

**THE IMPLEMENTATION of FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS
CARICOM and CAFTA PROCUREMENT PRACTICES in
BELIZE and GUATEMALA**

Edward J. Pabor

Edward J. Pabor has a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from the University of Oregon. He has worked as a Procurement Professional in the private and public domain for over 25 years. He is currently the "Stores Supervisor/Purchasing Analyst" for the City of Eugene Oregon, and a Master Instructor for the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing.

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on two countries that border each other and that belong to different Free Trade Agreements. My goal was to conduct research to find out if the two different Free Trade Agreements are similar or different. I found in research and interviews, that the language and structure of the two Free Trade Agreements are different. But their training of procurement professionals and implementation of procurement practices are similar.

INTRODUCTION

As a professional procurement practitioner for over 25 years, I spent several years in international procurement. I remember taking advantage of the reduced tariffs and duties on goods procured from countries with which the United States had Free Trade Agreements with. I frequently had to work with customs to confirm harmonized tariff codes, clear sensitive goods through customs, and get to know proper INCO terms. Then in the last 5 years I have heard the on-going debate on the effectiveness of NAFTA; is it a blessing, or is it a curse? I had noticed the great proliferation of Free Trade Agreements in Latin America, more than a dozen. Some of these are regional, and some include the United States, Canada, European Union, Japan, China or Taiwan. The goal of these Free Trade Agreements is to reduce tariffs, promote trade, strengthen cooperation, contribute to harmonious development and expansion of markets, improve trade relations, create employment opportunities, and undertake all in a manner consistent with the protection of the environment.

I chose Belize and Guatemala for my research because they were two countries with adjoining borders that belonged to different free trade agreements; Belize, CARICOM (Caribbean Common Market) and Guatemala, CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement). I decided to focus my research on how these Free Trade Agreements are implemented to affect day to day procurement activities in these countries, and to determine any differences between them. I chose five specific focus areas that all purchasing professionals must deal with on a daily basis. I asked these questions verbatim to the officials I interviewed in both Belmopan and Guatemala City on a voice recorder. All the government officials were gracious in their interviews and gave their recorded permission for their interview to be used.

- 1) Would there be any difference in the environmental protection language between the two Free Trade Agreements?
- 2) Is there any procurement “cooperation” amongst member nations of CARICOM or CAFTA, or between Guatemala and Belize?
- 3) Is there any cooperation in Logistics & Transportation in the procurement management of member countries within CARICOM and CAFTA, or between Guatemala and Belize?
- 4) Will the member countries of the Free Trade Agreements recognize the same standards? Will neighboring countries in different Free Trade Agreements (Belize and Guatemala) recognize the same standards?
- 5) How are the tenants of the Free Trade Agreements carried out day to day by Public Procurement Professionals? Are the Purchasing Professionals properly trained?

Any preconceived notions that I had turned out to be simply naïve. I started out my research scouring the internet. But I ended up going to Belize and Guatemala for 19 days and meeting with government officials in the capitols Belmopan and Guatemala City. My first observations were geographic. Why does Belize, a Central American Country belong to the Caribbean Free Trade Agreement, and the Dominican Republic a Caribbean island nation, belong to the Central American Free Trade Agreement? The answer is that history and culture have a greater influence than geography. Belize was a British Colony and is traditionally and culturally more aligned with the British Colonies in the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic was a Spanish Colony and feels traditionally and culturally more aligned with Central America.

