# **REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

#### IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

Claim No. CV2020-01087

#### **BETWEEN**

# THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY JAMES NANCOO FOR AN ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER UNDER PART 56 OF THE CIVIL PROCEEDINGS RULES, 1998 AS AMENDED AND

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY JAMES NANCOO UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, CHAP. 22:02

# **JAMES NANCOO**

Claimant

AND

#### THE TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER

Defendant

**Appearances:** 

Claimant: Anand Ramlogan SC leading Alvin Shiva Pariagsingh instructed by

Vishaal Siewsaran

Defendant: Natoya Moore instructed by Ryanka Ragbir

Before the Honourable Mr. Justice Devindra Rampersad

Date of delivery: February 5, 2021.

# **JUDGMENT**

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### Introduction

- This matter is a judicial review claim challenging the failure and/or refusal of the defendant to render a decision pursuant to s. 15 of the Freedom of Information Act, Chap 22:02 on the claimant's request for information dated 15 November, 2019. During the course of the proceedings, the majority of the document requested were provided save for 4 documents in respect of which the defendant sought an exemption from disclosure.
- 2. This judgment deals with the issues arising up to the provision of an access decision and the subsequent production of the documents as well as the decision to exempt the said 4 documents.

# The Case on the Pleadings

- 3. The claimant is the owner of A2Z Auto Repairs Centre Limited, which he operates at his home. On 29 November, 2018 the business was approved as a Vehicle Testing Station authorised to perform roadworthy tests on all motor cycles, private cars (not exceeding a tare weight of 2,270 kgs) and goods vehicles (up to 3200kgs M.G.W.). On 9 December, 2018, the claimant also became certified as an authorised examiner of the aforementioned designation of motor vehicles.
- 4. On 5 July, 2018, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago issued a five month moratorium on the inspection of motor vehicles in accordance with the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act Chapter 48:50 which was set to expire on 31 December, 2018. Towards the end of the moratorium period, the claimant stated that his vehicle inspection station was flocked daily by motorists eager to have their vehicles inspected.
- 5. In or around February, 2019, the Transport Commissioner contacted the claimant via telephone and summoned him to the Transport Division's office

at Caroni where it was shown to the claimant that a vehicle bearing the registration number PAX 6601 was determined to be road worthy and accordingly certified and was asked to explain same.

- 6. The claimant was found to have issued an Inspectors'/Testers' Certificate to vehicle registration number PAX 6601 which, on 11 February, 2019, was involved in a road check exercise by Licensing Authority Officers and found to be defective upon inspection of the vehicle at the licensing authority, Caroni, and was thereafter impounded. It was later found that the vehicle was issued with an inspectors' certificate by the claimant.
- 7. The claimant stated that he informed the Transport Commissioner that the said vehicle was inspected at his Inspection Station in December of 2018 and that in February, 2019 the state and condition of the vehicle was now materially different. He also acknowledged the incorrect certification of the vehicle and stated that this could have been due to an administrative miscommunication at his inspection station given the fact that there was a large volume of repetitive work and a human error was therefore possible.
- 8. By notices of termination dated 13 and 22 February, 2019, the claimant's authorisation as an examiner and authorisation of his inspection station as an approved vehicle testing station were respectively terminated by the Ministry of Works and Transport.
- 9. The claimant then made an application dated 15 November, 2019 under the Freedom of Information Act Chap 22:02 to the Transport Commissioner seeking access to the following:
  - 9.1. The complete file of Mr. James Nancoo and A2Z Auto Repairs Centre Limited held by the Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport;
  - 9.2. Copies of all documents relative to any and/or all complaints against

