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MEDIA RELEASE

INACTION OF THE MOE

TTUTA is appalled at the approach of the Ministry of Education (MOE) towards the repair of schools and the loss of teaching time and education opportunity for thousands of the nation's children.

The MOE has failed to deal with the hazardous, unsafe and unhealthy conditions at several schools both primary and secondary throughout the country and has left too many of them closed since the start of the School Year on September 02, or operating in a severely reduced manner during the period.

The list includes South East Port-of-Spain Secondary, Pleasantville Secondary, Marabella South Secondary, St. Augustine Secondary, Longdenville Presbyterian, Woodbrook Presbyterian Dinsley/Trincity Government Primary, Rio Claro Hindu, Marac Baptist Primary and Malabar Government Primary, among others.

More recently, hazardous conditions at Malick Secondary, Mount Hope Secondary and Tabaquite Presbyterian have also led to teachers having to remove themselves from these schools.

At South East Port-of-Spain Secondary, the building itself is over sixty (60) years old and the roof, walls, ceilings and toilets have all deteriorated and are barely functional. Despite repeated reports from the school's administration, the MOE failed to initiate any repairs. It was only after further complaints, when the Prime Minister and entourage used the school for a meeting with residents of South East Port-of-Spain in relation to the ongoing open gang warfare in the area, that the MOE began repairs.

Repair work commenced at the beginning of October and the MOE promised to remedy sixty (60) years of neglect in one (1) week. Three (3) weeks later, the work is still ongoing with further promises that it will be completed at the end of each succeeding week. Meanwhile, the students are out of school and suffering through the loss of teaching time.

To add insult to injury, the MOE has neglected to inform officially the school community (parents, teachers, administration) on the status of the repair work, when it is expected to be completed, or any possible alternative arrangements for the schooling of the students.

In addition, the MOE also has to upgrade the level of security at the school given the extremely unsafe environment in which it is located. Getting to the school has become a hazardous exercise. There are daily reports of gun battles in the immediate vicinity of the school and passers-by as well as members of the school community are in danger of becoming innocent victims. As well, students from some communities who attend the school are under threat by persons from other communities, with teachers caught in the middle.

TTUTA demands that the MOE have the repair work at the South East Port-of-Spain Secondary completed quickly, deal urgently with security concerns at the school and give proper direction to the entire school community on the current status of the school and any proposed alternative arrangements for the continued education of the students.

TTUTA exhorts the MOE to stop hiding in a cocoon and fulfill its responsibility to provide safe, secure and healthy working and learning conditions for teachers and students at all schools. Thousands of students at South East Port-of-Spain, Pleasantville, Marabella, St. Augustine, Malick, Mount Hope, Longdenville, Rio Claro, Marac, Dinsley/Trincity, Malabar, Woodbrook and Tabaquite among others, must not have their education compromised by the contemptuous inaction of the MOE.



PETER WILSON
GENERAL SECRETARY

October 19, 2013