

UPDATED PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES 2017 ANNUAL STATEMENT ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) ACT CHAPTER 22:02

In compliance with Sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, the Ministry of Public Utilities is required by law to publish annual statements on its mandate for the benefit of the members of the public.

The FOI Act was assented to on November 4, 1999 and came into full effect on August 30, 2001 to "give members of the public a general right (with exceptions) of access to official documents of public authorities and for matters related thereto". The Act provides members of the public with:

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 FOI Act;
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 FOI Act.

SECTION 7 STATEMENTS

Purpose and Function of the Ministry of Public Utilities

The Ministry's strategic framework establishes the context within which its goals and objectives are recognized and pursued. It is defined by the following goals and objectives:

- To provide effective and efficient leadership and governance to the Utilities Sector;
- To ensure that Trinidad and Tobago's utility sector (electricity, water, waste management, post and telecommunications) is modern, customer oriented and technologically enabled to provide effective, cost efficient quality services to all citizens;
- To provide a framework within the Ministry for promoting employee well-being and ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity, fairness and respect;
- Collaborate with the agencies to ensure that they practice prudent financial management with a view to becoming financially viable.

MANDATE

To provide effective and efficient leadership and governance in the delivery of Public Utilities Services to the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

VISION

To become an organization dedicated to excellence in the delivery of Public Utilities for the sustainability of our country and an improved quality of life of its citizenry.

MISSION

To facilitate the effective delivery of efficient, affordable and quality Public Utilities Services through a committed, resourceful team of professionals in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

CORE VALUES

The Ministry of Public Utilities is guided in its operations by the following core values:

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|----------------------|----------------------------|
| • Integrity | • Accountability |
| • Service Excellence | • Trust and Mutual Respect |
| • Transparency | • Partnership |

Reporting

The Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds, M.P., Minister of Public Utilities, along with the management team and staff of the Ministry, has oversight for the Public Utilities Sector. Services are provided through the efforts of two (2) Divisions, four (4) Statutory Bodies, two (2) State Enterprises and one (1) Agency. The Ministry is also responsible for the administration of the Utilities Assistance Programme and the Residential Electrification Assistance Programme in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry of Public Utilities has three hundred and thirty (330) employees and is accountable to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in the areas of: electricity and electrical inspections, telecommunication services, postal services, meteorological services, waste management and water resources.

The Minister of Public Utilities reports to the Cabinet and Parliament on matters for which he has responsibility, which include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Visioning and policy direction | • Leadership |
| • Securing budgetary requirements | • Public accountability |

MINISTRY STRUCTURE

Head Office

- The Office and Secretariat of the Minister of Public Utilities
- The Office and Secretariat of the Permanent Secretary
- The Office and Secretariat of the Deputy Permanent Secretary
- The Human Resource Services Division, which is comprised of:-
 - The Human Resource Management Unit
 - The Administrative Support Services Unit
 - The Finance and Accounts Unit
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
- The Economic Research, Policy and Planning Division, which comprises:-
 - The Research Unit
 - The Communications Sector Management Unit
 - The Electrification Sector Management Unit
 - The Water Sector Management Unit.
- The Sectoral Programmes and Projects Unit
- The Customer Service Unit
- The Communications Unit
- The Legal Services Division
- The Information Technology Unit and
- The Internal Audit

Divisions of the Ministry

- The Electrical Inspectorate Division
- Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service Division

Statutory Bodies

- The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC)
- Water and Sewage Authority (WASA)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost)

State Enterprises

- National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited. (MTS)
- Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Ltd. (SWMCOL)

Agency

- The Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TSTT)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND UNITS (HEAD OFFICE)

Human Resource Services Division

The primary objective of the Human Resource Services Division is to provide timely and efficient support to the internal clients of the Ministry by offering Financial, Administrative and Human Resource Services through its Human Resource Management Unit, Administrative Support Services Unit and the Finance and Accounts Unit.

UPDATED PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES 2017 ANNUAL STATEMENT ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) ACT CHAPTER 22:02

continued...

Monitoring and Evaluating Unit

This Unit is responsible for developing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems for the Ministry, consistent with the Government's mandate to provide effective and efficient delivery of public utilities to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The Unit's primary functions include tracking the progress, outcomes and impact of projects, programmes and policies, evaluating the Ministry's performance and reporting on its activities.

