FOURTH

REPORT FROM | THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE

EXAMINATION OF | The Audited Financial Statements of the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, (iGovTT) for the Financial Years 2015 to 2019, First Session, Twelfth Parliament.

Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street Port of Spain
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

PARLIAMENT
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

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

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

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

Current membership

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Mr. Rushton Paray, MP	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Ms. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, MP	Member
Mrs. Laurel Lezama- Lee Sing	Member
Mr. Keith Scotland, MP	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP	Member

Committee Staff

The current staff members serving the Committee are:

Ms. Keiba Jacob	Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Liu Metivier	Parliamentary Intern
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Publication

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Date Laid in HOR: July 09, 2021   **Date Laid in Senate: July 06, 2021**

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Members of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

Mr. Wade Mark
Chairman

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Member

Executive Summary

The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C) is the Parliamentary Financial Oversight Committee tasked with the responsibility of examining the audited accounts of all State Enterprises that are owned or controlled by the state. The Committee conducted **an Examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, (iGovTT) for the financial years 2015 to 2019** and produced this report to highlight its findings and recommendations. This report details the issues, and recommendations made by the Committee to improve iGovTT's performance.

The Report focuses on the following issues:

1. The lack of Human Resource Capacity
2. Strategic Pillars Hindrances
3. The Continuity of the TTWIFI project
4. Long-standing debts owed from defunct Ministries
5. Suboptimal Usage of GovNeTT
6. Circumvention of iGovTT's mandate by MDAs
7. iGovTT's Sustainability given Reduced Subventions

In light of the Committee's findings, the following recommendations were made:

- iGovTT should, by September 6, 2021, set out and communicate a coherent plan for how it retains and develop its workforce. The plan should include what the company is aiming to achieve i.e. planned outcomes and the associated timelines, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and the targeted outputs to be used to measure success;
- iGovTT should continue to utilize the current OJT Programme but should also offer ICT internships for undergraduate and graduate students to reduce the workload and supplement the entry level functions within the company;
- iGovTT should develop and implement an onboarding program with OJT graduates to facilitate a smooth transition and build necessary expertise for long term viability;

- iGovTT together with the MPADT should implement a School Outreach Programme in Secondary Schools to encourage students to pursue studies in the ICT field. This effort can directly assist with developing a large pool of skilled persons to fill the human resource gaps throughout the public sector so that poaching does not become an everyday occurrence;

- iGovTT together with MPADT should extend the School Outreach Programme to tertiary education institutions to negotiate streamlining of curricula for ICT based degrees to match the skill set required by iGovTT;

- iGovTT should explore having pro-active engagements with the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer to address the existing compensation packages and contract lengths of its ICT employees so that the company is better equipped to retain its staff;

- iGovTT should embarked on an enhanced employee engagement strategy that emphasizes on creating a working environment where persons are more likely to grow, be recognized for the innovative use of new technology and team collaboration for project implementation is promoted;

- The MPADT should by September 6, 2021, write to the Committee and provide a status update on the following:
    - An outline on the core requirements for iGovTT to operate according to agile principles, and by extension the limiting factors preventing adoption of agile processes.
    - the support the company requires, the request for a revised organizational structure, restructuring exercise so that the iGovTT could be more agile in the delivery of more value-added ICT solutions to deliver the required electronic services and necessary recourse and protection throughout the public sector;
    - the support needed for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of national polices to ensure that iGovTT's policy position is strengthened to move its mandate forward surrounding ICT use throughout the public service and the requisite ICT governance frameworks;

- MPADT should, by September 6, 2021, set out and communicate a coherent plan on what TTWIFI project is aiming to achieve and by when, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and how it will measure success;

- MPADT should ensure that proper security mechanisms are built in to TTWIFI project to protect against potential hackers infiltrating the system;

- The MPADT should provide a breakdown of the total costs of the TTWIFI project since its inception, the details of each proposed phase and the anticipated costs and timelines of each planned phase and write to the Committee setting out how it will scrutinize and improve cost and schedule estimates on major projects by September 6, 2021;

- iGovTT should review its aged receivables periodically to ensure that all receivables which have been deemed uncollectible have been included in a proposal to be sent to the Board of Directors to be written off;

- The MOF should develop standard operating procedures for the treatment of debts unpaid by state entities that have either been dissolved or realigned. This is a common issue this Committee has identified in many of the state enterprises this Committee has financially scrutinized. The MOF should provide a status update on the write off of the bad debts to the Committee by September 6, 2021;

- The MPADT and iGovTT should work together to educate the leadership and executive across MDAs about the importance of capitalizing on the existing enterprise software agreements that exist to reduce the total cost of ownership to operate software across the public service. As stated earlier fully using GovNeTT would allow a MDA's IT staff to focus on operation of that agency's core value added services;

- The MPADT should write to the Committee by September 6, 2021 on the actions taken to encourage other Ministries and Department to utilize the IGOVTT services;

- iGovTT should embark on a marketing and branding strategies and product offering promotion campaign to build awareness of products and service offering. There strategies and campaign should include what the company is aiming to achieve and by when, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and how it will measure success;

- The MOF and the MPADT should write to the Committee by September 6, 2021 to explain the reason for the shortfall in budget allocation to the iGovTT and the increased ICT department allocation to MDAs and how it intends to assist iGovTT in improving its sustainability and management of its finances; and

- iGovTT should continue to work and thrive within the financial restraints placed on the company but ensure that it submit requests in a timely manner for supplemental financial assistance form the MPADT when required.

Introduction

Establishment

The PA(E)C of the Twelfth Republican Parliament was established by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at the sittings held on Monday November 9, 2020 and Tuesday November 17, 2020 respectively.

Mandate

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

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

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

Ministerial Response

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

State Enterprises Performance Standards

The (PA(E)C used the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual as a benchmark to examine the performance of State Enterprises. The manual outlines the framework for compliance with official policy and the monitoring mechanisms to be used in assessing such compliance. The Government of

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1 Standing Order 110 (6) in the House of Representatives and 100(6) of the Senate.

Trinidad and Tobago monitors the performance of State Enterprises to ensure that these enterprises successfully execute their mandates and maximize value for money for the national stakeholders and shareholders.[2]

Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman

In accordance with section 119(6) of the Constitution, the Chairman must be a member of the Opposition in the Senate. At the first meeting held on Wednesday November 18, 2020, Mr. Wade Mark was elected Chairman and Mr. Rushton Paray was elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Establishment of Quorum

The Committee is required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum so that decisions can be made by Members during the meeting can be considered valid. A quorum of three (3) Members, inclusive of the Chair or Vice-Chairman), with representatives from both Houses was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

Determination of Date and Time of Regular meetings

The Committee is required by the Standing Orders to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House. At its Second Meeting, the Committee agreed to meet on the First and Third Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m.

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

Methodology

First Session Work Programme

At the Committee's Second meeting held virtually on Wednesday November 25, 2020, the Committee identified the following entities for examination during the First Session of the 12th Parliament:

- Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad & Tobago Limited
- Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad & Tobago
- National Gas Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited
- Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
- National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited
- Education Facilities Company Limited
- East Port of Spain Development Company Limited
- National Schools Dietary Services Limited
- Estate Management & Business Development Company Limited
- Community Environmental & Protection Enhancement Programme Company Limited
- Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited
- Sports Company of Trinidad & Tobago Limited
- National Infrastructure Development Company Limited
- Tourism Trinidad Limited
- National Export Facilitation Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago

The Inquiry Process

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

I.   Identification of issues in the iGovTT's Audited Financial Statements for the financial years 2015 to 2019

II. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for IGOVTT. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
   a.   Background;
   b.   Objective of Inquiry; and
   c.   Proposed Questions.

III. Questions for written response were forwarded to iGovTT, and Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT) on March 9, 2021. All responses were subsequently received by April 1, 2021.

IV. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions. In this instance, a public hearing was held on April 7, 2021.

V.   After the public hearing a request for additional information were sent to iGovTT, the MPADT and Ministry of Finance – Investments Division (MOF-ID) on April 14, 2021. The responses were subsequently received by May 6, 2021.

VI. Report the Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.

VII.   Carrying out follow-up to monitor progress in the implementation of recommendations.

National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited[3]

Company Profile:

The National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited's (branded iGovTT) mandate is to provide the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with ICT consulting and support services for its ministries, departments, divisions and agencies.

iGovTT is the implementation arm of the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT), the Ministry responsible for the administration and execution of the Government's enterprise-wide ICT strategy. The company focuses on both small and large-scale Government ICT projects that support the movement toward e-Government and Trinidad and Tobago's overall ICT development.

iGovTT acts as the custodian of two major platforms; ttConnect and GovNeTT. Essentially a series of shared services and common platforms, these solutions form the basis for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Government Service delivery. The impact of these improvements therefore extends far beyond Government to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are ultimately the recipients of government services.

The Company is resolutely guided by its vision: "To be the premier ICT solution provider to GoRTT, enabling efficiency, increasing productivity and transforming the delivery of government services to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago."

Board of Directors

- Dr Sean Rocke   Chairman
- Mr. Howard Dottin   Director
- Mr. Deepak Maharaj   Director
- Ms. Vashti Maharaj   Director

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[3] IGOVTT website https://www.igovtt.tt/company-profile/ accessed on May 21, 2021

- Ms. Jacqueline Morris — Director
- Mrs. Anastacia Samuel-James — Director
- Mr. Anthony Peyson — Director
- Mr. Anthony Tagallie — Director

Management Team

- Mr. Kirk Henry — Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Charles Bobb-Semple — Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Sherwyn Cambridge — Head, Delivery
- Mr. Edson Eastmond — Head, ttConnect
- Ms. Christine Ferreira — Head, Finance & Administration
- Mrs. Neeala Maharaj-Racha — Head, Consulting
- Ms. Janet Peters — Corporate Secretariat /Legal
- Mr. Sherwin Ragoonanan — Head, Operations
- Mrs. Joanne Sammerson — Head, Internal Audit

Line Ministry - Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation

Minister of Public Administration - Senator the Honourable Allyson West

Minister of Digital Transformation - Senator the Honourable Hassel Larry Bacchus

Permanent Secretary (Ag.) - Mr. Claudelle McKellar

Issues and Recommendations

In the Committee's examination of iGovTT, the following issues were identified and the corresponding recommendations proposed:

1. The lack of Human Resource Capacity

The current manpower is a significant barrier to the fulfilment of the company's operational needs in light of the increasing workload and demand for ICT solutions and services in the public sector. The organization was operating beneath the capacity of its approved structure by stretching existing resources and re-prioritizing and deferring projects.

While iGovTT was able to continue its operations with all staff members being equipped to work remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic and with the Public Health Regulations in effect, the reduction in staffing from the streamlining exercise conducted in 2017 did put some strain on the company's human resources. To maintain the delivery of ICT solutions and services aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the public service and enabling citizen centric eServices for citizens and other government customers, the company revised its workload and project portfolio to ensure that priority was given to assisting clients with maintaining their business services particularly as it applied to services associated with providing Covid-19 relief. Some relief to the human resource capacity challenges were obtained through the On-the-Job Training (OJT) programme, however, the level of expertise required did not make this option viable for long term operation and sustainability. To minimize the effect of the company's limited human resources, any internal projects the company planned to execute in 2020 and 2021 were also deferred to have staff focus on client projects. Also, despite the limited operating subvention, consideration to unfreeze some key positions was made to ensure that the company was better resourced to deliver on client demands and fulfil the strategy and mandate of the Company.

iGovTT was also hampered by its inability to retain and attract ICT professionals coming from the fact that within the current climate, IT professionals and tech talent were being procured at a premium. This has become a challenge for iGovTT because it had lost a lot of its talent via poaching from private consulting firms and even some Ministries. To retain its staff, the company was making a concerted effort to work on staff culture and step up its efforts to bring the compensation packages in line with the private sector. As a means of making the work more interesting, iGovTT tried to make use of and deploy the most leading-edge technology such as ChatBot, the use of Artificial Intelligence and data analytics in its work to encourage and attract younger talent. Officials from iGovTT

highlighted the issue of job security when it comes with the issue of tenure for contracted workers. It was further explained that where IT organizations were concerned with infrastructure that needs to be constantly supported, there needs to be a certain degree of continuity of staff to prevent organizational brain drain.

All staff at iGovTT are contracted. Contracts may be classified as follows:

- Long Term – 3 years
- Short Term – 1 year
- Contract for service – used for a specific service which is currently unavailable in the organization and for a specific period.
- Seasonal – As and when required e.g., ttConnect Bus Driver

A breakdown of staff as per classifications for the periods 2014 and 2020 are as follows:

	Long Term	Short Term	Contract for Service	Seasonal
2014	153	1	0	0
2020	116	7	1	3

iGovTT is not separated by division, but by Units and Teams. See table below for staff cost for the period 2015 to 2019.

UNITS	YEARS				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	$	$	$	$	$
Chief Executive Officer	286,712.79	706,005.98	776,017.01	1,597,864.96	949,150.67
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	463,193.00	634,320.84	659,402.27	659,463.63	594,219.47
Consulting	5,580,361.45	7,051,590.59	5,946,441.53	4,697,635.36	3,585,120.99
Corporate Secretariat	783,122.42	1,076,784.01	801,859.02	775,640.24	738,449.83
Legal	304,340.59	388,824.22	110,057.84	107,393.21	163,297.03
Finance & Administration	2,834,356.86	3,202,093.09	2,418,924.79	2,311,316.26	2,138,635.99
Corporate Communication	1,590,790.00	1,685,634.07	912,478.57	1,216,408.34	801,444.01
Human Resources	1,269,665.43	881,205.31	1,285,996.41	1,436,048.51	928,887.43
Procurement	546,194.70	1,170,875.53	484,688.65	382,366.54	388,497.62
Delivery	3,496,854.46	4,971,029.47	3,189,319.01	2,803,280.83	2,076,455.87

Operations	4,674,551.00	5,796,813.59	6,040,330.37	4,419,189.18	3,352,484.54
Internal Information Technology	875,427.67	1,460,971.63	1,589,557.57	1,203,202.87	1,153,685.17
Security & Assurance	380,640.00	567,297.96	137,453.85	6,853.86	-6,853.86
ttConnect	4,553,592.21	5,279,822.32	4,436,999.35	3,706,520.17	3,742,965.81
Internal Audit	857,979.36	517,561.09	427,199.02	447,332.12	296,392.53
TOTALS	**28,497,781.94**	**35,390,829.70**	**29,216,725.26**	**25,770,516.08**	**20,902,833.10**

Recommendations:

- **iGovTT should, by September 6, 2021, set out and communicate a coherent plan for how it retains and develop its workforce. The plan should include what the company is aiming to achieve i.e. planned outcomes and the associated timelines, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and the targeted outputs to be used to measure success;**

- **iGovTT should continue to utilize the current OJT Programme but should also offer ICT internships for undergraduate and graduate students to reduce the workload and supplement the entry level functions within the company;**

- **iGovTT should develop and implement an onboarding program with OJT graduates to facilitate a smooth transition and build necessary expertise for long term viability;**

- **iGovTT together with the MPADT should implement a School Outreach Programme in Secondary Schools to encourage students to pursue studies in the ICT field. This effort can directly assist with developing a large pool of skilled persons to fill the human resource gaps throughout the public sector so that poaching does not become an everyday occurrence;**

- **iGovTT together with MPADT should extend the School Outreach Programme to tertiary education institutions to negotiate streamlining of curricula for ICT based degrees to match the skill set required by iGovTT;**

- **iGovTT should explore having pro-active engagements with the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer to address the existing compensation packages and contract lengths of its ICT employees so that the company is better equipped to retain its staff; and**

- **iGovTT should embarked on an enhanced employee engagement strategy that emphasizes on creating a working environment where persons are more likely to grow,**

be recognized for the innovative use of new technology and team collaboration for project implementation is promoted.

