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Press Release

Equal Opportunity Tribunal to host its' first Trial in Tobago

New structures and systems at the Tribunal make its' services more accessible to Tobago

Chaguanas, November 2, 2018: On November 7th 2018 the Equal Opportunity Tribunal will host its' first trial in Tobago. The trial will take place at the Supreme Court in Scarborough, Tobago at 10:00am. The court in Tobago has generously offered their facilities for use on the day of the trial. The trial will be presided over by Her Honour Madam Justice Mrs. Donna Prowell-Raphael. Justice Prowell-Raphael will sit with Lay Assessor Ms. Leela Ramdeen.

The Tribunal has previously hosted sittings in Tobago but these were Directions Hearings. Over the last seven months the Chairman and staff have been working to implement new systems and structures with state of the art initiatives that will make the court and its' services more accessible to Attorneys and litigants alike residing in Tobago.

These initiatives include the installation of a digital database, video conferencing facilities to come on stream early in 2019, electronic filing and accessibility to Transcripts in a short time frame.

All the matters of the Tribunal are now stored digitally. Information on matters is now available at the touch of a button. The historical process for each matter can now be recorded in detail and be readily available. With the introduction of the digital database the Court now has the ability to provide automated Email reminders to attorneys of court deadlines and hearings. These will be issued four (4) days before the event.

Not only can electronic reminders be provided, but we are very excited to announce that video conferencing facilities for case management would soon be available. This means that Attorneys reside in Tobago will no longer need to travel to Trinidad for Case management and this state-of-the-art system will allow us to provide a video link to attorneys that will permit them to access and attend video- conferences out of their chambers - on their desk-tops, lap-tops, tablets, or even cell phones.

In addition to voice recordings, from October 2018 the Tribunal will have verbatim transcripts of the trials. These can be requested within 2 weeks of the end of a trial and will be made available in soft or hard copy at a nominal cost.

Another major priority for the Tribunal is the establishment of electronic filing. We have found that the location of the present Registry, the vagaries of travelling there, and unpredictability of the weather have been a challenge to attorneys to meet deadlines for filing. We are considering several options and hope (finance permitting) to be able to have an electronic filing system in place, if not before, by the end of this court year.

Mindful of the imperative to have a ready determination of the matters before it, the Tribunal is working with the objective of a 1-year turn-around for the disposition of complaints.

To accomplish this optimistic and formidable goal, we require the active understanding and commitment of attorneys and parties, who may notice a robust response by the Tribunal to repeated requests for extensions of time and or adjournments.

We have implemented a pilot time-table where Tobago has been allotted its' own period of the Tribunal's time to manage the expansion in the increasing number of complaints as follows:-

PERIOD	SITTINGS
2018	
June	Case Management
October	Trials/Hearings (Trinidad)
November	Trials/Hearings (Tobago)
December	Case Management
2019	
March	Decisions
April	Trials/Hearings
June	Case Management
July	Decisions

The tribunal is a superior court of record enjoying similar status to that of the High Court and the Industrial Court with powers to impose fines, make orders for damages and/or grant injunctions to persons who feel they are being discriminated against.

November 2, 2018