



OFFICE OF THE  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



**47TH**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**

---

**2024**

# Vision

A Public Administrator that is accountable, fair and transparent for the benefit of all who access public services in Trinidad and Tobago

# Mission

The Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will:

- Investigate and seek remedies to complaints of administrative injustice in an impartial and ethical manner (Problem Solving)
- Educate the public on their rights and responsibilities (Public Education)
- Advocate improvements in standards of service delivery in the public sector of Trinidad and Tobago (Advocacy)

# Values

Independence | Impartiality | Professionalism | Transparency | Accountability | Respect

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January 20, 2026

**Senator the Honourable Wade Mark**  
**President of the Senate**  
**Office of the Parliament**  
Parliamentary Complex  
St. Vincent Street  
Port of Spain

**The Honourable Jagdeo Singh, MP**  
**Speaker of the House**  
**Office of the Parliament**  
Parliamentary Complex  
St. Vincent Street  
Port of Spain

Dear Mr. President/Speaker,

I have the honour to present the **Forty-seventh Annual Report** of the Ombudsman for the period **January to December 2024**.

The report is submitted pursuant to Section 96(5) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yours faithfully,

(Digitally Signed)

Jaqui Sampson Meiguel  
Ombudsman

# THE Ombudsman's Message



*Jacqui Sampson Meiguel*

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my predecessor, Mr. Justice Rajmanlal Joseph, for his steady leadership of the Office during his tenure. His work strengthened the foundation on which we continue to build.

On assuming duties on May 20, 2024, I met an enthusiastic and committed staff whose passion for accountability and proper administrative oversight was unmistakable. Many have served this Office for years with quiet dedication, and their willingness to uphold the principles of fairness and good, effective public administration remains one of this Office's greatest assets. Their efforts continue to demonstrate how essential the Ombudsman is as a safeguard for citizens who rely on the State to act fairly and responsibly.

As a career public servant, I came into this Office with an appreciation for the pressures and operational demands placed on Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Even so, I was

concerned by the number of aged investigations I met on arrival, many of which were still far from resolution. It became clear that the accumulation of aged matters was not due to a lack of effort by investigators, but largely due to repeated delays and unfulfilled undertakings to previous Ombudsmen from MDAs whose cooperation is required for investigations to progress.

The effect of these delays was twofold.

First, citizens were left without answers in circumstances where the burden of delay should never fall on them. Second, Investigators found themselves managing caseloads that were neither practical nor sustainable. This placed pressure not only on the efficiency of the Office but also on the wellbeing of the staff who continue to shoulder these responsibilities with admirable commitment.

In 2024, we worked steadily to reduce the backlog, prioritised the oldest matters and strengthened our internal systems. We have also increased engagement with Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments to encourage more timely cooperation. The aim is not confrontation but

collaboration, and to reinforce the shared responsibility we all bear for delivering public administration that is fair, efficient and accountable.

Accountability is a cornerstone of sound public administration. When those who exercise public power are responsive, transparent and answerable for the decisions they make, the public service functions more effectively. In this context, the Ombudsman serves as a vital constitutional safeguard to promote accountability.

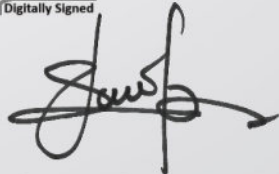
Established in 1976 as an Officer of Parliament, the Ombudsman was created to provide citizens with a simple and cost-free means of seeking redress when administrative actions appear unfair, improper or unreasonable. For many people, especially those unable to manage the cost, delay or complexity of court proceedings, the Ombudsman remains their only accessible avenue for administrative justice.

The Constitution clearly defines the Ombudsman's mandate. The Office's jurisdiction is wide, extending to more than 231 public bodies, ranging from Ministries and local authorities to any authority funded mainly by public money, or involved in the award of public contracts. While policy decisions of Ministers are outside the Ombudsman's remit, the Office is fully empowered to examine whether the administrative actions taken under those policies were carried out fairly and in line with the policy itself.

As complaints continue to rise each year, the need for a well-resourced, modern, and responsive Ombudsman's Office becomes more pressing. Plans are underway to strengthen investigative capacity, expand legal support, and improve operational systems so that the Office can better meet its constitutional obligations. These steps are essential if the Office is to deliver timely, effective and meaningful oversight on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Looking ahead, my commitment remains grounded in a simple principle: every person deserves fair administrative treatment. Where the State exercises power, it must do so lawfully, reasonably and with respect for the dignity of those it is meant to serve. The Ombudsman exists to help uphold that standard, and in the year ahead, we will continue working with determination toward that goal.

I extend my gratitude to the public for the trust placed in this Office, and to the staff whose work gives life to the mandate entrusted to us by the Constitution.

Digitally Signed  


Jacqui Sampson Meiguel

# INTRODUCTION

The mandates of the Ombudsman are set out in four statutes, the most important of which is the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

## THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago states -  
Section 93

- (1) Subject to this section and to sections 94 and 95, the principal function of the Ombudsman shall be to investigate any decision or recommendation made, including any advice given or recommendation made to a Minister, or any act done or omitted by any department of Government or any other authority to which this section applies, or by officers or members of such a department or authority, being action taken in exercise of the administrative functions of that department or authority.
- (2) The Ombudsman may investigate any such matter in any of the following circumstances:
  - (a) where a complaint is duly made to the Ombudsman by any person alleging that the complainant has sustained an injustice as a result of a fault in administration;
  - (b) where a member of the House of Representatives requests the Ombudsman to investigate the matter on the ground that a person or body of persons specified in the request has or may have sustained such injustice;
  - (c) in any other circumstances in which the Ombudsman considers that he ought to investigate the matter on the ground that some person or body of persons has or may have sustained such injustice.
- (3) The authorities other than departments of Government to which this section applies are –
  - (a) local authorities or other bodies established for purposes of the public service or of local Government;
  - (b) authorities or bodies the majority of whose members are appointed by the President or by a Minister or whose revenue consist wholly or mainly of moneys provided out of public funds;
  - (c) any authority empowered to determine the person with whom any contract shall be entered into by or on behalf of Government;
  - (d) such other authorities as may be prescribed.

## The Ombudsman Act

The Ombudsman Act Chap. 2:52 can be reviewed on the Office of the Ombudsman's website:



## The Freedom of Information Act

**The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Chap. 22:02** gives every person the right to obtain access to official documents from public authorities. This is not an absolute right and the FOIA identifies documents a person is not entitled to obtain in accordance with **Section 12** of that Act.

**Section 12** of the Act lists these documents to include:

- *Documents with information that is open to public access*
- *A document which is available for purchase by the public*
- *A document that is available for inspection that is in a registry maintained by the Registrar General or other public authority, and*
- *A document which is a duplicate of a document of a public authority*

The FOIA also provides for instances where a public authority can rely on stated exemptions to refuse access to requested documents. Where access is refused, the Ombudsman has the power to review that refusal provided that the applicant makes a complaint, in writing, within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the notice of refusal.

Documents that may be exempted from disclosure include inter alia:

- *Cabinet documents*
- *Law enforcement documents*
- *Documents relating to trade secrets*
- *Documents affecting personal privacy*

When a request is made pursuant to the FOIA, **Section 15** places a statutory obligation upon public authorities to take all reasonable steps to inform an applicant of its decision not later than thirty (30) days after the request for access to official documents was duly made.

**Section 38A (1)** states:

*“A person aggrieved by the refusal of a public authority to grant access to an official document, may, within twenty-one days of receiving notice of the refusal under Section 23 (1) complain in writing to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman shall, after examining the document if it exists, make such recommendations with respect to the granting of access to the document as he thinks fit within thirty days or as soon as practicable thereof.”*

Pursuant to **Section 23 (1) (e)**, the right to complain to this Office extends to instances where the refusal is based on the non-existence of the requested document and/or the inability of the public authority to locate the requested document despite diligent searches being made.

## The Whistleblower Act

**The Whistleblower Protection Act No. 9 of 2024** was assented to on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2024. It has not yet been proclaimed as of the date of this Report. The objective of the Act is to facilitate the disclosure of improper conduct in the public and private sector and to protect persons making those disclosures from detrimental action and other connected matters.

Pursuant to **Section 6 and 14 of the Act**, an employee of an organisation may make a disclosure of improper conduct to a whistleblowing reports unit where he has reasonable grounds to believe that improper conduct has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur within the organisation.

As the Office of the Ombudsman is deemed a Designated Authority under the Act, a whistleblowing reports unit would be established for receiving and processing external disclosures pertaining to the matters which fall within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. **Sections**



# 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR OMBUDSMAN

1

## WE ADDRESS COMPLAINTS OF MALADMINISTRATION

We investigate complaints of administrative injustice and unfair treatment by MDAs.

2

## WE ARE INDEPENDENT

As an Officer of the Parliament, the Ombudsman reports to Parliament and functions independently of the machinery of government.

3

## OUR SERVICES ARE FREE

The Ombudsman's services are free of charge.

4

## WE ADVOCATE FOR FAIRNESS

We recommend corrective steps to MDAs where delays, decisions or actions have resulted in unfairness.

5

## WE RESPECT YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

We maintain confidentiality when investigating your complaint.

# THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS



1

## COMPLAINT SUBMISSION

Complaint is received and reviewed.

If the matter is within jurisdiction, a case is created on the OASIS system.

If found that the matter is outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, the complainant is referred to the appropriate body.

2

## INVESTIGATION

An Investigator is appointed to conduct the inquiry. Information is gathered through inquiries, examination of records, site inspections or Hearings to determine whether the complaint is supported by evidence.

3

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

If investigations confirm the merit of the complaint, the Ombudsman determines how the matter should be resolved.

Alternatively, the matter is discontinued.

The findings are reported to the MDA and the complainant.

4

## MONITORING

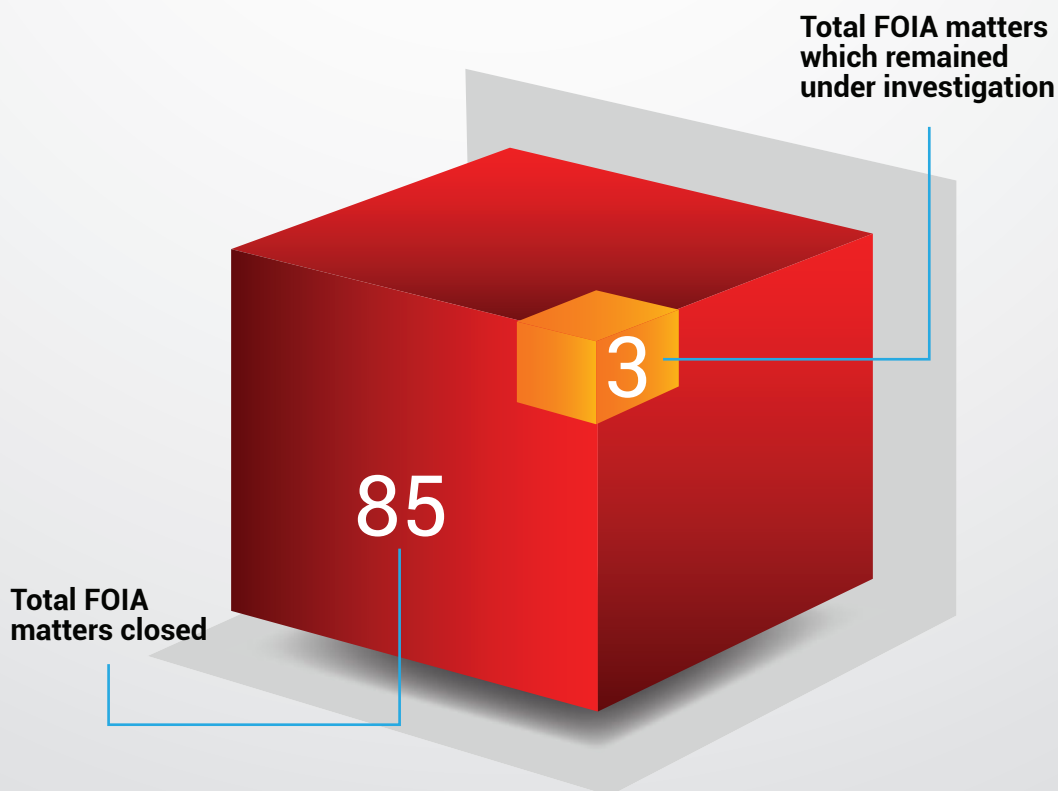
After corrective steps are recommended, a specific timeframe is established for the MDA to resolve the matter, and the case is then passed to the Monitoring Unit for ongoing follow-up with the MDA until the recommended action is taken.