2. **Strategic Pillars Hindrances**

To better execute its mandate which is to support the implementation of the MPADT's vision of a modernized public sector utilizing the latest digital technologies, iGovTT developed five strategic pillars in alignment with the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's (GoRTT) 2030 vision, the National ICT plan and the Digital Transformation Agenda 2020. These strategic pillars focus on:

    1.1   Supporting the development of a strong ICT security Posture for GoRTT;

    1.2   Positioning iGovTT as a 'Centre of Excellence';

    1.3   Being nearly adopters of electronic and digital solutions;

    1.4   Aggressively contributing to the development of ICT policies;

    1.5   Driving delivery of Government e-services throughout GoRTT;

    2.1   Improving the implementation of e-Gov services;

    2.2   Forming industry relationships to strengthen our solutions capabilities;

    3.1   Focusing on architectural frameworks and delivery models to promote interoperability;

    4.1   Focusing on building strong relationships with key stakeholders to enhance our reputation;

    5.1   Focusing on building the capacity of our internal talent; and

    5.2   Driving a new internal culture to enable efficient delivery of goods and services within a digital economy.

The execution and the impact of these strategic pillars have been hindered by the following challenges:

    a.   Limited ICT governance structures across GoRTT which impacts MDAs alignment to overall planning;

    b.   Conflicting priorities/shifting focus at MDAs;

    c.   Low maturity of ICT processes within Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs);

    d.   Inability to secure the necessary CAPEX and OPEX for the solutions and personnel to implement and ensure continued support of solutions;

e. MDAs can circumvent mandate to use iGovTT services furthering the adoption of a siloed approaches by MDAs which impacts upon interoperability and the pursuit of a whole of government approach to the integration of enterprise-wide solutions;

f. An increased demand for ICT talent puts iGovTT at risk for staff loss which is exacerbated by the company's inability to retain and attract talent

g. There is a lack of agility due to the iGovTT's existing HR 'structure' giving rise to low staff morale;

h. Institutional lag and the need for improved internal processes;

i. Too much time spent on operational actions and less on strategic; and

j. Annually reduced government subventions provide limited funding to invest in improving resources - people and technology.

iGovTT identified the solutions to the achievement of these strategic pillars as follows:

i Continued regular engagements with the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT) to support the advancement of the above-mentioned challenges through an appropriate, approved and operational governance framework; and

ii A revised organization structure has been proposed in the 2020-2023 strategic plan. Approval and staffing in alignment with this proposed organization structure will enable the company to be adequately resourced, more agile and suitably structured to be able to deliver on the needs of GoRTT Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in a more optimal and effective manner.

Observation and Recommendation:

The visible support of the line Ministry demonstrates to both the iGovTT and its clients that the initiatives of the iGovTT are valuable, endorsed by Government and are aligned with the Governments mandate. The Committee commends the initiative of the iGovTT in response to the achievement of its strategic pillars and recommend the following:

- **The MPADT should by September 6, 2021, write to the Committee and provide a status update on the following:**
  - **An outline on the core requirements for iGovTT to operate according to agile principles, and by extension the limiting factors preventing adoption of agile processes;**
  - **the support the company requires, the request for a revised organizational structure, restructuring exercise so that the iGovTT could be more agile in the**

delivery of more value-added ICT solutions to deliver the required electronic services and necessary recourse and protection throughout the public sector; and

- **the support needed for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of national polices to ensure that iGovTT's policy position is strengthened to move its mandate forward surrounding ICT use throughout the public service and the requisite ICT governance frameworks.**

3. **The Continuity of the TTWIFI project**

The ownership for the TTWIFI project lies with MPADT. The objective of the TTWIFI project was to facilitate select public spaces with wireless internet services for use by the general population Thus far, the project has had two Phases. Phase I was executed by iGovTT in 2015 which resulted in the deployment of mobile Wi-Fi service on thirteen (13) PTSC buses across Trinidad and Tobago. No payments were made against Phase I as the solution provided did not deliver on the technical requirements outlined in the RFP and contract. Phase I has been discontinued under the TTWIFI project. Phase II, which is currently being executed, extends the TTWIFI service to the waiting rooms in health care facilities, transportation hubs, community access centres and libraries across Trinidad and Tobago. It is still in execution. MPADT remains as the project owner and this Phase is being executed by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. iGovTT's role in Phase II was only as a technical advisor. The service was not exclusive and utilizes a fair share approach that limits users from monopolizing the services. iGovTT was also instrumental in advising on a content filtering policy so that users were exposed to legitimate sites with inoffensive content.

Recommendations:

- **MPADT should, by September 6, 2021, set out and communicate a coherent plan on what TTWIFI project is aiming to achieve and by when, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and how it will measure success;**

- **MPADT should ensure that proper security mechanisms are built in to TTWIFI project to protect against potential hackers infiltrating the system; and**

- **The MPADT should provide a breakdown of the total costs of the TTWIFI project since its inception, the details of each proposed phase and the anticipated costs and timelines of each planned phase and write to the Committee setting out how it will**

scrutinize and improve cost and schedule estimates on major projects by September 6, 2021.

4. **Long-standing debts owed from defunct Ministries**

iGovTT's total outstanding Trade Receivables as at February 28, 2021 was $12,313,096. Of this figure, $8,310,124 was related to debts owed for a period more than 360 days. This was approximately 67.5% of the company's total trade receivable. The officials from the company stated that it does have challenges with debt collection and resolution problems but these were primarily related to GoRTT changes which resulted from the non-existence of some Ministries and Departments for which services was provided. For example, a substantial amount of the debts owed for a period more than 360 days were from the former Ministry of Science & Technology, Ministry of Gender Youth & Child Development and Ministry of Justice. Officials from iGovTT stated that the company had reached out to its Line Ministry regarding the debts specifically owed by the Ministry of Science and Technology which was noted to be in the sum of $6,894,318 and approximately 56% of the company's total Trade Receivables. Attempts to resolve the amounts owed by the Ministry of Gender Youth & Child Development and Ministry of Justice have been futile and no positive outcome to date could be identified. iGovTT stated that the next step would be seek approval for write off those two bad debts from the Ministry of Finance (MOF).

Recommendations:

- **iGovTT should review its aged receivables periodically to ensure that all receivables which have been deemed uncollectible have been included in a proposal to be sent to the Board of Directors to be written off; and**

- **The MOF should develop standard operating procedures for the treatment of debts unpaid by state entities that have either been dissolved or realigned. This is a common issue this Committee has identified in many of the state enterprises this Committee has financially scrutinized. The MOF should provide a status update on the write off of the bad debts to the Committee by September 6, 2021.**

5. **Suboptimal Usage of GovNeTT**

GovNeTT is a secure wide-area communications network, which also allows Government Ministries and Agencies access to a host of applications such as messaging services and Internet access. It was set up in 2009 and is the backbone of the entire ICT network of the GoRTT and is essentially an information gateway for services. GovNeTT was established as a foundational platform that all MDAs

could utilize that would allow their internal IT departments focus more on the IT services that were more value-adding to the business of the Ministry.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, GovNeTT was sub optimally utilized but with the sudden need and focus on digital transformation and there was an increase in the use of the GovNeTT. With the recent work, the MPADT and iGovTT did to support the wholesale upgrade of the platform, improved services could be provided, there was greater bandwidth and a whole host of new service offerings were added. From September 2010 to 2021 the cost of GovNeTT had been just over a billion dollars in terms of the infrastructure and communication management services provided by a contractual alliance between to Fujitsu Caribbean (Trinidad) Limited and the Telecommunications Services Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

Recommendation:

- **The MPADT and iGovTT should work together to educate the leadership and executive across MDAs about the importance of capitalizing on the existing enterprise software agreements that exist to reduce the total cost of ownership to operate software across the public service. As stated earlier fully using GovNeTT would allow a MDA's IT staff to focus on operation of that agency's core value added services.**

6. Circumvention of iGovTT's mandate by MDAs

There is no mandate for exclusivity, as such individual MDAs often explore and engage the open market for similar offerings provided by iGovTT. However, given that nothing binds MDA to iGovTT, the company prefers that a shared services delivery model be used for solution delivery at those MDAs not serviced by iGovTT. While that is the preferred scenario, it seldomly happens. As a result, this fragmented national ICT governance framework leads to siloed behaviour across MDAs. As stated earlier, the adoption of a siloed approach by MDAs impacts upon interoperability especially when MDAs that did not previously utilize iGovTT's services, engage the company for ICT solutions. When government enterprise-wide solutions are rolled out, integration to those siloed MDAs has to be done separately which may be time delayed.

Recommendation

- **The MPADT should write to the Committee by September 6, 2021 on the actions taken to encourage other Ministries and Department to utilize the IGOVTT services; and**

- **iGovTT should embark on a marketing and branding strategies and product offering promotion campaign to build awareness of products and service offering. There**

strategies and campaign should include what the company is aiming to achieve and by when, the interventions it will use to achieve its aims, and how it will measure success.

7. iGovTT's Sustainability given Reduced Subventions

iGovTT has been receiving subvention that is below the required budget needed to operate and grow the company on an annual basis. The company has been receiving a subvention shortfall of approximately TT\$12million annually. Should this desired funding be made available, the company would be able to invest in the staffing and systems needed to better support the agenda of its line ministry. From the financial year ended September 30, 2015 the allocation to iGovTT was \$139 million, the subvention subsequently declined every year and as at the year ending September 30, 2020, the subvention from the Government was \$31 million. Over this same period, iGovTT's expenditures moved from \$138 million in 2015, down to \$37 million in 2020. This meant that the company was making a loss over the period. Officials from iGovTT clarified that these losses shouldn't be looked at as losses from expenditure exceeding revenue in the traditional sense but an excess of expenditures over a significantly reduced subvention. As stated earlier, losses were only made because the company had to spend \$37million in expenditure related to the necessary expenses incurred to satisfy the Government's ICT policies on an allocated subvention of \$31 million by the GoRTT. It was further stated that these losses would not be seen going forward as the company will be utilizing its cash resources to make up the difference in the reduced subventions. Officials form iGovTT stated the reduced subvention coincided with the increasing amount of funds allocated to MDAs to operate their ICT systems that would have previously been allocated to iGovTT. The Permanent Secretary in the MPADT stated that the budgetary allocation process for iGovTT which states, as a state entity under the MPADT, the iGovTT would prepare its annual Estimates of Expenditure as well as those for its subsidiary, ttConnect. These would be then submitted to the line Ministry for review and for discussion with iGovTT, for explanations and justifications until a final position is taken after the company's commitments in the next fiscal year have been considered. iGovTT's finalized estimates along with those of the MPADT are submitted to the MOF after which if needed, the MOF will call upon the MPADT to defend its budget submissions. Thereafter, it is really up to the Ministry of Finance to determine what MPADT gets and ultimately what it can allocate to iGovTT. The annual estimates of all MDAs are then submitted to Parliament for approval.

Recommendation:

- **The MOF and the MPADT should write to the Committee by September 6, 2021 to explain the reason for the shortfall in budget allocation to the iGovTT and the increased ICT department allocation to MDAs and how it intends to assist iGovTT in improving its sustainability and management of its finances; and**
- **iGovTT should continue to work and thrive within the financial restraints placed on the company but ensure that it submit requests in a timely manner for supplemental financial assistance form the MPADT when required.**

Conclusion

iGovTT's primary mandate is to provide the GoRTT with the ICT consulting and support services its MDAs need in order achieve cost effectiveness and up to date online service delivery. The Committee notes the efforts being made by iGovTT for the digital transformation of the Government services and the timely development of ICT solutions and services needed as a result of the demand created from the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Committee also noted that iGovTT diligently adhered to the stipulations of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual and should serve as an example for other State Enterprises. The Committee is optimistic that the organization is strategically moving towards a sustainably viable state and will support the iGovTT's continued role in creating a modernized public service and Trinidad and Tobago's overall ICT development.

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

Sgd.

Mr. Wade Mark
Chairman

Sgd.

Mr. Rushton Paray, MP
Vice-Chairman

Sgd.
Ms. Amrita Deonarine
Member

Sgd.
Ms. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal
Member

Sgd.
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, MP
Member

Sgd.
Mrs. Laurel Lezama- Lee Sing
Member

Sgd.

Mr. Keith Scotland, MP
Member

Sgd.

Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP
Member

Appendix 1: Minutes of Meeting

**THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE –
FIRST SESSION, TWELFTH PARLIAMENT**

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY ON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 07, 2021 AT 9:37 A.M.**

Present were:

Mr. Wade Mark	-	Chairman
Mr. Rushton Paray	-	Vice-Chairman
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	-	Member
Mrs. Laurel Lezama-Lee Sing	-	Member
Mrs. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal	-	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	-	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacob	-	Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	-	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Liu Metivier	-	Parliamentary Intern

Absent were:

Dr. Nyan Gadsby- Dolly	-	Member
Mr. Keith Scotland	-	Member

CALL TO ORDER

1.1   At 9:37 a.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING

2.1   The Committee examined the Minutes of the Sixth (6th) Meeting held on Wednesday March 17, 2021.

2.2   There being no omissions or corrections, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Member Amrita Deonarine and seconded by Member Rushton Paray.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING

3.1   With reference to item 3.1, the Chairman informed Members that the Secretariat received the following:

- the responses to request for the additional information from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited on March 17 & 24, 2021 respectively; and
- the responses to the request for additional information from the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago on March 26, 2021.

The responses were uploaded to the Rotunda (e-Repository) and used to draft the Committee's Reports.

3.2   With reference to item 8.3, the Chairman informed Members that questions for additional information were sent to the Ministry of Finance – Investments Division, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and Export–Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited with a deadline of April 21, 2021.

3.3   With reference to item 8.2, the Chairman informed Members that the review of the Committee's regular meeting days be deferred to later in the proceedings.

REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S MEETING DAYS

4.1   The Chairman invited discussions on the review of the Committee's Meetings days. A discussion ensued. Members that were present agreed that the review of the Committee's meeting days remain as an agenda item to provide for input from all Members.

OTHER BUSINESS

5.1   The Chairman invited Members to raise any other matters related to the Committee's work. A discussion ensued:

The Committee agreed to the following:
- Appoint champions for meetings or specific issues highlighted in the issues paper; and
- Creation of a WhatsApp group chat where all matters related to Committee work would be communicated to Members instantaneously.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION RE: NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED, (IGOVTT)

6.1   The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee would examine the Audited Financial Statements of the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, (iGovTT) for the financial years 2015 to 2019.

6.2   The Chairman invited Members to review the Issues Paper on the iGovTT based on the written submission received from the company.

6.3   The Chairman invited Members to raise any issues or questions on the examination into the iGovTT. Members discussed the issues of concern and the general approach for the public hearing.

SUSPENSION

7.1   There being no further business for discussion in camera, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:07 a.m., to reconvene in public.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED, (IGOVTT) FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS 2015 TO 2019.

8.1   The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

8.2   The following officials joined the meeting:

National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited (iGovTT)

- Dr. Sean Rocke   -   Chairman
- Mr. Kirk Henry   -   Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Howard Dottin   -   Director and Chairman of the Finance Committee
- Ms. Jacqueline Morris   -   Director and Chairman of the Human Resources
- Mr. Anthony Tagallie   -   Director and Chairman of the ICT Strategy and Steering Committee
- Mr. Sherwin Ragoonanan   -   Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Ag.)
- Ms. Janet Peters   -   Corporate Secretary/Head Legal
- Ms. Christine Ferreira   -   Head Finance and Administration

Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT)

- Mr. Claudelle McKellar   -   Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Ms. Angela Lum-Joseph   -   Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- Mr. Gary Turpin   -   Director ICT Services
- Ms. Abigail Bynoe   -   Manager, Policy Strategy and Monitoring

Ministry of Finance –Investments Division– MOF-ID

- Ms. Sharon Mohammed   -   Director, Social and Economic Transformation (Ag.)
- Mr. Suresh Dan   -   Senior Business Analyst (Ag.)

- Ms. Kimberlene Pascall - Business Analyst (Ag.)

8.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials.

8.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the hearing. Introductions were exchanged.

8.5 Key Issues Discussed:

1. The iGovTT's human resources (hr) limitation and the impact on its operations in light of the increased demand for ICTs by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) because of the COVID-19 Pandemic;
2. The current number of employees at the company and the desirable number needed to effectively execute the company's Strategic Plan for the period 2020 -2023;
3. The status of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of creating an environment that enables ICT development locally;
4. The status of the company's current Strategic Plan in addressing the lack of agility in the organization due to the existing HR structure and staff's low morale;
5. The reasons for the institutional lag and the inability to retain and attract talented personnel given the increasing need for ICT throughout the public service;
6. The iGovTT's five operational pillars and current corporate social responsibility initiatives;
7. The details of the TTWifi project and its anticipated expansion to easily accessible public spaces;
8. The status of 67.5% of outstanding trade receivables debt being over 360 days old and the recoverability of the company's longstanding debt from the defunct Ministry of Science and Technology;
9. The iGovTT's role in improving and preparing the education sector's ICT infrastructure for the COVID-19 Pandemic;
10. The e Government services developed in 2020 that allowed citizens to engage MDAs from the safety and comfort of their homes;
11. The history and the utilization rate of GovNeTT by MDAs since its inception;
12. The challenges faced by iGovTT when implementing the integrated enterprise-wide ICT solutions for MDAs that have siloed operating systems;
13. The status of the concerns raised by the external auditors with regard to the lack of a formal accounting manual and asset management controls;
14. The reason for the lack of management responses to the management letters by external auditors;
15. The reasons for the MDAs circumventing iGovTT's mandate to seek the services of private ICT consulting firms;
16. The contractual agreements the iGovTT entered into with its clients to secure the funding for projects;
17. The responsibility for the maintenance of the ICT projects after handover;
18. The satisfaction rate of the company's executive with regard to the progress and delivery of iGovTT's work;
19. The measures in place to improve the viability and sustainability of iGovTT given the shortfall in annual government subventions since 2015;
20. The budgetary process involved in the approval of iGovTT annual subvention;
21. The details of the websites and domain name hosted by iGovTT for MDAs;

22. The iGovTT's involvement in the deployment of ICT infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic specifically to the Ministry of Health;
23. The location of the six operational community IT access centres and the status of the functionality of the Navet, Waterloo and Barrackpore centres;
24. The status of the digitization of the public service and whether any assessment was conducted to determine the cost and timelines to complete that initiative;
25. The development of a National Work from Home Policy and the Ministries that were involved in the process;
26. The challenges faced by iGovTT in the execution of the National ICT Plan;
27. The status of the risks identified by the consultants during the conceptualization of iGovTT; and
28. The challenges experienced by the iGovTT's and the role of PA(E)C in assisting the iGovTT's to improve its delivery of services in an efficient, effective and economic manner.

