



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# Debates of the House of Representatives

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1st Session – 11th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 4 – Number 29

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**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE BRIDGID ANNISETTE-GEORGE  
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE ESMOND FORDE  
DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Friday 13th May, 2016**

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON-MEIGUEL**

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*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, May 13, 2016*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, May 13, 2016*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: hon. Nicole Olivier MP, Member for La Brea has requested leave of absence from sittings of the House during the period May 02-14, 2016; Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith MP, Member for Toco/Sangre Grande; and hon. Stuart Young MP, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2015. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
  2. Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2015. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
- Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*
3. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2015. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
  4. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the CEPEP Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
  5. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the CEPEP Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2014. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
  6. Consolidated Annual Audited Financial Statements of Business Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers Laid*

*Friday, May 13, 2016*

7. Consolidated Annual Audited Financial Statements of ExportTT Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
8. Consolidated Annual Audited Financial Statements of ExportTT Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2014. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers 3 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts [Enterprises] Committee.*

9. Annual Report of the First Citizens Asset Management Limited for the year 2015. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
10. Administrative Report of the Mayaro-Rio Claro Regional Corporation for fiscal year 2012-2013. [*The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan)*]
11. Annual Administration Report of the Port of Spain City Corporation for the year ended October 01, 2009 to September 30, 2010. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
12. Annual Administration Report of the Port of Spain City Corporation for the year ended October 01, 2010 to September 30, 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
13. Annual Administration Report of the Port of Spain City Corporation for the year ended October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
14. Annual Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and its subsidiary Premier Quality Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2013. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]
15. Privileges and Immunities [CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)] Order, 2016. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi)*]
16. Criminal Procedure Rules, 2016. [*Hon. F. Al-Rawi*]
17. Draft Summary of Recommendations and Conclusions of the Forty-First Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

*To be referred to the Joint Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.*

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS  
(Presentation)**

**Whistleblower Protection Bill, 2015**

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Whistleblower Protection Bill, 2015.

**Family and Children Division Bill, 2016**

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Family and Children Division Bill, 2016.

**URGENT QUESTIONS**

**“Shore of Peace” Cremation Site  
(Steps taken)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** To the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government: Could the Minister indicate the steps your Ministry intends to take to resolve the impending crisis over the ownership and use of land at the cremation site “Shore of Peace—Shanti Tiram” at Mosquito Creek, Oropouche?

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] As it is publicly known, the “Shore of Peace” is the premium cremation site in Trinidad. Approximately four to five cremations take place there every day. There is no crisis with regard to the ownership of the land. The land is owned by the Partap family, and this story started on June 16, 1970 when Miss Sumintra Partap granted permission to the then United Hindu Organization for use of a parcel of land to establish a site for cremation by the pyre method.

A series of steps happened then, but the other significant event was on March 02, 1983 when the then St. Patrick County Council officially took charge of the site—then Member for Tabaquite, that was his flagship project as chairman of the corporation at the time. Since then the Mosquito Creek cremation site, the “Shore of Peace”, has grown from strength to strength, as I said, as a premium Hindu cremation site in Trinidad.

*Urgent Questions*  
[SEN. THE HON. F. KHAN]

*Friday, May 13, 2016*

What has happened over the years is that the process of the formal acquisition of the land started and stopped, started and stopped, started and stopped. And from 1983 to present it is locked somewhere in the system. So, I think what the owners of the land were trying to do is try to wake up the Government and say, "Hey guys, let's get this thing right, you have been using my property for almost 35 years and it is time to bring some closure to that." I support that move. I met with Miss Myrtle Partap and her lawyers two days ago and I have given them the commitment that I will formally proceed with the acquisition of the land. They agreed to take down their sign that the cremation site will be closed from June 1<sup>st</sup>, and, all things being equal, bar the bureaucracy of the State, I think we would bring amicable closure both to the State and to the Partap family in this matter.  
[Desk thumping]

**Child Protection Unit  
(Shortage of Personnel)**

**Mr. Barry Padarath** (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, through you to the hon. Minister of National Security: Having regard to the staff shortages which have affected the work of the Child Protection Unit, would the Minister please indicate what specific actions have been taken to address the shortage of personnel at the Child Protection Unit?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon)**: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Cabinet approved the establishment of the Child Protection Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service with effect from March 01, 2016 with an establishment of 169 police officers and 11 civilian business support officers. At present there are 102 police officers assigned to the unit and one civilian business support staff. The police administration is at this time assigning additional officers to fill the shortages of the 67 police officers and making arrangements to recruit the additional civilian support staff. The full complement of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service personnel is expected by the end of June 2016.

**Mr. Padarath**: Madam Speaker, through you, to the hon. Minister. Minister can you indicate whether or not you or your office has been directly in touch with the Commissioner of Police and the members of the Child Protection Unit with respect to these plans?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon**: Madam Speaker, as Minister of National Security, I have been in direct contact with the Commissioner of Police with respect to the Child Protection Unit.



**Widespread Electricity Blackout  
(Measures Taken)**

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Chaguanas West*): Madam Speaker, through you to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities: Given the recent widespread electricity blackout across several parts of the country, could the Minister state what measures are being taken to mitigate and avoid future similar nationwide outages?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine)**: [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, at approximately 10.07 a.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 the TGU plant at La Brea tripped, causing major power outages in Trinidad and Tobago, as an undersea cable to Tobago failed as well. T&TEC immediately requested all available machines from Trinity Power Plant, as well as PowerGen at Point Lisas, to be started and brought in service. Parts of Port of Spain were out for 20 minutes; during the restoration, parts of south were affected for between two to four hours. Total supply was restored at 4.35 p.m.

Despite all the other available machines brought into service without TGU, there was still a shortage of approximately 100 megawatts of available capacity. Therefore, load shedding was conducted mainly in east Trinidad as Port of Spain was restored shortly after, and south a few hours after. T&TEC, with the decommissioning of PowerGen's Port of Spain plant, intends in the future to increase power generation with the plant in Barataria and increase capacity at the Cove power plant in Tobago. These increases will be done on a phased basis to spread the cost over an extended period of time. TGU remains our most efficient and reliable source of power, however, and I am awaiting a report with the recommendations to prevent such disruptions in the future. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Singh**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister indicated that T&TEC intends to increase the power supply from the plant in Barataria? Is there a plant in Barataria?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine**: I said that there are plans to construct on a phased basis over a period of time, maybe the next five to 10 years so that we could increase power capacity throughout Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Singh**: Could the Minister indicate to the national community, what caused the trip of the power plant at TGU?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine**: An air intake valve tripped causing the gas flow to TGU to be cut off. And a chain reaction resulted throughout Trinidad and Tobago causing a nationwide power outage.

1.45 p.m.

**Food Cards and Baby Care Grant  
(Assessment of)**

**Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein** (*Cumuto/Manzanilla*): In light of the recent freezing of hundreds of Food Cards and the Baby Care Grant, can the Minister state whether any assessment was conducted to determine whether the holders of these cards were in critical need of assistance?

**The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Cherie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn)**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Baby Care Grant was an initiative of the previous administration that was introduced for one year. It therefore came to its natural conclusion in September 2015 and was not frozen by this administration.

The Ministry, in keeping with its responsibility to ensure that food cards are only provided to the poor and vulnerable in our society conduct periodic reviews. One such review was under way earlier this year and all persons who were in receipt of food cards and had not had an assessment done were invited into the Ministry. Approximately 13,000 persons did not come into the Ministry to have those assessments conducted and as a result an interim hold was placed on their cards.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry could not have conducted any assessment to determine whether those persons were in critical need of assistance because they failed to come in to have the review done.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein**: Could the hon. Minister state whether their field officers were sent out to establish the conditions of these persons who have not been able to come in, if they were incapacitated in any way?