As far as procurement policy and procedures are concerned, CARICOM is very sparse. Belize has a huge trade imbalance, as it imports much more than it exports. Belize trades more with Mexico,

Central America, and the United States then it does with the other 14 CARICOM countries, simply because that is where they can get most of what they need. Guatemala's biggest trading partners are the United States, Central America, and the European Union. Three quarters of Guatemala's trade is within CAFTA, which includes the United States. As far as procurement is concerned, Guatemala is neither a signatory nor an observer of the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement. (per World Trade Organization, Trade Policy Review, Report by the Secretariat, 2009)

In Belmopan, Belize, I met with the following:

- Mr. Artemio Osorio, Budget Director, Ministry of Finance
- Mr. Cadet Henderson, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Works
- Mr. Jose E. Trejo, Director Belize Bureau of Standards

In Guatemala City I met with:

- Ms. Nancy Cardenas, Trade & Investment Director, American Chamber of Commerce in Guatemala

I am very grateful for all the generous assistance and support these professionals provided to me in this research. I also received valuable correspondence from Ms. Aura Guy in Belize, and in Guatemala City from Mr. Hector Herrera, Norms & Regulations Committee; Mr. John Seckinger AIMAR Logistics; and Estuardo Cepollina, AMCHAM Environmental Committee, and the Ministry of Economy. Thank you, to all of you.

CAFTA is more the traditional free trade agreement and encompasses many different provisions; Services, Investment, Government Procurement, Market Access, Agriculture, Intellectual property rights, Antidumping rules, Competition policy, Dispute resolution, Environmental protection, Labor standards, and Transparency. CARICOM focuses on those issues as well, but they go beyond that. CARICOM now offers a CARICOM passport. This may eventually lead to one CARICOM passport for all CARICOM countries. There is also some interest in the CARICOM countries aligning together as a block to centralize procurement and other activities. In Belize, they advertise tenders (bids) over \$100,000, and must receive at least 3 quotes on tenders under \$100,000. Currently there is no common tendering (solicitation) language in CARICOM, but they are working on that. Belize gets special provisions from CARICOM because it is a developing country. CARICOM has reduced tariffs on Belize beer and Rum.

Part of my research focused on environmental language and implementation. In Belize, they said they were proud of their Eco Nature Reserves. They also participate in international carbon neutralization “buy back” programs. Belize exercises CARICOM mandated rules about monitoring shipping pollution and has not had an environmental spill for a long time.

There has been a long standing border dispute between Belize and Guatemala, but this is mostly between government bureaucracies. The people of Belize and Guatemala get along fine. But every map of Guatemala includes the country of Belize. The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) is based in Barbados, and is an important source of funding for Belize and other CARICOM countries. CDB provides both funding and training on how to issue transparent tenders (solicitations). CDB has its own procurement guidelines that countries that receive CDB funds MUST follow. Some projects are funded by Kuwait, OPEC, or the European Union, and in these instances procurement protocol is administered by those agencies, and it is their guidelines that must be followed. When a project is funded by CDB, such as a bridge for instance, the steel for that bridge must be purchased from a CARICOM country, or a country that has donated funds to the CDB. Trinidad produces steel beams.

Another part of my research was focused on Logistics & Transportation. These are some of the basic fundamentals of procurement. Belize has never had rail service. Guatemala had rail service for most of the 20th century, but the lack of infrastructure funding has made it inoperable. That means that all goods for both countries must be transported by air, or ship, and then by truck.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Focus Area #1. *Would there be any difference in the environmental protection language between the two free trade agreements?*

In Belmopan; The CARICOM treaty does contain environmental protection language. Most of it is focused on protection for the Caribbean. Article 3: CARICOM amendment 1999, “*the establishment of measures: to ensure that the development of the transport sector does not impact adversely on the environment of Member States and, in particular, the Caribbean.*”

Article 9: CARICOM amendment 1999, *“Member States shall cooperate in achieving international recognition for the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area requiring protection from the potentially harmful effects of the transit of nuclear and other hazardous wastes, dumping, pollution by oil or by any other substances carried by sea or wastes generated through the conduct of ship operations.”*

CARRIBBEAN COMMUNITY AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE. 1991, *“Recognizing the need for sustainable development and optimal utilization of these resources and the protection and preservation of the marine environment; Bearing in mind the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982, and in particular Article 123 thereof concerning the cooperation of States bordering enclosed and semi-enclosed seas in the exercise of their rights and the performance of their international obligations.”*