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

8.6   The Chairman thanked the officials for attending the virtual meeting and they were excused.

SUSPENSION

9.1   At 1:09 p.m., the Chairman suspended the public meeting to resume in camera for a post-mortem discussion with Members only.

POST-HEARING DISCUSSION

10.1   The Chairman sought Members' views on the public hearing.

10.2   The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the iGovTT, the Ministry of Finance- Investments Division and the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation.

[**Please see Appendix 1**]

ADJOURNMENT

11.1   There being no other business, the Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.

11.2   The adjournment was taken at 1:15 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

General Questions:

Based on Response to Question 2

1. In light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, what is the status of the development and use of ICTs on a daily basis?

    a. What initiatives need to be implemented/adopted in order for this country to benefit from it and not be left behind?

    b. What factors whether internal or external to iGovTT are required for a modernized public service?

Based on Response to Question 4

1. What is the status of the achievement of the following strategic pillars to date?

    1.1   Supporting the development of a strong ICT security Posture for GoRTT

    1.2   Positioning iGovTT as a 'Centre of Excellence'

    1.3   Being nearly adopters of electronic and digital solutions

    1.4   Aggressively contributing to the development of ICT policies

    1.5   Driving delivery of Government e-services throughout GoRTT

    2.1   Improving the implementation of e-Gov services

    2.2   Forming industry relationships to strengthen our solutions capabilities

    3.1   Focus on architectural frameworks and delivery models to promote interoperability

    4.1   Focus on building strong relationships with key stakeholders to enhance our reputation

    5.1   Focus on building the capacity of our internal talent

    5.2   Driving a new internal culture to enable efficient delivery of goods and services within a digital economy

2. What are the hindrances and solutions to the achievement of these strategic pillars?

3. How is the Company measuring the progress of the Key Performance Indicators to determine whether the pillars have been achieved?

Based on Response to Question 5

1. For the period 2015-2019, provide the number of:
    a. new e-government solutions that were developed;
    b. e-government solutions that were implemented; and
    c. new ttConnect IDs that were created?
2. What is the status of the implementation of an integrative middleware platform for the integration between various GoRTT systems for data sharing and workflow optimization?
3. For the period 2015-2019, provide the:
    a. number and value of ICT procurement activities conducted;
    b. number of ICT solutions designed and implemented; and
    c. the number and type of ICT related draft position papers regarding policies/framework submitted to MPADT and/or associated committees?
4. State the selection process for the participants of the capacity building workshops.
5. State the process for consolidating and identifying the training requirements required by the MDAs.

Based on Response to Question 6

1. Given the existence of other providers and there is no mandate for exclusivity, what is the status of the discussions held with the service providers about a shared services delivery model used for solution delivery?

Based on Response to Question 7

Given the challenges experienced by iGovTT in the execution of the National ICT Plan, what were the underlying root causes of each of these challenges and the efforts undertaken to resolve these challenges?

- Limited ICT governance structures across GoRTT which impacts Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) alignment to overall planning
- Conflicting priorities/shifting focus at MDAs
- Low maturity of ICT processes within MDAs
- Inability to secure the necessary CAPEX and OPEX for the solutions and personnel to implement and ensure continued support of solutions

- The adoption of a siloed approach by MDAs which impacts upon interoperability and the pursuit of a whole of government approach to the integration of enterprise-wide solutions HR attrition at iGovTT and MDAs reducing the capacity to put the required, focused efforts on actions related to the plan

Based on Response to Question 9

1. Which MDAs have approached iGovTT the most seeking ICT solutions i.e., service champions?
2. Given the company does not practice prioritization by agency, how does the company approach a situation where two or more MDAs require ICT Solutions at the same time?

Based on Response to Question 12

Briefly state the following:

   a) A breakdown of the total costs of the TTWIFI project since its inception.
   b) The number of phases and the cost of each phases that were involved in this project.
   c) The details of any underserved populations across Trinidad and Tobago

Strategic Plan

Based on Response to Question 4

1. What was the reason for the selection of PriceWaterHouse Coopers to develop the 2020-2023 strategic plan?

Based on Response to Question 6

Provide a detailed breakdown of the cost attached to each of the following broad categories of value-added solutions and services:

   a. Development of e-solutions;
   b. Implementation of virtual collaboration solutions to support social distancing; and
   c. MS Teams Training and Support.

Project Management

Based on Response to Question 3

1. For projects that were executed for MDAs, when resources from the client were unavailable, has iGovTT at any point had to cover the expenditure for project deliverables.

a. If yes, how often does this happen?

2. For the instances, where the MDA does not commit to the agreed budget for the services provided by iGovTT, what position does iGovTT take in that scenario?

a. Does iGovTT get its Line Ministry involved in the situation given that it reduces the company's earned revenues?

Procurement Practices

Based on Response to Question 1

1. What is the timeframe for iGovTT to complete all the steps to be taken to align itself with the amendments made to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act?

Based on Response to Question 15

1. Do MDAs approach iGovTT needing to dispose of physical ICTs?

a. If yes, what process is involved in the disposal of physical ICT infrastructure?

Accounts Receivable and Prepayments

Based on Response to Question 1

1. The total outstanding Trade Receivables of $12,313,096 as at February 28, 2021, $8,310,124 relates to debts owed for a period more than 360 days. This is approximately 67.5% of the company's total trade receivable.

a. Is the company having debt collection/resolution problems?

b. Has the company sought assistance from its line ministry to resolve these debts given they are mostly due from other state agencies?

c. What is the nature of the debt owed from the individual 'Francola John'?

2. The table on (page 40-41) provided a breakdown, of the outstanding balances in sum of $6,894,328, $194,132 and $158,060 owed from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and Ministry of Justice respectively.

a. State the nature of these debts and the solutions to resolve these longstanding debts given that these debtors no longer exist.

Human Resources

Based on Response to Question 6

There was an approximately $7,000,000 increase in overall staff costs from 2015 to 2016 with subsequent decrease in each year thereafter between 2015 and 2019.

1. Provide the reasons for the spike in staff costs in 2016.
2. What was the reason for the increase of approximately $820,000 in staff costs to the Chief Executive Officer Unit in 2018?

Questions Posed During Public Hearing

1. Which units staff complement were reduced after iGovTT started its streamlining exercise?
2. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased demand for ICT solutions:
   - What were the effects of the reduced workforce on the operations of the iGovTT?
   - State the relief measures taken to minimize the effect of the limited human resources.
3. Provide a copy of the utilization report of MDA use of iGovTT services.
4. Provide a breakdown of monies paid to Fujitsu and TSTT each year since the GovNeTT contract with the two companies were initiated.
5. What recommendations could the PAEC make that could help address iGovTT's organizational issues and concerns and realise its vision of a modernized public service?
6. Briefly state the ICT infrastructure that were undertaken by the iGovTT in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Question to Ministry of Finance

7. Given the shortfall in subvention of approximately TT$12million annually and the growing use of ICT services, was any consideration given by the Ministry of Finance to ensure that the iGovTT receives its total requested allocation?
   a. What was the reason for the shortfall in subvention?
   b. How long has iGovTT been receiving a shortfall in the required budgeted allocation?

Question to Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation

8. What data has the Ministry collected with respect to the daily usage of community-based IT centres?

Appendix 2: Verbatim Notes

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE SEVENTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 07, 2021, AT 10.15 A.M.

PRESENT

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Mr. Rushton Paray	Vice Chairman
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Mrs. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal	Member
Mrs. Laurel Lezama-Lee Sing	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Ms. Keiba Jacobs	Secretary
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Darien Buckmire	Graduate Research Assistant
Mr. Liu Metivier	Parliamentary Researcher (Intern)

ABSENT

Mr. Keith Scotland	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	Member

MINISTRY OF FINANCE – INVESTMENTS DIVISION – MOF-ID

Ms. Sharon Mohammed	Director, Social and Economic Transformation (Ag.)
Mr. Suresh Dan	Senior Business Analyst (Ag.)
Ms. Kimberlene Pascall	Business Analyst (Ag.)

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Mr. Claudelle McKellar	Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ms. Angela Lum-Joseph	Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Mr. Gary Turpin	Director ICT Services
Ms. Abigail Bynoe	Manager, Policy Strategy and Monitoring

NATIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY COMPANY LIMITED (IGOVTT)

Dr. Sean Rocke	Chairman
Mr. Kirk Henry	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Howard Dottin	Director and Chairman of the Finance Committee
Ms. Jacqueline Morris	Director and Chairman of the Human Resources
Mr. Anthony Tagallie	Director and Chairman of the ICT Strategy and Steering Committee
Mr. Sherwin Ragoonanan	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Ag.)
Ms. Janet Peters	Corporate Secretary/Head Legal
Ms. Christine Ferreira	Head Finance and Administration

Mr. Chairman: Good morning, and welcome to the officials from the Ministry of Finance, Investments Division; Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, and the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited known as iGovTT. My name is Sen. Wade Mark, Chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. The Committee on Public Accounts (Enterprises) has a mandate to consider and report to the House on the following:

1. The audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State;

2. The Auditor General's Report on any such accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements; and

3. Whether policy is carried out efficiently, effectively and economically,

and whether expenditure conforms to the authority which governs it.

The purpose of this examination is for the Committee to examine the audited financial statements of the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, iGovTT, for the financial years 2015 to 2019; to ascertain whether expenditure conforms to the authority which governs it; to determine the challenges being faced and possible solutions to these challenges, and to ensure that the policy of the iGovTT is carried out efficiently, effectively and economically.

This virtual meeting is being broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel 11, on Radio 105.5 FM, and on the Parliament YouTube Channel *ParlView*. Participants are advised that their microphones should

remain muted until recognized by the Chair. May I at this time invite my other colleagues on this Committee and who are present to introduce themselves?

[*Introductions made*]

Mr. Chairman: Is there anyone else? I think the hon. Fitzgerald Hinds, is he there? All right. Well, may I take this opportunity to now invite the following representatives to introduce themselves: Minister of Finance, to be followed by the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, and of course, the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited in that order?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, permit me before that happens to introduce myself, my mike was off. I am Fitzgerald Hinds, Committee member.

Mr. Chairman: I was missing my friend but I am glad that you have been found.

Let us proceed now to the other representatives from the Ministry of Finance,

Investments Division; Public Administration and Digital Transformation, and

National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited in that order.

[*Introductions made*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Ministry of Public Administration?

[*Introductions made*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. And may I invite officials from the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited? [*Introductions made*]

Mr. Chairman: Would you be inviting those persons to introduce themselves for the record?

Dr. Rocke: If need be, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

[*Introductions made*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you so very much, anyone else? That is the final— [*Introduction made*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Anyone else?

[*Introduction made*]

Mr. Chairman: Anyone else? No one else. Thank you so very much officials from the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited. May

I at this time invite the representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Investments Division, to make a brief opening statement?

Ms. Mohammed: Good morning, again. I would just like to say that the mandate of the Investments Division includes oversight monitoring, and where necessary, the rationalization of government's

equity holdings in commercial enterprises. The Division acts on behalf of the Minister of Finance, Corporation Sole, and carries out the corporate function. In carrying out its mandate, the Investments Division utilizes the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual which outlines the framework for compliance with official policy and the monitoring mechanism to be used in assessing such compliance. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: May I now invite the Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation to make a brief opening statement?

Mr. McKellar: Thank you, Chair. Chairman and members of the Public Accounts

(Enterprises) Committee, thank you for inviting the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation to participate in the Committee's enquiry into iGovTT, and in particular, the company's audited financial statements for the period 2015 to 2019. We welcome the opportunity, given that the MPADT is currently the line Ministry for iGovTT and also fulfil that role during the period under review.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation's remit includes public service modernization and national ICT development, both of which are critical and intrinsically linked enablers of the Government's National Development Plan, *Vision 2030*. The Ministry is currently in the process of rolling out and supporting a number of enterprise-wide initiatives that will fulfil the Government's undertaking to digitalize the public service; digitize records; develop and implement a national e-identity solution, and enable inter-operability or the seamless exchange of information among government agencies. iGovTT, which is a wholly-owned state company, is the Ministry's primary implementing agency for these and other projects that will contribute to the creation of a digital public service and Trinidad and Tobago's evolution to a digital nation. iGovTT's involvement in this process is consistent with its mandate to provide Government Ministries, Departments and agencies with ICT consulting and support services.

In accordance with the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual,

the MPADT maintains regular communication with iGovTT and has continuously sought to improve upon the mechanisms by which the company reports on its operations and overall performance to the Ministry in order to ensure that value for money is being maximized. Chair, in closing, I wish to assure that my team and I undertake to support the Committee's enquiry by responding as best as we can to your questions and providing subsequently any additional information that may be required. We also welcome any recommendations that this august Committee may proffer as a means of improving the Ministry's ability to provide sound oversight to iGovTT. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you so very much. May I finally invite either the chairman or the CEO of this iGovTT or National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited to make a brief opening statement?

Dr. Rocke: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, again. I think that the esteemed Acting Permanent Secretary summarized, very succinctly, the importance and the role that the National ICT Company Limited, iGovTT, plays within the ICT space for digital government and the digital transformation agenda. What I would say at this point is that we are entirely thrilled to be able to provide any information that would assist the Committee in its deliberations today, and we welcome opportunities to also seek from your deliberations, recommendations for our continued improvement. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Thank you very much. And again, may I warmly welcome each and every one from the various Ministries and government agencies to this very important meeting of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. May I begin by asking a few questions, and then opening the meeting to my other colleagues to intervene. First of all, I want to address the human resources issue and that is contained in your report on pages 60 to 61, and I am addressing this to the iGovTT team. iGovTT indicated that its current manpower is insufficient, which corresponds to the overall decline in staff cost during the period under review.

It was further stated that the organization is currently operating beneath its approved structure and is barely managing by stretching existing resources and reprioritizing and deferring projects. I have a few questions for iGovTT in this respect: What is the status of this situation that I have just outlined? Is this situation sustainable? How did the manpower shortage arise? Which units had their staff numbers reduced the most? How has the insufficient manpower affected the operations of the company? And my final question, under this broad heading of "Human Resources": What relief, if any, is being sought to minimize the effects of a reduced workforce? Mr. Chairman I do not know if your good self or the CEO would want to address those six questions, and if you miss any, kindly remind me so I can restate.

Dr. Rocke: Thank you very much, Chairman. I would begin and I would defer to the CEO as well as any additional input from Director Morris, who currently sits as the chair of the HRC to respond as necessary. I would start by giving a very broad response at first as it relates to the questions asked and that is to indicate first off that the statement that you raised needs to be corrected somewhat in the sense that within the period under question, one of the things that the company endeavoured to do, as you would see from the trajectory outlined with respect to the staffing and the associated cost, was

to encourage internal efficiencies and to focus on ensuring that, at the times in question, the manpower was as necessary for the operations at hand.

In that regard, one of the things that was done to the beginning of that period was to contract, as necessary, the manpower to better align with respect to what services need to be delivered at that point in time. Moving on from there, having done that, as initiatives were on-boarded, a lot of the positions that were previously unfilled, those had to be considered for staffing to support the operations. So, I think that, in a broad sense, the company was attempting to be judicious with respect to the expenditure and to ensure that as much as possible we endeavoured to deliver on our mandate as efficiently as possible. So, in broad sense, that is what I would say, and I would now hand over, with saying that, to the CEO to continue with further specifics. Thank you.

