Trinidad and Tobago
Registered Nurses Association
- Central Executive -
Established in 1930
Incorporated in Parliament by Act No. 30 of 1980
Trade Union Established in July 2014

President: Mr. Idris Stuart
Secretary: Mrs. Bettyann Murray-John
Treasurer: Mr. Corey Dillon

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MEMORANDUM

FROM: President TTRNA
TO: ALL NURSING PERSONNEL
RE: Nursing Council Elections 5
Dated: 18th December 2019

As we come to a close on 2019, TTRNA will like to update its members on the current state of the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago (NCTT). The NCTT is guided by the Nursing Personnel Act (NPA) Chapter 29:53 of 2014. Section 4 of the Act explicitly states: . . . the Council shall comprise sixteen persons, as follows:

a. Six persons appointed by the Minister as follows:
   i. Attorney-at-law of not less than five years standing;
   ii. a person with qualifications and experience in nursing administration;
   iii. a person with qualifications and experience as a nursing educator;
   iv. a person registered under this Act, nominated by the Tobago House of Assembly;
   v. a representative of the Ministry;
   vi. and a member of the public who is not an advanced practice nurse, midwife, nurse or nursing assistant;

b. and nine persons elected as follows:
   i. five nurses elected from among their own number by the persons who are registered as nurses under this Act at the date of the election;
   ii. one person elected from among their own number by the persons who are registered as midwives under this Act at the date of the election;
   iii. two persons elected from among their own number by the persons who are registered as mental health nurses under this Act at the date of the election; and
   iv. one person elected from among their own number by the persons who are enrolled as nursing assistants under this Act at the date of the election;

c. the Chief Nursing Officer or his nominee who shall be an ex officio member

Currently, there are NO ELECTED PERSONS ON THE COUNCIL. Not a single person who currently sits on the Council, was voted into office by any member of the Nursing and Midwifery Community to be there to represent our interest. TTRNA challenges any person, to find one (1) Nursing Council in a democratic nation, operating with this current structure.

What is even more peculiar, is that it has come to the attention of the Associations, that the seven (7) members (six (6) appointees of the Minister of Health and the one ex-officio member), in the absence of the nine (9) elected
members, have found it fit to select from amongst themselves, all the positions of the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago. This is despite the Association’s previous memo, which frowned on such an occurrence happening because of the obvious implications. Coming out of several recent meetings TTRNA attended and being privy to several documents, the Association has learnt that Mr. David Murphy has been selected as the new President of the Appointees of NCTT.

This means, for the first time in the history of the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago, the President of the NCTT, is not an elected person from amongst his/her peers. No other Council in Trinidad and Tobago, this is taking place.

Of the six (6) appointees by the Minister to the Council, there are currently three (3) appointees who are nurses.

Upon simple analysis, the Association is aware who is the person nominated by the Tobago House of Assembly and wishes to congratulate Ms. Sarah Celestine Balfour, as she has demonstrated over the years while working in Tobago, she will truly be an asset to the new Council when it is properly formed.

The Association is aware who is the Nursing Educator on the Council as the same person was appointed by the Minister for the 2016 to 2019 term as the Nurse Educator from the records in our possession. Therefore, we congratulate Ms. Phyllis Woolford tremendously, as she has been a lifelong nurse educator gaining significant qualifications and experience as a Nursing Educator.

However, the Association is finding great difficulty in deciphering which one of the three (3) nurse appointees fills the position required to have qualifications and experience in Nursing Administration. Therefore, we have requested via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) from the Ministry of Health, who is the person the Minister has appointed to fill this position on the Nursing Council. The Association is also seeking to determine what position the final nurse appointee on the NCTT - Mr. David Murphy, a lifelong nurse educator also, was appointed onto the NCTT by the Minister.

The Association is also interested in finding out who is the Member of the Public, that the Minister of Health has appointed to the Council. This information too has been requested via FOIA and we will forward this information to the nursing and midwifery community also. The Association is interested in congratulating and working with this independent person, who is not aligned or beholden to the Ministry of Health or the Minister, and will offer a truly impartial and unbiased point of view, as presently takes place in the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago.

