

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

ON OCCASION OF DISTRIBUTION OF PRESIDENTIAL WRITS OF ELECTION TO RETURNING OFFICERS FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION TO BE HELD ON MONDAY 21ST OCTOBER, 2013

1. Introductory remarks
2. At one stage we in the Commission were at sixes and sevens as to whether the Local Government Election due by 25th October, 2013 would be held by that time, the latest date by which it could be held under existing law, given the fact that the term of office of the Council of Corporations ended on 26th July, 2013.

This is because the Draft Order arising from our July 2nd 2011 Report, the *Seventh Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act Chapter 25:50 for the purposes of Local Government Elections* was only approved in the House of Representatives on Friday 6th September, 2013, just ten days ago.

So here we are today, on 16th September 2013, and by section 33(1) of the Representation of the People Act instituting the Local Government Election 2013 by transmitting to Returning Officers the Writs of Election issued to them by the President of the Republic. Each Writ commands a Returning Officer to "... do cause a poll to be taken on 21st day of October, 2013 and that you do cause the name of such member when so elected to be certified to the Chief Election Officer on the seventh day next, following the declaration by you of the result of the poll."

It is an awesome responsibility being a Returning Officer, and the Representation of the People Act stipulates that the Commission, the body that has the legal responsibility of appointing them, shall not appoint to the positions of Returning Officer, Election Clerk, Poll Clerk, Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer any person who has not

completed to the satisfaction of the Commission a course of training in the duties which he or she will be required to perform in that office.

By now all Returning Officers and Election Clerks here present would have received some kind of training in the duties they are expected to perform. For those who performed the duties before, the power-point presentation made this morning to you by the acting Assistant Chief Election Officer would have served as a refresher course. For the novices I trust that the presentation would have whetted your appetite enough to cause you to consult the *Handbook for Returning Officers and Election Clerks*. The Handbook was prepared using the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01 (ROP) and its subsidiary legislation, the latter including the Election Rules and the Prescribed Forms Rules, so all of you might wish to consult with the ROP which is the authority.

Normally at the end of every election the Commission engages its Returning Officers and others in a Feedback Session. To digress, feedback sessions are useful management tools. Consider the four basic steps in management:

Planning : Action : Results : Analysis of Performance

(P.A.R.A.) for short

Through feedback one obtains the difference between the results actually obtained and those of the planned action, the object being to adjust the Plan to achieve the desired result. I gave you that little mini-lecture, as it were, in order to deal with the feedback from the Returning Officer, Mr. Everil Ross, of the Chaguanas West By-Election held last July 29th.

This feedback came in the form of a Paper on Observations and Suggestions, copies of which will now be distributed to you. Also being distributed are copies of a list of step-by-step instructions which Mr. Ross prepared as an aid to Presiding Officers at the close of polls.

Ladies and gentlemen, I now have pleasure in inviting Mr. Lewis W. Charles, one of our Commissioners to whom is attributed authorship of the *Handbook for Returning Officers and Election Clerks*. Mr. Charles will draw to your attention those matters in the Handbook to which particular and special attention should be paid. If you have any concerns, you may wish to raise them at this time.

3. Chairman's wrap-up.

13th September, 2013