



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE

The Process for the Appropriation Act 2019

The Minister of Finance wishes to provide clarification on the process for the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2019 in the Parliament and the assent of same by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government's Financial Year commences on October 1st and ends on September 30th of the following year. All government expenditure must be made in accordance with the Appropriation Act for the particular Financial Year.

However, until the Appropriation Bill 2019 is assented to by the President and made an Act, the Law provides for the establishment of a *Voting Account*, to accommodate government expenditure, **up to a maximum of ten percent of the previous year's appropriation for the first month of the new financial year**, i.e. October 2018

This *Voting Account* **ceases to be effective on November 1st, 2018** Therefore without the new Appropriation Act, the government is unable to expend any funds from November 1st.

For the Financial Year 2018/19, Debate on the Appropriation Bill 2019, commenced in the House of Representatives on the 10th October, 2018 and the House resolved itself into the Standing Finance Committee (SFC) to consider the proposals in the Bill and the Estimates of Expenditure. The SFC concluded its examination on the Bill on the 16th October, 2018 and the Bill was passed in the Lower House on the 16th October, 2018.

The Debate on the Bill then commenced in the Senate on Friday 19th October, 2018 and concluded on Monday 22nd October, 2018 with the passage of the Bill.

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(868) 612-9700
ext. 2804-2809



(868) 612-9700
ext. 2810



comm.finance@gov.tt



www.finance.gov.tt

Having been passed in the Senate, there are several administrative mechanisms which must be effected before the Bill is forwarded to Her Excellency, the President for assent. These are:

- Proof of the Act is sent to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the Director of Budgets, Ministry of Finance for vetting and return. Thereafter, any corrections received are inserted in the proof;
- The proof of the Act is sent to the Government Printer for printing of assent copies. Four (4) of these assent copies are signed by the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Senate;
- The Bill file along with the four (4) signed assent copies are sent to the Office of the Solicitor General for preparation of the Legal Report of the Attorney General;
- Upon completion of the preparation of the Legal Report, the Office of the Solicitor General will forward the Bill file and the Legal Report for the signature of the Attorney General. Thereafter, the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs will return the Bill file to the Office of the Parliament;
- The Office of the Parliament sends the four (4) signed assent copies to the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for assent.

Only upon conclusion of the above administrative process, can the Minister of Finance sign the General Warrant authorizing the Comptroller of Accounts to issue monies from the Consolidated Fund to meet government's expenditure for the Financial Year 2019.

The Parliamentary Opposition is very aware of the requirements of the annual budgetary exercise and understands fully that had the Budget debate not been completed in both Houses of Parliament there would be no appropriation for Fiscal 2019, which began on October 1st, 2018.

In short, a delay in the completion of the budget debate in the Senate would have made it very difficult for the Government to pay salaries for public servants and workers in statutory authorities, such as the RHAs, cover its debt and provide essential services, provide wages for flood relief workers, the defence force and the protective services who have gone above and beyond the call of duty over the last several days, or provide emergency grants and supplies for those affected by flooding. For this reason, the 2019 Budget had to be debated and passed in the Senate as a matter of urgency.

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The Hon. Colm Imbert
Minister of Finance