## REVIEW OF MATTERS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), CHAPTER. 22:02

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Chap. 22:02 provides members of the public with a general right of access to official documents in the possession of public authorities. That right is not absolute. Access may be refused on the basis of the exemptions set out in the Act. The Office of the Ombudsman serves as an impartial avenue of review for persons who are refused access to documents.

For the period January to December 2024, the Office received eighty-eight (88) complaints under the FOIA. Of these, eighty-five (85), or 97 per cent, were closed and three (3), or 3 per cent, remained under investigation as at 31 December 2024. **See Figure 1 below.**

**Figure 1** below shows the total number of Freedom of Information (FOI) matters closed and those which remained under investigation at the close of the year under review.



**Figure 1.** Total Number of FOIA Matters Closed and Those That Remained Under Investigation for 2024

## An Analysis of FOIA matters received by each quarter for the period January to December, 2024.

**Table 1** below shows a breakdown of FOI matters received in each quarter over the past three years. There was a marked increase of twelve (12) FOI complaints or approximately 16% increase in 2024 in comparison to 2023.

YEAR	1 <sup>st</sup> QUARTER	2 <sup>nd</sup> QUARTER	3 <sup>rd</sup> QUARTER	4 <sup>th</sup> QUARTER	TOTAL
2022	9	14	15	22	60
2023	13	16	28	19	76
2024	20	29	17	22	88

**Table 1.** FOIA Matters Received Quarterly in 2022, 2023 and 2024

In 2024, the Office received twenty (20) complaints in the first quarter, twenty-nine (29) in the second, seventeen (17) in the third and twenty-two (22) in the fourth.

Of the eighty-eight (88) complaints investigated, sixty (60) or approximately 68% were non-jurisdictional. In these matters, the complainant either received no substantive response from the public authority or lodged the complaint more than twenty one days after becoming aware of the refusal. In those cases, applicants were informed of their right to apply instead for judicial review and the public authority was notified of the complaint. This approach is intended to reduce the need for court proceedings, particularly where the FOI request was not forwarded to the designated officer in a timely manner.

The remaining twenty-eight (28) or approximately 32% involved non-disclosure or partial disclosure by the public authority. In these cases, the Office reviewed the decision and considered whether the public authority complied with the threshold requirements of the FOIA. On completion of those investigations, recommendations were made to the relevant public authority, either endorsing the refusal or recommending disclosure.

The data shows a steady increase in FOIA complaints over the three year period.

# Special Commendations

During the reporting period, the following MDAs demonstrated marked improvement in their engagement with the Office of the Ombudsman and adopted a more constructive approach to the resolution of citizens' complaints:

The Tobago House of Assembly

The National Insurance Board

The Ministry of Finance

County Medical Officers of Health

The Service Commissions Department

The Personnel Department

These developments show that when public authorities engage proactively with oversight bodies, matters are addressed more promptly, outcomes improve, and citizens' confidence in public administration is strengthened.

# MDAs with Systemic Issues

During the period under review, several MDAs continued to display recurring administrative weaknesses that resulted in clusters of complaints.

The Office has identified systemic issues at the following entities-

-  The Ministry of Education
-  The Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services (Social Welfare Division)
-  The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government (Municipal Corporations)
-  The Ministry of Public Utilities (The National Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited)

# The Ministry of Education

During the reporting period, the Office received **one hundred and eighty-six (186) new complaints** against the Ministry of Education. Forty-one (41) were resolved and one hundred and forty-five (145) remained under investigation at year end. For the corresponding period in 2023, the Office received ninety four (94) complaints. This represents an increase of approximately 98%.

## Systemic Issues

Ministry officials have attributed many of the administrative failures to a shortage of staff and the high volume of matters. While staffing constraints are real, the evidence suggests that the problem is broader and more entrenched.

The main concerns include:

- inadequate supervision and oversight;
- high turnover among human resource personnel, with loss of institutional knowledge and expertise; and
- continued reliance on physical files, which are prone to misplacement and delay.

An estimated 91 per cent of complaints concerned unreasonable delays in processing retirement benefits. There is a clear pattern of late completion of pension and leave records, driven by repeated administrative errors, incomplete files and a failure to follow established procedures.



Several circulars set out the responsibilities of MDAs for the timely preparation and transmission of pension and gratuity records, including:

1. Ministry of Finance Circular No. 6 of 2017, "Timely Submission of Accurate Records of Service, Pension and Leave (P&L) Records and Computation of Contract Gratuities for the Processing of Pensions and Gratuities";
2. Ministry of Finance Circular No. 4 of 2019, "Decentralisation of the Payment of Contract Gratuities";
3. Comptroller of Accounts Circular No. 3 of 2020, "Updating of Pension and Leave (P&L) Records".

Stricter adherence to these circulars is essential. Without it, retirees and contract officers remain exposed to unnecessary financial hardship caused by delays that are avoidable and inconsistent with good administration.

# The Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services

## Social Welfare Division

During the reporting period, the Office received **sixty-eight (68) new complaints** against the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services. Of these, thirty-two (32) were resolved and thirty-six (36) remained under investigation. For the corresponding period in 2023, the Office received sixty-two (62) complaints, a 9.68% increase.

**51 of the 68 complaints involved the Social Welfare Division of the Ministry.**

### Systemic Issues

The Social Welfare Division is mandated to assist vulnerable citizens to achieve a better quality of life through financial and social assistance, administered in keeping with the law and established policies. In practice, the Office has observed serious weaknesses in how that mandate is carried out.

Complaints frequently related to:

1. prolonged delays in processing Senior Citizens' Pension, Disability Grants and other social assistance;
2. repeated requests for the same documents, often requiring multiple visits;
3. lack of clarity on appeal rights and procedures;
4. inconsistent application of eligibility criteria.



Taken together, these issues point to deeper systemic weaknesses in administration and service delivery that undermine the effectiveness of these support programmes.

The system for processing social welfare applications remains slow and outdated. Most procedures are still manual and paper-based, forcing applicants to visit several offices and present the same documents repeatedly. Although a digital data-sharing arrangement exists between the Social Welfare Division and agencies such as the National Insurance Board and the Immigration Division, it does not appear to operate reliably. Applicants are still regularly told that the Division is "awaiting information" from other public departments and are left to act as messengers between these agencies.

These weaknesses are compounded by chronic understaffing and the absence of a fully computerised case management system. Elderly and disabled applicants, who are the least able to navigate repeated administrative steps, are disproportionately affected.

The Office also noted the extraordinary scale of the workload borne by certain districts. For example, the Local Public Assistance District of St George East is reportedly responsible for processing as many as 26,000 active cases at any given time. This is an immense burden for a

The St George East district covers several large and geographically dispersed communities, including Arima North, Arima South, Arouca, Curepe, La Horquetta/Talparo, Malabar, Maloney/D'Abadie, Trincity, Tunapuna North and Tunapuna South. The size and distribution of the population across these communities make every stage of the social welfare process, verification, assessment, follow-up, and file management, particularly difficult, especially in a system that remains largely paper-based.

Given these realities, restructuring of the district is both urgent and strongly supported by this Office. It is not reasonable to expect public officers to deliver the level of service that citizens are entitled to when they are working under such overwhelming conditions. Staff are already stretched thin and are often required to work far beyond normal hours.

The consequences therefore fall on both vulnerable applicants and the staff themselves. Elderly citizens and persons with disabilities endure prolonged uncertainty as they wait for essential financial support. At the same time, staff of the Social Welfare Division, already working in an understaffed environment, face unsustainable workloads, often taking work home or working into the night to meet demand.

These circumstances underscore why, in August 2024, a resolution was approved pursuant to the Public Assistance Act, Chap 32:03 to divide the St George East district into two separate districts: the Local Public Assistance District of Arima and the Local Public Assistance District of Tunapuna. Until this restructuring is fully implemented and supported by modern systems, the sheer volume of cases, the district's geographic span and the reliance on manual processes will continue to slow service delivery and place an unfair burden on both vulnerable applicants and the officers who serve them.

# The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

## Municipal Corporations

During the reporting period, the Office received **seventy-one (71) new complaints** against the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Thirty (30) were resolved and forty-one (41) remained under investigation. **61 of the seventy-one 71 complaints were directed at Municipal Corporations.**

In the previous year, the Office received thirty six (36) complaints against Municipal Corporations. The 2024 figure reflects an increase of approximately

### Systemic Issues

The Ombudsman has observed a persistent reluctance by Municipal Corporations to exercise their enforcement powers under the Municipal Corporations Act. This is evident even where lessees of Corporation lands are in clear breach of lease covenants, including restrictions on type of structure and permitted use. This inaction has created growing frustration among citizens who rely on the Corporations to uphold development and safety standards within their communities.

Citizens who make complaints about breaches of planning standards, unsafe conditions or unauthorised developments often encounter long

In some instances, Corporations indicate that concerns will be addressed in future development projects, only for those projects never to materialise.

The cumulative effect is a growing perception that municipal standards are not enforced and that local authorities are either unwilling or unable, whether due to funding or resource constraints, to exercise the powers granted to them by law. This weakens confidence in local government and undermines the purpose of the Municipal Corporations Act as a tool to promote orderly development and community safety.



# Ministry of Public Utilities

## The National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited

During the reporting period, the Office received **fifty-nine (59) new complaints** against the Ministry of Public Utilities. Of these, twenty-two (22) were resolved and thirty-seven (37) remained under investigation at the end of the reporting period. A significant proportion, **thirty-eight (38) matters, concerned the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS)**.

In the previous year, the Office received eleven (11) complaints against the Company; the 2024 figure reflects an increase of approximately twenty-seven (27) more complaints.

### Systemic Issues

The complaints reveal persistent and structural weaknesses within MTS's administrative and financial systems. Several MTS retirees reported prolonged delays in receiving their retirement benefits, even where all required documentation had been submitted. The pattern of deferrals and incomplete processing points to weak financial planning and the absence of safeguards to ensure that predictable liabilities, such as pension payments, are treated as priority obligations.

Another troubling category of complaints came from active employees who discovered that sums deducted from their salaries, such as loan instalments and other were not being remitted to the relevant financial institutions. This failure places employees at risk of arrears, penalties, damaged credit histories and other adverse consequences, despite the deductions being taken from their pay.

These issues point to deeper systemic problems within the Company, including:

1. inadequate cash-flow management
2. weak internal controls
3. delays in reconciling accounts and forwarding payments
4. insufficient oversight of financial processes
5. the absence of clear and timely communication with affected employees and retirees.



Taken together, the 2024 complaints indicate that MTS continues to face serious operational and financial governance challenges. The resulting hardship borne by both retirees and current employees underscores the urgent need for stronger internal controls, improved financial discipline and more robust oversight by the parent Ministry, the Ministry of Public Utilities, to bring the Company's administrative practices in line with the standards expected of a State enterprise.

# The Ombudsman's Casebook

1. Grief Compounded: The Case of the Missing Remains
2. The Relentless Pursuit of Justice—Investigating Unpaid Gratuity
3. When Retirement Becomes a Waiting Game
4. Senior Citizens' Pension Misplaced: One Error, Two Years of Hardship
5. A Family Displaced from Shelter, a System Unmoved
6. Left Waiting in Retirement: A Mason's Struggle for What He Earned
7. When the System Fails the Faithful: Mr. S's Three-Year Wait for His Pension
8. When Loyalty Meets Delay: The Struggle of MTS Retirees
9. Lost in the System: A Mother's Long Wait for Justice
10. When Bureaucracy Erases Merit: The Case of Mr. L
11. From Impact to Inaction, then Silence: The case of Mr. B



## GRIEF COMPOUNDED: THE CASE OF THE MISSING REMAINS

### *The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service*

Ms. C has faced a prolonged and distressing struggle to obtain the release of her relative's remains, which were discovered in 2009 following his disappearance in 2008. Despite DNA samples being submitted in March 2009, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) failed to conduct timely testing, and by 2012 no analysis had been carried out. The case was later deemed a "cold case," and repeated written appeals by Ms. C in 2020 and 2023 for the release of the remains went unanswered.

In 2024, after Ms. C lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, the Commissioner of Police confirmed that DNA testing had identified the remains as belonging to her relative. However, she was then informed that the remains had been discarded, without any official notice, confirmation, or explanation.

The delays, lack of communication, and eventual disposal of the remains without proper authority or notification amount to clear administrative failings. These actions not only denied Ms. C and her family the opportunity for closure but also represent a serious breach of the duty of care and accountability expected of public authorities.

