



## **JOINT CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### ***START OF PRESS RELEASE***

*Port of Spain-* The Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Industry (Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad & Tobago (APETT), Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad & Tobago (ISTT), Trinidad & Tobago Society of Planners (TTSP), Trinidad and Tobago Chapter International Facility Management Association(TTIFMA), Trinidad Tobago Institute of Architects (TTIA), Trinidad & Tobago Contractors' Association(TTCA), is calling for an immediate halt to the proposed Beetham Water Recycling Project to be undertaken by National Gas Company (NGC) on behalf of the Water & Sewerage Authority (WASA). The JCC is also calling for an independent public investigation into this matter of great public concern.

There is an ongoing series of expensive newspaper, radio and TV advertisements, intended to allay public concerns and promote the attributes of this project.

The JCC is making this call for an immediate halt to this large-scale project on the basis of the following questions and anomalies surrounding this Public Procurement Process as outlined here –

- WASA is the Statutory Agency responsible for our country's water supplies and sewerage, while NGC is the State-owned company established to manage the distribution and sale of our country's natural gas. The JCC is questioning the reason for the participation of the NGC in this water treatment project. The Chairman of WASA, who is also the CEO of the NGC, recently stated that WASA did not have the money for the project as a way to explain how NGC came to procure these water treatment facilities.

- Whether a Needs Assessment was carried out for this huge project. The JCC is noting its grave concern that no Business Case seems to have been made for the advisability of this large-scale project on grounds of a value proposition. The long-term, underlying contractual arrangements which are driving this project remain obscured. Do these proposed arrangements improve or further diminish WASA's financial standing? Do they benefit NGC and to what extent? What is the financial impact of these proposals on our country's fortunes?;
- Why was there only approximately 11% response from those who have paid for tender documents, could this be indicative of a lack of confidence in the process being advanced?;
- Why the tendering period for a project of this size, even after an extension was granted, was only 14 weeks?;
- Why was the contract reportedly awarded to the higher tenderer at a contract-sum over \$72M USD greater than the lower tenderer's?;
- The NGC has reserved its right to secrecy (at 3.12 (c) of the Instructions to Bidders in the RFP) in explaining how this decision was made. The imposition of those terms means that NGC sought to obtain virtual *carte blanche* in making these crucial decisions as to who is awarded this contract. That type of secrecy being required for grant of a major public contract is inimical to the public interest. This very point was clearly identified at the 39<sup>th</sup> recommendation of [The Uff Report](#) - "39. *The reviewing of tenders and the making of decisions upon the award of contracts should be undertaken in as transparent a manner as possible, including demonstrating clear compliance with procurement rules, so as to allay suspicion of improper actions or potential corrupt influences...*"
- Who are the decision-makers? - The JCC notes that the Consulting Engineers upon whose advice this major project was advanced are [CPG Consulting](#), a Singapore-based firm. The Tender Assessment procedure adopted was recommended by [KPMG's Singapore office](#).
- The JCC notes that the NGC is reliably reported to have awarded this contract in the sum of \$1.079 Billion to Super Industrial Services Limited (SISL) and its subcontractors, [Foster Wheeler USA](#) and the Singapore-based [Hyflux International](#).

The JCC would remind the public of the three classic '*red flags*' for corruption –

- the haste with which the project is to be implemented;
- elaborate publicity alongside the requirement for complete secrecy on all the essential details and finally,
- the sudden engagement of relatively inexperienced professionals in decision-making positions.

The Beetham Water Recycling Project bears those signs and the JCC therefore reiterates its demand for its immediate halt while an independent public investigation is carried out.

The JCC renews its ongoing request for publication of the Bernard Report into the Piarco Airport Project and for the Uff Report recommendations to be implemented.

**The JCC is also urging this administration to make the passing of effective Public Procurement laws an urgent priority.**

Thank you for your support on these important issues of national development.

***END OF RELEASE***