



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO – October 2020

CONTENTS

ILLEGAL PROCEDURES USED FOR PROPERTY VALUATIONS..... 1

Illegal procedures used for property valuations

Government’s Valuation Division is using illegal procedures to assess people’s properties such as use of stamp duty and also having assessors standing outside properties on the curb taking pictures to assess the property’s fixtures and facets, UNC MP Baratara San Juan MP Saddam Hosein said yesterday.

Hosein, an attorney stressed the point during yesterday’s Parliament debate of the 2021 Budget. He slammed the division’s modus operandi of doing property tax valuation. Government has said the tax will be collected this fiscal year.

Hosein noted a September 4 memo from the acting Valuation Division head directing ramping-up of exercises to populate the property rolls. When half of the rolls are populated the tax can be collected.

But Hosein said it was illegal for Valuation to use as a short cut, the stamp duty on people’s deeds to assess the tax.

“You can’t use stamp duty to assess property tax. It’s two different bases. One is determined on market value and the other (tax) is assessed on annual rateable value.”

He said Valuation, in using stamp duty assessment was putting values on properties without people completing valuation return forms which is a requirement under the law.

Hosein said another August 20 Valuation document states conditions for Valuation officers to go out and take information on people’s properties.

But this involves officers taking photos of people’s homes from the pavement, doing GPS co-ordinates, assessing how many toilets people have, how many pools, carports, beams, sheds, columns, air conditioning units and the dates of the building’s construction.

International Property Tax Institute

IPTI Xtracts- The items included in IPTI Xtracts have been extracted from published information. IPTI accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information or any opinions expressed in the articles.

“This is illegal, they have to do the proper valuation for people for them to get what is required to pay the tax,” Hosein said, appealing for Government to hold its hand on the tax in the harsh economic environment.

He also criticised Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley’s general election “griping” about a UNC plan to use Unit Trust Corporation (UTC) funds to run T&T.

He said Rowley didn’t know what was going on in his team since the Recovery Roadmap Phase 2 report recommends using \$3 billion from the UTC to fund expenditure for three months.

“And it’s the same UTC.... this is hypocrisy,” he said.

Questioning the cost of the changeover to the \$100 polymer notes, Hosein noted that \$8 billion in old notes had been in circulation and only \$7.5 billion was received to be exchanged for polymer. He said no one was charged for issues with old notes and questioned a PNM election advertisement with a piggybank, involving the use of old \$100 notes.

Hosein slammed allocation cuts for the T&T Police Service which he said would affect service at a time when 2019 held the record for the most murders.

“They also cut \$20 million from TTPS vehicle repair funding but allocated more to repairing President’s House, the PM’s residence in Tobago and other buildings; they have a TTPS Mobile Command Centre without vehicles but sometimes the comedy writes itself because there’s Coast Guard that can’t sail and Air Guard that can’t fly.”

Hosein also called for Government to say what will occur when the extension of registered Venezuelans is over in December, “We’re recently seen a spike in missing teenagers.

Dismissing the 2021 Budget as tedious, repetitive and boring, Hosein said the Finance Minister had shifted from once saying he “did it his way” to “blaming COVID -19 and Kamla.”

Hosein said Government’s tax on imported fruit has brought T&T to a situation where “Apple have more than tax than your Apple I Phone.”

UNC MP Barry Padarath who slammed Government’s youth and digitalization plans, said it was presented by a geriatric minister (Fitzgerald Hinds) whose policies were as old as he was. Padarath said Government used the social media TikTok approach to change buzz words and TikTok’s song and dance routine for its façade on other plans.

International Property Tax Institute

IPTI Xtracts- The items included in IPTI Xtracts have been extracted from published information. IPTI accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information or any opinions expressed in the articles.