Further points to note:

The Associations, by letters dated November 14th 2019, November 29th 2019 and December 16th 2019, have written to the appointees of the NCTT who have taken up office and held meetings in person and electronically, with a view to treating with one of Justice Seepersad recommendations. In his wisdom, The Honourable Justice felt the Associations are the most appropriate groups to conduct the NCTT elections. As one will expect, the Associations cannot fulfill this request, without the Roll of eligible persons and the budget to conduct same, being supplied to us by the NCTT. We have not received a response to meet from the Appointees.

Section 10 of the NPA of 2014 states: ‘The accounts of the Council shall be audited to 31st December of each year, not later than 31st March in the ensuing year.’ Section 11 of the NPA of 2014 states: ‘The Council shall make a report to the Minister not later than 30th June each year with respect to the administration of this Act for the preceding year ending 31st December, together with an audited statement of its accounts, and shall furnish to him such information as he may from time to time require respecting the conduct of its affairs and any other matters arising out of the administration of this Act.

TTRNA requested under the FOIA, from the Ministry of Health, these documents for the three years Mr. Murphy was previously President (he also served as Vice President of the NCTT for almost 6 years immediately prior to the 2016 to 2019). The MOH has responded by letter dated October 29th, 2019 (see attached) and stated ‘... checks have been made and the Ministry is not in possession of the information requested’.

TTRNA wrote to the Minister of Education by letters dated July 7th, 2017 and December 13th 2019, citing numerous irregularities of the NCTT Psychiatric Exams during this ‘Role Model’ term of office as President of the NCTT. No response.

TTRNA wrote to the Minister of Health by letters dated October 19th, 2017 and December 13th 2019, requesting for an investigation into the conduct of this ‘Role Model’ with regards to Psychiatric exams and the NCTT electoral process. The Minister refused to intervene or not replied.

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This ‘Role Model’ has seen the need to take legal action against the NCTT, temporarily freezing the functioning of the NCTT for several months and causing great inconvenience to hundreds of Nursing and Midwifery personnel. TTRNA empathizes greatly with all who suffered, and still continue to suffer because of single action. However, notwithstanding this information, the Minister of Health, found it prudent to appoint this ‘Role Model’ onto the Council. This forms the basis for the Judicial Review proceedings TTRNA, TTAM and PNATT has filed against the Minister of Health.

TTRNA has copied the Prime Minister on these correspondences and anticipates his response and action in this matter.

TTRNA has written to the new President of the Appointees of NCTT – Mr. David Murphy, asking them to conduct an investigation into all Psychiatric Exams conducted while this ‘Role Model’ sat as President (or Vice President), as we believe the integrity of the nursing profession must be maintained at all cost. We will update our members in January 2020, if this request was acted upon by the new President of the Appointees.

TTRNA understands that there will be a few nursing personnel who may feel a bit uneasy with TTRNA calls for an investigation into the Psychiatric exam results, as they may have benefitted from some of these actions and have been awarded passing grades when they would not have been successful at the exams. However, it is the role and responsibility of the TTRNA to maintain the integrity of the Nursing Profession. It is one of the key hall marks of a profession. That of self-regulation.

The calls for the NCTT to investigate the irregularities that occurred with the Psychiatric Exams conducted over the last three (3) years and the calls to investigate the reasons why the NCTT elections were not held within the timeframe given (before 25th April 2019), now partly falls to the new President of the Appointees to NCTT and Principal of the Psychiatric Nursing School in St Ann’s - Mr. David Murphy, to decide if he will permit those investigations to be done.

This will be taking place simultaneously while Mr. Murphy leads the NCTT and instructs the NCTT attorney in how the NCTT ought to defend itself while it is being sued by Mr. Murphy, into decisions and actions that Mr. Murphy took as President of the NCTT, and Chair of all meetings (with the exception of 1). This matter is expected to be concluded by Justice Seeopersad on February 10th, 2020. The Association wishes Mr. Murphy every success as both defendant and claimant.