In addition to the environmental protection under the CARICOM treaty, Belize also has a separate agreement with Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras to protect the Barrier Reef off of their Caribbean coasts. CARICOM has implemented policy for all government offices to buy printers that print on both sides of the paper and to purchase air conditioners and office machinery that are “Energy Star” approved. CARICOM and Belize have instituted a program to train AC technicians to maintain and reduce CFCs in government air conditioning systems. However, Belize has no trained buyers to carry this out. Government vehicles have no standards for emissions. Belize will often buy used vehicles or vehicles and machinery that do not meet other countries emissions standards, or that use leaded fuel, if they can get a reduced price for that machinery. There is no policy focused on giving preferences to products with re-cycled content.

Belize is looking to reduce its carbon footprint by partnering with the Japanese government on a \$10 million solar cell project to power government buildings in Belmopan. The Belize Public Works department does write purchasing specifications that incorporate best value and life cycle costing. These solicitations are issued by Project Managers or engineers.

In Guatemala City, Nancy Cardenas said there is no language in CAFTA that focuses on the reduction of carbon; however there is a department within CAFTA that addresses environmental issues. CAFTA

provisions state “-*Environmental Protection: the enforcement of environmental laws and improvement of the environment.*” “per World Trade Organization, Trade Policy Review, Report by the Secretariat, 20 April 2009: “*The export of certain logs is prohibited for environmental reasons.*”

The Comision Portuaria Nacional, Guatemala City, provided this feedback: There are no specific provisions in CAFTA regarding pollution in the oceans from maritime shipping. The entire environmental chapter of the Agreement (Chapter XVII) recognizes each of the CAFTA countries’ right to establish its own levels of environmental protection as well as its own policies of environmental development and its enforcement. As part of a regional initiative, the Central American Maritime Ports Greenbook (*Libro Verde de los Puertos Centroamericanos*) approved by the REPICA (*Reunión de Empresas Portuarias del Istmo Centroamericano*) in 2007; is a handbook which complements the environmental regional agenda on maritime transport, and was inspired on the valid/active international treaties of which all Central American countries are contracting parties. The definition of this called Greenbook, took into consideration the views and opinions of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (*Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo / CCAD*). And its purpose is to guide actions taken by each country’s port authority on environmental aspects inherent to the maritime-port operations and linked activities on a voluntarily basis. Its main objective is to establish a consultation, dialogue and cooperation framework between maritime and port’s administrations, port enterprises and civil society (e.g. NGO’s) within the Central American countries which are part of COCATRAM. Provisions within the CAFTA legal texts are established to respect each one of the contracting party’s individual legislation on environment and its own national environmental goals. Therefore, flexibility regarding the environment, although it is a key element on the spirit of such texts, cannot be observed as a general rule for all contracting parties of CAFTA.

Guatemala Ministry of Economy provided this feedback: Guatemala has ratified the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) in the marine environment, which is in force for Guatemala since 1983. Also the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (CONVEMAR) that specifically lists all possible sources of marine pollution. Also, there is Article 17.12 CAFTA-DR: Relation to Environmental Accords, which in the numeral 1 refers to the Parties acknowledging the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, all of which are party to protect the global and national environment. It is important

to note also that we have a framework law that the Decree 68-86 concerning the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, on the other hand we are part of the Kyoto Protocol.

Focus Area#2. Is there any procurement “cooperation” amongst member nations of CARICOM or CAFTA , or between Guatemala and Belize?

In Belmopan the answer to the second part of the question was no. As far as cooperative purchasing amongst CARICOM member nations, it is allowed by CARICOM treaty, but not being practiced. In CARICOM there was a very comprehensive draft done at a meeting in 2006 to promote this, but it has not been adopted yet. In Guatemala City the response was “There is no procurement cooperation among CAFTA member countries.” However there is some focus on public/private partnerships. The country of Guatemala has privatized its road maintenance by competitive tender (solicitation). That is something that other CAFTA countries and CARICOM countries are looking at.

