimming Pool; and
- ix. Laventille Community Swimming Pool.

In its Ministerial Response to the Twenty-Eighth Report of the PAAC, dated April 12, 2021, the MSCD indicated that the Cocoyea, Couva and Siparia Community Swimming Pools were non-operational. The MSCD further stated that, due to the lack of funding, works will commence only at selected Swimming Pools in fiscal 2022-2023. However, site visits to these facilities were conducted by the Project Management Unit of the MSCD, and the necessary repair works were identified.

Status update on Community Swimming Pools as at February 8, 2023

i. Siparia, Sangre Grande, Diego Martin and La Horquetta:

At the time of the hearing, February 8, 2023, the Ministry indicated that the Siparia, Sangre Grande, Diego Martin and La Horquetta Community Swimming Pools were at Phase Three of refurbishments, and were to be reopened by the end of March 2023. The MSCD stated that there was a schedule of works to be completed in terms of a third phase for these swimming pools.

ii. Morvant, Maloney, Laventille and Cocoyea Community Swimming Pool:

All four pools were operational. The Cocoyea Pool reopened on January 09, 2023 after being closed for five (5) years.

Reccommendation:

- ***The MSCD should submit a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on whether the Sangre Grande, Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta Community Swimming Pools were reopened on schedule also including the list of incompletd works as at April 1, 2023.***

2. The status of the Couva Community Swimming Pool

During its deliberations in fiscal 2020, it was revealed that the Couva Community Swimming Pool was non-operational for approximately eighteen months. The pool was closed from April to July 2018 but reopened in August 2018 for one month before being closed again in September 2018. This closure extend to the entirety of 2019 due the pool requiring extensive repairs. The Committee sought an update on the swimming pool. The MSCD stated the process of drafting a Cabinet Note for the refurbishment of the Couva Community Swimming Pool had been initiated. The MSCD also sought to engage a structural engineer to perform a structural asseeemnet of the pool. The MSCD informed the Committee that the Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT) had undertaken an initial structural assessment but the feedback received indicated that a more detailed assessment from specialist structural engineers was needed. Consequently, SporTT's officials informed the Committee that the procurement process for the provision of structural asseeemnet services began with the award of a contract to soon follow. SporTT further stated that it expected a report on how to proceed with the Couva Community Swimming Pool to be generated within one month' s time.

The Committee requested an update on the status of the Pool on June 02, 2023. Responses received indicated that the pool was still closed to the public at that time. However, a structural assessment was being conducted to address concerns over the public's and operators' safety when using the pools or occupying the spectators' pavilion, the administrative building, technical rooms, and the other adjacent areas. This assessment was executed by a suitably qualified service provider. Additional information received stated that CEP Ltd. was awarded the contract via Open Tender at a cost of \$48,346.88 to conduct this assessment. The contract was signed on March 07, 2023 with the assessment process commencing immediately thereafter. As at June 02, 2023, a detailed assessment of the structural integrity of the pool basins, walls and ancillary areas (i.e pump room, pool access-ways etc.) was ongoing. The MSCD stated that this assessment

report would provide clarity as it pertains to whether refurbishment of the facility was feasible or if total reconstruction was the better option economically. The Committee was informed that, upon conclusion of the assessment, a comprehensive structural report on the facility would be submitted to the MSCD. That report was expected to be submitted on or before June 23, 2023.

Recommendations:

- ***The MSCD should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on:***
 - ***the draft Cabinet Note for the refurbishment of the pool; and***
 - ***the findings of the assessment of structural integrity of the selected areas.***
- ***A copy of the comprehensive structural report should also be submitted to the Parliament by January 29, 2024.***

3. Untimely Release of Funds

i. Current Operations

At the public hearing held in February 2023, the MSCD reiterated that the untimely receipt of releases continued to be one of its challenges. Throughout the Committee's ongoing deliberations in 2023, the MSCD expressed that the untimely release of funding continues to delay the progress the MSCD makes in its management and oversight of Community Swimming Pools. The Committee questioned the impact of the untimely receipt of releases on the operations of the community pools. The MSCD indicated that this challenge had a significant impact on the procurement of chemicals and other equipment needed. This was experienced when the SporTT had to utilise chemicals from other operating community pools to support the need of the re-opened Cocoyea Community Swimming Pool.

At the public hearing held in February 2020, the Committee was told that the Ministry was working with the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to obtain releases in a timely manner. This situation had remained unchanged in 2023. The MSCD stated that discussions were held with the MOF which resulted in the MSCD devising ways on how to improve the efficiency of its requests as well as the processing of requests. The MSCD further stated that the MOF was re-engaged to determine what was needed to strengthen the knowledge and requirements of the MSCD. In response, the MOF committed to sharing the difficulties it encountered in the speedy release of funding. One week prior to the public hearing on February 08, 2023, as a step to further improve this, a meeting was held with the Budget Division of the MOF and the Ministry of

Planning and Development (MPD) to discuss the issues faced regarding the timeliness of submissions and the MSCD's requests. The MSCD stated that it was committed to addressing the issues regarding the receipt of funding in a timely manner.

ii. Outstanding Arrears

In the written response received dated April 12, 2021, the MSCD indicated outstanding arrears owed to service providers as shown in table below:

Item	Company	Amount
1	Telecommunications Services of T&T	28,682.31
2	Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission	657,631.88
3	Water and Sewerage Authority of T&T	15,319.50
4	Columbus Communications, T&T	49,808.81
5	Eltina's Distributors Ltd.	5,266.88
6	FT Farfan Ltd.	10,125.00
7	Safety Specialists Ltd.	7,059.38
8	RBP Lifts Ltd.	1,875.45
9	Heller Security Services Ltd.	85,552.84
	Total	861,322.05

The MSCD indicated that the untimely release of funds from the MOF had affected its payments to these entities. Officials from the Ministry stated that it had advocated for the release of funding from the MOF on a continuous basis. The Committee was informed that in 2022, the MSCD applied for supplemental funding to cover these arrears, but none was received in spite of the request being made in a timely manner. Officials stated that, at the time of the public hearing, the Ministry was paying its current bills and would be requesting additional funding in the Mid-Year Budget Review.

Additional information provided stated the following as MSCD's aged payables as at, March 31, 2023 amounted to \$24,276,553.31:

- National Maintenance Training and Security Co. Ltd. - \$9,737,812.94

- Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission - \$11,765,810.09
- Water and Sewerage Authority - \$1, 932,191.68
- TSTT - \$840,738.60

Recommendations:

- ***The MSCD and the MOF should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the process for the request for releases including the timelines for submission and the planned actions being taken to address the challenges regarding the timely request and release of funding.***
- ***The MOF and the MSCD should collaborate and discuss a way forward regarding:***
 - ***the release of funding in a timely manner. This meeting should be held by the beginning of the next financial year 2023-2024. An update on the discussions held and the planned actions to be taken should be submitted to Parliament by January 29, 2024; and***
 - ***The MSCD should provide a status update on the arrears owed to the agencies stated above. A timeline for the payments of the outstanding arrears including the age of the outstanding balances should be submitted to Parliament by January 29, 2024.***

4. Review of the Fee Structure for Community Pools

In the Twenty-Eighth (28th) Report of the Committee¹ dated July 2020, it was stated that a fee was being charged for the use of community swimming pools. At that time, the fees which were heavily subsidised were as follows:

- \$40 per hour per person; and
- \$100 per term per school.

At the time of the public hearing held on February 12, 2020, the Committee sought a status update on the revision of the fee structure for the use of the pools. The MSCD indicated that the revision was still ongoing and that a decision had not been made. The MSCD informed the Committee that the use of the newly built pools namely the Laventille, Morvant, Maloney, and Cocoyea Pools were free of charge. This had not been the case with the previously existing pools.

¹ [Twenty-Eighth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on the examination into the maintenance of Community Pools by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.](#)

The Committee questioned whether the previous fee structure stated above would be applied to the pools that were scheduled to re-open in March 2023. Officials stated that a decision had not been made, but, once decided, the proposed fee structure would be submitted to Cabinet for approval. Regarding the preparation of a Note for the revision of the fee structure for the use of the community swimming pools, the MSCD stated that it was looking at conducting an overall revision of fee structures across the facilities of both the MSCD and SporTT. Discussions had been ongoing with representatives of SporTT for a year and recommendations coming out of those discussions were being finalised. This would then be drafted into a note and submitted to Cabinet.

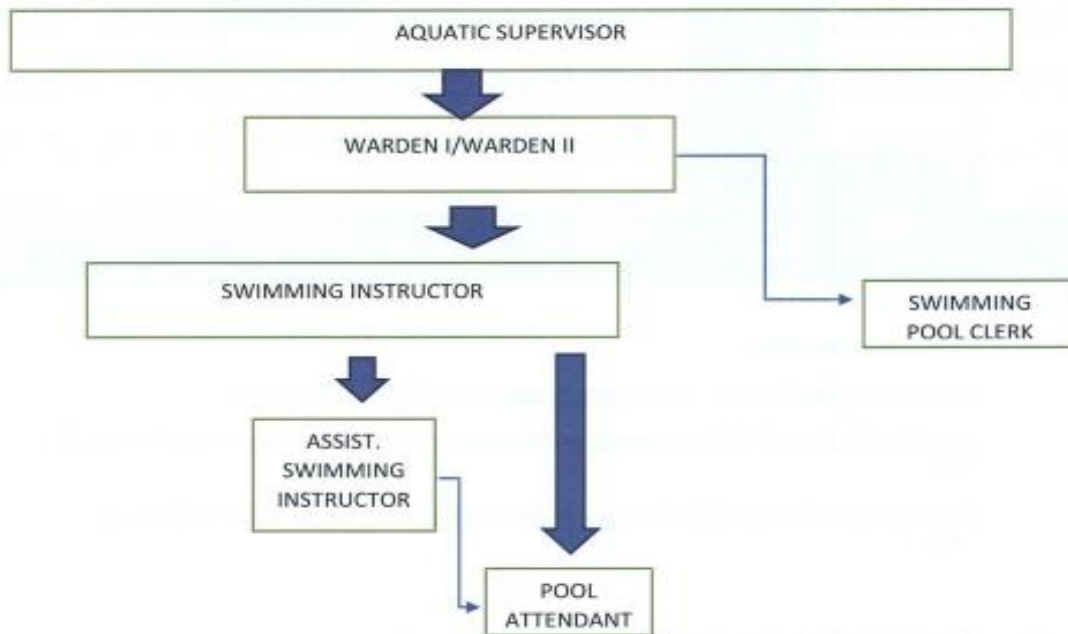
Additional information dated March 15, 2023, stated that with respect to the establishment of a fee structure for community pools, SporTT was in the process of engaging a consultant to conduct the facility rate review and standardisation exercise for all facilities under the MSCD and SporTT.

Recommendation:

- ***The MSCD should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024:***
 - ***whether any meeting has taken place to finalise the revision of the fee structure for the facilities under both the MSCD and SporTT including the timeline for the start date and end date of this process; and***
 - ***On whether a Note to Cabinet to effect those revision has been drafted, finalised and submitted to Cabinet for approval.***

5. Staffing at Community Swimming Pools

i. The Organisational Chart



The diagram above illustrates the organisational chart for community swimming pools. Based on the diagram, the MSCD indicated the following number of officers for each position stated in the diagram above:

- 1 Warden I;
- 6 Swimming Instructors;
- 4 Assistant Swimming Instructors;
- 2 Pool Attendants; and
- 4 Swimming Pool Clerks;

However, not all pools were operating with the requisite staffing. The staff complement at each community pool as at March 2023 is listed below:

Diego Martin Pool:

- 1 Warden;
- 1 Pool Attendant;
- 3 Swimming Pool Clerks;
- 1 Assistant Swimming Instructor;
- 1 Aquatic Officer II (Contract); and
- 1 Aquatic Officer I (Contract).

La Horquetta Pool:

- 1 Warden;
- 3 Pool Attendants;
- 3 Swimming Pool Clerks;
- 1 Swimming Instructors; and
- 2 Aquatic Officer I (Contract).

Siparia Pool

- 1 Warden I;

1 Pool Attendant;
2 Swimming Pool Clerks;
2 Swimming Instructor;
1 Aquatic Officer II (Contract); and
1 Aquatic Officer I (Contract).

Cocoyea Pool

1 Facility Coordinator (Contract);
1 Pool Attendant ;
1 Swimming Pool Clerk;
1 Business Operations Officer I;
1 Aquatic Officer II (Contract); and
1 Aquatic Officer I (Contract).

Sangre Grande Pool

Staff assigned to the Couva Community Pool were re-located to other facilities as the pool was out of service (unusable for the public) pending the completion of the necessary works. The Laventille, Maloney and Morvant Community Pools were fully staffed by sixty-four (64) members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF). The Committee sought an explanation on the challenges experienced in filling the vacancies at these community swimming pools. The MSCD indicated the following:

- The lack of suitable candidates; and
- lengthy and tedious recruitment process..

Recommendations:

- ***The MSCD should conduct a review of its recruitment process to determine the ways in which it can be more efficient and effective. A copy of the adjustments to be implemented with a timeline (if necessary) should be submitted to Parliament by January 29, 2024; and***

1 Warden;
1 Business Operations Officer I (Contract);
1 Pool Attendant (Contract) ;
3 Swimming Pool Clerks;
1 Swimming Instructor;
1 Aquatic Officer II (Contract); and
1 Cleaner (Contract).

Couva Pool

1 Warden I;
1 Pool Attendant (Contract);
2 Swimming Pool Clerks;
1 Swimming Instructor;
1 Business Operations Officer I (Contract);
and
1 Aquatic Officer I (Contract).

- *Given the importance of Swimming Instructors and Pool Attendants, the MSCD should indicate the planned actions being taken/intended to fill the vacancies. A status update should be submitted to Parliament by January 29, 2024.*
- *Given the challenge of the lack of suitable candidates to fill vacancies, the MSCD should consider developing and implementing a training course and lessons learnt manual with the input of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to enhance the capacity of candidates to become suitable for the positions needed. An update on should be submitted to Parliament by January 29, 2024*

6. Procurement and Storage of Chemicals

Procurement

On December 7, 2022 the Committee conducted a site visit to the Cocoyea and Morvant Community Swimming Pools. At the site visit to the Cocoyea Pool, it was revealed that the chemicals to treat the pools were internationally sourced but procured through local suppliers. Officials from SPORTT indicated that the untimely release of funding led to a delay in the delivery of the ordered chemicals from the local chemical suppliers until monies for immediate payment were made available. The Committee inquired whether these issues were experienced by all community swimming pools, to which officials responded that it did indeed impact all community swimming pools. At the public hearing, the MSCD was questioned on the schedule for the procurement of the required chemicals. Officials indicated that the chemicals were procured for periods of three (3) months at a time because a three (3) months supply of chemicals could be stored together without any dangerous implications.