    James Nancoo and A2Z Auto Repairs Centre Limited held by the

- Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport including investigation conducted into same;
- 9.3. Copies of all documents relative to the complaint of the alleged improper issuance of an Inspector's/Tester's Certificate for PAX 6601 by James Nancoo and A2Z Auto Repairs Centre Limited including, but not limited to witness statements, file memoranda, notes and reports;
- 9.4. The policy, practice and procedure of the Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport for treating with improper inspection of a vehicle including but not limited to the conduct of the examiner and inspection station.
- 10. By letter dated 4 December, 2019, Ms. Debbie Raghoo, Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works and Transport indicated to the claimant that her office received the application and that a response would be provided in approximately 30 days.
- 11. On 14 January 2020, the claimant then issued a pre-action protocol letter to the Transport Commissioner and stated that the information was critical for him to be allowed to obtain full legal advice and/or documentary evidence and give proper instructions to his Attorney at law. Further, the claimant contended that this was necessary to successfully pursue any claim he may have for the vindication of his legal rights.
- 12. The claimant also contended that the requested information/documents are not exempted under the FOIA and that the defendant is under a statutory duty to provide the requested information in his FOIA request dated 15 November 2019.

# **The Proceedings**

- 13. On 2 April 2020, the claimant filed his application for leave for Judicial Review which was granted by this Honourable Court without a hearing on 21 May, 2020.
- 14. In the fixed date claim form filed on 6 June 2020, the claimant sought the following reliefs:
  - 14.1. A declaration that the respondent/proposed defendant breached its statutory duty under section 15 of the Freedom of Information Act to take reasonable steps to enable an applicant to be notified of the approval or refusal as soon as practicable but in any other case not later than thirty days after the date on which the request was duly made;
  - 14.2. A declaration that the respondent/proposed defendant has breached his statutory duty under section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act by failing to issue a notice stating the reasons for the deferral of access to the requested information.
  - 14.3. Alternatively, or additionally a declaration that the applicant/proposed claimant is entitled to access the requested information pursuant to his applicant under the Freedom of Information Act
  - 14.4. An order of mandamus to compel the respondent/proposed defendant to render a decision with respect to the applicant/proposed claimant's request within 7 days thereof and inform him whether his entire request for access to documents/information has been approved or refused in accordance with section 15;
  - 14.5. Costs; and
  - 14.6. Such further orders, directions or writs as the Honourable Court considers just and as the circumstances of this case warrants pursuant to section 8(1)(d) of the Judicial Review Act, Chapter 7:08 (as

amended). By Order, the Honourable Court directed, inter alia, that parties were to file submissions. These submissions are filed pursuant to the said order.

- 15. At the first CMC held on 7 July 2020, Counsel for the defendant requested more time to get instructions and indicated that an email would be sent to the court indicating which documents would be provided and/or those that were exempt.
- 16. By email dated 23 July, 2020, Counsel for the defendant indicated to this court that all of the documents in its possession requested at items 2, 3 and 4 of the claimant's request would be disclosed. However, in relation to item 1, the defendant indicated that it would disclose all documents in the claimant's file save and except for five documents on the basis that they are exempted documents under s. 28(1) of the FOIA in that it was reasonably likely to prejudice the investigation of a breach or possible breach of the law or prejudice the enforcement or proper administration of the law in a particular instance and prejudice the fair trial of a person or the impartial adjudication of a particular case.
- 17. The case then morphed into one about exemptions and the defendant's right to exempt these documents. The exemptions were eventually reduced to one in relation to four rather than five.
- 18. Directions for the filing of submissions and affidavits were given in light of the defendant relying on the section 28 FOIA exemption. In the affidavit of the Transport Commissioner of the Ministry of Works and Transport, Mr. Clive Clarke, filed on behalf of the defendant, he deposed that the "Licensing Division" is in possession of the subject documents which were generated subsequent to the receipt of the claimant's request for information and that these documents are exempt under section 28(1)(a) and (b) of the FOIA in that they would be reasonably likely to prejudice the investigation of a breach or

possible breach of the law or prejudice the enforcement or proper administration of the law in a particular instance and prejudice the fair trial of a person or the impartial adjudication of a particular case.