Focus area #3. Is there any cooperation in Logistics & Transportation in the procurement management of member countries within CARICOM and CAFTA, or between Guatemala and Belize?

Belmopan; Belize is geographically further apart from most CARICOM countries, so shipping is sometimes challenging. Belize, like most CARICOM countries has to import almost all manufactured goods and many other commodities. Belize exports kidney beans, citrus products, bananas, sugar, Rum, and recently crude oil. But there are considerably more imports than exports. CARICOM used to have its own shipping line, The West Indies Shipping CO. It was cooperatively owned, so it could be managed to meet the needs of the member states. But it went bankrupt in 1992. It has not been replaced because of the broad discrepancies in exports and imports among CARICOM countries. Now this puts constraints on Belize exporting goods to other CARICOM countries because most shipping lanes go through Miami, or Jamaica, or even further away.

Most of everything Belize imports is by ocean vessel (Belize has no rail service). Some goods come into the Port of Belize City and then are shipped by truck to Northeastern Guatemala. In Mexico there are no good Ports in the Yucatan, so some goods destined for Southeastern Mexico also come in through the Port of Belize City. There is no cooperation in Logistics & Transportation between Belize and Guatemala. And there is no cooperation in Logistics & Transportation

among CARICOM member countries. There are 3 Ports in Belize, Belize City, Commerce Bay, and Big Creek. These ports are all privatized. This removes any incentive for cooperation.

Article 2 of CARICOM amendment 1999 says "*Member States shall coordinate their actions in order to secure the best terms and conditions for the provision of transport services by service providers.*" From my interviews, I did not hear of this being implemented.

There are special agreements on a few items that promote trade between Belize and Guatemala. There is robust trade between Belize and Guatemala. Guatemala prices are attractive to Belize. For the private sector it is easier to get goods from Guatemala or Mexico because it is more cost effective than importing goods from the United States. But the CARICOM reduced tariffs still induces strong trade between Belize and the other CARICOM nations. But there are inefficiencies in the logistics of that trade. Belize admits that it gets cement barged in from Jamaica, but sometimes the barge goes back to Jamaica empty. Officials realize that they should coordinate that barge to go back to Jamaica with Belize lumber or something that would utilize that empty space and energy. Belize does try and take advantage of this "backhaul" when they ship bananas and citrus by barge. They try and get back heavy equipment. There are provisions in the CARICOM treaty, and some limited cooperation amongst CARICOM nations to ship refined gasoline and diesel. The Port of Belize City is the sole source for importing fuel to Belize. It is pumped underwater from 3 miles offshore by underwater pipe to storage tanks at the Port. This is an environmental safety mandate that conforms to CARICOM rules. Belize has more trade with Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras than with the other CARICOM countries, simply because it is more practically integrated with those countries.

In Guatemala City, The Aimara group says this about logistics & transportation: "It is important to point out that we are talking about private industry which includes transportation. Major companies in the region are able to leverage their purchasing power with the shipping lines to get better freight rates. Shipping capacity is regulated by supply and demand, with consideration on rates. Currently there is an oversupply of vessel space however due to the world economic situation rates in and out of Central America is driving more shipping capacity into this market. Obviously as more capacity enters the market rates will drive down and the oversupply will flatten with pressure to push out the smaller or more

“opportunistic” shipping lines. There is no consideration on reduction of carbon footprint for shipping in CAFTA.”

