The Court Finance & Accounting Division of the Court’s Administration manages the funds of the Court and the Commission. The Court Executive Administrator is the accounting officer and the division is headed by Mr. Larry Ramoutar, Financial Comptroller and includes Ms Feli Renwick, Accounting Assistant and Ms. Deborah Williams, Secretary to the Financial Comptroller.

The division works with senior management to prepare the biennial budget of the Court and Commission and provides financial management support to the Court Executive Administrator. The division is responsible for accounting for all funds received and expended by the Court and prepares financial reports, including the Court’s annual financial and cash flow statements, analysis of budgets, and various reports for the RJLSC.

Other responsibilities include: VAT reporting; representation of the court in external audits; management of the cash and investments of the Court and Commission by monitoring bank balances; investing cash in hand to ensure maximum return pending disbursement, while facilitating timely drawdowns of funds when needed.

As the Court and Commission are financed by the Trust Fund managed by the Trustees, the Finance and Accounting division is responsible for the receipt of funds from the Trust fund. The division also prepares financial information and reports for grant agencies and assists the Court and Commission in the management of grant funds.
It is a performance standard of the division that all reports are submitted on time and that financial statements are completed according to generally accepted accounting principles and submitted for audit in a timely manner.

During the year to 31st July 2007, the Finance and Accounting Division developed finance and accounting performance standards for the unit and worked with the other divisions of the court’s administration to develop other performance standards and policies. The finance and accounting standards address the finance and accounting procedures themselves as well as customer service standards.

It is the policy of Court Administration that the organisation is a learning organisation in which continuing education forms part of the organizational culture. Employees of the division therefore attend professional seminars/meetings to keep abreast of reporting changes and the department subscribes to publications providing this information. In this regard, the Financial Comptroller attended several International Financial Reporting Standards Workshops in Trinidad. Training has been planned for the accounting assistant in the area of accounting working papers and auditing.

2007/2008 BIENNIAL BUDGET

The biennial budget is based upon a fiscal year that runs from 1st January through 31st December and is presented by the Court Executive Administrator and the Financial Comptroller to the Commissioners for approval.

The biennial budget includes recurrent and capital expenditure on a quarterly basis. The total budgeted recurrent expenditure (2007 and 2008) is US$10.6 million and of this amount, 68% or US$7.2 million relates to salaries, allowances and pension costs. Commission’s expenses account 4.5% of the recurrent biennial budget or US$480,000.

Capital expenditure for 2007 and 2008 is budgeted at US$1.29 million, (this includes capital commitments made in 2006 of US$246,000) of this amount $492,284 or 34% relates to Court Information Technology and US$443,253 or 34% relates to the Law Library capital expenditure.

The biennial budget was based upon the fact that the Court is now moving to the second phase of start up implementation and the Court requires certain systems in order to be accessible, effective, efficient, independent, accountable and deserving of the confidence and trust of the people it is designed to serve.
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

One of the division’s responsibilities is to provide accurate and efficient accounting support services. The division develops and maintains the Court’s Accounting Systems, including the Financial Accounting System, the Payroll System, the Pension System and the Employee Loan System. With the help of these systems, the division verifies expenditure before making payments and records and reports on the Court’s financial transactions.

Responsibilities of the division include:

- Record the Court’s financial transaction, maintain accounts and prepare financial statements.
- Develop, manage and maintain the accounting systems and major enhancements.
- Pre audit payroll, contract and other voucher expenditure for legality and propriety.

Services provided by the division include processing the payroll for all employees and issuance of payment to all vendors. The division also performs the administrative function for the Court’s pension plan and assists the Court Protocol and Information Division with certain aspects of the administration of the Court’s Medical Health Plan. On March 2 and 3 2007 the CCJ held the first CSME seminar at Queens Hall, Port of Spain. The accounting division assisted the seminar in the collection of cash and the issuance of receipts as well as the purchase of items for sale at the CCJ gift shop.

Above: Caribbean Currencies

COURT’S PENSION PLAN

The CCJ Pension Plan commenced on 1st July 2006 and provides a defined benefit contribution for the President and Judges in accordance with their terms and conditions of employment. Staff members are provided a pension plan under a defined contribution plan.

The division has systems and procedures in place to administer the initial pension arrangements, which is not complex, however, a number of important databases must be maintained and monitored.

Typical work activities include:

- updating pension scheme member records;
- requesting statements;
- checking benefit calculations;
- processing retirements/resignations