Storage of Chemicals

Regarding the storing of chemicals, at the site visit conducted, it was observed that chemicals at both the Cocoyea and Morvant Pools were not properly identified and there was no indication whether the chemicals were poisonous or flammable substances. At the public hearing, the Committee followed up on how the MSCD was addressing this issue. Officials indicated that they were working with the Procurement Unit with respect to signs for both Cocoyea and Morvant Community Swimming Pools. The Ministry gave the timeline of the end of February 2023 to engage a supplier and receive invoices, after which a request for releases would be made. Also, it

was seen that chemicals on the compound of Community Pools were stored in the same room. The Committee inquired about the risks associated with storing chemicals in close proximity to each other. Officials from the MSCD explained that a three months supply of chemicals could be stored together without any dangerous implications.

Observation:

- ***The Committee notes the challenges faced regarding the management of community swimming pools in light of the untimely release of funding.***

Recommendation:

- ***The MSCD should provide a status update and the associated timelines to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the ordering, payment and delivery for the chemicals for all the community swimming pools as well as the receipt of requisite signage for the Cocoyea and Morvant Swimming Pools.***

7. Implementation of the Comprehensive Maintenance Plan

In the Ministerial Response to the Twenty-eighth Report of the Committee, the Ministry indicated that a Comprehensive Maintenance Plan was developed by the previous Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs in the last quarter of fiscal 2019. However, with the realignment of the Ministries in August 2020, the Project Management Unit of the MSCD commenced the implementation of the plan and the maintenance schedule which involved an assessment of each of its facilities, to ascertain the nature and scope of works to be completed, as well as the production of schedules with estimated timelines for the repair works to be completed at each facility.

During the public hearing, the Committee requested a status of the implementation of the Maintenance Plan. Officials indicated that the Maintenance Plan was being implemented with no issues or incidents thus far. Official from the Ministry stated that the Ministry's Project Management Unit was responsible for the implementation of the plan at the various Community Swimming Pools. Officials further stated that some daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly checks were conducted and as such, no incidents or issues were reported since the implementation of the plan. The Committee questioned the response time from when a report was made identifying the challenges or issues and the actions taken to remedy the issues to avoid the shutting down of

Community Swimming Pools which transpired in the past. Officials indicated that with the implementation of the Maintenance Plan, a shutdown should not occur in the future.

The Committee inquired about the process for remedying reports of defective or faulty equipment. For example, if an issue with a pump arose, what was the response time to get the pump repaired. The Ministry stated that a preventative maintenance plan would be implemented. The Ministry also informed the Committee that there was no reason why equipment should not be easily replaced, given the procurement of specialised equipment during the life cycle of the item. Therefore, there was no need to wait for a pump to become defective before it can be replaced. Additionally, the Ministry indicated that its Physical Education and Sport Division (PESD), was in the process of drafting a Cabinet Note to have a preferred Special Purpose Company created to assist with its maintenance package. Once the company is onboard, the company will be responsible for all short-term repairs, while informing the Ministry of what the long-term repairs and replacement packages were expected to be. This gave the Ministry sufficient time to have the item procured and stored for installation whenever necessary.

Observation:

- ***The Committee notes the Ministry's implementation of its Maintenance Plan at the Community Swimming Pools.***

Recommendation:

- ***The MSCD should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the completion of the Draft Cabinet Note for the incorporation of a Special Purpose Company.***

8. Status of the Risk Management Plan and/or Risk Management Policy

During the Committee's deliberations, the Committee inquired about the MSCD's Risk Management Plan and/or Risk Policy. The MSCD indicated that the Occupational Health and Safety Act was utilised as the reference tool when dealing with risks. However, no formal documented Risk Management Plan or Risk Policy was in use. Despite this, the MSCD has implemented the following standard risk mitigation strategies in the event of Drownings, Theft, Trespassing without Permission, Chemical Burns, Chemical Inhalation and Vandalism:

- a. Proper signage in and around the Community Swimming Pool informing patrons of the rules and regulations to be followed for the prevention of drownings and encouraging to have learn to swim programmes
- b. Proper visibility and supervision of the security personnel at the Community Swimming Pool for the prevention of theft
- c. Proper visibility and supervision of the security personnel at the Community Swimming Pool for the prevention of persons trespassing without permission
- d. Chemicals are stored in a proper ventilated space away from staff and patrons visiting the Community Swimming Pool
- e. Chemicals are stored in a proper ventilated space away from staff and patrons visiting the Community Swimming Pool
- f. Proper visibility and supervision of the security personnel at the Community Swimming Pool for the prevention of vandalism

The Committee further inquired about a Emergency Response Plan. Officials of the MSCD indicated that an Emergency Response Plan/ Incident Plan exists at all Community Swimming Pools. The effective execution of the plain involves:

- i. The constant engagement with nearby Health Centres and Hospitals in the event of an emergency;
- ii. Reports are submitted to the MSCD's Head Office within 24 – 48 hours to two point persons. One within the PESD and the other in the MSCD's Project Management Unit (PMU);
- iii. Direct communication is maintained between the warden of the pool as well as the two point persons of the PESD and the MSCD's PMU; and
- iv. The incident reports are generated and forwarded to the Director of the PESD, as well as the Technical Director of the PMU for subsequent address.

Recommendation:

- ***The MSCD should prioritise drafting a Risk Management plan or Risk Policy to ensure its preparedness in the event of an emergency or incident. A status of the completion of this plan should be submitted to the Parliament by January 29, 2024; and***

- *The MSCD should conduct a review of the Ministry's Emergency Response Plan to test for effectiveness and submit a report to Parliament by January 29, 2024.*

CONCLUSION

The MSCD in collaboration with SporTT is responsible for the management and oversight of all community swimming pools across the country. The issue of the untimely release of funding remains a challenge for the MSCD. These issues have affected the management, maintenance and operations of community swimming pools.

During the Third Session of the Twelfth Parliament, the PAAC conducted a follow-up inquiry on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the MSCD. Several issues such as the refurbishment of swimming pools, untimely release of funds, review of the fee structure, procurement and storage of chemicals and staffing shortages, implementation of the maintenance plan and status of the risk management plan and/or risk management were highlighted and recommendations proposed to address these issues.

The Committee is of the view that the adoption of its proposed recommendations will lead to greater efficiency in the operations of the community swimming pools across the country. Moreover, the Committee intends to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations proposed in this Report.

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

Sgd.
Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Chairman

Sgd.
Dr. Lackram Bodoie
Vice-Chairman

Sgd.
Mr. Laurence Hislop

Sgd.
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy
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Mr. Randall Mitchell
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Mr. Hassel Bacchus
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Sgd.
Mr. Wade Mark
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Symon de Nobriga
Member

Sgd.
Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian
Member

APPENDIX I

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

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

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

10. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.
11. Engage in follow-up.

APPENDIX II

Minutes of Meetings

**THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
THIRD SESSION, TWELFTH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 08, 2023 AT 1:33 P.M.**

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Mr. Laurence Hislop	-	Member
Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian	-	Member
Mr. Hassel Bacchus	-	Member
Mr. Symon de Nobriga	-	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	-	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Excused were:

Dr. Lackram Bodeo	-	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Mr. Randall Mitchell	-	Member

COMMENCEMENT

1.1 At 1:33 p.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE TWELFTH MEETING

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Twelfth (12th) Meeting held on November 16, 2022.
- 2.2 The following correction was made:
- Page 1, the words 'De Norbriga' was replaced with the words 'de Nobriga'.
- 2.3 There being no further omissions or corrections, the Minutes as amended were confirmed on a motion moved by Mr. Hassel Bacchus and seconded by Mr. Laurence Hislop.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE TWELFTH MEETING

- 3.1 With reference to item 3.2, page 2: the Chairman informed Members that the responses from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development were received on December 5, 2022 and were uploaded to Rotunda for their consideration.

- 3.2 With reference to item 10.2, page 7: the Chairman informed Members that questions for additional information were sent to the Ministry of Finance and the Personnel Department with a deadline of December 14, 2022. The responses were received on December 14, 2022 and December 19, 2022 respectively. The responses were uploaded to Rotunda.
- 3.3 With reference to item 10.3, page 8: the Chairman informed Members that the Committee conducted a site visit to the Cocoyea Community Swimming Pool and Morvant Community Swimming Pool on December 7, 2022. The Secretariat prepared and circulated a Report on the Site visit which was uploaded to Rotunda.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION: A FOLLOW UP EXAMINATION INTO THE MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOLS BY THE MINISTRY OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The Chairman reminded Members that the purpose of this meeting was to follow up on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the Ministry of Sport and Community Development.
- 4.2 The Chairman invited Members to review the Issues Paper with possible questions on the maintenance of community swimming pools that can be used during the public hearing.
- 4.3 Members discussed the issues of concern and the general approach to be taken during the public hearing.

SUSPENSION

- 5.1 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 2:18 p.m., to reconvene in public.

A FOLLOW UP EXAMINATION INTO THE MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOLS BY THE MINISTRY OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.
- 6.2 The following officials joined the meeting.

Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD)

Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel - Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Gabre Jesu McTair - Director, Physical Education and Sport
Mr. Wilfred Fullerton - Technical Director

The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SporTT)

Ms. Ansuya Babwah - Head, Accounts
Mr. David Ince - Head, Facilities

Ministry of Finance – Investments Division

Mr. Ryan Maharaj - Senior Business Analyst
Ms. Sharon Mohammed - Director Agro-based, Manufacturing and Services Sector

- 6.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, members of the media and the public.
- 6.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were exchanged.

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The status of community swimming pools under the purview of the MSCD and the activities offered to the public;
2. The MSCD strategic partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF) to manage and oversee the facilities at the Maloney, Laventille and Morvant Community Swimming Pools;
3. The current refurbishment and re-opening of the Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta Community Swimming Pools in March 2023;
4. The status of the Couva Community Swimming Pool and the need to conduct a detailed structural assessment;
5. The potential revenue generating capacity of the Community Swimming Pools based on the model of the Couva and Diamond Vale Community Swimming Pool;
6. The late receipt of funds from the MOF and the MSCD's and the measures in place to address this issue in a timely manner;
7. The MSCD's use of a public survey to identify the public's request for the community pools for longer opening hours;
8. The Ministry's inability to extend its opening hours due to insufficient manpower;
9. The continuation of the repairs and refurbishment works at the Diego Martin Community Swimming Pool after its reopening in March 2023 without disruption to the public;
10. The implementation of the MSCD's Preventative Maintenance Plan to effectively identify and address issues as they arise;
11. The status of the Community Swimming Pools that the Preventative Maintenance Plan was tested on;

12. The measures in place to ensure the older pools receive the same robust maintenance monitoring as those managed by the TTDF;
13. The need for the MSCD to include a maintenance checklist as part of the execution of the Preventative Maintenance Plan;
14. The number of persons who accessed the Cocoyea Community Swimming Pool since it was reopened in January 03, 2023;
15. The challenges identified by the MSCD that impacted on its service delivery;
16. The status of the arrears outstanding for the following services - security, janitorial and maintenance and service providers operating at all of the Community Pools under SporTT;
17. The MSCD's inability to settle its aged payables;
18. The functions of the PESD's;
19. The status of the permanent and contract staff complement at the Physical Education and Sport Division (PESD) of the MSCD;
20. The development of a priority listing to fulfil the payment of salaries and wages;
21. The challenges experienced in procuring chemicals for the pool from local suppliers;
22. The status of the development of a vendor prequalification list using the Office of Procurement Regulation's depository and the criteria for prequalification;
23. The status of a Note to Cabinet on the fee structure to be implemented at each sporting facility's pool under its purview;
24. The MSCD's need to consider how best to facilitate private requests from private entities and swim clubs to utilise the community swimming pool without disrupting its regular 'learn to swim and community programmes';
25. The efforts made to formalise the provision of security and janitorial services at each swimming pool;
26. The status of communities engagement and involvement in the maintenance and running of community pools;
27. The need to develop a pool utilisation policy;
28. The status of the observations made at the Committee's site visits;
29. The timeline for the procurement of a new sump pump for the Cocoyea Swimming Pool;
30. The status of a risk management plan in place at each pool;
31. The status of the development of emergency response plans; and
32. The marketing strategies in place for the reopening of the Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta Community Swimming Pools.

Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission by the witnesses.

6.5 The Chairman thanked the officials for attending and they were excused.

SUSPENSION

7.1 At 4:52 p.m., the Chairman suspended the public meeting to resume in camera for a post-hearing discussion with Members only.

RESUMPTION

8.1 At 4:55 p.m., the Chairman resumed the meeting in camera.

POST-HEARING DISCUSSION

9.1 The Chairman sought Members' views on the public hearing. A discussion ensued.

9.2 The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the MSCD.

9.3 The Chairman informed Members that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday March 8, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. when the Committee will commence an Inquiry into the provision of flood relief grants by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS).

ADJOURNMENT

10.1 The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to **Wednesday March 8, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.**

10.2 The adjournment was taken at 5:26 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

February 08, 2023

Additional Information Requested

Questions to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development

1. Provide the following:
 - a. Arrears outstanding for telecommunications, security and janitorial services.
 - b. A status on the payment of these outstanding arrears.
2. With reference to the staff at each community pool, provide the following:
 - i. the organisational chart;
 - ii. the current staff compliment at each pool;
 - iii. the required staff complement;
 - iv. the number of vacant positions;
 - v. a breakdown of the specialist staff;
 - vi. the number of persons on short-term that currently filling permanent posts.
3. State all the vacant posts with and without incumbents to be filled at the Physical Education and Sport Division (PESD) and the challenges encountered filling those vacant posts.
4. How long has the late receipt of funds to pay for the expenditure related to community pools been an issue?
5. What is the MSCD's current aged payables to date?
6. What is the timeline between when releases were requested and received?
7. What billing utility rates are charged for the community swimming pools?
8. What fee proposals were being considered for the Community Swimming Pools at Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta?
9. What is the status of the Note to Cabinet on the implementation of the fee structures at all of the facilities under the purview of the MSCD?
10. State the justification for the no fee and fee structures in place at each swimming pool.
11. What is the MTS's monthly cost to provide services at each pool it services?
12. What are the current outstanding payments owed to each security provider used for the community pools?

- a. What is the duration of each contract?
 - b. What were the monthly costs for the periods the payments are owed?
 - c. What date/s were the requests for funds made to the Ministry of Finance to pay the outstanding debts?
13. Provide a list of the issues / vulnerabilities at each pool and the risk mitigation strategies to address same, for each pool.
14. What marketing strategies will be implemented prior to the MSCD's 'April Pools' promotional events?
15. What is the age of the Couva Swimming Pool?
16. What is the estimated cost to repair the Couva community pool?
17. What is the reason for the hiring of an external structural engineer to assess the integrity of the Couva swimming pool?
18. What was the cost to develop the maintenance plan and schedules for each pool?
19. Provide the following:
 - a. The cost to build each pool;
 - b. The monthly maintenance costs at each pool;
 - c. The monthly operational costs at each pool.
20. How does the MSCD intend to monitor and evaluate the maintenance of the swimming pools under its purview?
 - a. What oversight mechanisms will be implemented to ensure that maintenance plans and schedules are adhered to?
 - b. State the steps that will be involved in this process.
21. Provide the timeline for the procurement of the following for each Community Pool:
 - a. Sump Pump at Cocoyea;
 - b. Hazardous Chemical Signage; and
 - c. Chemicals.

