



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

TENTH PARLIAMENT

**SECOND REPORT
OF THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
MINISTRIES, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES
AND STATE ENTERPRISES
(GROUP 2)**

ON

**NATIONAL INFORMATION COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED (NICTCL)
BRANDED AS IGOVTT**

**Ordered to be printed with the Minutes of Proceedings
and Notes of Evidence**

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THE COMMITTEE

Establishment

Section 66 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago declares, that not later than three months after the first meeting of the House of Representatives, the Parliament shall appoint Joint Select Committees to inquire into and report to both Houses in respect of Government Ministries, Municipal Corporations, Statutory Authorities, State Enterprises and Service Commissions, in relation to their administration, the manner of exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.

Motions related to this purpose were passed in the House of Representatives and Senate on September 17, 2010 and October 12, 2010 respectively, and thereby established, (*inter alia*), the ***Joint Select Committee to inquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries with responsibility for the business set out in the Schedule as Group 2, and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview with regard to their administration, the manner of exercise of their powers, their methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.***

The business, as well as the entities which fall under the purview of your Committee are attached as ***Appendix I.***

Membership

The current membership of your Committee is as follows:¹

- Dr. James Armstrong - Chairman
- Dr. Victor Wheeler - Vice Chairman
- Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP
- Mr. Clifton De Coteau, MP

¹ The appointment of Mrs. Mary King was revoked with effect from May 10, 2011.

- Mr. Collin Partap, MP
- Mr. Kevin Ramnarine
- Dr. Lincoln Douglas, MP
- Mrs. Lyndira Oudit
- Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP
- Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP
- Dr. Lester Henry

Secretariat Support

Mrs. Nataki Atiba- Dilchan	-	Secretary
Ms. Candice Skerrette	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Candice Williams	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Powers

Standing Orders 71B of the Senate and 79B of the House of Representatives delineate the core powers of the Committee which include *inter alia*:

- to send for persons, papers and records;
- to adjourn from place to place;
- to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference; and
- to communicate with any other Committee of Parliament on matters of common interest.

INTRODUCTION

Background:

A National ICT Strategy was first articulated in 2003 in a Ministry of Public Administration Special report entitled, *“Connecting to the Future: Fast Forward: Trinidad and Tobago’s National ICT Strategy.”*

The National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, branded iGovTT, was incorporated in July 2009 as a state-owned enterprise to continue the realization of this strategy. In particular, the Company was formed to treat with the implementation and execution of Government’s major enterprise wide ICT strategies and programmes. As well, iGovTT provides ICT consulting and supportive services to Government agencies and Ministries in order to ensure more effective alignment, co-ordination, integration, consistency, security, interruptibility and cost effectiveness across Government entities.

With the renewed thrust toward the development of a knowledge-based economy, your Committee considered it appropriate to inquire into the operations of iGovTT and to ascertain what has been accomplished under the National ICT Strategy over the last few years.

Objectives:

The objectives of the inquiry were identified as follows:

- to determine the effect and the success of the ttconnect and TTBizLink projects
- to understand the purpose of the eCAL project, in particular:
 - the mandate and contractual arrangements associated with the laptop rollout initiative
 - the expansion of secondary school connectivity
- to gain an appreciation of the role iGovTT is playing in the restructuring of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago
- to determine the effect and success of the SEW project

- to ascertain the profitability of NICTCL as a state enterprise

Conduct of the Inquiry:

Two public hearings were convened with representatives of iGovTT on Friday February 11, 2011 and Wednesday February 23, 2011. Prior to this, written responses in line with the inquiry objectives had been requested from the Company. These were received in a timely manner and provided the basis for the supplementary questions pursued at the hearing.

The iGovTT Team that attended the meetings of February 11 and 23, 2011 comprised:

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie	Permanent Secretary Ministry of Public Administration
Mr. Cleveland Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. John Mollenthiel	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ms. Denyse White	Head, Consulting
Mr. Anand Singh	Head, Delivery
Mr. Stephen Abhiraj	Head, ttconnect
Mr. Kendall Tull	Head, Finance & Administration
Mr. Rajnath Singh	Programme Manager
Ms. Sheba Mohamid	Policy Specialist
Mr. Justin John	Senior Operations Specialist
Mr. Riyad Ali	Operations Specialist
Mr. Randall Karim	Director of Policy & Strategy Unit, Ministry of Trade and Industry

Between the first and second hearings, the Company was requested to supply the Committee with follow-up data.

The draft of this Report was considered and approved with amendments at the meeting of the Committee held on July 08, 2011.

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee with regard to this inquiry are attached as ***Appendix II.***

The Notes of Evidence of the hearings held on Friday January 14, 2011 and Wednesday February 23, 2011 are attached as ***Appendix III.***

THE EVIDENCE

Incorporation

The National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited was incorporated as a state enterprise on July 20, 2009 and a Board of Directors was appointed on August 27, 2009. The Company effectively began operations in September 2009 with its principal activity being the provision of Information and Communication Technology services to the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

However, the ICT Agenda for Trinidad and Tobago had begun since 2005 with the National Strategic Plan called Fast Forward which had been rolled-out under the National Information Communications Centre.

With the change of Government a new board was appointed in January 2011.

Financial Structure

IgovTT was a wholly-owned government entity financed through government subventions. The Company offered consultancy services to other Ministries free of charge and many of its services were outsourced to other ICT companies.

The decision for iGovTT to become a self sustaining company resided with the government. It was indicated that the Company's fees were competitive, and as such this was a realistic option.

Fast Forward: Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Strategy

Promulgated in 2003, the first National ICT Strategic Plan, entitled Fast Forward, was the blueprint for a self-sustaining knowledge-based society. The Plan had identified an initial 14 programs to be implemented. These included the liberalization of the telecommunications market, the establishment of an ICT Industry Association, community

connect programmes and the assembly of such advisory bodies as a National Innovation Council, e-Business Roundtable and Infrastructure Task Force.

An initial funding requirement of US\$82 million had been identified for design and implementation of the ICT Strategy with the Inter-American Development Bank being targeted for a partnership arrangement.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Information was given the mandate to coordinate and integrate the numerous programmes and a National ICT Secretariat was established to manage the transformation process.

A Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Singapore in December 2008, to accelerate the achievement of the Government's ICT vision. Under the MOU and pursuant to Cabinet approval, iGovTT entered into a management agreement with Infocomm Development Authority International (IDA-i) for 2 ½ year period.

The project purpose was to:

- assist iGovTT in the fulfilment of its key roles over a 2 ½ -year timeframe.
- leverage Singapore's past experience and apply its expertise, knowledge and best practices to accelerate Trinidad & Tobago's ICT transformation to the people, the private and public Sectors
- apply Singapore's proven programmes and experiences to deliver a National ICT Plan
- develop Trinidad & Tobago's local ICT capabilities and competencies
- realise more opportunities that arise from Government's stated priorities.

With the change of administration this contract was suspended pending a decision by the newly appointed Board. Thus far, US\$3M out of the US\$8M contract had been expended. There were no additional financial costs, to date, due to the suspension of the contract.

The status with regard to the deliverables is as follows:

Deliverables	Status
<p>Programme Management Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Management Office set up and operations 	<p>Programme Management Office (PMO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully set up of Programme Management Office (PMO); • Delivered a methodology to guide the successful implementation of projects / programmes. Training on the methodology was provided to selected staff from various Business Units; • Delivered a Change Management Strategy and Implementation Plan tailored for ICT projects undertaken by iGovTT; • Developed the Service Delivery Process to guide project delivery from conceptualization through deployment. •
<p>e-Services Project Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Service Infrastructure (Middleware) review • Requirement studies for People Hub and 4 G2C e-Services • Requirement studies for Business Hub and 4 G2B e-Services • Requirement study for eProcurement • Project management for TradeNet implementation 	<p>Foundation Services Infrastructure (FSi) Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed the Requirements Study of the Foundation Services Infrastructure;
<p>National ICT Company and ICT Planning Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National ICT Company and GCIO structure design • Conduct stocktake of <i>fastforward I</i> • Develop strategic implementation blueprint for e-Government, ICT industry and manpower development, and ICT adoption by community and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises 	<p>Structure and Design & fastforward Stocktake</p> <p>Assisted in the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mission, vision, strategic outcomes and strategies of iGovTT through a series of workshops with iGovTT Senior Management; • Used SWOT analysis to identify strengths and initiatives that can take iGovTT forward; • Completed the <i>fastforward</i> stocktake report. • Completed Draft ICT Strategy 2011-2015

At present, an assessment of the Plan and its achievements was being undertaken and financial information still had to be compiled.

Contractual Arrangements

The Company has partnered with other technology firms in the execution of the seven major projects undertaken to date. These include Caribbean Facilities Corporation Limited, Fujitsu Caribbean (Trinidad) Limited, Hewlett Packard Company, Digi-Data Systems Limited, Proudfoot Communications limited and Infotech Caribbean Limited.

Performance indicators for iGovTT

The 2009/2010 World Economic Forum Report had given Trinidad and Tobago an international ranking of 79 out of a group of 136 countries, in the Networked Readiness Index of its Global Information Technology Report.

The factors which may have contributed to this less than favourable position include:

- (i) the length of time taken to conduct business in Trinidad and Tobago
- (ii) the current laws pertaining to Information Communication Technology (ICT), procurement/tender systems online
- (iii) an evident lack of citizen confidence in the use of ICT for services
- (iv) the lack of timeliness in accessing data
- (v) the methodology used by the World Economic Forum to collect survey data.

Discussions were being held with the World Economic Forum to seek ways to improve the current rating.

GovNeTT

GovNeTT is a secure, high-speed Wide Area Network that provided connectivity and essential services to all Government Ministries. There were 507 sites connected to the

network of which 61 are located in Tobago and 5 of these were Tobago Regional Health Authority connections.

Three factors identified as key to GovNeTT's continued usage were (i) simplification of infrastructure and management (ii) reduction in costs and complexity and (iii) improved security.

The services provided on GovNeTT include Internet access, enterprise e-mail data centre hosting and video-conferencing.

The usage data for GovNeTT is represented in the following tables:

MINISTRIES' USAGE OF GovNeTT SERVICES											
#	Ministries / Entities	Messaging Services	Secure WAN Services	Internet Services	Mobility Services	Remote Access Service	VoIP Service	Data Centre Services	Service Desk Services	Domain and Email Services	Enterprise App. Access (GPS /IHRIS)
1	Legal Affairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
2	National Security			✓							✓
3	Trade and Industry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
4	MPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	AG		✓	✓							✓
6	STTE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	OPM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
8	Foreign Affairs			✓							✓
9	Energy										✓
10	Finance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
11	Housing		✓	✓							✓
12	Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Food Prod										✓
14	Local Gov	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
15	Planning		✓	✓							✓

MINISTRIES' USAGE OF GovNeTT SERVICES											
#	Ministries / Entities	Messaging Services	Secure WAN Services	Internet Services	Mobility Services	Remote Access Service	VoIP Service	Data Centre Services	Service Desk Services	Domain and Email Services	Enterprise App. Access (GPS /IHRIS)
16	Works and Transport		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓
17	THA	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
18	Sport			✓							✓
19	Public Utilities		✓	✓							✓
20	Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
21	Comm Dev		✓	✓							✓
22	Tourism		✓	✓						✓	✓
23	Judiciary										✓
24	Parliament										✓
25	Nat'l Libraries		✓	✓						✓	✓
26	Ministry of the People and Social Develop.		✓	✓							✓
27	Tobago Develop	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓

Videoconferencing Facilities

Video conferencing is one of the services that can be provided through GovNeTT. The end user equipment (i.e. web cams, video phones, large screens etc.) are not supplied by iGovTT because of budgetary constraints.

A pilot on the use of the facilities is being carried out with the Ministries of Public Administration, Health, Education, Trade and Industry and Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

e-Connect and Learn (eCAL) Project

IgovTT's principal role in the eCAL project was procurement and project management. All other areas were under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

Given the visibility of the project, emphasis was placed on strict procurement practices as stipulated by Corporation Sole.

Twenty thousand, three hundred laptops had been distributed with 3000 laptops to teachers and 17300 laptops to students. The last batch of 478 laptops was distributed on February 18, 2011 in Tobago.

The project was considered a success from which vital lessons were learned. Additional attention needed to be given to (i) the length of time for procurement, (ii) implementing measures to reduce user negligence and (iii) increased security features of the laptops.

Plans were in train to continue to work with the Ministry of Education on enhancing connections and creating a digital portal for 24/7 accessibility for parents and teachers.

ttconnect

The ttconnect initiative was designed to improve public access to essential government information and services. Five (5) channels are in existence for this service delivery and

comprise **ttconnect online**, **ttconnect service centres**, **ttconnect self-serve kiosks**, **ttconnect mobile** and **ttconnect express**.

There were five (5) ttconnect self-serve kiosks and six (6) ttconnect service centres in operation. 400 government services and 5 Ministries were identified as having downloadable application forms. This service allows citizens to make online applications, however, electronic payments are not yet possible because of a lack of enabling legislation.

The ttconnect express is the most recent phase being undertaken in partnership with Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC). There are three buses in service which visit rural areas to give citizens access to the government portal. As yet, no arrangements are in place to extend the project to Tobago, although there was collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) on other ttconnect services.

TTBiz Link

The TTBizLink project was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and iGovTT.

The IT-platform known as a Single Electronic Window (SEW) is designed to facilitate business and trade. It allows companies/individuals who wish to import/export goods, to apply for permits, licences, register a business and conduct other business related activities online.

TTBizLink comprises eight modules in the first phase and these will all become operational in the first half of 2011.

Internet Penetration

The number of internet users in Trinidad and Tobago had increased from 11.6% to 35.01% from 2003 to 2008. It is predicted that if the eCal project is continued over a five (5) year period, it would contribute to an estimated increase in the number of users by 10%. As well, other initiatives by concessionaires, the use of smart phones and the introduction of nine (9) new services under TTBiz Link would also contribute to increased penetration.

It is estimated that there was 40% internet penetration within other Caribbean countries.

It was a requirement for concessionaires to provide 100% internet coverage, and that details on the reality of the situation could be provided by TATT.

Productivity of Public Service

The extent to which productivity tools were effectively used was dependent largely on the initiatives in the individual Ministries. Statistics could be amassed on the number of email accounts in existence but there is no information available on the rate of use by individuals.

There was still need for a shift of culture toward more effective use of the technology and to assist in this, iGovTT offered training in the use of Microsoft applications.

Approximately \$478 million had been spent on the development of the e-government backbone, but this was not being used at an optimum. There was a need for business re-engineering to allow for Ministries to offer the public e-services.

Such initiatives were supported by iGovTT and there was a forum in which iGovTT liaised with IT managers within Ministries to re-engineer business processes.

The passage of legislation such as, the Electronics Transactions Bill, 2010 would enhance the services being offered.

Telecommunications Sector

This was largely the purview of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT).

Liberalization of the Market

Information sourced from the Authority indicated that five entities had submitted proposals to TATT's request for proposals in its efforts to liberalize the telecommunications market.

All service providers who responded to the pre-qualification were accepted to take part in the on-line Spectrum Auction held in June 2005.

Of the five qualified entities one was unable to secure a valid Letter of Credit and two chose not to participate in the Auction, leaving Laqtel and Digicel.

Both companies were required to supply five-year projections inclusive of balance sheets and cashflow statements along with evidence of financial strength and stability. Subsequently, Laqtel failed to rollout services in accordance with the agreed timetable at the grant of the Concession. This may have been due to a withdrawal of funding support and failure to secure another partner.

TSTT/Digicel dispute

There was one matter involving TSTT and Digicel which was settled in the local courts. There have been four disputes filed with TATT between the two companies for resolution in accordance with the Authority's Procedure for Dispute Resolution in the Telecommunications and Broadcasting Sectors of Trinidad and Tobago. These have all been settled by arbitration. There are no matters outstanding.

Future initiatives

Open source Structure

IGovTT is conducting research in the use of open-source solutions. A discussion paper would be submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet within four to six weeks.

Government Cloud

A government policy and legislation was necessary for the development of a Government Cloud. A discussion paper would be forwarded to the Cabinet within four to six weeks.

Broadband Strategy

There existed a 6-Point Strategy with regard to the use of broadband. Further consideration was being given as to whether government should be involved in this activity as a wholesaler. A final position would be forwarded to Cabinet within six to eight weeks.

ICT Governance Model

The Committee was advised that a central governance model did not exist. A proposal based on current international models, prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration, was before the Cabinet for consideration.

National Strategic ICT Plan 2011 and onward

The 2011-2014/5 Strategic National Plan was being finalized. It was expected to be forwarded from the Ministry of Public Administration to Cabinet within three months.

OBSERVATIONS/FINDINGS

Your Committee is appreciative of the information that has been provided by the iGovTT Team both through written and oral interaction.

Your Committee has noted the ICT achievements of the Company and is of the view that the Company is focused on its mandate and is working toward the goal of Trinidad and Tobago becoming a knowledge-based society.

Notwithstanding this, Trinidad and Tobago has not been rated well by the World Economic Forum in its 2009/10 Global Information Technology Report, gaining a ranking of 79 out of 136 countries in the Network Readiness Index. Given that approximately \$478 million had been spent to date on the development of the e-government backbone this is a cause for concern. It clearly indicates that there are other significant areas which need to be addressed.

In this regard, your Committee has noted the explanations proffered by the iGovTT Team as to the factors which may have influenced this mediocre score, particularly (i) the regulatory structure pertaining to online business transactions (ii) the untimely nature of data access (iii) the prolonged periods taken to conduct business in Trinidad and Tobago (iv) the lack of citizen confidence in the use of ICT for services.