In a recent letter to the Ombudsman dated August 22, 2025, the Commissioner of Police advised that TTPS had done all that was required to do in this matter, in accordance with its mandate. The letter further indicated that the resolution of this matter falls within the purview of the Forensic Science Centre (FSC) and that enquiries relating to this matter should be directed to the Director of the Forensic Science Centre, since that office is best positioned to advise on the reason for the disposition of the remains in question.



# THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF JUSTICE: INVESTIGATING UNPAID GRATUITY

## *The Ministry of Labour*

What began as a straightforward request for a well-earned gratuity became, for Ms. S, a long and painful struggle against bureaucracy. Instead of closure at the end of her service, she was left with unanswered questions, financial uncertainty, and years of delay. This investigation, which stretched on for almost five years, reflects not only the persistence of the Ombudsman's Office but also the systemic breakdowns that denied Ms. S timely justice.

Having completed her contract at the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA), Ms. S reasonably expected payment of her gratuity for the periods between 2010 and 2019. When months passed without progress, she turned to the Ombudsman in November 2019. What followed was a protracted process in which the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour failed to respond to repeated letters from the Ombudsman between 2019 and 2022. When a response eventually came, the tone of the Permanent Secretary's replies suggested a reluctance to accept responsibility for the delays. By framing the Ministry's role as limited to transmitting information between OSHA and the Human Resource Advisory Committee, the Permanent Secretary appeared to overlook both the Ministry's oversight function and her own duties as Administrative Head and Accounting Officer.

The failures in this case go beyond individual inaction. They reveal a system where accountability is blurred, communication is poor, and responsibility is routinely shifted between institutions. The absence of timely responses, the lack of clear ownership of the process, and the disregard for the financial rights of a former employee demonstrate systemic weaknesses that erode public trust. For Ms. S, this meant years of needless hardship; for the public service, it is a warning of how entrenched administrative failings can frustrate fairness and justice.



# WHEN RETIREMENT BECOMES A WAITING GAME

## *The Ministry of Education*

When Mr. L first approached the Ombudsman in 2023, he was weary and frustrated by the long delay in processing his pension. Having retired as a Teacher I in 2017, he expected his benefits to be settled within a reasonable time but instead found himself entangled in layers of bureaucracy. Despite his repeated follow-ups, his case seemed to go nowhere.

His situation was made more complex by the fact that his service spanned both the Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). Missing transfer approvals and unverified periods of no-pay leave created uncertainty over which authority bore final responsibility for approving his transfers and leave. Key documentation for his no-pay leave while on union business was also unavailable.

It is worth noting, however, that while the delay was primarily administrative, Mr. L also carried some responsibility. As a senior public officer, he would have been aware of the need to ensure that his leave applications were properly approved before proceeding. His failure to do so added to the complications surrounding his record. Public officers have an obligation to comply with established procedures, and timely documentation helps to protect their own interests as much as it supports the efficiency of the system.

Following the Ombudsman's intervention in 2023, the investigation exposed years of poor record-keeping and weak coordination between the Ministry and THA's Division of Education, Research and Technology (the Division). Two hearings in 2024 revealed further inconsistencies, but it was not until January 2025 that the Ministry finally approved his outstanding leave and processed his increments dating back to the 1980s.

This case reflects how a worker's benefits can be trapped in bureaucratic limbo. It also illustrates how small lapses in procedure by both officers and departments can snowball into major administrative failures. The Ombudsman remains concerned that unless these gaps are addressed through proper reform and shared accountability, similar hardships will continue to affect other retirees.



## SENIOR CITIZENS' PENSION MISPLACED: ONE ERROR, TWO YEARS OF HARDSHIP

### *The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services*

Ms. M did not receive her Senior Citizens' Pension for February and March 2023. The payments, meant to support her daily needs, had been mistakenly deposited by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) into the wrong bank account. Despite her repeated efforts to have the matter corrected, she received no redress from the Ministry and, in frustration, turned to the Office of the Ombudsman in November 2023.

It was only after the Ombudsman's intervention that progress was made. In January 2025, MSDFS informed the Office that the Royal Bank of Canada had returned the funds on December 23, 2023, and that the money had been deposited into the Ministry's vote at the Comptroller of Accounts on the same day. The Caroni Local Board subsequently prepared the necessary data for repayment, and Ms. M eventually received her arrears of \$7,000.00 through direct deposit into her Republic Bank Limited account.

While Ms. M's pension was finally restored, her case highlights troubling systemic failures. An error as basic as depositing funds into the wrong account should have been promptly identified and corrected. Instead, she was left without vital income for nearly two years, forced to navigate unclear procedures and endure repeated delays. The lack of timely communication, failure to provide accurate information, and inadequate follow-up within the Ministry reveal weaknesses in both oversight and accountability. For Ms. M, this meant unnecessary hardship; for the wider public, it raises concern about the reliability and responsiveness of the systems designed to protect the most vulnerable.



# A FAMILY DISPLACED FROM SHELTER, A SYSTEM UNMOVED

## *Housing Development Corporation*

In January 2020, Ms. J and her family endured a terrifying ordeal when armed men forced them out of their Housing Development Corporation (HDC) rental apartment in Port of Spain. Fearing for their lives, they fled the premises with the assistance of officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Seeking safety and stability, Ms. J submitted an application to the HDC for alternative housing in March of that same year.

For the next three years, however, her request remained unanswered. By March 2023, still without secure housing, Ms. J turned to the Ombudsman for help. Despite repeated enquiries from this Office, the HDC failed to provide any response. Given the urgency of Ms. J's circumstances, the Ombudsman found it necessary to issue a Summons to the Managing Director, HDC, in June 2023 and to press forward in pursuit of a resolution.

It was only after the Ombudsman's sustained intervention that progress was achieved. On September 3, 2024, Ms. J informed this Office that she and her family had finally been placed into alternative accommodation provided by the HDC.

While Ms. J's housing needs were eventually met, the delay and silence she experienced reveal serious systemic failures. The absence of timely action, lack of responsiveness to both citizen and oversight authority, and the failure to prioritize the safety of a displaced family point to deeper weaknesses in administrative accountability within the HDC. For Ms. J, this meant years of unnecessary insecurity and hardship; for the public service, it signals the urgent need to strengthen systems so that vulnerable families are not left to struggle in times of crisis.



# LEFT WAITING IN RETIREMENT: A MASON'S STRUGGLE FOR WHAT HE EARNED

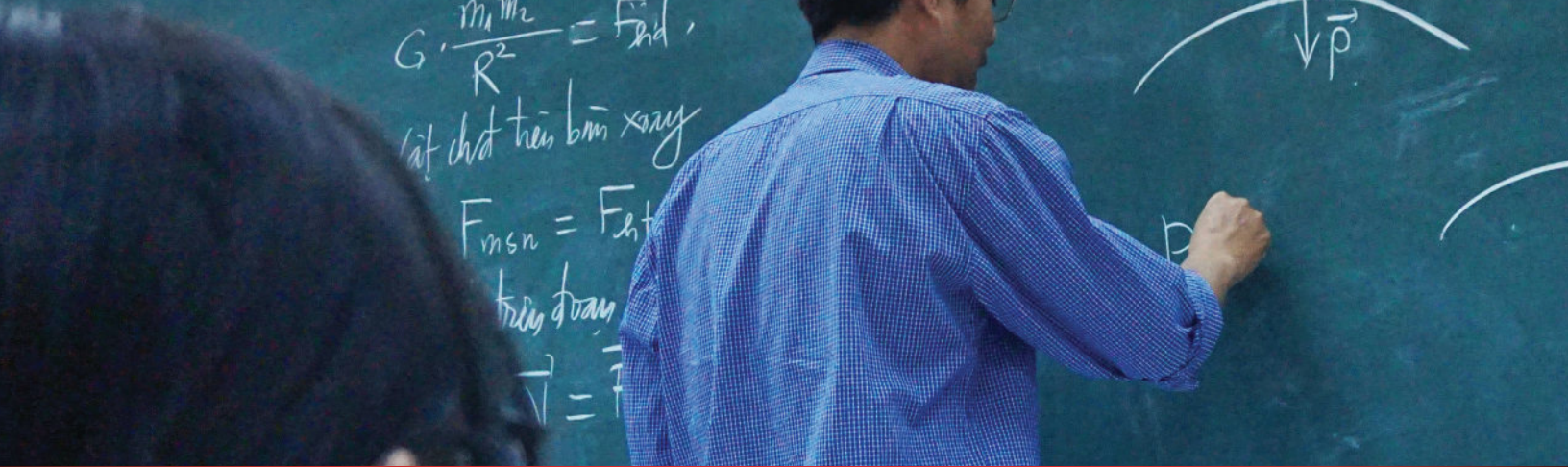
## *Ministry of Works and Transport*

Mr. N, a daily-paid mason with the Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT), retired in July 2022 after years of service. Yet, by the time he lodged his complaint with the Ombudsman in December 2023, he had not received his retirement gratuity or pension. For Mr. N, this meant entering his later years without the financial security he had earned, left to wait on a system that moved too slowly to meet his needs.

Enquiries with the Pension Division, Ministry of Finance, revealed that as far back as May 2022, the Division had requested audited pension and leave records from the MOWT. Those records were still outstanding at the time of his complaint, more than a year later. In January 2024, this Office wrote formally to the MOWT, advising that Mr. N had still not been paid. By then, his situation had become even more urgent: he was hospitalized with complications from several health conditions. Recognizing the seriousness of his circumstances, the Ombudsman contacted the Administrative Officer II of the Ministry directly, stressing the urgency and requesting that payment be expedited.

It was not until February 22, 2024, after sustained intervention, that Mr. N's daughter informed this Office that his gratuity cheque had finally been issued.

Mr. N's case highlights the very real human cost of systemic failures in the public service. Delays in transmitting records, failure to prioritize pensioners' entitlements, and weak coordination between ministries and the Pension Division resulted in unnecessary hardship for a man who had already given years of work to the State. Such failures not only jeopardize the dignity and wellbeing of retirees but also erode public trust in the systems meant to safeguard their rights.



# WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILS THE FAITHFUL: MR.S' THREE-YEAR WAIT FOR HIS PENSION

## *Ministry of Education*

When Mr. S, a former Teacher III, retired in November 2022, he expected his pension and gratuity to follow shortly. Instead, more than a year later, he found himself entangled in a web of administrative confusion and departmental inaction. Despite submitting all required documents, a year before retiring, he was still waiting when he lodged his complaint with the Ombudsman in June 2024.

Early inquiries revealed a troubling picture. The Comptroller of Accounts advised that his retirement benefits could not be processed because his salary increments, long overdue from the Ministry of Education, were still unsettled. Although those increments were finally approved in May 2024, his pay records remained locked away, literally. The Accounts Department explained that they could not proceed because the vault where the records were stored was closed.

That was only the beginning. A later review found that Mr. S's incremental date in 2008 had to be amended because three days of leave were retrospectively classified as "leave without pay." What began as an ordinary oversight quickly turned into a chain reaction of administrative complications, with his file circulating endlessly between departments.

As if this were not enough, a deeper problem emerged. Years earlier, the Ministry had recommended Mr. S for promotion to Teacher III before he was interviewed by the Teaching Service Commission, as required, which later created confusion over the legitimacy of his acting appointments. He acted as a Teacher III from 2006 but was only interviewed in 2013. The Ministry and the Commission seemed uncertain how to proceed, each apparently waiting on the other for direction, while Mr. S remained suspended in the middle, his case at a standstill. It was the Ministry's position that the period of acting from 2006 to 2013, should be classified as an overpayment. In essence, Mr. S was being asked to pay for a mistake he did not make.

In October 2024, the Ombudsman issued a formal Notice of Entry under Section 97(2) of the Constitution, authorising an on-site examination of the Ministry's records related to Mr. S. The investigation team uncovered the full extent of the administrative missteps.

The Ombudsman recommended that his years of acting service be treated as valid acting appointments, reflecting the reality that he performed the duties of the post competently and continuously. Following this intervention, the file finally began to move with more expedition. In January 2025, the Teaching Service Commission regularised Mr. S's acting appointments as a Teacher III from 2006 and confirmed his promotion with effect from June 2014.

Almost three years after his retirement, Mr. S received his gratuity and his pension payments finally commenced in October, 2025.

This case captures the human cost of bureaucratic hesitation. A simple retirement process became a cycle of uncertainty because no single office took decisive responsibility. While procedures and correspondence moved between desks, a long-serving teacher was left in limbo, waiting for the system to correct its own mistakes.