- 19. Mr. Clarke then stated in the affidavit that he considered the impact of s. 35 and found that there was no reasonable evidence in support of the override and accordingly, the public interest favoured non-disclosure. It was also stated that the information contained in the five exempted documents and the investigations as it pertains to same do not relate to the termination of the claimant's authorisation as an examiner and his inspection station's authorisation as an approved testing station, but rather, that the documents relate to any possible future applications by the claimant for new authorisation for an approved testing station.
- 20. By supplemental affidavit, Mr. Clarke indicated that further to information concerning a related matter CV2020-01086 James Nancoo v The Trinidad Transport Board, he reviewed the five documents, one was deemed by him not to be exempted and disclosed the document in the affidavit. The reason given was that the said document related only to the ongoing Magistrates Court matter involving the termination of the claimant's authorisation as an examiner and his inspection station's authorisation as an approved vehicle testing station and not to the pending investigation being undertaken by his office which formed the subject matter of the other four exempted documents. The defendant's claim to the exemption was therefore at that point reduced to these other 4 documents.
- 21. Prior to the court making its decision, a request was made of the defendant for the provision of the exempt documents to the court for inspection<sup>1</sup>. The court, having received and inspected the same shared the respectful view that the said documents were in fact exempt. The question then arose as to how this

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See *Vishnu Jugmohan v Teaching Service Commission* H.C.A. NO. 1055 OF 2004 per Kokaram J at paras. 6.2 et al; CV 2018-01817 *Devant Maharaj v Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago*; *Conway v Rimmer* [1968] A.C. 910 per Lord Upjohn at page 993

court should deal with those documents – declare them to be exempt or accept, as suggested by the claimant's Counsel, that the documents had not been properly considered under section 35 of the FOIA and remit them to the decision-maker to perform his statutorily mandated obligation to do so?

- 22. Counsel for the claimant submitted at the court should not step into the shoes of the decision-maker. He also submitted that a proper analysis of section 35 of the FOIA was not undertaken by the public authority and following the Privy Council's discussion and observations in the recent case of *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj v Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago*<sup>2</sup>, the request should be remitted to the public authority for reconsideration in accordance with section 35 of the FOIA. Counsel for the defendant disagreed.
- 23. Submissions were consequently filed pursuant to this court's order dated 3

  December 2020 to address the issue of the approach that should be taken by the court in these circumstances.

#### The Issue:

- 24. The issue therefore for determination is whether the matter should be remitted to the Defendant Public Authority for a proper consideration of the section 35 provisions or whether the court is permitted to supplant that duty through its own decision making process in these judicial review proceedings?
- 25. For ease of reference, section 35 FOIA provides as follows:

"Notwithstanding any law to the contrary a public authority shall give access to an exempt document where there is reasonable evidence that significant —

(a) abuse of authority or neglect in the performance of official duty; or

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> [2019] UKPC 21

- (b) injustice to an individual; or
- (c) danger to the health or safety of an individual or of the public; or
  - (d) unauthorised use of public funds,

has or is likely to have occurred or in the circumstances giving access to the document is justified in the public interest having regard both to any benefit and to any damage that may arise from doing so."

# The Claimant's Submissions

- 26. Counsel for the claimant submitted that the defendant failed to put forward any indication of performing a section 35 balancing act in its access decision. Further, it failed to perform a proper consideration of the harms and benefits of disclosure in its affidavit evidence, given that it has deposed of no benefits of disclosure for the public's interest, despite there being obvious and inherent benefits of disclosure.
- 27. It was stated that there are two options open to the court: it can either quash the illegal decision and remit the matter to the public authority for it to reconsider or perform section 35 analysis with the evidence provided and make an access decision now as part of its judgment.
- 28. It was also stated that there are two schools of thought on whether the court can usurp the role and function of the public authority to perform the section 35 balancing exercise itself. One view is that the court can step into the shoes of the offending public authority and perform the balancing exercise itself so that there can be a final disposition of the matter. On the other hand, it may be noted that such an approach may offend an important principle of judicial review which discourages the court from usurping the discretion, role and function of an actual decision maker.
- 29. Where however, there is the instance where the court is not minded to grant access to the requested information, it would be best that the matter be remitted to allow the public authority to reconsider the matter by conducting

the section 35 balancing exercise and render a lawful and valid access decision. Nevertheless, it was stated that the court should be extremely reluctant to make a final access decision where there is a lack of section 35 consideration by the public authority. This being because, the mandatory analysis condition was not fulfilled, thereby making the access decision defective, null and void, and of no legal effect. With no valid and lawful access decision before the court, it should allow one to be made so that the claimant can seek legal advice thereon and assert his rights under the FOIA as necessary.