**Hon. C. Crichlow-Cockburn**: Madam Speaker, the Ministry would have visited the last known address of each recipient. We would have sought to contact them via the telephone contacts on file and we would have also placed advertisement in the print and electronic media. Despite all of these actions the persons failed to come into the Ministry so the assessments could not have been conducted.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein**: Can the hon. Minister then state in light of the fact that the Ministry, according to what you have stated, has taken all the steps, what is the procedure now for persons who have had their cards suspended and would like to come into the Ministry? What is the process, please?

**Hon. C. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The recipients simply have to come into any one of the Ministry's offices. We would have indicated all the necessary documents they are required to walk with and the assessments would be conducted. [*Desk thumping*]

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate that questions No. 94 and 96 will not be answered today and we are asking for a two-week deferral, please.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

#### Faculty of Medical Sciences (Details of)

**94.** Could the hon. Minister of Health state:

- a) the number of nationals who have graduated from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies as medical doctors over the past three (3) years;
- b) the number of graduates from part (a), who have completed an internship at any Regional Health Authority; and
- c) the number of graduates from part (b) who have received employment contracts at any Regional Health Authority and the respective dates of employment? [*Dr. L. Bodoë*]

#### Mr. Gerry Brooks (Remuneration from State Enterprises)

**96.** Could the hon. Minister of Finance state:

- a) the state enterprises (inclusive of subsidiary companies) to which Mr. Gerry Brooks was appointed as either a Chairman or Board Member from September 8, 2015 to present; and
- b) the remuneration package, inclusive of allowances for each appointment? [*Mr. D. Lee*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**National Gas Company and its Subsidiaries  
(Details of Income Received)**

**84. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister state the income received from the National Gas Company and its subsidiaries from September 2015 to date?

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Acting Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Madam Speaker, income received from the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago, NGC and its subsidiaries for the period September 2015 to date, is as follows: For the period of September 1st to September 7<sup>th</sup>, zero; for the period September 8<sup>th</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> when the fiscal year closes, \$994,442,000; for the period October 1<sup>st</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>, which is the last day of this study, is \$3,941,223,238 of which \$1,514,177,238 was special dividends from the Phoenix Park IPO.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So cumulatively, how much income have you received from NGC for this period?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Cumulative, I will do the honours. Four billion, seven hundred and ninety-two million, eight hundred and eighteen thousand.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you. I know I might be placing the Minister in an invidious position given that he is not the substantive Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, but, could you give us an indication of how much projected income you are expected to get from NGC for the rest of this fiscal year?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Chaguanas West, I would not allow that as a supplemental question.

**Mr. Singh:** Four billion, that is what you are asking for.

**National Helicopter Services Limited  
(Wage Increase)**

**85. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Does the Minister support the 14 per cent wage increase to workers of the National Helicopter Services Limited, in view of the current economic downturn?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In accordance with the Civil Service Regulations, Chap. 23:01, the Personnel Department under section 14(1)(c) is responsible for providing and establishing

“...procedures for consultation and negotiation between the Personnel Department and an appropriate recognized association or associations in respect of:

- (i) the classification of offices;
- (ii) any grievances;
- (iii) remuneration; and
- (iv) the terms and conditions of employment.”

Further to this, the provisions under section 19 of the Act state as follows:

“19. (1) Where the Personnel Department and the appropriate recognised association reach agreement on any of the matters specified in section 14 after consultation and negotiation in accordance with section 17 or 18, the agreement shall be recorded in writing and shall be signed by the Chief Personnel Officer on behalf of the Minister of Finance and by a person designated by the appropriate recognised association on behalf of the association.

- (2) Any agreement recorded and signed in accordance with subsection (1) shall be binding upon the Government and the civil servants to whom the agreement relates.”

The summary of the wage negotiation process for staff of the National Helicopter Services Limited for the period 2013 to 2016 is as follows: Prior to commencing negotiations with the bargaining units of the Oil Field Workers Trade Union, the NHSL forwarded a copy of its counter proposals to the proposals submitted by the union to the then Ministry of Transport and copied to the public sector negotiating committee via correspondence dated September 19, 2014.

Discussions between the NHSL and the OWTU began on October 15, 2014, by correspondence dated August 25, 2015, the Personnel Department, Office of the Chief Personnel Officer outlined the guidelines for the negotiations regarding the revised collective bargaining agreement for the staff of the NHSL. The guidelines mandated a general increase in wages of no more than 9 per cent in addition to cash upgrades of \$250, \$500 and \$1,000 for the various categories of staff. A

settlement position between the two parties was eventually arrived at on November 11, 2015. The settlement adhered to the guidelines provided by the Personnel Department and in particular the Chief Personnel Officer. The details of the settlement are as follows: a 9 per cent salary increase spread over three years distributed as 3 per cent in year one, 3 per cent in year two and 3 per cent in year three. A movement into the salary range of all staff equivalent to a 5 per cent dollar value.

It should be noted that the approach NHSL used resulted in the wage settlement below the limits set via the approved guidelines from the Personnel Department. The wage negotiation process for the period 2013 to 2016 between the NHSL and the OWTU effectively commenced in September 2014 and ended in November 2015. The NHSL submitted the required information to the relevant authorities to facilitate the conduct of wage negotiations and arrived at an amicable settlement with the union.

In addition, adherence to the guidelines which were provided by the Personnel Department who is empowered to act on behalf of the Ministry of Finance in respect of remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for civil servants was maintained.

In view of the aforementioned, the current Minister of Works and Transport was not required to play a role in the negotiation process among the NHSL, the OWTU and the Personnel Department, and as such, the question of the Minister's support for the 14 per cent wage increase is not applicable.

Furthermore, the Minister is not desirous of usurping the legitimate authority or role of any of the parties involved in the conduct of wage negotiation. Thank you warmly, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would like to know from the hon. Minister, whether in the 9 per cent he quoted as the increase, whether the \$250, \$500 and \$1,000 increases in salaries were included in calculation of that 9 per cent or whether those are in addition to the 9 per cent?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** As I indicated earlier, maybe it escaped the Member. The guidelines mandated for a general increase in wages of no more than 9 per cent, in addition, to cash upgrades of \$250, \$500 and \$1,000 for the various categories of staff.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask the hon. Minister, whether this 9 per cent is the new norm by which settlements will be made with

respect to wage negotiations and topping that off will also be wage increases like has been described in the case of NHSL, whether the new norm is being established?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, I made it abundantly clear in response to my friend's question, that this Minister plays no role in that. Whatever the outcome [*Desk thumping*] of these negotiations we live with.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister then saying that the Government has no control whatsoever with respect to wage negotiations and the setting of policies with respect to wage negotiation in a time of economic downturn?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** This question does not—I suggest that the Member file a separate question and he will receive an appropriate answer in due course. [*Desk thumping*]

**College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts  
(Status of Chaguanas Construction)**

**86. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Could the Minister provide the status of the construction of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, Main Campus located at Pierre Link and Connector Roads, Endeavour, Chaguanas?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Madam Speaker, this project is approximately 95 per cent complete. It has experienced some delays due to the following:

1. obtaining a certificate of environmental clearance from the Environmental Management Agency to commence work on-site;
2. receipt of a final power connection to conduct commissioning exercises; and
3. receipt of approval for the designs from the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Madam Speaker, the site is scheduled to be handed over to COSTAATT by the end of July 2016. It is expected that this facility will be truly operational with staff and students for the new academic year commencing September 2016.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, in view of the commence and in fact that you have this advanced stage of completion, 95

per cent, can you tell us—I am hoping that I am still on the track with it—that you did indicate that for the new academic year you are going to start which we expect will be September. Will you be in a position to tell us how many classes you are going to have there?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, at this point I am unable to provide an answer to that question.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Education. Yesterday I had a brief glimpse of the facility. Does the Minister plan to tour that facility any time soon?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, my timetable of activities will depend on instructions from my Prime Minister. Thank you very much. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members. Members! Member for Princes Town, I am on my legs. Members, I am on my legs.