Mr. S's case is a sobering reminder of how one mistake by others can create real unfairness, unfairness that, if left unchecked, can strip a dedicated public servant of the security and peace of mind he deserves after decades of service.



# WHEN LOYALTY MEETS DELAY: THE STRUGGLE OF MTS RETIREES

## *The National Maintenance Training & Security Company*

**Ms. H**, who worked faithfully as a Cleaner with the National Maintenance Training and Security Company (NMTS), retired in August 2023. She submitted all the necessary documents to allow for the timely processing of her retirement benefits. Yet by September 2024, more than a year later, she had still not received what was due to her and turned to the Ombudsman for help.

**Ms. W**, a former Supervisor with MTS, lodged her complaint with the Ombudsman on July 16, 2024. She had gone on pre-retirement leave in August 2023 and officially retired at the age of sixty in December 2023. Hoping for a smooth transition, she repeatedly enquired about her retirement benefits but received no clear answers from the company. It was only after the Ombudsman's intervention that the MTS issued to her a partial payment on July 30, 2024. While this offered some relief, it represented only a fraction of what Ms. W was owed.

Their stories reflect the plight of many retirees struggling to access their hard-earned terminal benefits from the MTS. In fact, the Ombudsman's Office has, to date, received forty-five (45) similar complaints against the company, many remaining unresolved. For workers who dedicated their years of service, the inability to receive their benefits at the time they are most needed is deeply troubling.

In its response to the ombudsman, the MTS explained that it is unable to meet its obligations to these retirees because it is "strapped for cash," owed large sums by government departments, and without access to additional overdraft facilities.

Both Ms. H's and Ms. W's experiences expose serious systemic failures that go beyond individual hardship. Retirement benefits, which should be guaranteed, are being delayed because of wider financial mismanagement and weak coordination between MTS and its government clients. The company's reliance on incoming payments from State agencies before meeting its own obligations leaves retirees at the mercy of cash flow challenges.

This situation is untenable. It shifts the burden of the company's financial instability onto ordinary workers, depriving them of the security they earned after years of service. The lack of safeguards, delayed payments, and inadequate planning highlight structural weaknesses that require urgent reform to protect retirees from unnecessary suffering.



# LOST IN THE SYSTEM: A MOTHER'S LONG WAIT FOR JUSTICE

## *The Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago*

In November 2024, Ms. S approached the Ombudsman after months of frustration. She had secured a court order for child maintenance, but the father of her child had failed to comply. When he was finally arrested in June 2023, he was incarcerated and only released after paying through the Prisons Service what was due, some \$23,000.00 dollars. For Ms. S, that payment represented the means to support her child and meet basic needs. Yet, eight months following that payment, she was still waiting to receive the funds.

She said that in February 2024, the Family Court in Tobago called her to sign the documents required for the release of the funds. She did so immediately, but the months passed without any payment. Each time she visited the Court, she was told the same thing: the delay rested with the Ministry of Finance's Treasury Division. A process meant to protect her and her child instead became another source of hardship. What should have been a straightforward process became an ordeal of unanswered questions and shifting responsibility.

The Ombudsman's Office opened an investigation in keeping with Section 93 of the Constitution. Letters were sent to the Judiciary requesting a full explanation. The Judiciary later confirmed that the payment had indeed been made, in cash, by the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service and deposited with the Treasury Division as required by law. However, there was no record of when that deposit reached the Treasury, and the funds appeared to have sat unprocessed for months.

After the Ombudsman's intervention, progress finally came. In March 2025, Ms. S was contacted by the Judiciary and told that her payment had been processed. She collected it shortly thereafter. While this brought long-awaited relief, it also exposed the kind of bureaucratic gridlock that leaves ordinary people waiting far too long for justice.

This case highlights the importance of regular reconciliation of accounts between the Treasury and public sector bodies that handle public funds. Any delay in reconciling accounts does not merely reflect poor record management; it directly affects citizens who depend on timely disbursement of funds. Such lapses reveal deeper weaknesses in coordination and accountability, and they point to serious gaps in good order and good public administration.

Ms. S's case is a reminder that behind every delayed transaction is a person, often someone already struggling. It reminds us that efficiency in public administration is not simply a matter of paperwork or procedure; it is a matter of dignity, fairness, and basic humanity. Administrative discipline and efficiency are not abstract ideals; they are the foundation of fairness, dignity, and trust in public institutions.



# WHEN BUREAUCRACY ERASES MERIT: THE CASE OF MR. L

## *The Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service*

Mr. L served with distinction in the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service from 1970 until his retirement in 2001. Near the end of his career, he acted in the higher position of Assistant Divisional Fire Officer, a First Division post with a retirement age of sixty. He was assessed for promotion to that rank in 2000, and the Chief Fire Officer recommended his appointment. What Mr. L did not know at the time was that the Public Service Commission had approved the promotion that same year.

He retired the following year at fifty-five, as required for his then substantive rank, unaware that he had already been promoted to a higher position that would have allowed him to serve for another five years. It was only after retirement that he discovered the oversight. The error, which lay entirely within the administration, cost him years of income and pensionable service.

When he first approached the Ombudsman in 2013, Mr. L had already spent more than a decade seeking answers. The investigation confirmed that both the Chief Fire Officer and the Public Service Commission had failed to act on his promotion in time. Initially, the Director of Personnel Administration recommended Cabinet action to correct the record. Five years later, the Solicitor General's Department acknowledged that Mr. L had suffered an administrative injustice and advised that an ex gratia payment could be considered, since the error was through no fault of his own.

Even then, the matter drifted from file to file for years. The Ministry of National Security sought clarification, new opinions were requested, and the Solicitor General's Department revised its position several times. The wheels of bureaucracy turned painfully slowly. It took eight years from the time of Mr. L's complaint to the Ombudsman for an ex gratia payment to finally be issued to him, and twenty years from his retirement for any form of redress to reach him.

When he later discovered that his pension had still not been adjusted to reflect the higher post, Mr. L once again turned to the Ombudsman in 2023. The investigation that followed revealed continuing confusion among the agencies responsible, with the Fire Service, the Ministry of National Security, and the Solicitor General's Department each citing pending instructions or awaiting verification. Correspondence stretched into 2024 before the Ministry reported that the matter had finally been resolved.

Mr. L's experience reflects the heavy human toll of administrative delay. A mistake that could have been corrected with timely communication instead lingered for decades. It caused needless hardship and anxiety for a man who had given more than thirty years of service to the State.

Cases like this raise a deeper concern about the timeliness of internal communication and the absence of clear responsibility when errors occur. When an officer's career and retirement benefits are affected by an administrative mistake, the system must respond swiftly and decisively. The length of time taken in Mr. L's case, eleven years from complaint to resolution, shows how bureaucracy, left unchecked, can turn an injustice into a prolonged ordeal.



## FROM IMPACT TO INACTION, THEN SILENCE: THE CASE OF MR. B

### *The Ministry of Works and Transport*

In January 2024, Mr. B turned to the Ombudsman for help after months of waiting for the Ministry of Works and Transport to process his claim for reimbursement. His complaint was simple: while driving along the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway in August 2023, his vehicle had been damaged by debris from maintenance works being carried out on the median. The incident was immediately reported to the St. Margaret's Police Station, and he promptly submitted his claim and all supporting documents to the Ministry.

For Mr. B, this was not a trivial matter. His vehicle was essential for his work, and the damage left it unfit for lawful use. To avoid further hardship, he had to pay for urgent repairs himself, ensuring that his vehicle remained roadworthy. All he asked was to be reimbursed for a loss caused by public works, which the Ministry did not deny.

When the Ombudsman referred the matter in February 2024, the Ministry provided only intermittent updates. Several requests for extensions of time followed, each one granted in good faith by the Ombudsman. By July 2024, the Permanent Secretary advised that a further sixty days were needed, as the Ministry was awaiting guidance from the Solicitor General.

Then, months later, the truth emerged. The Ministry had only referred the case to the Solicitor General in November 2024, nearly a year after Mr. B's first complaint. The referral was made under a long-standing Cabinet directive that requires the Solicitor General's concurrence before certain payments are approved, no matter how small the sum.

This Office again wrote to the Ministry in December 2024, urging that the matter be diligently followed up and that Mr. B receive a clear and timely decision.

In September 2025, the Ombudsman also wrote directly to the Solicitor General, expressing disappointment that a matter with such a clear path to resolution was taking months to attract even a basic response. At the time of reporting, there has been silence from the Solicitor General's Department, not even an acknowledgement of the Ombudsman's letter. Checks conducted by this Office also revealed that the requested legal advice had not yet been submitted to the Ministry.

Mr. B's experience speaks to a deeper failure within the system. His case is not one of missing information or disputed facts. The details are clear and the cause of damage is undisputed. What has prolonged this matter is a cycle of bureaucratic hesitation and apparent indifference. The silence of the Solicitor General's Department in particular is deeply troubling, as its inaction has left a citizen waiting for fairness that should have been swift and straightforward.

This case also highlights a recurring concern with the Ministry of Works and Transport. It has become common for that Ministry to seek multiple extensions to respond to complaints before the Ombudsman, often failing to provide updates even after these extensions expire. Such practices weaken accountability and erode trust in public administration.

Mr. B's case reminds us that justice delayed through administrative inaction is still justice denied. For citizens who depend on the State to act fairly and promptly, such indifference is not merely a procedural failure. It is a quiet injustice that leaves ordinary people to bear the cost of official delay.



# Statistical Report

- **List of Terms**
- **Executive Summary**
- **Overview of Investigations for 2024**
- **Complaints Distribution & Performance Across MDAs for 2024**
- **Five MDAs with Highest Number of Complaints Received in 2024**
- **The Ombudsman's Investigative Toolkit**

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>MDA</b>	Ministry, Government Department, State Agency
<b>Primary MDA</b>	The MDA against which the complaint was lodged
<b>Secondary MDA</b>	Any additional MDA that arose in the course of an investigation
<b>Administrative Injustice</b>	Administrative injustice refers to unfair, improper or unreasonable actions/inactions by MDAs, encompassing issues such as delays, bias or unequal treatment, errors, excessive rigidity or negligence within administrative processes and decision making.
<b>Case</b>	A case is the primary record created when someone brings a matter to the Office to make a complaint. It represents the overall issue raised by the individual.
<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint is a specific instance or subject of investigation within a case. Depending on the nature of the case, there may be multiple complaints, each tied to a different MDA that needs to be investigated.
<b>Resolved</b>	The case has been investigated and resolved, whether in the complainant's favour or not.
<b>Recommended for Summons</b>	Matters where Ministries/Government Departments/State Agencies are not responding in a timely manner, so that senior public officers are summoned to provide the requisite information.  Matters that require testimony (viva voce) evidence to allow the Office of the Ombudsman to conduct a proper investigation of the issues at hand.
<b>No Jurisdiction</b>	Matters not subject to be investigated - Section 94 (1) and Third Schedule of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. (1:01);  Private matters (complaints between private citizens or concerning private authorities);  Referrals to other regulatory authorities
<b>Under Investigation</b>	Matters are still ongoing
<b>FOIA</b>	Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02
<b>Parent Ministry Profile</b>	A summary of an MDA's performance during the reporting period

# Executive Summary

In 2024, the Office of the Ombudsman through its review of 1,686 new complaints across MDAs, identified continuing weaknesses in administrative performance that undermine fairness, accountability, good governance, and the daily lives and dignity of citizens.

By the end of the reporting period, 58% of cases remained under active investigation, with an average resolution time of 23 weeks. Five MDAs (the National Insurance Board, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government) accounted for 64% of all complaints. The patterns that emerged were consistent and concerning:

- 41% of complaints involved delays in the processing of payments, with the Ministry of Finance alone responsible for nearly half. Within this group, 51% related to delays in the payment of approved salaries and other lawful entitlements to public officers;
- 33% related to delays in processing retirement benefits;
- 15% involved delays in routine administrative matters, including unanswered queries and reports of ill-treatment;
- 5% related to delays in infrastructure maintenance;
- 7% involved delays in issuing official documentation.

Investigations confirmed administrative injustice in 86% of matters. Particularly troubling is that 45% of cases had been left unattended by the relevant MDA for more than a year—clear evidence of systemic failures in responsiveness.

During the period, the Office was required to undertake 2,224 interventions, ranging from initial engagement to higher level actions. A total of 24 Notices of Entry and 185 summons hearings were issued to secure cooperation from MDAs, reflecting the increasing need to resort to the constitutional instruments available to this Office to advance investigations.