Appendix III

Site Visit Report

Report on the site visits to the Cocoyea and Morvant Community Swimming Pools
conducted on Wednesday December 7, 2022

Introduction

On Wednesday December 7, 2022, the Members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) conducted site visits to the Cocoyea and Morvant Community Swimming Pools. The purpose of the site visit was to undertake follow up on the matters identified in the Twenty-Eight Report of the PAAC in the Eleventh Parliament (An inquiry into the examination and the maintenance of Community Pools by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs now Ministry of Sport and Community Development².)

Of particular concern to the Committee was the operational state of the Cocoyea Community Pool and the Morvant Community Pool and the reasons for such.

Report

1. The Parliamentary contingent visiting the Cocoyea Community Pool comprised the following persons:

Members

- | | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|---|----------|
| i. | Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George | - | Chairman |
| ii. | Mr. Randall Mitchell | - | Member |
| iii. | Ms. Amrita Deonaraine | - | Member |
| iv. | Mr. Laurence Hislop | - | Member |

Parliament staff

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| i. | Ms. Keiba Jacob | - | Secretary |
| ii. | Ms. Khisha Peterkin | - | Assistant Secretary |

² The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was realigned to the Ministry of Sport and Community Development September 9, 2020 <http://news.gov.tt/sites/default/files/E-Gazette/Gazette%202020/Gazettes/Gazette%20No.%20158%20of%202020.pdf>

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| iii. | Ms. Rachel Nunes | - | Graduate Research Assistant |
| iv. | Mr. Darien Buckmire | - | Graduate Research Assistant |
2. On arrival at the site, the contingent was greeted by the following officials of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development:
- | | | | |
|------|------------------------|---|--|
| i. | Ms. Angela Edwards | - | Permanent Secretary |
| ii. | Mr. Gabre Jesu Mc Tair | - | Director, Physical Education and Sport |
| iii. | Mr. Wilfred Fullerton | - | Technical Director. |
| iv. | Ms. Kimberly Joseph | - | Facility Coordinator, Cocoyea Pool |

The Cocoyea Community Pool

3. The tour of the community pool commenced at approximately 10:18 a.m.
4. The tour of the Cocoyea Community Pool was guided primarily by Mr. Gabre Jesu Mc Tair (Director, Physical Education and Sport) and Mr. Wilfred Fullerton (Technical Director) of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development. During this tour, the following issues/matters were discussed:

(a) Arrears to T&TEC and WASA

- The untimely release of funds from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has affected the payments to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) resulting in arrears to the two utility companies by the Ministry of Sport and Community Development (MSCD).
- Members inquired about the measures taken to settle the arrears to T&TEC and WASA. Officials from the MSCD stated that payment schedules were established to settle the outstanding debts. Since the establishment of the payment schedules, 20% of the debt outstanding to WASA and T&TEC has been cleared off. However, due to the untimely

release of funds from the MoF, funding was unavailable to pay the remaining arrears by the MSCD.

- All current expenditure related to WASA and T&TEC were paid in a timely manner upon the expense occurring.

(b) Management of the Facility

- SPORTT has been managing the facility.

(c) Maintenance Issues

- All pumping and electrical equipment used at the facility was either recently replaced or repaired.
- Committee Members noticed that the following health and safety issues existed:
 - the facilities required cleaning, reinforced fencing, paint touch ups, and power washing;
 - algae and moss surrounded the pool walls and the pool itself which was a breeding ground for aquatic life (tadpoles and insect larvae);
 - the chair for disabled/elderly persons to enter the pool was non-functional;
 - the water fixtures in the washrooms and changing rooms were corroded resulting in water leaking from the pipes and running off into the drains;
 - the lighting fixtures in all the washrooms and changing rooms were no longer working;
 - the existing swimming lanes were left to the elements and were in a state of disrepair;
 - there were no visible fire extinguishers in the pump room;
 - the walls of the pump room showed visible signs of moisture and water was present on the floors of the room as well.

- there were protruding metal rods around the glass portals used to view swimmers while they are in pool; and
- the concessions area needed complete infrastructural repairs.
- Officials from the MSCD stated that a new sump pump for the pool will soon be needed as the existing pump was coming to end of its useful life.

(d) Procurement and Storage of Chemicals

- All chemicals to treat the pools were internationally sourced and procured through local suppliers.
- The untimely release of funds from the MoF led to the delayed receipt of chemicals from the local suppliers.
- Officials from the MSCD stated that the local chemical suppliers will not deliver the ordered products until monies for immediate payment were available. Members inquired about whether this issue was experienced at all the pools. Officials stated that all the pools were affected by this issue.
- The various chemicals used on the compound were stored in one room.
- Committee Members observed that there was no signage in the storage room to properly identify the chemicals or indication whether the chemicals were poisonous or flammable substances
- Committee Members inquired about the risks associated with storing all the chemicals in close proximity to each other. Officials from the MSCD explained that a three months' supply of chemicals could be stored together without any dangerous implications.
- The procurement process for an additional three-month supply of chemicals would be initiated when one month's worth of chemicals was on hand. Officials from the MSCD also indicated that was the standard procedure adopted across all the pools.
- It was further stated that when a pool experienced a shortage of chemicals, requests would be made to the other swimming pools to supply the deficit.

(e) Staffing

- Overall, the facility requires permanent appointments which include lifeguards and instructors who would be attached to the pool on a weekly basis.
- Committee Members inquired about the status of the recruitment process for the permanent posts. Officials stated that the process was ongoing.
- In the interim, certified personnel have been engaged to act as aquatic officers.
- Committee Members also inquired about what would occur if the pool was not functional. Officials stated that staff will be reassigned to work at a functioning pool.

(f) Marketing, Publicity and Promotions

- Committee Members inquired about the programmes to be relaunched at the pool and the strategies in place to notify persons of the pool's reopening. Officials from the MSCD indicated that:
 - the "learn to swim in schools" programme administered in conjunction with the Ministry of Education (MoE) will resume after the grand relaunch on January 3, 2023;
 - The "learn to swim" programme for community members will be communicated to community stakeholder groups two weeks prior to the grand reopening
 - advertisements were placed on the Ministry's website and broadcast via the Ministry's social media accounts
- The Committee suggested, to maximise the usage of the pool, the facilities could be commercialised to allow competitive swimming events or for persons to rent the facilities for private lessons. However, officials stated that the MSCD was not a receiver of revenue with regards to community pools. Secondly, officials stated that there was no standard procedure/mechanism in place to release liability from the facility in the event incidents or injuries incurred on the premises during private use.

Finally, the issue of commercialised use of the pool causing scheduling conflicts with the pool's public use was discussed.

5. The tour at the Cocoyea Community Pool concluded at approximately 11:43 a.m.

The Morvant Community Pool

6. The tour of the community pool commenced at approximately 12:57 p.m.
7. The Parliamentary Contingent was joined by the following individuals from the Ministry of Sport and Community Development and Defence Force
 - Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel - Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) MSCD
 - Lt. Jean Paul Bartholomew - Pool Coordinator
 - Petty Officer Clint Moses - Management Officer
 - Petty Officer Dwayne Roach - Management Officer
 - Petty Officer Grant Rodriguez - Management Officer
 - Petty Officer Marlon Moors - Management Officer
 - Petty Officer Kwesi Morris - Management Officer
8. The tour of the Morvant Community Pool was guided primarily by Lt Jean Paul Bartholomew (Pool Coordinator) of the Defence Force. During this tour, the following issues/matters were discussed:

(g) Staffing

- Committee Members were informed that all lifeguards, coaches and administrative staff were from the Defence Force;
- The directive for the Defence Force to be the body designated to manage the Morvant Community Pool came from the Office of the Prime Minister;
- Staff was assigned on a rotational basis – two days in two days out.

(h) Utilisation of the facility

- Committee Members were informed that the community pool occupancy level were as follows:
 - Approximately forty (40) persons attended aqua aerobics, which is held on a daily basis Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.,
 - Approximately sixty (60) to one hundred and twenty (120) persons daily attended the community open swim, which is held on a daily basis Monday to Friday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.,.
- Committee Members were told that the Schools Learn to swim programme through the MoE was actively participated by four (4) schools at least once a week between 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- The Morvant Community Pool's current opening and closing times are 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. respectively Monday to Friday.
- The Committee Members inquired about extending the opening and closing times to increase the pool's utilization rate. Officials stated that additional manpower will be needed to extend the opening and closing times.
- The Committee was also informed that pool users were required to go through a registration process prior to being allowed access to the pool and pool access was granted persons in groups of twenty-five at a time on a first come first serve basis.
- The Committee Members also observed that the washrooms and changing rooms were combined for both male and females but there was only one changing area/washroom designated for disabled persons.

(i) Maintenance Issues

- All pumping and electrical equipment used at the facility were fully operational.
- Committee Members noticed that the following health and safety issues existed:
 - Upkeep of basic maintenance was not maintained due to slow releases of funds from the MoF.

- The locks to the pumping room and storage room were rusted.
- There were broken/missing showerheads in the outside showers.
- Out of order signs were posted throughout the toilet facilities.

(j) Youth Advancement through the Pool's Swimming Programmes

- The Committee Members inquired on the possibilities available for participants of the Schools Learn to Swim Programme to become national athletes. Officials stated Servol was being approached to develop structured programmes to train competent swimmers for aquatic sports (competitive swimming and water polo).
- The Committee suggested the need for a transitional process to guide youths from childhood recreational uses through adolescent competitions and to scholarship worthiness in collaboration with the Aquatics Sports Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

(k) Procurement and Storage of Chemicals

- The Committee observed that the same chemical procurement and storage issues identified at the Cocoyea Swimming Pool were experienced at the Morvant Swimming Pool.
- Committee Members also noted that the storage room lacked proper ventilation and was lit by heat transmitting lightning fixtures. Members indicated that the lack of ventilation and heat could potentially lead to dangerous chemical reactions.

9. The tour was concluded at approximately 1:48 pm.

10. The proceedings of the site visit were captured by photos taken by the Communication Officer from the Office of the Parliament. These photos are available in the appendices of this document (pages 11-35).

Financial Scrutiny Unit
Office of the Parliament
February 08, 2023

Appendix IV

Verbatim

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HELD, (IN PUBLIC), ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 08, 2023, AT 2.30 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Laurence Hislop	Member
Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian	Member
Mr. Hassel Bacchus	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Mr. Symon de Nobriga	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Dr. Lackram Bodeo	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Mr. Randall Mitchell	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member

SPORTS COMPANY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED (SPORTT)

Ms. Ansuya Babwah	Head, Accounts
Mr. David Ince	Head, Facilities

MINISTRY OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Beverly Reid-Samuel	Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Gabre Jesu McTair	Director, Physical Education and Sport
Mr. Wilfred Fullerton	Technical Director

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Mr. Ryan Maharaj	Senior Business Analyst
Ms. Sharon Mohammed	Director Agro-based, Manufacturing and Services Sector

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the officials of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, and the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited. I am Bridgid Annisette-George, the Chairman of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations, PAAC, has the mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- (b) The budgetary expenditure of government agencies as it occurs and keeps

- Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and
- (c) The administration of government agencies to determine the hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this meeting is to follow up on the maintenance of community swimming pools by the Ministry of Sport and Community Development. The role of the Committee is:

- 1) To assist the stakeholders in achieving the efficient delivery of services while ensuring that expenditures are embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;
- 2) To determine the challenges being faced and possible solutions to these challenges; and
- 3) Make recommendations for improvement of public administration.

Today's meeting is being broadcast live on Parliament's YouTube Channel, *Parlview*, and there will be a delayed broadcast on the Parliament's Channel 11 and Radio 105.5 FM. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's enquiry via email, parl101@ttparliament.org, [facebook.com/ttparliament](https://www.facebook.com/ttparliament), and Twitter at [ttparliament](https://twitter.com/ttparliament).

I, therefore, at this stage will ask my fellow members of the Committee to introduce themselves, starting from my right.

[*Introductions made*]

Madam Chairman: The Committee is ably assisted by its two Assistant Secretaries, Ms. Khisha Peterkin and Ms. Hema Bhagaloo.

I will therefore now invite members of the—representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, and the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago to introduce themselves.

[*Introductions made*]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much and I will therefore invite the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry—well, who we have here really is the Senior Business Analyst and also the Director, Agro-based, Manufacturing Sector, Ministry of Finance. So I will invite one or the other of you all to make an opening statement if you so wish.

Mr. Maharaj: Thank you, Chair. The Investments Division of the Ministry of Finance is responsible for executing the investment policy as prescribed by the Cabinet. Accordingly, the mandate of the division includes oversight, monitoring and rationalize—where necessary, the rationalization of both GORTT's equity holdings and commercial enterprises. Chair, we are grateful for the invitation and we will make ourselves available in any way we can participate in this meeting this evening.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Maharaj. And therefore, could I now invite the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development to make a brief opening statement if she so desires.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Thank you, Chairman. The Ministry of Sport and Community Development was formed in August 2020. The Ministry continues to build our nation's human capital through the development of athletic talent and community life in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry achieves its mandate through the work of its core divisions and units, the Physical Education and Sport Division, the Community Development Division, the Prime Minister's Best Village Unit, and the Community Mediation Services Division. The Ministry is also supported by the three state enterprises under its purview: the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, the National Commission for Self Help Limited, and Export Centres Company Limited.

As part of the mandate of the Ministry, we ensure that citizens, communities and other interest groups have access to quality venues for sporting, social and recreational activities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry manages several sporting facilities which are used for a range of recreational purposes and sporting competitions, including its community swimming pools which we are discussing today. The Ministry has nine community swimming pools under its purview and a tenth is in the design phase. There is recreational and instructional swimming offered at our community swimming pools as well as aqua aerobics.

Through its strategic partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, a robust programme of activities are offered at the Maloney, Laventille and Morvant Community Swimming Pools. Currently, the pool at Couva, Siparia, Sangre Grande, Diego Martin and La Horquetta are being refurbished. It is expected that the Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta Community Swimming Pools would be reopened by the end of March.

The Ministry of Sport and Community Development remains committed to encourage total participation in sport and the development of athletic talent as we use sport as a driver for our community development. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam PS. And I would ask—invite at this stage either of the two representatives of the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago to make a brief opening statement if they so wish. Okay, so neither Mr. Ice or Ms. Babwah? No? Okay. Well, thank you very much.

I just want to ask a question to the Deputy PS. Did I hear correctly that Couva is going to be opened—was Couva one of those in the line-up to be opened at the end of March? No?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No, Chairman.

Madam Chairman: No. Could you just repeat for me—

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Siparia, Diego Martin and La Horquetta.

