



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

May 7, 2024

Dear Editor / Head of Department,

### **Update on the Operations of Bishop Anstey High and Trinity College East Schools**

The Ministry of Education wishes to provide further information pertaining to the operations of the Bishop Anstey High and Trinity College East (BATCE) schools, in light of the recent appointment of a Sub-Committee of the Cabinet to progress discussions on this matter in the best interest of students, staff, parents and the nation at large.

In 2000, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago entered into a Public Private Partnership (PPP) with the Bishop Anstey Association (BAA) for the construction and outfitting of 2 schools. This Build-Own-Lease-Transfer Agreement facilitated the construction, equipping and leasing of the 2 secondary schools over a 20 year period.

The BAA was also provided a License to Occupy which authorized them to manage and operate the schools during the time of the BOLT Agreement. This License facilitated a contract wherein the GORTT would purchase 100% of school places at an agreed user fee- i.e. the Management Agreement.

In 2005, an adjustment to the funding was made to allow for the construction of the 6<sup>th</sup> Form School.

The 20-year BOLT Agreement expired on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, at which time the loan was repaid in full, and the land and buildings of the BATCE conveyed to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2019, the GORTT, in recognition of the impending expiration of the BOLT Agreement, engaged the BAA in discussion, through the Ministry of Education, regarding the terms of the Management Agreement post-2021, when the BOLT Agreement, and therefore the Lease Arrangement, would have come to an end.

By 2021, no agreement had been reached regarding the revised terms of the new Management Agreement, and there existed a difference in opinion between the GORTT and the BAA regarding the validity of the Management Agreement subsequent to the expiration of the BOLT Agreement.

The GORTT appointed a Sub-Committee of the Cabinet, in October 2021, to arrive at a consensus on the way forward with regard to the continued operations of the BATCE, and the terms of a new Management Agreement. A series of discussions ensued.

By 2023, the Sub-Committee submitted its report, with recommendations that the BATCE choose one of 2 options, which would form the basis of the new Management Agreement:

1. The BATCE continue to operate as private schools, with the GORTT paying the standard rates payable for Government-Assisted Secondary Schools to the BAA for 100% of the student capacity, and maintaining the land and buildings; or:
2. The BATCE transition over 5 years to a Government-Assisted School model, with a reduced fee being paid to the BAA each year to reflect the lower operational cost as teachers gradually transition into the public system and are paid by the GORTT. Discussions would also be held over this 5-year period to settle the way forward with staff outside of the organizational structure of public schools, the existing staff pension plan and other relevant considerations.

Based on the options presented, the BAA advised by letter dated August 10<sup>th</sup> 2023, that they had, “decided, in principle, towards transition to the Denominational Government-Assisted School model for the future operations of the BATCE schools and related SIXTH FORM Unit.” The BAA requested “an urgent meeting with appropriate Ministry Officials to develop a plan and settle the terms of the new arrangements...”

Consequent upon that position, Cabinet agreed to accept the relevant proposal of the Cabinet Sub-Committee, which included:

- The transition of the BATCE and Sixth Form Schools to a Government-Assisted model over 5 years
- The payment of \$50 Million for each of fiscal years 2022/23 and 2023/24 to facilitate operational expenses and curriculum delivery at the schools
- The submission of audited financials as a condition of the subvention
- A reduced subvention being approved and paid in subsequent years as teachers gradually move under the jurisdiction of the TSC.

At this time, the terms of the new Management Agreement have not yet been settled, as the BAA and the MOE are fully engaged in complex discussions, on a monthly basis, as to how this can be most seamlessly achieved. These discussions are led by a team of persons comprising staff of the MOE and officials of the BAA. A report is currently being compiled to summarize the progress of the discussions thus far.

In the interest of achieving the best outcome possible for all stakeholders, including the students, staff and parents of the BATCE, along with the BAA and GORTT, the Cabinet has appointed a new Sub-Committee to reengage the BAA, as we collaboratively work towards the implementation of an operational model and new Management Agreement for the BATCE which is satisfactory to all parties.

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