



## **International Anti-Corruption Day**

**- December 9**

**International Anti-Corruption Day**, set aside by the United Nations to raise public awareness of corruption and ways to fight it, is being observed tomorrow, December 9.

International Anti-Corruption Day is a time for political leaders, governments, legal bodies and lobby groups worldwide to work together against corruption by promoting the day and the issues that surround this event.

The **United Nations Convention Against Corruption** signed in October 2003 states, in part, that the UN is: "concerned about the seriousness of problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law."

Corruption is an issue that affects all countries. It undermines democracy, creates unstable governments, and sets countries back economically. Corruption can refer to the destruction of one's honesty or loyalty through undermining moral integrity or acting in a way that shows a lack of integrity or honesty. It also refers to those who use a position of power or trust for dishonest gain. Corruption comes in various forms such as bribery, law-breaking without dealing with the consequences in a fair manner, unfairly amending election processes and results, and covering mistakes or silencing whistleblowers (those who expose corruption in hope that justice would be served).

**The Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago** has as its vision "*to make Trinidad and Tobago a corruption-free nation with a high moral tone where persons in public life are respected because of their integrity and not because of their status and social standing.*"

The Commission takes opportunity during this end of year season to remind 'Persons in Public Life' who receive gifts, personal benefit or social obligations in excess of \$5,000 that they are required to describe the circumstances under which each gift; fee or benefit is given or accepted. Additionally, 'Persons in Public Life' are required to provide information to the Commission on their directorships in companies or other corporate bodies, investments or partnerships and particulars of any Trusts held.

### **Anti-Corruption Initiatives of the Integrity Commission**

#### **Prevention**

Persons in Public Life are required to file financial declarations with the Integrity Commission -- *Declaration of Income, Assets and Liabilities*. These declarations are

examined by the Commission for unexplained accretion in wealth. A ‘*Statement of Registrable Interests*’ –a separate document - is available for public scrutiny. The filing of declarations and the examination of the **Register of Interests** are seen as anti-corruption initiatives. These initiatives are designed to capture whether public officials have interests or material benefits which may influence or may be perceived to influence any actions taken. Members of the public are invited to view the Register of Interests to confirm that the information disclosed by a declarant is accurate.

### **Investigations**

The Integrity Commission is empowered to initiate investigations and receive complaints into alleged breaches of the Integrity In Public Life Act (the Act), the Prevention of Corruption Act and acts of dishonesty committed by persons who fall within the purview of the Act. Invariably, in the course of these investigations the policies and procedures of public bodies may be subject to scrutiny. Investigations can result in either disciplinary or criminal proceedings being instituted against persons found in breach. On occasions investigations may take an inordinately long time to be completed due their complex nature. In the interest of fairness and integrity of the investigative process it is necessary that the investigator commit all available resources to ensure that the matter is effectively addressed.

### **Enforcement**

The effectiveness of the Integrity Commission would be severely retarded had it not been endowed with a degree of cohesive powers to ensure compliance with the Integrity in Public Life Act. Some of these powers include the authority to approach the Courts for the imposition of sanctions against persons who fail to file declarations; approaching the Courts for the imposition of sanctions against persons who fail to provide information requested in the course of an investigation; the Commission can also exercise the powers of a Commission of Enquiry and summon witnesses to attend.

### **Public Education and Enlistment of Public Support**

Public education initiatives of the Commission, the “Register of Interests,” the ‘Code of Conduct’ and the document – “Principles of Integrity for persons in Public Life and persons exercising public functions have become useful in educating public officials on their roles, responsibilities and adherence to good governance, ethics and leadership.

The Commission is of the view that realistic cultural change must start with the school-age population and in this regard the Commission launched in September a “*Do Right Champions*” Competition that sought to engage students of the Primary and Secondary School in a series of activities on the theme of Integrity. Over 1,200 students have participated in the inaugural competition and judging of entries in the following categories – Poems, Short Stories, Drawing, Cartoons and Scenarios (Skits) is expected to begin today, December 9.

*Communications & Public Relations*

**The Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago**

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