Madam Chairman: Oh, thank you. Okay. So my first question really then is to the representatives of either the Sports Company or to the PS of the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, if you all could give us a sort of status overview on each community pool.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, I will provide the status update. So we have four

community swimming pools opened at this time. We have the Morvant, the Maloney, the Laventille and Cocoyea swimming pools. Cocoyea was recently reopened on the 9th of January. We have programme of works for the La Horquetta, the Diego Martin, and the Sangre Grande, and Siparia swimming pools. We have completed phase one and two in some of these swimming pools and we are at the stage of phase three for the La Horquetta swimming pool, the Diego Martin swimming pool and the Siparia swimming pool.

So we have a schedule of works to be done in terms of a third phase for these swimming pools. However, the Couva swimming pool, we are right now engaging a consultant to look at the structural integrity of the pool and I could ask our Technical Director to go into some more detail about the Couva swimming pool.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So with Couva, I believe that the information that we would have had is that that, looking at the structural integrity, would have occurred sometime ago.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, I would like to invite my Technical Director to give a bit more detail on the Couva swimming pool.

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you, Madam Chairman. With respect to the Couva swimming pool, a structural assessment was indeed done by SPORTT, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, a couple of years ago, and they required further assessments to be done and they invited the Ministry of Works and Transport to undertake that structural assessment. We have that report and the report indicated that a further, much more detailed assessment has to be done by the use of senior, more proficient structural engineer at this point.

Is it with that information that we would have gone through the procurement process to get a structural assessment done by a suitably qualified company for the Couva swimming pool. We have the procurement process almost completed, we are at the stage where we are actually going to award a contract to one of the successful proponents and we expect in one months' time that a report will be made available for us to determine what is the exact procedure to take with respect to refurbishment or replacement of the Couva swimming pool, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So up to this stage we are not sure whether we could use this pool with some repairs or if we have to condemn the pool all together?

Mr. Fullerton: That is correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Speaker: And this would have taken us from 2019 to now? How long has this pool been down?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Since 2019, Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Since 2019? Would I be correct in concluding that Couva pool was one of the greater generators of revenue of the community pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I would like to invite Mr. McTair.

Mr. McTair: Thank you very much, Deputy Permanent Secretary, and good afternoon

again, Chairman. The Couva swimming pool would have been one of those pools that was more popularly used among the original six. However, the situation with Couva swimming pool is that, due to the age of the structure and as well the sort of degeneration that has taken place over a period of time, there would have been some differences of opinion, and back and forth that would have been taking place as it relates to whether we should in fact repair, and there would have been some repairs done, or if it is we need to replace.

So there would have been some repairs done that would have had the pool ready in 2020. By March 2020, however, of course, we would have gone into lockdowns due to COVID and then some other issues started to appear with respect to the pool basin. That is where we have reached to the point or started to assess whether we need to actually replace the pool or whether we would refurbish.

As Mr. Fullerton would have indicated, that would have gone through its processes in terms of requesting assessments from the Sports Company, then from the Ministry of Work and Transport and the final recommendation was to seek the assessment of a structural engineer and we are at the point of procuring that person's services at this time.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And might I ask, seeing that it was one of the more popular pools, were there any steps taken to cater for that catchment, that user base for the Couva pool?

Mr. McTair: Well, in terms of a community swimming pool, the Couva swimming pool would have been the only one in the area. Of course, we do have the National Aquatic Centre which, at this time, is utilized more by the Aquatic Sports Association of Trinidad and Tobago for their training—national and development training with respect to swimming, water polo and, of course, the hosting of various competitions at local and international level. So we do not have a “learn-to-swim pool” at this particular point in time under the Ministry that we can divert persons to.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And Mr. McTair, you know, we should not really talk about the Aquatic Centre. I think that was a bad mention here because I think I heard something about Aquatic Centre in the news today, okay?—about not functioning. Okay? That was in the news this morning. All right. So let me just ask, so in terms of all the pools, are there any pervasive issues that run across the board? And if they are, what are they?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Right now we have quite a lot of vacancies in the Physical Education and Sport Division, specifically, swimming instructors and pool attendants. We have begun the recruitment process, however, so we hope that this will be done quickly. We know the other three pools will be coming on board in March. We do have the basic staff for those pools but we would need additional staff. Right now we have a survey out in terms of getting from the public what they would like to see at the pools, in terms of the hours and the days. And so far, we are seeing, people are saying they want the pools to be opened for longer hours and on Saturdays and Sundays.

With the current staff, we cannot provide the services on Saturdays, Sundays. So that is

a big challenge we are having. The other challenge we are having, of course, is our timely receipt of our releases. We have had discussions with the Ministry of Finance and we are working towards improving the efficiency of one, our requests or releases and, of course, their processing. So that is in train.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And just to go back a little bit, PS, in terms of, initially, you said that there is a third phase to be done on those pools to be opened in March. When would that third phase take place?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Third phase will start in March. I am advised by my Technical Director that the works in this phase will not affect the pools because they are peripheral. So it would not affect the reopening of the pools, the third phase.

Madam Chairman: So while the pools are up and functional the works can go on?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, at this stage, I will open up the enquiry to my fellow members to raise any questions they may wish on the subject. So, yes, member de Nobriga.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Chair. DPS, good afternoon. You speak about the works to be done in phase three and, of course, I am asking with particular interest for Diego Martin. What sort of work would be conducted in phase three?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Thank you, member. Phase three for Diego Martin, we have the resurfacing of the overhaul of the pavilion, the kitchenette, CCTV installation, paving of the car park, barbed wire installation on the northern entrance, refurbishment of the security booth and painting of the administrative building and, of course, the main sign for this facility has to be replaced.

Mr. de Nobriga: So, DPS, my follow up to that is that, that sounds—in particular when we talk about paving needing to be done, work on the fence needing to be done, work on the pavilion needing to be done, those seem to be construction-based events. How would we be able to have it open for members of the community if that sort of work is happening around it?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I would like to invite, again, my Technical Director to give some more details on it because he is intimately involved in this.

Mr. Fullerton: Okay. Thank you, DPS. Thank you, member. The works that are envisioned for phase three for Diego Martin would not at all deter or render the pool inoperable when these works are taking place, simply because the areas for the works to be carried out would be warded off, they would not affect the patrons nor the operators of the pool at all and it is not like the entire fence has to be sorted out. There are some small areas that we have discovered deficiencies in that we are going to take care of.

Madam Chairman: All right. So might I invite member Hislop if he wishes to join the conversation at this stage.

Mr. Hislop: Sure. Thank you, Chair. Welcome, officials. Thank you for coming. I noticed

in terms of your maintenance—the preventive maintenance plan, it is a very comprehensive plan over all your pools, very detailed. Could you give us some clarity in terms of the implementation of the maintenance plan? How is that going—because you have it detailed very nicely. But it is one thing to have a plan and another thing to implement it.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Thank you, member. The plan is being implemented and we have had no incidents or issues since the implementation of this plan. I think it was developed in 2019 by the former Ministry and we are implementing the plan. Now, we have staff at the Ministry in our Project Management Unit as well as on the ground, at the pools, we have our staff there who have these plans and they are implementing it there. There are some things that are being done weekly, some daily, some monthly and some quarterly. So we have no challenges right now in terms of the implementation of the plan. There are some areas that we still have to procure certain goods to efficiently operate the pools, but we are in train with that as well.

Mr. Hislop: Just a follow up, Madam Chair. So—and I appreciate that, I am happy that the plan is being implemented. What are the checks and balances—so let us say, for instance, I am your maintenance personnel that goes out to, let us say, Cocoyea, and I come back with a report, what is the escalation—from me, as your maintenance personnel, who goes out to do weekly, quarterly checks—what is the escalation to make sure that if I identify a challenge at Cocoyea, that it is treated with in short order? So that we do not have a situation where we have pools—because we are reopening pools, and by March all your pools should be up and running, or all our pools should be up and running, except Couva.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Except Couva and Sangre Grande.

Mr. Hislop: Right, Couva and Sangre Grande. So we are hoping that with this new maintenance plan in place that we are not going to have a situation where we are going to have major shutdowns at our community pools. So what is the process after your maintenance personnel comes back in with a report? What is the escalation from there?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: As I said, we have staff from the Physical Education and Sport Division as well as the Project Management Unit who are responsible for monitoring and the implementation of this plan. So they are identified either by the pool attendants or the mangers at the pool. It is escalated to the Director of the Physical Education and Sport Division, who will then inform the Technical Director of the Project Management Unit. If it is works to be done, scope of work will be developed. If it is goods to be procured, that procurement process will take place. So that is how we work. We work together, the Physical Education and Sport Division and the Project Management Unit.

Mr. Hislop: So what is your timeline for a specific issue? Let us say you have a report of a pump, there is a malfunction on a pump, what is your timeline to get that item repaired and back in service if you have to go through these steps?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I will invite Mr. Fullerton to give some more details in terms of the

timeline, please.

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you, Deputy Permanent Secretary, and thanks for the question as well. With respect to the—what we have to enter into, what we have started to implement is a preventive maintenance plan. It means that there is no reason why we cannot procure specialized equipment and the like during the life cycle of the item. Therefore, we should not be waiting for a pump to become defective before it can be replaced.

With respect to repairs to the pump and stuff like that, we do have—and right now the Physical Education and Sport Division, we are now doing some Cabinet Notes to have a preferred special purpose company come on board to help out with the maintenance package as well. Once they are on board then they will be responsible for all those short-term repairs and stuff like that, while informing us of what the long-term repairs and replacement packages are supposed to be like, giving us more than sufficient time to have the items procured and stored, just waiting for installation whenever that time comes.

Madam Chairman: I just wanted to ask something, in terms of—I hear the confidence that this plan is working and so on. Where has this plan been tested? At which pools? Because when you all first came before us, the plan was not as yet finalized or in operation, right? That would have been sometime in 2020. No pools were running, I would expect, in 2020 because of COVID, no pools in 2021 because of COVID.

My understanding is that, from what I heard—I might be wrong—Diego Martin, Siparia, Couva, Sangre Grande, La Horquetta, not up and running. So where has this plan—now, the plan looks great as a textbook plan. It is very detailed. I feel anybody could follow it and if people checking, could check it. But where has this plan been tested?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman and members, since we returned to play—since the opening of our Maloney, our Morvant and even at the Laventille Swimming Pool— well, as I said, we have a partnership with the defence force and they have a robust testing and monitoring in accordance with this plan. So we have had at the least one year at the Movant swimming pool and at least one year at the Maloney swimming pool. The Cocoyea swimming pool was only recently opened but this is the plan we will be using for the Cocoyea swimming pool as well.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But, PS, again, I might be missing something. Morvant, Maloney, Laventille have special arrangements.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Right.

Madam Chairman: Right. This is the defence force. My understanding is this is not an arrangement that applies to the other pools. Agreed? They are not manned by the defence force people.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No, they are not manned by the defence force. But in terms of the monitoring mechanism, the same monitoring mechanism will be used.

Madam Chairman: The same monitoring mechanism from within your Ministry?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: The same—because we have meetings with the defence force and we are aware of what they are doing and their monitoring mechanism aligns to our plan.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So my understanding is you have staff on the ground, you have staff in the Ministry. Your monitoring is two-pronged, your staff on the ground and your staff in the Ministry. We would admit that the staff on the ground at Morvant, Maloney, Laventille are a special kind of people?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I come back to the question, what gives us the confidence that what is working there will work in the other places where we do not have that kind of specialist staff?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, I think it is working for us, the Cocoyea swimming pool, and it only recently opened but they will be monitored in the same way using this plan.

3.00 p.m.

We would have had learnings from our relationship with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, which we will take to Cocoyea, and, of course, the other three pools which will be opened in March.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Let me ask one question again please, and then I will ask member de Nobriga. What is the staff component at the other pools? You said pool attendants—you told us pool attendants and a manager. If you could tell us the number of pool attendants per pool, the number of managers, and is there something called a warden?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: That is also—

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: At the pools, yes. I will invite Mr. McTair to—

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel:—to answer that question.

Mr. McTair: Thank you very much. So at each of the community swimming pools such as—well, that are not Laventille, Maloney and Morvant to put it that way, we have a warden, one warden at each of these pools. There is administrative staff, in terms of clerks, that will provide that administrative support to the pools. In terms of the specialist pool staff, we have a pool attendant. In some cases, we have two. We have swimming instructors, which are also lifeguards for the pool as well, because they are trained lifeguards as per international specifications, and we have assistant swimming instructors. So that will provide the full complement of staff that we have at the pools.

So between the pool attendant and the warden more so, they will be the persons who are overlooking the treatment of the pool, the monitoring of the structures of the pool's operations, such as the pumps, et cetera. They will liaise with an assigned officer from the Project

Management Unit as well as from the Physical Education and Sport Division any time there may be issues. Of course, they are supervised as well by the Physical Education and Sport Division as it relates to providing any information that needs to be placed on the division's responsibility towards ensuring that the pools run properly. So we have devised a system whereby there are appointed persons to which wardens or pool attendants can direct any issues under both the Physical Education and Sport Division and the Project Management Unit, so that we can now advance more efficient responses to those problems.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So on the ground level, the accountable person is the warden?

Mr. McTair: The accountable person for the pool will be the warden. The warden is essentially the overall manager of the pool and then, of course, you have the pool attendant who is the sort of operational specialist when it comes to the pool.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member de Nobriga.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Chair. PS and team, I am sorry to belabour the point. I just need for my own clarification and maybe it is to say directly, is there a report that comes to you, as the Ministry, that speaks to the activities that are supposed to be conducted as part of the maintenance schedule daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, twice a year, yearly as needed? Is there a report that accompanies a checklist to say we have done this, as required by the schedule, that is signed by someone if you say the warden is the person; that is signed by someone that is then submitted to you in order for you, as the Ministry, to be assured that your maintenance schedule, as you have laid it out, is actually being followed as apart from somebody saying that they have done it? So that signature allows for a level of accountability. And if there is, what is the frequency in which that report comes to you and to who does that report go to?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, the reports, which are done by the pool attendants and the managers, are delivered to the Sport Division. I think, in terms of a more robust system, we will have to ensure, in terms of the sign off—it is already signed off for the Director of Sport Division, but there are some areas that we would have to strengthen in this maintenance plan.

Mr. McTair: If I may?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: “Um-hmm”.

Mr. Tair: If I may? Yes, we do have one monthly meeting that takes place and there are monthly reports that are provided. However, in terms of an actual checklist that is directly associated with the—if you want to say, demands of the maintenance plan, that is something you have to institute, whether it is an actual direct checklist that goes hand in hand to say, well okay, weekly we did this, daily we did that. As it stands, we do expect that the warden would be supervising the pool attendant, in terms of his or her daily, weekly, monthly duties as it relates to the operations of the pool. And, of course, if it is there are any issues that are coming up, those issues are related to us quite efficiently. However, we take your point as it relates to having something that is a lot stronger, a lot more robust and a lot more accountable, and we look to

institute such.

