

ASSEMBLY BUDGET CUT BY \$102 MILLION

The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) has suffered a \$102 million dollar shortfall in its budgetary allocation for the current fiscal quarter, Chief Secretary Orville London has revealed.

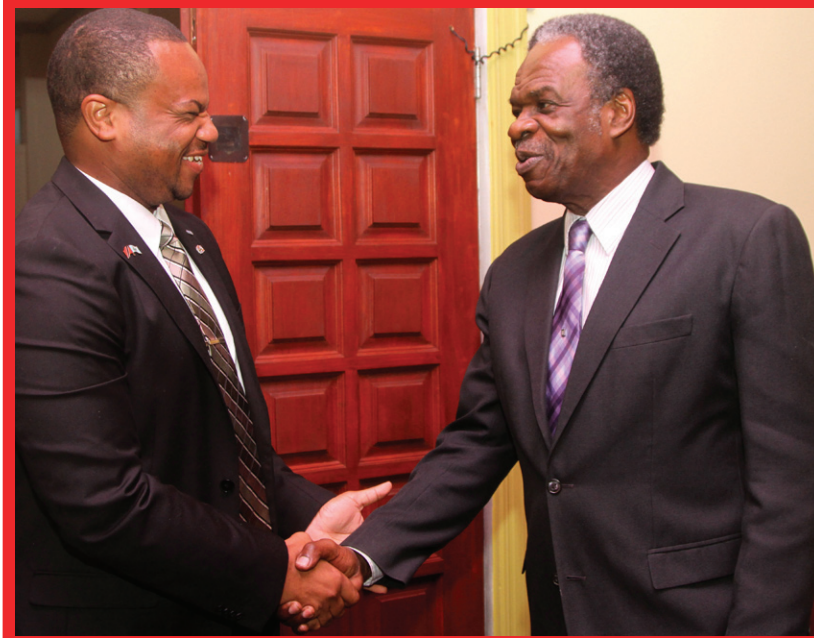
During yesterday's (April 22, 2015) post Executive Council media briefing at the Administrative Complex, Calder Hall, the Chief Secretary stated that for the first two quarters of the fiscal year, the THA has received its pledged allotment "give or take a few million dollars".

This time, the Assembly's funding is 20 percent less than expected. The THA has already budgeted for its recurrent expenditure and development projects based on the projected figure. According to the Chief Secretary, there has been no reason or explanation for the deficit.

Finance and Enterprise Development Secretary Joel Jack wrote to Finance Minister Larry Howai on April 15 to find out why the THA's budget was cut. London said Howai asked his permanent secretary to advise him (Howai) on the deficit, but the Ministry has not confirmed to the Assembly why it happened.

The Chief Secretary could not say whether the shortfall was an error, but said the Assembly has been seriously affected. The THA has to settle arrears to public servants and teachers. Remuneration for teachers and daily paid workers has been increased and needs to be paid as well.

London added that he has released this information to make Tobagonians aware of the financial challenges the Assembly is facing.



WARM WELCOME: Chief Secretary Orville London greets Junior Chamber International president Kwesi DesVignes during a courtesy visit at the Office of the Chief Secretary at the Administrative Complex, Calder Hall on Tuesday (April 21, 2015).

AUDITOR GENERAL APPLIED RULES FROM THA ACT 1990

Even though the Tobago House of Assembly has twice amended the rules for the Tobago House of Assembly Act of 1990 governing financial reporting, the Auditor General's office is still applying the rules from the original Act.

This was explained by Chief Secretary Orville London yesterday (April 22, 2015) during the post Executive Council media briefing at the Administrative Complex in Calder Hall.

The THA has been facing negative comments over the Auditor General's report on the THA's accounting for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

The fact that the report comes nearly ten years later is also problematic, London explained. He pointed out that the accounting would

have been done under officers who are no longer in that position.

London added: "The rules of 1996 and 2001 modified the Rules of 1990 in accordance with the substantial changes of the THA Act No. 40 of 1996 as required by section 78 of that Act. However this position of the modified rules does not satisfy the Auditor General, who continues to use the 1990 rules in its original form with minimal reference to changes in the THA 1996."

Further, the Auditor General's report refers to the Chairman of the Assembly and the General Purposes Committee. These positions were replaced by the Chief Secretary and the Executive Council in 1996.

CEDP SECRETARIAT CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

Earth Day was celebrated globally yesterday (April 22, 2015), and the Tobago House of Assembly's CEDP Secretariat marked the occasion by challenging its staff to a "No Print Day".

The CEDP (Comprehensive Economic Development Plan) 2.0, of course, is the strategic mandate of the THA to transform and diversify Tobago's economy and foster its sustainable development.

The CEDP Secretariat staff therefore took the

lead in demonstrating the need to preserve the environment, by working through the day without printing or photocopying any documents.

Staff members were encouraged to become more sensitive to the environment and conscientious about the meaning of branding Tobago "Clean, Green, Safe and Serene", and also its greater implications for Tobago.

The initiative is the beginning one a once monthly "No Print Day" at the Secretariat, which has also scheduled a Green Office Week for July.