- 30. It was also argued that the evidence of the case at bar suggest that the documents relate to possible future applications for the claimant for licences for himself as a motor vehicle inspector and of his garage as an inspection station. However, no evidence has been put before this court as to the damage if the documents were to be disclosed. The benefit of having such disclosure would assist the claimant in ensuring that any future applications meet the standards and requirements of the defendant. It was also suggested that more than sufficient time has elapsed for the investigation to be completed.
- 31. Counsel for the claimant relied on authorities<sup>3</sup> to show that a court has the power to conduct the section 35 analysis in the absence of consideration by the public authority of the balance between any benefit and any damage to the public interest. Only then can that consideration of that balance can be made by the court itself.
- 32. Further, the responsibility of the decision maker in relation to section 35 was described by Boodoosingh J in the case of *Nicholas Cumberbatch v The Minister of National Security*<sup>4</sup> as follows:

"The decision maker must therefore show, by the reasons it advances, that it applied its mind to whether any of the factors in (a) to (d) of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Maharaj v Petrotrin [2019] UKPC 21, Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development v Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Industry (Civil Appeal No P200 of 2014)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> At paragraph 22

section 35 were met or whether "giving access to the document is justified in the public interest having regard both to any benefit and to any damage that may arise in from doing so."

- 33. It was stated that it is mandatory that the defendant execute the requisite balancing exercise when relying on the FOIA exemptions, as mandated by section 35 FOIA. Section 35 also has the significant role of making exempted documents disclosable. Further, that the Act recognises that there are circumstances where the public interest is so overwhelming that it warrants disclosure of documents that would usually otherwise be exempt.<sup>5</sup>
- 34. Section 35 also requires a mandatory balancing act, weighing the public interest to disclose the exempted documents against the public interest to keep the documents exempt. Of course, the facts of each case justifies where the scale tips. It was stated by the claimant that the defendant, in relying on the statutory exemptions, bears the burden of proving that it is in the public's interest to keep the documents exempt. This is notwithstanding that public interest consideration that the exemption itself may demand. The burden of proof is also high considering the Act itself is biased towards public disclosure.
- 35. The claimant also relied on the *Freedom of Information Handbook by Peter*\*\*Garvey and Marcus Turle<sup>6</sup>\* where it described the public interest test<sup>7</sup>.
- 36. It was stated by the claimant that the court's approach should be to invalidate the decision and remit the matter for the defendant public authority to reconsider in accordance with s. 21 of the Judicial Review Act.<sup>8</sup> This is because a decision arrived at without any consideration of section 35 is defective and illegal and cannot be retroactively cured in such a manner as it is procedurally unfair and contrary to the supervisory role of the court in judicial view.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Circumstances are considered in s.35 (a) to (d)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Published by the Law Society 2006

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See page 187

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> 21. If, on an application for judicial review seeking an order of certiorari, the Court quashes the decision to which the application relates, the Court may remit the matter to the Court, tribunal, public body, public authority or persons concerned, with a directive to reconsider it and reach a decision in accordance with the findings of the Court.

- 37. It was also submitted that the approach of Rahim J and Mohammed J to remit the matter in the cases of *Devant Maharaj v The Office of the Prime Minister<sup>9</sup>* and *Carlton Dennie v the Minister of National Security*<sup>10</sup> is the preferred approach as it is consistent with the principle that the court, in the exercise of its supervisory jurisdiction, will not substitute its discretion for that of the decision maker.
- 38. It was respectfully submitted that the court should not reconsider the matter and make an access decision on behalf of the defendant. Rather, a certiorari to quash the illegal decision and an order remitting it to the defendant to reconsider in accordance with the findings of the court would be more of an appropriate declaratory relief and considered be sufficient.

