

March 17, 2021

NIA Welcomes and Recommends Strengthening of Integrity Commission's Oversight of COVID 19 Spending

In the context of the Ministry of Finance/Government of Jamaica announcement of a further 60 Billion dollars budgeted largely for the COVID 19 recovery programme, National Integrity Action (NIA) welcomes the report [**Gleaner, March 16, 2021**] that the Integrity Commission will be submitting an **Interim Special Report** to Parliament on the Commission's "*Heightened contract monitoring initiatives and operations during the COVID 19 pandemic.*" This follows the Commission's announcement in June 2020 of its monitoring programme "*to ensure ...accountability and independent oversight in the Government's COVID 19 expenditure and response, and contract awards as well as in the decision-making process.*" associated with this activity.

Against this background, NIA wishes to propose that the Commission take on board two recommendations:

1. From the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the commitment to "*publishing crisis-related procurement contracts*" on its website "*including identifying the companies awarded the contracts and their beneficial owners.*"
2. Adoption of the World Bank recommendation that where "*competitive public procurement procedures are suspended, then Government agencies should be required to publicly post all transactions using emergency funding within five days after a contract is signed. Disclosures should include contractor's name (including beneficial owner information if possible), cost of contract and services to be provided.*"

We note the reported observation of Mr. Greg Christie, Executive Director of the Integrity Commission, that "*the Commission continues to be challenged by the provisions of the Integrity Commission Act, in its ability to freely make public disclosures about its work.*" NIA regards such disclosures by the Integrity Commission as essential to enhancing transparency and therefore, once again, we urge the Government and the Parliament to amend the Integrity Commission Act, as proposed by the Integrity Commission in two successive annual reports, to allow the public to be kept more abreast of the Commission's work and thereby facilitate public engagement with - and support for - the Commission's activities.

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Prof. Trevor Munroe
Principal Director
876-383-2447