Your Committee is of the view that these should form the priority objectives in the plans of the Company over the next strategic period. These issues are seemingly inter-related and therefore one comprehensive strategy may result in a remedy for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the foregoing, your Committee proposes that the Ministry of Public Administration, in close collaboration with the National Information Communications Technology Company Limited, can focus in the short term on the following:

- (a) implementing initiatives in the area of business process re-engineering within the public sector, which can be achieved through the networks already existing with IT professionals in government agencies;
- (b) guiding organizational culture change in order to complement the re-engineering efforts. This may be pursued through the employment of additional administrative staff with specific focus on developing strategies to promote this change sector wide;
- (c) developing awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public about online facilities offered on GovNett to encourage use of the services, and to increase the levels of citizen comfort and trust in the available technology;
- (d) since the eCAL project is to be ongoing, giving additional attention to strategies (i) to address the length of time for procurement (ii) to reduce instances of user negligence (iii) to increase security features of the laptops;
- (e) expanding the ttconnect mobile services to Tobago before the end of the year;
- (f) fast-tracking the governance arrangements for iGovTT, noting that the models have been prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration and are under consideration by the Cabinet.

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

Sgd.

Dr. James Armstrong
Chairman

Sgd.

Dr. Victor Wheeler
Member

Sgd.

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Clifton De Coteau, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Collin Partap, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Kevin Ramnarine
Member

Sgd.

Dr. Lincoln Douglas, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mrs. Lyndira Oudit
Member

Sgd.

Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP
Member

Sgd.

Dr. Lester Henry
Member

July 15, 2011

APPENDIX I

BUSINESS ENTITIES

List of Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises that fall under the purview of this Committee:

1. Local Government

- Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited
- Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme
- Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited
- Community Improvement Services Limited
- Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago
- East Port of Spain Development Company Limited

2. National Security

- Counter Drug-Crime Task Force
- National Drug Council
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)

3. Office of the Prime Minister

- Board of Film Censors
- Sport and Culture Board of Management
- Caribbean New Media Group Limited (CNMG)
- Government Information Services Limited (GISL)
- National Broadcasting Network (NBN)

4. People and Social Development

- Adoption Board
- Trinidad and Tobago Association in Aid of the Deaf
- Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association
- Social Welfare District Boards
- Civic Council on Social Equity
- National Social Development Council
- Children's Authority

5. Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs

- Advisory Town Planning Panel
- National Population Council
- Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UdeCOTT)

6. Public Administration

- Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT)
- Government Human Resources Services Limited (GHRS)
- Salaries Review Commission
- National Information, Communication, Technology Company Limited (iGovTT)

7. Public Utilities

- Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TSTT)
- Regulated Industries Commission
- Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA)
 - Water Resource Agency
- Water Resources Management Unit
- The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (TTEC)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST)

8. Science, Technology and Tertiary Education

- Board of Industrial Training
- National Energy Skills Centre
- National Training Agency
- Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute
- University of the West Indies
 - School of Continuing Studies
- University of Trinidad and Tobago:
 - Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI)
 - Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (ECIAF)
 - Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA)
 - John S. Donaldson Technical Institute
 - San Fernando Technical Institute
 - National Institute of Higher Education (Research, Science and Technology)
 - Teachers Training Colleges
- College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts (COSTAATT)
 - Joint Services Staff College
 - College of Health Sciences
 - College of Nursing
 - School of Languages
 - Business Management and Information Technology Division
 - General Education Division
- Metal Industries Company Limited (MIC)
 - Government Vocational Centre
- Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Limited (YTEPP)

9. Sport and Youth Affairs

- Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
- National Sports Council
- National Stadia Board of Management
- Regional Complexes
- Trinidad and Tobago Boxing Board of Control

10. Tobago Development

- Tobago Regional Health Authority
- Tobago Projects Development and Authority Limited

11. Tourism

- Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago
- Tourism Development Company Limited

12. Trade and Industry

- Betting Levy Board
- Small Business Development Company Limited
- Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards
- Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority
- Caribbean International Airlines (Holding) Limited
- Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (e-TecK)
- Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
- Rum Distillers Limited
- Sugar Manufacturers Company Limited
- Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited
- Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited (PLIPDECO)
- Seafood Industry Company Limited
- Trinidad and Tobago Entertainment Company Limited
- Trinidad and Tobago Export Trading Company Limited
- Trinidad and Tobago Film Company
- National Flour Mills
- PLIPWIJIS Limited
- Property and Industrial Port Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago

13. Works and Transport

- Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Air Transport Licensing Authority
- LIAT (1974) Limited
- Pilotage Authority
- Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Public Transport Service Corporation
- Transport Board
- Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority
- Maritime and Fisheries Institute of Trinidad and Tobago
- Caribbean Airlines Limited
- The Vehicle Maintenance Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
- National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS)
- National Infrastructure Development Company Limited
- National Helicopter Company Limited

APPENDIX II

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**MINUTES OF FOURTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES
(GROUP 2), STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES FALLING UNDER
THOSE MINISTRIES, HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, RED HOUSE, PORT OF SPAIN,
ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2011**

PRESENT

Dr. James Armstrong	Chairman
Dr. Victor Wheeler	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Clifton De Coteau, MP	Member
Dr. Lincoln Douglas, MP	Member
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Member
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP	Member
Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP	Member
Mrs. Mary King	Member
Mr. Kevin Ramnarine	Member
Dr. Lester Henry	Member
Mrs. Nataki Atiba-Dilchan	Secretary
Ms. Candice Skerrette	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Candice Williams	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mrs. Lyndira Oudit	Member
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**NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
COMPANY LIMITED (NICTCL) (IgovTT)**

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration
Mr. Cleveland Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. John Mollenthiel	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ms. Denyse White	Head, Consulting
Mr. Anand Singh	Head, Delivery
Mr. Stephen Abhiraj	Head, TTconnect
Mr. Kendall Tull	Head, Finance & Administration
Mr. Rajnath Singh	Programme Manager
Ms. Sheba Mohammad	Policy Specialist
Mr. Randall Karim	Director of Policy & Strategy Unit, Ministry of Trade and Industry

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed those present.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

2.1 The following corrections were made to the Minutes:

Page 3 Bullet (e) – Insert ‘no’ before ‘assignment of lands to UTT’

Page 4 Bullet (i) - Delete ‘PETROTRIN’ and insert ‘PSAEL’

Page 4 Bullet (k)- Delete ‘by’ and insert ‘but’

Page 4 Bullet (l) – Delete ‘last’

Page 4 Bullet (n)- Delete “air” and insert “ear”

2.2 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes, as amended was moved by Mr. Clifton De Coteau and seconded by Mr. Collin Partap.

2.3 The Minutes were thereby confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Chairman noted that all the documents requested from PSAEL were received.

3.2 The Committee agreed that further information would be requested with regard to the tendering process for all projects and the successful candidates.

3.3 Members indicated the need for more time to consider the Draft First Report, and it was agreed that concerns would be emailed to the Secretariat for circulation. Further discussion would be deferred to a subsequent meeting.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Chairman solicited feedback from Members concerning the approach that the Committee would take at the hearing with officials from Igovtt and a format was agreed upon.

NEXT MEETING

5.1 A draft proposal for an inquiry into the administration of the Tobago Regional Health Authority was circulated. Members identified the following areas of concern:

- Financial Management arrangements
- Operations Management- hospitals and health centres
- Legal Framework and Reporting relationships- THRA/THA/Ministry of Health
- Recruitment processes for senior management
- Needs assessment and gap analysis

- Data on customer satisfaction
- Services offered to the public and reasons other services are not currently offered

5.2 The Committee agreed to meet with the Tobago Regional Health Authority on Friday 11th March, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. (*in camera*) and 10:00 a.m. (*in public*)

[The meeting was suspended and Members of the Committee proceeded to the Chamber.]

HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED (NICTCL) (IgovTT)

6.1 The Chairman welcomed officials of IgovTT and gave a brief overview on the Committee's function. Introductions were made on both sides.

The following matters were discussed:

(a) **Incorporation**

The Committee was informed that IgovTT became a State Enterprise in July 2009 and began operation in September 2009. With the change of administration, a new board was appointed one (1) month ago. However, the ICT Agenda for Trinidad and Tobago began since 2005 with the National Strategic Plan called Fast Forward.

(b) **Achievements under Fast Forward Plan**

It was explained that a stock taking exercise on the first National ICT Strategic Plan was being conducted. Some areas on the initial 14 programs had been implemented, for instance telecommunications liberalization and the e-business round table.

The officials were asked to provide in writing further details in this regard, including sources of funding, expenditure, the status of the consultancy and use of local expertise.

(c) **GovNett**

The Committee learned that there were approximately 600 sites connected to the GovNett. Definite information was not provided on whether the Tobago Regional Health Authority was on the network.

The officials agreed to provide details on these sites and levels of interconnectivity.

(d) **eCal Project**

Members were advised that with regard to the eCal Project, the role of IgovTT's was procurement and project management. Other facets were under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

The Committee learned that to date 20300 laptops had been distributed with 3000 laptops to teachers and 17300 laptops to students. The last batch of 478 laptops to be distributed would be done in Tobago, later that day.

The Officials considered the project a success and lessons learned included (i) a need for a longer planning for project execution and procurement in order to mitigate risk exposure (ii) implementation of measures to minimize the level of user negligence (iii) the need to increase security specifications of the laptops.

There were plans to continue to work with the Ministry of Education on enhancing connections and creating a digital portal for 24/7 accessibility for parents and teachers.

The Officials took the opportunity to emphasize that the procurement practices employed were consistent with those stipulated by Corporation Sole. As well, the media attention given to the project added to the efforts at transparency and accountability.

(e) **Measurable Goals**

On the question of performance, the Committee was informed that the Trinidad and Tobago international ranking is 79 from the 2009/2010 World Economic Forum Report.

The representatives were not pleased with this ranking and pointed to several factors which may have contributed to this. These included (i) the length of time taken to conduct business, (ii) the current laws of Information Communication Technology (ICT), procurement/tender systems online (iii) the lack of citizen confidence in the use of ICT for services (iv) the lack of timeliness in accessing data and (v) aspects of the methodology used to collect data.

The officials advised that efforts were in train to market more effectively the achievements of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as to address the survey approach taken by the World Economic Forum.

(f) **Videoconferencing Capabilities**

Members were told that the present ICT infrastructure supported videoconferencing in certain Ministries. This was done on a pilot/phased basis due to limited resources. Any incremental equipment had to be sourced by the relevant Ministry.

The Committee requested a list of Ministries with these facilities.

(g) **Community Connections**

The Committee was informed of a new initiative done in partnership with PTSC–the TTconnect Express- which visited rural areas to give citizens access to the government portal. A calendar for visits was established and public announcements were made in the specific areas about the visits. There were three buses in service.

No arrangements had as yet been made to extend the project to Tobago, although there was collaboration with the THA on other TTconnect services.

(h) **Financial Structure**

IgovTT was a wholly-owned government entity financed through government subventions. The Company offered consultancy services to other Ministries free of charge.

Some consideration was being given to whether business should be continued in this manner.

(i) **Open source Structure**

Research was being conducted in the use of open-source solutions. Vendors have been alerted about this decision. A discussion paper would be submitted to Cabinet to be approved for public discourse in four to six weeks.

(j) **Government Cloud**

The officials indicated that the development of a Government Cloud would be mean leveraging on facilities already in place. A government policy and legislation in this regard were also necessary. The discussion paper will be forwarded to the Cabinet in the next four to six weeks.

(k) **Broadband Strategy**

The Committee was informed that there existed a 6-Point Strategy which was being given further consideration in terms of the broader picture and whether government should be involved as a wholesaler. A final position will be forwarded to Cabinet within six to eight weeks.

(l) **Use of Kiosks**

The Committee was informed that there were five (5) kiosks and six (6) TTconnect Service Centres in operation. At present, they provided for online applications but e-payments would only be possible when legislation was put in place.

(m) **TTBiz Link**

An information brochure on the TTBizLink project was circulated to Members. Members were informed of the successful launch of the initiative and were provided with details on the phased activation of the various modules over the next four months.

(n) **Assistance of the Committee**

In responding to the question of how the Committee, through its reporting to Parliament, may assist the Company, the officials suggested that parliamentarians could aid the public education and marketing efforts. More discussions on ICT in the Chamber debates and in the public arena would be beneficial.

Additional financial resources would also assist in the implementation of ideas and the retention of staff expertise.

7.2 The Representatives of IgovTT were thanked for their attendance and participation and were excused from the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 Members expressed the need for further discussion with the officials from IgovTT.

8.2 The Committee agreed to meet again with IgovTT on **Wednesday 23rd February, 2011** at 9:30 a.m. (*in camera*) and 10:00 a.m. (*in public*).

8.3 The adjournment was taken at 12:12p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Sgd.

Chairman

Sgd.

Secretary

February 11, 2011

**MINUTES OF FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES
(GROUP 2), STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES FALLING UNDER
THOSE MINISTRIES, HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, RED HOUSE, PORT OF SPAIN,
ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2011**

PRESENT

Dr. James Armstrong	Chairman
Dr. Victor Wheeler	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Clifton De Coteau, MP	Member
Dr. Lincoln Douglas, MP	Member
Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP	Member
Ms. Alicia Hospedales, MP	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, MP	Member
Mrs. Mary King	Member
Mr. Kevin Ramnarine	Member
Mrs. Nataki Atiba-Dilchan	Secretary
Ms. Candice Skerrette	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Candice Williams	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Member (Excused)
Dr. Lester Henry	Member (Excused)
Mrs. Lyndira Oudit	Member

**NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
COMPANY LIMITED (NICTCL) (IgovTT)**

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration
Mr. Cleveland Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. John Mollenthiel	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ms. Denyse White	Head, Consulting
Mr. Anand Singh	Head, Delivery
Mr. Stephen Abhiraj	Head, TTconnect
Mr. Kendall Tull	Head, Finance & Administration
Ms. Sheba Mohamid	Policy Specialist
Mr. Justin Long	Senior Operations Specialist
Mr. Riyad Ali	Operations Specialist

INTRODUCTION

- 1.2 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and welcomed those present.
- 1.3 The Chairman indicated that Mr. Colin Partap and Dr. Lester Henry asked to be excused from the meeting.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

- 2.1 The following correction was made:
- Pg 3 Parapgraph 6.1(c)* replace the word “*agreed*” with “*were requested*”.
- 2.2 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes was moved by Mr. Clifton De Coteau and seconded by Dr. Victor Wheeler.
- 2.3 The Minutes, as amended, were thereby confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 The Chairman noted the following:
- Pg 2 Parapgraph 3.2* PSAEL was written to and responses were circulated via email on Monday February 21, and Tuesday February 22, 2011
- Pg 2 Parapgraph 3.3* No feedback has been received from Members regarding the Draft Report.
- Pg 3 Parapgraph 6.1* The written responses requested from iGovTT were received and circulated in both hard and soft copy on Friday February 18, 2011.
- 3.2 Mrs. King stated that the information provided at paragraph 6.1(e) was unclear. It was agreed that further details would be sought at the hearing on the nature of the Trinidad and Tobago international ranking of 79 from the 2009/2010 World Economic Forum Report.
- 3.3 A document provided by Mrs. King entitled ‘A Brief Review of the Progress of Trinidad & Tobago ICT Agenda’ was circulated.
- 3.4 Mr. De Coteau circulated a document and raised his dissatisfaction with the response given by PSAEL regarding the retaining wall at the Recreational Grounds in Princes Town. It was agreed that PSAEL would be written for further clarification.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Chairman solicited feedback from Members concerning the approach that the Committee would take at the hearing with officials from iGovTT. It was agreed that Mrs. Mary King would initiate the discussions.

[The meeting was suspended and Members of the Committee proceeded to the Chamber.]

HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED (NICTCL) (IgovTT)

5.1 The Chairman welcomed officials of iGovTT and gave a brief review on the issues raised at its last meeting. Introduction of new members of the iGovTT team were made.

The following matters were discussed:

(a) **International Ranking**

The Committee was informed that the ranking of 79 was based on the Global Information Technology Report from the total number of 139 economies surveyed by the World Economic Forum.

(b) **TRHA sites**

The officials indicated that there are currently 5 Tobago Regional Health Authority sites connected to GovNeTT, as listed in a circulated document under the aegis of the Ministry of Tobago Development.

(c) **Telecommunications Sector**

In response to a query on what happened with Laqtel and the seven other potential service providers in the telecommunications sector, Members were informed that the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) was the body best suited to respond to this.

The Committee requested that the Permanent Secretary elicit written replies from TATT in regard to these questions.

(d) **Internet Penetration**

The officials advised that the number of internet users for Trinidad and Tobago had increased from 11.6% to 35.01% from 2003 to 2008.

It was further predicted that if the eCal project is continued over a five (5) year period, that it would contribute to an estimated increase in the number of users by 10%. It was also emphasized that other initiatives by concessionaires, the

use of smart phones and the introduction of 9 new services under TTBiz Link, would also contribute to increased penetration.

The Committee was informed of an estimated 40% internet penetration within other Caribbean countries.

(e) **Internet Concessionaires**

Members were informed that it was a requirement for concessionaire to provide 100% internet coverage, and that details on the reality of the situation could be provided by TATT.

It was noted that approximately 300 out of 470 primary schools have internet connectivity, but in communities like Marac Village, Moruga the service was sporadic and in need of improvement.

(f) **Productivity of Public Service**

A concern was expressed on the extent to which productivity tools were effectively used within Ministries. The officials indicated that there are statistics that provide information on the number of email accounts, however, there is no information available on the rate of use by individuals.

There was still need for a shift of culture toward more effective use of the technology and to assist in this, iGovTT offered training in the use of Microsoft application.

(g) **E-Gov Platform**

It was acknowledged that approximately \$478 million had been spent on the development of the e-government backbone, but this was not being used at an optimum. There was a need for business re-engineering to allow for Ministries to offer the public e-service.

Such initiatives were supported by iGovTT and there is a forum in which iGovTT liaises with IT managers within Ministries to re-engineer business processes.

As well, the passage of legislation such as, the Electronics Transactions Bill, 2010 would enhance the services being offered.