**Mr. Charles:** A follow-up question to the Minister of Education. In view of the fact that the COSTAATT Campus will begin in September at its new location, could we look forward to a reduction in the rents for the facility in Port of Spain, I think it is Melville Lane, Port of Spain.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I will not allow that as a supplemental question.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Beetham and Forres Park Landfills  
(Toxic Landfill Fires)**

**87. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

In light of the need to prevent toxic landfill fires, could the Minister provide the Government's plan to address solid waste management at the Beetham and Forres Park Landfills?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine):** Madam Speaker, safeguarding public health and protecting the environment are major priorities of this Government. To this end, the Government is fully committed to ensuring that the three landfills located at Beetham, Forres Park and Guanapo are properly managed. The reduction of the occurrence of landfill fires is, therefore, pivotal.



It should be noted, however, because of the very nature of landfill, fires at the site are not uncommon. For example, data provided from Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited, SWMCOL, indicates that over the period October 2011 to 2015, 22 serious fires occurred at the Beetham, Forres Park and Guanapo Landfill sites.

Landfill fires can occur spontaneously from a wide range of often unexpected events in defiance of good planning and prudent management. The occurrence is heightened during periods of extreme dryness and heat such as what we are currently experiencing in the country. It is undeniable that a core issue of this problem is a generation of too much waste within our country. The three landfill sites: Beetham, Forres Park and Guanapo collectively receive approximately 1,500 tonnes of waste per day.

This Government has, therefore, as a matter of strategic priority, developed a plan which involves the implementation of an integrated solid waste management system which takes a comprehensive and holistic approach to an environmental and sound management of solid waste in the country. The plan is as follows:

- a) The cornerstone of the integrated solid waste management system would be the containment of waste and waste by-products. This will be underpinned by strategies to promote waste prevention and minimization at the source, diversion of waste from landfills, capture and recovery of materials for the productive economy, reuse, recycling and energy into energy from waste.
- b) This integrated solid waste management system is being formed by the Inter-American Development Bank Finance Technical Corporation study for a strategy and action plan to deal with the management of solid waste for Trinidad and Tobago. The draft final report is due in June 2016.
- c) In addition, the development and implementation of the integrated solid waste management system would involve consultation with all key stakeholders: the business community, civil society, investors, municipal corporations, the Environmental Management Authority and special interest groups.
- d) There is intention to upgrade the facilities for waste that require special handling, transportation and disposal requirements.
- e) The Beetham and Guanapo sites are scheduled for closure on a phased basis. During closure, both sites would be rehabilitated and would

*Oral Answers to Questions*  
[HON. BRIG. GEN. A. ANTOINE]

*Friday, May 13, 2016*

involve construction of gas vents, leachate collection and treatment systems, as well as landscaping. The closure of the site is scheduled to commence next fiscal year.

- f) It is proposed that a waste to energy plant be constructed such as incineration and material recovery facilities on the closed section of the landfill sites.
- g) The Forres Park Landfill would be upgraded and converted to a fully-engineered sanitary landfill according to international standards.
- h) The policy, legislative, institutional and regulatory framework for waste management would be appropriately strengthened to drive a strong resource recovery agenda and stringent enforcement of all relevant laws and regulations.
- i) Education enforcement will be key elements of the strategy to bring about the change in the culture and psyche of the population which would be required to implement the integrated solid waste management system.

In this regard, an education programme will be developed to sensitize, inform and educate the public on sustainable waste management practices such as waste prevention, minimization, reuse, recycling, source separation and special waste. Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, in your explanation within there, is there any plan by your Government to construct a recycling plant and if so, how soon?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** There is no immediate plan to establish a recycling plant as parts of the entire waste management system need to be looked at in terms of the waste management, but there is no immediate plans for the construction of a recycling plant.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, in your presentation, you said that the Forres Park dump will be upgraded according to international standards. Are you aware, Minister, or have you considered, that in that area, there are several villages where people have been affected very seriously, including a school, with many illnesses during the several fires to the point where there are now suspected cases of cancer in that community?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, could you just limit the preamble to the questions in future?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** Yes, the Forres Park would be looked at and according to international standards, the site would be reconstructed taking into consideration the communities surrounding the site.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, you also said that the Beetham site would be closed in the new fiscal year. Are you then going to dump the waste from the Beetham site to Forres Park, creating greater burden? How are you going to dispose of garbage at Beetham?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** The Beetham site would be closed on a phased basis so it will not occur in the next fiscal year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So even on a phased basis, there will be garbage to be discarded, is that going to be sent to the Forres Park dump?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** Again, the Beetham site will be closed on a phased basis, the point in time when garbage will be sent to the Forres Park would be part of that phased basis.

#### **Chaguanas New Health Facility (Status of)**

**88. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Chaguanas West*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister provide the status of the construction of a new health facility in Chaguanas?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The designs and subsequent tendering and evaluation for contractor services have been completed. The Ministry has requested that NIPDEC, together with a consultant, prepare and submit options for a phased approach to project implementation with the priority being the emergency wing. The project has been included in the Ministry of Health's 2016/2017 budget estimates.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for the answer. I just want to know whether the site remains for the Chaguanas Health Facility at Connector Road, Pierre Road.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, I do not have that information with me but I can certainly get it and communicate same to the hon. Member.

**Dr. Khan:** Hon. Minister of Health, could you just indicate when were those designs completed and when were the contractors assessed and completed? What date?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, as I said, the designs and subsequent tendering and evaluation have already been completed. I cannot make the answer any clearer than that, hon. Member.

**Police Service Commission  
(Recruitment Process)**

**90. Mr. Barry Padarath** (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister state:

- a) whether a request has been made by the Police Service Commission to contract an appropriate local firm to conduct the recruitment process for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police;
- b) if the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, state:
  - i. the name of the local firm contracted; and
  - ii. the selection process for the local firm?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Members are advised that pursuant to clause 3(a) of the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police (Selection Process) Order, 2015, the Minister of National Security, by letter dated February 16, 2016, submitted a formal request to the Police Service Commission to undertake the necessary steps to initiate the process for the appointment to the Offices of Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The Police Service Commission has not made any request to contract an appropriate local firm to conduct the recruitment process for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. The Police Service Commission has advised that it is in the process of finalizing the request for proposals. This request for proposals will be considered at a statutory meeting which is scheduled for Thursday, May 19, 2016. [*Desk thumping*]

**World GTL Inc. and World GTL St. Lucia Ltd. v Petrotrin  
(Outcome of Case)**

**91. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister advise the outcome of Case No. 111988, World GTL Inc. and World GTL St. Lucia Ltd. v Petrotrin in the London Court of International Arbitration?

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Acting Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The London Court of International Arbitration, LCIA, issued its judgment on April 24, 2014 dismissing all the claims made by World GTL parties and ordered them:

- (1) To bear the costs of the arbitration; and
- (2) To pay Petrotrin for its legal costs.

