

## **Good governance - a regional perspective**

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**Integrity is not just our name. It is at the core of the Mission of the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. Here we seek to ensure that those who serve the nation do so with integrity, dignity and that they are ethical in their service to the nation.**

The Commission fosters trust in government by working to ensure compliance with the Integrity in Public Life Act and we work to promote inter-agency coordination and collaboration between and among integrity commissions within the Caribbean region.

It is in this regard that our Chairman, Dr Eric St Cyr, was invited to St Lucia last week to speak at a three-day conference on “Good Governance in the Private and Public Sector”. Good governance assures that corruption is minimised, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.

The conference sought to share knowledge, and facilitate inter-agency coordination and understanding of the roles and functions of public and private sector organisations in supporting and strengthening good governance.

Thirty-five representatives from CARICOM integrity commissions, government and private service organisations – including the Media Association – participated in the conference, which was held at the Coco Palm, Rodney Bay Village, Gros Islet, St Lucia, from June 7-9, 2011. The principal facilitator at the conference was Dr Roger Koranteng, Governance Advisor for the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Dr St Cyr, in his presentation, observed that with victory over slavery (1834/8), indentureship (1846-1917) and the Great Depression (1930’s) and with the short-lived dominion status of the Federation (1958-1962), Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados — and after periods of associate statehood, the Windward and Leeward Islands, the Bahamas and Belize, all attained independence as separate, autonomous sovereign states by 1974.

“With colonialism defeated and the Federation rejected, a unique pattern of West Indian self-government began to show itself,” Dr St Cyr stated.

He added: “While our countries have been named, flags hoisted, nations and administrations established, the core value still struggling to come forth is integrity – uprightness, soundness and completeness.”

Trinidad and Tobago illustrates this pathway from the legendary El Dorado, through colonialism,

independence, republicanism unto nationhood, Dr St Cyr observed. He added that the Integrity in Public Life Act of 1987, and its amendments of 2000 and 2010, establishes an Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago.

“The Commission’s vision is that of a society that is free of corruption. To achieve this we engage in public education as a means of promoting awareness, monitoring official behaviour and recommending corrective action where necessary. The conduct of these activities, it is anticipated, will influence a greater degree of integrity in the conduct of our affairs.”

An economist and lecturer who held senior academic positions at the University of the West Indies and a former consultant with the UNDP, UN ECLAC and the IDB, Dr St Cyr reaffirmed that by strict adherence to the rule of law, the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago administers the Integrity in Public Life Act.

This Act requires:

**Financial Disclosure** – Persons entering public life in Trinidad and Tobago must, within three months in respect of the previous year, and by May 31 for each subsequent year, file with the Commission a declaration of income, assets and liabilities in addition to a statement of registrable interests.

**Code of Conduct** – Persons in Public Life, and persons exercising public functions, are subject to a Code of Conduct regulating behaviour.

**Powers of Investigation** – On its own initiative, or on the allegation of a member of the public made in writing, the Commission may enquire into any alleged breach of the Act.

**The Commission’s Vision Statement** – The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a corruption free nation with a high moral tone, where persons in public life are respected because of their Integrity.

While we strive to “do the right thing always”, Dr Cyr reaffirmed the Commission’s Mission as “leading in promoting integrity, reducing corruption and increasing legal compliance among persons in public life, so that public resources are used fairly and for the benefit of our nation”.

Comments on this article are welcome.

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