

**GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) 1999**

**UPDATED PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
2009**

**In compliance with sections 7, 8, and 9 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)  
1999**

In accordance with Sections 7, 8, and 9 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 1999, the Ministry of Public Utilities is required to publish a statement setting out certain information for the benefit of the public.

The Act gives members of the public:

1. A legal right for each person to access information held by the Ministry of Public Utilities;
2. A legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/her amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading;
3. A legal right to obtain reasons for adverse decisions made regarding applicant's request for information under the FOIA;
4. A legal right to complain to the Ombudsman and to apply to the High Court for Judicial Review to challenge adverse decisions made under the FOIA.

**Section 7 Statements**

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**Section 7 (1) (a) (i)**

**Function and structure of the Ministry of Public Utilities**

**Mission statement**

The mission of the Ministry of Public Utilities is to facilitate the delivery of affordable and quality public utilities through a committed, resourceful team of professionals in close collaboration with all partners.

The Ministry of Public Utilities has a staff of 93 persons and is headed by the Minister of Public Utilities, who has responsibility for policy matters as well as the general direction and oversight of the Ministry. The Permanent Secretary is the financial and administrative Head of the Ministry. The Ministry of Public Utilities has 12 responsibility centres, 10 of which are internal to the Ministry, and two (2) are external to the Ministry.

## **Responsibility Centres internal to the Ministry:**

### **i. Human Resource Services Division**

The functions which are carried out under this Division are human resource management, administrative support services and finance and accounts.

### **ii. Economic Research, Policy and Planning Division**

This Division is responsible for research and development, policy analysis, technical advisory, integrated planning and sectoral restructuring. This Division conducts its work through four (4) Units, namely:

- The Research Unit
- The Water Sector Management Unit
- The Communications Sector Management Unit, and
- The Electrification Sector Management Unit.

### **iii. Legal Services Division**

The functions of this Unit include providing legal advice to the Ministry, liaising with other legal counsels in the public and private sectors with respect to the Ministry's legal business, advancing the Ministry's legislative agenda and providing instructions to the Chief State Solicitor and the Solicitor General on Court matters pertaining to the Ministry.

### **iv. National Social Development Programme (NSDP) Secretariat**

This Secretariat manages the National Social Development Programme which is a Government-funded social programme designed to facilitate the delivery of water, street lights and electricity services to deprived and under-developed communities in the country.

### **v. Sectoral Programmes and Projects Unit (SPPU)**

This Unit is responsible for strategic programme and project development and management (including capital projects), sectoral project monitoring, risk management, and project reporting.

### **vi. Customer Service Unit**

This Unit is responsible for ensuring that there is greater efficiency in the Ministry's service delivery system.

### **vii. Information System/Information Technology Unit**

This Unit is responsible for managing the Information Systems and Information Technology portfolios of the Ministry, as well as providing the necessary IT support as required.

viii. Communications Unit

This Unit has responsibility for developing and implementing the Ministry's communication strategy in support of Government's plans, programmes and initiatives.

ix. Monitoring and Evaluating Unit

This Unit is responsible for the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems for the Ministry, consistent with Government's Vision 2020 agenda and approved policies.

x. Internal Audit

This Department is responsible for ensuring that the system of accounting as prescribed by the Ministry of Finance is established, implemented and maintained in the Ministry. The Department also has to ensure that all financial records of the Ministry are complete and accurate, and that the assets of the Ministry are safeguarded and can be properly accounted for.

**Responsibility Centres external to the Ministry:**

i. Meteorological Services Division

This Division is responsible for providing information on current weather events; issuing weather forecasts, bulletins and warnings; and providing and storing climate data. Information is provided to the general public, the media, the aviation industry, insurance companies, building contractors and local, regional and international agencies.

ii. Electrical Inspectorate Division

This Division has responsibility for the following areas:

- Inspection and certification of all wiring and electrical installations to ensure that they are safe to the consumer
- Licensing of electricians
- Licensing of Cinema Operators (Projectionists)
- Fire and accident investigations with the intent of determining whether a fire was due to an electrical fault.

**Effect of Functions on Members of the Public**

All the services provided by the Ministry of Public Utilities, namely, water, electricity, wastewater, solid waste, postal and telecommunications, positively impact the lives of all persons in the country as well as all sectors of the economy, since these services contribute to the basic infrastructure upon which all human and economic development is based, measured and sustained. At present, Trinidad and Tobago is on a growth path towards developed country status by the year 2020, and developments in the utility services are pivotal to attaining this Vision.

## **Section 7 (1) (a) (ii)**

### **Categories of Documents in the Possession of the Ministry of Public Utilities:**

#### Files:

Administrative, human resource management, financial, procurement, legal, conferences/seminars, programmes, projects, Cabinet, boards, committees, meetings, technical assistance, local/regional/international organisations, and utilities.

#### Financial Records:

Financial and accounting statements and operational documents.

#### Documents:

Copies of legislation, laws, legal notices, Bills, regulations, orders, Gazettes, reports from Government agencies.

#### Digital media

Photographs, CDs, DVDs, diskettes, videos and tapes pertaining to the Ministry's work.

## **Section 7 (1) (a) (iii)**

### **Material prepared for publication or inspection**

This section is not applicable.

## **Section 7 (1) (a) (iv)**

### **Literature available by subscription**

This section is not applicable.

