

**VERBATIM REPORT**

**Committee:** Finance and Public Accounts Committee  
**Meeting:** Meeting with the **Department of Legal Affairs** to discuss the 2011 Report of the Auditor General  
**Room:** Committee Room 3  
**Date/Time:** Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 at 1400 hours

**Present:** Committee  
Hon. David Pierre - *Chairperson*  
Hon. Charles De Commarmond – *Vice-Chairperson*  
Hon. Lenny Lebon  
Hon. Nichole Barbe  
Hon. Marc Volcere  
Hon. Jeniffer Vel

**Absent with apology:** Hon. Sebastien Pillay

Department of Legal Affairs  
Mr. Ronny Govinden – *Attorney General*  
Mrs. Samantha Laure – *Assistant Human Resource and Budget Management Officer*

**In Attendance:** Office of the Auditor General  
Mr. Marc Benstrong - *Auditor General*  
  
The Secretariat  
Ms. Angelic Appoo – *Committee Advisor/Secretary*  
Ms. Saviona Isaac - *Secretary Assistant*

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much and good afternoon to both of you. This is the second hearing for the Auditor's Report for 2011 and let me welcome both of you. As you are very much aware, the powers of the Finance and Public Account Committee comes from the Constitution, Article 104 which states very clearly that, 'the National Assembly shall, as soon as is practicable after the beginning of each session of the Assembly, appoint from amongst its members standing committees and other committees necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions and, without prejudice to the forgoing, the National Assembly shall appoint the following standing committees', one of which is the Finance and Public Accounts Committee and, 'for the purposes of effectively performing its functions a standing committee or other committee may summon any person the committee believes may assist the committee in the performance of its functions and the committee shall have the powers, rights and privileges of the Supreme Court for –

- a) enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise;
- b) secondly, compelling the production of documents; and
- c) thirdly, issuing a commission or request to examine a witness abroad.'

So, basically we are the Finance and Public Accounts Committee and we obtain our powers from the Constitution of the country and the Constitution also states that there shall be seven members on the Committee based on the proportion of Members from different parties in the National Assembly and we are seven. I myself is the Chairperson of the Committee from the Opposition and we also have six other Members who are; Hon. De

Commarmond, he's also the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, we have Hon. Volcere, Hon. Pillay who is absent today, we have Hon. Vel who will be with us in a few minutes, Hon. Lebon and Hon. Barbe. We are assisted in our duties by a Secretary, who is Ms. Angelic Appoo and an Assistant, who is Ms. Isaac. We also work in close collaboration with the office of the Auditor General and therefore we also have today with us the Auditor, Mr. Benstrong. Please note that everything that is discussed in the hearing is recorded and therefore we shall speak the truth and nothing but the truth. And everything is kept for the consumption of the Committee and made public through a report which would be tabled before the National Assembly, debated and voted upon. Let me now kindly ask Mr. Govinden to introduce himself and the other member of his delegation. Thank you very much.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. On my part it's a privilege for me to be able to personally come in attendance with your Committee. I think it's a tool which is provided by the Constitution and it serves a useful purpose in ensuring that public account is scrutinized and it also goes in line with the check and balances in ensuring that the Executive arms of the Government complies with its own statutory financial regulations. I also take into consideration the fact that your mandate is obviously limited in the Constitution itself namely to enquire matters of public finance and accounts and that it might not necessarily until reviewing part of the powers for example setting constitutional appointees like the Attorney General, who exercise certain powers that is not subject to the scrutinisation of any person or

authority that is powered to prosecute. So, other than ... coming here and obviously discuss and clarify, I'm very much aware is within your mandate. In my team, unfortunately I don't have my Human Resources and Business Management Officer, Mrs. Houareau. She's presently on leave overseas as her husband is ill and she has been given 3 months leave. With me there is her Assistant Mrs. Laure. She is the Assistant Human Resources and Business Management Officer and she is *au-fait* with all matters that we are going to deal with today. My office is a relatively small office and our Accounting Budget Management Section is quite small. For the time being there's practically 3 Officers working, there's Mrs. Houareau who unfortunately is absent and her Assistant and another Officer who was recruited for secretarial duties, but she's also assisting in the Accounting Section. With this said, I'm open to any questions that you may wish to ask me.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Ok, thank you very much and we appreciate the fact that you've made time for you to come here personally to answer our questions. Thank you very much for that. And I shall be the first person to ask you the first question and my question refers to page 34 of the report, paragraph 2.2 and 2.3. I will be asking you two questions actually, because they refer to 2.2 and 2.3. According to the Auditor's report in 2.2 line 4, starts with 'although'. 'Although Audit was informed that monthly payroll records are reviewed for completeness and correctness by the Attorney General prior to effecting payment, audit did not see any evidence that the review was done through certification on payrolls'. And in 2.3 according to your reply, 'the Attorney General in his reply stated that the non-adherence was due to his

