



Press Statement
by
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Minister of Public Works
Public Service Reform – New Estates Office
January 30th, 2019

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us in the Estates Department of the Ministry of Public Works. I am joined today by Miss Sudell Joseph, the Acting Chief Surveyor and Mr. Sheridan Ming, the Acting Buildings Manager – key personnel in this effort.

Earlier this year the Cabinet approved the introduction of revised space standards for Government offices in order to make more efficient use of space and reduce costs.

As part of the Public Service Reform Initiative - Cabinet also considered a number of issues in respect of asset management, one of which was the need to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted in the layout, design, finishes and furnishing of Government office accommodations. The goal is to provide effective Government Services in a sustainable, safe and healthy work environment that makes efficient use of space and affords greater value for money.

The existing Government office space standards have not changed for decades and are now considered overly generous - the layouts are inefficient compared to the more modern, flexible and collaborative work environments common in the private sector.

With private sector rents of approximately **\$8.9 million** annually - savings can be had by more efficient use of space both within Government owned buildings and those rented from the private sector. Savings are not limited to rents alone as other operating costs including electricity, maintenance and service charges will also decrease as the space occupied is reduced.

The existing office space standards provide for 250 – 300 square feet for a Minister, 200 – 250 square feet for a Permanent Secretary, 150 square feet for a Director and 100 square feet for staff. In addition to this, a further 15% is provided for circulation space. Conversely, the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 2009 require a

minimum of 43 sq ft per employee. The revised space standards provide for 200 square feet for a Minister, 150 square feet for a Permanent Secretary, 100 square feet for a Director and 65 square feet for an Officer with no additional allowance for circulation space. The reductions range from 35% for general staff to 66% for Department Heads.

We have agreed that the layout of Government offices generally move to open floor plan to make better use of space, improve collaboration and communication as well as provide a more flexible working environment. The offices are to be furnished with “trader style” desks common in the private sector as opposed to the work stations of old that effectively created individual offices. Only Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Directors are to be provided with a private office. Small conference rooms will also be provided for confidential discussions or meetings with staff.

That said, it is recognised that there are some Government services and operations that do not fit the new office format and have special requirements owing to the nature of those activities. These will be reviewed on a case by case basis and any deviations will require the prior written approval of the Minister of Public Works.

Not surprisingly, within the Civil Service, we have had some resistance to this new policy – the lead entity in delivering this message – the Estates Department - is setting the example by being the first department to transition to an open floor plan that also sees the Chief Surveyor (who is entitled to an office) and his management team occupy desks on the office floor.

Around us you will see photographs of the space as it existed prior to these renovations. You will readily see the new space is bright with a significant amount of natural light that affords Officers the ability to easily collaborate with each other on various aspects of their work. They have been in situ since November last year and while there are a few minor teething pains – the transition has been quite smooth so far.

In this space previously we accommodated 15 staff and have increased that compliment to 23 stations in the new configuration.

The cost of these renovations were just over \$500,000 and took us 5 months to complete the works.

The immediate plan is to expand this concept to the remainder of this floor and transition other departments into this space. Going forward – as we renovate or move government departments – this will be the standard that is applied.

We are moving into the modern age and over time we expect to effect significant cost savings to the public purse.

Thank you.