Here is the summary of the award. There was a unanimous award on April 22, 2014. The Arbitral Tribunal determined that:

- (1) WGTL did not establish any fiduciary or equivalent non-fiduciary duty;
- (2) All claims of World GTL parties were dismissed;
- (3) Petrotrin was awarded \$251,130 on its counterclaim plus interest;
- (4) WGTL ordered to pay Petrotrin US \$118,851 for the cost of arbitration, plus interest, and World GTL was ordered to pay most of Petrotrin's legal cost and other costs totally US \$3.9 million plus interest.

Further to this award, the House of Representatives is now advised as follows.

- (1) Upon notification of the LCIA award, Petrotrin's External Counsel Sidley Austin LLP, filed a motion in the Federal Court, Southern District of New York to:
  - (a) Confirm the LCIA award in the New York Federal Court case that was commenced by WGTL in February 2010 and stayed in August 2010 pending arbitration based on Petrotrin's motion to stay and compel arbitration; and
  - (b) To confirm the ICC award.
- (2) Further to the said motion, Petrotrin hired an investigative agency to conduct an assets search on WGTL and its principals to determine what assets were available to satisfy the award made against WGTL.
- (3) The assets search report did not reveal the existence of assets belonging to World GTL to satisfy Petrotrin's award and indicated limited assets of related third parties existed. However, Counsel advised that to get to the assets of the third party, a case of "piercing the corporate veil" would have had to be made out and this was not likely to be successful on the known facts.

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- (4) Counsel recommended, “Going forward with trying to achieve a settlement with World GTL that will end incurring further costs with respect to this dispute, provide cash and other benefits to Petrotrin and ensure that if the project were to continue in some form in the future, there are no obstacles from the past that might give WGTL an opportunity to re-asset itself.”

**Hon. Members:** Reassess.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** No, to re-asset. To bring back assets onto its plate. I know what I am reading, Sir. Yeah, I am answering the question, not you. [*Desk thumping*]

- (5) Petrotrin’s then board approved a settlement with World GTL on January 07, 2015. The parties entered into a settlement agreement dated April 07, 2015 and on April 08, 2015 requested the Court, Southern District of New York order entry of consent judgment confirming final arbitration awards in both the ICC and LCIA arbitrations.
- (6) And finally, Madam Speaker, pursuant to the settlement agreement, Petrotrin has received payment of US \$2 million from World GTL and documents executed by World GTL transferring its share in the World GTL Trinidad, its rights in the World GTL patent and extinguishing and/or transferring all of its contractual rights to Petrotrin.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Minister, further to your response, were there any reasons given as to why the veil of incorporation could not be lifted?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Well, from my understanding that was the advice of Counsel, the New York counsel and in these international arbitration we have to be advised by our international counsel. We hired them for that. Okay, so we have to take the advice of the counsel. Thank you.

### **Gas-to-Liquids Project (Details of)**

**92. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

With respect to the “Gas-to-liquids” project involving World GTL Inc. could the Minister state:

- a) the total investment;
- b) the profit or loss;

- c) the return on investment by Petrotrin; and
- d) the status of the GTL Plant to be built by World GTL Inc.?

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Acting Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Madam Speaker, the reply to question 92: the gas-to-liquid project involving World GTL Incorporated had a total investment of TT \$2.59 billion. The plant is currently in receivership and has not been commissioned. The receiver is currently finalizing arrangement for the sale of assets.

**Nursing Graduates of COSTAATT and School of Nursing  
(Details of)**

**93. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (Fyzabad)** asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister indicate:

- a) the number of nationals who have graduated from the College of Nursing, COSTAATT and the School of Nursing, Ministry of Health as Nursing Personnel (inclusive of nurses, advanced practice nurses, nurse interns, midwives and nursing assistants) from 2010 to 2015; and
- b) the number of graduates from part (a), who have secured employment contracts with any Regional Health Authorities?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The answer to part (a) is 2,110 and the answer to part (b) is 1,621.

**Faculty of Medical Sciences  
(Details of)**

**94. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (Fyzabad)** asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister state:

- a) the number of nationals who have graduated from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies as medical doctors over the past three (3) years;
- b) the number of graduates from part (a), who have completed an internship at any Regional Health Authority; and
- c) the number of graduates from part (b) who have received employment contracts at any Regional Health Authority and the respective dates of employment?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The answer to part (a) is 553. The answer to part (b) is 538 and the answer to part (c) is 538.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, will the hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us disaggregated by campuses, since it is the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, I think that is another question which was not asked. I would be happy to respond at a future time if he asks it.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Whistleblower Protection Bill, 2015  
(Extension of Time)**

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Madam Speaker, having regard to the Third Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Whistleblower Protection Bill, 2015, I beg to move that the Committee be allowed an extension of seven weeks in order to complete its work and submit a final report by June 17, 2016.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
(LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AND TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY) ORDER, 2016**

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Acting Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* it is provided by subsection (3) of section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, that as soon as may be after the Elections and Boundaries Commission (hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”) has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4 of the said Act, the Minister shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report:

*And whereas* the Commission has submitted a report to the Minister in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4:

*And whereas* the draft of an Order entitled the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order,



2016” giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2016:

*Be it resolved* that the draft of the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2016” be approved.

Madam Speaker, it is with a great sense of pride and honour that I present to this House for its adoption the Eighth Report of the EBC, under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50 for the purpose of local government elections.

Madam Speaker, before I get into the core of my presentation, I want to take this opportunity to compliment the hard work, and the independent work in particular, of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. [*Desk thumping*] I will be brave enough to say here today that this is one institution created by the Constitution that has worked extremely well in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The EBC, founded in the 1976 Republican Constitution, Part IV, Chapter 4, was formed from the amalgamation of two entities, the Boundaries Commission and the Elections Commission. Madam Speaker, since its inception and its predecessor institutions the Elections and Boundaries Commission has successfully conducted 15 general elections, starting in 1956, and the last one in 2015.

During that period, it has successfully concluded and supervised and administered 16 local government elections. And finally, over its tenure, it has successfully implemented and supervised and administered nine Tobago House of Assembly elections, starting in 1980 and the last one being in 2013.

Madam Speaker, all these elections were free and fair and free from fear. They have demonstrated without a shadow of a doubt that they are independent and based on foreign intervention, in most cases, with observer entities coming from Caricom and sometimes the Commonwealth and even the OAS, I think, once came here, the EBC has always performed creditably and there has been absolutely nobody over that period who has been able to point a single finger at the independence of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Madam Speaker, it is also the convention of this Parliament, I want to make this point, and also the convention of the Cabinet that we do not make major, or if

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any, amendments to an EBC report. They are debated and accepted in their current form. I am sure that this precedent will be continued today during the course of this debate.

Madam Speaker, just to start from ground zero. The Municipal Corporations Act identifies 14 corporations; five of them are municipal corporations and nine of them are regional corporations. As we speak, Madam Speaker, of the 14 corporations, eight are controlled by the People's National Movement and six are controlled by the United National Congress. There is a total of 136 electoral districts. Of the 136 electoral districts, 84 are controlled by the People's National Movement, 46 are controlled by the United National Congress and a mere three, Member for St. Augustine, are controlled by the Congress of the People and three are controlled by the ILP, as we speak.

Also to note, Madam Speaker, is the fact that the number of electoral districts in the municipal corporations is fixed by law. So that means the City of Port of Spain, the City of San Fernando, the Borough of Arima, the Borough of Point Fortin and the Borough of Chaguanas, the number of electoral districts in these municipal corporations is fixed by law. Port of Spain is 12, San Fernando is nine, Arima is 7, Point Fortin is six and Chaguanas is eight.