## **Section 7 (1) (a) (v)**

### **Procedure to be followed when accessing a document from the Ministry of Public Utilities**

#### **How to Request Information:**

##### General Procedure

Our policy is to answer all requests for information, both oral and written. However, in order to exercise your rights under the FOIA (for example the right to challenge a decision if your request for information is refused), you must make your request in

writing. You must, therefore, complete the appropriate form (*Request for Access to Official Documents*) available at the Ministry's Library and the Business Services Unit, for information that is not readily available to the public.

#### Addressing Requests:

To facilitate prompt handling of your request, please address it to the Designated Officer of the Ministry (**see Section 7 (1) (a) (vi)**).

#### Details in the Request

Applicants should provide details that will allow for ready identification and location of the records that are being requested. If insufficient information is provided, clarification will be sought from the applicant. If you are not sure how to write your request or what details to include, communicate with our Designated Officer.

### **Requests not handled under the FOIA**

A request under the FOIA will not be processed to the extent that it asks for information which is readily available to the public, either from this Ministry or from another public authority, e.g. brochures, pamphlets, reports etc.

### **Responding to your Request**

#### Retrieving Documents

The Ministry of Public Utilities is required to furnish copies of documents only when they are in our possession or we can retrieve them from storage. Information stored in the National Archives or other storage centre will be retrieved in order to process your request.

#### Furnishing Documents

An applicant is entitled to copies of information we have in our possession, custody or power. We are required to furnish only one copy of a document. If we cannot make a legible copy of a document to be released, we may not attempt to reconstruct it. Instead, we will furnish the best copy possible and note its quality in our reply.

Please note we are not compelled to do the following:

- (a) Create new documents. For example, we are not required to write a new programme so that a computer will print information in the format you prefer.
- (b) Perform research for you.

### **Time Limits**

#### General

The FOIA sets a time limit of thirty (30) calendar days for determination of your request for access to documents. If we fail to meet this deadline, the FOIA gives you the right to proceed as though your request has been denied. We will try diligently to comply with

the time limit. If it appears that processing your request may take longer than the statutory limit, we will acknowledge your request and advise you of its status. Since there is a possibility that requests may be incorrectly addressed or misdirected, you may wish to call or write to confirm that we have received the request and to ascertain its status.

#### Time Allowed

We will determine whether to grant your request for access to information as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days as required by Section 15 of the FOIA. If a decision is taken to grant access to the information requested, you will be permitted to inspect the documents and/or be provided with copies.

#### **Section 7 (1) (a) (vi)**

##### **Officers in the Ministry of Public Utilities responsible for:**

- The initial receipt of and action upon notices under Section 10,
- Requests for access to documents under Section 13, and
- Applications for correction of personal information under Section 36 of the FOIA, are:

##### **The Designated Officer:**

Mrs. Sarah Briggs  
Manager Business Services Unit  
Sacred Heart Building  
16-18 Sackville Street  
Port-of-Spain  
Phone: 627-5915  
Fax: 625-7003  
Email: [sbriggs@mpu.gov.tt](mailto:sbriggs@mpu.gov.tt)

##### **The Alternate Officer:**

Ms. Cheryl Ann George  
Legal Officer  
Sacred Heart Building  
16-18 Sackville Street  
Port-of-Spain  
Phone: 627-5915  
Fax: 625-7003  
Email: [cgeorge@mpu.gov.tt](mailto:cgeorge@mpu.gov.tt)

## **Section 7 (1) (a)(vii)**

### **Advisory Boards, Councils, Committees, and other bodies (Where meetings/minutes are open to the public)**

Nil

## **Section 7 (1) (a) (viii)**

### **Library/Reading Room Facilities**

The Reading Room in the Ministry is located on Fifth Floor, Sacred Heart Building, 16-18 Sackville Street, Port-of-Spain. It is open to the public from Mondays to Fridays between the hours of 8:30 am to 3.30 pm.

### **Policy of the Ministry of Public Utilities for the provision of copies of documents which are readily available to the public**

Members of the public may:

- i. Indicate the form in which the copies are to be made available e.g. soft or hard copies, and must take into consideration, the possibility that the copies may not be available in the form required.
- ii. Be required to supply copying paper for hard copies in instances where requests require large amounts of paper. This is to be determined at the discretion of the Ministry of Public Utilities.

## **Section 8 Statements**

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The following documents are used to guide officers of the Ministry of Public Utilities and they are available to members of the public for perusal. Some of these documents can be purchased from the Government Printery, and others can be accessed on-line via [www.ttparliament.org](http://www.ttparliament.org) or [www.ttconnect.gov.tt](http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt)

- Copies of legislation, laws, regulations and orders
- Copies of Trinidad and Tobago Gazette
- Hansard Reports relating to Debates in the Senate and House of Representatives
- Circular memoranda from the Ministry of Finance, Comptroller of Accounts, Chief Personnel Officer, Director of Public Administration and other Departments
- Reports of Government Agencies
- Public Sector Investment Programme
- Policies of agencies within the purview of the Ministry

- Estimates of Expenditure, Recurrent and Development Programme
- Procurement Policies and guidelines
- Financial Regulations and Instructions

## **Section 9 Statements**

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### **Section 9**

#### **Reports which are available in the Ministry of Public Utilities**

Reports are available at the Ministry's Library located on the Fifth Floor, Sacred Heart Building, 16-18 Sackville Street, Port of Spain.