Mr. de Nobriga: Chair, just one more. So you have laid out the sort of org structure for each pool. Just as a follow up somewhere along the same lines of what I have been asking, is there any sort of community component to this? So, in other words, are all of these persons, people from the Ministry or is there in line, let us say what happens with a community centre, where there is a community component to that? And the reason I asked is, if there is community involvement, then there is more in buy-in I would think. So my question is, is there any community component to the staffing of the pool?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, no. There is no community component. When we advertise our positions, they are either filled by the Service Commissions Department or through contract employment, which is an open and transparent recruitment process. But we have had no challenges in terms of usage of the pool or community involvement, because only one month the Cocoyea pool is opened and already 922 persons have used the pool. So we have no challenge there, in terms of community involvement.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Bacchus.

Mr. Bacchus: Thank you, Chair, and good day to all, and congratulations on that number in Cocoyea. It is quite an achievement. I want to go back to something you said earlier and I want to get an understanding of the impact of primarily three issues, as the question posed by Chair, that would have been impacting on what is happening with the pools. The three things mentioned: the vacancies that you had; the fact that there was a need and as such a survey was being done to identify use, timing, hours and so on; and lastly, releases, both from a request perspective and from the processing perspective. How are these things impacting on the operations? I saw, for example, your maintenance programme should have the pools always available. It should be up and running, if all things goes well, all things being equal. How are these things impacting the operations, the functions or the continuous upkeep of the pools?—these three things as you mentioned.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Thank you, member. As I mentioned, we would like to expand the services, in terms of the hours of opening, the days of opening. We cannot do that right now. I think Morvant, Maloney, they are operating on Saturdays and Sundays. As you know, the defence force is in place. When it comes to the releases, that could have a significant impact in terms of the procurement of chemicals and other equipment that we need. So we have had to use chemicals from other pools for the pools that are opened right now. So that is not ideal. So those are the main areas that, you know, I think we have to strengthen. We have to come up with a more workable relationship with the Ministry of Finance, in terms of what we are required to do and what they are required to do, so that we could have speedy and quick releases of funds. We have begun, again, discussions with the Ministry of Finance to see if it is that we need to

strengthen, in terms of the knowledge and the requirements on our part. We are committed to do so. And the Ministry of Finance is also committed to sharing what deficiencies we may have so that we could have that speedy release of funds.

Mr. Bacchus: If I may—and thank you for that. So, “impactfully”, what you are saying is that the hours and so on, you want to expand the services that will work; if you have more people, you could get more things done and you have more time to open it.—but the releases part intrigues me. Maybe the Ministry of Finance could chime in to explain. Because from what you are saying, there are learnings to be had on from both sides, and the impact of while that is happening, is that it could impact procurement for things that you need to keep the pools open. What does the Ministry of Finance say and how are you managing while that ongoing learnings, as I said, are happening? Good afternoon to the Ministry of Finance, that is.

Mr. Maharaj: Thank you, member, for the question. First of all, I want to point out that the section of the Ministry is the Budget Division. We represent more or less the Investments Division, so I really cannot speak on behalf of the Budget Division. But generally what I can say is what the DPS is saying, I could just continue on that vein, that whatever the requirements are of the Budget Division, the line will have to follow it, the line Ministry. And if there is more stringent requirements to submit to the Budget Division for releases, I think that it the way they should go.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I just maybe want to follow this up with something—the conversation. The way I understand it is the Deputy PS is saying, look, we are going to attack the issue of funding two-pronged. On our end, meaning the Ministry’s end, you will be more efficient in asking. Okay? I guess, the timing and so will improve, and you develop a better relationship with the Ministry of Finance. Okay? But the Ministry of Finance in its submission has said to us:

Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago request releases for various facilities, including community pools, to meet obligations to service providers, payment of utilities, janitorial and security as an aggregate sum. Specific amounts are not detailed in making request for funding, and releases comprises funds to meet janitorial, maintenance, security, utilities, landscaping, technical maintenance, pool maintenance, repair and maintenance, legal settlement and operational expenses. Payment for services provided to community swimming pools is determined by the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

Is this submission outdated?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, right now, the Sports Company, they are managing the security, janitorial and services for the Cocoyea, Couva, Diego Martin, La Horquetta, Sangre Grande and Siparia pools. So they are managing the contracts for MTS and the other security providers. So that is where they will be requesting the funding to pay for these services.

Madam Chairman: So it is your Ministry that will request the funding, say for chemicals, personnel, TSTT?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: That would be your Ministry?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let me ask this. Thus far, what your experience has been, to give you the hope that what you could control is that your end, in asking more effectively and efficiently for releases, would bring about an improvement. And I ask that specifically in light of a big arrears that was accumulated to T&TEC. Now, we have other big arrears, but I am just dealing with T&TEC as the biggest one.

With a submission given by you all that, at some point, you had entered into an arrangement for a payment schedule. I think at the time, somewhere in 2020 that arrears balloon was some \$650-something thousand plus. And that even though you had entered into an arrangement with T&TEC for payment by installments, you had only knocked off 20 per cent of the arrears because releases were not being done in a timely manner. So, one, I am asking, what gives you the confidence that asking more timely and this improved relationship would redound to the benefit of you getting your releases? What has been the experience to support that?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, in terms of the arrears—we still have a large figure, in terms of our arrears. Last fiscal, we would have submitted for supplemental funding. We did not receive any. The Ministry only received 5 million for gratuity and, of course, SPORTT received 62 million for services—various service providers. The Ministry's debt, you know, is still large. What we are doing right now is we are paying current bills and, again, when we approach mid-term, we will be asking for addition funding for aged payables.

Madam Chairman: So, in terms of—if I were to conclude, I would conclude that your history, with respect to this improved relationship and this asking timely may not give you the results that you expect. That is what I will conclude. Because from what you have told me, I mean, I will be shy to accept that you did not ask on time.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No, I think we would—we asked on time.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Now, with respect to the consumables, in terms of our recurrent budget there, we have asked in a timely manner. However, we did not get releases in a timely manner. Aged payables is something else.

Madam Chairman: Yeah.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Right. So, in terms of the improved relationship, only on Monday we had a meeting with Ministry of Planning and Development, and the Ministry of Finance, Budget Division, were we went through some of our issues with respect to the way and the timeliness of our submissions and, of course, their request as well. So we are hoping that—we are committed to attending to the issues that are affecting both Ministries, in terms of giving us the funds we need on a timely basis.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Bacchus.

Mr. Bacchus: As you speak of the arrears, I was actually looking through it. So for swimming pools, you expect security, water, chemicals, to deal with things like pumps, pools. What I did notice was a sizeable amount owed to telecommunication providers. Explain that to me.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Sorry, member. I was just consulting. I apologize. I do not have the details with me with respect to telecommunications.

Mr. Bacchus: But is it that you have significant telecommunications infrastructure at the pools themselves?

Mr. McTair: What I can say, Sir, is that the arrears go back quite a few years. I cannot actually pinpoint what year, but the arrears do go back well before this particular Ministry as its name was actually put together. So we have been working through our accounting unit as it relates to trying to get those aged payables taken care of. I know that there would have been requests made to get the necessary funding to be able to have those paid. However, we have not seemed to be successful, in terms of getting the releases and being able to pay those bills.

But what I can say, as the Director of the Division, through which these bills come, is that I regularly certify bills and send them through for payment. I regularly liaise with the point person in our general administration department to ensure that those bills are indeed sent across to accounts, and I believe that accounts has been doing the necessities as it relates to seeking the necessary releases to pay these bills. And when it comes to telecommunications, we are talking about, of course, phone as well as Internet. And in many cases unfortunately, we have not had the use of these services because of the fact that these bills have been so much in arrears.

Madam Chairman: Member Bacchus.

Mr. Bacchus: Yes, if I may? So there is actually a telecommunications component to the services provided at the pool. And where you mentioned phones, phones only administrative purposes. But Internet, is that also for the administration or for the people who would be attending and utilizing the pools?

Mr. McTair: No, that will be for the administration.

Mr. Bacchus: So it is all for the administration?

Mr. McTair: Yes.

Mr. Bacchus: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, again, to everyone. DPS, let me just start off with something that you mentioned earlier when Madam Chair asked you about the challenges that you are currently experiencing, and there were primarily two challenges, one, in terms of vacancies, and two, in terms of the timeliness of releases from the Ministry of Finance. I want to focus first on the vacancies issue. Now, I know Mr. McTair would have alluded to the

complement of staff that the pools are manned with. But correct me if I am wrong, is the complement of staff at each one of the pools or is it rotating across all the pools? Because from my understanding, there is one overall manager at each pool; and you have administrative staff, approximately two at each pool; and then, the specialized staff, we did not get a number of them at each one of the pools. Are they rotating?

Mr. McTair: No. I do not have the exact numbers for each of those specialized staff off the top of my head. I know, definitely, pool attendants, we at least have one pool attendant per pool. In some cases, we do have two. But I know, in most cases, we have one pool attendant per pool and there should be at least two to three swimming instructors as well as another two to three assistant swimming instructors, at least in terms of posts.

At this particular time, we do have a cadre of short-term contract staff that have been providing the services where we have had vacancies as swimming instructors and assistant swimming instructors. That also would have come about when it is we sought in—I think it was in 2016 or '17 we sought to have those vacancies filled, and it was said the persons who would have applied did not have the requisite experience. So we had to create those short-term positions as Aquatic Officers II and Aquatic Officers I to be able to supplement the staff.

So what we are trying to do now is to seek to have those actual public service positions filled and utilizing those staff that now have the experience. And if it is we can supplement even further, especially in order to satisfy the demand for the pools to be open on Saturdays and Sundays, then we will do so.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Chair, with your permission, can I ask for, in writing, that they submit for each one of the pools the number of staff for each area of expertise? And also, if it is possible, the number of vacancies that you are having trouble to fill for each one of these pools? Do you have a general number that you could let us know in the interim?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, yes. For the Physical Education and Sport Division, we have 39 of the positions filled; 77 vacant, 16 with bodies and 61 without bodies. That is for the entire division, not specific to the pools. And our contact establishment, we have all 36 sport development officer positions vacant and 12 coaches vacant.

Ms. Deonarine: And what is usually your complement of coaches required?—the total amount. How much you have hired right now?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: We have just one coach.

Ms. Deonarine: One coach?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: One coach

Ms. Deonarine: So how is that one coach utilized across all the pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: The coach is not for the pools.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay.

Mr. McTair: The coaching complement would be for general sport development

programmes that takes place in schools and communities.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. All right. Thanks. PS—Chair, if you would allow me? PS, could elaborate for me? Now, you mentioned you have the issue of timely releases from the Ministry of Finance. Even if you are to go through the procurement process to hire these persons, do you have money to pay these persons?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: We will have to do a priority listing of the positions to be filled. So far, we have determined that we need instructors and we need the pool attendants.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. All right. With respect to the timeliness of releases from the Ministry of Finance, could you tell us how long this has been a problem? Because I am looking at a document that was submitted to us. As at September 01, 2020, we had a total of \$861,000 in aged payables. What is that figure to date? And also, how long the problem of timeliness of releases has been occurring?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, I will have to give you that in writing, in terms of the current debt. Timeliness of releases is something we have been facing for quite a while. Most of our releases—as you know, request for releases are ad hoc releases and I do not have, in terms of a specific time frame for each request. But I know for the Physical Education and Sport Division, with respect to chemicals, we had—probably it is like a two-month—two months, in terms from the date we submitted our request. We submitted the request in December and we only recently got our releases. Some of the providers, like a particular provider we have selected for chemicals, they want the cheque as they deliver. So we are right now preparing that cheque. That cheque should be done tomorrow.

Member: I think it was done today.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay, it was done today. So tomorrow we will be getting our chemicals.

So, you know, it is affecting the relationship we have with supplies and even contractors, because some people are not even responding to our request. We are seeing people are no longer wanting to provide services to us and, you know, the area, in terms of chemicals and servicing the pools, that is a specialized area. So, you know, it will impact on us if this continues. So, as I said, we are looking at our internal processes to ensure that we do things efficiently, so that we can get the releases on time.

3.30 p.m.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Chair, I have one more question. I want to direct it to the Ministry of Finance. Now, Mr. Maharaj and Ms. Mohammed, could you explain exactly what is your role with the Ministry of National Security and SPORTT as members of the Investments Division of the Ministry of Finance?

Madam Chairman: Member, Ministry of National Security?

Ms. Deonarine: Oh, sorry. Ministry of Sport and Community Development, sorry. My

apologies.

Ms. Mohammed: Thank you for the question. The Investments Division, we provide the oversight, monitoring of all the state enterprises and that includes reports. So we monitor using the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual. All these enterprises will submit requests to us, they will submit their reports, they will provide their financial statements. We attend their annual meetings. We submit all their reports, where required, to Parliament, the financial statements. We also look at rationalization of the enterprises. Yes.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So then, you are no way at all involved with the allocation of finances, the releases of finances to any one of the Ministries?

Ms. Mohammed: No.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Member. That was a nice way of putting it. I would have asked them, in what way they could assist the enquiry. I think that is what we would really like to know rather than asking you all questions that you cannot answer. Because I note that in the first enquiry, it was not Investments Division who came as the representatives of the Ministry of Finance. So having regard to the nature of the enquiry, maybe Mr. Maharaj and Mr. Mohammed could tell us, having regard to the nature of the enquiry, how they think they can assist us in the conversation. It will help us direct the relevant questions to you.

Mr. Maharaj: Thank you, Chair. But what I can say is that our role primarily in the Investments Division, as Ms. Mohammed has said, is the monitoring and providing oversight of state-owned enterprises. So, in this context, if it was—something falls under SPORTT, we may be able to assist. But once it is the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, we may not have any direct relationship, in terms of assisting the Committee at this time, as we really do not monitor projects under the Ministry itself but rather under the state-owned enterprises.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. So I just wanted to invite Mr. de Nobriga at this stage to ask any questions he might have.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Chair. There are two questions coming out of this that I just want to ask. One, my colleague would have raised some of the outstanding arrears. And I just wanted to know, when it comes to things like the outstanding amount for TSTT and for T&TEC, in particular, what rates are these entities billed at? So, is it at residential rates, is it at commercial rates, is it at industrial rates? What is the rate that they are billed at?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, we will respond in writing, please.

Mr. de Nobriga: Sure. And just as another thing. Specifically you spoke about requesting releases for chemicals but I would think this would be applicable to a lot of the things that are part of your day-to-day operations of these pools and it has to do with scheduling your release request. So when you purchase—and let us use chemicals as the example. If you have to purchase chemicals for your pool, do you purchase enough for a specific amount of time, so let us

say three months, and then within that three months, make a request for another three months? So let us say by month two, you make a request in order to fulfil the check on delivery. So that is actually what I wanted to find out.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, that is exactly what we do. So we have this—in terms of—we procure for three months because we cannot keep a large amount of chemicals on the compound. All right? So we procure for three months. We have already started the process of procuring for April. We have April pools and this is something very big for our Ministry in April.

