

Published: Wednesday, April 4, 2018 President Paula-Mae Weekes yesterday appealed to the chairmen of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT) and the Fair Trade Commission (FTC) who were both sworn in yesterday that while there may be little gratitude in serving country, they should execute their jobs faithfully and well.

This was the message Weekes delivered in her first official swearing-in ceremony at President's Cottage, St Ann's, since her presidential inauguration on March 19.

Economist Dr Ronald Ramkissoon was sworn in as chairman of the FTC, along with commissioners Christopher Sieuchand (an attorney), CEO of Jaleel Distributors Ltd Dr Mikaeel Mohammed and Dennis Scott, who holds a Master in Business Administration.

Attorney Donna Prowell-Raphael was appointed chairman of the EOT.

In the past, all swearing-in ceremonies, hosted by then president Anthony Camona, were held in the cramped President's Office.

Before the ceremony, guests were advised by Weekes' aide-de-camp Major Mohammed that they were not allowed any selfies with the President.

In a simple ceremony, the commissioners and chairmen recited their oaths at the rostrum and affixed their signatures on the oath book, while Weekes remained seated a few feet away.

Thereafter, Weekes signed the book, gave them a congratulatory handshake, brought greetings and invited guests to light refreshments in a room next door which the media was prevented from entering.

In previous swearing-ins, Carmona operated differently, in that after each commissioner or chairman took their oaths and signed the book, he would affix his signature while standing next to them at the rostrum. There was also no refreshments served.

Cherly Ann Lala, communications officer at the Office of the President, when asked if proper procedure was followed for the swearing-in, said she could not say, stating that this was her first ceremony.

"The protocol person would have taken care of that. I have been told by a protocol official that the new "P" in protocol is preference. And so each new person has a way of doing things. Maybe, this is the new way. We have a new President, I don't know," Lala said.

In bringing greetings, Weekes described the ceremony as a mass swearing-in, stating that it turned out to be the most convenient thing at the end of the day and for them to get to know each other if they hadn't.

"It's almost like the courthouse because I see a few lawyers ...familiar faces."



President Paula-Mae Weekes, left, presents newly-appointed Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT), Attorney Donna Prowell-Raphael with her instruments of appointment during yesterday's swearing-in ceremony at the President's Cottage in St Ann's. PICTURE ABRAHAM DIAZ

Weekes admitted to being familiar with Prowell-Raphael and Sieuchand while she knew Ramkissoon based on his reputation. Commissioners Mohammed and Scott were new to her.

"But if resumes and good looks are anything to go by, I am sure the commissions in the tribunal are all in good hands," Weekes said as she thanked them for their willingness to serve.

"As we all know times are a little challenging and that is what makes service all the more important. There would be little that would be more gratifying at the end of the day than to know that you have served your country faithfully and well...even though there would not always be gratitude for it. But never mind that, you will have your satisfaction from doing your duty," Weekes said.

Devan Narinesingh, FTC's executive director admitted that the commission's law was not fully enforced.

Ramkissoon said he hoped that businesses would understand that anti-competitive behaviour was a disadvantage to economic development.

"Our work will very much be based on research and scientific investigations. We are not about witch-hunting and making decisions without evidence. We would warn and caution against anti-competitive behaviour before we take the next step," Ramkissoon said.