



National Assembly of Belize

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PRESS RELEASE

The Joint Public Accounts Committee (JPAC) met in its 11th consecutive session on Monday, 2nd October 2023, to discuss, among other pending matters, a way forward for its scrutiny and oversight functions in the use of public funds and in support of good governance.

To the nation, the JPAC registers its grave concern on the continued unavailability of timely and complete Financial Statements from the Office of the Accountant General. As stipulated in Standing Orders 73 (A) and 74 of the House of Representatives, this information is essential to the mandate of the JPAC. Committee members unanimously and urgently call on the Ministry of Finance to immediately provide all requisite resources, and expertise to the Treasury Department to ensure that the Treasury can meet its legal commitments to the National Assembly and comply with the Finance & Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15 of the Laws of Belize.

The last national audit report produced was for financial year 2014-2015. Public testimonies from the Financial Secretary, the Accountant General and the Auditor General have underscored that there is a dire need for a comprehensive systemic evaluation of the policies, processes and procedures that are currently in place to prevent a collapse of proper function of the public financial management system. The JPAC stands ready to lend its full support to the Accountant General, the Auditor General and the Financial Secretary in meeting their legal and professional obligations to the Belizean people. The JPAC reiterates that the absence of the outstanding financial statements undermines all efforts for accountability and transparency of public funds.

Good governance cannot be achieved without monitoring and scrutiny of public accounts. Taxpayers have a right to know how monies are being utilized in the interest of providing essential services to citizens. The Committee also takes this opportunity to call for requisite training of Accounting Officers, Finance Officers and Public Officers to be held recurrently to allow for the most effective management of public funds.

**Joint Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly of Belize
Belmopan**

10th October 2023