Economic Research, Policy and Planning Division

The Economic Research Policy and Planning Division (ERPPD) is the technical arm of the Ministry of Public Utilities and is charged with the overall policy direction, research and planning of the utilities sector. This Division conducts its work through four (4) Units:

- The Research Unit;
- The Communications Sector Management Unit (Telecommunications and Postal);
- The Electrification Sector Management Unit; and
- The Water Sector Management Unit

Sectoral Programmes and Projects Unit (SPPU)

The Sectoral Programmes and Projects Unit is responsible for monitoring the implementation of sectoral programmes and projects (including capital projects), risk management and project reporting.

Customer Service Unit

The Customer Service Unit is responsible for facilitating greater efficiency and effectiveness in the Ministry's service delivery system. The Unit is charged with the following functions: preparing responses to Parliamentary Questions, treating with all matters under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 1999, addressing Utility Complaints/Queries, managing the Utilities Assistance Programme (UAP) and facilitating the provision of Standby Generator Licenses.

Communications Unit

The primary responsibility of the Communication Unit is to develop and implement the Ministry's communication strategy in support of Government's plans, programmes and initiatives.

Legal Services Division

This Division is responsible for providing legal advice to the Ministry, liaising with other legal counsel in the public and private sectors with respect to the Ministry's legal business, advancing the Ministry's legislative agenda and providing information to the Chief State Solicitor and the Solicitor General on court matters pertaining to the Ministry.

Information Technology Unit

The Information Technology Unit is responsible for managing the Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT) portfolios of the Ministry, as well as providing the necessary IT support to the Ministry.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit 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 Unit's primary functions are to ensure that all financial records of the Ministry are complete and accurate, and that the assets of the Ministry are safeguarded.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL DIVISIONS

Electrical Inspectorate Division (EID)

The Electrical Inspectorate Division's (EID) primary responsibility is to provide inspection and certification of electrical installations in Trinidad and Tobago in accordance with both local and international standards. The EID is also authorised to issue and renew wireman's licenses, and to investigate fires that may be caused by electrical faults, upon the request of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services, Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and Insurance Companies.

Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service

The Meteorological Services Division (MSD) is responsible for providing meteorological information and advice consistent with international standards, namely the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. MSD produces and distributes weather and climate information to the general public and key stakeholders in sectors such as aviation, maritime, agriculture, tourism, water and disaster management.

Impact of Functions of the Ministry of Public Utilities on Members of the Public

The Ministry of Public Utilities is responsible for the Utility Sector, such as electricity and electrical inspection, water and sewage, telecommunications and postal services which positively impact the lives of Trinidad and Tobago's citizenry. These contribute valuable resources on which Trinidad and Tobago's basic infrastructure and human and economic development are based, measured and sustained.

Categories of Documents in the Possession of the Ministry of Public Utilities

The following documents are in the possession of the Ministry of Public Utilities, in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (ii) of the FOI Act:

- **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, brochures, bulletins, reports from Government agencies.
- **Digital media:** Photographs, CDs, DVDs, diskettes, videos and tapes pertaining to the Ministry's work.

Material prepared for publication or inspection

The Ministry produces the following documents which are available to the public:

- The Ministry's Quarterly Newsletter "Focus on MPU" (2007-2013)
- Utilities Assistance Programme (UAP) brochures
- Residential Electrification Assistance Programme (REAP) brochures
- Newspaper advertisements (Ministerial vacancies, Ministerial messages and statements)

Members of the public can also visit the Ministry's website for additional information at: www.mpu.gov.tt

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

The following are the procedures to be followed when accessing documents from the Ministry of Public Utilities, in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (v) of the FOI Act.

(a) General Procedure

The Ministry's policy is to respond to all requests for information, both oral and written. However, in order to exercise the rights under the FOI Act (for example the right to challenge a decision if the request for information is refused), the applicant must make the request in writing.

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

(b) Addressing Requests

To facilitate prompt handling of the request, it should be addressed to the Designated Officer of the Ministry (see Section 7 (1) (a) (vi)).

(c) 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 applicants are unsure of how their request should be written or what details should be included, they should communicate with the Ministry's Designated Officer.

(d) Requests not handled under the FOI Act

A request under the FOI Act 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.

UPDATED PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES 2017 ANNUAL STATEMENT ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) ACT CHAPTER 22:02

continued...

(e) Retrieving Documents

The Ministry of Public Utilities is required to furnish copies of documents only when they are in its possession or can be retrieved from storage. Information stored in the National Archives or other storage centres will be retrieved in order to process the requests.