Mr. Henry: Thank you, Chairman. In terms of the overall staffing situation at iGovTT, we find ourselves, I think, in a position where we are executing more projects. We are involved in a greater degree of evangelizing and going out to offer services. So, what is happening is that we—it is almost a good problem to have because the demand for our services is increasing. And coming out from a period where we really were attempting to be judicious in terms of the approach that we took to engaging and having staff in the organization, we see that ramping up and this accounts for the current stretch that exists within the organization. So, in a sense, it is a good problem to have. And with the support of the board and particularly the HR committee on the board, we have identified a strategy in order to meet the prospective demand that we see because, as I tell the team, the country is in a golden age, a renaissance, where we are seeing an increase in the request for services, and to make use of ICT to enable the operations of the Ministry.

In terms of your question, Chairman, with regard to the specific units, I would be grateful if you would allow me to respond in writing. I do not have the particulars before me but I wish to assure you that, yes, we did—we are in a bit of a crunch, but I think it is a crunch of our own making because of the demand for services, which I think the company is now providing. But we do have an approach or a strategy for addressing the shortcomings which may arise as we do our business. I will defer to Director Morris.

Mr. Chairman: Could you inform this Committee, what is the current number of employees in iGovTT and what is the desirable level given your new strategic plan and direction for 2020—2023?

Mr. Henry: Yes, Chairman. Currently we have 117 employees—contracted employees. We are currently in the process of filling 17 vacancies in assorted roles. I must add that the vacancies which we are attempting to fill forms part of the strategy. Because what we try to do is to forecast demand

and provide the human resource to fill the need, as opposed to having resources on the establishment just waiting for work to come. So, we do a bit of forecasting. I mean, it is part art, part science, so that we could be very efficient in terms of the way we deploy our resources and the associated expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Given your strategic plan for 2020 to 2023, your ideal manpower strengths, anticipating, forecasting and seeking to address the growing demands by agencies on your company, can you tell this Committee what is the ideal staff level that you are striving to achieve in an effort to obtain your goals as set out in your strategic plan?

Mr. Henry: Certainly. I would say that the recruitment that we have, the recruitment exercise that we are currently engaged in represents our best forecast for our needs. Of course, as with any strategic plan, there is need to do revision, to adjust in response to the environment. And this is where, again, the close relationship or internally, in terms of the HR committee, and our line Ministry, where we collaborate to fill and adjust as necessary. So, I would say for the current period, moving in for the rest of this fiscal, I think that the recruitments that we have on tap currently should meet the need but, of course, that would be subject to revision based on the needs that would arise coming out of the environment. **Mr. Chairman:** Now, can you indicate to this Committee how has the insufficient manpower affected the operations of this company?

Mr. Henry: One of the things that we adopt as a mantra as a company is that we are focused on using our ICT skills to create value, to improve a business process, to make life easier for a citizen as far as possible. What we have attempted to do is to— cut back may not be the proper word—but to look at internal projects as the first line of activities that we would want to reduce. So, for example, if I have a choice of looking at an internal infrastructure item that is not critical as opposed to providing a service to a Ministry, a Department, or an agency, what we do is that we would focus or divert our resources to meet the need of the client. So, internally, what we would have done is to triage projects and, you know, coincidentally with the pandemic a lot of the internal projects that that we may have had on tap— operational items—we would have kind of limited in order to meet the need of the client.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us look briefly at your strategic plan and maybe you can summarize for us. Where is Trinidad and Tobago in terms of creating an environment that enables ICT development locally? You want to share with our Committee where are we given your strategic plan?

Mr. Henry: Certainly, Chairman. I am wondering though if, respectfully, if we would want to allow the MPADT to chime in on the broad sector and I could perhaps come in after to show how our strategic plan aligns with that vision.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Henry: Thank you.

Mr. McKellar: Chair, could you restate the question please?

Mr. Chairman: No. I was just asking, in terms of the overall direction of the strategic plan of iGovTT, I wanted to ask—I am asking, I should say, where is T&T, Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of creating an environment that enables ICT development? Where are we from your perspective?

Mr. McKellar: Okay. As I articulated in my opening remarks, the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation has been tasked with promoting, stimulating, advancing Trinidad's position as a digital nation. We have rolled out in the last three years an ICT national plan and we have taken a number of steps working towards digitalizing and digitizing the public service, which is essentially is about providing government services, all government services, as many government services, be it to business, be it to citizens, be it amongst government institutions, providing those services online. That is about increasing internal efficiency, it is about minimizing cost, it is primarily about enhancing service delivery, citizens' satisfaction, and of course, national development. As CEO, iGovTT has said, ICT would play a critical role in that process.

Of course, the whole arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has served as a catalyst for us moving forward. There are a number of things that serve as what—foundation pieces or critical enablers of ICT development within the country. So, for example, education, training and development; we definitely need to develop a critical mass of citizens who are able to play a leading role, a supporting role in the digitalization in the evolving of Trinidad and Tobago as a digital society, a digital economy.

10.35 a.m.

There has to be a growing, increasing level of national willingness to participate in an e-society, in an e-economy, both on the part of businesses, on the part of citizens because, for example, services, whether it be services from government or services from the private sector, those could be made available online, but is the citizenry sufficiently attuned and willing to participate in online business for one reason or the other? So, there is another input that flows from that, the ability of the State and other agencies to develop online mechanisms that are robust, resilient. There are redundancies to deal with failures, systems that enable trust and confidence, for example, protection of citizens' data that may be stored online in government agencies and Departments.

So there is a multifaceted system or puzzle that needs to be put in place to effect the kinds of ICT development and digital evolution that we want to have, but like I said, I mentioned some of the pieces: upskilling of our citizens and our public employees, a whole change of mindset and awareness

in the broader community, there are issues related to legislative reform because there are a number of pieces of legislation that would fit in and serve as enablers of a digital economy and those things are being actively looked at. I hope that encapsulates a response.

Mr. Chairman: May I return to the CEO by asking: Will the 2020—2023

strategic plan addresses the weakness identified with regard to the lack of agility due to the existing HR structure and low staff morale? I would like to ask the CEO to address that matter.

Mr. Henry: Certainly, Chairman. So, the 2023 strategic plan really consists of five elements. Now, these five elements are based on a model for digital transformation first outlined by MIT. It is based on hard data and research. And essentially, Pillar 1, we are focused on service delivery excellence. In order to achieve that there is a focus on ensuring that our infrastructural elements, both hardware and software, are operating as it should. And when we say service delivery excellence, we are looking at it from the perspective of the three dimensions of people, processes and technology to put the necessary disciplines in place to ensure that at a base level we have a foundation to operate from.

The other element is a focus on the development in the growth of a portfolio of e-government services. Now, this is critical; this is a critical element of the strategic plan because we need to grow our portfolio of services that is available to our citizens in an online fashion. And this came to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic, where we were able to push out services and you saw a willingness on the part of the citizenry to utilize those services.

The third element of our strategic plan speaks to support, which the PS just mentioned, the development of governmental interoperability. The days of having to provide the same information to multiple agencies are numbered. And we are focused, like a laser beam, on ensuring that we address these issues but it requires some work.

The fourth element is that as an organization—and I consider the company to be a sleeping giant in a sense—is to consolidate our position as trusted advisors. So, we have been working diligently with Ministries, Departments and agencies to be the first port of call for support.

Now, finally to address the whole issue of agility and the human capital that exists, we have identified capacity building to be able to effectively operate in what is commonly known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Because we realize that the skills that exist today may not be relevant tomorrow, particularly data analytics, the use of artificial intelligent to support the activity of a modernized public sector.

And just one more, in terms of morale, when we developed the strategic plan, at the time, prior strategic plan that was an issue. In fact, at the end of I think 2018, one of the things we conducted is

to look at the internal voice; the internal customer's voice. In other words, a staff satisfaction survey. It was around 34 per cent if I am not mistaken. The last satisfaction survey that we conducted in the height of the pandemic showed that the satisfaction levels within the company had moved to 80 per cent. So, we have a committed, we have an exciting, an enthused bunch of team members at iGovTT and the challenge for us is to leverage that to create value across the GORTT landscape.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, and my final question before I open up to my other colleagues is simply this: What do you attribute to be the reason for what has been described as the institutional lag? For example, there appears to be an inability on the part of the company to retain and attract talent. Can you explain to us what is the reason or what are the reasons for this development? And how can we as a Committee assist you and iGovTT in moving forward in this particular period where you are seeking to bring about that digital revolution?

Mr. Henry: Thanks for that question, Chairman. Indeed, I think the mere fact that you asked that question sets us in the path to improving the situation. I will start by saying that. The institutional lag really is a function of the culture that exists not only—that existed, let me say, I am speaking in the past tense—that existed at this iGovTT, at this state enterprise and it is what I would like to call the classical or the waterfall approach to managing.

Now, again, if you look—I like to look at the data, eh; I like to look at the research and the research says that the companies, the organizations that succeed in the landscape today are those that are agile, open to change, is not focused from a management leadership perspective command and control, but more on collaboration and coaching. It is about using small "I" innovation in everything. In other words, fostering a climate of innovation. When a member of the team makes a suggestion, has an idea, there is a round table space that we could bring that to the fore and utilize, and those are the things that we have been practising at iGovTT because we identify changing the culture and creating a digital mindset as critical to us achieving our mandate.

So, I think that is something that needs to be encouraged and it should not just be at iGovTT because—the example I would give is during the pandemic we operated even more efficiently and we did it in a remote fashion. And I think it is an example that if we could replicate and share with the wider state enterprise sector in our country, I think it is something that we could add value.

In terms of the whole issue of retention and attraction, it is a challenge. We try to make the work interesting; we try to make use of the technology, we deploy things like, what I would say—I do not want to say bleeding edge but leading edge—Chatbot, the use of AI, data analytics in our work and that has encouraged a lot of the younger folk to participate and say—because they want to have

bragging rights about deploying things. But I think if we consider Maslow and that pyramid, we need to make it attractive because in this current climate IT professionals and tech talent is at a premium. So, we are competing with other sectors and we have to find ways, not just simply through compensation packages, et cetera, but to encourage and to keep the talent that we have. Because we have suffered a bit of poaching, but I think what needs to happen—and I know our line Ministry is doing it. They are making a concerted effort to work on culture and to support our efforts to bring the compensation package in line with what happens in the private sector because we have—I mean, Chairman, we have lost a lot of talent to consulting firms. And if I may respectfully, Chairman, suggest—I do not know if our chairman or the chairman of the HR, our committee will like to chime in.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Dr. Rocke: I would just say that the CEO has very succinctly summarized the challenges that are faced by the company and that the board, the management and the Ministry are actively working towards providing sustainable solutions towards. As the CEO has pointed out, yes, there are matters of compensation, there are matters of motivation and so on, but given the environment we operate in and as mentioned by the Acting PS before the pandemic catalyst, it is a really interesting time and it is a notable challenge to attract and retain the necessary staff. In other words, there are things we can do and there are things in the framework we currently are not able to do.

But I think that looking at some of the evidence, as the CEO has suggested, for example, the proof is in the pudding, the service roll out, the sorts of projects that are being undertaken at significantly reduced cost to the country and the fact that over the last few years one thing I would say that I am very heartened to see is the increased internal development of solutions as well as the increased interaction with various stakeholders. So, for example, you spoke before about the environment. You asked about the environment and one aspect of that would be the youth and the fact that they have a critical part to play within this entire development thrust moving forward. And one of the things that iGovTT has been pretty focused on over the last few years is engaging the youth as evidence by our HackTT initiative where they work in partnership, it is a multi-stakeholder model, they work with MDAs, Ministries, divisions and agencies to identify certain problems that are—and prioritize accordingly. Through a bit of competition and mentorship with the private sector, the students are able to help with the development of proof of concepts which can then be deployed as solutions for the recipient Ministries.

So that is an ongoing, I would say Petri dish model, but those are the sort of common eye things that the CEO is referring to. And I would say that from wearing my other hat at the university, students are extremely excited about these sorts of opportunities to participate in national service when they do come around. So, on that side, you get that level of enthusiasm and you were able to fill the pipeline but we also face the challenges for the more experienced members to contribute at higher levels as well. I do not know if—permit me to just past it to Director Morris if she has anything else to add, but I think that with what we said that should hopefully answer your questions.

Mr. Hinds: Before that, Ma'am, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Mr. Hinds: Would you permit me an opportunity to make an intervention at this juncture?

Mr. Chairman: Well, I will just ask you to hold for one moment to allow Ms. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal to make her intervention and I shall immediately revert to you thereafter.

Mr. Hinds: I am more than gratified, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: No problem. Mrs. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Thank you very much, Chair. Now, I heard the point being made just now about young people and we all appreciate that very important to young people is Wi-Fi, battery life and data. I could speak about my children in particular. That being said, my questions at this point are relative to our TTWifi initiative. If the Committee can give us some information as to how long—and I guess you would know amongst yourself who would be the appropriate person to answer this question. I just want a general sense as to how long has the project been ongoing and the success that you have been able to—or any sort of information relative to the TTWifi project?

Mr. Henry: Sure. I would just ask for the DCEO who operates—who moonlights as also our head of infrastructure to respond please. Thanks.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ragoonanan: Hi, good morning. To the question on the TTWifi project, this has always been—this has been an ongoing project. It was implemented firstly in 2015 where the phase one execution of that project saw Wi-Fi implementation on several PTSC buses. Since then, PTSC has taken over the project and they have been running with their own Wi-Fi initiative to further outfit their fleet. Separate and apart from that, the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, through the Telecommunications Authority, has been using the Universal Service Fund to further expand this in a phase two initiative, which is where we are now, expanding that beyond PTSC to

transportation hubs, maxi-taxi hubs, et cetera, bus stations and the ports as well, as well as waiting room in hospitals and in the libraries as well.

So, the anticipation of it is to have Wi-Fi available in public spaces for general consumption by citizens. There is a simple splash page which gives you the information and disclaimers about, you know, be safe about the utilization of the service, make sure that you do not utilize web pages or services that may be capturing private information, et cetera, because there is an exposure that you may have seeing that it is a shared public space that you will be utilizing this.

As well, the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation through us, we are working together with them in the development of community access centres which is also going to introduce Wi-Fi services and computing infrastructure at various community access centres or community centres at the different locations. Right now, we are undertaking, with the Ministry, three and I think there are nine more centres currently lined up, separate and apart from, I believe there were 10 or 13 that were done prior to this stage.

So, there are various implementation stages of getting that public Wi-Fi in place. As I said we started with the public transport; we have moved now to the transportation hubs, hospital waiting rooms, libraries, which is in a state of deployment presently, and we are also working on the community access centres to have that also available.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Okay. Fantastic. So, let us talk dollars and cents now, right? Would you be in a position at all to give us an estimated cost of this TTWifi project since its inception? It is noted that you said that the project would have started from 2015 and 2015, of course, to 2021 is a significant period. But in a nutshell, would you be able to identity to us what has been the overall cost to the country thus far?

Mr. Ragoonanan: I do not have that detail before me but that is something that we could always get back to the Committee.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Okay, fantastic. Now, how many phases—I know you—well, of course, you would have gone through speaking of—when you spoke about the inception of the project on the PTSC buses and so on, and would have taken us to where we are at currently, I guess that would—in essence, you were explaining the phases of the project, right?

Mr. Ragoonanan: Correct.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: I had another question of course relative to, again, cost and the second phase of the project, but you said you did not have that information. So, I look forward, at least, to

that cost information being provided to us. So, thank you very much relative to the questions I had on the TTWifi.

To the entire Committee, my other question now is relative to accounts receivables and prepayments based on the submissions that was submitted. So, again, I am sure, gentlemen, you all would know who would be most prepared to answer my questions relative to that. Now, what I noted is that of iGovTT's total outstanding trade receivables of, I believe, $12 million—313 dollars and 9—313— yeah, let us say above 12million, right, as of February28, 2021, it is noted that 8,310 million thereabout relates to debts owed for a period more than 360 days. Now, this debt is approximately, in my calculation—I am not too good in maths— but it is approximately 67.5 per cent of the company's total trade receivables. My question is why is 67.5 per cent of the outstanding debt more than 360 days old? Would you all be able to answer that question?

Mr. Henry: Yes. If you look at the—just briefly and I will ask for support from the head of finance who is on the call. You would notice that—I am not sure in your schedule there you would have seen that it is associated with the Ministry of Science and Technology for project work associated with what the head of infrastructure just outlined in terms of community access centres. So, of the existing trade receivables, you will see that approximately 7million of that is associated with a Ministry—an entity that currently does not exist. And I will provide—if you want details of the breakdown, we have that, which I can share.