The Office is mindful that, as with Ombudsman institutions worldwide, the complaints it receives represent only a fraction of the challenges citizens encounter in accessing public services. Many difficulties never reach this Office. Yet even this fraction provides significant insight into where administrative systems are under strain, where procedures require strengthening and where improvements are needed to advance the State's commitment to efficient, fair and responsive service delivery.

The Parent Ministry Profiles Report is not merely diagnostic; it is prescriptive. The evidence supports the need for-

1. stronger human resource management and clearer accountability mechanisms.
2. improved communication and timely responses across all MDAs.
3. streamlined and modernised payment and pension systems.
4. greater attention to infrastructure maintenance, record-keeping and procedural compliance.

Taken together, the 2024 findings underscore both the scale of the Ombudsman's work and the seriousness of the administrative challenges facing many public bodies. While the Office remains a vital safeguard for fairness in public administration, the responsibility now rests with Permanent Secretaries and MDA leadership to transform administrative culture. The aim is not simply to identify weaknesses, but to chart a path toward meaningful reform; one that strengthens responsiveness, restores efficiency and rebuilds the public's trust in the institutions created to serve them.

Figure 2 below illustrates the summary of investigations undertaken.

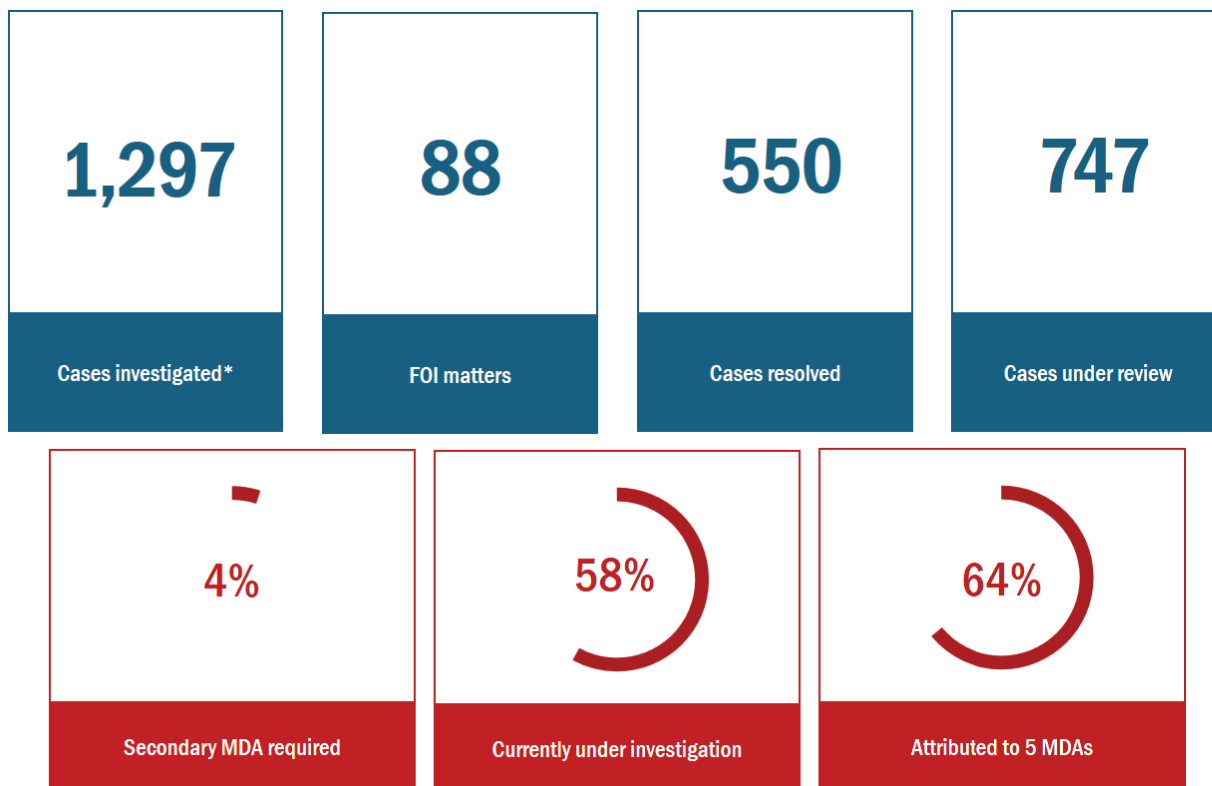


Figure 2. Summary of Investigations Undertaken

Note that although 1,297 cases were received and deemed eligible for investigation, those generated a total of 1,370 complaints as a single case may give rise to more than one complaint.

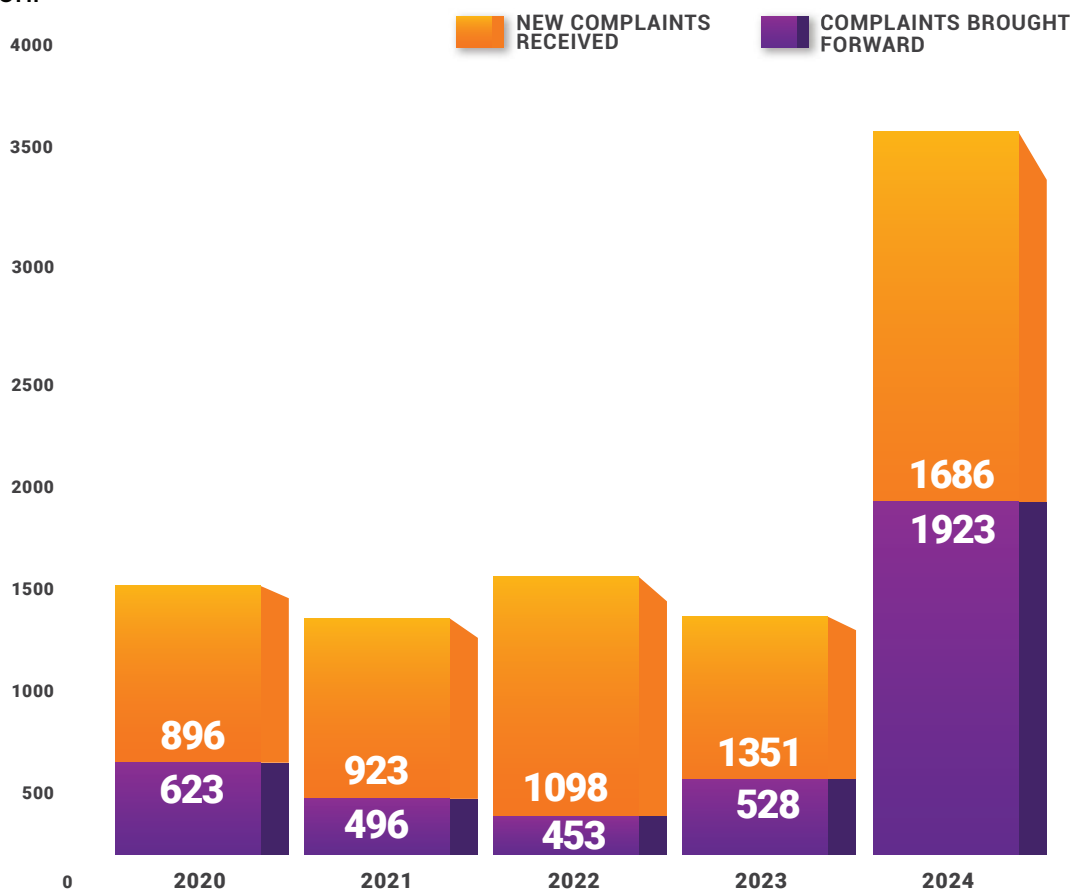
# Overview of Investigations for 2024

For the period under review, the Office of the Ombudsman managed a caseload of three thousand six hundred and nine (3,609) complaints—an increase of one thousand seven hundred and thirty (1,730) compared to the previous reporting period. This total comprised one thousand six hundred and eighty six (1,686) new complaints received in 2024 and one thousand nine hundred and twenty three (1,923) matters brought forward from previous years.

A forensic review of both physical and electronic case files, undertaken during the reporting period, revealed a significant number of complaints that had been actively managed by the Office but were not captured in earlier statistical analyses. This was a major factor contributing to the higher number of complaints carried forward into 2024.

There are other reasons why complaints may extend into a new reporting year. Some investigations span a longer period because of the complexity of the issues involved. In other cases, matters remain open because of delays or a lack of responsiveness by the relevant MDA, which prevents timely resolution.

Of the one thousand six hundred and eighty six (1,686) new complaints received, three hundred and one (301), or 17.9%, fell outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, while eighty eight (88), or 5.2%, were Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) matters. This left one thousand two hundred and ninety seven (1,297) cases that moved forward to investigation. By year's end, five hundred and fifty (550), or 42.4%, had been concluded, while seven hundred and forty seven (747), or 57.6%, remained under investigation.



**Figure 3.** Five (5) Year Trend of New Complaints Received and Complaints Brought Forward from Previous Years (2020-2024)

**Figure 3** above shows the total number of new complaints received and those carried forward from previous years over the five-year period 2020 to 2024. While the number of new complaints has steadily increased during this period, the number of matters carried forward has consistently declined, with the exception of the transition from 2023 to 2024.

**Table 2** summarises the status of complaints received in 2024, showing the number eligible for investigation and the proportion concluded or still under investigation at year's end.

DETAILS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE %
Total number of complaints received in 2024	1686	100
Less total number of No Jurisdiction matters	(301)	17.9
Less total Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Chap. 22:02 matters	(88)	5.2
Total number of complaints Passed for Investigation	1297	76.9
Total number of complaints concluded (Resolved)	(550)	42.4
<b>Total Number of complaints Under Investigation as at December 31, 2024</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>57.6%</b>

**Table 2.** No. of Complaints Under Investigation as at December 31, 2024

# Complaints Distribution & Performance Across MDAs for 2024

The following Parent Ministry Profiles provide an overview of the distribution of complaints received against Ministries, Departments, and State Agencies during the reporting period 2024, as well as an assessment of their performance. See **Appendix I** for a comprehensive listing of the number of complaints investigated by Division

### Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago

 1 complaint received

 1 case resolved       0 cases under review

 18 days avg. to respond to the Office       0 complaints required higher level intervention


 100% of complaints due to delay in addressing matter       66 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints


 100% of complaints related to delays in administrative processes

### Director of Public Prosecutions

 2 complaints received

 1 case resolved       1 case under review

 - days avg. to respond to the Office       0 complaints required higher level intervention

 50% of complaints due to poor communication       5 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 50% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing documentation

### Elections and Boundaries Commission

 2 complaints received

 2 cases resolved       0 cases under review

 15 days avg. to respond to the Office       0 complaints required higher level intervention

 50% of complaints due to related human resource issues       27 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 100% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments

### Environmental Management Authority (EMA)

 5 complaints received

 1 case resolved       4 cases under review

 19 days avg. to respond to the Office       1 complaint required higher level intervention

 80% of complaints related to poor communication       50 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 40% of complaints related to delays in addressing infrastructure and maintenance

### Equal Opportunity Tribunal

 1 complaint received

 0 cases resolved       1 case under review

 45 days avg. to respond to the Office       0 complaints required higher level intervention

 100% of complaints related to poor communication       0 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 100% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits

### Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago

 38 complaints received


 24 cases resolved       14 cases under review

 23 days avg. to respond to the Office       3 complaints required higher level intervention

 49% of complaints related to poor communication       19 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 55% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

 21 complaints received


 6 cases resolved  15 cases under review

 37 days avg. to respond to the Office  2 complaints required higher level intervention

 38% of complaints due to poor communication  15 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 52% of complaints related to delays in administrative processes


### Ministry of Education

 186 complaints received


 41 cases resolved  145 cases under review

 47 days avg. to respond to the Office  6 complaints required higher level intervention

 91% of complaints due to human resource issues  23 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints



 51% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Finance

 157 complaints received


 66 cases resolved  91 cases under review

 44 days avg. to respond to the Office  5 complaints required higher level intervention

 52% of complaints due to poor communication  23 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 74% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Health

 84 complaints received


 36 cases resolved  48 cases under review

 31 days avg. to respond to the Office  12 complaints required higher level intervention

 56% of complaints due to human resource issues  23 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 57% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

 34 complaints received


 17 cases resolved  17 cases under review

 25 days avg. to respond to the Office  4 complaints required higher level intervention

 62% of complaints due to poor communication  25 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints



 35% of complaints related to delays in administrative processes


### Ministry of Labour

 8 complaints received


 1 case resolved  7 cases under review

 25 days avg. to respond to the Office  1 complaint required higher level intervention

