



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

NS: 35/5/8 Sub. III

October 4, 2023

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St Vincent Street
PORT OF SPAIN

Mrs. Sampson-Meiguel,

Re: The Fourteenth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) on an Examination of the Implementation of the Recommendations contained in the Twenty-Fourth Report of the PAAC from the Eleventh Parliament on the Processing of the Payment of Pensions and Gratuities of Retired Public Officers and Contracted Employees

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter Ref. No. *Parl: 5/6/5* dated July 20, 2023 on the subject at caption.

In this regard, pursuant to Standing Order 110(6) of the House of Representatives and 100(6) of the Senate, respectively, please find attached the Response of the Minister of National Security to the recommendations/ comments in the PACC's Report at caption.

Respectfully,

Gary Joseph
Permanent Secretary

Encl.

Ministerial Response to the Fourteenth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) on an Examination of the Implementation of the Recommendations contained in the Twenty-Fourth Report of the PAAC from the Eleventh Parliament on the Processing of the Payment of Pensions and Gratuities of Retired Public Officers and Contracted Employees.

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Page 25	<i>The Ministry of National Security and its Divisions, should submit to Parliament by September 29, 2023, a brief update on the initiatives taken to improve each Division's pension computation while awaiting amendment to the regulations to remove the Auditor General from the process of calculating pension records.</i>	<p>The Ministry of National Security (MNS) is the arm of Government that has primary responsibility for the Maintenance of Law and Order; Public Safety and Defence against Aggression; the Management of Disaster Preparedness and Relief; and the Monitoring and Control of the flow of persons into and out of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is considered one of the largest and most complex organizations in the public sector, consisting of approximately twenty-five thousand, five hundred and forty-one (25,541) positions on its permanent staff establishment (1,684 civilian and 23,857 uniformed), as well as, one thousand, eight hundred and thirty-three (1,833) contract positions. Further, the MNS comprises an Executive Team and ten (10) key Divisions/ Agencies, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General Administration Division – contract and permanent (civilian) officers 2. Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force – contract and permanent (civilian & uniformed) officers 3. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service – contract and permanent (civilian & uniformed) officers 4. Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service – contract and permanent (civilian & uniformed) officers 5. Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service – contract and permanent (civilian & uniformed) officers 6. Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force – part-time volunteer (uniformed) officers 7. Immigration Division – contract and permanent (civilian & uniformed) officers 8. Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management – contract (civilian) officers 9. Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre – contract and permanent (civilian) officers 10. Strategic Services Agency – contract officers <p>The abovementioned situation is further complicated by the fact that the criteria and timeframes for processing terminal benefits to permanent officers (civilian and uniformed officers), as outlined in the respective service legislations, vary across the particular Services. As such, Pension and Leave (P&L) Records are processed by the particular Division/ Agency in which an officer works, and then submitted for certification in keeping with the respective service legislation. Terminal Benefits are then computed by the Comptroller of Accounts and payments are processed by the MNS.</p>

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		<p>Accordingly, the MNS' response in this matter is guided by the foregoing, in respect of the seven (7) Divisions/Agencies that have permanent public officers (civilian and/or uniformed officers) on their staff establishments, for which the processing of P&L Records and thus pension computations are required. These seven (7) Division/ Agencies are the General Administration Division; Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force; Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service; Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service; Immigration Division and the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre.</p> <p>In this regard, while the MNS supports amending the respective service legislations in order to harmonize the legislations and streamline the calculation process, it has implemented several initiatives via the relevant Divisions/ Agencies to improve the current pension computation process, with the aim of ensuring the timely payment of terminal benefits to its permanent public officers, upon their retirement. These include the following measures applicable to the seven (7) Divisions/Agencies:</p> <p>(1) General Administration Division (GAD)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the GAD is comprised of only permanent (civilian) officers. As such, the Division's Human Resources Management Unit (HRMU), which is responsible for processing all P&L Records of the permanent (civilian) officers, conducted an evaluation to identify shortcomings and possible solutions that could be instituted, in order to achieve a properly functioning system. Based on this evaluation, the following measures are proposed to be implemented by the GAD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Increase the number of P&L staff, from the current complement of two (2) to five (5) persons, comprising 2 public officers and 3 contract officers. (b) Training of staff in the areas of P&L preparation, Financial Regulations, Exchequer and Audit Act, Leave Calculations and treating with audits and enquiries from the Comptroller of Accounts. <p>(2) Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the TTDF is comprised of two classes of public officers: permanent (civilian) and uniformed (Defence Force Officers), with separate units processing P&L records for each class of</p>