The other major receivable, over 360, really is assorted projects that would have executed and where we continue to attempt to retrieve the funds, but I think the big-ticket item there really comes out of the Ministry of Science and Technology. The other thing I would want to point out is that if you look at the schedule of our trade receivables, you will see that really and truly the bulk of it is associated with that major entity. And it really came about—the occasion for it, I would want to defer perhaps to the head of finance to provide some further details regarding how it got to that. But before I do, just to add that what we are doing; what the company is engaged in currently, particularly—I have a finance committee that is very focused on this is ensuring that as we move forward, these types of account receivables do not appear on our books because of the associated implications for IRFS 9, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And I will now hand over to the head of finance to add some colour to what I just said member, respectfully.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Thank you.

Ms. Ferreira: Hi, good morning. The CEO is correct in that the large part of the receivable is actually the Ministry of Science and Technology which is no longer in existence. And again, it is the community

access centres which we had invoiced for—and that was quite a while back, 2015—we still try to recover that amount. It is being provided for as per the IFRS 9 and we continue to try to collect. The other outstanding receivables, again, is for Ministries and we continue to see if we can collect, but they are mainly provided for. Current receivables are not a problem, we follow through and we have been quite successful in the collection of those receivables.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Okay, fantastic. Now, as we have finance here, a question. I noted that there was a debt identified as still owed to the company by Frank Holder John, I believe it is. Would you be able to shed some light—so this is an individual. So, you would have explained about debts owed by other state agencies but this particular individual name, would you be able to provide any sort of information? I recall it is a Frank Holder John. This is of course based on your response, the submissions made by iGovTT under the header "Accounts Receivables and Prepayments". I believe it was in response to question 1 of that particular header, but I did recall coming across that name Frank Holder John. Would you be able to shed some light on that debt that is owed by this individual?

Ms. Ferreira: Yes. This is a litigation matter that we have ongoing right now. And we had sent a debt collector and we had been receiving small amounts. So, the amount has actually been reduced and we continue to follow through with that.   **Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal:** So, the matter is currently being litigated or is it that you are—because I know you said that it is a litigation—

Ms. Ferreira: It is just a debt collector.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: It is in debt collect—okay, excellent. Chairman, that is the extent of my questions relative to the accounts receivable and prepayment. Do I have some more time, Chair, or would I be imposing on my other colleagues?

Mr. Chairman: Hold your thoughts and we would come back to you.

Mrs. Sagramsingh-Sooklal: Okay, Chair. Great.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Fitzgerald Hinds to intervene at this time.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, one of the purposes as you identified of this Committee is really in this scrutiny—in this process of scrutiny to identify shortcomings, problems, challenges and we make recommendations largely with a view of having them fixed. I have had a look on this company and I have noted that in the most recent management letter of 2020, from PKF, that accounting unit of high repute, they identified that they have found no "notable"—my word—or "reportable"—the accountant's word—or any serious issues around the financial statements and so on of this entity.

This entity, Mr. Chairman, was born in 2009. I am not going to politicize the issue but I took note of that date and the vision. And from all that I have heard from the CEO this morning and from the chairman of the board and so on, I think we are on to a very good thing and I think the people of Trinidad and Tobago ought to recognize that. What we have in front of us this morning, Mr. Chairman, is a good thing, a great thing, and I see the need for us to protect it because the mandate from the reports that we have read—and the public does not always understand this and as I speak, I speak with the public in mind and with that I urge the officials before us to speak not with Chairman Mark, he is a very learned man or Fitzgerald Hinds or Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal, but with the public in mind. I think the public ought to understand what this is about and I read in those reports, of course, this company was born to service MDAs, Ministries, divisions, and agencies. It does not go outside of that, it is not a private sector operator but it is bringing a private sector ethos, modernizing the entire government platforms, ICT platform across Trinidad and Tobago in the public sector in the Ministries, in the divisions and the agencies. And I heard the CEO speak about elements of poaching.

In the context of us protecting us, we are like a sitting duck. We have these people working in the state sector, iGovTT, doing wonderful and necessary things. If any country, including ours, has to progress, has to move on in this digital world, what they are doing is a great thing and I want to ask the CEO with some element of candour, whether—if this mandate is broadened to include activity in the private sector, to do business with other elements, whether that should make any substance. This is a deeply philosophical issue, eh. I understand this is a state agency, but I am just asking for the country's benefit whether that is a matter ever came in contemplation and if so, how might that make them more competitive, be able to pay their staff and their operators more potently—I cannot find a better word, Mr. Chairman—so as to protect us from the poaching that we heard from the CEO subsist? Mr. CEO?

Mr. Henry: Thank you, member. I think—I agree that it is a deeply philosophical question. It is something that the board and management, we have had extensive discussions around but I just want to add another dimension to that. Where the country fits currently, particularly the public sector, our mandate really is about supporting the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation to modernize the public sector. And the reality is we have a lot of work to do. And while the entrepreneur in yours truly would relish the opportunity to go out and compete, I think the mission at hand really, at least in the short to medium term, should be focused on enabling our MDAs, because it will have a lot of rippling effects to benefit, first and foremost citizens, as well as the way we are

able to do business. And indeed, it would also bode well for the country when you look external to our shores and investors look in at the level of development that exists because it will enhance our risk profile.

11.15 a.m.

So, I think I agree 100 per cent and would relish the opportunity for the company to go out and to compete, but I think the mission in the short to medium-term has to be squarely focused on enabling the activities of our Ministries to make life better for our citizens. That is how I will respond, member.

Mr. Hinds: And I do appreciate that. I see that that voracious creature that is business, the private sector, they may not be so minded you know, and they look on you, and we are at serious risk because for a few dollars more they will take your best constantly and that I am sure partly explains some of the turnovers that we would have seen earlier alluded to in this discussion. Let me move on a little bit so that the public could better understand. I am aware, and they need to be aware, that you, iGovTT, would have played a very substantial role in causing the children, the young people of Trinidad and Tobago—and I speak as Minister of Youth Development and National Service to some extent—to have better access to online education facilities necessary as that is especially in the context of the COVID-19 experience. I would like you to tell this Committee what role you, iGovTT, played in this? And did the role you played in making this thing happen in the education sector at least in Trinidad and Tobago— I understand that you played a role in the procurement of certain devices and so on. Could you tell us about that role so we could better understand how you proceed along the lines of your pillars, your strategic plan and so on?

Mr. Henry: Yes, member. Indeed, the company—from the onset we were behind the scenes. In terms of the—when we speak specifically about education, we supported the work done with respect to enabling the online learning to happen through the network engineering activities that would allow it to actually happen. And typically—and I really appreciate this question because typically the citizens or the public just see the results, the outputs, but iGovTT almost from the get-go was involved in the infrastructure elements in terms of supporting the wonderful team across at the Ministry of Education to deliver continued learning in an online fashion. Additionally, we are involved in the procurement activity associated with the devices, laptops, tablets, that the Government has engaged in to make the devices, peripherals available to bridge that gap that exists. And we were involved from inception part of planning in terms of the procurement activities, and I dare say that we are actually engaged in that procurement which is happening at lightning speed as I like to say. We are also involved in activities surrounding providing Wi-Fi in a portable fashion, Mi-Fi devices, so that the disadvantaged children

in our midst, the Government saw it fit to fill that gap to meet a need, and again we were involved very closely in the procurement, in the specification, in the planning of the activity, and that is currently underway and is approaching a stage where it is coming to an end.

In terms of Internet capability, we are looking currently at using our pipe, our Internet pipe, to distribute Internet in secondary schools, to make it available for people in the community of the schools—not just the students—to have access and to make use to bridge that digital divide. And that is in addition to the day-today that we do to support from a business development, a consulting perspective in the underlying Ministries ultimately geared at providing a service in this case to a student or a teacher as they go about attempting to educate our children. I do not know if the Chairman would like to add anything, but essentially that just represents just some of the activities that we were involved in during the period as it relates to education, member.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you very much. I want to—my next question has to do with— I think you have about 11 strategic pillars that you have established for yourself, am

I, correct? I am trying to get the document in front of me. I think it is—

Mr. Henry: Five, member.

Mr. Hinds: Five of them? Yes?

Mr. Henry: Yes member, five.

Mr. Hinds: Could you tell the public what you mean by "pillar" and what they are, so that they can understand?

Mr. Henry: Certainly.

Mr. Hinds: Because my next question will touch and concern that, but I do not want this conservation to be between you and I alone. The public is sharing this with us.

Mr. Henry: Certainly. At the very heart of what we do is to seek an alignment with government policy. *Vison 2030* outlines some developmental objectives of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and from that, cascading downward you have the national ICT Blueprint 2018—2022 produced by the Government. We are completely guided by those strategies. Falling on from that we have identified—and just to be clear let me just outline the vision for 2030—

Mr. Hinds: Thank you.

Mr. Henry: —which speaks to:

"Improving Productivity Through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation".

The infrastructure bit is where we are squarely focused on; making use of the digital technology.

"Putting People First: Nurturing our Greatest Asset

Promoting Good Governance and Service Excellence

Building Globally Competitive Businesses"—sector

"Valuing and Enhancing Our Environment."

From that we would have developed five strategic pillars to give life to the Government's vision.

One, to focus on service delivery excellence. We want to utilize the digital technologies to allow our public service to deliver services to our citizens. That is almost the raison d'être for our existence. And, for example, at the start of the pandemic iGovTT was involved in the roll out of an online payment facility that allowed citizens to go online for the first time and pay for a birth certificate. So, what that allowed for was that citizens did not have to leave their homes to face the potential of the pandemic but to execute and to get. We have instances where citizens in the diaspora, as far afield as Israel, would have made requests for birth certificates completely online and had it delivered via TTPost to them. So that is one of our pillars, but we feel that there is more that we could do.

The second item or the second pillar is to focus on business development and the growth of a portfolio of e-Government services. You would see in recent times we would have assisted our Ministry of National Security with the travel exemption application which we developed to make—again, to make life easier and to support the Ministry. We have developed an e-appointment service so that our citizens do not necessarily have to be on the phone, and appearing in a Ministry and putting themselves at risk during this pandemic time. We have developed an EmployTT application which we use at iGovTT which allows citizens to apply for jobs that exist in the space. We are focused on improving the number of services that we are able to provide via the Internet.

The third element is to support the development of interoperability. This is a huge one for us. The PS would have mentioned it, and it really is about improving the maturity of underlying systems at various Ministries to allow for the sharing or the passing of relevant data to allow citizens to conduct business at individual Ministries without having to move from one place to a next, and ultimately to stay at their machine, their PC, their laptop, their mobile device and conduct business.

The fourth pillar is to consolidate our position as the trusted advisor to GORTT. Now, we thing that is very important. We are about to embark on a programme of evangelism where we are continuing in an accelerated rate to interact with various Ministries to provide support in terms of developing the governance arrangements to run their IT, all with the goal of improving the way they do business and

deliver to citizens. Because at the heart of everything we do is what value does it bring to the Ministry, but more importantly the value it adds to the life of a citizen.

Finally, capacity building. We need to develop internal skills. We need to ensure that we future-proof our human capital because there are lots of emerging technologies, not pie in the sky. I am speaking to things like data analytics, the use of artificial intelligence to support public sector service delivery. Those are the five pillars, all of which are aligned to Government's 2030 vision which drives the activity of iGovTT, member.

Mr. Hinds: You know, as I come to my conclusion on this round, all that you have said Mr. CEO—and I am very happy I asked that initial part of the question because all that you have said, I am aware it touches issues of national security, it touches issues of the way the police conduct affairs on the road with tickets and issues concerning a major sector, the Licensing Department, the Registrar

General's Office. People will tell you now that they can access a birth certificate in 15 minutes, 20 minutes. All of these things, you are really like the grease that oils the wheels of the society, the Government platform, making the quality of life, issues of national security, issues of the ease of doing business, assisting in that way the private sector although you are a state entity. I am happy that I asked the first part of my question.

The second part of my question was for you to tell the public how then in the context of these pillars you would have made Trinidad and Tobago safer, healthier, more accessible to education and better, but you have already answered them. So, I will now pass the forum over to the Chairman again so that he could continue, not before I say I am really genuinely proud of iGovTT as a citizen, as a Member of Parliament, and I can be justifiably proud based on your record from 2009—we are in 2021 now—and the portents to the future provided that you all stay on the pillars and on track. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. I now invite member Amrita Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you, Chair. Good morning again. My question goes to either the PS or iGovTT. Now, in the submission that we would have received I saw reference was being made to GovNeTT, and for the listening public could you just clarify or explain to us what GovNeTT is?

Mr. Henry: Okay, member. GovNeTT, if you would recall when I mentioned the pillars, one of the things we spoke about was service excellence, and when we talk about transformation, one of the elements of digital transformation is the notion of having a solid or operational excellence, and a solid piece of infrastructure. GovNeTT represents—it was set up in 2009. It represents a core piece of infrastructure that hosts—allows for office productivity, and some core services that any organization,

any business organization would require, and it revolves around enterprise collaboration, automation, security in terms of safe browsing, et cetera, and acts essentially as an information gateway for services. Ministries utilized GovNeTT for their collaboration, their email services, intranet services, et cetera, et cetera. We also use it as a delivery mechanism to provide safe Internet to secondary schools. And this piece of infrastructure following a shared services model was established in 2009. The plan being to have a shared service available for Ministries, Departments and agencies to utilize so that their internal IT departments will not be focused on what we would call foundational services, and they would be focused more on the IT services that are more value-adding to the business of the Ministry and this is what GovNeTT represents. I do not know if my Acting DCO wants to add anything, but that essentially represents the concept of the Government network infrastructure.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So given that it is expected to be something that integrates all Ministries using your Internet services, I see that one of the challenges that you all identified in the submission is that there is an adoption of a siloed approach by Ministries, Departments and agencies which impacts upon interoperability and pursuit of the whole of government approach to the integration of enterprise-wide solutions. So, tell me, is it that GovNeTT has not been able to take up maximum utilization across all Ministries? Is that the case?

Mr. Henry: I will say at the time in terms of the period that is in question here, that we are examining, it was, I would say suboptimal in terms of usage. However, the caveat now is with the establishment of the MPADT, one of the things that is happening there, there is a renewed focus—and perhaps the PS will speak to this— on the whole notion of the governance of enterprise IT. And governance of IT is critical to translating the strategic intent of the policymakers, our government, down into the operational reality of the various Ministries, Departments and agencies, and that is just a fancy way of saying what is intended actually happens in the operations. So, it was suboptimal in my view what I am seeing, and maybe— I think it is twofold. I think the pandemic as well as the adjustment, the focus of MPADT to digital transformation, you are seeing an increased uptick in the use of the GovNeTT combined with the recent work that we did, MPA, the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation would have supported a wholesale upgrade of the facility to provide improved services, greater bandwidth, et cetera, a whole host of services. I would say—I would posit that we are seeing an uptake, and it bodes well as individual Ministries start to create more systems, they will make use, more or greater and greater use of that piece of infrastructure. I hope that answers your question, member.

Ms. Deonarine: Yeah. It causes me to think of another question. So right now, what is the utilization rate by existing Ministries and where you intend that utilization rate to go given the initiatives that you all are deploying at the moment? **Mr. Henry:** The current utilization is that all Ministries in some form or fashion make use of a service associated with GovNeTT in terms of sites or participating in the exchange services that we offer, et cetera. Utilization, tongue in cheek, I would say that I would like to see 100 per cent utilization because it represents what I dare say is a shared services model, and if we talk about value for money and the benefit of the economies of scale, that is automatic if we move in that direction. If you look in the private sector that is the model of choice that is used for IT services delivery, a shared services approach, and we are following along that rate.

In terms of the—I could tell you we have over 27,000 users who make use, for example, of our enterprise agreements. In terms of the number of sites, it is hundreds and I can get that information, the stats. I do not know if—I suspect my head of infrastructure, the Acting DCO would have that in his head, but we could provide specific statistics to you in writing if that is okay with you?

Ms. Deonarine: Yes, I would appreciate that. Through you, Mr. Chair, I want to pursue my line of questioning with respect to GovNeTT. Now, I see in one of your submissions, one of the appendices, you would have given a breakdown of the contract period of GovNeTT, and from September 2010 to 2021 the cost of this infrastructure has been just over a billion dollars in terms of managed services. Could you explain to us—and I see that the vendor is TSTT and Fujitsu. So, could you explain to us or let us know what is the percentage that is being paid for TSTT and for Fujitsu?

