



Ministry of Labour
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L:25/11/8 Vol I

January 20, 2022

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

Re: The Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of The Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year 2020.

Reference is made to your letter dated November 18, 2021, (Ref: Parl: 5/1/2) on the captioned subject.

Please find attached the written response to the findings and recommendations regarding the Ministry of Labour contained in the Second Report of the Public Accounts Committee on an examination of The Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2020.

Additional information, should it be required, may be obtained from Ms. Natalie Willis, Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ministry of Labour, at 625-8478 ext. 1539/1302 or via email at natalie.willis@gov.tt.

Yours faithfully

Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ministry of Labour

Enc



**Written Response of the Ministry of Labour to the Second Report from the
Public Accounts Committee on an Examination of The Report of the Auditor
General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
For the Financial Year 2020**

Recommendation (on page 23 of the Report)

The Ministry of Labour should report to Parliament on whether its Internal Audit was fully functional during FY 2020 as well as the challenges faced and solutions implemented, by January 31, 2022;

Response

Internal auditing is one of the indispensable elements of corporate governance. It helps Management to protect the assets, reputation and sustainability of government institutions. It can provide the assurance to Management that departmental systems and controls are working well or if not, how we can improve the systems, procedures and rules. It is crucial for transparency and accountability, key elements of good governance and one of the cornerstone for the development of Trinidad and Tobago by our government under the Vision 2030.

Functionality of the Internal Audit Unit during FY 2020

The establishment of the Internal Audit Unit in the Ministry of Labour is comprised of a total of five (5) members of staff inclusive of:

- One (1) Auditor II,
- One (1) Auditor I, and
- Three (3) Auditing Assistants.

However, during the Financial Year 2020 there were two (2) positions of Auditing Assistants that were vacant.

Challenges faced by the Audit Unit in FY 2020

With the onset of fiscal 2020, Trinidad and Tobago was faced with Covid-19 which was spreading rapidly and globally and therefore as a country we had to take several containment and support measures. Two (2) of these measures included the national lockdowns for non-essential services as well as social distancing. During this period the Audit Unit worked on rotation arrangements in light of the critical nature of the work of Unit which requires the use of original documentation. The combination of the aforementioned factors impacted the Unit's ability to conduct the full range of its functions resulting in the Unit being able to focus on Urgent Matters. Some of these areas included the audit of Contract Gratuities, Previous year vouchers, Pension and

Leave Records, Arrears of Salary worksheets, Overpayments, Contract Listings Establishment, Commitments, Infrastructure Development Fund Statements, Appropriation Accounts, Reconciliation Statements, Void Cheque listing.

Solutions implemented to address challenges faced by the Audit Unit in FY 2020

Nevertheless, please be informed that despite the challenges faced the Audit and Executive Management team of the Ministry of Labour must be commended for their efforts to treat with the challenges faced. Some of the initiatives undertaken included:

- The engagement of an officer on short term to provide Auditing Services; and
- A request made to the Service Commission Department to fill the vacant positions in the Unit.

In closing, the Ministry of Labour would like to take this opportunity to thank the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General Department for their objective assessment of its internal audit operations. It enables us to work together as a team to ensure the efficient and effective operations of the Government's financial systems and transparency, accountability and ultimately good governance to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.