(h) **E-Services**

On the question of what services are already in existence, the officials advised that ttconnect provided access to information. 400 government services and 5 Ministries were identified as having downloadable application forms. Three additional services from TTBiz Link would be included from March 2011. IHRIS and network-wide email services were also facilitated.

(i) **ICT Governance Model**

The Committee was advised that a central governance model did not exist. A proposal based on current international models, prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration, was before the Cabinet for consideration.

(j) **Fast Forward Plan review**

The stock take exercise regarding the Fast Forward plan was not complete and financial information still had to be compiled. The point was made that the last plan was executed through a grant of US \$990,000 and not all projects have been implemented.

The Committee was also informed that a Memorandum of Understanding had been entered into with Singapore in December 2008, which later resulted in a 2 ½ year contract being signed between iGovTT and IDA for services including e-services project management and the national ICT planning.

With the change of administration this contract was suspended pending a decision by the newly appointed Board. Thus far, US\$3M out of the US\$8M contract had been expended. There were no additional financial costs, to date, due to the suspension of the contract.

(k) **National Strategic ICT Plan 2011 and onward**

The Committee was informed that the 2011-2014/5 Strategic National Plan was being finalized. It was expected that it would be forwarded from the Ministry of Public Administration within three months.

(l) **Government Subventions**

On the question of iGovTT becoming a self sustaining company, officials indicated that such a decision resided with the government. However, they felt that they could provide services at competitive fees.

(m) **Contractual arrangements**

The Committee requested information on the value of contracts with other ICT companies for outsourced services.

5.2 The Representatives of iGovTT were thanked for their attendance and participation and were excused from the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

6.1 Members confirmed the next meeting with the Tobago Regional Health Authority on Friday 11th March, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. (*in camera*) and 10:00 a.m. (*in public*)

6.2 The Committee agreed to consider the Draft First Report, particularly the recommendations, and to make a final decision at the next meeting.

6.3 The adjournment was taken at 11:50 a.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

February 24, 2011

APPENDIX III

NOTES OF EVIDENCE

MEETING OF FRIDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2011

IGOVTT TEAM

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie	PS Min. of Public Administration
Mr. Cleveland Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. John Mollenthiel	Deputy CEO
Ms. Denyse White	Head, Consulting
Mr. Anand Singh	Head, Delivery
Mr. Stephen Abhiraj	Head, TTconnect
Mr. Kendall Tull	Head, Finance & Administration
Mr. Rajnath Singh	Programme Manager
Ms. Sheba Mohammid	Policy Specialist
Mr. Randall Karim	Dir. Policy and Strategy, Min. of Trade and Industry

Mr. Chairman: Good morning everyone, I will like to call the meeting to order now. We can start.

This morning we are actually going to look into an enquiry into what is unofficially the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, branded as "iGovtt". Before we start, I would ask members of the iGovtt team to introduce themselves and then we will introduce the parliamentarians.

[Introduction of iGovtt members]

[Introduction of committee members]

Mr. Chairman: As you are aware, this is a committee set up as a requirement under the Constitution. As you may be aware, ministries and statutory authorities under those ministries are required to submit annual reports to the President. Those reports are then submitted to the Parliament and we have a process of selection of certain ministries, statutory bodies, into which we make certain enquires. This is one such exercise.

The exercise really would be to get an idea of your operating mandate, your administration, management policies and so on, to get some sort of appreciation of how you are operating under the Executive arm.

It also affords an opportunity really for us to be able to identify any constraints, any problems you are having and also to note the successes that you might have had in meeting your particular objectives. The report from this committee will then be tabled again at Parliament for consideration so that is the framework and the process.

I now request if we could have some ideas of, perhaps, the history, the evolution of this

body, because I have noticed that it has evolved over time, your structure and management, so that we have an appreciation of the company.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you, Chairman, and good morning again to everyone.

It probably is useful to take us back to the period after the development of a national ICT strategy, which was branded as fast forward over five years or so ago. Based on consultation with key stakeholders, the policy itself, being national, defined substantially the ICT agenda for Trinidad and Tobago, the landscape, recognizing the need for attention to the private sector, the public sector, Government, the region, internationally or otherwise and the extent to which ICT can be a key contributor towards development, et cetera.

With that agenda set in place, the Ministry of Public Administration and Information, at the time, established a small unit within the Ministry. I will refer to it as a secretariat with not many people. Over the period, in seeking to attend to the agenda and to execute the plan, there was a move from being a secretariat into a department, subsequently into a centre, and today we are now a state enterprise.

The company, and I will speak to iGovtt as it is now, was incorporated in July 2009, but we started our operation as of September 01, 2009.

10.15 a.m.

If we go back to the Cabinet decision at the time, as a state enterprise, some of the items that they placed for our agenda included us being the execution arm of the Ministry of Public Administration; the execution arm for ICT, that is.

Mr. Chairman, with that, therefore, the company really sought to be the central repository for ICT, as far it is enterprise wide. And when I speak about it being enterprise if there is an ICT matter that effects two or more Ministries, then iGovtt really is playing that central role, whether it is advisory, whether it is consultant, whether it is having the mandate to operate, manage, and or execute.

We have been playing that role. A number of items on our agenda, and I am sure we are going to talk as we go through this morning's session on many of the things we have done over the last year, especially since being incorporated and started business. Briefly in summary, Mr. Chairman, our mandate really is to improve the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago using the technology as best as we can, making it simple. The traditional ways in which we would have provided services to John Public we are seeking to improve that and at the same time try to contribute to the efficiency, try to contribute also to the economy, as far as the GDP and others are concerned. Mr. Chairman, I trust that this is a brief summary and, of course, as we go through for our session this morning we are going to be bringing clarification or any more information needed.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks a lot. Just one quick question. As a company incorporated since 2009, is there a board and so on, I did not get the—

Mr. Thomas: Yes, as a state enterprise we have a board. The recent board received their instruments as in a month or so ago. So most recently, prior to that there was a board operating, administrating and directing the company's operation. Below the board, of course, there is a management team and, with me, I have a few of my managers or the senior team that treat with the issues of execution.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. You said, recently as in a month ago, was there a period when you did not have a board?

Mr. Thomas: What I meant, Mr. Chairman, sorry, is that when the company started operation, even though we were incorporated in July 2009, we started our operations then and there was a board, as at September 2009. That board operated, continued to work with us but with the change in administration, following the election of May 2010, the board continued to operate until such time that a new board was appointed. And what I am referring to is that the new board received their instruments last month.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. Parliamentarians; Sen. King.

Sen. King: Yes. I would have a few follow up questions. Thank you very much. Good morning, everybody.

The fast forwarded initiative or as you called it the T&T national ICT strategy, started actually in 2003 from our records. I know that—Mr. Thomas is it—you have been Chief Information Officer since 2005, before we ever formed iGovtt. Now, we started with, or the intention was to have 14 particular programmes within the initial initiative.

So I would like you to give me an idea of what actually has been achieved of those 14 programmes. We also had a budget at that time of US\$82 million. So I would like a report on the drawdown of that, and if it has all been used up, and, if so, what are we now funded by?

The other question I have at this time, is that we initially had an overseas consultant, so what is the status of that consultancy and/or their plans that eventually the management and the future development of the ICT strategy will be actually handed into the hands of our local experts. Those will be my initial questions.

Mr. Thomas: The first question relating to the gap forward and the 14 programmes and what would have been achieved to date, I will deal with that first item.

Unfortunately, I do not have the details of what would have been achieved or not with me here but what I can say, is that we have conducted and are in the process of completing the study—we call it a stocktaking exercise—of the first ICT plan. And that study or stocktaking exercise, the intent is to do exactly that, which is what was intended, what was achieved, what

would have been the gap and probably what needs to be done in order to probably improve even for the next plan. I hasten to say at the same time, that what we do have is that that report is to influence the next national ICT plan for Trinidad and Tobago which is under current study and review.

So the details of the success or successes are specific details I do not have with me. I can say that we have seen some of the elements of the plan come into fruition. One item within the plan, for instance was the issue of liberalization of the telecommunication sector and the extent to which it could have been liberated and the benefits of liberalization. We know that today there are few mobile operators broadcasters, et cetera.

Apart from that, there was also the need for centralizing government's operation or connectivity. And we have executed that through the GoVnet programme. GoVnet being the brand that we use to connect Ministries in order that there would be the ease of communication, the ease of exchanging and ultimately the need to provide government services. Today we know it as the TT Connect on line.

So that came out of the plan as well. There was the recommendation under the programme also to engage the private sector, and the private sector to participate and contribute. We have since set up one such sector known as the E Business Round Table in which members of the different chambers throughout Trinidad and Tobago also make their contribution towards the whole operation of ICT. So, the private sector part also is making their contribution. So that has happened and is in progress .

At the same time in terms of the education and ICT within schools, and tertiary level et cetera, schools have been also connected, so a number of schools have the connection again under the programme. Libraries have been connected and we found ourselves also to, through the national plan of speaking of the level of connection towards the households, probably the use of the internet, et cetera.

In summary, Senator, I can say that a number of elements we have had some successes and the focus at the time was more familiarity and connectivity in the first instance. But, as I have said before, the actual plan and the element of it, we certainly can bring some more information to the Committee.

10.25 a.m.

Mr. Thomas: With respect to the second question of the overseas consultant and the extent of the work and what are the plans, I would invite—I do not know if PS Mc Comie can speak to it, because there were a few consultants at the time. If my recollection serves me well, there was a level of engagement, even with the Canadians at the time through CCC, I think it was, and who participated—work with the administration at the time in helping build the

internal capacity and so forth, so I can give that briefly. But the extent to which either they have been recruited, what they have done, even an assessment and so forth, unfortunately, I do not have that information, PS Mc Commie.

Mrs. King: Could I just have a follow up to your report on the 14 programmes or projects, what you have actually told us is that you have no strategic plan, you are now taking stock to development, could you give me the timeframe for the stocktaking?

Mr. Thomas: I am not sure I got the question correctly, if you can repeat. Is it you said that there is no strategic plan?

Mrs. King: You informed us that you cannot really report back on the project, you do not have that with you, but you went into the iGovTT, what that has done in the last year. You also said you are now completing a stocktaking exercise so that you would be better able to report to us when you have done that, I am asking you what is your timeframe to complete that stocktaking exercise?

Mr. Thomas: The stocktaking exercise that we are doing is with the assistance of the agency or consultant from Singapore through IDI at the time. They were the ones who the then administration had engaged to help us with that aspect of what was done and possibly what is next or what should be done. So, having gone with a first national strategic plan in ICT which was branded as “Fast Forward”, there is a new plan to be put in place taking into consideration the nine pillars of the current administration and the use of ICT within that.

That study, we anticipate, should be completed within the next six months to nine months maximum, which, I could tell you also, that some of the work that we have done thus far is having interviews, consultations with those who would have been involved in the first strategic plan and others also, in terms of what we should do, taking best practices, a new element, whether it is the services now, the focus now for this new plan, of course will take into account now that there is connectivity focused on services online. I think the end point of it is a maximum of nine months taking the process into account—consultation, Cabinet, the people's view, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, PS, you wanted to say something?

Mrs. Mc Comie: Well, I think Mr. Thomas clarified it. It was really a point of clarification that there was no strategic plan. The “Fast Forward” was the national ICT strategic plan and the focus, initially was, as he just said, on connectivity. This new, refreshed plan has not been named yet, but the focus is on uptake and usage within the country.

I think he has outlined the programmes that have been implemented in terms of liberalization within the sector which would have taken a few years and which is still ongoing, the establishment of TAT, the introduction of legislation, the establishment of an e-business

round table and two successful ICT symposiums have been held over time. GovNeTT, which is the Government backbone, and which supports the work of Government, was done in two phases.

The second phase recently came to an end and it is continuing because we now have to leverage on that, the backbone, but I also wanted— point of clarification with respect to US \$82 million that was supposed to be available, was that a loan?

Mrs. King: The question was, has it all been fully drawn down? In your strategic plan that you talked about, the Fast Forward 2003 to 2008—

Mrs. Mc Comie: It is stated.

Mrs. King: Has that been drawn down?

Mrs. Mc Comie: That would have been an estimate. It is not that the money was there. It was an estimate for implementation of a plan, as a matter of fact, for most of the work done, the Government through the Consolidated Fund put in the money.

Mrs. King: So it has all been spent? That is what I am asking, has it all been spent?

Mr. Thomas: You cannot say that it has all been spent. There was not a pool of money to be drawn down. It was an estimate of what it would cost to implement, so included in there would have been the establishment of TAT and the payment of salaries to officers to do this work.

Mrs. King: I understand. Thank you.

Dr. Wheeler: Good morning, you mentioned the GovNeTT Programme's wish is to interconnect with different ministries, with respect to the Ministry of Health, I know there was a plan to connect the health institutions in the Ministry of Health and also the health institutions in Tobago, could you say how far this has progressed. The second question with respect to Tobago—I know that the Tobago Regional Health Authority has in fact undergone some interconnection itself, is there a link and coordination with what the TRHA is doing and what you are doing?

Mr. Thomas: Thank you, if I could I would ask the Deputy CEO to respond to the first question and I would also contribute as necessary.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Good morning, with respect to the Ministry of Health, they are in fact connected to GovNeTT, but when I say "they" I could, perhaps, decompose they, so when we think of a ministry we think of the ministry's main office and then we do recognize ministries have out line offices and then remote offices or what we call sub-ministries. So the Ministry of Health does not have 100 per cent of the sites connected to GovNeTT, that is a work in progress, so Government would have sized a certain amount of work through distributions across all ministries and ministries that wish to have additional connectivity beyond what was

paid for already through iGovTT can expand and that is what we are doing with the Ministry of Health and with a number of other ministries. In terms of the RHAs, they are also included in terms of connectivity with the Government.

Dr. Wheeler: Specifically, Tobago Regional Health Authority which sometimes gets left out.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Well, I cannot answer Tobago Regional Health Authority specifically because I do not have—this is 600-plus sites in total, so I cannot say that one in particular, but we do in fact spend a great deal of time in Tobago in general, so it is not to say that Tobago has been left out. We do work closely with the THA so we can provide information in terms of every single site that is currently connected and scheduled for connectivity and when that information can be made available.

Mr. De Coteau: Mr. Thomas, I see where you said that the institutional arm of the Ministry of Public Administration for all ICT related projects and initiatives, and then a number of projects were enumerated, but my interest, the laptop role out, expansion of secondary schools connectivity—with reference to the laptop role out, would you say:

1. Whether it was a learning experience?
2. Were there challenges and if any could you identify the challenges and were they successfully surmounted?

Would you say that the experience that you have gained would be used as the framework for success for any such future projects?

I would also like to know how many schools—in fact, how many laptops were distributed to date? Because I see here you mentioned a number, have you completed the distribution? I would also like to ask how many schools have computer labs and what kind of upgrade would be taking place, because that would be in connection with your expansion of secondary schools connectivity. So it is not an opportunity to embarrass you, but I think I am giving you a window of opportunity to blow your trumpet.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, just one question I want to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Is it a follow up question?

Miss Hospedales: It is a follow up question because I was going to ask what systems are in place to address the challenges that you have experienced pertaining to the role out of the laptops in secondary schools.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you very much. Through you, Mr. Chairman, the ECAL project as it is called or the Laptop Roll-Out project—first, it is probably important to note what is iGovTT's role or what was iGovTT's role. The programme itself is a programme under the Ministry of Education. Our role is related substantially in the procurement and the project

management aspect of the programme. So I think it is critical to establish upfront that it is a Ministry of Education programme, for which we as in iGov was engaged to procure and project managed.

The laptop project is one which is—we in the Caribbean were the very first to treat with this programme. Recently, most of us would have read that a number of other countries in the Caribbean have gone the same way. The approach that they have adopted may be different based on their own circumstance. We have read of Guyana, we know of Jamaica, Barbados and a few others have already taken the initiative of having computers in school. Having said that, the project for us was an extremely exciting one because it was the first project and a fairly important one for the Government in meeting a particular deadline, but also important for us, it was one of the first projects that really tested our internal capacity to procure and project managed.

We went out. We were able to—the project itself had elements that substantially spoke to assisting the ministry, developing the bids, managing the tender process, evaluation, maintaining the whole project as it were, providing weekly updates and reports, monitoring some of the possible risks and treats to ensure success of the project. We also needed to get the necessary resources to make this a success. At the same time, we were using information to communicate to as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that the delivery was met. So, this being the first, not only within the region, but it is the first, a fairly ambitious project as it were, and I am happy to say from where we sit the project was a success, from where iGov actually sat in ensuring that it went through.

Mr. Chairman, I can say to you that with the project, the intention, of course, was to give a sense of what it was. It is 20,300 laptops in total of which 3,000 of those laptops were to be assigned to teachers and another 17,3000 to students. I am pleased to report that today the last schools would receive their laptops, and that is some schools—I think it is five schools—in Tobago where just about 470 or 478 computers or so, are to be delivered today.

10.40 a.m.

That would complete the laptops for all of the students for Form 1. So it is a noted important day for us from since the conception right through to installation. The teachers, we are starting to distribute and by next Friday, according to our plan and project all 3,000 computers will be delivered to the teachers. We have looked at many other laptops throughout the world and the specification and so forth, and given the plan that the laptops are to be taken all the way through, of course, with maintenance and updates, and applications and all the other things. We recognize that what you have is top of the line computers.

So for us it has been successful; it has really moved forward in taking it. The learning

for us—we have some great learning. One learning for us was that there is a need possibly in terms of planning the execution and/or procurement a bit longer. That being said, it means it gives us more time to treat with the unplanned elements and minimize risk and exposure. So that it is recommended that we go out to procure a lot earlier, than we have done before. That is a learning. I think also that one of the learning that we have had is, the extent to which the users of the computers, the need for probably putting certain measures in place that they themselves can minimize the level of negligence that will take place.

