

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COURT OF APPEAL, JAMAICA (2019)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Honourable House is asked to note the Court of Appeal Jamaica (CAJ) Annual Report for the Calendar Year 2019.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Court of Appeal came into being at the time of independence. The judges of this court exercise great care in reviewing the decisions of the lower courts and tribunals. In doing so, the court hears and determines a variety of matters ranging from procedural applications and procedural appeals to substantive appeals. After careful deliberation, judgment is pronounced and the court comprehensively outlines the reasons for its decisions before ensuring public access and accountability by publishing same on its website.

3. Highlights of Performance and Achievements

3.1 Operational Review

3.1.1 The court started the year in newly renovated facilities on Public Building West and from all indications, the users of the facilities are extremely satisfied with the vastly improved amenities. The extended physical space has also resulted in increased sittings with Hearings in Chambers increasing by 29.04%.

3.1.2 Three additional judges of appeal were appointed in 2019, bringing the total judicial complement to ten. The new appointees were: the Honourable Miss Justice Jennifer Straw, CD, the Honourable Miss Justice Carol Edwards and the Honourable Mrs Justice Nicole Foster-Pusey. The Court was able to sit, for the first time, in three Divisions.

3.2 Key Performance Indicators

3.2.2 Disposed Appeals

The overall number of appeals disposed of in the Court of Appeal for 2019 was 193. This represents 53 more appeals or a 20.4% increase in the clearance of appeals when compared with 2018 figure of 140. For every 100 new appeals, 20 more appeals were disposed of in 2019 than in 2018.

3.2.2 Judgment Delivery Time

191 matters were disposed of within six months, an increase over 2018, with 63.35% of those being disposed of on the same day and 25.65% within one week.

3.2.3 Pending Appeals

The number of pending appeals was 1,817 with 412 outstanding criminal transcripts and 427 outstanding civil transcripts.

3.3 Practice Directions

For the year under review, the Court of Appeal issued two Practice Directions which seek to improve the efficiency of case management.

3.4 Outreach and Other activities

In addition to the regular duties of the court, the President and the Judges of Appeal also engaged in a variety of activities at the national and international levels by interacting with the next generation of legal professionals, serving on Commissions and continuing their professional development.

4. Challenges

- 4.1** Pursuant to Section 3 of the *Judicature (Appellate Jurisdiction) Act*, the Court of Appeal comprises the President of the Court and not more than 12 judges of appeal. However, the complement of judges is 10 (including the President). Supporting staff is also not at full complement as only 42 of 52 posts are filled. It is imperative that the court achieves its full complement of judges and supporting staff in 2020 to assist in more effective scheduling and efficient use of judicial time.

The Honourable House is asked to note the foregoing.



Delroy Chuck, QC, MP
Minister of Justice
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