 100% of complaints related to human resource issues  13 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints


 38% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of National Security

 60 complaints received


 15 cases resolved  45 cases under review

 40 days avg. to respond to the Office  11 complaints required higher level intervention

 76% of complaints related to human resource issues  25 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints



 43% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Planning and Development

 6 complaints received


 1 case resolved  5 cases under review

 31 days avg. to respond to the Office  2 complaints required higher level intervention

 50% of complaints due to poor communication  14 weeks complaints have remained unresolved



 33% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation

 1 complaint received


 0 cases resolved  1 case under review

 51 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 100% of complaints due to poor communication  - weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 100% of complaints related to delays in administrative processes


### Ministry of Public Utilities

 59 complaints received

 22 cases resolved  37 cases under review

 28 days avg. to respond to the Office  3 complaints required higher level intervention

 54% of complaints due to availability of funding  21 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints



 59% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

 71 complaints received


 30 cases resolved  41 cases under review

 25 days avg. to respond to the Office  3 complaints required higher level intervention

 44% of complaints due to poor communication  22 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 37% of complaints related to delays in addressing infrastructure and maintenance


### Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

 68 complaints received


 32 cases resolved  36 cases under review

 29 days avg. to respond to the Office  4 complaints required higher level intervention

 56% of complaints related to poor communication  16 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 82% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Sport and Community Development

 9 complaints received


 5 cases resolved  4 cases under review

 16 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 89% of complaints related to human resource issues  20 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 56% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts

 2 complaints received


 2 cases resolved  0 cases under review

 33 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 100% of complaints related to human resource issues  23 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 100% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Trade and Industry

 4 complaints received

 3 cases resolved  1 case under review

 6 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 100% of complaints related to human resource issues  20 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 75% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Works and Transport

 47 complaints received

 15 cases resolved  32 cases under review

 26 days avg. to respond to the Office  2 complaints required higher level intervention

 45% of complaints related to human resource issues  18 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 34% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Ministry of Youth Development and National Service

 3 complaints received

 0 cases resolved  3 cases under review

 17 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 67% of complaints related to human resource issues  - weeks complaints have remained unresolved

 67% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing documentation


### National Insurance Board (NIB)

 329 complaints received


 188 cases resolved  141 cases under review

 47 days avg. to respond to the Office  30 complaints required higher level intervention

 64% of complaints related to poor communication  26 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints



 75% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs

 10 complaints received


 4 cases resolved  6 cases under review


 21 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 60% of complaints related to human resource issues  21 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints


 30% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Office of the Prime Minister

 15 complaints received


 6 cases resolved  9 cases under review

 31 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 87% of complaints related to human resource issues  17 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 53% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Personnel Department

 15 complaints received


 5 cases resolved  10 cases under review

 15 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention

 73% of complaints related to human resource issues  9 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 33% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Service Commissions Department

 37 complaints received


 9 cases resolved  28 cases under review

 36 days avg. to respond to the Office  0 complaints required higher level intervention


 89% of complaints related to human resource issues  21 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 41% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments


### Statutory Authorities Service Commission

 6 complaints received


 3 cases resolved  3 cases under review

 30 days avg. to respond to the Office  2 complaints required higher level intervention

 67% of complaints related to poor communication  19 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 50% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing documentation


### Tobago House of Assembly (THA)

 46 complaints received


 19 cases resolved  27 cases under review

 41 days avg. to respond to the Office  6 complaints required higher level intervention

 80% of complaints related to human resource issues  19 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 41% of complaints related to administrative delays in issuing retirement benefits


### Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS)

 33 complaints received

 7 cases resolved  26 cases under review

 25 days avg. to respond to the Office  7 complaints required higher level intervention

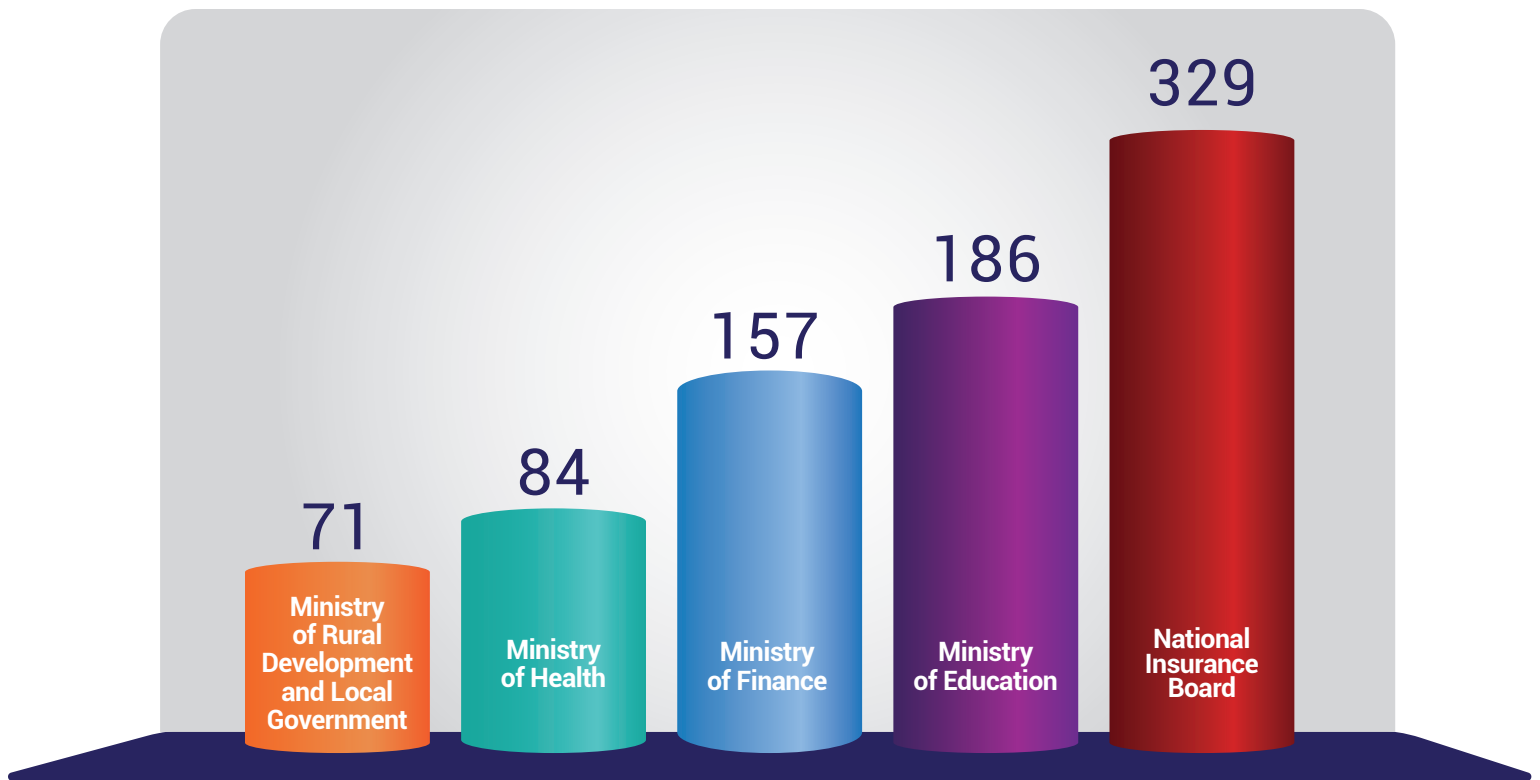
 64% of complaints related to poor communication  27 weeks avg. taken for the Office and MDA to resolve complaints

 48% of complaints related to administrative delays in processing payments

# The Five MDAs with the Highest Number of Complaints Received in 2024

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to monitor the number of complaints received against each Ministry/Department/State Agency.

**Figure 4** below illustrates the Five (5) MDAs with the Highest Number of Complaints.



**Figure 4.** The Five MDAs with the Highest Number of Complaints Received in 2024



# The Ombudsman's Investigative Toolkit

In this section, "The Ombudsman's Investigative Toolkit," refers to a set of tools, techniques and resources utilized in the conduct of the investigations into complaints engaging the attention of the Office.

These are as follows:

Summons [Section 97(1)]

Notice of Entry [Section 97(2)]

Site Visits

Reporting [Section 96(2)]

# Summons - Section

Section 97(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 1:01 states -

*“The Ombudsman shall have the powers of the High Court to summon witnesses to appear before him and to compel them to give evidence on oath and to produce documents relevant to the proceedings before him and all persons giving evidence at those proceedings shall have the same duties and liabilities and enjoy the same privileges as in the High Court.”*

The issuance of Summonses is therefore an essential statutory tool used by the Office to obtain information and evidence under oath, secure cooperation from MDAs, and advance the resolution of complaints.

During the reporting period January to December 2024, one hundred and eighty-five (185) matters escalated to Summons, and one hundred and twenty-four (124) matters were resolved through the Summons process.

**Table 3** below shows the number of Summonses issued for the period 2024.

YEAR	NO. OF MATTERS ESCALATED TO SUMMONS	MATTERS RESOLVED (MATTERS RESOLVED BY SUMMONS)
2024	185	124

**Table 3.** Number of Summonses Issued

## Undertaking

At the Summons hearing, officials, usually representing the relevant MDA, often give undertakings under oath to provide feedback to the Ombudsman within a reasonable timeframe. When these undertakings are not honoured, investigations are prolonged, the integrity of the process is compromised, and further consequences may follow.

## Summons Protocol

When a Summons is issued, it is routinely addressed to the relevant Permanent Secretary or Head of the Department or Agency. If that officer is unable to attend, a request must be made for a representative of comparable rank to appear in their place, and that request must be communicated to the Ombudsman in advance of the hearing for approval.

This approach ensures accountability at the appropriate level and reflects the obligation on MDAs to give prompt and proper attention to Summonses and other communications from the Ombudsman.

# Notice of Entry - Section 97(2)

Section 97(2) of the Constitution empowers the Ombudsman, or designated Ombudsman's Investigators, to enter any Ministry, Department, or Government agency for the purpose of examining records relevant to an investigation and carrying out any part of that investigation on the premises. This authority includes the power to retain documents or other relevant material. It is therefore a key investigative tool that allows the Ombudsman to conduct on-site examinations, inspections and inquiries of staff or other persons present, using whatever information is available at the location to verify administrative actions. The purpose is to determine whether the complainant's allegations are substantiated or whether they are unsupported.

Section 97(2) of the Constitution provides that:

*"The Ombudsman shall have power to enter and inspect the premises of any department of Government or any authority to which section 93 applies, to call for, examine and where necessary retain any document kept on such premises and there to carry out any investigation in pursuance of his functions."*

This investigative authority, exercised through a Notice of Entry, was utilised by the Ombudsman during the period under review. For the reporting period, a total of **twenty-four (24) Notices of Entry** were issued to MDAs.