Guatemala City, Comision Portuaria Nacianal says this about logistics & transportation: “There is no official cooperation among CAFTA countries to combine any requirement and efforts in logistics and transportation. Such cooperation is primarily promoted by private sectors within the region, which as users of the maritime ports seek for trade facilitation (e.g. producers associations, chambers of commerce, guilds, etc.). There have been some initiatives at government level that are aimed to efficient maritime transport and operations. However, and despite such efforts, which include short-distance maritime transport initiatives; neither regulation nor formal cooperation amongst CAFTA countries has been agreed and came into force up to this date. In practical terms, combined freight will finally depend on the needs and the decision taken by the importer(s) within the region. Aiming transport and freight facilitation, the multimodal shipping is sometimes the best option importers have (and most likely utilized) when importing goods from the US. For example, if imported goods are shipped somewhere in the US to a port in either Guatemala or Honduras, and the total amount of such import is destined to both market/countries; ground transportation is more likely to be used. Here it is important to highlight the fact that the Central American Customs Union is not fully agreed [sic] nor implemented amongst all five parties (countries). Therefore some customs clearing process must take place at specific borders amongst the region in order to transport goods by land.”

Guatemala has four Ports. Three of them are government owned.

Focus area #4. Will the member countries of the Free Trade Organization recognize the same standards? Will neighboring countries in different Free Trade Organizations recognize the same standards?

Belmopan; CARICOM does have a standards committee called CROSQ (CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality). Their mission is “CROSQ supports the CARICOM mandate in the expansion of intra-regional and extra-regional trade in goods and services, and is the regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in goods and services through the process of standardization and the verification of quality.

I met with Mr. Jose Trejo, the Director of the Ministry of Standards for the Country of Belize in his Belmopan office. His comments are as follows:

“The country of Belize has 24 national standards. Ten of which are compulsory standards. These standards are drawn from regional and international standards. CARICOM standards are recognized in Belize as in all CARICOM countries. Belize is currently trying to establish standards for organic produce, including honey and honey bees.

The CARICOM treaty states that a regional standard must be recognized by CROSQ. Sometimes that can be a lengthy process. CROSQ has a technical standards committee that looks at regional standard requests. Initial drafts are sent to CROSQ departments in all member countries for feedback. Both public and private stake holders weigh in with this process. CROSQ headquarters are in Barbados, but CROSQ meetings can occur in any CARICOM member country.

The Belize Ministry of Standards has grown from a staff of 4 to a staff of 15 in two years. The emphasis of standards and quality is gaining momentum in Belize and CARICOM, where Belizean standards are accepted and implemented in CARICOM countries. It has been more difficult to implement those standards with trade to Mexico and Central America. Currently, all CARICOM member countries are developing testing criteria that can be utilized equitably by all CARICOM member countries.”

Question to Mr. Trejo: *How do you assure that the work you carry out to establish standards is really properly implemented in procurement, if you have no dedicated procurement staff that is trained in implementing those standards?*

“It is the intent of CROSQ that this will be integrated into the final procurement. Jamaica and Trinidad do have professional procurement departments. CROSQ is developing and procurement will have to follow.”

I met with Ms. Nancy Cardenas, Trade & Investment Director of the American Chamber of commerce in Guatemala City.

CAFTA has no Standards Committee. In Guatemala we have the Norms & Regulation Committee from the Ministry of Economy. They work to assure norms and regulations of Guatemala goods. Each county in CAFTA works alone.

The Norms & Regulations Committee provided this feedback: “In relation to question four, I can tell you that the rules are not prepared by COGUANOR based on CAFTA framework, and no country in Central

America, that I know, makes norms or regulations under that vision. In the case of Guatemala, rules of construction materials and hydrocarbons are based on ASTM standards of USA, but other standards (food, pesticides, etc.) are developed with standards in different countries or using available technical literature, and aligned with subject to normalization.”

The Comision Portuaria Nacional, Guatemala City, provided this feedback: “Dissemination of procedures and standards regarding government procurement is a key activity of the authority designated for each contracting party of the CAFTA. With regards to Guatemala, the enforcement of CAFTA (and all commercial agreements) is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy through the *Dirección de Comercio Exterior* –DACE. Since the other Central American countries have no valid commercial agreement with CARICOM countries, the CA-4 group (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua) and Panamá have attempted to join the one valid among Costa Rica and CARICOM. Therefore, in early 2008 a first round of negotiations amongst the countries of the CA-4 and Panama, took place in Trinidad and Tobago. However negotiations to fully join such agreement have been on standby by CA-4 countries and Panama after that first approach.