Best regards,

[Signature]

Idi Stuart
President TTRNA 2016-2022
ELECTED MEMBERS

Dr. Oscar Ocho
Mr. Russell Salcedo
Ms. Karin Pierre
Mrs. Franka Olliverie-Andrews
Mr. Chris Craigwell

Representing Registered General Nurses

Mr. Idi Stuart
Mr. David Murphy
Mrs. Eureka Griffith

Representing Registered Mental Nurses

Representing Licensed Midwives

Mr. Winda Greene

Representing Enrolled Nursing Assistants

APPOINTED BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Mrs. Marla Kowlessar-Tagallie - Attorney at Law
Mrs. Betty Ann Pilgrim - Nursing Administration
Mrs. Phyllis Woolford - Nursing Education
Ms. Giselle Bishop - Representative of the Ministry of Health
Mrs. Michelle Edwards- Benjamin - Representative of the THA
Ms. Suzette Yhip - Member of the Public
October 8, 2019

Mrs. Denise Israel-Richardson
Registrar
The Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago
Dolly Hargraves House
25/26 Victoria Square West
Port-of-Spain

Dear Mrs. Israel-Richardson

Appointment of Members to the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago

The Matter at caption refers.

Please be informed that in accordance with Section (4) of the Nursing Personnel Act Chapter 29:53 the following members have been Appointed as members to the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago for a period of three years with effect from October 7, 2019.

Ms. Carsha Peter;
Mr. David Murphy;
Ms. Phyllis Mary Woodford;
Ms. Sarah Celestine Balfour;
Dr. Maryam Abdool Richards; and
Ms. Suzette Yhip

Thank you

Sincerely

[Signature]

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health
He: 6/2/45 Vol. XII Temp XXXXI

October 29 2019

Mr. Idi Stuart
The Professional Centre
11-13 Fitzblackman Drive South
Woodbrook
Port of Spain

Dear Mr. Stuart

Re: Request for access to official documents pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, Chapter 22:02

I acknowledge receipt of your request for access to official documents pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, Chapter 22:02, dated October 9 2019. It is to be noted that you requested Monthly Reports submitted to the ministry of Health by the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago for the years 2016 to 2018.

However, I regret to inform you that checks have been made and the Ministry is not in possession of the information requested.

Respectfully

Signed

Permanant Secretary
Ministry of Health

[Stamp]
May 31, 2019

Mr. Jodi Stewart
President
Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association
Professional Centre
11-13 Fitzblackman Drive South
Woodbrook
Port of Spain
Trinidad and Tobago

Dear Sir

Re: Urgent Request for a Meeting

Reference is made to your letter to me dated May 20, 2019, with regard to the captioned.

Please note that specific issues relating to the conduct of elections by the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago, fall within the remit of that Council.

Consequently and in the absence of any reports or evidence of wrongdoing requiring intervention in the public interest, neither the Ministry of Health nor I, have jurisdiction in that regard, save and except that following the Council’s notification of the newly elected members, I will appoint the additional six (6) persons to serve on the Council in accordance with the Nursing Personnel Act, Chapter 29:53.

The Ministry awaits Council’s notification of the newly elected members.

Please be guided accordingly.

Respectfully,

Terrence Deyalsingh
Minister

cc: President, Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago
cc: Mr. Keith Scotland, Attorney at Law for and on behalf of TTRNA
He: 10/21 Vol. IV

July 19, 2019

Mr. Idi Stuart
President
Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association
Professional Centre
11-13 Fitzblackman Drive South
Woodbrook, Port of Spain

Dear Sir

Re: Urgent Request for a Meeting

The matter at caption refers, ending with your letter to me dated July 12, 2019.

As indicated in my letter to you dated May 31, 2019, the specific issues relating to the conduct of elections by the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago fall within the remit of that Council.

Notwithstanding, the Ministry of Health has been informed that, and as you are aware, the Council met, discussed the conduct of elections and the alleged irregularities, any inconsistencies were resolved and decisions were taken on the way forward.

Consequently, the Ministry awaits Council's notification of the newly elected members.

Please be guided accordingly.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Terrence Deyalsingh
Minister

cc. President, Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago
Mr. Keith Scotland, Attorney at Law for and on behalf of TTRNA