

EIGHTY- EIGHTH REPORT

OF THE

SALARIES REVIEW COMMISSION

OF THE

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

May 14 , 2008

EIGHTY-EIGHTH REPORT OF THE SALARIES REVIEW COMMISSION

Review of the Constituency Allowance and the Assembly/Constituency Allowance

By letter dated March 23, 2006, His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago conveyed his approval for the Salaries Review Commission (SRC) to review the Constituency Allowance and the Assembly/Constituency Allowance which are payable to certain office-holders.

2. In considering the matter, we sought clarification with respect to the details of the current arrangements for the Constituency Allowance and the Assembly/Constituency Allowance from officials of the Parliament Department and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) respectively. We were advised that while, over time, changes were effected to the Constituency Allowance on the basis of recommendations of the House Committee of the House of Representatives, the provisions in respect of the Assembly/Constituency Allowance which were approved by Cabinet in 2003 and are outlined in the Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2003 dated March 10, 2003 continue to apply. Given the changes effected to the Constituency Allowance, we sought a meeting with representatives of the House Committee of the House of Representatives to clarify the issue. It was not possible for them to meet with us. That notwithstanding, we are of the view that we possess sufficient information to conclude our deliberations on the matter.

3. The Constituency Allowance is provided to elected Members of Parliament while the Assembly/Constituency Allowance is allocated for elected officials of the THA. The Constituency Allowance and Assembly/Constituency Allowance are intended to defray costs incurred in hiring staff at constituency offices and to assist in meeting the cost of rental accommodation and telephone and electricity expenses at those offices.

4. The allowances are provided to the following office-holders if they are elected Members of Parliament or of the THA:-

Constituency Allowance	Assembly/ Constituency Allowance
Prime Minister	Chief Secretary
Minister of Government	Deputy Chief Secretary/ Secretary/Assistant Secretary
Speaker of the House	Presiding Officer
Leader of the Opposition	Minority Leader
Parliamentary Secretary	Deputy Presiding Officer

Deputy Speaker of the House

Assemblyman
(other than the holder of another office)

Member of the House of
Representatives
(other than Ministers and
Parliamentary Secretaries)

5. We last reviewed the Constituency Allowance and the Assembly/Constituency Allowance in 2006 when we undertook a general review of terms and conditions of service of all office-holders within our purview. However, the recommendations in our 80th Report pertaining to the allowances were not accepted by Cabinet and it was agreed that the arrangements currently in place should continue, pending a review of the allowances by the Commission. The details of the arrangements recommended in the 80th Report of the SRC are set out in Appendix I.

6. In the course of our current review, we were advised that in October 2003, notwithstanding the provisions contained in Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2003 dated March 10, 2003, Cabinet agreed to a revised Constituency Allowance on the basis of recommendations of the House Committee of the House of Representatives. Further, we understand that since then there has been some modification of those provisions by the House Committee, with the introduction of the payment of an allowance of \$1,800 per month for clerical services at a sub-office. Details of the current arrangements are set out in Appendix II. Further, details of the Assembly/Constituency Allowance are set out in Appendix III.

Disbursement of Funds

7. We are advised that with the exception of salaries, funds to be expended in respect of the Constituency Allowance are deposited on a monthly basis (by Parliament) into a constituency office bank account in the name of the representative Member of Parliament and are managed by the office-holder. Similarly, in the case of the Assembly/Constituency Allowance, cheques in the name of the representative are issued directly to the office-holder, monthly, to cover expenses related to the maintenance of the Assembly office. Salaries, however, are paid directly by the Parliament Department to staff employed at constituency offices and by the Tobago House of Assembly for employees of the Assembly offices.

Staffing

8. In the 80th Report, we recommended that the provision which allowed for a maximum of three (3) persons to be employed to perform administrative/clerical and/or other support services as outlined in Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2003 should be maintained. We are informed that in keeping with the subsequent decision of Cabinet of October 2003, a maximum of five (5) persons inclusive of one (1) research person may now be employed at a main constituency. We are also advised that the House

Committee subsequently approved a provision that one (1) person be employed to perform clerical duties at a sub-office. We understand that persons hired in constituency offices are the employees of the relevant Members of Parliament and as such, the terms and conditions of employment, including salaries provided to such employees, are determined by those office-holders, within the limit established for salaries/wages.

9. We are advised that because of the geographical spread of some constituencies, there is a need, in addition to a main office, for up to a maximum of two (2) sub offices to be provided. We are of the view that with the inclusion of sub-offices for constituencies, there is a basis for increasing the staff allotment. Therefore, we consider the current arrangements for staffing, that is, a maximum of four (4) persons to be employed to provide clerical/secretarial and support services at the main constituency office as well as the arrangement for one (1) person to perform clerical duties at the sub-office to be adequate. Additionally, the arrangement for securing the services of one (1) person with research capability is considered appropriate.

Accommodation

10. We are informed that accommodation for constituency offices for elected representatives is generally provided by the State. However, where the State cannot provide a suitable and convenient location for a constituency office, the House Committee of the House of Representatives may take the initiative to locate a privately owned building. In cases where the cost of rental accommodation exceeds the existing quantum for rental, the approval of Cabinet is sought, on the recommendation of the House Committee, for funding the additional cost. In the 80th Report, the sum of \$1,500 per month was recommended for rental accommodation. Currently, the sum of \$3,000 per month is allocated for rental accommodation for a main office or a combination of a main office and a maximum of two (2) sub offices. We note, however, that only the actual cost of the rental accommodation is provided by Parliament.

11. We have been advised that on average, the size of a constituency office is 864 sq. ft. The cost of rental accommodation varies depending on the location of the office, and over the years, there has been a continuous rise in the cost of such accommodation, particularly in the cities and boroughs. Our research on rental accommodation at various locations in Trinidad and Tobago supports this observation. Our findings reveal that on average, the cost of rental accommodation based on the stated average size of an office ranges from \$6,500 to \$14,300 per month. Consequently, we consider that there is justification for increasing the existing rate of \$3,000 per month.

Telephone and Electricity

12. In the 80th Report, we had recommended that the sum of \$1,000 per month be provided for telephone and electricity for a constituency office including sub-offices. Under the current arrangements, the allocation is \$1,500 per month. In addition, the sum of \$300 per month is paid for a residential phone and \$500 per month for a mobile

phone to Members of the House for constituency duties. Nevertheless, we note that the remuneration arrangements of a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary include provision for the State to meet the cost of installation of a telephone in his/her private residence, rental costs and other charges, including Value Added Tax, related to official business. We are informed also that these office-holders are provided with mobile phones, administratively, by the Ministries to which they are assigned and that expenses relating to such phones are also met by the State.

Postage, Stationery/Supplies and Janitorial Services

13. In accordance with the provisions of Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2006 dated March 8, 2006, Members of Parliament are to be provided with stationery and postage as a Parliamentary Allowance by the Parliament Department. In fact, a sum of \$1,500 per month is provided to Members to acquire postage, stationery/supplies and janitorial services for their constituency office. Additionally, a sum of \$300 per month is allocated for routine maintenance of the constituency office, for the purchase of cleaning agents and small tools and for meeting the cost of minor repairs to office equipment.

Recommendations

14. In making our recommendations, we took cognisance of the fact that over the years, the House Committee has sought and obtained the approval of Cabinet for revised arrangements to be implemented in respect of the Constituency Allowance, as the need arose. Our recommendations are developed within the context of the provisions set out in the Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2003 as well as those which currently exist.

Staffing

15. We recommend that the current arrangements for Members of the House of Representatives should be maintained. With regard to the Assembly/Constituency Allowance for Members of the THA, we recommend that in addition to the existing arrangement outlined in Minister of Finance Circular No. 1 of 2003, provision should be made for securing the services of one (1) person with research capability.