Regional harmonization on standards on quality is not completed. According to an official report of the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA) dated July 2009; Technical Regulations (*Reglamentos Técnicos*) have been pushed forward. Up to this date, 31 were valid within the region; while 5 are in consultation in both WTO and SCAC. Since regional harmonization has not been completed, CAFTA countries develop and utilize both standards: general and specific by each country.”

Focus area #5. *How are tenants of the free trade agreements carried out by day to day Public Procurement Professionals? Are they properly trained?*

There are very few Public Procurement Professionals in either Belize or Guatemala. The only training I heard of that was provided in Belize was Belize accounting personnel for the Ministry of Finance, who do most of the tenders (solicitations) and subsequent Purchase Orders. The lending institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank, or the Inter-American Development Bank, or WTO, or the European Community will demand and train the protocol required to meet their transparency requirements for that procurement. Sometimes these government people are Project Managers or Engineers. But there is no dedicated or trained

Purchasing Professionals in Belize. In Guatemala City, the Ministry of Finance said this: “Internally the Directorate of purchases and acquisitions of State, Ministry of Public Finance maintains a constant training to all public bodies and thus fully complying with international commitments.”

Conclusion

When I left to do my empirical research in Belize and Guatemala, I must admit, I expected to find over worked Public Purchasing Professionals that were under appreciated, under paid, with inadequate training, just like where I live. I didn't expect to find that there were very few Public Purchasing Professionals at all. How can there be any strategic procurement planning? How can there be any commodity management? How can there be any pro-active contract administration? How can there be any consistent compliance with standards, or transparency mandates? How can you have effective policy and procedures? Who will know when it is best to issue design specifications or performance specifications? How are you able to manage the risks associated with a tender (solicitation)? How can you manage your transportation dollars if you don't know the meaning and responsibility of INCO terms and are not trained in transportation contract negotiation? When you leave transportation up to the supplier, or a private freight forwarder to ship freight the “Best Way”, they will usually ship it the best way for them. If your competitive solicitation specified “F.O.B. Destination, Freight Prepaid and Allowed” and you got competitive offers, than you are probably getting a fair freight price. If you have negotiated a favorable freight transportation agreement with a dependable freight forwarder, you are probably getting a fair deal on transportation costs. But it takes a trained, experienced procurement professional to do either.

When I was in Guatemala City, Nancy Cardenas said, *to have a professionally trained, ethical procurement staff that could write proper specifications and assure transparency requirements would only make sense. It would also support and complement all government expenditures.*

When I met with Mr. Artemio Osorio in Belmopan, *he said he would like to envision each Government Ministry in Belize would have its own procurement department, and an audit team.* In my opinion, if this framework were to happen, then step by step they could start to build the

foundation of public procurement professionals. No doubt these first individuals would feel overwhelmed, but step by step, they could assess staff needs, training needs, and start to assure transparent ethical procurement and accountable material management to the government of Belize. During my interviews, it was a common theme that the government of Belize wants to be able to assure transparency in the tendering process and in its expenditures. Having trained procurement professionals could only help in that objective. Mr. Osorio also said that at a 2006 CARICOM conference in St. Kitts, a proposal was produced that would address all these issues. Mr. Osorio went further on to say he wished this proposal would be adopted by CARICOM, but as to this date it has not. Mr. Osorio provided me with the “Draft Framework Policy Report on Government Procurement presented April 24-25 2006, By Patrice F. Pratt Harrison and Hagop Angaladian.”