current work load. He further stated that with the planned recruitment of an Accounts Assistant to fill in the amendment forms, it will permit the final payroll to be verified by the Administrative Officer'. So, my question to you will be; has this recruitment taken place and is the payroll now being verified by the Administrative officer?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

I'm the Accounting Officer in my Department and this is over and above my official and constitutional function and you might understand that this additional duties comes as a very tenuous exercise of my function. I find it almost impossible for me to scrutinize all monthly payrolls and ensure that it is in total completeness with the record. But given that the Department is small and that the number of Officers being paid each month is relatively small, I could see off of ... that the payrolls are complete and in order. I don't think there has been any case where employees have been paid over and above what should be their monthly remuneration. I mean this defect if ever it is, it is a procedural one in the sense that there is no compliance to certain financial regulations, but it has no substantial irregularity as such. And we've been trying to recruit an Assistant Accountant Officer that would part of her competence would be basically to do just that, to review each and every documents and ensure that genuineness of payments and correctness of amount of money being issued every month. We had done two, in fact the post is there, we have created the post, this was as a result of recommendation from the Audit. We have created the post and then we were trying to secure Officers for that post. We did two exercises on two different dates and we managed to get certain individual, but both times the

candidature was not clear. So, we are back to the drawing board and I think we are going to make another attempt to publish and recruit ... for the post and we hope that this time it would be successful.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

So, basically you have not recruited, you have not been able to recruit yet?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes. So, as I told you prior to, there is an Office assistant that is actually helping the Accounting Section. And right now what she's doing is helping out with just that, to overview and verify those documentations. But the undertaking that we gave to the Auditor General then is still not fulfilled in the sense that we have not managed to secure the right individual for the job.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

But in view of that, is the payroll now being verified even if you have not been able to recruit an Account Assistant, is there a special effort that is being made to ensure that the payroll is being verified as per financial instructions?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, a special effort is being put into place and that Office Assistant that is appointed in the Accounting Section is verifying the payroll in line with the recommendation of the Auditor General.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Do you have?

**HON MARC VOLCERE**

Yes Mr. Chairman, then if that is the case AG, so why the need for another person to ....?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Because I think the financial regulations calls for somebody within

that section meaning an Account Officer of some sort if I'm not mistaken, should not be a person carrying out secretarial duties, it should be a person with a designated post and term of reference.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. I'll be asking you the next question as well and I'll be referring to page 34 again, 2.4 and 2.5, lack of documentation in support of amendments. 'The month to month comparative analysis of payroll expenditure was performed and audit noted that salary amendments which comprised leave pay, increase in personal salary, standing and periodic allowances, totalling to R17,719 were effected during the months of November and December 2011 which lacked supporting documents.' And in your reply you stated that, 'the Office indicated that relevant documentation in support of periodic allowances paid to the employees will be provided'. The question that begs itself here is a simple one; has the relevant supporting documents been provided to the Office of the Auditor General?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, they have been provided.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Ok?

**MR MARC BENSTRONG**

Yes ....

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Any supplementary questions? Hon. De Commarmond.

**HON CHARLES DE COMMARMOND**

AG my question relates to page 34, paragraph 3.2, regarding payments inadequately supported. Now, why were these payments made without