# The Defendant's Submissions

- 39. In response, the defendant indicated that there was in fact a section 35 consideration by the Public Authority<sup>11</sup>. Further, that if this Honourable Court disagrees that there was the mandatory consideration, that it would not be contrary to the supervisory role of the court in Judicial Review to undertake the section 35 analysis itself.
- 40. Secondly, the claimant submitted that its position, as in the case of **Devant Maharaj v National Gas Company**<sup>12</sup>, that there were "no reasons at the time the analysis was made, that it was in the public interest to make available the documents and information requested by the claimant."
- 41. Further, in response to the claimant's reliance on the case of **Devant Maharaj**v The Office of the Prime Minister, where J Rahim remitted the request to the public authority, it was submitted as per J Rahim that, "the Court has the ability

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> CV2019-02413

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> CV2016-04139

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> The defendant noted that the consideration of s.35 by the Public Authority is evidenced in the affidavit of Clive Clarke filed on 28 August, 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> CV2019-02084

to perform the section 35 consideration on its own or remit it to the defendant to properly perform its decision making, in congruence with the findings of the court pursuant to section 21 of the Judicial Review Act."

- 42. Counsel for the claimant also made note of the fact that since this court is in possession of the said exempted documents, that the court is equally in the same position as the defendant and that there is nothing technical about the case at the bar.
- 43. Relying on the case of *Devant Maharaj v Port Authority*<sup>13</sup>, where the court applied the section 35 override, allowed the provision of the unredacted letters and quashed the access decision on the ground that it was invalid, illegal and defective, the defendant submitted that this court can and should consider the section 35 public interest override of its accord based on the evidence before it (the affidavit and documents in its possession).
- 44. The defendant also cited authorities<sup>14</sup> where the court had the benefit of inspecting the requested documents, undertook the section 35 analysis itself and ordered disclosure/non-disclosure accordingly. Further, in these cases, the requests were remitted to the public authority for reconsideration where:
  - 44.1. There was no consideration of section 35 of the FOIA or a defective section 35 analysis conducted by the public authority at the time of making the access decision,
  - 44.2. The public authority possessed certain technical acumen or experience which would allow it to consider a much wider range of factors in making the s.35 assessment than the court would in conducting such an assessment; or

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> CV2018-01817

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> CV2006-00037 Civ App No. 58 of 2007 **Ashford Sankar v PSC**, HCA No. 1055 of 2004 **Vishnu Jugmohan v Teaching Service Commission**.

- 44.3. The court was deprived of sufficient evidence for it to undertake the assessment itself.
- 45. It was further noted that this court was not deprived of the relevant evidence to undertake the section 35 analysis itself but rather, actually had the benefit of seeing the requested documents first-hand. On this basis, the court would be able to conclude whether the public authority's decision was correct in refusing the grant access to the document. In addition, it was submitted that the analysis in this case does not require one to possess vast technical knowledge or expertise which could only be properly done by the public authority and the court can properly do the same.
- 46. In response to the claimant's submission that there was a complete omission by the defendant to conduct the s.35 balancing exercise, the defendant strongly disagreed and invited the court to follow a similar approach taken in the authority of *Vertech General Contracting Limited v South West Regional Health Authority*<sup>15</sup> where there was no consideration of the s. 35 factors and the request was not remitted to the public authority, but instead, the court made an order for disclosure.
- 47. In conclusion, the defendant submitted that it would not be contrary to the supervisory role of the court in Judicial Review to undertake the section 35 analysis itself. Further, that this is not a situation where the court is the one granting or refusing the access request instead of the public authority. Only in such a circumstance then it can be said that the court was stepping into the shoes of a public authority. Rather, that the Court would merely be reviewing, affirming or disagreeing with the public authority's process in coming to the decision to give or refuse access accordingly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> CV2019-03928

48. It was said that the matter ought not to be remitted to the Transport Commissioner, since remittal would be redundant, costly and would be contrary to the overriding objective.

