



**MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY**

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April 27th, 2023

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Sampson-Meiguel

Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Land and Infrastructure on an Inquiry into the Management of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) with specific reference to the 2020 Cabinet Sub-Committee Report of WASA and related recommendations

Reference is made to your letter Parl: 14/3/73 Vol. VI dated January 16, 2023 on the captioned subject.

In this regard, please find attached the Ministry of Planning and Development's response to the recommendation contained in the Third Report of the JSC on Land and Physical Infrastructure on an Inquiry into the Management of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) with specific reference to the 2020 Cabinet Sub-Committee Report of WASA and related recommendations.

I apologize for the delay in response and regret any inconvenience caused by the delay.

Yours sincerely


**Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Planning and Development**

Enc. **PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ministerial Response to the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Land and Physical Infrastructure on an inquiry into the Management of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) with specific reference to the 2020 Cabinet Sub-Committee Report on WASA and related recommendations

Recommendation No. 58:

“We recommend that the MPU and WASA meet with MoPD, TCPD to develop and implement strategies for addressing poor land-use practices that affect watersheds in Trinidad. In this regard, there may be need to use enforcement measures to treat with illegal developments particularly those that are a threat to watersheds.”

Response:

The Town and Country Planning Division (T&CPD) and the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) collaborate on an on-going basis in the spatial development process with the objective of safeguarding not only human well-being but also the environment, inclusive of watersheds. Spatial planning can contribute to sound watershed management through the promotion of groundwater recharge, protection of rivers and coastlines as well as the mitigation of flooding and erosion.

In an effort to counteract the adverse impacts of poor land use practices, this interagency collaboration is deemed essential to advise on development on hillsides, the application of suitable site development standards in respect of physical infrastructure, utilities and services, as framed by policy and legislation. More particularly, WASA participates directly in the planning process by assessing adherence to required standards in respect of, inter alia, conceptual designs, water lines and types of sewerage systems.

This partnership was strengthened with the introduction of the automated construction permitting platform, DevelopTT, which since 2020 has allowed for seamless, paperless referrals between agencies involved in the spatial development process while allowing for transparency and visibility at every step of the planning application process.

Watershed management strategies have become more entrenched in the spatial planning process. The T&CPD has updated policies and standards to control urban sprawl and promote sustainability through the protection and rational use of finite land resources. As such, in 2021 the Hierarchy of Settlements relating to Building Heights and other Development Standards and its Application to the City of Port of Spain was approved by the Cabinet. Revised density policies to promote more intensive built development in urban areas were introduced, thereby retaining watershed areas under conservation or similar wise use. Additionally, Spatial Development Guidelines addressing agricultural, residential and other uses were also put in the public domain, stipulating plot sizes and other site development standards, such as on hillsides,

to mitigate land degradation and poor land use practices. Participation of WASA, T&CPD and the Water Resources Agency (WRA) in the assessment of proposals subject to the Certificate of Environmental Clearance (CEC) Rules also advances sound watershed management as an integral part of the planning process.

Tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the incorporation of digital data collection serve to enhance the technical evaluation of development proposals at various heights and along certain types of slopes permitting more timely and accurate assessment of potential for land degradation.

As it relates to enforcement, illegal development is currently subject to the provisions contained in the Town and Country Planning Act Ch. 35:01, whereby the Minister of Planning and Development may, within four years of the development being carried out without the granting of planning permission, or contrary to conditions stipulated in the planning permission, take enforcement action against the owner or occupier of the land. Following investigations, the Minister may serve an enforcement notice, giving a specified period for compliance, failing which the matter is referred to the Magistrates' Court.

As such, unauthorized development with potential to cause land degradation and flooding that adversely impact watersheds can be reported by any state agency or member of the public to the relevant regional office of the T&CPD so that the enforcement process can be undertaken. This reporting pathway is now facilitated by a 24/7 complaints portal on the DevelopTT platform as well as via dedicated email access to each regional Enforcement unit, staffed by specialized Enforcement Officers in Trinidad as well as Tobago.