supported documents as required by FI 0520?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Now, if I can go back in the history of these two payments. These payments relate to two payments made to the Attorney General. First payment, the Attorney General ..... of the La Misere pollution incident, had to lead a legal delegation for an urgent meeting in London in order to continue with the negotiation that had started with the ASCON legal representative. The negotiation was for a settlement out of Court in respect of the said incident. The cost of this visit was to be paid by the Government of Seychelles. The fees of the two accompanied State Counsels were covered by the President's Office budget whilst the Legal Affairs paid for the trip for the AG. The AG booked a London Hotel online for seven days which came to a total of £13,374, this comes to a total figure of R27,067.80. Proof of the online booking was given to the Administrative personnel before payment was effected, this online booking is actually on file. The Attorney General was also funded seven nights at full per diem as Head of Delegation which according to the PSO comes to seven times R5,400 which is R37,800. The grand total for both the accommodation and per diem being R64,867.80. The AG sought the approval of the President for the mission on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011 and approval was granted on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. It is to be noted that subsistence allowance according to the PSO is an entitlement and there was no need for ex-post facto justification for this payment. It is submitted that the above provide enough supporting documents to justify the payments. These documents are still on file. Second payment which would add up to the figure of R84,000 is as follows: the AG attended a meeting on behalf of the

Minister responsible for Home Affairs, Environment and Transport in New York from the 17<sup>th</sup> of November to the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 2011. The meeting was a contact group meeting on piracy off the coast of Somalia as part of the annual meeting. In fact, I delivered a speech there in a plenary session on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, 2011. The AG sought the approval of the President to attend this meeting as such to be out of the jurisdiction from the 15<sup>th</sup> of November to 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2011. The approval was granted by the Vice President on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. This mission was fully funded by the Government of Seychelles. The airfare was paid fully by the Office of the President. The sum of R20,005.53 which represent a payment subsistence allowance was paid to the Attorney General by the Department. Accordingly, this figure in the Audit Report I think is wrong, I think it ... as accommodation as its application and payment voucher clearly showed that the sum is being deducted in the overseas subsistence allowance budget. The accommodation for this trip was borne out by the FIU budget. As per calculation in line with the PSO full subsistence allowance for New York represented for that period should be in fact R26,250, not R20,005. Accordingly there was an underpayment for the full per diem in this trip. Full subsistence allowance for USA being R3,750 per day. Again I note that subsistence allowance according to the PSO is an entitlement in such circumstances and there was no need for ex-post facto justification for this payment. The AG proceed on this trip without being paid the allowance and was refunded after his visit, hence the payment in December, 2011. Given the above, it is submitted that there was sufficient documentation to justify payment in the circumstances. These documents were and are still on the file, my

personal file. So, all in all both sum, the subsistence allowance for the New York trip and the additional payments comes to a sum of R84,873.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much for your answer. Can we have a copy of the relevant documents please?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, I can give you a copy of the breakdown.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Yes, Hon. De Commarmond.

**HON CHARLES DE COMMARMOND**

I will proceed on my next question referring to page 35, the next page and paragraph 3.5, it concerns the incorrect classification of payments. The Office responded that payments were charged against those other accounts due to insufficient funds from the appropriate account codes'. Why didn't the Department vire the funds to the appropriate accounts code in order to record the payments in their correct expenditure codes?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, we rightly acknowledge that a mistake was done here. In fact there was note that the appropriate codes were not deducted, but I'm instructed that this was because there were no budget. The problem here is that there were no I think request for approval before the codes were deducted. Substantially, the budgets under the relevant codes which should have been deducted were insufficient and other codes had to be deducted, but without the approval from the Ministry of Finance. But this has been rectified, internally we are now ensuring that all codes that needs to be deducted with

Finance approval, has to be clarified by Finance first.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

What mechanisms have you put in place to ensure that? What have you done internally to ensure that?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Can I speak to my Officer?

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Yes, please.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Internal approval is sought first and if this is given there's a Desk Officer at the Ministry of Finance that deals with our Department and all correspondences and supporting documents are then forwarded to that Desk Officer and then approval is given and we do the necessary.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

For clarification, she can answer questions if you give her permission to.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Ok, thank you Mr. Chair.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Any other supplementary questions? If I go back to, sorry about that, if I go back to the questions I asked you earlier, about the relevant supporting documents provided to the Office of the Auditor General. What were the problems? Why at that time, at the time of the audit, why were the documents not available? What happened?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Many times, I think it's not the first time that it happens and maybe the Auditor General might assist us in that regard that he's come across cases where maybe due to the fact that the documents could not have been located

there and then during the audit exercise, we are given a certain amount of time to respond and submit that document post-auditing. And that is sometimes provided, but even then we have come across maybe a few cases where even after the publication of the report it is now that we manage to retrieve the documents. But unfortunately then obviously we cannot go back, the report is drawn maybe it's at the stage where it cannot be modified, but we can retrieve it from our archives or record office.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