Regarding the report; I must admit, I was very impressed with the insightful thoroughness of this document. It laid out an empirical study and road map to re-invent Public Procurement in the CARICOM countries. I did not receive this document till after I had returned from my research in Belize and Guatemala, but her findings and recommendations very much mirrored my own observations. I will list some of their findings:

- **Competitive public procurement regimes in the CARICOM States are in disarray and are dysfunctional:**
In general terms, the roots of competitive public procurement in CARICOM States are obsolete and shallow, developed at a time when transparency and accountability emanated solely from public finance administration concerns. The result is dysfunctional procurement regimes which translate into segregated pockets of procurement practices and not national systems. National Governments have not yet considered or tackled the challenge of public procurement reform in any meaningful way;
- **Legal Framework:**
The current legislation governing procurement in CARICOM States is made up of poorly-coordinated and outdated sub-legislative Regulations/Acts and Decrees:
There are no dedicated legislations governing public procurement within the CARICOM States, except for Guyana where the Public Procurement Act is not yet fully operational. In general, the legal framework in member States emanate from subsidiary legislation issued under outdated “Financial Administration and Audit Acts” or

similar variants of it (Government Compatibility Act in Surinam and Procurement Decree in Haiti). These make up a poorly-coordinated and piecemeal approach to procurement legislation and fail to provide a satisfactory set of rules for planning, awarding and monitoring government contracts. These types of legislation fail the key tests of economy, efficiency, reliability, transparency and accountability which are all essential to any well-functioning national public procurement system.

- **Capacity to conduct procurement is extremely weak:** Procurement is not regarded as a profession throughout the public sector in the CARICOM States. Procurement functions are handled by untrained, non-specialist staff at all levels of administration. Combined with weak legislation and regulations, procurement has turned into an interpretive function. Compounded by low salary levels the risk is significantly high resulting in adverse outcomes throughout the procurement process. *Most public officials who handle procurement have never received any procurement training at all.*

Even more encouraging are some of Patrice F. Pratt Harrison's and Hagop Angaladian's recommendations:

- **Recommendation # 4**

- Principles of Best-Practice Public Procurement**

- The overriding principles of a Best Practice public procurement system is to deliver *economy and efficiency* in the use of public funds while adhering to the fundamental principles of *reliability, non-discrimination and fair treatment (due process), transparency and access to information*, conducted in an *Accountable and Ethical manner*.

- **Recommendation # 10**

- Objectives of Public Procurement System**

- A Best Practice public procurement regime should operate to meet the following objectives:

- Provide public accountability;
 - Achieve value for money in public spending;
 - Work within current government policies;
 - Ensure contract performance;
 - Operate within current available resources.

- Recommendation # 20**

- Training is the Key to a Best Practice in Public Procurement;

- Training on procurement rules and best practice may well be the best and least costly way to achieve economy, efficiency, reliability, transparency and accountability in public procurement. New procurement techniques and structures will not deliver greater efficiency and lower costs unless procurement officers know how to use them.

Recommendation # 25

Green Procurement

- Green procurement considerations must be integrated in the procurement process. Where Environmental protection Laws/Acts are not yet enacted, Procuring entities may incorporate green requirements into the pre-selection process, tendering process and post-qualification process, by referring to internationally accepted standards and by employing life-cycle costs in their evaluation procedures.

I did not meet any public purchasing professionals in Belize or Guatemala. In both countries I was told that there are trained purchasing personnel in the accounting department or the Ministry of Finance. But there was no one that had “Purchasing” or “Procurement” in their title that I could find. In my opinion, funds that governments spend to hire, train and retain good, honest, ethical Public Procurement Professionals are some of the smartest money governments can spend. It will reap rewards far beyond the expenditure of those funds. The obvious question; what is public confidence and good stewardship of public funds worth? As long as CARICOM, CAFTA and the Public Procurement Profession have hard working visionaries like Ms. Patrice F. Pratt Harrison and Hagop Angaladian, I have hope that our profession is heading in the right direction.

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