For instance, whether or not a computer falls even though it is under warranty, if it is damaged, it has to be replaced, et cetera, having some level of that aspect of it. At the same time we also note that there is probably more message to go out, to minimize those who have the intention of probably stealing, that certain security measures are put in place. So to really stop you before you even plan to go out there because there is an element of security that will trace you. And it has been reported in the media of course that a couple of those were stolen and of course we have received them. I think too the extent the Ministry has set up an internal committee that meets almost every week with us, in iGov, looking at all aspects of the programme in it and to continue to build upon it, so that in the next rounds it is sufficiently robust or tight, so that we can deal with some of those challenges.

The other thing too we would have to look at is whether or not even the specification that we have had for the computer—and I speak to it because there is a lot of media report—is there some way you can secure the computer further, probably by just the colour of the computer. If you see the computer people will know that this is a Ministry of Education's computer. So by colour is one way, probably the Coat of Arms is another way to brand it, to make it easily recognizable, which we do not have. All of those things have cost implications.

So, Mr. Chairman, through you, in response, I think overall it is 151 schools for delivery of computers. The distribution I have given to date; some the final amount and what we plan for tomorrow or for next week.

In terms of the computer labs, I cannot give that detail as to the labs, but we do know that a number of school have labs. We do know that there is even connection to all the schools to facilitate access to the Internet, et cetera. But we are progressing with a few other stages in the programme. And the few other stages in the programme speak about connectivity given the number of computers that we do have in the school, in each school. I can tell you also, Mr. Chairman, that we have the private schools that participate in the programmes, including the life centres that got the computers. This is not a programme only for Trinidad, it is Trinidad and Tobago all the way through.

So the connection—we are moving to enhance connection. We are also working

towards—with the Ministry of Education of course—to have a digital portal. And what is the digital portal? It literally is to make the information content available and accessible 24/7 to students, to teachers, to parents, so that they can interact. The intention of course is to enhance the whole programme, so that parents and teachers can communicate with each other, link with each other and work together. It is that single interface using the technology to improve the whole education experience. In terms of the connection to the school, we have a 5 meg connection, and to the extent there is need for more or otherwise we will treat with it as we do with the audit.

Mr. Chairman, the only other thing I will say in response to the question would be that as far as the programme streams are concerned there is the laptop roll-out which I have spoken to in detail. There is also the teacher training element. There is the portal which I mentioned. There are policies. There is an entire detail document on policies based on consultation and so on, and a study of best practice outside—in the world. There is also a requirement for monitoring and evaluation, what has happened and what is happening and probably how it can improve. And there is finally a stream on content—digital content. I trust that has answered the question.

Mr. De Couteau: You know in the Trinidad we seem to be under the umbrella, of the "Brer Nancy syndrome", where believe that there is some kind of "smart man" in everything. Probably you can share with us what were the measures put in place to remove the perception out there that with a project that size, you must get some kind of kickback. I know that your level of religiosity and spirituality—I am sure that you would want to ensure, that there is some degree of transparency. Probably you can elaborate and let us know what were the measures in the procurement process.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you, and you made reference to my spirituality. For those who do not know, part of my mandate if not so more importantly is that I minister the Gospel. My voice is known on the radio because I do prayer on the morning, ever so often. And far more important for me is the spiritual integrity than anything else. Apart from that of course, in terms of what we are required to do, this project had so much publicity that everything that was necessary to ensure the transparency aspect of it all as much as accountability, we initiated and put in place. What are those measures you asked?

First of all there is a procurement process of the company that is consistent with the corporate sole. So, the corporate sole has established what your procurement minimum requirements are. And the procurement that we have established speaks to certain processes for one to follow. So that guided by the client's need and the requirements what happened was that for us we when through the process of open tender approach. And with the open tender

approach we received bids. Based on the receipt of the bids we have had requests for some extension, which was met. We went beyond the extension of having to do the evaluation. We set the criteria, we set conditions. The members of the evaluation team were not members that were of iGov, solely, but the members of the evaluation team comprised of members from the Central Tenders Board, I believe, the Solicitor General's Office, department, the AG's department, ourselves and then we also got an independent party to sit on the evaluation team. At the same time collectively there was a recommendation which in fact was placed. Our board looked at the evaluation following the process, et cetera and we took decisions based on that. We make recommendations based on that to a committee that was established by the Government concerning the whole process. And I can say that based on our recommendations there is nothing that we have recommended independently which the Government actually took away or changed.

So we have put those things in place. And I do not know if there are other things that are needed. We went through negotiations with the preferred vendor, HP in this case. Those were long, extensive, hard negotiations. I was given the mandate to negotiate as the chief negotiator among a group of people to take the negotiation on behalf of the client—in this case the Ministry of Education—and we got what I believe is fair, reasonable under the circumstances. Mr. Chairman, I do not know if there is anything else to add, but in summary we went through a fairly vigorous process using a procurement approach that through corporate sole, the minimum requirement that we were required to fulfil, to meet that.

Ms. Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Thomas made reference to teacher training as it pertains to ICT. And that particular objective was recognized in the national ICT strategy. Could, Mr. Thomas, tell us, what role does the iGov have in ensuring that Form 1 teachers are trained and equipped with the necessary ICT skills? And if there are training courses how many courses were done to date? Also, are training courses also conducted for the Form 1 students who receive laptops? Thank you.

Dr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, before you answer the question could I asked a follow-up question from the previous—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Could we—since we have moved on to another question let's just finish this one and then we—it is a different question.

Dr. Douglas: Well it was following up the procurement issue.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Maybe what we can do is respond to this one and then we will revert to yours.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The training aspect—it is an element of the programme, as I may have mentioned before. But again it is important to remind ourselves of

iGov's role or mandate in this project. Our role and mandate for this programme was one to procure and project manage the laptop roll out. In terms of the other elements of the project, the other streams, while there was and is a subcommittee made out to treat with elements such as the teachers' training, students' training course, et cetera, that substantially, is under the mandate and the remit of the Ministry of Education. So, regrettably, the extent and the level of training and all the areas of how many teachers were trained, where, what were the successes, et cetera, I am not in the position to answer those. But it is part of a big programme of the Ministry which I would advise that the Ministry of Education is the better placed to respond to those questions.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Hospedales are you okay with that response?

Ms. Hospedales: Yes I am okay with that, Sir.

Dr. Douglas: Rather simply, the procurement was for this batch of students coming in here, the Form 1 students, or was it for subsequent groups of students that would be coming in? So would you have to do a new set of—because next year is kind of upon us already and there will be new Form 1s?

10.55 a.m.

Mr. Thomas: The project focuses on the SEA students of 2010, all of the form ones, and that being the case, 17,300 students so that it was solely for the 2010. For the 2011 period and for the students sitting the SEA of this year, the process has to start all over again. However, of course, with the ministry we would have to back and with the learnings et cetera, revisit the specification, revisit the things that we have done and so forth to take this forward.

Dr. Henry: I want to broaden the scope here a bit in terms of looking at measurable goals that the igovtt may have set out. I do not know if you have these and what could you tell me about our ranking, in terms of ICT. What type of actual measure do you look at to measure your success in terms of broadband access? I am sure you are familiar with the indicator that caused us to be ranked higher or lower on the international scale. What could you tell us about our standing and your own goals in that regard? I have another question after—

Mr. Thomas: In terms of the ranking, the ranking as it stands for 2009 or 2010 for under the Global Information Technology Report, placed us at 79 among the world and of course, that is ranking position or level which we are not pleased with. We believe that with the work that we have done, the vision that we have, that we should be in the top ten. All indications of course, are that we could be there. From the report—we have studied the report as to why we are pleased there relative to others. In the report they identify for us and to us, some of the areas where we rank very well among the rest of the world. In the area of the

extent on effect of taxation, we are ranked 16th. Fixed broadband tariff, ranked eight. Mobile telephone subscribers 39th in the world but collectively when we bring this and others we are doing pretty well.

In some other areas from the report it shows that our areas of performance are not too good, in the first instance time required to do business, ranked one hundred and it has to do a lot with the challenges and the bureaucracy in probably getting services, registering a business, making payment, the many different ministries that you have to go to and so forth. The issue of law, of ICT, that is a challenge when we look at other administrations throughout the world. The enrollment, contract, putting tenders and procurement online, the ease of information to have access to probably everyone. The extent to which probably the same information that you may have is a match up that you have probably for security as much as it for health or otherwise. The use of ICT and the confidence of using the technology for services it is another area that among others that would have contributed to our ranking. Very critical through you, Chairman, also we recognize that would have placed our ranking in some of those areas is the issue of the data and the timeliness of the data. It has been shown that much data that would have contributed to our ranking are outdated, very outdated. Data that had been used 2006/2007. Further than that it has also been recognized that even the methodology in which the data is being collected and through whom. The report shows that we can be at times in Trinidad and Tobago very honest, far more honest than probably other countries, and when I say that, what do I mean. People tend to respond to a survey when the survey is done, based on how they feel at the time. Something happened and some report pass through the media or otherwise and they say well they had a bad experience or a bad conversation and they put no, no, they just do not know. It is also a fact that we need to improve on the awareness of our ICT and some of our successes both locally and internationally. A lot of attention has to be placed in those areas, so for measurements in going forward it is an item which is gaining the attention of even our board and the executive and I say go beyond our board and say the Government, that if the agenda is to improve on that number, what is some of the measures that you are going to put in place to deal with it to make sure that is improved? The ttbiz link or single electronic window, that is a significant success story that when implemented—and I must commend the Ministry of Trade and they for the work that they have done. We have with us, one of the director Mr. Randall Karim representing that Ministry here and if necessary more details can be given but I can say that, through that, on the very survey that I am referring to, they did indicate that if we in Trinidad and Tobago can attend to that area of business, that over 85 percent of the citizens indicated that they prefer to visit—and that will contribute to the improvement in our figures overall.

We will be the first ones to go as far as that business is concerned, but that is business. It does not even take the liberalizations segment—we are talking about things like IXP, we are talking about open source, we are talking about what is current and the next ICT plan which is now being developed and it is taking all of those things into account and the measurements into account for many of them. In summary through, Chairman, again I say we are not happy, that is one area of measurement you have tattooed as its report, showing some improvement in internet use and so forth, household user net, online activities, PC in homes. We are seeing some improvement but we have to tell the story. We really have to go out there and make it business of communicating to the rest of the world, “Hey, this small country has done this. Do you know?” and we can even work with you to help.

Mr. Chairman: PS, do you want to add something to that?

Mrs. Mc Comie: To support. Just in addition to and in support of—we know that the rankings are there, and it is up to each and every Government to accept or not accept. But I think when you dig deeper, you realize that a lot of the rankings are based on perception and not necessarily fact, as Mr. Thomas indicated. This is where the ebusiness round table in its meeting yesterday is working on strategies to make a difference. We have a lot of members from the business sector and therefore they can work with their people, because they are the ones surveyed, Government is not surveyed.

We asked Dr. Douglas that question and he said it cannot be himself onto himself, so Government is not surveyed and more often than not we tend to have more of the facts. As Mr. Thomas said we have to do a lot more marketing on the success stories and the things that are being done. The ebusiness round table in working out strategies to see whether we can improve these rankings and a lot of what Mr. Thomas said came up in terms of the ebusiness link and the difference that will make, they will work with the business sector and the Chambers in order to inform their members, we on Government side will continue to work through igov with our ministries and departments to be able to leverage on the foundation and infrastructure that already exist so that we can use the technology that is available to create greater efficiencies in how Government does its business. The whole issue of data, it was stated and I think Mr. Thomas mentioned it. How the questions are even worded, sometimes puts us in a negative place because it is worded like that for everyone, so that we intend to even ask the World Economic Forum, whether they must continue to be worded like that or they should be worded differently to ensure that there is fairness and equity in what you are doing. It is not that we are sitting still we are working on ensuring that the message gets out there and that we really do what is required, not so that the competitiveness ranking and our ranking in the system is improved but that we the citizens, I think begin to feel that the technology is really

working for us.

Sen. King: Chairman, could I just asked a follow up on—question.

Mr. Chairman: Does that satisfy your query, Sen. Henry?

Dr. Henry: Yes, but what has me a bit uneasy is that, why Barbados or Jamaica is able to get their message out and we do not seem to be able to do that?

Mrs. Mc Comie: They spent money on marketing. They have a little organization that works on getting the information out and the rest I should not say publicly.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Jeffrey— [*Interruption*]

Sen. King: Mr. Chairman, could I have my follow up question?

Mr. Chairman: To this one?

Sen. King: On this issue.

Mr. Chairman: Okay if you would give me a second—

Mr. Chairman: Sorry Mr. Jeffrey, it is a follow up to the discussion now, so we will get back to you in a minute. Sen. King?

Sen. King: The PS said they do not survey Governments, but there is a United Nations Global eGovernment report which actually has data up to 2010, for Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica and Barbados. We actually are failing since 2008, so there are some reports which do incorporate the Governance.

11.10 a.m.

Mrs. Mc Comie: I was just referring to the specific World Economic Forum when they conduct their surveys, they do not survey government. The UN uses other factors, because they are looking at human development and, therefore, they are using factors that speak to the level of development and well being of persons within a country and, therefore, it is a little different. Yes, it gives current information, but it is a little different from what the WEF would normally survey.

Mrs. King: But it is e-government report.

Mrs. Mc Comie: They have an aspect—

Mrs. King: Besides human development there are other issues.

Mrs. Mc Comie: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: What is the latest count you have in terms of Internet penetration in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Thomas: The latest count that we have from the MORI survey shows that Internet access at least in homes for 2010 is about 30 per cent. In Internet usage on a daily basis it is at 45 per cent. Those are figures that we have under the indicators at this time.

Mr. Jeffrey: Is there any strategy in terms of how we are going to improve on those figures?

Mr. Thomas: Sorry, I did not get the question.

Mr. Jeffrey: In terms of improvement of those figures from 30 per cent and 45 per cent, what strategy do we have in place?

Mr. Thomas: Through you, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of ways that we plan to improve those results, and not only for Internet in home or business. One, of course, is that making computers—for instance, the one laptop per student project alone with 20,000 plus computers outside there, that would help contribute towards the improvement in the numbers, because it is not only schools but, by extension it would go to the home. The family will buy and so forth. So, this is every year, so we would see some there naturally in the support that we have.

Also, in terms of Telecommunication Authority and their plans, from what I understand, there is also plans that speak to a broadband initiative. So, there will be potentially new providers or concessionaires providing Internet which, of course, will make it far more attractive as far as price is concerned. There are certain partnerships that are being done, not only in the telecommunication sector, but also in the private sector which is a different industry. For instance, we are seeing now that some of the retail stores, Courts and others, are partnering with these ICT sectors, so that they themselves are now doing some kind of combination of services. They are offering computers at a reduced price; this is called bundling.

We also find that on mobile phones, given that we have mobile penetration in Trinidad and Tobago in excess of 140 per cent, it means that that the phone itself which is called “smart phone” is going to be used more than is currently being used. So there are different measures Government can put and facilitate making it more attractive, not only by the number of vendors, users, et cetera, but the pricing at times can be prohibitive. So, I think a combination of those and also more marketing communication, we will see a collective move toward an increase in those numbers.

Mr. Jeffrey: I raised that question principally, because I was reading an article recently where it talked about St. Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis having a higher rate of Internet penetration than Trinidad and Tobago, and that was worrying.

Mr. Thomas: It is so that you do have the ranking that is different; you have the services in some areas different, but when you think about the numbers, you think about the

numbers that you have in a country. So you see a percentage of 99 per cent and then you realize that it is 40,000, and you see another number that is 30 or 20 per cent and you are talking about probably close to 2 million or 4 million. I am still saying, at the same time, it is not good enough for what we have. There is a need to improve and it will improve over time. When you bring it collectively, not only Internet, when you look at business, government and some of the things that we do.

I know that we can boast right now in Trinidad and Tobago that some of the world recognition—Trinidad and Tobago was recognized worldwide for our ttconnect services. We have won many awards for many of the things that we are doing here worldwide. The authors of some of these studies such as the WEF report and so forth, when they were invited and we met with them they said we are suppose to have a higher ranking and your area of focus is to get out there, market and tell your story—go out there and tell your story not only in the region, but tell your story in these meetings in the UN and make it a business like your other colleagues outside there and set up an entire business unit to tell the story as it is, so that you can really get the message outside.

We are planning, as a company, to now treat with it having down so much great things. Mr. Chairman TTBiz and others are coming and there are some good things now that we have to focus on, so there is an emphasis on promotion and marketing at this point in time.

Mr. Ramnarine: I just wanted some clarification. Was IGOVTT responsible for video conferencing facilities being installed in ministries and at the homes of Ministers of the former the Cabinet? If the answer is yes, have you all retrieved all that equipment from the former Cabinet?

Mr. Thomas: Well, IGOVTT is how we are branded. With IGOVTT and the video conferencing, my colleague, the deputy CEO mentioned that as part of the national ICT strategy and the agenda, connectivity of all ministries, and having the responsibility of laying that platform for communication, email, Internet, calendaring, et cetera; that is the services.

Apart from that, we also have installed the capacity for video conferencing to ministries. It is not the remit mandate or any other area of IGOVTT to treat with connectivity of anyone, whether it is a PS, a minister or anyone else outside of their place of work.

We have had connection of video conferencing to some ministries. It is not to all ministries at this point in time and that is a phased project as we go forward. So, substantially, the platform IS there—the capacity and capability is there to so provide. A number of ministries are under testing now.

The areas we tend to treat with has to do with probably a Minister's office in his place of work, and also a conference centre if necessary so that there is greater access to members of

that ministry should it become necessary in communicating to another entity. I am not aware at all of any such facilities being provided beyond the boundaries a place of work for the minister, his worker. As I said, it is for a few of them, because it is on a phased basis.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, one thing I would like to identify is the fact that one barrier that was stated in the National ICT strategy with respect to the usage of ICTs is that there is no community access to computers. Could you tell us whether or not you are responsible for the roll out of the Community Connection Programme? If yes, at what stage of the programme have you all reached in respect of the roll out, and how many centres have been established and in what communities?