So, it's usually a question of misplacing the documents?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Misplacement, yes and another problem, another constraint of ours is that we have another budget with the President's Office mainly for travelling, accommodation and per diem. Sometimes we make direct application to the President's Office for certain components and we need also to retrieve documents from another Department or Ministry to ... of the Auditor.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Excuse my ignorance on one issue. With respect to per diem, if you're going on overseas mission, if let us say you're going to the U.S. and you'll be staying in a hotel for seven days, if your hotel cost is being paid by your Department do you still get full per diem?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Well if the mission is not fully sponsored, it's half per diem, it's a reduced per diem. The procedure is once say I'm going to attend a meeting, we get the necessary documentation in advance, whether myself or any of my Officers, then I submit the case to the Minister responsible. So, I'm not in the

position to take a decision upon myself. The Minister is the President, which is the Minister of Legal Affairs. All documents are sent to the President with a memo and I say Mr. so and so needs to attend Commonwealth meeting scheduled in September, it's starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September til the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, this mission is not supported, therefore Government of Seychelles needs to support accommodation and full per diem. This is approved then it comes back to me. When it comes back to me then I forward it to the Administration Section. When it comes to half subsistence, according to my knowledge we don't need to have any supporting documents, even full subsistence because we know the Officer leaves on a certain date and comes back on a certain date and his mission report is on file. I have not come across any cases where Officers .....

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

You only have to decide whether it's full subsistence or half subsistence.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, or half subsistence.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Ok. Everything is kept in file and in order?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Everything is kept on file, yes.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Ok. Thank you very much. Hon. Lebon.

**HON LENNY LEBON**

Thank you Mr. Chair. AG if I can guide you to page 35, section the Fixed Assets Management. So, you have the section 4.2, then your office replied that, 'a complete review of the Assets Register

will be conducted and each office will be allocated room numbers instead of employee names for ease of identification'. The question would be; has the Department completed this review and what is the status of your Fixed Asset Register?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

In fact this was one of our weaknesses and this has been .... of reports, at least the two last audit exercises. There is an Officer who basically has a portfolio of maintenance for the fixed asset. What's her designation?

**MRS SAMANTHA LAURE**

Documentation Officer.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

A Documentation Officer, Documentation/Sales Officer, because she also sells the Government Gazette. Now, this officer has a register, one main register in which all assets that are written off is entered and all assets purchased are also entered. So, that officer will be liaising closely with the administration and accounting section to ensure that whatever comes in monthly is entered on her register and whatever is written off is taken off the register and this is subject to the overview of Ministry of Finance who has this unit that ensures that compliance is effected, but I would admit that there was a lack of proper maintenance of that register. But following this report I've sit down with Administration Section, Fixed Asset Register Officer to ensure that this is done on a regular basis. The problem was that there was no standard and regular ..... register, it was being done on an adhoc basis and obviously once you do it on an adhoc basis, chances are something will fall through and you will miss it, because the purchase is not necessarily sent to evidence or to the Asset Management Officer. But we've come

with a system where there is quarterly up-keep of all the registers and that I believe is being followed.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Any further questions? Ok? Hon. Vel.

**HON JENIFFER VEL**

Thank you Mr. Chair, good afternoon everybody. I would like to draw your attention to page 35, point 4.5, Non performance of stock take, which states that according to, 'section 12.3 (f) of the Departmental Accounting Manual requires that physical verification of fixed assets be carried out at frequent intervals and at the year end. Any discrepancy found is to be investigated and appropriate action taken. Audit observation revealed that no stock take was undertaken during the period of audit', and my question to you will be; is the department conducting stock-take of all its assets and at what intervals?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, again this is somewhat linked to the prior question. As part of the ... of this procedure now there is an internal control and protocol that ensures that every quarter of the year stock-taking, 3, 4 times a year this exercise is being carried out following this timetable.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

So, basically if we were to come to your Department and ask for your Fxed Assets Register everything would be in order?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Well I cannot guarantee you a 100% being in order but I'm sure that it will be drastically different from the last audit exercise.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

So, basically you're happy that the mechanism's put in place?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

..... is there, yes.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Ok. Any other questions supplementary to that? No, Hon. Volcere.