# Discussion and decision

49. In the letter dated 30 July 2020 from the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works and Transport, signed by Petal Alexander for the Permanent Secretary<sup>16</sup> the court noted that it was specifically said therein that that response was being made on behalf of the Transport Commissioner, Ministry of Works and Transport and the Trinidad Transport Board. The letter went on to state:

"The Ministry is also in possession of five documents which were generated subsequent to the receipt of your letter dated 15th November, 2019 for the purpose of enabling the Legal Services Unit to respond to your client's claim. The Defendant considered the facts and matters contained in the Claimant's FOIA request, the Claimant's affidavit and the requirements contained in section 35 of the FOIA and thereafter concluded that there was no reasonable evidence that significant abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty, injustice to an individual, danger to the health or safety of an individual or of the public or unauthorized use of public funds, had always likely to have occurred. The Defendant also considered the public interest in disclosing the requested information and the interest in the Claimant receiving same, and was satisfied that in assessing the balance, the public interest favoured non-disclosure. These said documents are exempt documents under section 28 (1)(a) and (b) of the FOI Act in that they would be reasonably likely to prejudice the investigation of a breach or possible breach of the law or prejudice the enforcement or proper administration of the law in a particular instance and prejudice the fair trial of a person or the impartial adjudication of a particular case. Therefore, we do not believe that the circumstances itemized under section 35 of the FOI Act warrant disclosure."

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Exhibited to the affidavit of Samantha Chattergoon filed in these proceedings on 20 August 2020 as exhibit**S.C.1**"

- 50. In his affidavit filed on 20 August 2020<sup>17</sup>, Clive Clarke, Transport Commissioner, indicated that he was the one who considered the facts and matters contained in the claimant's FOIA request, the claimant's affidavit and the requirements contained in section 35 of the FOIA. He then repeated the matters described above in the preceding paragraph.
- 51. To this court's mind, this was a sufficient consideration of the section 35 factors and this court is not required to engage in any such consideration of its own accord. Should he have gone fully into the explanation of the process of considering each of the factors and given a more thorough explanation? Maybe. That is probably more desirable but, to this court's mind, his failure to lay bare his thought process is not fatal. The fact that he has said that he has considered the factors and then has gone on to enumerate and conclude on them suggests a familiarity with what was required of him. The court therefore cannot say that a section 35 consideration was not done. It clearly was.
- 52. Having reviewed the documents for which the exemption is claimed, the court is of the respectful view that the defendant has sufficiently considered the matters that he had to and agrees with the decision that he came to in relation to the exemption. Consequently, the court need not go any further in this regard.
- 53. Of course, the court does see merit in the point raised by the claimant in general terms and it may very well be more appropriate for the court not to usurp the decision-maker's statutory obligation. That, however, must be viewed on a case-by-case basis rather than as a general principle of law as several instances have arisen where the court found it more expedient to conduct the exercise itself under the overriding objective in clear and obvious cases. Ultimately, having regard to the evidence before it in a particular case, a court would be in the best position to decide whether the remittance may

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> At paragraphs 6 and 7

be a mere formality or ritual which, in itself, may spawn further unnecessary and expensive litigation against the backdrop of already strained resources on all sides. The purist may disagree but this court is of the respectful view that sometimes a pragmatic approach to an obvious answer may suit the circumstances and justice of a case.

54. In the case at hand, however, the court can proceed to endorse the belated decision made by the defendant in respect of the exemption.

### The Order

55. The court is therefore of the respectful view that the claimant is entitled to the following relief on his claim as set out below. Since the decision to provide the documents was delayed until after the commencement of these proceedings, the court is of the respectful view that the claimant is entitled to the declarations sought relating to the failure to make the decision within the statutory period provided by the Act. Further, having regard to the exercise conducted by the court in relation to the four documents, the court is prepared to make a declaration to reflect the decision to not override the defendant's claim to exemption.

# 56. The court declares that:

- 56.1. The defendant breached its statutory duty under Section 15 of the Freedom of Information Act to take reasonable steps to enable an applicant to be notified of the approval or refusal as soon as practicable but in any other case not later than thirty (30) days after the date on which the request was duly made;
- 56.2. The defendant breached his statutory duty under section **23 of the**Freedom of Information Act by failing to issue a notice stating the reasons for the deferral of access to the requested information;

- 56.3. The claimant is entitled to access the requested information pursuant to his application under the **Freedom of Information Act** save for the four (4) documents in respect of which the defendant claimed exemption.
- 57. The defendant shall pay the claimant's costs of the claim certified fit for Senior Counsel.

/s/ D. Rampersad J.

Assisted by Shalini Dabideen Judicial Research Counsel Attorney at Law