I will now deal with the body of the report. Madam Speaker, this report really proposes several boundary changes to the local government system. In summary, for the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, the alterations to boundaries in nine electoral districts. There are changes to the name in three electoral districts and the creation of a brand new electoral district called Carapo. With regard to Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, alterations to four electoral districts, and in Arima, alteration to four electoral districts.

I would just briefly go through the rules that govern these changes. First and foremost, Madam Speaker, rule number two determines the number of electoral districts in a regional electoral area in Trinidad and Tobago. How this is done, you begin with four basic electoral districts. Then you take the number of electors in the entire district. You divide it by 15,000 and the number you get you add it to four. If it is a number like 3.2, you assume it to be four. As an example, to illustrate this rule, Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation can be used as an example. It begins with four basic electoral districts. The total electorate amounts to 28,834. So you take 28,834, divide it by 15,000 and you get 1.92. That rounds off to two. So Mayaro will have six electoral districts, Member for Mayaro.

I would just quote the case of Tunapuna. Tunapuna, you start with four basic electoral districts. Tunapuna has a total electorate of 169,066. You divide that by 15,000 and the answer is 11.27. That rounds off to 12. Twelve add four is 16. Tunapuna now has 15 electoral districts and that is the basis on which a new one was added.

The other major rule that governs this EBC report is Rule 1, which states, *inter alia*, that, shall the number of electors in one electoral district of an electoral area exceed or be less than the number of electors of any other electoral district of that area by more than 25 per cent, the boundaries will have to be adjusted and this occurred in the case of Arima and Penal/Debe and also Tunapuna.

In the case of Arima, the electoral district with the most amount of electors was Malabar South with 4,548. The lowest was Calvary, 3,518, giving a difference of 29 per cent. Hence, the reason for boundary changes to comply with that regulation. So in that context now, four electoral districts had to undergo boundary changes.

By the same token, it happened in Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. The electoral district of Debe/L'Esperance/Union Hall has 9,436 electors. The lowest is Penal, 7,496 electors, which is a difference of 26 per cent and, therefore, four electoral districts had their boundaries adjusted to comply with this regulation.

### **2.30 p.m.**

So to summarize, Madam Speaker, this part, the recommendations are as follows, coming out of this EBC Report: changes in the boundaries of (a), four electoral districts in the electoral area and one municipal corporation, that this is Arima; nine electoral districts in the electoral area of the regional corporation of Tunapuna/Piarco; four districts in the electoral area of the regional corporation of Penal/Debe; and changes in the name of three electoral districts, in the electoral area of the regional corporation of Tunapuna/Piarco.

Just for the record, I want to give the name change to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, the creation of a new electoral district called Carapo.

And the following three electoral districts have gone through a name change:

- The electoral district of Five Rivers/Lopinot has now been renamed, Five Rivers.
- The electoral district of La Florissante/Cleaver, has now been named La Florissante/Lopinot.

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- The electoral district of D'Abadie/Carapo, has now been renamed Cleaver/D'Abadie.

So, Madam Speaker, this, in essence, is what this House is being asked to adopt, the report of the EBC. Just for the record, the laying of this report, section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50, states that no less than two years or no more than three years, a report must be laid of the submission from the previous report. So what happened is November 22, 2012, Cabinet accepted the 7<sup>th</sup> Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. On May 28, 2015, Cabinet accepted the 8<sup>th</sup> Report of the EBC. On May 29, 2015, the Draft Order was laid in Parliament. However, the Order was not approved during the last Parliament and, therefore, would have lapsed with the dissolution of Parliament. Hence the reason we have reintroduced the Order here for your adoption.

Madam Speaker, let me just go on record as saying, the previous administration had from May 29 to September 07, to debate and pass this Motion. It was not done. It was allowed to lapse. One wonders why, but I will tell you why. Because this report indicated a resounding victory for the PNM in the 2013 local government election, and probably they felt it inopportune at the time to debate a report that was indicating a tremendous victory of the People's National Movement just three months before the general election. [*Desk thumping*] But that did not save them, because they still went ahead and lost the general election of 2015. [*Desk thumping*]

I have sort of summarized the contents of a very comprehensive document here before this Parliament. I will hope that Members study it in detail, because as you all know, another local government election is on the horizon.

Permit me, Madam Speaker, now to deal with one aspect of local government that I have been championing on behalf of this administration over the last several months, which is our local government reform agenda. During the 2015 election campaign, the People's National Movement revealed this document to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Holds up a copy of the PNM manifesto*] one of the best prepared manifesto [*Desk thumping*] in the history of party politics in Trinidad and Tobago. I would not tell this House this is a party secret, but I would not say who was the major author of this document but by now you all will know.

But, Madam Speaker, one of the major policy positions of this administration, was two—we campaigned in the election on two platforms of serious policy shifts. One was the creation of a Ministry of rural development, that we would

swing the balance back to more balanced spatial development across Trinidad and Tobago, and secondly, was significant and fundamental local government reform.

And, Madam Speaker, let me just rewind the tape from the beginning. It was in 1845 that Lord Harris, then Governor of Trinidad, not Tobago, instituted a system of counties and wards in Trinidad, way back in 1845. In 1945, the County Council system was implemented, and since 1945, the only fundamental change that occurred in terms of local government in Trinidad, was the 1990 Municipal Corporations Act, which was, in fact, an NAR initiative.

However, having said that, one of the issues with the Municipal Corporations Act—there was a time everybody knew what the schedule was for those of us, I would say us, who are old enough. Local government was the County Council system, and the County Council had certain responsibilities: minor roads and drains, some aspects of public health, cemeteries, recreation grounds, some aspects of building approvals.

But by and large, when the Municipal Corporations Act was incorporated, while there were significant boundary changes, where the counties were now put into the context of regional corporations, the schedule of responsibilities that were transferred from the County Councils to the municipal corporations, remained by and large the same. This time around, we intend to keep, in a general sense, the 14 regional corporations, but what we plan to do is fundamentally change the system of service delivery, and the areas of responsibility that will now be assigned to local government corporations.

Because, Madam Speaker, as we speak, one of the greatest challenges facing this country is, service delivery. Service delivery is at the core of our inertia in Trinidad and Tobago. It has absolutely nothing to do with how much money “yuh spend”, check successive budgets. Patrick Manning, former Prime Minister’s last budget in 2009—2010, was \$45 billion. It was ramped up over the UNC administration from 2010—2015, to well over \$60 billion spent per annum.

Yet for some strange reason, you ask the average citizen of Trinidad and Tobago if you are satisfied with the service delivery. They tell you no, because we think now that the service delivery is clogged up in a centralized form of administration, that is not facilitative to service delivery. And we cannot keep pumping money in a flawed system, and expect it to deliver the result that we need. [*Desk thumping*]

So because of that principle and that policy of the People’s National Movement, we conducted 14 consultations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, one

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each in each corporation. I want to go on record of this Parliament to say that probably that was one of the most successful form of consultations that has ever happened in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And it cost a mere \$2 million; \$2 million [*Desk thumping*] for 14 national consultations held throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad in every single corporation. I want to also say, I want to compliment both the PNM corporations and the UNC corporations, [*Desk thumping*] because the consultations were extremely well-received at all the corporations, because everybody who is involved in local government seemed to have bought into this process.