Mr. Nobriga: April pools. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes, April pools. So we have started the procurement process for that. And, of course, in April, more pools will be opened so the demand will be great as well.

Madam Chairman: Member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you, Chair. I just want to intervene as my colleague raised the whole issue of procurement. And I remember in your submission, you all mentioned that under the previous—when the Ministry was under the Ministry of Community Development, a prequalification list existed for the period 2020 to—did it exist already for the period 2020 to 2022?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes. We have the 2017 to 2020 procurement list. We have already prepared our expression of interest to go out to review the prequalification list so people can now prequalify again. So we are in the process of doing that. I think the ad should go out very soon.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So could you describe the process for us?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay. So we at the Ministry, we prepare our expression of interest. We look at all the areas, in terms of goods, works, services and we prepare a document, which we publish in the newspaper as well as online, inviting contractors, companies to prequalify. When that is done, the Project Management Unit and the procurement unit—we have a functioning procurement unit—will go through all the submissions to—there is a criteria. They will go through the criteria with each company and then we will determine whether they are prequalified. We will prepare a list which we would then put on our—all heads will have that prequalified list and it is from that list, we will do our procurement.

We have also requested registration with the OPR for their depository. So we are in the process—I think it will be very soon, we will get access to the depository. Of course, the OPR Depository is very, very large. So very soon we will have access to that. However, we are reviewing our prequalification list right now.

Ms. Deonarine: Do you have a timeline in mind, given that the expression of interest is going out very soon? And also, are you in a position to explain to us, very briefly, the criteria?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay. The criteria will include the company's registration, it will include the years, the staffing. It will include all the statutory documentation they are supposed

to have, a clear listing of personnel in their company. All of that we will be looking at before they are prequalified.

Ms. Deonarine: Do you expect or foresee that some suppliers—existing suppliers, who may have some sort of challenge with receiving finances on time, may not necessarily take advantage of applying for this expression of interest?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I really hope not but that is not something I could predict.

Members: [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: We have had the last list—the 2017 to 2020 list—we saw that some of our suppliers did not express interest to be prequalified with us. However, those were few. We saw other companies asking to be prequalified after. So this time we will have the open prequalification. But I really hope that those who have served us and who have waited for their funds will prequalify again.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. And with respect to the timeline?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Prequalification is a lengthy and tedious job and the last occasion, it took us almost two months to complete the prequalification exercise. So I am looking probably around two months. Of course, it depends on the number of companies who request to be prequalified. On the last occasion, it took about two months for the entire process to be completed.

Ms. Deonarine: Did it take two months because there was not appetite or a lot of persons expressing interest, such that you had to extend the period of the expression of interest or is it for other reasons?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No, on the last occasion, we had to close off.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: So at the close of that expression of interest, we then did the review to prequalify the contractors. That process took about two months because of the number of contractors we received. We got the procurement unit and the PMU, it is usually a double-check before we approve that list.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay, all right. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, DPS.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to find out in terms of the fee structure was being revised and what is the status of that?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: It is still ongoing. We have not come to a decision as yet. However, right now, our pools, the newer pools, they are free of charge.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that will be Laventille, Morvant and Maloney.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: And Cocoyea as well.

Madam Chairman: And Cocoyea. They are free of charge.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So the 900 and something people that you have attracted at Cocoyea

swim free, yes?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. The other pools that will be coming, which are the older pools which are coming back on by March, would it be the same 40—I think it was \$40 per person, \$100 per school—what is the—per term?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I think we will still have to decide, in terms of when those three pools are opened in March, we have to decide whether we will go with the same fee structure or whether it will also be free of charge.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So could you, therefore, one, PS, in your follow up—because March is just now, so it means that that decision, I think, is imminent.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So could you give us in writing what the proposal is with respect to those? So is there any pool right now that is functional, that operates with a fee structure?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No.

Madam Chairman: No. Okay. And the other thing I wanted to ask is this, certainly from some of the submissions from the Ministry of Finance and what we have discussed here, you know, releases, the timeliness of releases and your request, those seem to match. In fact, in a submission, that the Ministry of Finance made, in terms of releases to your Ministry, they would have said that is subject to availability of funds. I want to ask, and it is a discussion that we have had with you all before, has there been any advance in the discussion and the decision about commercializing the pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: No discussion that I am aware of right now.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So let me ask you. With respect to Diamond Vale, had there not been, prior to COVID and for at least 24 years prior, some relationship with a private entity and the use of the Diamond Vale pool?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes, Chairman, yes.

Madam Chairman: Is there a cost attached to that? Is there any revenue generated from that?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I will ask Mr. McTair to speak on that.

Mr. McTair: Yes, there is a fee structure that is attached to the use of the pool by the particular private entity.

Madam Chairman: So would I be wrong in saying that there is an opportunity from that model with all the pools to enter into similar kinds of arrangements?

Mr. McTair: Yes, there is definitely an opportunity. Of course, with the pools such as Laventille, Maloney, Morvant and Cocoyea, there would have been a policy decision made by the Government of the day to ensure that those particular pools remain free of charge while the older pools, so to speak, would have had a fee structure that would have been from long before.

Madam Chairman: Yeah.

Mr. McTair: So in terms of the revision of the fee structure of those older pools, that is something that we will have to decide on and then, of course, take to the Cabinet for its approval. However, how we treat with some of the pools being free of charge and some of the pools actually functioning for revenue is going to be one of those decisions that we will have to discuss at a higher level and probably even submit to the Cabinet for a particular decision.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. McTair: I mean, I guess it could be looked at as a bit unfair that some persons in some communities have to pay while other persons in other communities, they get to use the pools for free.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So let me ask this: Where have you all reached in looking at preparing a Note with respect to that?

Mr. McTair: We are looking at an overall revision of fee structures across the facilities of both the Ministry and Sports Company. So we have had discussions with Sports Company representatives. We would have come forward with a particular level of—at a particular level, we have come to some recommendations. What we need to do is to discuss a little bit further, in terms of finalizing those recommendations, which would be then put forward to Cabinet via Note.

Madam Chairman: How long those discussions have been in train?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: A year.

Mr. McTair: Yeah, it has been about a year. To be honest, it has been about a year. We have admittedly just been distracted by other matters, events that take place, that have sort of pulled the particular personnel who would have been discussing this matter away from dealing with the revision of the facility fee structure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. You see, I am getting the impression that we have facilities, we have challenges with the facilities, we have a great demand for the facilities. Okay. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central will know better than me the demand for use for that Diamond Vale pool. We talked about learn-to-swim but certainly the elderly—I know a couple of well elders, and not my kind of elders, senior to me, who, I mean, it is not just only the physical benefits but also the social benefits that that pool in the last five months, at least five of them died. I do not know if they do not have the social outlet apart from the benefit of the physical outlet. And I cannot understand, I cannot get from this discussion a reason that programmes like these are not operating. You cannot fulfil the need but there are people out there.

You all would have told us liability issues. If you had the Diamond Vale model, it means that the liability issue either has been addressed or ignored, but I have not heard in the discussion that in the 24 years, some liability issue cropped up that left you exposed. So I do not get a sense that this is being pursued with any kind of vigour and we just have assets lying down there and not serving the purpose it was intended to. We cannot do it but others can. Arrangement, I am

sure, could be made. What is happening?

Mr. McTair: In terms of the Laventille, Morvant and Maloney swimming pools under—

Madam Chairman: Let me just say this, just to put the conversation in context. You see, Laventille, Maloney and Morvant, “leh we” put them as special. Okay?

Mr. McTair: Noted.

Madam Chairman: So when we are dealing with the special pools, we will talk about special pools. Okay? So I would like us to not deal with the special pools in this context.

Mr. McTair: Noted, Chairman. As it relates to the other pools, as we have them reopened, we are looking at those proposals that have come to us with respect to the utilization of those pools for programmes outside of what the Ministry normally provides. For example, at Cocoyea pool, considering that it has been reopened, we have received a number of proposals, not anything as yet for senior citizens, however, we have had a couple of clubs that have submitted letters requesting use of the pools. We are currently looking at those requests and we will be collaborating with the persons who would have proposed their means of being able to develop a partnership and we will seek to engage them accordingly. At the other pools, we are open to having that sort of—

Madam Chairman: So, Mr. McTair, not to cut you. Just before you go on to the other pools, those for Cocoyea that you have proposals, give me a timeline that you would consider or come to a determination, yay, nay or in-between?

Mr. McTair: We are seeking to have finalization of those discussions by mid-March.

Madam Chairman: And who makes the determination to go ahead? Do you have to go to Cabinet for that?

Mr. McTair: Not that I know of. I think, at this time, that will be a determination to be made within the—

Madam Chairman: At the Ministry level. So, PS, could you give me a kind of timeline?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I think we will be committed to do this before the end of March.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman?

Madam Chairman: Yes?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: May I?

Madam Chairman: “Uh-huh”.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I know you have indicated that the three pools are special and we will not consider those. But when the pools were closed, these three pools were not there and we will have a challenge, as the director is saying, in terms of the payment for some and non-payment for others. But we will be reviewing it, we will review the whole matter.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Just before—I will take you, Member Hislop, but I really interjected when Mr. McTair was speaking just to ask him a particular question, so maybe I

should give him an opportunity to complete his statement and then the floor would be open to you, Member Hislop.

Mr. McTair: I more or less may have lost my train of thought there. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: You know, you just admitted that that is what happened with respect to the proposals. You know, that is what you told me.

Mr. McTair: No, no, no, not at all, not at all.

Madam Chairman: You did not say it in those words but that is what I concluded.

Mr. McTair: Oh okay. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: That is why I stopped you.

Mr. McTair: No. But, I mean, as I said, we will be looking at mid-March as it relates to finalizing the discussions with respect to those proposals and, of course, it will be an in-house decision as to how it is we move forward with the engagement of those persons who would have proposed and we are open—and I think that is where I was going to go. We are open to inviting—we are open to any proposals that come forward to the other pools when it is those pools are reopened as well.

Madam Chairman: So you have to wait until they are reopening? You know they are coming in March.

Mr. McTair: Well, if people provide proposals beforehand—

Madam Chairman: You can do it from before.

Mr. McTair: —then great. We do not have an issue with that at all. In fact—I was thinking about it—we have already been in discussion with one of our technical staff where water polo is concerned and the development of water polo at other pools, apart from the three special pools.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Hislop.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just to piggyback on the Diamond Vale situation before I move to something else, what was the fee structure that we were engaged in with this entity? And what was the relationship between the entity and the Ministry, in terms of the expectations, maintenance and all of those kinds of things?

Mr. McTair: I do not have the actual fee that the particular entity would have paid off the top of my head. However, what I do know is that the entity would have been utilizing the pool at a particular time frame which would have been, of course, earlier than our normal working hours, so it did not affect our normal operations and our programmes.

Also, we would have had an arrangement, so to speak, whereby with regard to certain minor repairs, where we were having issues in terms of getting the fund to repair on time, there would have been assistance provided in having those repairs taken care of and that basically was the nature of the arrangement.

Mr. Hislop: So it was a written arrangement?

Mr. McTair: I would not say it was a written arrangement from the standpoint of, okay, well like a formal public-private partnership. I would not say it was a formal PPP. It was a matter where the entity utilized the pool, they paid the particular fee for the use of the pool as per the fee structure that exists. And upon having some issues that the entity thought, well, within his remit he could assist with to be able to continue the operations of the pool, that would have taken care of and we would have come to some agreement in terms of how that was done.

Mr. Hislop: Madam Chair, to me, if it worked for 20-something years successfully, I see it as something to be explored for the other pools as well and I am hoping that the Ministry put a little speed on those—

Mr. McTair: Sure. It is just a matter of formalizing—and I think that is the thing. It is a matter of formalizing it. So what we have actually been doing is based on the proposals that have been submitted, we are going to—well, we are having that discussion with our legal services unit to ensure that whatever is formalized is fair to both parties. So I think that is element that we have to get to, formalizing the arrangement, as opposed to having what has been a somewhat ad hoc relationship in the past.

Mr. Hislop: Okay. So, Madam Chair, if I am allowed, I just want to jump to the role of SPORTT. They have been here with us and we have not heard anything from them yet. But there is something I just wanted to highlight, that the Ministry of Sport and Community Development was supposed to provide update on the efforts as it relates to security and security services and janitorial services. Based on what I am seeing here, was that Note done, was it provided to Cabinet and what are the reasons for the delay if it has not gone to Cabinet yet? That is for security and landscaping, and so on. And have we had any issues of vandalism at our pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Member, the Note was prepared for Cabinet. We had some changes to make and we resubmitted it today to our Permanent Secretary for consideration of the Minister, and that is for the Morvant and Maloney pools. The other pools are secured by the Sports Company.

4.00 p.m.

Laventille is also under the Ministry, but MTS is in place for Laventille pool. So the Note that we prepared for Cabinet is for the Maloney and the Morvant pools. Because right now, UDeCOTT is still providing those services for us.

Mr. Hislop: Okay. So, for my information and for the information of the public, what is really the relationship between SPORTT and the Ministry of Sport and Community Development when it comes to the community pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: SPORTT manages the contracts for maintenance, janitorial, security, for all the other pools as per Cabinet decision. That was a Cabinet decision.

Mr. Hislop: For the older pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Mr. Hislop: And Ministry of Sport and Community Development deals with the newer pools?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Laventille, and we are look to enter into a contract with MTS for the Maloney and the Morvant pools. Yes.

Mr. Hislop: So what prevents one entity from managing all of the sites?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: With respect to the other pools, we have a Cabinet decision regarding MTS providing janitorial, maintenance and landscaping. We also have SPORTT—if, of course, MTS cannot meet the manpower then, you know, we have another challenge in place. Sorry—

Mr. Hislop: Madam Deputy PS, I was hoping that I would hear the representatives from SPORTT chime in this regard. We have the Head of Facilitates, and so on, from SPORTT.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay. So well, that is where we are at with the Note for Cabinet.

Mr. Hislop: Right.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: And that should go—once it is approved by the Minister, that should go to Cabinet soon.

Mr. Hislop: Okay. And from a SPORTT perspective in terms of the relationship?

Mr. Ince: Yes. Well, as the PS mentioned, we manage the payment of the contracts for servicing the grounds, and janitorial/maintenance contracts, and security. There are some locations which MTS could not provide full coverage of the security, in which case we have gone to alternative service providers. But that is the extent to where our involvement is in the services provided at those pools.

Mr. Hislop: And how many facilities MTS was unable to provide?

Mr. Ince: I am not 100 per cent sure. Do you have—

Ms. Babwah: Hi, six.

Mr. Hislop: Six?

Ms. Babwah: Yes.

Mr. Hislop: I do not know, Madam Chair, with your permission, if could it be provided to us, whether in writing or if you have it, the other—well, the providers of security for the other locations that MTS was unable to manage and the cost?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay, sure. May I respond?