Mr. Thomas: I would invite my colleague, Miss White to just speak to the community access probably in a bit more detail on it if she can.

What we have now for community access—when we talk about communities, we are talking about the rural areas, not even the suburban areas. You may have certain kinds of communities there, but it is making again information and/or Government services available using the technology. Through the suite of channels which is under the ttconnect brand, we have introduced ttconnect express. The ttconnect express is really a bus that has been refurbished to provide facilities that will give you access to information on over 400 Government services where forms can be printed, et cetera. The services that we have online use that. So we use the ttconnect express as one channel to reach communities, and go out to different communities indicating to them what is available, so it avoids the long distances and so forth.

In some cases, you do have communities where probably in the community centre they have a small area with computers. As long as you have access to the Government online portal, you get all the necessary information and our services that are being offered. That is another means through which it is being done for the communities.

The communities themselves have different ways and methods in which they themselves may utilize the resources with what they have among themselves. I think from where we are, a community access project is geared specifically for the community, and we are using these channels of ttconnect to bring that, because as long as you have that front face of the portal, that online, and as long as you have access to Internet then the technology is there at your hands. Even with the ttconnect mobile, if you have that phone that can also download the information or data again, it is a way to do that.

Ms White: We did a limited pilot of the community connection programme. We are working with the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Social Development who had a Telecentre Programme and did have a blueprint completed for the roll

out of same. However, the traction was not there, and what we had begun to realize at that point was that the pervasiveness of equipment was starting to increase.

So we went forward with the ttconnect initiative providing access via ttconnect, as well as looking at other touch points of the community; looking at an integrated approach to the provision of access as well as usage and uptake. So, for example, ECAL Programme now, which is now pushing out 17,000 laptops into household nationwide, is meant to provide that access without having to create and set up separate infrastructure to do this kind of programme. So in our attempts going forward we are looking at leveraging what is there and working in partnership. So that providing access is one thing, but how do we get people in; how do we get people using it; how do we get people train on it and seeking to provide a holistic approach to it, rather than just setting up stand alone centres going forward.

Mr. Chairman: I just want to ask a quick follow up question. With respect to our outreach programme, I notice, for instance, I think there are three buses. I saw that in one of your reports and so on. Is there a sort of a schedule as to what areas these buses will serve during the days or week or whatever? Are you in consultation with the Tobago House of Assembly for instance? Is that service being provided in Tobago as well?

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Chairman you are correct. Yes, it is an initial project that actually was launched just a few months ago.

11.25 a.m.

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, you are correct that one, yes it is an initial project that actually was launched just a few months ago and is it a project which we—essentially, it is in partnership with the PTSC, where we received a 45 seater bus that was de commissioned that was refurbished and we received two other 25 seaters and similarly refurbished to the point whereby it has internal facilities within it and even access for the physically challenged and so forth. Quite an attractive bus in providing services and so on. Because this is an initial, it is three that we have. It provides critical information to us in whatever plans there might be in the future for using the bus or even should it continue so with that initiative what we do is that in the area there are three depots because it stays at PTSC depot North, Central and South and we have done some studies as to the areas around them for providing services around the North, Central and the South areas.

What we do is that we go to the different areas and we get information, gather information from the communities and based on the information gathered then we have a calendar as to where we will visit, when we are coming, et cetera, and then we make announcements and so forth. We also find that there is also unequal take-up in some areas because as long as it is known somewhere what happens is that there is a greater demand in

other areas as well. The schedule that we have for them is available online and we advertise in the specific areas—in your area or community—this is where we are or will be coming, but we do not go to a national advertisement of where that community visit is for the month or otherwise, again because it is managing the expectation and the visits and all the other things with it.

Mr. Chairman: Are you in consultation with the THA with respect to that service?

Mr. Thomas: THA—It is our programme so that we have it as Trinidad and Tobago. We have three buses, one was functional immediately and two others just came on. The second one is going to be used as well and the plan that we have in place is to work with THA, not only for this but as we have done for the other tconnect suites as well. So yes, we planning to go forward and partner with them as we have done with the portal and as we have done for the govnet service.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Ms. Hospedales.

Ms. Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, thank you. My final question—Ms. White made reference to how you get people out and I am just asking, do you all have a marketing or communications strategy geared towards encouraging persons to access the services and to come out more often?

Mr. Thomas: Yes, there is a marketing plan that we have as a company and it is one—education, two—to tell our story, three—we partner with a number of institutions as well. Right now we are part of another organization, Caribbean Telecommunication Union that has a road show going on right now made up of members of the Caribbean at the Hilton and we partner with them, we have a booth out there; we even have a programme where we partner with schools. We go out and we talk about ICT, take-up security and other things, even with TATT, so we do that but there is a promotion and awareness plan that we have developed that would target different sectors, different audiences and so forth in going forward.

Mr. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Chairman, on page 9 of the report provided to us, the part of the remit of igov is to provide consulting support services to entities in the State sector including Ministries, THA, Statutory Authorities, State enterprises, et cetera, my question is that has this been done and if so have you all been compensated for it?

Mr. Thomas: Yes, I am happy to say it is done. It is a major area of the igov mandate. There are many ministries that we work with to assist as far as ICT is concerned and we have the assistance in the area whether it is with the whole internet, whether it has to do with the capacity internally, whether it is even interviews, whether it is designing and structuring their whole IT department. We have also found ourselves where we provide support to them if they are looking to go out to engage a vendor, revisiting their terms of reference, drafting it,

providing assistance and support, connectivity, specifications and so forth. So we have probably, if I not mistaken—and I will invite my colleague again, Ms. Denyse White as head of that unit probably to speak in more detail currently over 150+ consultants individually assigned to different ministries, quite significant and the detail she can give—business process, re-engineering and otherwise.

The other part of your question has to do with whether we are compensated; we would like to be, but we are not at this time so that there is no charge for the services that we offer. If we are to become self sufficient, surely it is a matter that would gain our attention urgently. Where we are to be compensated substantially, is in the area of procurement and project management which takes on a different framework than before but I do not know if you wish to get some more detail as to some of the work we do?

Mr. K. Ramnarine: Expect a call soon.

Mr. Chairman: I was wondering as a follow up to that are you saying that you are not self-sustaining, I mean how do you fund your operations? I do not quite—I was not able to pick up on that, how do you as a company?

Mr. Thomas: Substantially a subvention from the Government. Ms. Mc Comie, I do not know if you wish to—

Ms. Mc Comie: Just to state that igov is a wholly owned Government State entity so Government gives a subvention under current transfers every year. I think just where there are areas, Mr. Ramnarine spoke about being compensated, the possibility is that igov has a structure and it has certain resources. If a ministry asked for resources that they do not now have, that they have to go out and try to provide, for instance a consultant—that has not happened—in some specific areas where they do not have the expertise, they can charge the Ministry to pay for that, because they would not have the money, they would not have budgeted for it, so it is an instance something like that.

Mr. Thomas: And, Mr. Chairman, it is an extremely critical point because it means that, of course, there are core savings when the individual ministry does in fact make that request. Should we continue doing business along those lines? The extent to which you get engaged is another question that we have to ask because one has to focus on what is our core business at the end of it all, define that, establish that so that we really concentrate on what that core business is in moving forward.

Dr. Douglas: I wanted to ask a follow up question from a few questions way back and that had to do with the video conferencing. I was wondering if the igovTT could make available, probably an oral answer now or submitted in writing later, the list of ministries that have received the conferencing facilities, if they are still there; how does a ministry go about

getting this conferencing facility, the sustainability and the maintenance of these if they are still working and if they are used. I have been to ministries where I saw this facility and do not think it is being used at all, so probably you could give us an idea about the usage of this facility and whether it has made any sense at all within the functioning of Government.

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, through you, the video conferencing, again saying that we within the company and through govnet connecting the ministries, so we have invested, we have laid that platform for communication and it has the capacity for certain applications including video conferencing.

Now, of course with limited funds and we continue to do the projects by phases, what has happened is that we provide the capacity or the foundation but the extent to which we now go for video conferencing or voice over the internet or otherwise the capacity and capability is there but any incremental equipment that may be needed, it is really the remit of that requesting a ministry as it were. So that what has happened is that we are aware that with that capacity that some of the concessionaires or vendors, what they do is that sometimes they engage the Ministry directly saying—well we can provide you with—like video conferencing but it is a course which the ministry may carry for the end equipment or so, igov does not at this point in time have the financial resources to do or ensure that every single ministry gets the final equipment for the video conferencing. So what has happened now is that we have in train now, based on discussions with a couple of the concessionaires that we will have to understand the pilot because people, let them taste it, feel it, see what it is like, if they can do that free of charge—pilots so they work through igov so that we can then go to a few ministries whatever the numbers are and facilitate that on your behalf. So we have some in train right now and we can provide that list as requested.

Dr. Douglas: I am not sure my substantive question has been answered. I am asking simply for where they exist right now, who was given, are they still there, has it been working. I think that has been my substantive question, subsequent to that I think you have answered my subsequent question which has to do with the process whereby we engage you to get these facilities but I said you could do it orally like now or you could also submit it in writing if that is more convenient to you unless somebody here feels it is urgent enough that we should have it answered now.

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, I would take the guide and have that matter—we investigate it, we get the information and we provide the information as requested.

Mr. Chairman: Okay noted. Senator King you wanted to—

Mrs. King: Thank you. Yes, I wanted to maybe take us a little further into the future. I would like to know what is our broadband strategy? What is our strategy for the optimum

use of open source software and what is the status of the planning and costing of the government cloud?

Mrs. Mc Comie: Minister what was the last question?

Mrs. King: What is the status of the planning and the costing for the government cloud?

Mr. Thomas: I would invite my Deputy CEO to respond to some aspect of it and I would also take another part of the question.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Alright, I can treat specifically with the open source and cloud so assuming that persons are aware of what open source is versus perhaps propriety solutions.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. Mollenthiel: I can treat specifically with the open source and cloud. Assuming that persons are aware what open source is versus, perhaps, propriety solutions. It is the opportunity, I guess, for the country—so this is not Government, I think it is for the whole country, the nation—to develop skills in technologies that are not costly, but equally as useful and powerful. So that is the whole concept of open source. You would hear strong arguments from the proprietors—I will not call names for obvious reasons—so there is an ongoing battle of the pros and cons.

This is not just our research, this is leveraging as well governments and countries that have moved from proprietary solutions to the incorporation of open source solutions. Our research seems to suggest that there is a happy compromise. It is not a one fit, it is a happy compromise based on your particular context. So for reasons of support post implementation, you may find that there are circumstances or contexts where open source is not suitable. In other instances you may find that open source is not only suitable, but preferred or more flexible.

At this particular point in time we have a draft discussion paper, because we think that this is not a policy thing, we think this is something for national discourse, and among that would be the ICT Society and so forth. So we literally want to have a conversation. By the same time, we have been alerting our proprietary vendors they we are looking at open source and they can provide their own cases and their own justifications, where they, based on experience with other countries, have found open source solutions to be lacking or having shortcomings. So that is a discussion paper that would be coming for national discourse. We think that is the way it should be handled.

Mrs. King: When can we expect the paper?

Mr. Mollenthiel: I am hearing within four to six weeks. I would say probably within the month of April we can start doing some discussions. I also believe that the discussion paper,

before it goes out for national discussion, would be submitted to Cabinet.

Similarly, on the concept of the cloud — the Government cloud that is—I do not know if I should give a brief or if I should just answer the question in terms of what the opportunities are for cloud.

Mr. Chairman: Brief.

Mr. Mollenthiel: With the cloud computing we are saying there is no need really to continue purchasing everything, managing it yourself, owning everything. If you treat technology as a utility, there are others out there in the world that are better positioned, have the resources and have made the investments already. So it is really just leveraging the opportunity of technology as a utility.

We are looking at, one, what we already have in place, because Government has already made investments in technology, for instance, the Government network and so forth. We are looking at the future work, so we know there is work already in train and work that is planned by different ministries. We have a fairly well thought out document that lays out a path for migrating from where we are now to a Government cloud. In there, some policies decisions have to be taken by the Government. Again, there is no one way and there are pros and cons cost wise, resource wise, et cetera, that also factor in the data protection and the sovereignty of data and where that data resides. In there, there are also conversations or positions on private cloud versus public cloud, et cetera, so it is a fairly heavy document that will be forthcoming to Cabinet, I would also say within four to six weeks, maybe sooner for this one.

Mrs. King: Could I get the broadband strategy?

Mr. Thomas: Minister, the broadband strategy takes a similar approach, in that, there was a broadband, what we call, “six-point plan” that focused on content and carrier hotel and a few other things sometime ago. Since then, just as it is with the cloud open source, we are developing a revised strategy, taking note of what John has said and our intention similarly is to have it brought forward for Cabinet’s consideration.

As far as the broadband strategy is concerned, the question has been asked before as to—again, it is a pipe. People speak in simple terms about this pipe that carries and the speed. But in very simple terms, one question or one position: Should Government really be involved, if so, as a wholesaler and if not as a wholesaler, probably who ideally is placed, or should there be some form of a partnership taking any form, hot spots in Trinidad, where and how, what is the minimum level?

Looking at what is happening in different parts of the world, the studies with Singapore, for instance, they took that model whereby they created a partnership with the Government, more from a wholesale perspective, for which other players, concessioners, can buy into, so that

you do not have a proliferation of vendors who have to find this big investment as you go forward.

In like manner, we are looking and researching what is probably the best practice worldwide. I suspect that this paper, of course, might very well take between six to eight weeks, which will go through to the Ministry of Public Administration for review and consideration as it is and move forward from there.

Mrs. King: But you are aware that this broadband strategy, the examination of that and the planning for that, was approved by Cabinet in 2007. So how come we are still planning and we have no position paper yet?

Mr. Thomas: Minister, the one that was approved by Cabinet is a six point. That strategy was not necessarily—we were involved and I can say that it was not taking, one, what I call “the big picture” of broadband but looked at elements of a plan. One included at the time, if I recall correctly, the issue of policies and regulations. One element inside had your a local IXP. So while you had a local IXP as you went through, thus far we recognize, one, the issue of cost, the issue of what others were doing, should we still go with a local IXP now, et cetera. This is saying: Do we still go with it?

Then there was the issue also of the carrier hotel. We went ahead with an element of the carrier hotel under the six-point plan, which introduced this at the Chaguaramas centre that facilitated the whole connectivity in bringing in the additional connectivity or pipe through the Americas, one, Columbus and others there. So with the Chaguaramas Development Authority, we used and partnered with them to execute elements of the plan.

What I saying Minister is that we had these elements. There are some successes inside of there. There was an element inside of there too that spoke to the e-content as part of the broadband plan. The e-content really required that we go towards e-services online; some of which we have provided online as it is, services.

Substantially what I am saying is that elements of that plan specific, we have worked on, we have delivered on. Some elements either would have to be revisited, but do we still need to, how has it changed since 2007—2011? What probably is the best model? That model may not be relevant or valid at this point in time. That is why I am speaking about—okay, we have engaged the consultants, in this case Singapore, using their experience, this we have defined. Can it work, can it not work?

I can also tell you, Minister, that at one point in time the last administration also had before them a bigger plan for consideration called “The Gigabyte Plan”. That plan spoke to all the sundries and above. Is that still valid? Does it need to be modified? This is what we are saying now in going forward for next the national ICT strategy.

Mr. Chairman: We have just a few more questions, one is with respect to the service centres, the kiosks you have established in what I would consider to be strategic locations, whereby you can use a credit card. Could you give us some brief information on that, how that is working, how many centres or kiosks have been established and what services you can actually pay for using your credit card?

Mr. Thomas: Chairman, just one correction, not that you can use your credit card there at this time. The intention is to move towards that. So if it is there, it is a correction that we would have to make. But payment, as far as the service centres are concerned—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Comie: Just to clarify for the kiosks, the potential is there to use the credit card, but you need legislation. As a matter of fact, the Electronic Transactions Bill will begin debate today. That is required before you can use things like credit cards.

Mr. Thomas: Some of the services that we offer include, and working with the Ministry itself, first issue of the electronic birth certificates, the beneficiary own land subsidy, applying for your first home purchase subsidy, scholarship applications, STT life skill facilitator applications, on-the-job-training and even some of the programmes for advertising. Some like the service commission and others can advertise through us.

We talk about the service centre; it is one of the channels through which the customer can have a new experience of having a single location where you can get Government information and services. So that, to the extent that, traditionally you would have to go to one ministry, at one location you may have gotten a form, then you have to go somewhere else to pay and then you have to go somewhere else for something else, it is a one-stop shop for complete services. The long-term plan is to use the technology where you can get the form, fill it online, submit it, pay for it, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman's iGovtt's work substantially is with the technology aspect of it, but as we know in order to have end to end services, we speak about the people, the process and the technology. So we have the technology element which we would work on and concentrate, but as far as the process and the people are concerned, those elements remain the responsibility substantially of the Ministry. So, for instance, the Ministry of Health, right in their offices, workers when the application comes through, the processes and the reengineering and the people to complete and attend to it will be of the Ministry; iGovtt will work with them as far as the technology is concerned. So the service centre is really a front facing of the delivery of these services collectively.

The question as to the service centres, we have right now six locations still. We have one in Tobago, we have in Arima, Bon Accord, Chaguanas, Princes Town, Tunapuna and

St. James. We have a sense of the kind of visits or applications that we have received and we know them by location. So we get a sense as to the demands overall. That is in document that was referred to as well.

As far as the kiosks are concerned, we still have, at this point in time, five of them: La Romaine, Tobago, Piarco, Point Fortin and we have another one for special events and so forth.

11.55 a.m.

The numbers are quite attractive. We know the one at Piarco is used more than others. Some of the things that people tend to go for is the kiosk. We have records that would show that they go there to get information for like housing; they go to get information probably on Tobago; What is happening in Tobago when people are coming in; Legal Affairs information in that regard. So we have five of those at this point in time.

We also have with us the online which was launched since 2007 and to date the number of visits that were made, we know is over 2 million or so. Mr. Chairman, by the particular channel, the TT connect Express, the applications received we have a sense, probably by month as well, we follow them through.