OFFICE	NOTICE OF ENTRY ISSUED SECTION 97(2)
HEAD OFFICE (PORT OF SPAIN)	10
SAN FERNANDO REGIONAL OFFICE	13
TOBAGO REGIONAL OFFICE	1
TOTAL	24

**Table 4.** Number of Notices of Entry issued per Office location for 2024

# Site Visits

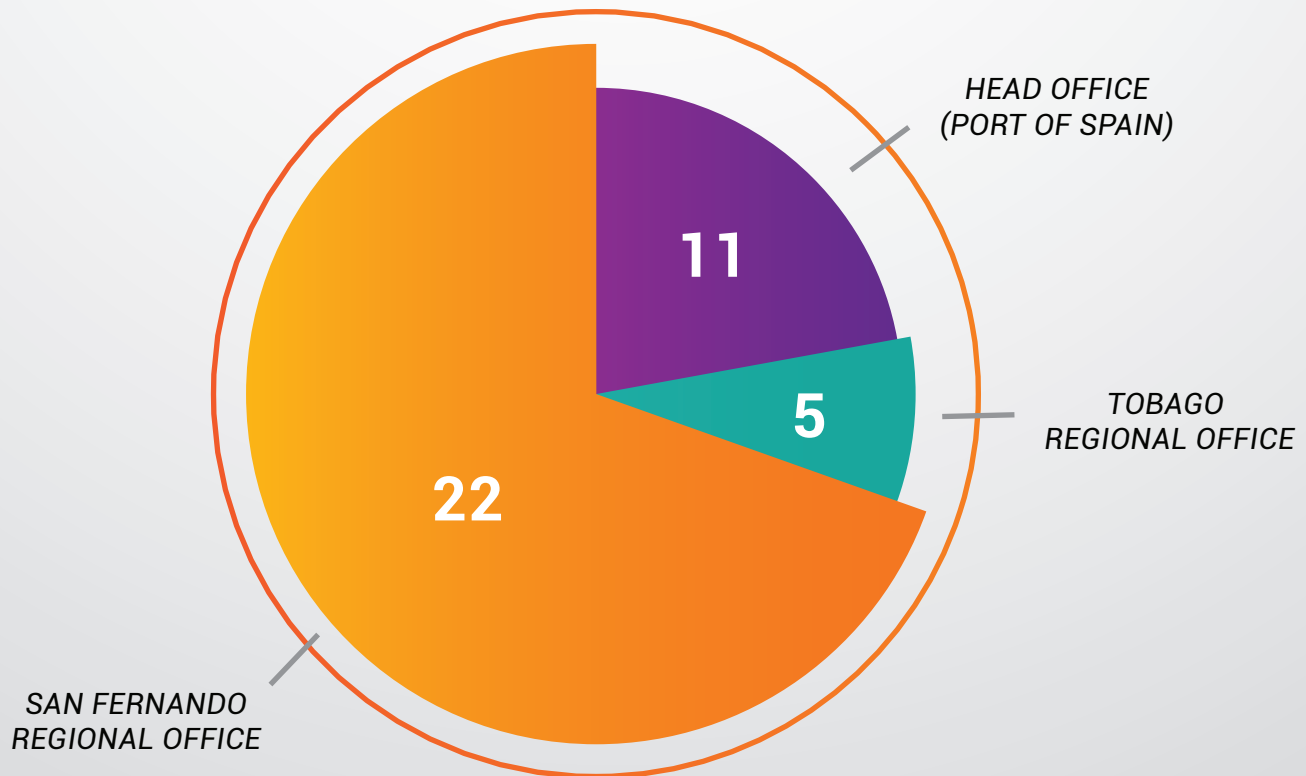
In the course of its investigations, the Office of the Ombudsman conducts site visits as part of its evidence-gathering function. These visits are undertaken in matters that require an on-site assessment to verify technical details, observe conditions and obtain first-hand information relevant to the complaint.

Site visits allow the investigative team to corroborate documentary evidence, speak with affected parties and assess the actual circumstances surrounding the issue raised. This approach ensures that investigations are thorough, objective and grounded in verifiable facts, thereby supporting the fair and just resolution of cases.

For the period January to December 2024, a total of thirty-eight (38) site visits were conducted, categorised by office location as follows:

- **Eleven (11)** visits were conducted by the Head Office (Port of Spain);
- **Twenty-two (22)** visits were conducted by the San Fernando Regional Office; and
- **Five (5)** visits were conducted by the Tobago Regional Office.

**Figure 5.** Number of Site Visits Conducted by Regional Offices



# Reporting to MDAs

## Section 96(2) Reports

The Ombudsman is mandated pursuant to Section 96(2) of the Constitution to report findings and issue recommendations at the conclusion of an investigation, ensuring that the relevant MDA is formally notified and provided with corrective measures to address administrative failures. This provision requires the Ombudsman to communicate with Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments/Authorities to:

- (a) Present the investigation's findings, outlining the results in detail;
- (b) Advise whether an individual has suffered injustice due to administrative shortcomings;
- (c) Provide a clear rationale for the findings;
- (d) Recommend corrective measures and, where necessary, specify actions to remedy the injustice along with a defined timeframe for implementation.

**Section 96(2)** of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 1:01 states that-

*"Upon the completion of an investigation the Ombudsman shall inform the department of Government or the authority concerned of the results of the investigation and, if he is of the opinion that any person has sustained an injustice in consequence of a fault in administration, he shall inform the department of Government or the authority of the reasons for his opinion and make such recommendations as he thinks fit. The Ombudsman may in his original recommendations, or at any later stage if he thinks fit, specify the time within which the injustice should be remedied."*

For the reporting period, **thirty (30) reports/letters** pursuant to **Section 96(2)** were issued.

OFFICE	SECTION 96(2)
HEAD OFFICE (PORT OF SPAIN)	6
SAN FERNANDO REGIONAL OFFICE	6
TOBAGO REGIONAL OFFICE	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

**Table 5.** Number of Section 96(2) Letters Issued by Regional Offices

# The Investigations Department's Community Outreach Services

During the period under review, the Office of the Ombudsman held several community outreach events, the details of which were published in advance. Investigators were present at each event, giving citizens an opportunity to learn about the role and services of the Office. While valid complaints may be taken during these sessions, much of the engagement involves advising citizens on administrative issues that are frequently raised. Outreach events also provide an opportunity for follow-ups with complainants who already have matters under investigation.

Overall, these engagements help to educate the public, guide citizens toward the appropriate avenues for assistance and strengthen the Office's connection with communities.

OUTREACH LOCATION	COMPLAINTS TAKEN	ADVISED	FOLLOW-UP	TOTAL PERSONS ASSISTED
Arima	16	20	5	41
Chaguanas	11	11	1	23
Couva	20	1	7	28
Mayaro/ Rio Claro	13	8	12	33
Point Fortin	19	3	3	25
Roxborough, Tobago	8	0	1	9
Sangre Grande	15	30	16	61
Siparia	16	3	3	22

**Table 6.** Community Outreach Reports for the Period January to November 2024

# SCHEDULE OF COMMUNITY VISITS

## **ARIMA**

Mayor's Box  
Arima Velodrome, Hollis Avenue, Arima  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **COUVA**

Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional  
Corporation  
Railway Road, Couva  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **POINT FORTIN**

Engineering Services Compound,  
Point Fortin Borough Corporation  
Guapo Cap-de-Ville Road, Point Fortin  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **SANGRE GRANDE**

Technical Department Conference Room,  
Sangre Grande Regional Corporation  
Robert Paul Street, Sangre Grande  
Last Tuesday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **CHAGUANAS**

Chaguanas Borough Corporation  
Cor. Taitt & Cumberbatch Streets, Chaguanas  
2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **MAYARO/RIO CLARO**

Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation  
Rann's Plaza, High Street  
Last Thursday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **ROXBOROUGH**

Conference Room  
Roxborough Administrative Complex,  
Windward Road, Roxborough  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

## **SIPARIA**

Ministry of Labour, Siparia Office  
Level 2, Siparia Administrative Complex  
Cor. Allies Street and S.S. Erin Road, Siparia  
3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

# Staff Training and Development

## **Ministry of Public Administration (Public Service Academy)**

Corporate Image and Protocol.....	January
Designing Orientation Programmes.....	January
Government Protocol and Etiquette.....	February
Preparation of Estimates.....	March
The Role of the Investigator in the Disciplinary Process.....	March
Introduction to Ethics and Values.....	April & October
Introduction to Information Technology and Cyber Security Risk Management.....	April
Requirements for Organizational Design.....	October
Creativity and Innovation for Leadership.....	November

## **Office-Sponsored Training for the Legal Division**

21 <sup>st</sup> Annual Caribbean Commercial Law Workshop – UWI Faculty of Law, Cavehill Campus.....	June
Fundamentals of Business Law and Contract Management – Arthur Lok Jak Global School of Business.....	October
Pathway to Peace: Evolving trends in dispute resolution – 5th Triennial Conference–Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIARB).....	October

## **In-House Training**

Use of Case Management System (OASIS).....	Quarterly
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# Public Relations and Events

## Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute's CPI Launch

Mr. Justice Rajmanlal Joseph (ret'd) delivered the keynote address at the launch of the Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) on the 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024. Mr. Joseph's address focused on the theme of the launch, 'Corruption and Injustice'.



## OASIS and Website Launch

The Office of the Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago launched its new digital case management system, the Ombudsman Advanced Solutions Investigation System (OASIS) on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 at its Head Office Conference Room.

OASIS enhances the Office's investigations into complaints against public authorities and empowers us to function outside the limitations of physical files and office spaces. This is at the core of the Office of the Ombudsman's thrust for digital transformation.



*(L to R) Mr. Brandon Tobias, IT Infrastructure Specialist; Ms. Marcia Pile O'Brady, Executive Officer; Ombudsman Rajmanlal Joseph; Mr. Akil Wiltshire, ICT Technical Officer; Mrs. Jameelia Wickham, Corporate Communications Officer.*

## Sixth Ombudsman of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Sworn In

On Monday, May 20, 2024, Mrs. Jacqui Sampson Meiguel was sworn in as the sixth Ombudsman of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago by The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, then Speaker of the House.



Mrs. Jacqui Sampson Meiguel takes and subscribes to the oath of Ombudsman before The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House.  
*Photos courtesy The Office of the Parliament.*

## Rotary Club of Central Port of Spain Presentation

Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel delivered the feature presentation at the Rotary Club of Central Port of Spain's meeting on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 at the Cascadia Hotel, St. Ann's.

Mrs. Sampson Meiguel discussed the role of the Office of the Ombudsman and the process of investigating and resolving complaints. She also shared her objectives as the newly appointed Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago and fielded insightful questions on the work of the Office.



The Ombudsman is presented with a token of appreciation by Ms. Tanya Western, President of the Rotary Club of Central Port of Spain, as part of the Club's Garden with Wings Project in collaboration The Botanical Gardens.

## Free Legal Clinics

The Office of the Ombudsman participated in the Eastern Lawyers Association's free legal clinics throughout 2024. These clinics afford persons the opportunity to access free legal advice in various areas of concern. The Office attended alongside other independent public institutions to sensitise attendees about our services as well as receive complaints.



**Biche RC Primary School**  
Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2024



**Toco Regional Complex**  
Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2024



**Arima Community Centre**  
Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

## Public Service Week Tobago 2024

The Office of the Ombudsman showcased its services to the public at the Tobago Public Service Expo 2024 held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 at the Shaw Park Complex. The expo, which was hosted by the Tobago House of Assembly in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration, aimed to highlight the work of the public service through the use of digital technology under the theme, 'Public Service Now and Beyond'.

The team shared insight into the work of the Office and highlighted its digital case management system, the Ombudsman Advanced Solutions Investigation System (OASIS).



## Ombudsman Receives Public Life Award for Leadership Excellence

Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel was honoured by the Management Institute for National Development (MIND) as their 2024 Regional Awardee for the MIND Public Life Award for Leadership Excellence. She was presented with the distinguished award on Thursday, July 11, 2024 at the Public Life Award for Leadership Excellence Luncheon hosted at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica. The award ceremony is a special event within the Regional Public Sector Leadership Development Conference hosted by MIND in collaboration with the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD).



Dr. Lois Parkes, Leadership Development and Institutional Strengthening Specialist, Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) with Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel



From left: Ambassador Joan Underwood, CEO Underwood Talent Development Services Inc; Ms. Kerline Graham, conference participant; Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel, and Dr. Lois Parkes, Leadership Development and Institutional Strengthening Specialist, Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD)

## Ombudsman's Courtesy Call to Chief Secretary of the THA

The Ombudsman, accompanied by Ms. Allison Quita Superville, Senior Investigator at our Tobago Regional Office, paid a courtesy call to the Honourable Farley Chavez Augustine, Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly at the Shaw Park Complex on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August,



The Hon. Farley Chavez Augustine, Chief Secretary of the THA, greets Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel.



The Hon. Farley Chavez Augustine greets Ms. Allison Quita Superville, Senior Investigator, Tobago Regional Office.

## Ombudsman's Team Huddle: Investigations Department and Legal Division

The Investigations and Legal Units, together with the Ombudsman, participated in a two-day intensive workshop from 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The training retreat was designed to strengthen the skills and knowledge required for effective complaint investigation and resolution. It also supported the standardisation of investigative practices across all regional offices while helping to build team morale and cohesion.



Ombudsman Mrs. Jacqui Sampson Meiguel with the Office's Legal and Investigations teams.



The Ombudsman with facilitators (from left to right) Mr. Terrance Dick, Ms. Maria Mason-Roberts and Senator Anthony Vieira SC.

## Ombudsman's Meeting with THA's Divisional Officials

Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel together with Ms. Allison Quita Superville, Senior Investigator of the Tobago Regional Office, met with the Chief Administrator of the Tobago House of Assembly, Ms. Denese Toby-Quashie, and other THA Administrators and senior officials on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2024.

The meeting provided an opportunity for detailed discussions on outstanding complaints involving several THA Divisions.



The Ombudsman Jacqui Sampson Meiguel, Ms. Superville and Ms. Toby-Quashie, Chief Administrator, THA, facilitate discussions on outstanding matters.