Madam Speaker, I just want to indicate that, in those 14 consultations, the comment that caught my attention and to me summarized the whole process in a very succinct and clear way, was held at the Princes Town consultation at the Princes Town Regional Corporation, good. It was held at the Princes Town Regional Corporation consultation, and the quotation comes from one former Member of Parliament for Princes Town, Mr. Subhas Panday, and he said: all previous local government reform focused on decentralization, this one rightfully focused on devolution. [*Desk thumping*] To me that has capsuled the essence of what these consultations are about, and strange enough, as time passes, people get more matured, and they get greater wisdom, and this wisdom comes from one Mr. Subhas Panday, a former UNC Member of Parliament for Princes Town.

I have been passed a note here, saying that 14 national consultations cost the People's National Movement \$2 million, and I am talking about everything recorded. In fact, there is a 15-minute video of a summary of the 14—all that is included in the cost, and \$2 million. I can bring the records and show this Parliament. The UNC consultation on constitutional reform, I think it was four meetings, cost a staggering TT \$14 million. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, I will now deal very quickly with the specific areas that we plan to reform. First and foremost, most fundamental, we will be allowing the regional corporations to collect, retain and spend land and building and property taxes within their jurisdictions. [*Desk thumping*] Now, this is an extremely fundamental change in terms of the financial management of the country.

Trinidad and Tobago's accounts and finance are governed by the Exchequer and Audit Act. The Exchequer and Audit Act approves one account. There is only one account for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; it is called the consolidated account. Here we are making fundamental legislative change,

allowing 14 corporations to collect municipal taxes, to collect property taxes, keep it in their coffers, and spend it in the community where it was collected. That is fundamental change. [*Desk thumping*]

We plan to give some form of executive authority to regional councils. As we speak, they are part-time and they have no executive authority. The only authority they have is at a council level, to make policy and to approve projects, but they have no executive authority. For those of you who have been involved in local government, some of my colleagues on this Bench, know there is always an issue between the council and the administration, because public servants know where their power lies. So they flaunt the idea that the councillors have no authority, no executive authority. We plan to institute a system, not identical to the THA, but similar to the THA, where we will be appointing something like secretaries, that they will have an administration in each of the corporations.

More fundamentally, the third point is we are going to significantly increase the areas of responsibility that will be assigned to regional corporations. School repairs, as we speak, no offence to the Minister of Education, the Minister of Education for the first time since I know myself, that all schools opened on time, with no repairs pending, was done under our current Minister of Education. [*Desk thumping*]

**2.45 p.m.**

But having said that, Madam Speaker, we do not think it is good governance for one state entity called the Education Facilities Company Limited to be in charge of 450 primary schools and 157 secondary schools. So if we devolve that authority to the level of the regional corporation where they will be responsible for the school repairs for the schools within their jurisdiction, we think it is a better system of service delivery.

Another area of responsibility we plan to assign to the regional corporations is social service delivery. Social service delivery—you heard the Minister of Social Development and Family Services yesterday at the post-Cabinet press conference. It is festered with inefficiency, incompetence and to a large extent, possible corruption. There are stories about Ministers with food card in their trunk sharing. Okay?

And then while we have that extravagance and wastage on one side, you hear old ladies complaining that they are getting a runaround to be assessed for their pension and that, we think, local government is closer to the people. Who will know the lady who is in need? Who will know the family that is under serious

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threat of extreme poverty? Who will know the family that is subject to domestic violence, child abuse and incest? These are community-based things and community-based issues are better handled by the community, and there is nobody who represents the community politically more than a councillor. So it is that devolution of authority, that devolution of responsibility that we plan to implement.

We will be authorizing the regional corporations to approve buildings, simple buildings and small developments within their jurisdiction. And, as we speak, we are adding a couple other things to this area of responsibility. But I want to guard the nation on this local government reform. It is not our intention to create 14 independent republics. There is still something called central government, there is still something called national policy. So while you will be autonomous and you will be empowered, there is a limit to which we can do that. Additionally, we do not want to bite more than we can chew. Good? And that is what will be happening.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Who will be coordinating all of this now?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** I am coming to that now. We plan to boost the municipal police service significantly. As we speak, it is part of our policy in this document [*Document in hand*] to recruit 100 municipal police officers per corporation, so that would be 1,400 municipal police officers, and we are in the process of executing that. However, legislatively, what we want to do with the municipal officers is that they have to fall under the—as we speak, they fall under the Statutory Authorities Service Commission and the Public Service Commission but, in truth and in fact, they are precepted officers or they are officers of the law, so they must fall under the Police Service Commission, and be under the purview of the Police Complaints Authority, because they can misbehave and there is no disciplinary process in place to organize that. Also, in the legislation, we want to give greater influence of NGOs and CBOs in the community in the whole governance process. So, Madam Speaker, by and large, these are some of the areas that we plan to incorporate.

Very, very, fundamental to this reform process also is the fact that this administration has decided that when this process is completed, the Ministry of Local Government will be no more, because we felt that once you have a Ministry of Local Government, you always have a big stick over the regional corporations. To show our commitment to empowering the regional corporations with their new level of responsibility and their new level of autonomy, we find it is necessary to what I call “retire” the Ministry of Local Government. [*Desk thumping*]



**Dr. Moonilal:** You out!

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** No, no, no, and then my responsibility is to change the developmental landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, and bring into the most prominent Ministry in Trinidad, the Ministry of Rural Development. [*Desk thumping*] So let me say something now. The oversight will be provided by the Ministry of Finance in a way similar to how the THA operates. Obviously, they will be under the purview of the Auditor General. If the central accounting office of the Parliament kicks in, the Parliament will have accounting oversight of the regional corporations in addition to the Ministries.

And, finally, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, this is a democracy, this is a political process. You underperform as a corporation, you mismanage the public funds as a corporation, the final arbiter in that is the people, and every three years the people will be asked to adjudicate on your performance, and that is where your final arbiter is. I hope that the population will be matured enough so when they see incompetence, they will vote it out and when they see performance they will vote it in. So, Madam Speaker—how much time do I have remaining?

**Madam Speaker:** You stop at 3.06.10.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** 3-0?

**Madam Speaker:** 3.06.10.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Okay. Fifteen minutes. Madam Speaker, the position we are in now, we have concluded the 14 consultations. We have our draft manifesto, which is the general guidelines of the policy. We plan to prepare, distilling all the comments we got from the 14 consultations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We will distil all the ideas we get there—we have a team working—and we will be preparing a draft policy statement for the approval of the Cabinet. After that or concurrent with that, more likely, the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, he has been given the responsibility to lead a drafting team that will be drafting significant legislative amendments to two main Acts, which are the Exchequer and Audit Act and, in particular, the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990 where all these new changes will be reflected.

On the conclusion of the legislative drafting and the policy position, we will have one final round of consultation, not 14, probably two or three—one in north, one in south and one in central—to lay out in detail the policy position and the legislative changes that we are proposing, and people will have one more iteration

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to make their input felt, and then before we table what we will call omnibus legislation, at the time, to this Parliament. We hope to table that legislation here to go before a joint select committee possibly by the end of September, early October latest, and then that will be the position now in which we will face the population for the 2016 local government election.

Madam Speaker, it is common knowledge that local election is due on October 21, 2016; that is when the three years would have expired. Under the Municipal Corporations Act, we have 90 days in which to keep the election. So the back-end date for the election will be January 21, 2017. I want to give this House this assurance that under no circumstance and, I repeat, under no circumstance will the local government election that will be legislatively due by October, 21 2016, under no circumstance will the election be postponed. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Remember PNM postponed it three times.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Well that was then, this is now. We have a new leader.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Would the hon. Member give way just to answer a question?—your having said that just now. Did I hear you say that you were going to bring the relevant legislation that would facilitate the elections for consideration by a joint select committee in September?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Yeah, but just to clarify the point, we will bring the suite of legislation to joint select by September, early October for its consideration, but this 2016 local government election will be held under the old rules and regulations, and then when the Parliament passes the legislation, probably in 2017 sometime, we will have a two- to three-year period for the transformation, but this transformation is fundamental. Most importantly, we have to improve the administration of the corporations for this to work.