Mr. Hislop: Yeah. Sure. If you have—yeah, sure.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay. So we have four other security firms providing services for the pools, through SPORTT, providing the security services. The total cost—the monthly cost for—should I give the names of the—

Mr. Hislop: Yeah.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Okay. Sure. So we have Protect providing security at the Cocoyea swimming pool, \$44,550 per month. We have Heller providing security services at the Couva

swimming pool, same \$44,550. We have SWAT providing security at the Diego Martin, La Horquetta and Sangre Grande swimming pools; \$48,000 for Diego Martin, \$44,212.50 for Sangre Grande, and \$43,200 for—sorry, La Horquetta, \$44,212, and Sangre Grande \$43,200. We have Ibis providing security at the Siparia swimming pool, \$44,928 per month. MTS is providing the ground maintenance and janitorial for the pools.

Mr. Hislop: All right. What was the challenge with MTS being unable to provide the security services for those pools where we had to bring in another entity?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I will invite SPORTT to respond.

Mr. Ince: Yeah. Staffing. They were short of manpower to provide those services. They are reviewing this at the moment and we expect a meeting with them to discover whether they can provide coverage for the balance that we mentioned here.

Mr. Hislop: Madam Chair, one final from me. How do we—I am trying to find the correct way to word the questions so that—so MTS was unable to provide the manpower. Do we have outstanding payments to MTS and these other security entities?

Ms. Babwah: Thank you, member. Yes, currently, we do have outstanding payments. The most recent payments they all would have received was as at October 2022. So we currently have outstanding payments for November, December, January.

Mr. Hislop: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Can I just ask, Ms. Babwah, if you can give us a list in writing of those outstanding, the contracts, the duration of the contracts, the monthly sums—I think Acting Deputy PS would have told us—but if you could get that in writing, and the outstanding sums, and the last date you would have asked for releases in respect of those outstanding sums?

Ms. Babwah: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Yes, thanks. May I invite Mrs. Morris-Julian to join the conversation?

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, Madam Chair, I must admit, coming from a local government background, I was a little concerned when I heard about ad hoc arrangements. Because I know of the complications and also the sense of entitlement persons may get. Is there any plans for a set policy and who could contribute towards this policy regarding the use for—we using Diamond Vale as an example once more. Because I can also tell you, the Arima Velodrome, we created a sports policy, and we also said it was free for every NGO. And then from that day forward, every application came in from an NGO. It was no longer private citizens or—and I think at one time a fete was listed as an NGO in order to use the space. So I am just asking from that perspective.

And also, I also know that people care for items that they pay for. It seems to matter so much more. What aspect of community engagement, with regard to the running of these pools, do you engage with the leaders in the community, the local government? What exactly would

this entail? Because I know from personal experience people care for spaces that they have a role to play in. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. McTair: Thank you very much for those questions member. Currently, we do not have any engagements with the communities as it relates to the operations or administration of our facilities. As I would have indicated earlier, the facilities—the pools, if I be more specific to pools, the older pools would have had a fee structure, though minimal, but they would have had a fee structure that would have existed, and all users of the pool would have engaged the pool with that fee structure.

More recently, we have had pools built, starting with Cocoyea in 2007, and then Laventille—the special pools as they are called—Laventille, Maloney, Morvant. And we have received a mandate from the Government of the day that those pools were to remain free of charge to the public.

What we have in terms of engaging any community groups and so, that is something that we always pay close attention to, that element of entitlement that could exist. As it stands, we have that one arrangement that we spoke about, that has worked well. As it pertains to engaging any others, as we are doing right now, we looking to formalize those arrangements to ensure that we do not have that issue of entitlement taking place and the relationship remains mutually beneficial. However, there is an understanding as to the ownership of the particular facilities.

Madam Chairman: Member de Nobriega.

Mr. de Nobriega: Thank you, Chair. We have been using Diamond Vale a lot, so I will continue using Diamond Vale. The Chairman would have pointed out, and very, very rightly so, that pool was very much the heart of the Diamond Vale community. So, obviously, it not being available has impacted, but as we look to reopen in April is what—

Madam Chairman: March, March.

Mr. de Nobriega: End of March? Chair says March. Obviously, and this is tying in to member Morris-Julian's point, there are going to be private entities that are going to want to utilize the facilities. Let us be honest, a pool that can be utilized for an event is not available to everyone. And I want to make the distinction between people having to use the pool, as opposed to it being free, and the pool being a commercially viable entity that allows for that free use while funds are being brought in to add to the maintenance. So you are going to have very much like what we had before aqua aerobics; you going to have an occupational therapist, physical therapist; you going to want to have people who will want to have weddings there; you will have the parties, whether they are NGOs or not. How is that going to work? Because if it becomes a part of the community, the community is going to want to use it for events.

Now, I do not expect that to be a free sort of relationship. So how is that going to work in order to maintain—well, you want to ensure that if something happens you have to have contractual arrangements, you want to ensure the liability issue, Chair, and what is the timeline for us to be able to say, well, there is something in place, a mechanism in place for these facilities

to be utilized in that way?

Mr. McTair: An excellent point, member. We will definitely have to create a policy, as I would have stated earlier. We are engaging with our legal services unit as it relates to those proposals that we have received. And yes, we will have to create a policy that will help to guide how it is we relate to any other entities that wish to utilize the pool, what the type of costing would be and, of course, how—what we will also have to look at, based on the request, would be how those proposals impact the normal day-to-day operations and accessibility of the pool to the general public. That is and will always be our first priority due to the fact that we want to—well, one of the mandates of the pool is to spread the ability of swimming and water safety to as many people as possible. So we cannot and will not in any way do anything that will negatively affect the achievement of that mandate.

However, we understand the viability with respect to, you know, utilizing the pool spaces as commercial entities that can help to bring in revenue. So we will have to find a balance. That will be done through policy, that will be done in consultation with our legal services unit.

Mr. de Nobriga: Chair, I am taking pattern. Do you all have a timeline for that?

Mr. McTair: Well, we mentioned mid-March. I will go with what DPS said in terms of end of March.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: It is urgent.

Madam Chairman: I did not hear “end”, you know. I heard March. So I know March starts from the 1st. So that was my expectation.

Mr. McTair: She did say end of March. And considering the events between now and the end of February or start of March, as you said, I think it will be better that we—and more feasible to all of us that we go with the end of March.

Madam Chairman: So I want say this, that the Committee would have visited Cocoyea just a month shy of the opening date, and I want commend the team because I want to quote Mr. Fullerton who said:

It is only an act of God or a climate event or an insurrection would have—those were the words—stop the pool from opening.

So we had none of those and the pool opened. So I want to congratulate you on that. But I want to ask this, am I correct that SPORTT manages Cocoyea or we got that wrong?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: They provide the contract.

Madam Chairman: Just the janitorial and so on?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes. Yeah. Just that.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: The management is the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Okay, great.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: We have a manager there and all the staff there are Ministry staff.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So thank you very much, we had that wrong. What I want to find out is, the pool is open. Our observations:

The facilities required cleaning, reinforced fencing, painting and power washing.

Was that done?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, that is for the Cocoyea pool?

Madam Chairman: Cocoyea.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes. That was done.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We were there, you know.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: PS, I think you joined us in Movant.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: It was done.

Madam Chairman: Algae and moss surrounded the pool walls and the pool itself which was a breeding ground for—this is a nice word—aquatic life.

Really tadpoles and insect larvae. Was that treated with?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Yes, Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I would show you my pictures, eh. I would show you my pictures of what we saw. So I hope you have picture to show me what is. All right. The chair for disabled, elderly persons to enter the pool was nonfunctional. Is it working?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, that is still to be addressed.

Madam Chairman: Still to be addressed, when?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I will invite Mr. Fullerton to speak on that, please.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you, DPS. Madam Chair, the issue pertaining to the disabled access to the pool, that is to be addressed as soon as the procurement—we have to source the item. It is a bit aged and to repair it might be a little bit of a challenge so we are now in the process of looking for a new lift system to put inside of it. That would take place in phase three, simply because that is the period in which we are going to address that issue, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So what I am being told is that the chair was really for phase three and we “eh” reach phase three as yet?

Mr. Fullerton: No, no, no. The chair was supposed to have been repaired when we had that site visit right thereafter. However, sourcing the parts for it proved to be a significant challenge. So we now may have to replace the entire component which would now be done in phase three.

Madam Chairman: And phase three ends in March, I think my understanding—

Mr. Fullerton: It begins at the end of March and it should last a period of about two

months total to get all the items sorted out, simply because we have to do it while the pool is in operation, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So that is May?

Mr. Fullerton: Yes, Madam Chair. End of May to be precise.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. All right. So I know when we are coming back.

Water fixtures in the washroom and changing rooms were corroded resulting in water leaking from pipes and running off into drains. Was that dealt with?

Mr. Fullerton: Those items have been repaired along with the ceiling issues that are coming from the tiers. The ceiling has been replaced in its entirety, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Let me ask something. As far as the fixtures and those fittings for faucets and so, what grade do we use?

Mr. Fullerton: You must go with—it would not be household—standard at all. It must—

Madam Chairman: It is not residential? It is commercial?

Mr. Fullerton: It must be commercial or industrial. It must be. What took place in that facility is that they, in error, stored the chemicals for the pool in that area. And as a result of the corrosive atmosphere, the items were compromised in the process. So although it was industrial grade components and fixtures in the environment, the storage of chemicals provided an unsafe and untidy arrangement and therefore, it resulted in compromising—

Madam Chairman: Okay. So lessons learnt.

Mr. Fullerton: Lessons learnt definitely.

Madam Chairman: So we no longer storing chemicals and so in the washrooms?

Mr. Fullerton: No, Madam Chair. It was in some sort of exuberance that they wanted to store so much chemical that you would not have an issue, that the length of time it was there caused the issue. So now the throughput is now being managed where we will not have that issue taking place again.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Mr. Fullerton, you provided me with so much material to quote you verbatim. Lighting fixtures in all washrooms and changing rooms were not working. Was that addressed?

Mr. Fullerton: They too have been addressed, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Existing swimming lanes were left to the elements in a state of disrepair.

Mr. Fullerton: Swimming lanes?

Madam Chairman: You know the—what you call them?

Mr. Fullerton: The lane ropes?

Madam Chairman: The ropes, yeah, the lane ropes. They have been repaired? Well, they would have to be replaced.

Mr. Fullerton: They have to be replaced. Once they are subjected to the elements, they have to be replaced because become compromised.

Madam Chairman: All right. So how we are swimming if the lane ropes not there? We have lane ropes?

Mr. Fullerton: Okay. Through the Physical Education and Sport Division that will come under one of the items to be procured. As it is right now, the swim instructors are the persons really taking care of the facilities and they are working as best as they can there, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So the procurement is phase three or next week?

Mr. McTair: No, the procurement would be something separate that will be done. However, the usage of the pool as it relates to learn-to-swim and so, would not really require the use of lane ropes. You attend to utilize the lane rope if it is you either want to probably have a competitive meet or if it is you need to separate certain swimmers from others depending on what the programme is.

However, we will look to—while not giving a timeline just yet, we will definitely be looking in to seeking to procedure lane ropes. The matter at hand will be our allocation, due to the fact that we would have already procured—under that particular Vote, Materials and Supplies, we would have already procured chemicals and we have another batch of chemicals that we are seeking to procure, as the PS would have alluded to earlier. So we will have to look at going through the procurement process but making sure that we get the necessary transfer of funds to that particular Vote.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So maybe I can ask this, Mr. McTair. Is it that you run programmes that do not require lane ropes?

Mr. McTair: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, if you run programmes that you do not require lane ropes, why would you be spending money to procure lane ropes?

Mr. McTair: It would be instructive to procure lane ropes, especially if it is we are going to be housing or accommodating rather swimming clubs. And that is—the proposals that we have for Cocoyea, for example, are mainly from swimming clubs. So we will have to seek to procure the ropes, at least for the sake of separating athletes when it is they are actually engaging in their training and also, if it is they want to have any meets at the pool.

Madam Chairman: All right. So your acquisition of lane ropes will be conditional upon you accepting proposals. You see, what I am trying to avoid is that you acquire lane ropes, because it looks nice for a pool to have lane ropes, and then the lane ropes end up staying on the deck—

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm.”

Madam Chairman: —and deteriorating like we had seen.

Mr. McTair: Well, I was going to respond, which we intend to accept once favourable.

Madam Chairman: That is an advancement in the two hours that we are sitting here. Nice to hear. So you will let us know what is going on with the procurement of the lane ropes. Fire extinguishers, none were visible.

Have we acquired fire extinguishers? And I am talking specifically with respect to the pump room because somebody might be saying, if we are by a pool why we need fire extinguishers.

Mr. McTair: I will have to look into that matter of fire extinguishers. I will have to look into that because the fact that—well, at least, the statement that none were visible is not something that is to my knowledge. So I will have to look into that matter and we will have to do the necessary procurement in that regard.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So do you have fire extinguishers?

Mr. McTair: We should have fire extinguishers at all our pools. As far as I know, our pools should have—all our facilities rather should have a required number of fire extinguishers.

Madam Chairman: Okay. When last you were at Cocoyea?

Mr. McTair: I was at Cocoyea in January. However, to say I was specifically looking for fire extinguishers, that was not the purpose of the visit.

Madam Chairman: All right. So in the grand opening would we have checked off on certain things?—in the grand opening we had on the 9th of January.

Mr. McTair: I personally was not there for the opening. I could not make it to the opening.

Madam Chairman: All right. But prior to the opening, I would expect there are checklists for certain things.

Mr. McTair: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Because I am gleaning from what you said—

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm.”

Madam Chairman: —that all our facilities should have fire extinguishers. It is something that is considered as necessary, mandatory. So that, in preparing for the opening, not necessarily on the day, did we check for fire extinguishers? Because we are saying none were visible. You take exception to that, so that is why I asked whether you have.

Mr. McTair: Again, that is something I will have to check to make sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. McTair: I did not make the personal checks to see if it is there were fire extinguishers. I would liaise with the facilities manager and well, we will have that information and deal with it as such.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. McTair: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: All right. There was protruding metal rods around the glass portals. You know, that underground where you view the swimmers from underground. Was that dealt with?

Mr. Fullerton: That—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Fullerton: Sorry, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Fullerton, yes.

Mr. Fullerton: That has been dealt with, Madam Chair, yes

Madam Chairman: Okay. Maybe I should have asked you about the fire extinguishers. Okay. What is the status with this concession area? That area that was really—looked like a public health hazard. What has happened with that?

Mr. Fullerton: That area is where the ceiling would have been compromised, and the sinks and the like would have been also compromised. That area has been cleaned and power washed and stuff. The sinks and the other components are part of phase three to be procured and installed, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that phase three, again, is when?

Mr. Fullerton: It begins at the end of March.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So that by the end of May that concession area should be dealt with?

Mr. Fullerton: And ready for use, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, there was an issue that we had observed with visible signs of moisture and so on, damp in the pump room. What is the status of treating with that?

