Supporting Access to Justice, Building Public Trust and Confidence and Assisting the Court’s Accountability

Public Education And Communications
The Public Education and Communications (PEC) Unit was formed in June 2008, in-keeping with the Court’s commitment to Public Education to support access to justice, to build public trust and confidence and to assist the Court’s accountability. As a judicial organisation established for the citizens of the CARICOM region, it is crucial that all are aware of and understand the role and functions of the CCJ and how this new establishment affects them.

The statement that “the Caribbean Court of Justice was established by Caribbean people, for Caribbean people” then highlights that the customers of the CCJ include all persons inhabiting and operating in the Caribbean region. The novelty of this Court has proven to be of great interest to academics and other persons as well as institutions outside of the Caribbean region, thus causing them to observe the operations of the Court. These factors have informed the main objectives of the PEC Unit as follows:

- To educate, inform and empower all customers on a regional and international level about who we are and what we do; and
- To build and develop relationships with the various sectors of the regional diaspora.

The Court is initially focusing its public education efforts on the following specific customers:

- National Judiciaries in CARICOM member states;
- the Caribbean Legal Fraternity;
- the Caribbean Business Sector;
- Labour Unions and Representatives;
- skilled workers;
- academia (tertiary, secondary and primary school students and teachers);
- media personnel and institutions; and
- Public Service Bodies of the contracting parties.

Toward this end the PEC Unit will employ a careful combination of the following tools in order to achieve its objectives:

- Public Education Visits in the Caribbean Region;
- the CCJ website;
- CCJ publications;
- CCJ print and electronic advertisement and video productions;
- CCJ Info Kiosks;
- Court tours and open houses; and
- Media Relations.
Public Education and Communications

The Court Executive Administrator has taken on direct oversight of this unit, which is staffed by two officers who have undergone training in this area over the last two years in order to handle this function.

Public Education Visit to Belize – June 2008

In the period under review the PEC Unit organized a Public Education Visit to Belize in June 2008. The visit included a public education seminar, a schools’ seminar, media conference and private meetings with the leaders and representatives of the government and opposition in Belize City, Belize in June 2008.

“CCJ AND THE CSME: VEHICLES FOR REGIONAL UNITY. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AND FOR ME?”

A Public Education seminar entitled “CCJ and the CSME: Vehicles for Regional Unity. What does this mean for you and for me?” highlighted the various issues that will arise with the advent of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the CCJ. The one-day seminar, which took place at the Radisson Fort George Hotel and Marina in Belize City, gained full attendance with members of the legal, labour and business fraternities, members of the media and tertiary level students. Also present were the Honourable Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court, and the Honourable Attorney General of Belize.

Presentations made were as follows:

- “CCJ: From Concept to Reality” - Ms. Radha Permanand, Deputy Registrar of the CCJ
- “The CCJ & the CSME” - The Hon. Mr. Justice Pollard, Judge of the CCJ
- “Competition Law from a Caribbean Perspective” - Dr. Kusha Haraksingh, Chairman, Community Competition Commission
- “Core Aspects of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas” - The Hon. Mr. Justice Wit, Judge of the CCJ
- “CSME and Labour” - Mr. Joseph Goddard, Trustee of the Caribbean Congress of Labour
- “The CCJ and the Legal Profession” - The Hon. Mr. Justice Saunders, Judge of the CCJ
- “Bar Association as Agents of Change” - Mr. Wilfred Abrahams, President of OCCBA

Attendees provided good feedback to organizers, commenting that this seminar assisted their knowledge and awareness of the CCJ, CSME and the Competition Commission.

TRIPARTITE MEETINGS

A very important aspect of this public education visit was a meeting arranged between government officials and the CCJ tripartite team. The CCJ Tripartite Team, consisting of the Court President and other
CCJ officials and members of the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) and the CCJ Trust Fund, met with the Honourable Prime Minister Mr. Dean Barrow, Chief Justice The Hon. Mr. Justice Conteh and Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Leslie. The CCJ Tripartite Team also met with members of the Opposition.

SCHOOLS’ SEMINAR—ST. JOHN’S JUNIOR COLLEGE

Another integral part of the visit was to be able to engage with school students. To this end, CCJ Personnel made an appearance at the St. John’s Junior College in Belize City. This seminar, aimed at the tertiary level students, focused on the aspects of the CCJ and CSME that relate to young men and women. The students and teachers benefitted from the insightful presentations of Ms. Shawn Richards, Head of the CSME Unit in Belize and Ms. Radha Permanand, Deputy Registrar of the CCJ. Among the issues raised was that of Belizean students being afforded the same opportunities as any other CARICOM citizen to attend other tertiary level institutions in the CARICOM region, such as the University of the West Indies or the Law Schools of the Council of Legal Education. Ms. Richards noted the issues and reminded the students that the CSME Unit was established to assist them in that regard.

The Hon. Mr. Justice Saunders and The Hon. Mme. Justice Bernard were also present at the seminar to interface with the students on a one-on-one level.

Other Projects

The Unit also produced its first of the many planned CCJ video productions entitled ‘CCJ Courtroom Technology’. This presentation takes its viewers through the many technological tools and solutions available in the CCJ Courtroom, from the perspective of the presenting attorney.