(f) Furnishing Documents

An applicant is entitled to copies of information the Ministry has in its possession, custody or power. The Ministry is required to furnish only one copy of a document. If a legible copy of a document cannot be released, the Ministry may not attempt to reconstruct it. Instead, we will furnish the best copy possible and note its quality in our reply. Please note the Ministry is not compelled to do the following:

- Create new documents; or
- Perform research for the applicant.

(g) Time Limits

The FOI Act sets a time limit of thirty (30) calendar days for the determination of a request for access to documents. The Ministry is required to grant the request for access to information as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days, as required by Section 15 of the FOI Act. If a decision is taken to grant access to the information requested, the applicant will be permitted to inspect the documents and/or be provided with copies.

Should the Ministry fail to meet this deadline, the FOI Act gives the applicant the right to proceed as though the request has been denied. The Ministry will diligently seek to comply with the time limit. If it appears that processing the request may take longer than the statutory limit, the Ministry would acknowledge the request and advise the applicant of its status. Since there is a possibility that requests may be incorrectly addressed or misdirected, the applicant may wish to call or write to confirm that the Ministry has received the request and to ascertain its status.

(h) Fees and Charges

Section 17(1) stipulates that no fee shall be charged by a public authority for the making of a request for access to an official document. However, where access to an official document is to be given in the form of printed copies or copies in some other form, such as on a tape, disk, film or other material, the applicant will be required to pay the prescribed fee incurred by duplication of the said material. Similarly, where documents in the public domain are made available to a member of the public, the Ministry may charge duplication fees in accordance with its normal replication policy.

THE DESIGNATED OFFICER:

Mrs. Mauricia Pegus
Manager, Customer Services
One Alexandra Place
#1 Alexandra Street
St. Clair
Trinidad, W.I.
Phone: 628-9500 ext. 1115
Fax: 628-6067
Email: mpegus@mpu.gov.tt

THE ALTERNATE OFFICER:

Ms. Anika Farmer
Director, Legal Services
One Alexandra Place
#1 Alexandra Street
St. Clair
Trinidad, W.I.
Phone 628-9500 ext. 5200
Fax: 628-6067
Email: afarmer@mpu.gov.tt

These Officers are responsible for executing the following functions:

- The initial receipt of an 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 FOI Act.

Advisory Boards, Councils, Committees, and other bodies (where meetings minutes are open to the public) Section 7 (1) (a) (vii)

- National Technical Electrical Committee

Library/Reading Room Facilities

The Ministry of Public Utilities currently has a Reading Room/Library in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (viii) of the FOI Act. The Reading Room/Library is located on the Fifth Floor, One Alexandra Place, #1 Alexandra Street, St. Clair, 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:

- (a) 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.
- (b) Be required to supply copying paper for hard copies in instances where requests require large amounts of paper.

SECTION 8 STATEMENTS

Section 8(1)(a)(i) Documents containing interpretations or particulars of written laws or schemes administered by the Ministry of Public Utilities, not being particulars contained in another written law:

At this time, the Ministry of Public Utilities has no such documents.

Section 8(1)(a)(ii) Manuals, rules of procedure, statements of policy, records of decisions, letters of advice to persons outside the public authority, or similar documents containing rules, policies, guidelines, practices or precedents:

There are other documents which guide the operations of the Ministry of Public Utilities. These documents can be purchased from the Government Printery, while others may be accessed on-line via www.ttparliament.org or www.ttconnect.gov.tt. The following applies:

- 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
- Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)
- Reports of Government Agencies
- Annual Budget Documents of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- Policies of Agencies within the purview of the Ministry
- Guidelines for Programmes within the Ministry
- Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and Development Programmes
- Procurement Policies and Guidelines
- Financial Regulations and Instructions
- Health and Safety Guidelines

SECTION 9 STATEMENTS

In accordance with Section 9 (1) (a)-(m), the following reports are available at the Ministry's Reading Room/Library, located on the Fifth Floor, One Alexandra, #1 Alexandra St, St. Clair, Port of Spain:

- The MPU's Annual Administrative Reports
- The MPU's Statistical Digest (2006-2010), (2010-2011)
- The MPU's Quarterly Newsletter (2007-2013)
- Annual Reports and Financial Statements of Agencies of the MPU
- Newsletters/Magazines of Agencies of the MPU (e.g. Watts Happening and RIC News)
- Contact Magazine prepared by the T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- Linkage Magazine prepared by the American Chamber of Commerce
- Newsletters of Other Ministries and Agencies (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA))