

NINETY-SIXTH REPORT

OF THE

SALARIES REVIEW COMMISSION

OF THE

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

January 24 , 2012

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Review of the Terms and Conditions of Service of the offices of the Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet

By letter dated September 22, 2011, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago conveyed his approval for the Salaries Review Commission (SRC) to review the terms and other conditions of service of the offices of the Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, in the context of the payment of a Duty Allowance with effect from June 1, 2010, taking into account the nature of the work of the Cabinet Secretariat, headed by the holders of these two offices.

2. In our deliberations on this matter, we met the incumbents in the offices of Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet who provided clarification on their duties and responsibilities as well as the demands of their jobs in the Cabinet Secretariat.

3. We are advised that the Cabinet Secretariat, which is considered to be the traditional link between Ministries/Departments and the Cabinet as well as between the Public Service and the President and Parliament, provides specialized administrative support to the Cabinet and its two major sub-committees, that is, the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GPC) and the Parliamentary Questions Committee (PQC). Additionally, with the coming into office of the new administration in May 2010, the Cabinet Secretariat has been providing secretariat services to another sub-committee of Cabinet which is responsible for the appointment of selected persons to Boards. Over the period October 2010 to September 2011, the Cabinet appointed 165 Boards/Committees.

4. We are informed that Cabinet, which comprises twenty-five members at present, meets in regular session once per week. Also, special meetings of Cabinet may be convened by the Prime Minister at any time and at short notice. Meetings of the F&GPC are held once per week and the PQC generally meets on a weekly basis except when Parliament is prorogued. We are advised that, unlike the Parliament and the Judiciary, Cabinet does not take any break or recess during a year.

5. The major responsibilities of the Cabinet Secretariat are as follows:-

- (i) making all arrangements for weekly meetings of Cabinet and the two main sub-committees (the F&GPC and PQC), which include examination of all Notes for Cabinet before they are placed on the Agenda, preparation of the Agenda and

circulation of the relevant documents to participants for those meetings;

- (ii) preparation of Agendas for the weekly meeting of the two sub-committees and their circulation, together with relevant Notes, to members of these sub-committees and invitees to these meetings;
- (iii) recording of Cabinet decisions in the form of Cabinet Minutes and preparation of the recommendations of the F&GPC and the PQC; and
- (iv) preparation of the recommendations of the F&GPC and the PQC which are included in the Agenda for the next meeting of the Cabinet.

6. We are advised that the Secretary to Cabinet is the Administrative Head of the Cabinet Secretariat which has a staff establishment of thirty-eight persons at the present time. The office holder is responsible for formulating, organizing and directing the activities of the Cabinet Secretariat, serves as Secretary to the F&GPC and provides advice and support to Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other senior Government officials. The office holder reports to the Permanent Secretary and Head of the Public Service.

7. The Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, who reports to the Secretary to Cabinet, provides technical and managerial support to that office holder, functions as the Secretary to the PQC and is required to manage the operations of that Committee.

8. A Duty Allowance is provided to certain offices within the purview of the SRC in recognition of the fact that the office holders must be available to respond to the demands of their offices outside normal working hours. These offices are at the most senior levels and are, generally, of national importance. The allowance currently ranges between \$2,000 per month and \$7,500 per month, with the highest quantum being paid to the President of the Republic.

9. We are advised that the holder of the office of Secretary to Cabinet is required to:-

- (i) be accessible outside of normal working hours, including weekends and public holidays, in the event that services are needed by the Prime Minister; and
- (ii) be available to respond to matters of State such as vetting and signing of legal documents to be presented to the President for his signature.

Additionally, Ministers rely heavily on the advice of the office holder and communicate with the Secretary to Cabinet on various Cabinet related matters outside of normal working hours.

10. We are advised that the Secretary to Cabinet and the Deputy Secretary to Cabinet are required to co-ordinate the weekly cycle of activities within tight deadlines and in so doing, encounter a number of challenges preparing for the statutory meetings of Cabinet. Some of the challenges include the timeframes within which decisions of Cabinet and recommendations of the Sub-Committees must be prepared for confirmation or deliberation at the following Cabinet meeting; the late submission of Notes as well as ad hoc Notes by Ministries/Departments for Cabinet's consideration; the size of the Cabinet Agenda over which the Secretariat to the Cabinet has no control; and the complex and intricate nature of some subjects requiring greater time to be spent on the accurate drafting of Minutes/recommendations.

11. We were informed that the demands of the work of the Cabinet Secretariat make the working of excess hours an inherent factor for the execution of its mandate and that staffing constraints exacerbate the situation, particularly when staff proceed on vacation leave and the Cabinet Secretariat is unable to secure leave reliefs. It was emphasised that, despite those challenges, the work of the Cabinet Secretariat cannot be deferred.

12. In determining whether a Duty Allowance should be paid to the offices of Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, we considered the office holders' duties and responsibilities and the demands placed on them, particularly having regard to the manner in which the Cabinet functions. Also, we took into account the impact on their personal lives of having to work beyond normal working hours regularly.

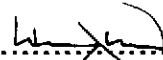
13. The offices of Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet are remunerated in Groups 3B and 4B respectively of the Top Managers in the Public Service. Currently, none of the offices in these two groups is eligible for a Duty Allowance.


Recommendations


14. Having regard to the duties and responsibilities of these offices, the uncertain and extended hours of work and the demands on the office holder's we recommend the payment of a Duty Allowance of \$2,040 per month and \$1,700 per month to the offices of Secretary to Cabinet and Deputy Secretary


to Cabinet, respectively, with effect from June 1, 2010, the date expressed in the remit from the President.


Dated this 24th day of January, 2012.


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Edward Collier
(Chairman)


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Haseena Ali


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Marjorie Thorpe


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Gerard Pinard


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Kenneth Dallip