Mr. Henry: The Fujitsu/TSTT, it is an alliance in terms of infrastructure and communication services. The breakdown, I will endeavour to provide that because even as I look at my notes here, I do not have that specific breakdown for you, but I—before I promise, let me ask my Acting DCO if we have that or what it would take to get it, but either way we will endeavour to provide it to you.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Now, GovNeTT right, now, I understand based on what you are saying and based on the submission that phase 2 was implemented in 2010. When was phase 1 because it seems as if there was something before 2010 that led up to phase 2?

Mr. Henry: Yes. Let me—

Ms. Deonarine: Let me just continue.

Mr. Henry: Sure.

Ms. Deonarine: And also, I see in your submission that you said that the platform upgraded with scheduled completion in May 2021. Right? So, you expect that to be completed. But at the same time, through my research, I saw from the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation

website, they issued a media release on the 5th of July, 2017, related to this same GovNeTT matter, and I am reading from the text here. It says that:

"…GovNeTT 3.0 issued in 2014 which had been expected to cost…$234 million and $43"—million— "dollars respectively but which had to be abandoned due to several issues."

So, could you provide some clarification? Is it that there are some aspects of GovNeTT that were totally abandoned and you all started from scratch again? Because my concern lies here because up to that point of 2017, $600 million was spent on this infrastructure and that is just taking into consideration 2015—2017, and based on what—you are nodding. It seems as if something existed on GovNeTT prior to 2010 as well. So just provide some clarification for the Committee please.

Mr. Henry: Certainly. I will ask for some support here from my head of infrastructure.

Mr. Ragoonanan: Sure, no problem. Ms. Deonarine, just to answer your question, so phase 1 for GovNeTT was conceptualized back in 1998. It was actually deployed and went live between 2003 and 2004, and just to give a bit of an understanding, I mean, some of the technologies that existed then, did not exist today. So, at that point in time the infrastructure and the solution were very distributed, which meant that at each Ministry there was actually a large number of devices, and servers, and infrastructure that were placed independently of any other Ministry. So, for example, Ministry of Education had their own infrastructure associated with Ministry of Education; Ministry of Public Administration had their own infrastructure associated with Ministry of Infrastructure. At that point in time if you would recall, the communication services that were available would have been frame relay dial-up services. So, we did not even have the facilities as we do now with some of the high-speed bandwidth that we do have presently.

Coming out from that period, 2004 towards 2007, there was an upgrade that was done to the tail end of the solution wherein the advanced communication technologies were brought in. So, we started to move away from the frame relay, we started to move away from the dial-up services towards ADSL, and also towards metro Ethernet. And I know I am getting a little bit technical here, but it is just to show the progression of the network.

So, in 2009, as CEO would have mentioned, the phase 2 that came into play started to reconsolidate the infrastructure that was once distributed. So instead of having a sprawl of computing infrastructure sitting at each individual Ministry, all of that was back-hauled into two data centres. So, at that data centre we consolidated all the email services, all the domain services, DNS services, et cetera, the Internet services as well rather than have it terminated at each individual Ministry were controlled and terminated at these data centres as well. So, we started to benefit as well from consolidation and that

sharing of infrastructure which is the fundamental principle of a shared services model. From 2010 to present, we would have been utilizing the platform as it would have been implemented in 2010 up until 2017.

So, the item that you just raised in terms of the 2014 publication, that would have been the termination of the standard period for the services contract and we would have gone out to tender. The tender in the estimates roughly came up to the numbers that you were talking about in terms of $250 million, and at that point in time there were several challenges with funding, et cetera, and moving ahead with the solution that would have terminated those procurement activities. But there was an agreement for and—this is the basis under which we are still operating—is a Cabinet decision that identified the month-to-month continuation of the service with the same contractor alliance TSTT/Fujitsu.

In 2017, the contractor alliance, both TSTT and Fujitsu, made an offer to the Ministry which was later formalized, that through their own cost they would venture to upgrade the entire platform. So, all the servers, all the networking devices, bandwidth was increased as well, security devices were upgraded. Everything associated with the services that existed on the platform were upgraded, and at this point in time we are just at the tail end of closing off those. Largely in part the new services are in place. There is the tail end for the project which will deal with service testing and sign offs, et cetera, but that is where we are. So, our clients, which is the public service, they have really been benefiting from an enhanced and upgraded platform from the, I would say the tail end of 2019 to the beginning of 2020, and we have been slowly and incrementally upgrading and updating on those.

Ms. Deonarine: Therefore then, would you say that the current architecture is fully up to date? And what also is being done to ensure that whatever you have in place is not bordering on obsolete, because as you know, information technology and IT solutions, all these IT things are quite agile and developing quite rapidly as time progresses.

Mr. Ragoonanan: So, the arrangement that we have, and with the upgrade of the platform that was recently done, we have regular reviews of the platform and the technologies to ensure that obsolescence is not met. Coming up to 2017 when the offer was made, we were actually at that point of technology obsolescence where a lot of the devices were coming to end of life. A lot of the products and the software technologies that we were using were towards end of life as well, and now where we are, we are actually at the current versions of all of those. So, for those of the members here or the listening public who would be familiar with some of the Microsoft email technologies, recently Microsoft advised that there is a vulnerability that existed within their email solution, and we were at the point of the latest version which would have had all the patches and all the plugs in place to ensure

that those vulnerabilities do not impact us. So, there is a continuous improvement on that and continuous review on that platform to ensure that we do not end up in that state again where we are faced with obsolescence issues.

11.45 a.m.

Mr. Henry: Through the Chair, if you just permit me just to add, member, one thing. One of the things that we have been focused on is establishing a governance arrangement where in terms of improving process majority, one of the questions that we responded to was the question about enterprise risk management framework and we take a risk-based approach to managing the infrastructure, both hardware and software, and the disciplines of risk management as it relates to IT and maintaining the usability of the underlying infrastructure is something that we are paying close attention.

And our PS, we have a very close working relationship with the Ministry and I know for a fact that one of the things that is happening is an enhanced governance arrangement where there are specific working committees established to monitor and to work with Ministries as well as iGov to ensure that that number one risk, which is sadly often the case in governments around the world, it is not confined to Trinidad, where we deploy plants and equipment and the focus on maintenance is not there. That is something that we hope to be a thing of the past and we have even identified it in our strategic plan as an item that we will be focused on. Thank you.

Ms. Deonarine: So, there is an existing contractual arrangement to ensure that the hardware is continuously upgraded as time progresses?

Mr. Henry: Yes, there is.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay, thank you. Now, I saw in your submission that you all drew reference to an internal audit that was done on the procurement audit of GovNeTT 3.0 and you all referenced it as Appendix 11, however, I did not receive that on our end. So, could you kindly double-check on your end and resubmit it to us please?

Mr. Henry: Certainly. Apologies for that.

Ms. Deonarine: No problem. Now, earlier on in the conversation— Hold on. Mr.

Chairman, could I proceed or would you like me to pause at this moment?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, can you pause so I can go on to Rushton Paray and I will come back to you in round two? Mr. Rushton Paray.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Chair. I am having some bandwidth issues here, so if I start to stutter at any point in time, Chair, and you lose me, you can move on to someone else. But firstly, let

me just say thank you to iGovTT for the submissions, it was very interesting. It was a very interesting read. I too want to join member Hinds in focusing on the importance of iGovTT as this enabling arm of the Government to push ICT services throughout the Government sector. I think after farmers in this country, you guys are the next most important team because outside of food, data connectivity, ICT is what is going to keep us connected to the rest of the world. So, I have a couple of comments that I would like to make based on the submissions and a couple of questions and I will try to be very, very quick.

Now, I went through the management reports, the document entitled

"National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited Management Letters from Auditors". Now, I did notice for 2019 and 2020, there was no commentary for management response. I do not know if for those two periods, there was no commentary or it did not end up in the report. Perhaps the CEO can advise on that.

There were a couple of things that stood out to me in the five management reports that I read. One primarily went with the issue of asset management and there were some issues over the period of time in terms of tracking assets, issues of serial numbers, things that will manage the movement of assets at iGovTT. It brought to my concern how do you manage warrantees and so on if there is no way to track equipment? Warrantee which is something critical. How you would have dealt with that. The other thing that I saw, well, the issue of short staffing which the Chairman had dealt with and again in 2017, you had commentary on asset management. In 2018, asset register came up again and in 2018, they spoke about the need for the provision of an accounting manual.

Now, the fact that in that management report, they were very vocal in insisting on this manual, it spoke to the previous reports about some weaknesses, internal controls. So, the question that I have to ask based on the management reports, for the period that is under consideration now which these management reports spoke to, how are you today in 2021, with regard to the issues around the asset register, managing of warrantees, perhaps security for the equipment because if you do not know what you have, where it is, you do not know when it leaves the building. What has happened so far with that, what is the status on the accounting manual which the auditor looked at for 2018 and what happened in 2019 and 2020 with regard to concerns for management response?

Mr. Henry: Thank you, member. I will lean on the support of the Head of

Finance. Just before I hand over though, I would say that we would have undertaken a special exercise in 2018/2019 to address those concerns, those exceptions which were noted and we did special internal audits to also take a deep dive into it to make sure our bases were covered there. So, we were

pleasantly surprised for the last two years when the external auditors would have basically given us a clean bill of health recognizing some of those shortcomings, they would have identified which we really did pay some attention to but I will just ask the Head of Finance to provide some additional details please.

Ms. Ferreira: Yes, good morning. The asset register and all the issues that were identified by our internal auditors we have addressed and you could see that with our external audit, these issues were not identified as issues because they were no longer there. In terms of the warrantees, these are managed by our internal auditor from IT and to date, we are just about to put in a software package which will help us monitor all our assets in the company.

Mr. Paray: Okay, thank you for that. I just want to go back to Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry, I listened to your response when member Hinds asked his last bit of questions and your response, you spoke on the pillars and you connected to the 2030 vision, Government vision in terms of how do you connect what you guys at iGovTT are doing and what you are going to be doing well into 2030. Now, if I were to draw your attention to your submission, on page 14 of your submission where you provided a SWOT analysis which is headed "SWOT Analysis, 1st of

October, 2020 to the 30th of September, 2023" and under the section of "Threats", you identified the second item as lack of national policies. Now, can you just explain to this Committee taking into consideration what you have said, concerning the pillars and its connection to the *Vision 2030* plan, what do you mean by lack of national policy as a threat to your organization?

Mr. Henry: Thank you for that, member. Our mandate really is to support the implementation, the vision of our Ministry as it relates to the modernization of the public sector and utilizing the digital technologies. One of the things that we need to standardize on or to get going is the establishment of policies to govern the use of IT at a national level in the Ministries. So currently for example, we would make recommendation, we would propose standards, we would contribute but, in some instances, I think the application of some of our recommendations, because it is not set as policy, is sub-optimal and we have to do some work there to ensure that we have compliance and I will give you an example. If you look at the Auditor General's reports doing ITGCs, IT General Control audits across Ministries, you would see where there are disparate procedures, there is no harmonization of some structures, certain disciplines which I know you will be familiar with, capacity management, backup and restoration policies, handling of data, even fixed asset management as it relates to ICTs, they are not standardized. For want of a better description, it is "ah bit of ah wild, wild west" but it is a work in

progress. And this is something that we feel is important for us or for the country to get right to enable us to adequately deliver. So, I think that is not I think, that is—

Mr. Paray: CEO, let me ask you this, right? One of the threats also was that MDAs can circumvent mandates to use iGov services. Now, from my experience, I mean, I have been in the business for some time as well and I understand the challenges in some of these Ministries but why would you think that these MDAs choose to circumvent the mandate, right? Is it that they do not trust the organization called iGovTT or they do not trust the competency level that you may have or it is just, as you know in the IT world, it is just the clash of egos and they choose to go their own way? What would you say would lead to that?

Mr. Henry: Speaking frankly, I think it may very well be a combination of all of the above. When you are in group environments, speaking from my experience outside of the public sector, in the private sector where you have subsidiary IT managers, they tend to have their egos and they want to run their shop their own way and they want to do their own thing. There may be instances where people may not have confidence. That is a reality but it is our responsibility and that is why we identified it in our strategic plan, to build that confidence. I dare say during this pandemic period, I think that we are on an upward trajectory because most, in fact all of the Ministries in some form or fashion have been coming to us for support and I think a good indicator is that they are involving iGov, they are coming to us and they are making the demands and the requests through MPA sometimes, sometimes directly, to support new initiatives that they want to go with, whereas in the past, they would do their thing and then they would call us on the back end to solve issues that they may not have envisioned.

So, I think it is a compendium, I think the latter is on the decline because I mean, I could tell you that even some Ministries attempt to poach some of the staff that we have. Hope that answers your question, member.

Mr. Hinds: I want to reject the submissions. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Paray: What about the issues—

Mr. Hinds: Oh, my goodness. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Paray: Let me ask this, I know my colleague Mr. Hinds loves to interject but let me just finish and then he can interject as much as he needs to. Do you think the fact that or let me ask the question this way? When an MDA or any one of the MDAs decide that they want to go forward with a project, the funding or the capex for these projects, does it remain in the MDA or is it transferred to you at iGovTT and then you execute while controlling the budget?

Mr. Henry: Currently what happens is that the MDAs, the Ministry, they would have the budget, they would get the capex for the project, we would form contractual arrangements— I do not know if he has dropped. Are you still there?

Mr. Paray: No, I am here, I am here. I am just having bandwidth issues.

Mr. Henry: Sure, yeah, so what happens is that we form contractual arrangements with our partner Ministry to execute the project and what we do is we have drawdowns based on the progress of the project and we invoice based on milestones or deliveries to the project.

Mr. Paray: But do you think if you had more control over the finance or what you referred to here as a bit of autonomy on that, that it may make the execution of the projects a lot easier or a lot more manageable than you have to be tossing back and forward for funding between those MDAs? Would that help?

Mr. Henry: Now, that is another philosophical question and I will answer it this way. This same issue arises in the private sector, particularly in group IT scenarios where you have subsidiary IT organizations asking, they want to— You know, masters of their own destiny kind of thing. The thing is though, the MDA or as we say in the private sector, the accountable executive in the business, IT essentially should be operating as an enabler of business projects and the Ministry ultimately or the business entity should be ultimately accountable for the execution of a project.

Now, there are instances, for example, in the case of iGovTT where we have to provide shared services. As you would know, for example, your infrastructure, your backup and recovery solutions, hosting services, et cetera and those IT projects, to enable other activities, I do believe that consideration should be given to holding that or having that fall under the remit of the IT organization.

Mr. Paray: Mr. Chair, I just have two last questions. One of it is based on one of the responses Mr. Henry would have given in terms of when you execute a project, let us say for instance, I am aware like in Mayaro here, there are a lot of schools and I think perhaps the Mayaro Police Station, I remember making some queries concerning the IT infrastructure, their connectivity to the backbone and so on, and in several schools, we have the Ministry's backbone, the equipment lying idly in a lot of the schools. And when I asked about well, who is responsible for looking at it because sometimes the principals will call me in Mayaro and say well, you know, Mr. Paray, can you help us because you know, of my background and the business that I have.

But is iGovTT responsible when you hand over these projects or these servers and so on in all these schools, who is responsible for making sure that it remains up and working and effective and carries

out the maintenance and so on, because I get the sense that when you hand over, the individual Ministries are responsible for continuing the support? Is that correct?

Mr. Henry: Member, yes and no and I am not trying to be cute. The reality is we hand over but we are always here to assist and this is why the model is in a sense iGovTT which kind of operates like a group IT and you have the individual Ministries with their own internal IT. Now, we also provide or we act as a wholesale provider so we provide services, wholesale services that terminate at various sites and the individual Ministries really would, using their on-prem equipment to connect to the service or to utilize the service, will have some responsibility for maintaining the operations at the end site.

But I want to say this is why, and I kind of mentioned it at the start, where what I am seeing happening now is, for example, through the governance arrangements that exist at the Ministry of Public Admin and DT is an increasing focus on the governance of IT to ensure that these risks associated with obsolescence, not—inability to support, et cetera, do not materialize.

So, in the past that may have been the case but what I am seeing now is definite movements through an appreciation of the GIAC practices which you would be familiar with being embedded. This is what MPADT is focusing on now and I anticipate that we are going to start to see the benefits of that as we move forward.

Mr. Paray: And my last question, Mr. Chairman and again to Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry, this is 2021 Trinidad and Tobago, are you comfortable with the level of progress? I mean, iGovTT from my reading was well, that version of the company was set up in 2009, it had an earlier existence. But in 2021, are you comfortable with the progress that iGovTT has been able to make so far and if not, what do you think are some of the challenges that we as a committee can address in our final report to Parliament to jump those hurdles? Because I really believe that we have to make some quantum leaps in terms of technology. It may not sit well with a lot of people because we do have a citizenry that is a bit behind in the use of the technology as you could have seen the impact with COVID-19 compared to the rest of the world. What would be some of those things that you would want us to address in our report that would make you comfortable that we will be where we ought to be in 2030? What are some of those items?

Mr. Henry: Well, first off, I would say I am never satisfied, I always think that we could do more with whatever we have. So, I think there is opportunity for us to move forward and I think we would have seen that happening particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of the support that we could get from the Committee, I think we would have mentioned finding ways to make the role that we play as an IT organization with knowledge workers that are in demand to augment, to potentially move through the associated HR policies and practices which we are governed by, so that we could make working at iGovTT and similar-type institutions in government more attractive so that we could attract and retain.

I think in the Auditor General's Report of 2017, 2018 thereabouts, they also identified this whole issue of tenure for contracted workers. As you would know, once you are talking about IT organizations and supporting infrastructure, big infrastructure, we need to have a certain degree of continuity and we have to find ways to ensure that the continuity is there. I think that is something that I think would be useful.

And the other thing which I know is happening is the whole notion of developing a digital mindset and I know our line Ministry is actively pursuing activities in that direction to look at the culture. To look at the culture within the public sector so that we would have back a few years ago, there was this notion of a mobile-first strategy but now we want to engender to create a digital mindset and it is not necessarily about technology. It is about developing a profile of staff in the public sector that is agile, that is open, that is adaptable, that moves away from command and control to collaborate and communicate.

I would just close by saying we need to understand that in the 21ˢᵗ Century, the new illiteracy is not the three Rs you know, it is an unwillingness to unlearn what we thought was gospel in the past and relearn new, and I think that is the mindset, that is the profile of team member that I try to bring into iGov to support the agenda of our line Ministry and by extension the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Those are the asks that I would have for you, member.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Mr. Henry, and I wish you all the best at iGovTT and I know we are depending on your organization to take us forward. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you very much, Mr. Rushton Paray. Before I invite my colleague Minister Hinds to intervene second round, I just want to ask for a few clarifications and before I get there, may I invite the CEO Mr. Kirk Henry to commit in writing your concerns and your thoughts as to ways and means that our Committee can really seek to strengthen your overall goals and objectives as a very critical and significant organization for the transformation and continued development of ICTs in T&T. I would like you to put that in writing for this Committee.

I want to start also by saying also that iGovTT reminds me of someone running extremely fast but you are on the same spot, and it seems to me from what you have said to this Committee that your

hands seem to be tied, you want to do more, you would like to do more but somehow there are some boulders and hurdles in your pathway. So, you are on the same spot running extremely fast but from where I sit, you are not going anywhere and I will tell you why I make this submission for your consideration.

In the 2019 audited financial statements, the company appears to be incurring losses, I dare say some comprehensive losses. In 2019, your audited financial statement revealed that your company iGovTT, that is the acronym, suffered a $6.6 million loss. That was the recorded loss in 2019. In 2018, it was 7.9 or I round it off to $8 million in terms of losses under expenses. And in 2017, it was about 3.7 round it again to $3.8 million in losses.

But what did we see in terms of your administrative expenses? We saw in 2016, it was $53 million. In 2017, it was $42 million in terms of administrative expenses. In 2018, it was $40.2 million. And in 2019, it is down to 32.3 or point 4 million. Now, look at this in the context of your submission based on questions that we asked and answers that you provided. We are seeing a high dependence on government subventions.

In your SWOT analysis, you emphasized that as well, that your major source of revenue is government subvention, but against that background, you also highlighted certain weaknesses, certain challenges. One, low awareness of iGovTT. So, there is a low awareness among the Government State apparatus that you are supposed to serve through the MDAs as they are called. There is a low awareness of iGovTT and the work that you do. There is also according to you, no clear plan for dealing with dissatisfied clients. That is outlined in your threats and the SWOT analysis for the period 2020 to 2023.

You also indicated that other Ministries and agencies seem to be running away, not using iGovTT. That is a major challenge that you have faced and another one that you have identified is no authority to demand uptake for services that you provide.

12.15 p.m.

So, we are seeing from your submission that there appears to be—and when

I go to your submission, I see when we asked, "Is iGovTT the sole provider, executioner of ICT infrastructure projects and programmes to government agencies?" Your response:

No. However it is recommended that a shared services delivery model be used for solution delivery. There is no mandate—that is the point that you have emphasized there—for exclusivity. Individual MDAs often explore and engage the open market for similar offerings provided by iGovTT.

And then when we look at your 2020 to 2023 submission in terms of your SWOT analysis, my colleague Rushton Paray pointed out, under "Threats", lack of national policies the MBAs can circumvent your mandate to use your services. Then you went on to talk about delays in legislative approvals for ICT, then other Ministries and agencies not using iGovTT. You talked about client dissatisfaction with outdated technology, and then no authority to demand uptake of some services.

Now, Mr. Kirk Henry, CEO, when we look at all of this, when we look at this comprehensive picture that you have presented in different parts of your submission, I am very worried. I am very troubled. I am seeing where iGovTT is trying. They are carrying out their mandate insofar as it is practically possible, but you are faced with hurdles. You are faced with barriers. You are faced with boulders in your pathway, and therefore this morning in your own way you are appealing to this Committee to help iGovTT overcome these hurdles, overcome these obstacles in terms of providing the kind of services that you are designed to provide.

I would like to ask both iGovTT as well as the Ministry of Finance, Investments Division: What is being done to improve the viability and sustainability of this company? Because if things are not done to improve the viability and sustainability of this company, then we are going to see a replication of losses being incurred on an annual basis, and your dependency is going to mount in the coming period. So, I would like to ask both iGovTT as well as the Ministry, what is being done to improve the viability and sustainability of this company? First, I would like to hear from iGovTT, and secondly, I would like to hear from the Ministry.

Mr. Henry: Certainly, member. I just want to point out, member, when we look at the submission, the issue with regard to low awareness, client dissatisfaction, this was at the start of the SWOT analysis associated with the period 2017 to 2020. The current analysis, when we did the analysis, actually painted a different picture. What we see now is that there is an increase in the uptick of our services, as I mentioned, particularly heightened during the COVID pandemic period.

We are on-boarding a significantly greater number of users on our government platform so that we could benefit. And indeed, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Admin and Digital Transformation, we were able to upgrade GovNeTT as—we mentioned briefly at the start, to bring it up to date with respect to the infrastructure and associated services and functionality that is required to support a modern public service, and I think a big thing, which it would be remiss of me if I do not mention it, is the governance arrangements that are in place, that MPADT is actively putting in place currently to address the whole issue of policy and controlling the use of—or encouraging the use of standards across the MDA.

So, a lot of the problems which existed at the start of—the end of 2016/2017, when we did the most recent analysis, we actually are seeing a movement forward and an upward trajectory. Particularly in terms of the governance arrangements that I know the MPADT and the PS are currently—once we have that it will, as we have a joke in IT, it will help us herd the cats, because there is a standard problem that happens when you have group IT environments with group IT and satellite sites around. So that, I just want to make that point, but, of course, we are welcomed. We welcome the help, and we will certainly identify the things that—some of our asks, to ensure that we could continue to provide the service, this most important service to Ministries, in the first instance, and ultimately to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the Ministry of Finance, may I invite the Ministry of Finance to address the question: What is being done to improve the viability and sustainability of iGovTT? Ministry of Finance.

Ms. Mohammed: Thank you, Chairman. The Investments Division focuses on corporate governance, and the viability and sustainability reside under the remit of the line Ministry, as well as the proposals for expanding mandates. So, I would like to defer this question to the line Ministry, please.

Mr. Chairman: All right. The Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of, is that Public Administration and Digital Transformation? Can I invite your comments on the whole improvement of the viability and sustainability of this very important organization?

Mr. McKellar: Okay, thank you, Chair. I think I will just want to start by supporting some of the comments made earlier that iGovTT has been doing a fair amount of very good work in terms of delivering on its mandate. The CEO for himself did indicate that he is a person who is never satisfied, constantly aspiring to deliver more. Agreed that right now, as we said at the start, given the pandemic, given all the challenges that we are facing as a country in terms of being able to deliver more and better services to our citizenry, we need to utilize ICT services and ICT technology to a greater extent. The issue of boulders in the way of iGovTT, all I would say, Chair, is that there are issues that may relate to some degree of awareness of the company's ability, not that its capability is in question. And the CEO just spoke to the issue of herding the cats.

There is an extent to which all Ministries and Departments have a degree of freedom in terms of their spend, but we really need to take steps to guide them towards the shared services model and approach which is what iGov has been set up to do. CEO Henry talked repeatedly, he mentioned it on quite a few occasions of the governance mechanism that the Ministry has put in place. This is a Cabinet

approved framework that seeks to ensure greater discipline in terms of the ICT spend across the public service. For example, we have recognized that over the last few years, much of the spend that Ministries have in the area of ICT is in terms of hardware and maybe software purposes to address internal operations rather than a spend that seeks to improve delivery to the citizen, i.e., spend that goes towards delivering services.

So the governance framework that has been put in place that includes, for example, committees at the sub-Cabinet level, committees that seek to draw upon wider public participation in the decision-making process, getting points of views from academia, from business, social society, civil society, and even internally at the Ministry, are really geared towards prioritizing what should be the spend on ICT, prioritizing what are the key projects that we need to initiate and push forward, that again, would help to develop government services and service delivery, projects that would seek to develop internal capacity within the public service, develop capacity within the wider national society, develop the ICT sector nationally. So, the governance mechanism would definitely seek to bolster the efforts of iGovTT. Because, again, iGovTT is the Ministry's key implementing agency. So, as we start to use the governance mechanism to streamline our projects, we expect, we will ensure, we will use moral suasion to our fellow Ministries and Departments, to utilize and point them in the direction of iGovTT, because iGovTT has the capacity to deliver on its mandate.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well, I will come back in a short while, but I will invite—

Mr. Henry: Chairman? Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, sorry about that.

Mr. Henry: Respectfully, Chairman, because of the importance, I think the import of the question you raised. This is a discussion that we frequently have at the level of the board, and particularly the chairman of our finance committee, he cogitates on this matter quite a bit, and I was wondering if, respectfully, we could allow him to share just a couple of thoughts with respect to this.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course, of course. Sure. Sure. We welcome our colleague to speak on this issue.

Mr. Dottin: Thank you very much, Chairman. Just to bring some clarity and talking about the viability of iGov. If you look at iGov, and I also want to deal a bit about member Paray and his question in terms of the management letter. So, if I may? If you look at the history of iGovTT from 2015 to 2020, you would see that government subventions, and just again for some clarity, iGovTT does not go outside looking for clients. So, we depend on subventions from Government to exist. So, when you look at losses in the context of iGovTT, what we are really looking at is excess expenditure over

revenues. Unlike other companies, when they talk about losses, we are talking about revenues less expenditures, and they have clients from all over.

We are really, to put in a simple term, we are like a department of government, so we get a certain allocation every year and we spend accordingly. What has happened over the last couple of years is that our subventions have been cut from—the financial year ended 2015, September 30, 2015. In that particular year the allocation to iGovTT was $119 million. Every year subsequently it has declined into what I perceive is a much more reasonable level. When we look at the year ending September 30, 2020, the subvention from Government in total was $31 million and thereabouts, $31,408,000, yeah? So, we are moving from $190 million to $31 million, and we are getting more for less. Now, our expenditures moved from $138 million in 2015, down to $31 million in 2000. Yeah? So, when you see those losses, you are seeing the expenses—$37 million, sorry—you are seeing that $6 million loss or that $7 million, or that $8 million loss you are looking at, is the excess of expenditures over a significantly reduced subvention; significantly reduced subvention. And how do we deal with that? We utilize some of our cash resources to make up the difference. Yeah? And I assume that if this thing really gels well and we manage to digitize the entire public service, we will not be in a situation where you will be seeing losses going forward.

We will be getting subventions necessary to cover our necessary expenses. What we are spending now is what I consider necessary expenses, and those expenditures most probably would go up as we beef up to satisfy the Government's mandate. Okay, that is one. So, I do not think you should be overly concerned about the sustainability of this particular institution. I think this institution will be sustained, and I do not think that the losses that you are seeing are as bad as you think they are, because it is really excess expenditures over a significantly reduced subvention from Government.

Now, going back to the management letter, the management letter really outlines some of the deficiencies or things the company could improve, and this is by an independent source, the external auditors. Right? So, when in 2015 you would have seen about four or five items, I do not have the management letter in front of me, and that has been reduced, those items, one of which was the fixed assets register, and we dealt with that significantly. So today you can find any particular asset by just looking at our spreadsheet, and we know where every asset within the organization is located. Now, we are going to computerize that, so it would be even a little more efficient. But without the computerization of that fixed asset register, we know where everything is located today. And that system has been cured because we inherited that, and it is now such that we have moved to a point

where over the last two consecutive years been in receipt of management letters that have absolutely no substantive things of concern.

So, when member Paray says where is the management comment, we have nothing to comment on, because there is nothing that the auditors identified as a weakness. So, I just wanted to put that on the table. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Dottin. Before I invite member Deonarine to intervene, I wanted to ask this question to the Ministry of Finance: Given the growing use of ICT's and the need for more since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, should not the Ministry of Finance ensure that iGovTT, which is now an essential service provider, receive its total requested allocation as opposed to the subvention shortfall as was just outlined by Mr. Dottin on an annual basis? Can we get a response from the Ministry of Finance on this question?

Ms. Mohammed: Thank you, Chairman. Chairman, iGovTT will make their budget and their representations to their line Ministry. The line Ministry will then liaise with the Budgets Division of the Ministry of Finance on the allocation of the subventions. So, it is not really under the remit of the Investments Division. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask the Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation to clarify what has been going on with this truncation in the allocation on a regular annual basis to the iGovTT? Can you enlighten us on this?

Mr. McKellar: Thank you, Chair, I will try my best. As a company under the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, iGovTT would prepare its annual *Estimates of Expenditure*—well, for iGovTT proper as well as its subsidiary, ttConnect. These would be submitted to the line Ministry for review, for discussion with iGovTT, for explanations, justification, and once we reach on some final position, because, of course, the company will have to be able to fund and pay for all its commitments, whether those are utilities, staffing, other commitments, liabilities for example, as well as developmental work that it may need to do.

So, we clearly want to be able to have the company covering its operating expenses. But at any rate, by the time we come to some conclusion/finalization with respect to what we would be submitting to the Ministry of Finance for estimates, those are submitted along with at the Ministry's estimates, and we will then appear if requested before the Ministry of Finance to defend, as we say, our budget submissions. Thereafter, it is really up to the Ministry of Finance to determine what iGovTT gets, what the line Ministry gets, and what every other Ministry receives in the fiscal year that will be approached, and of course approved by Parliament. Based on whatever is allocated to iGovTT for its

expenditure during the fiscal, they will receive subventions which will be released from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Public Administration, and we will in turn release to iGovTT. So really, that is the process, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. But given the kind of severe cuts, we know the kind of crisis that we are faced with in T&T, but given the importance of this organization to the further transformation of this nation, what kind of representation subsequent to that allocation is made by the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation to the Ministry of Finance appealing to the Ministry to at least provide that entity with some further increases, given the kinds of cuts, severe cuts that we are seeing and we have been informed about?

Mr. McKellar: Well, in the first instance—while the focus is on iGovTT right now, we might be looking at ICT spend across the entire public service, because again, there is that mandate for all Ministries and Departments to digitalize their services, to digitize your records. So, that could very well be a plea in respect of all such initiatives, not just with respect to iGov. But with respect to iGov, as I said earlier, Chair, coming out of the annual budgeting process there is an allocation that is approved by Parliament. Certainly, if there is an aggressive spend during the first half of the fiscal, we can—once the opportunity arises—go back to the Ministry of Finance at the midterm and make a plea for additional resources, in which case, I suppose the theoretical approach is that there is much more work to be done, and if there are other Heads that may not have been performing, funds could be allocated. But the allocation to the national budget, as you know, is a fixed one, but certainly the Ministry at the midterm could make appeals for additional funds.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you. May I invite member Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you, Chair. So, given this whole, you know, move with iGovTT, what exactly—could you all submit the utilization report for us of all the various Ministries? Is there a report that you all conduct? Because I am trying to understand, for some reason you all have an idea of where you want to go but outright, I am not getting a sense of where we are right now in terms of the number of Ministries that are utilizing your services. The intention is to go 100 per cent, but we need to know by Ministry what exactly is the existing utilization rate. So, if you could submit that in writing for us, we would appreciate that. And, also, right now if you can tell us off the top of your head, is it that other than the Ministry of Trade, are all Ministries currently hosting their website—are you all hosting the website of all Ministries right now, or is website hosting done externally?