What this is saying, is away from the tradition of going to government visiting sites and location, bring the service to you wherever you are and making it more comfortable and convenient. If it is your phone, we have the TT connect mobile, developing on that. If it is the internet, your computer, we have it online. If you do not want any of that, we are coming to you with a bus, or, if not, service centres. So it is the channel to really bring a new experience and improve what has been done over the last few years.

Mr. Chairman: You want to elaborate on something?

Ms. Mc Commie: Just to put some things in context. The Ministry of Public Administration, I think the only service we deliver to the public is scholarships. And iGovtt really does not deliver any service to the public. What we have done is incubate a concept, TT connect, which is the delivery of services, government services to the citizens, to the public of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is now, as we seek to engage—Mr. Thomas spoke about the Ministry of Health—we deal with the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Immigration, the divisions of government that provide services. We have to work with them and we have been working with them to get their services online. Of course some of the pieces coming together would be the passing of the Electronic Transactions Bill so that people can stay at home on their computers and fill out the immigration form and pay online and then possibly go to office to collect and then it may be then it is verified or something like that.

So that we now have to work with those ministries and departments, that provide the

services, so that we can get the services on the TT connect suite. They are also doing some research on where do we place all of these centres, if we place centres? Should it not be better with uptake and usage to ensure that people have their computers at home and therefore can do a lot of these transactions in their own homes.

Where you have the very rural areas the buses can go out. So there are ways and means. You can put the kiosk in possibly malls that those who may not have computers, but who pass through the malls can use, you know. It is a mechanism that has a lot of modalities in it that we place strategically to ensure that we deliver services to the entire country, Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. It seems that given all that has transpired here this morning that there is some scope or room in your organization for some additional administrative person, in charge of cultural change and making sure that our investment in ICTs does not go wasted. I believe that is one of the major problems, that you have the best laid plans, develop the best platforms and you meet resistance to change in some of the same ministries. If I hear you correctly, you are basically depending on people in the ministries to use, or make use of what platform you are setting.

And, for example this nice glossy brochure here, quite impressive and this is obviously long overdue, this type of development. And I congratulate the people who put this in place. And of course, do you have the follow-up and the sort of related investment to get people to participate and to make use of such innovative programmes. Because, I mean, it is not for the first time we have seen very good programmes developed and they tend to fall by the wayside because people do not latch on to them. And we end up wasting huge amounts of millions—as Sen. King was just whispering to me a few minutes ago—and two, three years down the road we find that this lovely programme just withered away somewhere.

It seems as though that there is something that has to be put, something additional in your scope.

Mr. Thomas: I believe an accurate observation: we have put some things in place. The whole issue of transformation, change, business process, reengineering, et cetera, working with the relevant Ministry. And you lifted up that glossy card for TT Bis link. That is a perfect example where we work with the Ministry of Trade and the processes and the reengineering it is bringing over seven plus Ministries and other agencies together getting it all done, moving with all the information and paper work. So again the Minister of Trade has to be commended over and over again.

And here they have partnered with us, both in us working with them, giving advice, technology, process wise and others and they have even gone so far as to require that through

the TT connect it would be the channel which you can register, get your ID and so forth, and again bring the service and so forth.

So I am saying that is a perfect example and yes it has to be done. In the Ministry Public Administration, the PS can also speak to that transformation. What the Ministries themselves are required to do and the extent to which it is being done because it is an absolute critical component because it is one of the big challenges, not only for but all over the world. The technology is one element but the people issue, the culture issue, the change, the process, that is another element. I do not know PS if you can add—

Mr. Chairman: We are running out of time. Are there any other questions by Parliamentarians?

Dr. Douglas: Probably I have a simplistic way of thinking but I will just take the glossy brochure for example and I would like a simple kind of yes or no, or on a scale of one to ten where you think we are at because I do not want to leave here fuzzy. You know, you could leave here still hazy because of a lot of information. This has about nine things here in relation to this TT Bis Link; import, export, permit licence. Is it something that exists right now? Yes or no would be a good answer.

Mr. Thomas: Minister, could I ask please that—and yes or no will come, but I would advise that it comes from Mr. Randall Karim since he is intimately involved in that. IGOVTT procure and project manage but the extent of the services and the project, Ministry of Trade. So Mr. Karim—

Mr. Randall Karim: Thank you. Minister to directly respond, as well as to piggyback on Sen. Henry's earlier point on value for money and optimizing Government's investment, this brochure gives information, in respect of TT Bis Link. Some of you all may have been hearing about single electronic window one stop shop. This brochure speaks to a significant project that has been under implementation for the last 13 months led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. What you see here is what is actually in existence as of now. The platform has already been built, and the roll out is going to take place in the next three months. There is the agreed schedule approved by Cabinet. The entire infrastructure has already been built out but, if I may just add a little preamble. The Ministry of Trade—

Dr. Douglas: I do not want to take a whole set of time, I am just trying to get clarity of — let me ask a question please? I just want to be a little clear in the midst of all the papers and reports, to get—

Mr. Karim: I am helping you.

Dr. Douglas: No man you are not helping me, you are confusing me with more information.

Mr. Karim: We spoke earlier of the optimizing the infrastructure, MTI, as the CEO indicated.

When we decided to go ahead with this project—

Dr. Douglas: You see, you are confusing me with more information, I do not want all that set of MTI because I do not know what MTI is. I just want to get an idea. I have a brochure before me; I just want to know if these things are functional. It is not a judgment or anything, I just want to get an idea of they are.

Mr. Karim: In respect to directly answer your question, all of the services that you see here, the platform has already been built and all of these services will be introduced in the first and second quarters of 2011. The first three will go online on March 25; the Prime Minister will introduce fiscal incentives, import duty, concessions and work permits. One month later on April 25, certificates of origin and the import/export permits and licences being granted by the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Trade and Industry will go forward in terms of online. One month later the companies registry will go forward on May 25 and on June 25 of this year, the Cargo Manifest and Goods Declaration Module will go live.

Mr. Dogulas: Beautiful, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: I can entertain only one more question. All right, I will take the last question then. The only thing I want to find out, I also read in one of your reports with respect to the E-Market Place website, 750 companies registered and there was some reference made to Spanish. I wanted to find out the languages that you are looking at in terms of the services that—whether you are—through the E-Market Place facility and whether French is also being considered or are we still operating largely in English?

Mr. Thomas: It is substantially in English. Spanish was considered but certainly French was not part of the thinking.

Mr. Chairman: I think for the questions we will have to conclude here. Now, what I would ask you, Mr. Thomas, is if there is anything that you would like to share with us that we have not asked. As you know, this report will be considered by Parliament. So I will give you an opportunity to briefly mention anything that you think should be brought to our attention. And I know that the PS wanted to—oh, it is okay now. So if you could conclude by sharing with us anything you think we should be aware of that we did not ask, but you think would be important to the company.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, thanks for the opportunity even to respond with respect to that. I believe we are on a good course; we have some good work going before us; of course, we can do better.

How can we get some assistance from Parliament to make our work even better? If we have representatives talking more ICT when you have an opportunity even in your speech, in your discussion, in your interviews. There is a bit more that is spoken of ICTs; of course, we

have to share information with you. But there is an element of ICT that we can build because it can contribute to the GDP in my ways, as we have seen elsewhere. So talking more of ICT and making it an element of reference, I think is useful.

12.10 p.m.

Mr. Thomas: I think also money; if moneys can be made available. It is a challenge. We have some good ideas, really excellent ideas but like most people we are constrained by the finances overall and I think further than that, of course, the capacity to retain good resources is a challenge and when we talk about resources, because the market as it is with the private sector and others, we continue to have people who are attracted by other institutions so how can we retain them. But overall I believe if we look at the money, the finance and the item identified there I think we could do well. We are doing pretty well and it would be remiss of me if I did not say that we have had tremendous support, especially from our line ministry—PS Mc Comie and her team, tremendous support. We have had some other ministries like the Ministry of Trade and Industry and others that are really working with us, but we are at a good place. The vision is there and the excitement is there. We have to keep the momentum, continue to work together and make it work. We have a new board and a group of people that came on with tremendous excitement, new interest and everything else which would carry the agenda forward. So I feel pretty comfortable with that in mind.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So CEO Mr. Thomas and PS Mc Comie, we would like to thank you for being here and for the information that you have provided. I should like to remind you that you have promise to provide us with some additional information which we would follow up as well through the Secretariat so that would facilitate the completion of the report and we would be in touch with you at some point.

Thank you very much and I would like to adjourn the meeting at this point.

MEETING OF WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2011

IgovTT Team

Mrs. Arlene Mc Comie	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration
Mr. Cleveland Thomas	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. John Mollenthiel	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ms. Denyse White	Head, Consulting
Mr. Anand Singh	Head, Delivery
Mr. Stephen Abhiraj	Head, TTconnect
Mr. Kendall Tull	Head, Finance & Administration
Ms. Sheba Mohammad	Policy Specialist
Mr. Justin Long	Senior Operations Specialist
Mr. Riyad Ali	Operations Specialist

Mr. Chairman: Good morning everyone, I would like to call this meeting to order. This is the second meeting that we are going to be having with the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited (iGovTT). It will be recalled that at the last meeting which we had on the 11th, that we raised a number of questions and requested some information and also indicated that we would like to meet with them again. We have received the information that we requested and just to put that in context, I would like to give a brief recap/overview of the information that we requested from the last meeting on the 11th which would have included an update, on what has been achieved under the 14 programmes identified in the Fast Forward National ICT Strategy; the status of the overseas consultancies in respect of the national ICT plan, a list of sites connected to GovNeTT; a list of the number of schools with computer labs; a list of locations at which video conferencing facilities are functional. Those are the items that we requested I iGovTT to respond to when we met the last time, so we will now start.

Is there anyone here who was not here the last time that we need to introduce, everyone was here the last time?—and you have your same team with you, two new persons, and who are these people, who are they?

Mr. John: Justin John, Senior Operations Specialist.

Mr. Ali: Riyad Ali, Operations Specialist.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. Could we now start with questions from the parliamentarians? Minister King, are you ready for—?

Mrs. King: The data that was presented to us from the World Economic Forum 2009—2010, we did not quite pick up that ranking of 79th. Is that a particular specific readiness

or ICT or Internet penetration or economic situation. What is that 79th, ranking 79th?

Mr. Thomas: Minister may I just ask my colleague, Denyse, to treat with that item specifically as you have asked the question, please.

Ms White: Hi, good morning everyone. The ranking 79th is out of the total number of economies that are usually covered by the World Economic Forum. And to my knowledge it is not that they give a classification to the rankings as they go along. So it is just a number order ranking rather than saying, well 1 to 25 are the best developed countries, 25—50 and so on and so forth, I do not know if that is what you are alluding too?

Mrs. King: Yes so it is 79th in economic development?

Ms White: It is 79th in—that is the Global Information Technology Report.

Mrs. King: Technology report?

Ms White: Yes, so they look at network readiness.

Mrs. King: Thank you, that is where we got the vagueness, okay technology report, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: And that was 79th out of—

Ms White: Ah, it is 130—

Mrs. King: It is 139, roughly 139.

Ms White: Something like that, it varies from one or two depending on the economies that are covered every year.

Mrs. King: Thank you so much, and I think the Member—

Miss Hospedales: Through you, Mr. Chair, during our last meeting with the iGovTT officials we did not receive definite information on whether the Tobago Regional Health Authority was on the GovNeTT network. You all presented to us a report but it is still not clear as to whether they are on the network.

Mr. Mollenthial: Can I? All right good morning. Hopefully it was not a needle in the haystack, but we gave you a complete listing of all the government sites that are connected. And according to the *Gazette* the Tobago Regional Health Authority actually falls under the Ministry of Tobago, Tobago Development, sorry. So on page 21 of the 23-page document, it is listed, there are actually three TRHA sites.

Mr. Chairman: Miss Hospedales is that okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair can I talk to the member, Ms. Denyse White, Head of Consulting. In terms of the answer to the question raised by Sen. King just a while ago, the information that I have before me that the global competitive index of 2006—2007, we ranked 67th out of a 125 countries. I cannot remember what you had mentioned, how much is it?

Ms White: There are a couple of different rankings that the World Economic Forum

uses, the broadest one that we refer to or are a part of is the Global Competitiveness Index. For the purposes of the work of iGovTT we however, look at the Global Information Technology Report. Some of the information of that particular report feeds into the Global Competitive Index, but the ranking that we were speaking of earlier is the Global Information Technology Report.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And according to the 2006—2007 information we have here in terms of the global competitive index, we are looking at Institutions, 85; Infrastructure, 70; Macro Economy, 38; Health and Primary Education, 64; Efficiency Enhancers, 64; Higher Education and Training, 65; Market Efficiency, 69 and Business Sophistication, 64. These are 2006—2007 figures.

Ms White: That is correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you have any as at 2000—have you been following the trends from 2006—2007 to 2010, is there any? You gave some charts here on global consequences at the World Economic Forum, Global Information Technology Report, you have some charts here and you have different configurations, but nothing explains the chart itself or what was probably given. We do not have an idea of which countries fall where, so perhaps it would be important to have that information in terms of the countries. It was not printed properly, so the chart is meaningless as for the global consequences, so we need to probably have some more report on that.

If I may ask you—I can direct you to some information that you provided on Executing Agency Final Report, Ministry of Public Administration Information, and Modernization of Telecommunication Sector Project October 2007. I see here on page—could you—I cannot get the exact page at the moment, perhaps I will come back to it and I would not delay the meeting, but I will come back to it when I find the exact page to ask the question on it. So I will look for it again and come back to it. It relates to expansion of the telecommunications sector with the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, that there were a number of players in the market—oh right, here it is, on page 4, the penultimate paragraph this was what year? It was October 2007:

“The project outcome was an increase from 1 to 3 in the number of companies offering long distance services by 2003 and the increase in the number of wireless companies from 1 to 3 by 2003. However, due to slippages in project implementation, positive results were only achievable by 2006”.

So you had a lapse of three years when you tried to open up the Telecommunications aspect.

The domestic telecommunications market was effectively opened to competition from December 2005—so you opened up the market in December 2005 and concessions were granted

to two additional mobile service providers Digicel Trinidad and Tobago and LAQTEL Trinidad Limited. To date only Digicel is operational. Could you give us some idea as to what happened to LAQTEL and what was their submission to the Telecommunications Authority? If iGovTT knows about it, because it is part of your report. Who were the directors of LAQTEL and what has happened to LAQTEL Trinidad Limited, so that we only have Digicel and TSTT as the dominant providers now? And you said at the time that 10 concessions had been issued to potential providers, what happened to the other seven, who were the other seven who were potential providers in 2005 and what has happened to LAQTEL since that time?

Ms White: Minister, I think we have to remember that the Fast Forward dealt with two aspects, the ICT environment and the telecommunications environment, so the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago had responsibility for the telecommunication. [*Power failure*] [*Interruption*] So that they would have all of the details related to why LAQTEL had to go out, what they did to try to ensure that they were still a player in the market, and to what extent they went with the process until they had to withdraw.

10.40 a.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it possible that you can provide some information as to the other seven companies which had submitted or that would normally come from TATT. So, Mr. Chairman, is it possible then that I do not know whether we should probably ask the Telecommunications Authority for the information or whether we should ask iGovTT to provide this information after discussion with TATT?

Mrs. Mc Comie: If anything, you can ask the Ministry and we will ask TATT. Two ways, the Parliament can ask Mr. Secharan, at TATT for the information or if it comes to the Ministry, we will also ask TATT for it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we would follow up on that minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just have one question before I just hand over. In terms of the Internet penetration of the country—well in summary then, I just want to mention that we—it is important for us to find out what happened to the seven concessioners who were not awarded and what happened to Laqtel and who were the directors of Laqtel? And what financial proposal they submitted and the bids that were submitted? And how they ended up just reneging on everything that they had submitted, it is very strange and therefore it is important for us as the Joint Select Committee and for the nation to understand what happened to Laqtel particularly and the other seven concessioners.

Mrs. Mc Comie: I think the other seven may not have met all that— [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you also give us some information as to what happened to the whole problem of the court actions between Digicel and TSTT, in terms of, some matters

that went on for one or two years, with Digicel and TSTT to see what was the essential issue there, so that the nation could be given some information as to what constituted the major difference and has that been resolved to the benefit of the country at the moment, and whether in fact, we need now as Members of Joint Select Committee; to know whether that we are moving forward now with an open telecom sector, with Digicel being an equal player with TSTT or whether there are any factors to impede the equal ability of both companies.

Mrs. Mc Comie: That would also be Telecom's Telecommunications Authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Internet penetration of the country at the moment—I think it is about nine per 100,000 inhabitants.

Mr. Thomas: Forty percent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, in one of your reports here, it shows that the Internet penetration is nine per 100,000 inhabitants. So, if you look at Internet penetration within selected countries on your report, you have Trinidad and Tobago 9.9 per 100 inhabitants. How do we relate this in terms of the national Internet penetration? So, if you have approximately 10 inhabitants with Internet capability and usage out of 100, so we will have possibly about 130,000 people with Internet. If you look at the Internet penetration in your report in review of progress of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Thomas: Page 19—Minister, may I?

Mr. Chairman: Minister sorry, I am not sure that that is a document that they submitted.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, let me ask the question then. What is the Internet penetration now of the country? The latest information that we have even coming from TATT is approximately 40 percent by household. But Minister, I thought you were referring to the document we sent which was the Fast Forward Stock Take Draft Document, and on page 19 of the said document, the number of Internet users by selected countries, that document. So referring to this document we circulated, yes? And on page 19 of the document there is this table, and this table here, the first table refers to, the Internet users per hundred inhabitant, referring to the penetration level, and in 2003, for Trinidad and Tobago the figure was just about 11.6 percent, 2008 it was 35.01 percent, and this document and/or data source reference was the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). So, up to 2008, from this report the figure is about 35 percent, to date it is now about 40 percent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Now, with the Government strategy of the ECAL project, one laptop per child and with the possible movement of that one child spreading that laptop information to the household. Give us your views on what will happen to the Internet penetration of the country, following the introduction of this one laptop per child. If it we are to continue for the

next four or five years, could you give an extrapolation of what will happen?

Mr. Thomas: Certainly. Through you Chairman, the average amount of computers we are talking about annually, it is 20,000 computers for the one laptop per child initiative. If we maintain that amount, we are close to 100,000 computers by the end of the five year period. Taking penetration into account, just only on those numbers, 100,000 today to the million plus people, on average it should go up by at least another 10 percent. That does not take into account penetration or the use by other family members, which really be a spur on from that. What do I mean, is that from the home? The student having the computers, teachers, families and all other stakeholders. So, purely by this initiative, I would anticipate that this figure will go up by as much as 100,000 in the school, household you can have an additional 33 percent, simply because of that initiative, meaning it is close to 33,000 more computers, again the role on between each one that you have. So, by this initiative clearly Minister, we would anticipate that the figure with the penetration level would be improved significantly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you say then that, by the introduction of this ECAL project, (the students one laptop per child) it would have expanded activity in the household and therefore increase the cyber wellness of the population significantly.

Mr. Thomas: Well I would say, that because of this, it certainly will contribute to the increase in the penetration level of the ICT and the ICT figures that we have. Definitely it will do so outside of this initiative, as has happened elsewhere. There will be other needs and other approaches that any administration would have to take, to introduce computers and/or technology within the local environment.

You may recall that last week when I did mention that, there are a number of new initiatives that a number of firms and businesses are using for instance, there are partnership between courts for instance, and the local concessioners, where loans are made available and/or facilities are provided, even the concessioners in the name of TSTT and others are again using new ways to add to the system. So, collectively, clearly with this initiative of the laptop for the student together with other initiatives in the market we anticipate that the figure will in fact, improve significantly over the five year period.

Dr. Gopeesingh: About what value you estimate, based on your knowledge and experience?

Mr. Thomas: From a figure of 40 percent, I think a conservative estimate would be an additional 15 to 20 percent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And where would we rank, in terms of the global competitiveness in ICT technology?

Mr. Thomas: Minister that is a fairly hard question to answer. Where would we

rank—because the ranking is not purely based on the computers. The computers in fact will contribute to our ranking, because through the computers of course, it would help, not only for the education side, through the computers, it would help even for the role out effect for businesses, homes et cetera. And then we have to take into account, the phones, smart phones. The use of the mobile phone and all the other applications that are being used. So, I am saying that overall, unfortunately, I cannot even give a fair figure to that but certainly as far as the computers are concerned, it will contribute to the level of penetration, utilization of ICT overall.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And of course, improving the knowledge-based technology education
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Thomas: Of the people and of the students.

Mr. Ramnarine: You cited a figure of 40 percent as Internet penetration for Trinidad. Could you give us some comparative information with regard to Barbados, or some other Caribbean country that we could compare ourselves to?

Mr. Thomas: The exact figure for the other Caribbean countries, I do not have with me at this time. The figures in some cases in terms of Internet penetration would be higher, I would believe, again I would need to review that. They may have some more attractive or better figures in a number of areas including the Internet per household. I am very certain however, with the introduction by the Government with the ECAL project, that the penetration level as far as the school penetration or connectivity and so forth would be far more attractive than any other country that we have within the region. I expect, I anticipate that there are other areas where our ranking is far higher than we have with our counterparts in the region. We have seen it for instance, in the level of the mobile penetration. We are close to fourth, in the world that was the count probably in 2008/2009. We expect similarly to see a significant improvement in our ranking from the business element, with the introduction of TT Biz Link, with the nine new services that would be introduced under that initiative, from the survey that was done and was shares previously with the committee, that would contribute significantly to the ranking of Trinidad and Tobago over the next few years.

Mr. Ramnarine: In relation to that previous question, what is the extent of—what percentage of Trinidad enjoys Internet coverage?

Mr. Thomas: As far as I recall, the requirement of every concessioner is to have one hundred percent coverage: rural, urban, suburban areas, et cetera. Again, that is a requirement over given period of time.

The level of tele-density or coverage that we have in some cases, in most cases—my understanding is that it is in access of 90/95 percent, so that their capacity for Internet is available there. Again, this is a question which would ideally be better answered by the

Telecoms Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. Their mandate of course, is to monitor, to take note of the extent, whether there is compliance or not, the level of coverage of each concessioner that we have throughout the country and there is an annual report I understand that each of one of the concessioners or licensed operators are required to supply. So, substantially I believe for more accurate information as we are also asking of TATT to provide information, that we can similarly make a request for coverage by each one of the licensed operators or concessioners.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If I am to give you some assistance in that question, if we are to judge by the connectivity of the schools, in 152 secondary schools, 134 Government and Government-assisted, in 18 primary all have Internet connectivity at the moment and I think you, iGovTT, had been instrumental in helping us to move from three megs (3MB) to five megs (5MB) connectivity. So between WiFi and Internet connectivity, the 152 schools are located geographically through the expanse of Trinidad and Tobago. So therefore, I believe we have connectivity throughout Trinidad and Tobago if we are to judge from our school population.

Mr. De Coteau: Thank you Mr. Chairman, I really listened intently with some degree of hope because I heard in where you said the requirement of every concessioner is to ensure that there is coverage throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension the rural paradise of Moruga, Marac to be exact, where we have a beautiful Baptist school perched on a hill with absolutely no connectivity, in the area. So I am asking whether—I am raising this loud, I am ventilating this loud so that the powers that be would realize that this is an area—brilliant children.

10.55 a.m.

We have the captain of the West Indian Cricket Team. It is a primary school with brilliant people up there, and there is absolutely no connectivity. I can say this with assurance, because I was in a meeting last night in the community, and they have asked me to ventilate this, and here I have the God given opportunity to say it loud and clear. So, I hope you can really do something about this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think Mr. De Couteau is speaking about the primary schools that I mentioned a while ago. There are 152 secondary schools. To answer my colleague, he knows that in the Ministry of Education we have over 470 primary schools, and we have computer labs in about 300 so far which iGovTT has helped us with. There is some work being done with the IDB to complete the other 100-plus primary schools for connectivity with the major providers. So, perhaps, his school is one of the schools that has to be brought on. I am certain that 152 secondary schools have labs.

Mr. De Couteau: The secondary schools have, but there are students from the Marac area who attend secondary schools—they go to Cowen Hamilton, St. Stephens College and

Naparima—all I am asking is probably you can use the influence with the other people to make sure that we do not remain in the rural state; it is rural paradise.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. De Couteau.

Mr. Ramnarine: This question has to do with productivity in the public service. We have some Ministries with Outlook and some Ministries have other types of software. Is there a standard that is recommended for a Ministry with respect to email? I understand that some Ministries have Outlook and some Ministries have something else. I think it would be more efficient if everybody has one platform. That is basically my statement and question in one.

Mr. Mollenthiel: That weighs very nicely to the whole issue of govnet. So govnet is intended to be and has been designed to be that platform; that platform for communication and for standardizing the way in which Ministries share information internally and across Ministries. So, the answer is yes. For those that use govnet, govnet is equipped with certain application productivity tools that those who are connected can make use of.

Mr. Ramnarine: Do we have any idea or appreciation for the extent to which these productivity tools are actually used? My experience is that we have all these productivity tools, and I am not really sure how many persons are actually using them in the Ministries. So, maybe, there might be some gap between actually providing somebody with a tool and actually using the tool.

Mr. Mollenthiel: I think that is a multi-pronged issue potentially. So, I do have colleagues here who can, in fact, elaborate a little on some of the statistics of persons who have the accounts. In terms of persons who use the email, I am not sure that I have that kind of information now as to how many persons actively use it, but that is also related to the change management, the adoption and the use of technology. That is the whole culture shift.

Mr. Ramnarine: Just as a supporting point to that, my observation has been that there is an age curve. You find the younger persons in the Ministries using the email more, and the older folks in the Ministries are using it less. So, perhaps, there is some work to be done with respect to getting people on board with respect to these email tools.

Mr. Mollenthiel: We do offer training and so forth, not only in email but also Microsoft Word, basic office productivity tools and Word Excel. So there are options for persons who may be new to the technology. That is the most fundamental part of what we do; pushing out the technology on one side, but allowing people to become accustomed and comfortable with the technology as well. Even the senior executives in the Government have their Blackberry phones and so on, so that starts to create a whole different dynamic in terms of visible use of the technology which is what I believe the CEO referred to as one of the things that would be helpful; keep talking about it; keep embracing it; and keep endorsing it. It sends the right kind

of signal.

Mrs. King: Going back to the backbone and the issues there, I think that since in 2005 we have spent \$478 million on the e-government backbone. I wonder if you can tell us, at this time, how many Ministries are actually able to deliver e-services.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Can I delink the two?

Mrs. King: You may.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Well, we have given information in terms of Ministries that are connected to the Government network or govnet.

Mrs. King: Are they offering e-services?

Mr. Mollenthiel: I am going to make the bridge. The way that the architecture is currently designed at the very bottom, this Government network is for transportation of information, but the actual creation or delivery of an e-service relies on that transportation and also on systems and solutions to be developed within the ministry itself. So they would look at their processes or services and automate them, and then they can use the network for the transportation of certain information. So access to govnet is one part of it, but it is business process reengineering and creation—whether it is B-Spoke Solutions or whatever, a good example would be TTBiz Link.

Mrs. King: Sorry I did not get that last sentence.

Mr. Mollenthiel: B-Spoke Solutions.

Mrs. King: And then you said?

Mr. Mollenthiel: A good example would be TTBiz Link, a single electronic window. So, TTBiz Link will usher in a series of e-services and they are actually using govnet for the transportation of information between 13 or so different agencies across Government. So, it is necessary, but not sufficient.

Mrs. King: That is correct. So you are saying now that the Ministries themselves have to get involved in the actual applications that they want for their Ministries.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Absolutely.

Mrs. King: And is there a way that you can help them do that?

Mr. Mollenthiel: Absolutely. We do help.

Mrs. King: You can help if we ask you.

Mr. Mollenthiel: Yes. We also try to knock on some doors, because there are certainly things—we see different layers of e-services. For example, the ability to change an address is probably something that different Ministries would do.

Mrs. King: Which we are now doing in my Ministry.

Mr. Mollenthiel: So, if you change it in one place it would be useful to have that effect

all across government—you exist once and your address is known to all of government rather than every Ministry seeking to have a change of address service.

Mrs. King: So you cannot identify at this time the number of Ministries that are actually offering e-services.

Mr. Mollenthiel: We are aware of the Ministries that offer electronic services; and we are also aware of some of the Ministries that are seeking to deliver e-services, but we are not aware of all.

Mrs. Mc Comie: I cannot push on the open door, and I thank you for that. The Government has, in fact, invested in a platform. They have invested a lot of money in the backbone and in the portal. It can, therefore, as John indicated, with Ministries working with iGovTT, reengineer their processes, get the application that is required and liaise with iGovTT to ensure that the applications can talk to each other and get their services through.

We have been pushing the brand of the ttconnect to get the services to the people, but Public Administration and iGovTT deliver the scholarships to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, but all the other services of passport and birth certificates, we need the Ministries to work with us to get the information onto the system. We are hoping that from next week the debate will go well and our Bills will be passed; the Electronic Transactions and the Data Protection Bills. We are waiting to exhale. Once that enabling environment is there, we can stay at home on our laptops and apply for a birth certificate and make the payment and track where our applications may be. It is all possible with the investment that has already been made. We need to do some additional work with the Ministries to get it to the citizens.

Mr. Chairman: Can I just ask one follow up question? I am still not very clear on some things. In one of the reports that you have submitted, it seems that some Ministries are not making effective use of the technology, for example, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Food Production. How do you account for that disparity where some Ministries are on and making use and some are as if they are not even aware of it?

Mrs. Mc Comie: Remember iGovTT has been in place for five—well iGovTT is one year, but I mean the function in terms of a central ICT division. Well, they have had different incarnations. Each Ministry has had its own IT personnel for years—some with more qualified, proactive and stronger IT units than others—who would have put in place various applications. Now that the backbone is there, we have to continue to work with the Ministries to use what exist. I know that iGovTT is doing that and more work has to be done. There is a CIO forum where they speak to IT managers. So that it is a work in progress to get people onto the system.

With respect to the Ministry of National Security and, especially, the Ministry of Energy, they have peculiar activities and needs given the sector, and they have built-out technology. It is not that they are not using it, and it is not that it is not state-of-the-art. They may not be connected to the backbone as many other Ministries may be.

Mr. Chairman: What about the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Food Production?

Mr. Mollenthiel: Basically, we are working with the Ministry of Food Production since late last year to first of all, upgrade some of their internal infrastructure to allow them to connect to govnet. So they represent a good example of a Ministry that is ready to come on board and fully utilize the services; economies of scale, economies in resources, all the benefits are there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In layman's language, would you say that the backbone provides a wide area of networking for the entire country where each Ministry might have their local area of networking and the backbone provides for the national wide area of networking and each ministry is supposed to introduce their own local area of networking and make sure that it is compatible?

Mr. Thomas: Minister, I would support substantially what you have said with one caveat, that is the backbone is not for the whole country. The backbone is for Government. So that it is all of Government, and it does not now give the facilitation of access to any and all agencies outside of the Government and its affiliates, but you are absolutely correct. It is for all of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministries and related agencies as much as individual Ministries have their responsibility for their local area network.

I also want to respond to the broad aspect. You may recall in our previous meeting, the last meeting when we were here, we stressed the significant difference between what we have responsibility for in terms of connectivity, and we used the term of the "highway". We say that we have a "highway"; we have the platform for Government for its main Ministries and/or affiliated agencies, and as the Minister of Education just indicated, individual Ministries however, continue to maintain their responsibility for their local area network, so that they can speak to each other and carry the applications, et cetera. There is no policy that currently exists that requires all of Government, even as individual Ministries are pursuing the initiative to bring services on line that they must come to some central entity, agency, iGovTT or anywhere else. There is no policy position on that

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Thomas: What we do have is that where it is enterprise-wide we have a mandate, if it affects two or more ministries then iGov, naturally, will be the entity through which we are

engaged to treat with that activity. What do we mean by that? We again with what my colleague said, one single entity saves with cost economies of scale, central repository for providing training and all the other items and Chairman, the only other thing to remind ourselves of, is that for change or for service end to end, whether we use our phone to provide services end to end, whether we use the computer, whether we go to some desk where the technology is being utilized, the technology is only one element in the whole process. The two other elements we spoke of previously centered around the issue of people because if the people are not trained, if the people are not involved, if there are no processes as well, process change and all of those elements that add to the technology, so we will go so far as to assist with the technology but the people process re-engineering, change management, those are equally critical for which the ministries, each ministry for their service, play an extremely important role.

Mr. Chairman: Any other Member of Parliament who did not as yet get a question in? Okay, Minister Gopeesingh?

Mr. Gopeesingh: If you were to indicate to/through the Joint Select Committee and the national population, iGovTT is helping to facilitate the Government's information communication technology networking throughout Trinidad and Tobago and what would be the services that are already being provided for the national population through your kiosks and through the other areas and where you see the movement of ICT in terms of governance where do you see it going and how is iGovTT facilitating that?

Mr. Cleveland: Thank you Minister. Through you Chairman, the services that are being offered now through technology and through the GovNett, in the first instance we have a number of channels, so Minister you made mention of kiosks, that is one channel to provide government information and services using what we call very simply put a large ATM type machine so you can go to such a machine which we have listed in a number of places and provide and make a request either for information or some of the services and I will give you that. You have the mobile phones; that is another channel, you have the service centers—another channel, channels which we shared with the committee before. There are five channels including the tconnect express or bus that will go into the community.

The first approach we have adopted which again we feel proud of that has won so many awards internationally is to make government information available online so information is available for over 400 services and while that may not be considered as critical or important for some people, in many countries it is extremely important and it is a step in the right direction. We see that because just to get information online that is important enough that somebody regardless of where they are, they can gather the information, so we have that.

People can also download forms online—that is a service that is being provided, it may not be called the type of service somebody wants but if somebody needs just an application form rather than having to go to the related ministry they would not travel long distances. That is available online through the government portal or website as it is. Similarly, a number of ministries—again what we have said earlier, ministries do have services that are beyond information. The Ministry of Legal Affairs has its service for the electronic Birth Certificate that is available through ttconnect working in partnership with that ministry online. So your first electronic birth certificate, we partner with that ministry to provide that.

The Ministry of Housing and the Environment—we also have a number of services there: own land subsidy, first home purchase, home improvement subsidy; those services can be available through that ministry again using the ttconnect channel, particularly the service centers. The Ministry of Public Administration, scholarships and application for scholarship, OJT training, even if a ministry wishes to post advertisements for a job or vacancies—that is available—again Minister, substantially, and we cannot over emphasize, iGov would work with the ministry and we continue to work with them to move from the traditional way of what is on paper and bring it under electronic form using the different channels to do that. So we have started with a number of Ministries in this regard and lastly we spoke about the Ministry of Science and Technology, having life skill facilitation application, training and equally we have, as I said, advertising opportunities.

TTBiz Link coming on line now, would bring on nine new services from March of this year to March of the next year; three in the first instance, information I do not immediately have at my disposal but we did have a representative from the Ministry of Trade who shared with us last meeting here with this committee of the services that are being planned over the next year.

Mr. Gopeesingh: Besides eConnect what are the other ones that you have from iGov—beside eConnect and TTbiz link, what others do you have?

Mr. Cleveland: The ones that I made mention of, somebody can go online. Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education (STTE), someone who is returning home and wishes to apply for OJT training, you can get that online, you do not need to go to the Ministry—retraining, you do not need to go to the ministry as well and that is external, internal we do have the IHRIS system where you have the facility there provided where even understanding performance and other modules that one can get access to beyond just payments and so forth. Online we have for ourselves, we have the internet, we have calendaring, email, et cetera, that we can utilize, so different sectors, different groups can utilize technology in broad in order to get access to different services as much as information about the service.