During the consultation, do you know what people were saying? Why give them more authority when the little they have they are not effecting it well? So we know that they need major human resource capacity building at the regional corporations. If you look at the structure of a regional corporation, it is old, it is antiquated. It is an administration, it is not a delivery machinery. So, for example, Madam Speaker, most corporations do not have engineers, most corporations do not have quantity surveyors and most corporations do not have project managers. Corporations do not have supply chain managers, they do not have asset managers. These are new skill sets that you need to run delivery institutions. So

we will be making a new organizational structure for the corporation, staffing it with people who have the skill sets to deliver.

On this point, let me make the point. Madam Speaker, this country spends approximately \$600 million a year on GATE.

**Mr. Imbert:** Seven hundred million.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:**—\$700 million on GATE, and we produce top-class and world-class graduates, but the economy cannot absorb the level of graduates we are now producing. The issue is our young people in this country are suffering from underemployment. Let me make the point that in a real sense to those people who are underemployed, underemployment is worse than unemployment, because it makes you feel belittled, because you have gone to university, got a bachelor's degree—most of them now have master's degree—and they come out and they feel underemployed because they are really doing clerical work in most of these government offices and/or private sector companies. Here is a tremendous opportunity with 14 new modern structures to incorporate these young, bright people that we are producing in this country and make them gainfully employed to the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So, having said that, I have outlined the basic contents of this EBC report, outlining the recommended boundary changes. I have outlined our reform agenda for local government, which is well on the way and is progressing very smoothly. We are at a critical point now where we are drafting the policy document and, hopefully, starting the legislative drafting for tabling into this Parliament around September or October.

So, Madam Speaker, finally, we face a 2016 local government election. At the end of the day, it is still about politics. I want to go on record as saying here that since the People's National Movement, which I am the proud chairman of, has elected Dr. Keith Rowley as our leader, we have won virtually every single election that we have fought. We started off by winning handsomely the 2013 THA elections. We went on to win handsomely the 2013 local government elections, eight corporations to six—84 electoral districts to 43. We went on to win the St. Joseph by-election. We went on to win handsomely the 2015 general elections so that today we sit on this side of the House. [*Desk thumping*]

I have absolutely no doubt, Madam Speaker, that come to the end of 2016, we will also win handsomely the 2016 local government election. [*Desk thumping*] With these words, Madam Speaker, I recommend the adoption of this EBC Report and I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**3.00 p.m.**

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, let me begin by congratulating the Minister for carrying out the consultations he is doing, and just to, you know, indicate that a lot of the ideas that he has proposed for the reform of local government are in sync with the thinking of the United National Congress and the People's Partnership. In fact, I would refer to the Minister a document which we left at the Ministry when I exited office, called the Policy on Local Government Transformation and Modernisation: Better Quality Services, Better Communities and Stronger Councils. In this document the Minister will find a lot of agreement with several of the things that he has said, and, in fact, in the appendix to this document every single piece of legislation that had to be reviewed, as well as every change that had to be made to the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990, and to amend it, had been made and detailed here for implementation. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister made reference to some of the powers that were going to be given to local government, and indicated that local government will have the opportunity to pass simple plans and simple developments and housing plans and what have you, but, just to note, in this document, which I will refer to page 24, building on a philosophy of participatory planning and development, we said here that this would “be a key feature of the new council”, and:

“Within the framework of the new Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill...”

—which was brought to this Parliament by Dr. Tewarie—

“Local Government bodies will be planning authorities in their own right; a one-stop agency for both planning and building approval for simple developments as defined.”

It goes on to say:

“This arrangement will reduce bureaucratic red tape and eliminate the protracted application process”—and what have you.

So that a lot of what the Minister is saying we have gone through that, and we too held 15 consultations. I can assure the Minister it was at a very low price also. It was not any excessive prices.

The Minister made an interesting point about service delivery, and he is correct, this country is failing at all levels in terms of service delivery. And in times of recession and our need to attract more foreign investment, and to get repetitive tourism, we are failing miserably in the area of tourism in particular; and the Tobago House of Assembly, as a local government authority in its own way, you know, has to do something about service quality if it wants to set new standards and to attract new foreign exchange, a continuous flow of foreign exchange in that regard.

But, Minister, service delivery is not only a function of a clogged system, it is not only a function of centralization—you are right on that point—but it is also a function of people, and whether people want to serve or not to serve. We in this country have to stop defending poor quality service by talking about the past and colonialism, and so on, and make an instantaneous leap, and make a decision to serve people and to do it with a sense of duty and responsibility as part of our work ethic. There has to be a revolution in work ethics in the country. [*Desk thumping*] The problem is that we are using the wrong methods of hiring people in organizations, and whereas we look at people's degrees, and so on, and so forth, while we use the word "competencies", we have to shift the way we hire people, and we have to hire people for the right values.

Do people have the right values when they come into the organization? It is difficult to train people in values, therefore you now have to recruit people to make sure they have the right values, and, Minister, that is where we are going wrong. In the health service we are going wrong there because people do not have the right values. We are going wrong in local government, we are going wrong in tourism, and that revolution and that new paradigm, that new mental set, mindset, has to take place if we are to move on.

You made another point, Minister, with respect to collecting taxes and the ability of local government corporations to spend this, we are in agreement with that, but you are also going to agree that some regional corporations will not be able to collect the same amount of taxes as other regional corporations. You will have a sense of disequilibrium, therefore you run the risk of undermining your rural development goals which is, you know, to create some kind of equalization in terms of the development thrust. So that the goal, therefore, you want to be sure that you have a formula—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** Urban bias.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Yeah. Reduce the urban bias, which is what the Minister wants to do, which we all want to do, because you have to reduce the urban bias, not only in terms of the urban bias but in terms of ensuring that you move population to new centres, that you build new towns, and that you create new industries in the spaces that you have, geographic spaces you have outside of Port of Spain and make for, therefore, for a higher quality living.

Minister, one of the things I noted that you have not said in your local government consultations is the need to develop self-sustaining communities, and a whole development plan has to be put in place as to how you develop self-sustaining communities. Unless we get communities and leaders in these communities to take responsibility for the community, and to let their ideas flourish in the development of their communities, we will not have the kind of future society that we envisage, a society where people are going to be very proud and where they are going to have to take care of community assets; that is the way I want to put it.

You made the point about the Minister of Education opening schools on time; if he did so, congratulations, that is very good, but you did not make the point as to how many schools, immediately following the opening of schools, remain closed; very much within the next two weeks, children going home. Just in today's news we are hearing about Aranguez and Barataria, and the whole conflict that is existing there. So did we manipulate the system to show that a certain number of schools were in fact opened and repaired but a vast number were also not repaired? So, therefore, your point is well taken in this sense that the EFCL by itself cannot manage 498-or-what schools. Therefore, giving the authority and devolution of power, whatever you want to call it, to the local government corporations is a good thing, but you must be prepared to give them the resources; otherwise [*Desk thumping*] we are going to end up the same way. You have to give them the resources to do it.

