



Any reply or subsequent reference to this communication should be addressed to the Contractor-General and the following reference quoted:-

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MEDIA RELEASE

CONTRACTOR-GENERAL RECEIVES ASSURANCE THAT PARLIAMENT WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION TO FACILITATE MONITORING OF FUTURE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS ENTERED INTO BY PARLIAMENTARIANS

The Speaker of the House of Representatives has positively responded to proposals put forward by Contractor-General, Greg Christie, for Parliament to provide him with information to facilitate his monitoring of any future government contract in respect of which a Member of Parliament expresses a desire to become an interested party.

The new development was disclosed today in a statement which was issued by the Office of the Contractor-General.

“In a letter which was dated June 20, 2006, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Michael Peart, M.P., has assured me that Parliament will in the future provide me with the details which I have requested regarding these contracts,” Mr. Christie said.

Earlier in the year, the then newly appointed Contractor-General, in an effort to promote greater transparency and public confidence in the Government contracts award and

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procurement process, had announced his intention to commence the routine monitoring of all government contracts in which Members of Parliament, their spouses, parents, children and siblings, are interested parties.

On January 12, he wrote to the President of the Senate and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives proposing that Parliament should establish effective mechanisms to ensure that whenever a Parliamentarian sought an exemption under the Constitution to enter into a contract with the Government, the relevant information would be immediately conveyed to the Office of the Contractor-General, whereupon the monitoring of the subject contract would commence.

Section 41 of the Constitution of Jamaica requires a Member of Parliament to vacate his seat if he or any firm in which he is a partner, manager or director, becomes a party to a Government contract. However, every Parliamentarian is entitled to seek an exemption, from Parliament, from the application of Section 41.

The Contractor-General had also asked Parliament to consider extending the ambit of Section 41, albeit notionally, to require Parliamentarians to disclose to Parliament, the particulars of any Government contract which is known to them to be a contract in which their spouses, parents, children or siblings are interested parties.

However, Mr. Christie is awaiting clarification from Parliament as to whether this latter proposal has also been accepted. “I have yesterday written to the Honourable Speaker to have him confirm this one way or the other”, the Contractor-General said.

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Mr. Christie had earlier explained that these categories of contracts have never been routinely monitored or investigated by his Office in the past. He had said that, for the most part, the contracting parties in these contracts were believed to be entities in which Members of Parliament and/or their relatives were interested parties. This, he said, had strengthened the case for enhanced transparency, assistance in identifying the contracts and for routine monitoring and/or investigation by the Contractor-General.

The Contractor-General is empowered, by law, to monitor the award and implementation of all Government contracts to ensure (a) that they are awarded impartially and on merit, (b) that the circumstances in which they are awarded or terminated do not involve impropriety or irregularity, and (c) that their implementation conform to their terms.

In his January 12, 2006 letter to Parliament, the Contractor-General had emphasized that he wanted to "... make it abundantly clear, that none of his proposals were actuated by any inference whatsoever that Government contracts to which Members of Parliament or Related Persons are parties, are *ipso facto* suspect".

"Rather", he had said, "I am of the fervent belief that if transparency and the public's confidence in the Government contracts award and procurement system are to be effectively secured, there can be no better way of achieving this than for Parliamentarians themselves, as the servants of the people, to hold up their own commercial transactions with Government (together with those of their immediate relatives) to the light of public scrutiny".

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