16. Based on data with respect to permanent and contract positions in the administrative/clerical and research field, we are of the view that the current sum of \$15,000 per month for the employment of staff at the main constituency offices is adequate. We recommend, however, that the existing allocation of \$1,500 per month for clerical support in a sub-office be increased to \$1,800 per month. In respect of the THA, except in the case of the Chief Secretary who is provided with the same terms as a Minister of Government (Non-Cabinet), an allowance of \$10,000 per month should be provided for staff at constituency offices. Of that amount, \$5,000 per month should be allocated for securing the services of one (1) person with research capability.

Accommodation

17. We recommend that a revised maximum rate of \$6,500 per month be provided for Members of the House of Representatives as well as elected members of the THA: the sum to be paid being the actual cost of rental. The approval of Cabinet should continue to be sought where the actual cost of rental exceeds the recommended maximum rate.

Telephone/Electricity

18. With respect to meeting the cost of telephone and electricity services at a constituency office of the Members of the House of Representatives, we consider the monthly allocation of \$1,500 to be adequate. We recommend, therefore, that this allowance continue to be allocated for such services at constituency offices and that it be extended to eligible members of the THA. Further, we recommend that elected Members of Parliament, including Ministers of Government and Parliamentary Secretaries should continue to be provided with allowances at the rate of \$300 per month each for a residential phone and cellular phone. Similarly, elected members of the THA should be provided with \$300 per month to meet costs related to the use of a cellular phone.

Postage, Stationery/Supplies and Janitorial Services

19. We recommend that Members of the House of Representatives continue to be provided with a sum of \$1,500 per month for postage, stationery/supplies and janitorial services for the constituency offices. Elected members of the THA should also be provided with \$1,500 per month to meet the same costs. Consequently, we recommend that the entitlement to official stationery and free postage within Trinidad and Tobago for official correspondence related to the business of his/her constituency should be discontinued since it would be superfluous. We recommend also that the quantum of \$300 per month currently allocated for routine maintenance of the constituency offices be maintained and that elected members of the THA be provided with the same allowance.

20. In summary, we recommend the following:-

(a) Constituency Allowance

Details	Per Month \$
<u>Staffing</u> For the employment of a maximum of four (4) persons to perform administrative/clerical and other support services	10,000

Details	Per Month \$
For the employment of one (1) person to undertake research	5,000
For the employment of one (1) person to perform clerical duties at a sub-office	1,800
<u>Rental Accommodation</u>	
Where accommodation is not provided by the State or where accommodation for the main office is provided by the State – for a maximum of two (2) sub offices	A maximum of 6,500
<u>Other provisions</u>	
Telephone and Electricity	1,500
Residential phone	300
Cellular phone	300
Postage, Stationery/Supplies and Janitorial Services	1,500
Routine Maintenance	300

The existing Parliamentary Allowance under which an elected Member of Parliament is entitled to official stationery and free postage within Trinidad and Tobago for all official correspondence related to the business of his/her constituency to be discontinued.

(b) Assembly/Constituency Allowance

Details	Per Month \$
<u>Staffing</u>	
For the employment of a maximum of two (2) persons to perform administrative/clerical and/or other support services	5,000
For the employment of one (1) person to perform research duties	5,000

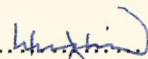
Details	Per Month \$
<u>Rental Accommodation</u>	
Where accommodation is not provided by the Assembly	A maximum of 6,500
<u>Other provisions</u>	
Telephone and Electricity	1,500
Cellular phone	300
Postage, Stationery/Supplies and Janitorial Services	1,500
Routine Maintenance	300

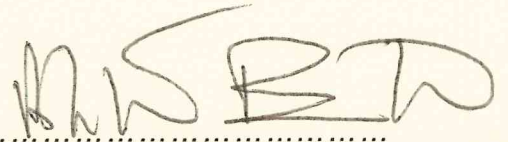
The existing arrangement under which an elected Member of the THA is entitled to official stationery and free postage within Trinidad and Tobago for all official correspondence related to the business of his/her constituency should be discontinued.