Mr. Henry: We provide DNS services to a series of Ministries, but some Ministries or some agencies do go external. So, once you go to a website and you see that .gov, then you would know that we are

affiliated. And the other thing is, in terms of the former question with regard to the utilization, we have those stats by Ministry, by service, and we would definitely share with you.

Ms. Deonarine: Yes, because that is the only way when we look at that we would be able to offer additional recommendations and suggestions for you all in our final report. I am also asking this, because the question of security and cyber-security comes into play as well, and we have not discussed that yet. Now, remember a couple of years ago, I cannot remember exactly when, there was a hack with the Ministry of National Security, and I am wondering to what extent iGovTT provides that security for platforms affiliated with government IT services?

Mr. Henry: Member, we do play a role, but I would like to beg your indulgence to perhaps if we could discuss that off camera. The cyber-security element is a kind of sensitive area—

Mr. Hinds: Yes. Mr. Chairman. One moment please, member. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Hinds: I just heard the question and I just heard the response of the veritable and learned CEO, for reasons that we have traversed in this Committee in times past, Mr. Chairman, given all the experience you have, I am sure you would want to concur with the suggestion that this matter be dealt with. Because we are now in the realm of cybercrime, we have laws that are not fully proclaimed, and we have circumstances touching on the response to the question outside of the responsibility and the capacity for the CEO. So, I would want to urge your intervention, Mr.
Chairman, so that we desist from this line for the moment at any rate.

Mr. Chairman: I do not understand. Well, allow the CEO and—

Mr. Hinds: Let me elucidate. Let me elucidate then, just so that I will make sure that you understand. I thought you did, but let me elucidate. The question put to the CEO, was what action has, or is iGovTT taken to prevent hacking in national security? That, I as a Committee member consider is outside of the purview of the matters in front of us this morning, one. Two, the substantive issue being raised is a legal issue, and to some extent the responsibility of others. The mandate of iGovTT and the documents in front of us for this Committee's interrogation do not carry sufficiently widely for the entertainment of that. That is my suggestion, Mr.
Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: If that is the question, Amrita—member Deonarine, if that is the question that you have raised, I will ask you to, you know, rephrase your statement, and not necessarily go into the area that Minister Hinds has outlined, because that is not within our remit.

Mr. Hinds: I thought you would say refrain then, since it is not—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, just in case, you know, she might want to approach a question differently without infringing upon or trampling upon our mandate.

Mr. Hinds: No, but we have agreed that the subject matter is outside of—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I agree. I agree with what you have said, so you do not have—

Mr. Hinds: —and therefore it should be refrained. It should be refrained.

Mr. Chairman: —to discuss the matter any longer.

Mr. Hinds: Okay, thank you kindly.

Mr. Chairman: So, I am allowing—I am asking member Deonarine to continue, but not along the line that she has started.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Thank you very much. Yes, member Deonarine.

12.45 p.m.

Ms. Deonarine: Thank you so much. Thank you. I would desist on this line of questioning.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Deonarine: Now, I wanted to move along to current issues and the involvement of iGovTT. Now, the intention is to get iGovTT to be the centralized hub for all public service or government ICT services in the future, and this COVID-19 pandemic is a typical or is the ideal situation where you could entertain yourself as becoming one of the very—be more involved in government IT services. Right? So, my question then is, how involved has iGovTT been in the deployment of the ICT infrastructure or the ICT services with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ministry of Health?

Mr. Chairman: CEO?

Mr. Henry: Yes. Member, we have been involved from the get-go with the Ministry of Health, not just in some of the ongoing projects that they were engaged in. We have been assisting essentially from the start, whether we talk about assisting with procuring specific devices in a short time to facilitate an activity; whether it is supporting configuration of sites to support the administering of shots or "jabs", as the English say, you know, we are involved in that. We would have deployed a Chatbot solution to assist with responding to enquires by the general public on their website. We would have deployed, as part of a whole omni-channel strategy to service delivery, virtual contact centre facilities where we, via our ttConnect channel would support enquires, non-medical of course, regarding activities in the Ministry of Health. And this is in addition to the normal work that we do with them, whether it is the support of augmenting their internal IT because they were under a tremendous amount of pressure during this pandemic period.

So, we have been, I would dare say, very involved during this period from facilitating virtual sessions and not only at the Ministry of Health, at multiple Ministries. We supported our leadership—the Cabinet with respect to the set-up of virtual Cabinet meetings, the deployment of the tools that we have by leveraging the existing enterprise agreements that we have. I would have mentioned the deployment of the online payment systems that the Attorney General— again, all with a view towards minimizing the face-to-face contact that citizens were exposed to. We are assisted with the travel exemption application. I mean, I could provide a list because I may not—my memory may not be serving me. It is, you know—it is close to lunch maybe and, you know—but we have really been pushing the team. And I just want to take the opportunity—you gave me an opportunity to recognize the team at iGovTT because they have been doing yeoman service and we did not miss a beat. They have answered the call on every single occasion.

I have gotten to know the inside of almost everybody's homes through this channel because we are constantly meeting. And just to add, during that period we internally had to do some work to engage our staff to provide some enhanced support because this channel, you know, it limits the physical contact. We were one of the very first—we started planning for the pandemic coming to the end of December/January when we were seeing the stories on CNN. And when the Government announced that we would need to go into a lockdown mode, we just activated our plans because we were able to move everything in a remote—so we have been intimately involved with many a Ministry in providing service, in adjusting business processes, in acquiring devices, in developing—we even developed the application that the Road to Recovery Committee used to solicit feedback from citizens in terms of what we would need to do to recover from this pandemic. But I could provide something in writing in case my memory is really failing me.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. And mentioned—during the course of the discussion, mention was made about online services being provided to children to ensure adequate access or equality of access to schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now—and I know that mention was made about these community access centres, how many in total are there?

Mr. Henry: Let me just ask my DCEO to assist me.

Mr. Ragoonanan: The total—actually, I have to defer to the PS on this one—

Mr. Henry: All right.

Mr. Ragoonanan: —because the Ministry would have undertaken some of the access centres directly as well.

Mr. Henry: Yes.

Mr. McKellar: Okay. Chair, through you, we currently have six ICT access centres in operation.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. So, since there are just six, could you identify where they are?

Mr. McKellar: Sure. We have at Penal, Marac— [*Technical difficulties*] Sorry, I was muted there for a sec. Are you hearing me now?

Ms. Deonarine: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. McKellar: Okay. I will start again. So, we have at Penal, Marac, Guayaguayare, Cumana, Todds Road, and the most recent was opened last year—I think around October—Carenage.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. And I recall over the course of the last couple of years, I recall there were centres opened in Sisters Road, Navet, Waterloo and Barrackpore, are those still—I know that they were fully commissioned and outfitted, are those still open and functional? And if not, what happened to them and what are the next steps to make them fully functional?

Mr. McKellar: Okay. As I understand it, I do not think the Waterloo centre was ever opened formally even though it would have been outfitted. Sisters and Barrackpore—I think in the case of Barrackpore there may have been a decision to share operations from Penal, but again I can clarify that subsequently. Yeah.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. And is the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation or iGovTT taking—capturing data on the number of persons that are accessing these facilities to ensure that they are benefiting the persons who they intend to benefit?

Mr. McKellar: Yes. Data is being captured on usage, daily usage. That information comes directly from the centres to the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation. So, we would track, as you said, the number of visits per day, the nature of the visits because, for example, what these centres have been set up to do is certainly to provide Internet access to members of the community. They have been set up to provide training in simple, basic IT skills. There is some business facilitation. There is scanning of documents, people could, you know—so there is a wide range of services that are provided and the data, the statistics in terms of usage and applications for support are provided to the Ministry on a regular basis.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay. Through you, Chair, is it possible to have the PS submit this to us in writing, these details?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, sure.

Mr. McKellar: Yes. Yes.

Ms. Deonarine: And my final question, Mr. Chair, through you, is—now, when the budget was read and it was announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an overall move and shift towards the digital economy, digitalization and digitization, one of the focus of the existing Government—and it was outlined in the budget—was that they want to move towards ensuring that every aspect of the public service is able to have the ability to work remotely via VPN connections and so on, where are we in trying to achieve this? Has an assessment been done on how much it is going to cost and the length of time that it will take for something like this to happen? Because I understand that the public service is a huge number of persons to have to try and adequately equip them to function remotely in the event of something like this ever having to happen again such that we have nationwide shutdown.

12.55 p.m.

Mr. McKellar: Chair, through you with respect to a work from home policy for the public service, that initiative is actually being led by the Ministry of Planning and Development. It involves about five Ministries who are supporting, one of which is the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation. So, the policy is currently being developed.

Ms. Deonarine: And do you have a timeline on the policy, how long would the policy seek to be developed and so on?

Mr. McKellar: I could not say right now through you, Chair.

Ms. Deonarine: Okay, I am finished with my line of questioning.

Mrs. Lezama-Lee Sing: Chairman, can I join the conversion now, please?

Mr. Chairman: Just hold a second, Ma'am. Yes, continue Deonarine.

Ms. Deonarine: Mr. Chair, I am completed. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I am sorry, Laurel Lezama-Lee Sing. You can now intervene.

Mrs. Lezama-Lee Sing: Thank you, Chairman. [*Laughter*] You have forgotten me in the first round.

Mr. Chairman: My apologies, my apologies, my apologies.

Mrs. Lezama-Lee Sing: You forgot me completely in the first round but that is okay, that is quite all right. Several of the questions that I would have raised as indicated previously would have related to strategic plan and corporate governance. And I am tremendously satisfied by the set of questions that would have been asked in this first round of questioning. Chairman, because I need to take my leave shortly, I have a funeral to attend. I must put on the record my tremendous satisfaction with the work of iGovTT. I know that the Government's thrust is towards digitalization and digitization throughout the country and in every sphere of the country, particularly in the public sector, and I am

extremely excited at what I have heard here. I am excited and motivated by all of the different documents that would have been submitted. I am satisfied that iGovTT is really trying to fulfil its mandate.

I would love to hear a little more about the ICT blueprint that has been set out. I know that we have been talking about interoperability and interconnectivity between the Ministries and I do know that that is one of the weaknesses that have been identified because I have been looking at the SWOT analyses for the different time frames. And I do hope that this Committee can provide some assistance because your company is extremely important as pertains to the developmental thrust that is articulated in *Vision 2030.*

I am satisfied as well that Mr. Henry, who I think is doing a remarkable job, has been speaking about fostering a climate of innovation and capacity building and agility and talking about enhanced government arrangements, et cetera. And I am really, really very satisfied. And as somebody who has just come out of the youth demographic, not too long ago, and somebody who is very IT connected, I think this is exactly where we need to go and I do hope that more Ministries continue to take advantage and more public service agencies take full advantage of what iGovTT has to offer. And I look forward to really exciting times and Trinidad and Tobago being either forcibly or willingly pull into the modern technology era and being able to keep up with the demands of the world so that we can increase our own competitive index in our own customer service delivery throughout the country. I know that several Ministries are reliant on or are moving towards online activity and I really look forward to that. And that is just my intervention. So, thank you to all of you and huge congratulations because I am tremendously satisfied. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you so very much Mrs. Laurel Lezama-Lee

Sing. Mr. Paray.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Chair. I know we are running perilously close to the end of the session so I just have one, a question that I think that Mr. Henry may be able to answer briefly or if not, we would accept the response in writing. Now, on question 7, your response to question 7 which was referring to the execution of the national ICT plan, you identified eight items which were challenges, right. I think if you were to give us an indication of some of the root causes for these eight items, and I will just for the record just mention it: limited ICT governance structures across the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago which impacts MDAs' alignment to overall planning; two, conflicting priority shifting focus at MDAs; three, low maturity of ICT processes within Ministries, departments and agencies; four, inability to secure the necessary CAPEX and OPEX for the solutions

and personnel to implement and ensure continued support or solutions; five, the adoption of a siloed approach by MDAs, and the last item, HR attrition and iGovTT and MDAs reducing the capacity which is required for focused attention.

Now, I think these are eight items that are extremely critical that if you could identify to us and I think in writing, what are some of the root causes and some of the areas that would resolve these challenges for you it will play an integral role in our reporting as we write the line Minister and the Government to kind of help you solve some of these issues going forward. So, if you have a comment to make that is fine, if not we will accept the information, it writing going forward. Thank you.

Mr. Henry: Member, thanks for that question. Just a brief comment. You would observe, with the exception of the last item, all of the items really relate to governance arrangements. The guide practices for example that exist in COVID, for example, is something new to the environment and what is happening currently—and this is why the PS would have said that I kept repeating it. I know for a fact, from the highest level, from the Cabinet come down the governance arrangements are either in place or at very close to completion in terms of execution.

And it is to give time, there would be a gestation period for it to take root. But MPADT currently is squarely focused as the policy maker when we take our lead in making this a reality and we are part and parcel of supporting that effort. But nevertheless, I will undertake to provide comments in writing for you member.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I would just like to ask in closing to Mr. Henry as it relates to page 27 of your submission under the Item: Risk Management. There are a number of principal risks associated with iGovTT mandate. I think around eight of them. Can I ask briefly of the CEO to summarize for us what will be done or what measures are being taken to address these risk management matters? Just in a brief summary and then you can commit pen to paper subsequently by identifying in a more detailed manner. But for the time being can you provide us with a tight summary of some of the risk management factors and how we are we going to be addressing same.

Mr. Henry: Certainly Chairman. At the risk of sounding like a broken record the reality is these risk categories they were identified at the inception by the consultant when they were setting up iGovTT. And it speaks to the overall environment. And if you look at them most of them are associated with governance items as it relates to IT, not necessarily corporate governance, but governance of enterprise IT which is a subset of that. And the work that MPADT is currently undertaking in conjunction with some of the elements of our iGovTT strategic plan proper, it is intended that those things will address those items. So, items, for example, Item 1, absence of government e-leadership,

we have that now. We have a Ministry focused on that with two Ministers and the PS who we work very closely with; absence of the required regulation. I know for a fact that that is being attended to. Government policies, I raised that even in our SWOT analysis and again we have committees, we have a GIAC which is sponsored by MPADT, this is Government Information Tech Leaders and they are actively working, looking, making recommendations for onward submission to the leadership. Funding, we spoke about that. The PS gave an undertaking there.

So, I think, those are the problems, but the reality is I feel confident that we are making progress, we are trending in the right direction, we are in an upward trajectory and opportunities like this to share and to ventilate I think is just what I would like to say you bring sunshine. Sunshine is the best disinfectant and I am confident that a lot of these things will be addressed, I am optimistic.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Thank you so very much Mr. CEO. Whatever additional areas or questions that we may need to have clarified will be submitted in writing to the iGovTT team, the Ministry of Finance as well as the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation. But for the time being we are very, very, near to our period where we want to bring proceedings to a close. And I would like to really thank, sincerely thank the chairman, the Ministry of Finance I should say, officials from the Ministry of Finance-Investments Division, officials from the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation as well as officials from the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited for being here with us over the last period of time. So, unless there are other interventions to be made—

Mr. Hinds: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to—yes?

Mr. Hinds: I am more than grateful for your oblique invitation. I feel compelled as I am sure you do on behalf of others of my colleagues who spoke here to indicate, because the public gets to see this and they have seen other CEOs appear before us and they have come to their own conclusions in the spirit of our democracy, I am sure they will all share the view that this young CEO, the Permanent Secretary, the Minister who did not appear before us and all of the operatives in iGovTT have really settled into their mandate and they are making a most wonderful and necessary contribution or advancement in Trinidad and Tobago.

So for that reason on my own behalf and on behalf of all those who may not have a forum to speak here like me, who share the view in describing his passion, his knowledge of his profession, his depths, his range and his management capacity, I would like to extend—not that it is perfect, nothing is perfect, but I can tell you he has acquitted himself remarkably well, and on behalf of all of us I would

like to extend my personal and collective congratulations and admiration to this CEO and to iGovTT as a whole under the guiding hand of the Permanent Secretary and the Minister, Ministers responsible I would like to extend sincere congratulations. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, thank you so very much. As we bring the proceedings to close, may I on behalf of this Committee warmly extend our heartfelt congratulations to the team that have been with us for the last few hours, all officials from the Ministry of Finance, Investments Division, all officials from the Ministry of Public Admission and Digital Transformation, as well as all officials from the iGovTT which is the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited, for being here with us and for sharing your thoughts and views on this very important matter of your operations and your future endeavours and objectives as manifested in your strategic plan for 2020—2023.

So, at this time, we will excuse all of you and this meeting is now suspended. Thank you so very much.

1.09 p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*