Mr. De Coteau: I am glad, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity again and I am as very excited as the members of the community I spoke to last night and I am saying this because repetition leads to retention. The members from my community are really grateful, I mean thanks for the enlightenment of our Minister, that we have the connectivity in the school but the community itself I am talking about, they expressed their frustration because there is sporadic connectivity because apparently the area has been neglected for a number of years and I am asking now and I am sure there might be other communities as such, but I as the representative for Moruga/Tableland, and more particularly Marac Village—a rural paradise—there is no kind of consistent connectivity there and I am saying that it deprives the members of the community. All I am asking is—probably we would like to benefit from all of this, we would like to go online, we do not want to go Gran Chemin, we do not want to go to Moruga Secondary, we do not want to go to Gran Chemin Anglican, we do not want to go to the primary schools. We are saying we would like to access those things from our homes in that area but thank you for doing a wonderful job Sir.

Mr. Cleveland: Thank you. Thank you for that. Minister, there were a couple of other questions where we were at the ICT governance model and there was the question of the future plans and if I just go with the ICT governance model today, I mentioned before that we do not have a central governance model but we do know that our Minister—Ministry of Public Administration—already has taken before Cabinet a governance model that would have members of a community and community in terms of Ministers who in many of the areas where there is education planning or otherwise are now ready to set direction vision and really work towards a holistic agenda.

Some of the challenges that we are having now, how can this community or committee actually treat with it? So I know that our Minister has taken it to cabinet, I know that there was some discussion already on it and there was support substantially for moving it forward. So that model is a model that is current internationally, you can use that vision, that group that will bring all players together. We also have the model where we have partnered with the business community in the name of the e-biz round table who lend their support in policy direction and so forth.

The future plan speaks to the national ICT agenda in going forward from 2011 onwards. It is a plan which our current board has and attending to even now but there is some work what I spoke about as to what was done and in progress. Part of the plan, Minister in terms of community, it also has and recognizes provisions for what we call Universal Service Obligation. The Universal Service Obligation commonly known as the USO internationally. It is a fact that some concessionaires or providers do not find it economical to provide services in

communities. It is too costly to do that, so the practice has been internationally whereby concessionaires, license—those who have received license, to make a contribution of their profit towards this fund and this fund now, will then be available again through an entity like the Telecoms Authority who would probably go out in putting bids outside there, so the community that you referred to, you can put a bid where someone is prepared to invest in that community whether it is in the area for broad coverage, having hot spots or otherwise, but the funds would be available there to invest.

I know that the telecoms authority has a draft USO policy or plan in place. It is a condition under which the concessions or licenses are given so that is one way in going forward as much as the national ICT agenda or plan, which takes all of these into account.

Mr. Chairman: Just one question I want to follow up to this. Mr. Thomas, you talked about the 2011 plan, just two quick questions on that. The original plan in some of the information that you subsequently submitted, we have noted that there was in fact some assistance to come from Singapore and that has been suspended, that suspension has been extended from what I read. Are there any financial implications with respect to the assistance that you were supposed to get from Singapore and what is the status of that now? The second part of the question is: is there any significant substantive difference between the previous ICT programme and the one that is emerging now?

Mr. Cleveland: Thank you Chairman. With respect to the Singapore arrangement and contract support under the previous administration through an MOU between both countries, Trinidad and Tobago and Singapore, which was signed in 2008—late 2008—December to be exact. Singapore was engaged to provide services and support to us within Trinidad with a focus and a concentration within the iGovTT as a company.

The mandate at the time centered around—and the contract arrangement centered around a project management office that was one key item they were supposed to deliver. Another item they had was the e-services project management and thirdly the issue of a national ICT planning service company as in, iGov help us to move forward. The long and short of that contract arrangement was that given Singapore's history as to what they have done and doing quite well ranking in the top ten, first in many areas like business and other areas, let us utilize the expertise now rather than try to reinvent the wheel so that some of the errors that they would have made over the 27+ years we would avoid that.

11.25 a.m.

So through the MOU they were engaged with us to provide these different areas of contractual arrangements for services to help us.

They started their work; they were with us on the ground for just about a year and, at

that time, they helped us with the stocktaking exercise. They provided support with the draft of the National ICT Plan in going forward for the next three to five years. They helped us with our project management office and the level of involvement that we had. The e-services, the front line, they provided support, the details of which are available.

Chairman, we took a decision that with the new administration coming in place, whether or not this ought to be the focus, as was done under the previous administration, we should give the new administration the opportunity now to make that decision. I can tell you it was on that basis it was suspended until March of this year.

Our board has the information concerning this item and they are looking into the next steps and the approach that would be taken in going forward concerning this arrangement.

Mr. Chairman: What are the financial implications?

Mr. Thomas: As of now the Singapore party has recognized and accepted, thus far, the suspension that we have given to March. I do not know their financial implications, because all that is before Singapore at this point in time is a suspension subject to review and a final determination by the Government in terms of going forward. But we are in transition with a new board being put in place just a month or so ago and the Government also having to take a decision how or if they are going to continue to utilize that. So at this point we do not have any sense that there are financial implications based on the suspension before us.

Mr. Chairman: What were the terms and conditions of this MOU, was it pro bono work, was it gratis?

Mr. Thomas: Oh no; there was a contract for—

Mr. Chairman: If there was a contract, what are the implications?

Mr. Thomas: There was a contract for a scheduled period of two and a half years for the areas I have identified, covering the areas of project management, training, e-services, including providing some studies and/or support, the establishment of the National ICT Company and the structure and design and developing a strategy or blue print for Trinidad and Tobago in going forward for the few years.

Mr. Chairman: I am simply interested in the figures, the financial implications.

Mr. Thomas: There was a figure of US \$8 million over two and a half years for these services to be provided, of which to date, to the point of the year period that they have provided the service, just about US \$3 million was paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is the new board considering the continuation of the project? You said it was a memorandum of understanding that was signed.

Mr. Thomas: Between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Singapore.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you had an MOU, was there a contract signed with an MOU? An MOU is just to establish relations between one country and another, but the last administration went further to sign a contract is what you are indicating, that it was a US \$8 million contract.

Mr. Thomas: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the MOU have that contractual obligation in it?

Mr. Thomas: No, and I do apologize; let me just take it a step at a time. There was an MOU signed between both governments to provide ICT and support, et cetera. Coming out of that MOU, the Cabinet agreed—

Dr. Gopeesingh: The last administration agreed to a contract of \$8 million.

Mr. Thomas: —that iGovTT should now work with an entity in the name of IDI of Singapore to help us deliver these items here. So the contract that was signed was a contract between IDI and iGovTT to provide these services under the auspices of the MOU.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that went beyond the country to country MOU; it went to IDA Singapore and iGovTT Trinidad? So the contract was signed between IDA Singapore, iGovTT Trinidad for US \$8 million, of which \$3 million has been drawn down already and they have provided services whether technical training, et cetera to you already, iGovTT?

Mr. Thomas: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: With the absence of your board then, this new board has to determine whether you will continue that contractual obligation between iGovTT and IDA Singapore?

Mr. Thomas: Minister, yes, the new board, in the first instance, and we are presenting to them all the information in detail, because as a new board they need to understand what has happened starting from there and then the board will make a decision, a determination, a recommendation, in going forward.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it is under consideration at the moment?

Mr. Thomas: It is under consideration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have made a presentation to your board on that issue?

Mr. Thomas: We have not made a presentation to the board as yet. We plan to make that presentation to the board actually tomorrow.

Mrs. King: Chairman, at the last meeting we had asked for some detail on the 14 programmes under your National ICT Strategic Plan and we asked the question at what cost were these 14 programmes identified and partially implemented. We have been given a document and a page. The page relates to an IDB loan to facilitate the establishment of TATT in 2001 and then you have a report on that loan dated October 2007, with a little addendum to the note:

“This is all that we have been able to source in the given time.”

I am asking whether someone is still working on providing us with the information to date or are we going to be satisfied with this.

Mr. Thomas: Chairman, through you; in addition to the information that we submitted, we did provide this document on the fast forward stocktake draft. On page 41 of the said document, starting from page 40, 41 and 42, it speaks to the stock taking exercise. If I recall, Minister, you had asked the question, of the 14 programmes what was the status of each one. This stocktake document on this page provides the detail of each one of the programmes that were under the fast forward initiative at the time and it give also whether they are complete, ongoing, et cetera. So the report, taking the stocktake, provides not only for each item, but where the gaps were, what was successful and why. It is in draft because we still have some work to do, as I mentioned.

What we do not have at this time and what we submitted when we responded to the request on the achievements—we indicated that a lot of the costing that was required for each item of the programme, we needed to work—we as in iGovTT—very closely with the Ministry of Public Administration, given that the information and the history behind that information does not totally reside within our portfolio remit. Since then, we are committed that as we get the information, we will share it with the committee. This is what we attempted to do, because we got the report from the IDB indicating that this is the summary, particularly as it relates at the time to only an element of the programme, the element being the establishment of TATT, the consultant that came in— But other areas of the project, as to what was the spending probably for the anchor company for the library, like library-net, et cetera, which all form part of the 14 programmes, we are now working with the Ministry and, possibly, even to the extent that it has to go to the Ministry of Finance or others who may have that information since 2003 or so, so we can provide it to you. We will continue, as we get the information, to collate it and align it to what is in this report at this time.

Mrs. King: You are confirming that someone is still working on the costing and we will receive it?

Mr. Thomas: Absolutely, Minister.

Mrs. Mc Comie: The executive financial sheet, Minister—we did not receive a loan initially; it was \$990,000 as a grant. So we do not have to pay that back and that money was spent to establish what was stated there. When you look at the fast forward plan—I remember last time you spoke of the \$82 million loan, there was no \$82 million loan; they were estimated amounts. So some of the projects listed, as Mr. Thomas indicated, have been implemented; some here have not totally been implemented, but within each one you will have to work out the

cost for it. We would not have all the information because some of the projects may not have gone to fruition.

Mrs. King: Thank you, I understand perfectly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On the way forward for iGovTT—it came into existence in 2009 and before that you had a National Information Communication team that operated from 2004—2009. There have been strategic plans which have been enunciated under the N ICT. What plans are there now for the development of the NICT strategy? Are you aware of TATT strategic plan? I understand they had a plan from 2007—2010. Has that been reviewed? How is iGovTT working in tandem with TATT's plan? Have they reviewed their strategic plan of 2007—2010? Could you also give us some idea of your National Broadband Action Plan and also finalization and implementation of the ICT Division's strategic plan?

So there are a number of areas that we need to determine the way forward in relation to what iGovTT is doing and, of course, your working with the TATT. If it is possible you can give us some information on that, where you source it from and what your own plans are. I ask you that in the context that the Ministry of Works and Transports is looking forward to your assistance, based on your backbone capacity, to assist in the whole licensing process and procedure at a national level.

Of course, I think there is some discussion between the Ministry of Health in terms of their e-card. Of course, I am working with you all on the digital portal for connectivity to your main backbone for the curriculum infusion in the education programme with the one laptop per child. Could you give us your strategic plans and what they have in relation to that. The Ministry of Works and Transport would probably have to utilize your backbone and your knowledge and experience with a service provider who will assist them with that. How is iGovTT assisting the various ministries in fast forwarding some of these areas which the country needs at the moment?

11.40 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Could you give us a brief overview of that, Mr. Thomas?

Mr. C. Thomas: Brief overview, certainly Mr. Chairman. The national, the way it has been done as of now is that we have the backbone, the Govnet, which, as we heard from our colleagues, it is a platform for communication and providing Government information and services in the long term. It recognizes and has a capacity to treat with services of Government generally. It took into account future plans, such as for services whether it is the Ministry of Education or others. Again this is the highway, this is the platform for that.

So, recognizing that element, we can facilitate it, up to a certain point of course. Because as the demand increases, whether it is from the Ministry of Health or otherwise, one

has to look at whether or not we have that capacity to respond in a timely manner, as much as the quality of service and everything else. But thus far, we have a certain level that we can treat with at this point in time.

The vision at the time, since 2005 to now, was a recognition that there were these services coming online, the speed and the extent of that vary from Ministry to Ministry. So, Minister, in terms of that plan, yes, we can treat with that, we have to continue to review it. We are also reviewing the extent to which probably the model that we have right now should continue, whether the model should be outsourced, should we now go with some of the things we spoke about last week, cloud computing as another way to treat with these kinds of demands?

These things are under consideration. All of those in the future form part, or will form part, of the National ICT agenda for the next few years for the Government. It takes into account whether it is Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Housing, whatever the Ministries are, and finding new creative ways to handle the demands and sensitive to cost, economies of scale.

So this national plan is there for which iGovTT, sensitive to the draft national plan, define our strategy in alignment to that national plan. But we are only one element in the picture. The Government also requires the different Ministries to be aligned to the national blueprint and this is where not we are looking to continue to partner, synergize, as it is with TATT as well. TATT's plan with going forward and the policies and direction are guided by Government.

We made reference just now to the operator, that did not come on board. Why did it not come on board and questions were asked as to financial reasons, et cetera. Whether or not the Government says we need to have a third mobile operator or a fourth mobile operator or more concessionaires, the Government in its national plan will take that as part of the plan to carry it forward and as a policy direction.

Lastly, Minister, I can tell you that we have a number of documents which we spoke about at the last meeting, including a Gigabyte Plan that the Ministry of Public Administration is looking to bring for Cabinet's consideration. We have the data centre and other plans that are there that we have committed to, at the last session as a discussion document that will contribute to the overall national plan.

So, substantially, I am saying that I believe that the best practice is that really you are supposed to have this national plan for which the different players will make contributions, and each playing and singing to one tune, the national agenda of Government.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, we do have one at the moment where—

Mr. C. Thomas: A draft.

Dr. Gopeesingh: —a number of other Ministries are interacting in relation to the national ICT plan and you are relating as well to TATT which also has a strategic plan.

Mr. C. Thomas: Right.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us an idea in terms of the plan, the time frame, in terms of your strategic action plans, what years they incorporate now?

Mr. C. Thomas: Well, the intention, Minister, is that the plan through the stages that we have given is that it is going and has to be finalized through the board, consultation and other players. Then it will go to the Ministry then it goes to Cabinet. We expect that this should be done in the next three months maximum for which the Government will advise us as to how we need to proceed with it.

We say it is from 2011 right on to 2014 or 2015, again it is dependent on what the Government wants. Do they want a three-year plan? Do they want a five-year plan? Normally, the past has shown a five-year plan is appropriate with it being rolled, meaning that adjustments are taken into account.

Mr. Chairman: We can have a quick other question.

Mrs. King: Yes.: I just had a question on your financial statements ending September 2010. These are already audited accounts. I see that you live mainly on Government's subventions, your income is mainly subventions \$144 million and then you have some project management fees. I presume that is from other Ministries that you work for. Do you foresee perhaps that you could become less dependent on subventions and more on your own work capacity to get more projects; project management fees?

Mr. C. Thomas: Thank you, Minister, for that one and it is an extremely important point for us. Yes, that would be an item which we would want to move towards in the shortest possible time. Certainly it means charging for services. And again we will be guided by the policy and the position of Government. What do I mean by that? Substantially the service we offer as services of Government, passport online, birth paper, whatever it might be online, education going to the portal or getting past papers and so forth. Is the Government of the view that we should charge for services? Should we charge the Ministry? There is significant saving that happens through iGovTT.

So, while on one hand we would love to be at a place where you become self-sufficient, on the other hand, even by our operation with subvention there are certain cost savings by the Government not having to go out and probably contract for the services, whether it is project management or otherwise.

So, it is really going to be guided by the vision and the direction of the Government.

Does the Government wish that every person applying for some service pay some fee or would they subsidize it or would they partially subsidize it or otherwise? I think that is a policy decision and guided by that iGovtt now will have a role to play of charging or not charging.

Mrs. King: I presume that you have competitive fees?

Mr. C. Thomas: Yes, we do.

Mr. King: If you have competitive fees, I think that is a great way to go.

Mr. C. Thomas: Yes we do.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There are a number of ICT companies in Trinidad, for instance, Microsoft, IBM et cetera. What contracts do you have at the moment with companies and could you give us the value of your contract with these ICT companies in Trinidad? If there are any existing ones that relate to your backbone, that you have, and ongoing projects? If you do not have that now, perhaps you might be able to give it to us subsequently.

Mr. C. Thomas: Thank you, Minister, certainly for more accurate information I would appreciate if the opportunity is given to provide you with exact figures for the IBM Fujitsu and all other contracts that we do have and I would submit that under separate cover.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And whether they are ongoing or whether they have concluded and what is the duration continuing into the future?

Mr. C. Thomas: We have that information we can share to give you—

Dr. Gopeesingh: And what specific areas that you have this relationship with them?

Mr. C. Thomas: I can tell you Minister that in the main what we do is that iGovtt does not have the capacity internally to treat with many of the areas at this point in time so our model is one of outsourcing.

We do not have a concession for a fibre link or say connection. What we do is that we go out, we go through our tender process and we would outsource that, meaning that someone else will provide that. We also have, in many areas, as long as we do not have the internal capacity, it is a matter of tendering and engaging as we have done even for the support that we have gotten for the E-Cal project.

We should note finally, that there are a number of contracts that are still with the Ministry of Public Administration and not with iGovtt because we are operating and acting on behalf of the Ministry, so we would have to work very closely with the Ministry to gather that information in submitting later on.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank very much. Thank you Madam PS Mc Comie and Mr. Cleveland Thomas and your team, for returning and for providing the additional information which we requested. Keep in mind that arising from the meeting today we still have a few items that we will ask the Secretariat to get in touch with you, that you will provide for us. So, we thank you

very much and this meeting is adjourned so you are now excused. Thank you.

[Entities exited the Chamber]