

23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016

The News Editor:

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**HDC responds to the Press Conference held by Mr. Gerald Ramdeen, Attorney-at-Law –**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2016**

The Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (HDC) has noted with concern that since the dismissal earlier this year of its Managing Director, and even more so, since the recent filing of a matter before the High Court by the Honourable Attorney General, it has been the target of an ugly campaign of entirely spurious allegations either emanating from or supported by members of the Opposition United National Congress. The press conference called by Opposition Senator, Gerald Ramdeen on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, who is also the Attorney-at-Law for the former Managing Director, is quite obviously part of this campaign.

In this regard, HDC recognises that in pursuing its mandate to encourage the construction of dwelling houses and home ownership, it must adhere to the principles of integrity and fairness. The HDC also recognises that it is the right, and in fact the duty of all citizens, to immediately raise concerns if these principles are not adhered to. However, it is not the right or duty of citizens, especially those who hold public office and are also officers of the Court, to intentionally mislead, misrepresent, and to simply speak untruths in an effort to unjustifiably discredit the HDC and its officers and in so doing distract the entity from pursuing its very important mandate.

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With respect to the matters raised by Senator Ramdeen at the press conference, the facts are as follows:

1. In February of 2016, the HDC placed an advertisement in the newspaper inviting Expressions of Interest from all who may be interested in entering into a design-build-finance-public-private initiative. The receipt of expressions of interest is not a competitive process, nor is it a tender or a bid as stated by Senator Ramdeen, and as such, there are no tender documents to pass to a third party, nor are there bids which are capable of being rigged. It is also important to note that at the end of this process, no contract is issued.
2. It was evident from the documents in the possession of Senator. Ramdeen, that the said advertisement, which was already in the public domain, was all that was forwarded to Media 21 Ltd by the Land Co-ordinator at the HDC. It is simply untrue, as stated by Senator Ramdeen, that tender documents were forwarded to Media 21 Ltd, especially since no such document would exist for the purposes of an Expression of Interest.
3. In responding to the Expression of Interest, Media 21 Ltd, along with other parties, sought the advice of the Land Co-ordinator as to precisely what information and/or material would be relevant for the purposes of the response. The HDC is satisfied that the assistance rendered to Media 21 did not provide them with any unfair advantage in what was in any event a non-competitive process.
4. Having regard to the fact that the stage at which this interaction took place was only at the level of expressions of interest, HDC is quite satisfied that there was no breach of its Tender Rules. However, had that been the case, as purposefully asserted by Senator Ramdeen, that this was in fact a tender process where bids were being solicited and evaluated (which the HDC again reminds it was not) the view of the HDC would be entirely different.

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5. The employee, who holds the position of Land Co-ordinator, has been employed with the HDC for twenty two (22) years, and has sole responsibility for managing the Land Assembly Department. The Land Co-ordinator's remuneration package has always included a fully maintained company assigned vehicle. However, at no time was the said employee assigned a driver, as stated by Senator Ramdeen. His statement is simply not true. Further, the employee is not the Special Advisor to the Managing Director. Again this statement is untrue.
  
6. As a consequence of vacancies at the management level at the HDC, many members of the Management Team are currently assigned additional responsibilities. As a consequence, pursuant to a recommendation from the Human Resources Department, those managers are put in receipt of an additional sum to compensate for these extra responsibilities.

The Land Co-ordinator is one of those Managers. All acting appointments are due to end during the first quarter of 2017.

It is deeply regrettable that much time, effort and expense, all of which can be better utilised to expand the country's housing bank, has to be directed towards correcting calculated misrepresentations from those opposed to the efficient, effective and fair operation of the HDC.

Lamentably, HDC anticipates that there will be more attacks, again without any basis in truth whatsoever. When those baseless attacks are made the HDC will endeavour to provide both truth and clarity. The HDC nevertheless looks forward to the end of this campaign, so that we can get on with the business of providing homes to citizens in need.

**END.**

**For further information: Contact the Corporate Communications Unit, HDC at 612-7432 Ext.4505.**