The Ombudsman's meeting with THA's Chief Administrator and other THA Administrators.

## Ombudsman Receives Medal of Merit Gold (Governance) at the 2024 National Awards

The Ombudsman, Jacqui Sampson Meiguel, was awarded the Medal of Merit Gold for Public Service in Governance at the National Awards Ceremony held at President's House on Republic Day 2024.

The award recognises her distinguished service as Clerk of the House, where she served as Administrative Head Accounting Officer of the Parliament as well as principal adviser to Members of Parliament. In that capacity, she oversaw six presidential elections, and served under four Prime Ministers and six Speakers.



The Ombudsman receiving the Medal of Merit Gold from Her Excellency Christine Carla Kangaloo O.R.T.T. at the National Awards Ceremony.

*Photos courtesy the Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.*

# Testimonials

I wish to express my gratitude for action taken by your office to complete the long-delayed Reclassification and Recalculation of my pension by The Teaching Service Commission...

I do appreciate the assistance and updates given by members of your staff since July 2022... I am truly grateful their effort in walking through the process from The Teaching Service Commission to the Ministry of Education and for giving me regular updates.

I thank you for your determination and commitment to complete my case.

The workmen from HDC Estate Management began construction works... to repair all the cracks in my unit. They continued working on Saturday and Sunday and completed all construction works on Monday...

All construction works were completed to a satisfactory standard. The team also informed me that they would return later this week to prime all the repaired areas.

Thank you for all the assistance given to me in resolving this complainant.

Blessed Monday,

The guys came this weekend and a lot was done. Thanks to your office I'm finally getting some justice.

I would like to place on public record, my heart filled thanks and appreciation to you and your team for the professional services provided in reference to my "Home to Office" travelling claim not being processed. Kindly note that I finally received my traveling cheque at the Victoria Education District office.

Your tremendous involvement in this matter has caused the Ministry of Education: Finance/Accounts Division to recognize that "Home to Office" claims are owed to the Third schedule officers of the Ministry. Your persistence efforts are note-worthy and commendable in achieving this positive outcome. I wish to compliment you and your staff fir your labour of love.

Many thanks and blessings for a job well done. It was a great pleasure working with your establishment.

# TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

## Examples of Complaints We Investigate

### **DELAYS & OMISSIONS** (Undue Delay/ Failure to Act)

- Undue delay in processing and paying pension benefits, contract gratuity, severance benefits.
- Undue delay in obtaining birth certificates, passports, ID cards, or medical reports.
- Delays by Municipal Corporations in maintaining/constructing roads and drains.
- Failure to issue land tenure documents, state land approvals or leases.
- Undue delay in processing NIB claims, and social welfare support.
- Failure to update or correct public records after repeated requests.
- Failure to acknowledge or act on repeated follow-up letters from citizens.
- Delay in reconnecting water or electricity services where eligibility is clear.
- Non-action or failure to make a decision when required (omission).

### **PROCEDURAL UNFAIRNESS** (Unreasonableness/ Error/ Bias)

- Failure to act in accordance with regulations and standard procedures.
- Decisions or advice that are contrary to established procedure or policy.
- Decisions that appear unreasonable, unjust, or arbitrary.
- Unexplained changes to previously communicated decisions.
- Applying criteria inconsistently between citizens in similar situations.
- Misinterpretation or misapplication of eligibility rules.
- Decision-making influenced by irrelevant considerations.
- Making a decision without first hearing from the citizen or allowing them to explain the circumstances.
- Refusal to correct a clear administrative error.
- Failure to follow published timelines or service standards.
- Unequal treatment of similarly placed applicants for the same service.

# Examples of Complaints We Investigate

## **COMMUNICATION FAILURES** (Poor Service/ Lack of Transparency/ Disrespect, indifference or arbitrary treatment)

- Delay/ failure by Government Departments in responding to official letters of complaint or requests for assistance.
- Discourtesy, disregard for the citizen and the exercise of public power in a dismissive or arbitrary manner.
- Giving conflicting information to citizens on the same matter.
- Lack of updates after repeated requests.
- Failure to inform a citizen of the status of an application.
- Not providing reasons for a refusal or adverse decision.
- Calling citizens out repeatedly to offices without resolving the issue.
- Providing incorrect advice that causes a citizen to lose a benefit.
- Unprofessional conduct toward elderly or disabled applicants.
- Failure to direct citizens to the correct office or procedure.
- Inconsistent application of rules.
- Unexplained switching of citizens between waiting lists.
- Discretion exercised in a way that appears biased or punitive.
- Public officers treating citizens with hostility or contempt.
- Failure to provide reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities.
- Unreasonable requirements for documents beyond what policy demands

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION MATTERS** (Non-Disclosure of Official Documents)

- Refusals to disclose official documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Chapter 22:02.

# Examples of Complaints We Cannot Investigate

## COURT PROCEEDINGS/DECISIONS

- Matters that are currently before any court (civil or criminal) or issues that have already been adjudicated (decided) by a court.
- Right of appeal, reference, or review before an independent tribunal other than a court.

## PUBLIC SERVICE PERSONNEL MATTERS

- Complaints challenging human resource management decisions such as appointments, promotions, transfers, terminations or disciplinary actions involving public officers.

## MINISTERIAL/GOVERNMENT POLICY

- Policy decisions of Ministers or Government Departments e.g. HDC Housing Allocations, Town and Country, etc.

## COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS

- Contractual or commercial transactions.

## MATTERS INVOLVING THE ARMED FORCES

- Matters concerning the terms and conditions of service, any order, command, penalty or punishment given to members of the Defence Force.

## CRIMINAL MATTERS/ NATIONAL SECURITY/ FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS/ INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- Action taken for the purpose of investigating crime or of protecting the security of the state.
- Extradition/fugitive offenders.
- Action taken affecting relations/dealings with foreign government/international organisations.

## PRIVATE MATTERS

- Disputes between private individuals.
- Complaints against private Companies.

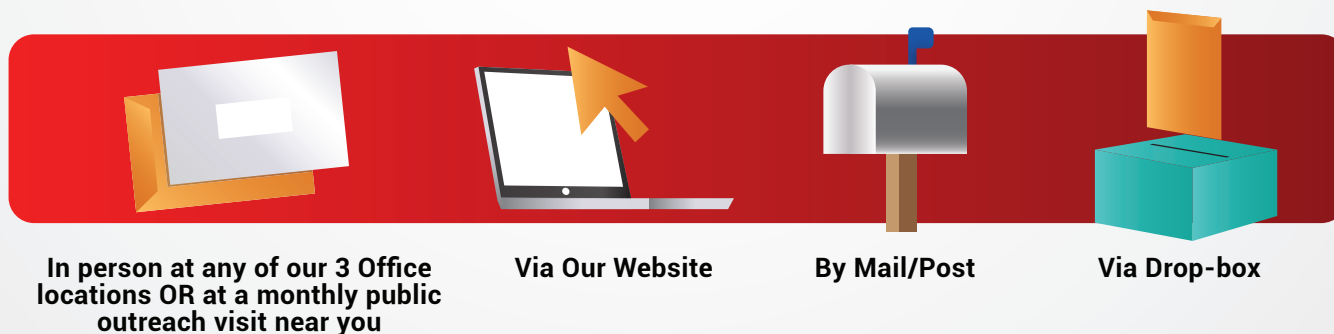
# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

## 1. WHAT MUST BE DONE BEFORE A COMPLAINT IS MADE?

- An official complaint must first be lodged in writing within the government department where the alleged injustice occurred.
- The department should be given a reasonable amount of time to adequately address the matter before it is brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman.

## 2. HOW DO I LODGE A COMPLAINT?

All complaints must be made **IN WRITING** to the Ombudsman. Complaints can be lodged:



If you are unsure whether you have a valid complaint, you may contact the Office for further information.

## 3. WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD MY COMPLAINT INCLUDE?

**Your complaint should include:**

- Name
- Telephone contact
- Residential address and/or mailing address
- Email address (optional)
- A summary outlining:
  - The facts of the complaint and the current status of the matter
  - The government department involved
  - The date when the complaint was lodged with the government department
  - The name of the person(s) to whom you have reported the matter
- Copies of documents pertinent to your complaint (if available).

#### **4. WHAT TYPE OF COMPLAINTS CAN THE OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATE?**

- Delay by Municipal Corporations in constructing, repairing and maintaining roads and drains.
- Delay by Government Departments in processing and paying pension and severance benefits.
- Delay by the National Insurance Board (NIB) in processing claims for NIS benefits.
- Delays in obtaining birth certificates, passports, medical reports.
- Refusals to disclose official documents under the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02.
- Delay by Government Departments in responding to letters of complaints and requests for

#### **5. ARE THERE AREAS THAT THE OMBUDSMAN CANNOT INVESTIGATE?**

**Some of the matters which the Ombudsman cannot investigate include:**

- Civil or criminal proceedings before any Court.
- Contractual or other commercial transactions.
- Personnel matters in relation to service in the public service.
- Terms and conditions of members of the armed forces.
- Policy decisions of Ministers or Government Departments e.g. HDC Housing Allocations, Town and Country etc.

# Appendix

## Distribution of Complaints by MDA

MINISTRY/GOVERNEMENT DEPARTMENT/AGENCIES	PRIMARY COMPLAINTS	SECONDARY COMPLAINTS	TOTAL
<b>FINANCE</b>			<b>159</b>
General	40	0	40
Customs and Excise Division	2	0	2
Inland Revenue Division	99	0	99
National Insurance Appeals Tribunal (NIAT)	2	0	2
National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB): Port of Spain	2	0	2
Treasury Division - Comptroller of Accounts	10	1	11
Valuation Division	3	0	3
<b>HEALTH</b>			<b>86</b>
General	33	1	34
County Medical Officers of Health	10	6	16
Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA)	9	0	9
North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA)	2	0	2
North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA)	25	0	25
<b>HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT</b>			<b>34</b>
General	1	0	1
Housing Development Corporation (HDC)	31	1	32
Land Settlement Agency (LSA)	1	0	1
<b>JUDICIARY</b>			<b>39</b>
General	23	1	24
Magistrate's Courts	6	0	6
Chief Magistrate' s Chambers	1	0	1
Family Courts- Trinidad	6	0	6
Family Court - Tobago	2	0	2
<b>NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD (NIB)</b>			<b>329</b>
Trinidad	259	1	260
Tobago	69	0	69
<b>NATIONAL SECURITY</b>			<b>60</b>
General	28	0	28
Forensic Science Centre	1	0	1
Probation Services Division	2	0	2
Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service	12	0	12
The Immigration Division	6	0	6
Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service	11	0	11
<b>PUBLIC UTILITIES</b>			<b>63</b>
General	9	1	10
Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC)	2	0	2
National Maintenance Training and Security Company Ltd. (MTS)	38	0	38
Regulated Industries Commission	0	1	1
Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT)	1	0	1
Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST)	2	0	2
Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (WASA)	8	1	9

MINISTRY/GOVERNEMENT DEPARTMENT/AGENCIES	PRIMARY COMPLAINTS	SECONDARY COMPLAINTS	TOTAL
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNEMENT			72
General	11	0	11
Municipal Corporations	57	4	61
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES			68
General	16	1	17
Social Welfare Division	51	0	51
TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY			47
General	0	1	1
Community Development, Youth Development and Sport	4	0	4
Finance, Trade and the Economy	2	1	3
Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development	7	0	7
Health, Wellness and Social Protection	6	0	6
Infrastructure, Quarries and Urban Development	17	0	17
Office of The Chief Secretary	3	0	3
Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development	2	0	2
Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation	3	0	3
Ministry of Health - Tobago Regional Health Authority (TRHA)	1	0	1
AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERIES	20	1	21
CENTRAL BANK OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (CBTT)	1	0	1
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS	2	0	2
EDUCATION	186	0	186
ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION	2	0	2
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (HEAD OFFICE)	5	0	5
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TRIBUNAL	1	0	1
LABOUR	8	0	8
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS	9	1	10
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER	14	0	14
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PERSONNEL OFFICER	10	5	15
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION (TATT)	1	0	1
SERVICE COMMISSIONS	18	19	37
STATUTORY AUTHORITIES SERVICE COMMISSION (SASC)	5	1	6
SPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	8	1	9
TOURISM, CULTURE AND THE ARTS	2	0	2
TRADE AND INDUSTRY	4	0	4
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	33	0	33
WORKS AND TRANSPORT	44	3	47
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL SERVICE	2	1	3
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	5	1	6
	<b>1316</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>1370</b>



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OFFICE OF THE  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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