**HON MARC VOLCERE**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. AG can I refer you to page 36, bullet point 1.3, private usage of transport. The report says, 'review of mileage sheets for the two vehicles revealed several instances where daily trips had been effected which in Audit's opinion was private mileage'. My question to you is what mechanism has been put in place to control over usage of official vehicle for private purposes?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Well, we have two Drivers; there's one my Chauffeur and then there's a Departmental Driver. Again given the size of the office, there's a crossover of functions. Sometimes the Departmental Driver is for example sick, which happens or is unable to carry out the duties, I assign my Chauffeur Driver to do the Department exercise and vice versa. That Officer .... my Chauffeur is taken up, is sick, will also carry out. So, I think we need to consider this, we have to be a little bit flexible. We need to be flexible to allow ..... to work. A typical example; say that I've left a record at my private residence, my Driver is unable to because I'm doing something off Victoria, I would tell the Departmental Driver go at my residence there's a record ... a file, this might not be reflected maybe in the actual running of the register or whatever diary that they keep, but it's .... And then there was a component where I think my car was in a garage and I make use of the Governmental Departmental transport to go at my local residence for some voyages. But whilst this is said, I think we need to

segregate the Official transportation from the Departmental transportation and all drivers have been informed that they need to make sure that this happens, so that whenever they are for example carrying out a private non-official function within a Departmental it has to be reflected in their documentation, so that we can justify that it doesn't, it should not be reflected on the mileage or the place that they have gone to, if they need to do something private it needs to reflect the purpose and the object of the trip so that tomorrow when it comes to justification we can say as to why the trip was effected in the first place. But this said, we've assigned fully formally to all Drivers, strict instructions to ensure that there's no private trips or non-official trips in the Departmental vehicle.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

How difficult is it to control that? I mean, in terms of private trips. For example, if you were to sendt, let us say you are attending an official opening of some sort at Ephelia, your Driver is with you. Whilst there, you're thinking of what you're going to do next when you reach your office and you realise you've left an important file at your residence. Then you call the other Driver and you ask that person to go to your place and pick it up for you, which is fine in principal, but how do you know that the Driver has gone somewhere else for a private matter before he goes to your place? It's very difficult to ..

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

It's quite difficult unless you put a GPS system in your car, which can be quite costly. But at the end of the day it's the trust and confidence in the person. There's an amountof trust that you need to assign your Driver or any of

your employees, but there's a limit to that.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

I have a Driver and I know what it's all about, it is really difficult sometimes. Anyway, what kind of procedures and records do you keep to ensure that the possibility of this happening is really really minimal?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

In fact there is a book, how is that book called?

**MRS SAMANTHA LAURE**

Mileage book.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Mileage book. Whenever they displace for any courier or any service they need to enter through that, the mileage of the start to the end and then the object of the trip. And this I think the Auditor's Office has a way of checking and ..... of checking and see that this corresponds to the actual situation on the ground.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

But those procedures are there?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, it's there.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Thank you very much. Any other questions? Hon. Volcere.

**HON MARC VOLCERE**

Yes, Mr. Chair while listening to the AG's answer regarding my first question, the problem raised by the Auditor I think it's related to control, I think it's not necessarily related to private use or unofficial use, maybe the car being used on that specific trip or day, the problem is with the control like you say. The Driver or yourself you can use the company's car, but the trip has

to be, there should be some kind of control to ensure that from point A to point B it's been recorded, so that for the Auditor tomorrow to know that. And the other thing, is your Department verifying or signing off the trips, the Driver's trips whenever, on a daily basis?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

For control it's almost impossible for us to, given the constrained resources that we have to verify daily what had been the trips and whether the trips correlates and correspond to the actual mileage on the ground. It's impossible, we don't have this capacity. So, for that sense of control, one; we rely on the driver to abide to instructions from the relevant Officers and again to their values and compliance to standard. Obviously, if this trend continues that the Auditor General reflects the constant flag on this regard I think we will need to take disciplinary action at the appropriate time. But when it comes to say usage of vehicles in a weekend, an Officer needs to leave or come back from a trip abroad, and we usually afford official transportation. When we assign that car to the Departmental Driver, he's assigned with specific instructions to take the Departmental car, leave at a certain time go to the airport, collect this individual and bring him back to his apartment or house and that has to be, there has to be no other use of that Departmental vehicle. So in the event that, it has not come across any, that this vehicle is used in the weekend to do something else other than that as per the instruction, then I think disciplinary action needs to be taken at this level.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Hon. Volcere no further question? Have you ever taken any disciplinary action against your Departmental Driver?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

No, not so far.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Hon. Barbe.