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		<p>officers. In this regard, some of the measures proposed to be implemented by the TTDF in order to improve its pension computation process, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Improving the preparation of the Record of Service to at least 6 months prior to retirement; (b) Engaging the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of National Security to formulate an early response when requested to audit the pension computation; and (c) Engaging with the Comptroller of Accounts to work out a quicker response system for the payment of terminal benefits (Pensions and Gratuities). <p>(3) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the TTPS is comprised of two classes of public officers: permanent (civilian) and uniformed (Police Officers). The processing of P&L records for each class of officer is done by separate units, with the Employee Relations/ Industrial Relations Unit processing the records of permanent (civilian) officers and the Pension and Leave Section (Finance Branch) processing those of uniformed police officers. Accordingly, in order to assist in the timely payment of terminal benefits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permanent (civilian) officers - members of the Employee Relations/ Industrial Relations Unit, were provided with a two-day online P&L workshop training session over the period June 28-29, 2022, which was also recorded and shared with heads and staff to allow for easy referral and access of the information. The Unit has also been bolstered with additional staff and upgraded positions; and • uniformed police officers - the Pension and Leave Section (Finance Branch) engaged the services of retired, knowledgeable police officers in addition to the implementation of a coaching and mentoring system within the Section. <p>The TTPS has also improved the networking relationships amongst its functional human resource management sections, to ensure the timely processing of terminal benefits, given their interconnectivity. These include the Planning Section which is responsible for the preparation and approval of Returns of Exercise of Delegated Authority; the Increment Section that deals with the award and payment of all</p>

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		<p>increments; the Registry Section which receives and logs all personnel files; the Finance Section which treats with the calculation and payment of arrears of salaries and allowances; and the Audit Unit which audits P&L records. This improved networking allows staff to more easily address queries from the TTFS' Internal Audit Unit, as well as those from the Comptroller of Accounts.</p> <p>(4) Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service (TTFS)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the TTFS is also comprised of two classes of public officers: permanent (civilian) and uniformed (Fire Officers), that require the processing of P&L records. However, both classes of officers are processed by the TTFS' Pension and Leave Unit. Accordingly, in order to assist in the timely processing of P&L records, the TTFS would have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nominated members of staff of its Pension and Leave Unit to participate in a training workshop hosted by the Chief Personnel Officer. This workshop entitled "Processing of Pension and Leave Records for Public Officers" was held on the May 8-9, 2023. • liaised with the MNS' Internal Audit Unit, to provide inhouse training to officers within its Pension and Leave Unit. <p>(5) Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPrS)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the TTPrS is similarly comprised of two classes of public officers; permanent (civilian) and uniformed (Prison Officers), for which the processing of P&L records is required. The records of both classes of officers are processed by its Pension and Leave Section. In this regard, the measures implemented by the TTPrS to assist in the timely payment of terminal benefits to its officers, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased staffing through the implementation of a recruitment drive to fill all vacancies within the P&L Section; and • The development of a training plan tailored to meet the training needs of officers. It should be noted that while the implementation of this training plan was severely hampered by the COVID-19 Pandemic, internal and external training has since commenced.

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		<p>The TTPrS is also considering a proposal for the updating of personnel files, at least three years prior to the date of retirement, so that there is sufficient time to address any queries regarding acting, increments and/or sick leave, thus allowing for the timely processing and payment of terminal benefits (Pensions and Gratuities) to its retired public officers.</p> <p>(6) Immigration Division</p> <p>While the staff establishment of the Immigration Division is comprised of only permanent (civilian) public officers, it should be noted that these civilian officers are subdivided into regular civilian and uniformed civilian (Immigration Officers), with the latter granted some police powers under the Immigration Act. Nevertheless, the P&L records of these officers are all processed by the Division's Human Resources Management Unit, which is currently in the process of evaluating its computation process towards ensuring the timely processing and payment of terminal benefits to its retired officers.</p> <p>(7) Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre (TTFSC)</p> <p>The staff establishment of the TTFSC is comprised of only permanent (civilian) public officers, which require the computation and processing of P&L Records. However, given the TTFSC's limited human resource management capacity, the P&L Records of its staff are computed and processed by the GAD's Human Resource Management Unit.</p>