Effective Date

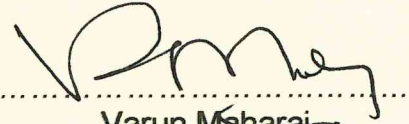
21. We recommend that revised arrangements should take effect from a current date.

Dated this 14th day of May, 2008.

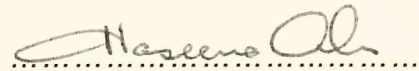
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 Edward Collier
 (Chairman)



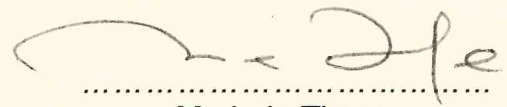
Ashton Brereton



Varun Maharaj



Haseena Ali



Marjorie Thorpe

APPENDIX I

Recommendations in the 80th Report of the SRC in Respect of Constituency Allowance and Constituency/Assembly Allowance

Funds Allocated for	Members of the House of Representatives and Chief Secretary	Elected persons in the THA other than the Chief Secretary
	\$ per month	\$ per month
<u>Employment of staff</u>	7,000 Maximum of three (3) persons to perform administrative/clerical and/or support services	4,500 Maximum of two (2) persons to perform administrative/clerical and/or support services
<u>Rental Accommodation</u>	1,500	1,500
<u>Telephone and Electricity</u>	1,000	1,000

APPENDIX II

Current Arrangements approved by Cabinet with respect to the Constituency Allowance for Members of the House of Representatives with effect from October 2003

Details	Per Month \$
<u>Staffing</u> (i) For administrative/clerical and messenger/driver duties for a maximum of four (4) persons;	10,000
(ii) Research Staff	5,000
(iii) For clerical duties at a sub -office*	As determined based on needs
<u>Rental Accommodation</u> Rental costs associated with one (1) main office and a maximum of two (2) sub-offices, or where the main office is a government building, for a maximum of two (2) sub-offices	3,000
Telephone and Electricity	1,500
Postage, Stationery/Supplies and Janitorial Services	1,500
Routine Maintenance and Contingency – To cover routine maintenance and contingencies. (Capital repairs to be handled by the Parliament Department)	300
Residential Phone	300
Cellular Phone	500

*Approved by House Committee of the House of Representatives

APPENDIX III

Current Arrangements approved by Cabinet with respect to the Assembly/Constituency Allowance for elected officials of the Tobago House of Assembly with effect from March 10, 2003

Details	Per Month \$
<u>Staffing</u> Chief Secretary For administrative/secretarial services and/or other support services, employment of a maximum of three (3) persons Other elected THA officials (except Councillor) For administrative/secretarial services and/or other support services, employment of a maximum of two (2) persons	 6,000 3,000
<u>Rental Accommodation</u> Chief Secretary Other elected THA officials (except Councillor)	 1,250 960
<u>Telephone and Electricity</u> Chief Secretary Other elected THA officials (except Councillor)	 750 540
<u>Postage, Stationery/Supplies</u> All elected THA officials	Free postage within Trinidad and Tobago and provision of official stationery
<u>Telephone Facilities</u> Chief Secretary	Cost of installation of a telephone in private residence, rental costs and other charges including Value Added Tax related to official business to be met by the Assembly

Details	Per Month \$
<p data-bbox="188 401 652 432">Deputy Chief Secretary & Secretary</p> <p data-bbox="188 600 509 730"> Assistant Secretary Presiding Officer Minority Leader Deputy Presiding Officer </p> <p data-bbox="188 867 886 930"> Assemblyman (other than the holder of another office) Councillor (other than the holder of another office) </p>	<p data-bbox="930 401 1414 531">Rental costs and other charges including Value Added Tax related to official business to be met by the Assembly</p> <p data-bbox="1068 667 1276 699">\$400 per month</p> <p data-bbox="1068 867 1276 898">\$300 per month</p>