**HON NICHOLE BARBE**

Thank you Mr. Chair. My question refers to page 36 on Revenue, 1.2, Departure from financial procedures. FI 0802 requires that where cash, cheques or drafts are received through the mail they must be recorded in a Mail Remittance Register in the manner prescribed in Section 8.10 of the Accounting Manual. But Audit observed that although incoming mail register was kept for recording mails received, particulars of the cheques received were not recorded on the register. And my question is; why did the Department stopped recording incoming cheques knowing that this was against the provisions of the Financial Instructions?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Again this is a lapse on our part and we need to .... What had happened is that at some point in time the details of the cheque was not registered. So, a cheque say came from the SIBA, the date of that cheque and the drawer of the check would be listed in the on the .... register. It was entered on the Mail Register, say the Secretary that opened the mail basically registered that mail as incoming and then forward it to the Accounting Section where it is banked and the paper work is there. You would see the coming of the cheque and the banking of that cheque. The only lapse here was that the detailed cheque number was not kept on a separate register but ....

**MRS SAMANTHA LAURE**

In the Accounts Section we do have this book only the Secretary.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, in the Account Section it is kept. So, when the Secretary checks that, the problem, the challenge in that is that Secretary that first opened that, according to finance regulations .... that cheque be the first person to register that.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

But that was not happening?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

That was not happening. But it is happening now,

**MRS SAMANTHA LAURE**

In the Accounts.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

In the Accounts Section.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

So this mistake has been corrected?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Ok, Honourable.

**HON NICOLE BARBE**

Ok, and my second question refers to 1.4, third line. The explanation for part compliance to procedures ...

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Page 37?

**HON NICHOLE BARBE**

Yes, page 37. 'Was due to workload as per discussion with the Director of Administration and the Accounts Assistant', and 1.6, 'the office responded that they had not been adhering to the applicable procedures as it was time-consuming to effect banking on a daily basis especially when the days connection are minimal'. So my question is; why has the

Department not taken the necessary step to recruit additional personnel in the Accounts Department?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Yes, sometimes our intake is so minimal that we get only R100 per day and sometimes R50, and again flexibility needs to be inbuilt in the system. Sometimes the financial regulation doesn't reflect the size of the organisation. And I'm not saying we should change it, but whilst we are interpreting it we should bear in mind the constraint and resources factor on the ground. And what we have been doing is that having no daily banking but these cheques or payments have been collected and they are being banked the day after. So, we are informed that this needs to be changed, because we're not strictly abiding to the financial regulation and again I think the Accounting Assistant when she comes she would make a drastic difference in the procedure, because she would be having as part of her competence this daily banking of those payments.

**HON NICHOLE BARBE**

So, when are you planning to recruit the Assistant?

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Well we've discussed as part of our discussion with our Desk Officer with Ministry of Finance, I think what we need to do now either we talk with Finance instead of going on the open market, see whether internally Finance cannot help us given they would have information about people that may be seeking employment, something like that, that we can have this person taken on board as soon as possible. But we cannot give you a deadline; we've attempted that twice, but both times have failed.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

You were talking earlier about flexibility within the Financial Instructions, but you can obtain derogation from the Ministry of Finance, upon approval by the Ministry. So, that's possible if you were to ... So, perhaps that can be given some consideration.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

I think that was given a consideration. This was one case which I put to the Auditor, maybe it's not reflecting in the report, but this is one thing when I sat down and discussed with them, they were aware of and they were ready maybe to allow this practice to ..... but it's not reflected here.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

The Auditor.

**MR MARC BENSTRONG**

Mr. Chair perhaps my office cannot decide this, it will have to be the Ministry of Finance.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

We will take this on.

**HON DAVID PIERRE**

Yeah, the necessary can be made. Any further questions? Ok, it remains, on behalf of the Committee for me to thank you and all the best and we wish you well.

**MR RONNY GOVINDEN**

Thank you, and on my side, myself and my team we thank you for this opportunity and remain ready and available for any post-hearing clarification that you may need. Thank you.