Mr. Fullerton: We are trying to see what will be the source of it. We know that is because the area is a bit cold and because it is at a lower level than the surrounding area, it means that it will always have that damp issue inside there. Perhaps we could introduce a fan that will bring some hot air inside there to kind of balance off the temperatures. We are actively seeking information as to what is the best possible approach to reduce the formation of mold and mildew inside there, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So as the technical—

Mr. Fullerton: So as it is right now we are doing constant cleaning of the area.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. So as the technical officer, if I gave you, through the Ministry, to report to us by the end of March on what is proposed with respect to this—because it will be within your third phase now, the starting up of your third phase. Would that been unreasonable?

Mr. Fullerton: No. That would not be unreasonable, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. And the last thing, what is going on with the sump pump? I know we identified that it is at the end of its life cycle. Have we begun anything with respect to the procurement for a replacement?

Mr. Fullerton: The procurement process is in place to get a new pump, Madam Chair. It has not been a front burner item simply because the recent repairs would have given us a little bit more life in it, but the procurement process has begun to get a new pump for replacement, Madam Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And you have an idea of how long your procurement process will take to identify a supplier?

Mr. Fullerton: I would want to safely say by mid-year we should have that process completed, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: By mid-June.

Mr. Fullerton: Mid-year, end of June is mid-year.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. Member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Madam Chair, I just want to intervene here. Could we perhaps ask them to submit in writing a timeline for this procurement process? Because this is something very important and if anything goes wrong with it, the whole facility has to close. So I think it is something that we need to pay very close attention to, in terms of being very strict with the timelines that we are using to procure for this item and we cannot delay on it.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I think it is a valid point and I am sure the Secretariat, in writing to the Ministry for further responses, would also indicate that. Okay. And the last thing I wanted to ask is the storage—the actual storage facility is something that we noticed both at Morvant and at Cocoyea, in terms of the chemicals and the hazards not being properly identified like, you know, signage, poison or this is salt and not something else. There was an absence of that. Have we improved on that?

Mr. McTair: We are currently working with our procurement unit with respect to signs for both Cocoyea and for Morvant swimming pools.

Madam Chairman: All right. So that—in terms of the signage, what kind of timeline for the signage? Because, I mean, it is a big risk.

Mr. McTair: Definitely. I think definitely by the end of February we should be able to at least have a supplier engaged and get invoices—get the necessary invoice and put forward for accounts to request the releases for payment.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And in terms of—there was an issue with lighting, again—heat-generating lighting in the areas where chemicals are stored. Has that been addressed?

Mr. Fullerton: In so far as the Cocoyea pool is concerned, yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And the last thing I wanted to ask, we are in the—entering the second month of the reopening of Cocoyea. Okay? Because we opened the 9th January. Right? The 9th of February is tomorrow. Okay? Have you started the procurement process for chemicals?

Mr. McTair: Yes. As alluded to by Deputy Permanent Secretary, we will start receiving a batch of chemicals tomorrow based on the procurement process that would have been done, and also in December. And we would have got the releases for probably, what?—earlier this week? Yeah, earlier this week. And we had the cheque cut today. So we have passed on that information to the supplier and we will start delivery tomorrow. So we have one batch of chemicals coming in and in preparation for that time period that we know chemicals would last, we have already started the necessary procurement process for another batch of chemicals.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So the chemicals that we would have used in January, we borrowed it from some other pool?

Mr. McTair: Yeah, we would have borrowed chemicals from other pools where those pools are down and we could afford to have those chemicals just to last the time period because we are waiting on releases.

Madam Chairman: Can I ask what pools you borrowed them from?

Mr. McTair: Sangre Grande.

Madam Chairman: Sangre Grande?

Mr. McTair: Sangre Grande would have been that pool that we would have utilized.

Madam Chairman: Okay. What is the lifespan of chemicals?

Mr. McTair: I think the lifespan—the safe lifespan is, I think, what?—three to six months if I am not mistaken. After that, you tend to find that if it is you have it in storage for over about six months, it starts to expire or it starts to lose its strength rather.

Madam Chairman: Right.

Mr. McTair: So we try to—one, in terms of storage capacity and also, in terms of the same issue of lifespan of chemicals, we try to procure on a three-month basis.

Madam Chairman: And Sangre Grande would have been down, how long?

Mr. McTair: Sangre Grande would have been down—well, Sangre Grande would not have been used throughout COVID—well, period of lockdowns rather, and some issues would have developed. So we were not be able to be reopen Sangre Grande when it is we returned to play, so to speak.

Madam Chairman: Right.

Mr. McTair: So since then, we would have procured chemicals, I think it would have been in July or August of 2022. All right? So it is from that batch we would have had chemicals remaining that could have been utilized for Cocoyea swimming pool.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. McTair: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Yes, member Bacchus.

Mr. Bacchus: Just before you leave that on—you have mentioned the heating. I was thinking about the suitability. So the suitability of facilities for the storing of chemicals, heating

is one thing but ventilation is another. Is the facility set up that we—you know, we build storerooms as vaults, we do not really build them as something that, you know—lock it tight, everything inside, nobody can get in. Is it suitable for what you want?

Mr. McTair: Yes, member, they are. They were designed particularly for that purpose.

Mr. Bacchus: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: And as far as—I want you to go on to Morvant, in case anybody—anybody wish to ask anything about the site visit at Cocoyea?

Mr. de Nobriga: Chair, just—

Madam Chairman: Yes, member de Nobriga.

Mr. de Nobriga: Apologies for the delaying the move. With regard to the chemical storage, I do not know if it was mentioned—my apologizes if I did not hear. Do you all have guidelines for the storage? I know we spoke about signage, but in terms of the ground, some of these things can be quite corrosive, is there any sort of protection for the floor inside there so that we do not have damage to the substrate in there?

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Mr. Fullerton?

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you very much for the question. The same environment that has been purpose built for storage of the items has protection on the floors and walls which would prevent corrosion entering into the concrete substrate for damage to take place. Those measures were put in place during construction.

Mr. de Nobriga: Yes, thank you.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we could just look a bit at Morvant? All right. I must say when we went to Morvant, aesthetically, it was a totally different ballgame. It was really pleasing to see. But, again, we have noticed a number of things when we went in. There are a number of toilet facilities that are all out of order and, again, I wanted you to ask about the grade of, you know, appliances and equipment and so on, furnishings that we use.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: I would like to invite Mr. Fullerton.

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you, thank you Madam Chair. To the best of my knowledge, once again, the fixtures and fittings inside the Morvant—all pools, the special purpose pools, are all supposed to be industrial grade. I was not there when they were being constructed and implemented, so I cannot say for sure that they are but they were supposed to have been based on the documents I received. And as a result, I will hate to think that it is because of misuse that they may have deteriorated. I doubt that very much. So we are looking into see what could be the cause of the issues and that in fact the fixtures that are put in there were not industrial grade, then the replacements would definitely be industrial grade fittings.

Madam Chairman: Right. So is it that those facilities are still not functional?

Mr. Fullerton: Morvant is fully functional, fully operational, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: No, no, I am not talking about the pool, I am talking about the toilets.

Mr. Fullerton: The one or two stalls that were inoperable are still that way—

Madam Chairman: “Um-hmm”.

Mr. Fullerton: —as we are trying to get the contractor to come back and do what was supposed to be done in the first place through UDeCOTT. That is still being discussed at this point—

Madam Chairman: “Um-hmm”.

Mr. Fullerton: —before we enter into a further costs associated pools. They are brand new pools, therefore the contractor must be held accountable for stuff. That are the discussions that are taking place right now with those fixtures and fittings, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So a kind of idea of timeframe for these discussions to fructify into some action one way or the other.

Mr. Fullerton: I would say that given the Carnival period and the attention being paid to everything else right now, I would want to say that probably in the middle of April, thereabouts, we should have some action taking place with respect to replacements, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And as far as—I do see we got quick action on the changing of the locks.

Mr. Fullerton: Oh, yes.

Madam Chairman: I think they were changed the next day.

Mr. Fullerton: The very next day, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: But it goes back to, again, the kind of quality of fittings and fixtures being used. And in terms of the replacement and how quickly it was executed, you know, I expect it would be of a proper grade for outdoor use.

Mr. Fullerton: Yes, Madam Chair, they were expressly stated on the packaging, “Exterior use”.

Madam Chairman: All right. But, you know, as I said, we will be back—*[Laughter]* We will be back. But what I must commend you for the quick action in having those things seen about.

Mr. Fullerton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, particularly with respect to Morvant, when we got there, we asked, in terms of there being an emergency response plan, in the event that something happened there, you know, ambulance or something like that, having to get in there. Have we dealt with any emergency response plan for all of our pools, one, but particularly, Morvant, because of the tight access and so on?

Mr. McTair: That is a matter that we are discussing with the members of the TTDF, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. We are even discussing it with respect to the creation of an MOU at this point between the Ministry and the defence force to sort of formalize the relationship between two organizations and their operations at the pool. So that is something that we are taking into consideration very seriously as well, in terms of the development of that emergency response plan.

The suggestion that would have been made as it relates to having an ambulance on site is a bit cost prohibitive, to be honest. So—but we do have that relationship with the health centres nearby and, of course, with the Port of Spain General Hospital in case there are any emergencies, that they can be attended to as quickly as possible.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So do I take that Mr. McTair, even though we focused on Morvant, that in terms of all your pools, you have an emergency response plan?

Mr. McTair: At all of our pools we have an emergency response plan or an incident plan—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. McTair: —and that is followed through with in case there are any emergencies. Again, the nearby health centres, the community health centres that are nearby are always engaged in case there is any emergency. And, of course, reports are submitted within 24 to 48 hours to head office in case of any incidents that would have taken place at the particular facility.

Madam Chairman: And who is the point person with the emergency response plan?

Mr. McTair: Well, we do have a point person within the Division of Physical Education and Sport as well as the Project Management Unit, as would have been alluded to earlier. Those are the two point persons to which there is direct communication by the warden of the pool and, of course, that information will come to myself as the Director of the Division of Physical Education and Sport, as well as the Technical Director of the Project Management Unit.

Madam Chairman: Right. So let me ask you something. The warden has a job spec?

Mr. McTair: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So that is included in his or her job spec?

Mr. McTair: Well, at least in the position description, it is definitely included.

Madam Chairman: Okay, about the response—

Mr. McTair: About response time, in terms of any incidents that take place at the pools.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And have we at each of our pools, because they are all uniquely placed, do we have a sort of a risk management plan and a risk policy with respect to each of them?

Mr. McTair: The policy that we would utilize would be the OSHA policy of the Ministry and everything that we do, we try to do it in compliance with the OSHA policy of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but I asked that in terms of—I understand the OSHA policy but risk—let us say, for instance, Cocoyea—

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm”.

Madam Chairman: —has a unique risk.

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm”.

Madam Chairman: Okay? You agree with that?

Mr. McTair: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And what that unique risk—if we talking about the same thing, I would have thought the unique risk is that it is located beneath road level.

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm”.

Madam Chairman: Right? So how do we access that risk and what do we do to mitigate that risk at Cocoyea?

Mr. McTair: I cannot say that there is a policy in place with respect to that at this time.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. Okay. So that is what I am trying to find, that we have identified for each of the facilities, the risk, the vulnerabilities—

Mr. McTair: “Um-hmm”.

Madam Chairman: —and the strategies to deal with that. So if we could get that done in writing for each of the facilities.

Mr. Hislop: Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Hislop: I think we should also include if drills are done, in terms of fire—just emergency drills. So I think that should as well be included in the risk assessment. **Madam Chairman:** Now, with the opening of the old new pools, the reopening of those in March, how do we plan to make it known to the public that these pools are coming on stream by what date and so on? How are we going about that?

Mr. McTair: Well, similarly to Cocoyea, we would put forward an ad in newspaper and as well on social media. And as would have been indicated, when it is you had visited Cocoyea, it does not take long for that information to disseminate and for people to be registering to utilize the pool. So, again, it is usually very organic, but we have taken into consideration the suggestion that would have been made and we are utilizing traditional as well as social media options as it relates to promoting the opening of the pools.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So you have not begun yet to engage any schools and so on, in the area, catchment areas of those pools that are coming back on stream?

Mr. McTair: Not as yet.

Madam Chairman: Not as yet?

Mr. McTair: No.

Madam Chairman: And plans to do that will be when?

Mr. McTair: We will wait a little closer because we want to ensure that the works that have to be taken care of are actually on—as per the completion date, right?—are in time with the completion date. So we would not want to make an announcement and then we have to delay, again, in terms of the actual opening. So, as would have been done with Cocoyea probably about two weeks before, we will start to—when it is absolutely certain that it is going to open on the particular date, yes, we will definitely start to engage.

Madam Chairman: So, I note from that, it is more than act of God or insurrection may stop those opening dates of the end of March 2023. Okay. So I will ask any other member of the Committee if there are any other questions they wish to ask. No? Okay.

So I want to, at this stage, thank the Deputy PS and the Technical Director from the Ministry of Sports and Community Development, and Mr. McTair, I cannot remember your position but I will call you by your name. Okay? I want to thank you all for, you know, your contributions. I certainly want to thank you all on behalf of the people and the community around Cocoyea for getting that pool up and running. And while not perfect, what things are not done have not inhibited the operation of the pool. And I look forward to the other three or four that have been identified for the end of March similarly coming back on stream.

Certainly as far as Couva, on behalf of the Committee, we really hope that some sort of determination with respect to Couva can take place at the earliest possible time because it appears from the figures, Couva really is a community that has a hungry need. Okay? Their revenue from the learn-to-swim was—far exceeded all the other pools over a four year period. And of that four year period they earned zero in one year, and they still exceeded everybody. Okay? So let us hope that we can make a determination with respect to that.

As far as the Ministry of Finance, I think we have some questions for them but we would send it in writing because I think, regrettably, we got Investments here, it was not really Investments that we needed. But, again, we do thank you, Mr. Maharaj and your fellow officer for coming and making yourself available to assist the Committee in whichever way. And as far as Ms. Babwah and Mr. Ince from the SPORTT, again, we thank you all for coming.

Just before I adjourn the meeting, can I ask, is there anything that any of the representatives from the three entities wish to suggest that the Committee can do to assist them in discharging their functions with the management, maintenance, administration of the community pools? Yes, Deputy PS.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Chairman, I think you would have given us quite a lot to, in terms of your recommendations and your enquiry, for us to attend to certain matters and address the concerns of the Committee. So I thank you all for bringing up those issues, some which we may not have taken into consideration in the way we should have. So I thank you for your recommendations, which we will take on board. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Again, thank you all very much. I wish you all a safe journey home. I want to thank the members of the viewing audience and the media who have stayed with us,

those who send questions assist us in this enquiry. This meeting is now suspended. Good afternoon.

Mrs. Reid-Samuel: Good afternoon.

Mr. McTair: Good afternoon and thank you.

4.52 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*