With respect to another point you made about the police, the municipal police, I agree with you. The municipal police, wherever they are, they also run into conflict with the Mayor's office, or the Chairmen's office. In fact, in some corporations you do not know whether you could even give any instructions to the municipal police, and that is an anomaly that has to be dealt with and has to be dealt with fast, because the municipal police, well constituted, can in fact play an important role in community policing and increasing the security of the community. Mr. Minister, in that regard, I draw your attention to the fact that the

only corporation that has a proper municipal police building with all the facilities is the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, which was built during my time—[*Desk thumping*—no other corporation.

Mr. Minister, you talked recently in your presentation about the conditions under which workers work in the corporations, you are also right, you are perfectly right, the conditions are atrocious. When you go to Princes Town, when you go to Laventille, the conditions are atrocious. Mr. Minister, I want to tell you that during my time as Minister of Local Government we had designed buildings for Arima, for Diego Martin, for Princes Town, and for Penal. All those designs are completed. The tenders were done. I would like to hear from you why is it that the buildings in Princes Town have not started, the building [*Desk thumping*] in Penal has not started. Mr. Minister, you know, I think—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** San Fernando.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Exactly. San Fernando should have a proper building, make sure when they build it, it does not become a problem like the Tarouba Stadium, and that they really build it and finish it within the term, otherwise you will have another Tarouba Stadium on your hand, Member of Parliament for San Fernando West. But you need 14 proper administrative complexes in the country, just like the Chaguanas Borough Corporation.

Mr. Minister, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation is a good example of what you need but you have to maintain it, and right now the funds to maintain that building are not being provided to the corporation. So you have some good ideas, and I am saying to you that we share those ideas. We share your idea about executive councils and the need to put some power in the hands of the Mayors and the Chairmen, and for the very reason you said, because today the administrators can shut down the council by not carrying out the instructions. They can virtually shut it down, and they actually do that, and, therefore, a lot cannot be done. I will tell you that when I was Minister of Local Government there was a CEO at the Arima Borough Corporation who did not carry out many of the instructions of the then People's Partnership controlled Arima Borough Corporation and brought that corporation—sorry, the council members—to their knees because of that [*Desk thumping*] particular CEO who did not do what he was supposed to do. I will go further to say that it might have had political groundings in terms of his behaviour. We have to stop that. [*Crosstalk*]

Member for Arouca/Maloney, wherever any politician—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I would like to hear the Member for Tabaquite, please.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Let me make myself clear, wherever any politician, or any member of the public service acts contrary to the will and interest of the people of an area, they must be brought to account. [*Desk thumping*] We will not stand here [*Interruption*] because there are certain principles which we are going to enunciate as to how we go forward with our local government, and one of those principles will be the principle of fairness and fair treatment for everyone. [*Desk thumping*] You will see when we produce our manifesto, you will see us outlining our philosophy and you would see us outlining our principles by which we intend to govern in terms of local government and governing the country.

Madam Speaker, as I prepared for this debate I asked myself a very important question, why is there still so much apathy with respect to local government, and the Minister answered why there is so much apathy. We are trying to reform local government to give people a more direct say in the affairs of their communities, but we have to ask another question also, what is it there that people do not like about governance as a whole in Trinidad and Tobago? What is it they do not like? What is it in the general governance of the country, now in particular, or in the psyche of our citizens, which frustrates local involvement in local government?

What is the objective of the reform process, Madam Speaker? The objective of a reform process is really to build better communities, self-sustaining communities, to build empowered communities, and to do that you must have involvement and get people involved. And, therefore, Mr. Minister, if we have to reform local government it is one thing to tinker with the boundaries, and so on, and so forth, that is not going to give you reform. What is going to give you reform is how you get people involved, how they are going to make a greater impact upon their own life, how they are going to ensure that they are masters of their destinies in the areas in which [*Desk thumping*] they have found themselves. We have to find mechanisms to involve more people.

Madam Speaker, therefore we need to find mechanisms and institutions and structures to embrace a greater number of persons from the community, working—whether it is through established committees, advisory, or otherwise—to improve delivery, and the performance of local government. In this country we have probably not noticed it and we continue to miss it, but I hope we do not do so for long into the future. We must not miss the role that civil society is demanding in terms of their involvement in their destiny and involvement in the direction of the country, and we run the risk in this country of something that is



happening in the United States, which is a voter revolt, but that voter revolt will turn into a citizen revolt in a different kind of way and we need to ensure that we build structures, and we can start at local government, in order to ensure that people are involved in decisions that affect them. And that is why a part of our philosophy of local government is participatory governance and direct citizen participation. [*Desk thumping*]

### **3.15 p.m.**

In that regard, in our transformation document we had proposed the establishment of civil society boards voted by delegates of civil society organizations at the local level to work in the local government system, and also stakeholders advisory councils on specific sectors as required, especially where you are talking about rural development, and where you need to bring developmental plans. I think you have to look at what are the structures you are going to put in place in order to accommodate this kind of intervention by the people in terms of how we move forward.

Madam Speaker, we have to redefine, we have to restructure the meaning and form of representation, and not limit it to the elected councillors. We have to widen what we mean by representation and we have to structure it to ensure that we get it at the local level.

This would have to do with organization restructuring, not only in terms of positions, but in terms of organizing for community consensus and results. Therefore, you may have in each region community councils, but also to have the community councils at each electoral district level, where you can have that wide involvement of people.

The COP had a good concept which was the circle concept, to make sure you expand and to involve people. You see, one of the problems we have with development in this country is alienation, and the only way you can remove alienation is not by legislation, but by active policies that promote inclusivity of people in what you do. [*Desk thumping*] That is what you have to do. Local government gives you one of the best opportunities to promote inclusivity. I tell you that because in 1983 I started as the Chairman of the St. Patrick County Council until 1987. I was Mayor of Chaguanas from 2003 to 2009, and then again I was Minister of Local Government. Therefore, I have walked the platform from both sides, and I can tell you that this country suffers in terms of development.

You can manage a relationship between the local government authority and the central government. You can manage that. You can have laws put in place that

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would protect local government and ensure, just like the Tobago House of Assembly gets its fair percentage, local government will get its fair percentage. I hope that the Minister will make sure that the legislation contains provisions to ensure that local government is not underfunded and they get what is their due, otherwise the whole process fails. Beyond that, unless you have inclusivity, you are not going to have transformation.

Madam Speaker, this debate comes on the heels of this ritual, I like to call it Minister, of local government reform, and you are right, it is on the agenda for a very long time. I want to credit Dr. Carson Charles of the National Alliance for Reconstruction in 1990 for the role he took and brought about the 1990 Act. The 1990 Act is not a bad Act. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1990 as amended is not a bad Act. You know where we have gone wrong? We have gone wrong in terms of implementing the Act, and we have gone wrong in terms of carrying out the provisions of the Act.

The Minister is right. When you do not have the quality of personnel that you should have at the local government authorities—even now I have concerns with the quality of lawyers, I have concerns with the quality of engineers, I have concern with the quality of medical persons and the quality of financial people who have been hired as professionals at the local government corporations, carrying out the functions that they are about to carry out. Some of them do not come to work. You cannot find them and, therefore, it is a place sometimes of retirement for them. Minister, you have to do something about it, because on this side we stand for productivity. [*Desk thumping*] We stand for productivity in the interest of public accountability. [*Crosstalk*] We stand for accountability. And the wastage that you spoke about at local government is a wastage that we recognized, is a wastage that we tried to deal with, and something has to be done, because people must not suffer as they have suffered because of the lack of productivity in the public service. It must come to an end, and we have a responsibility to speak about it, but more than that, to act, to do something about it. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] I want to tell you, Minister, as Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, perhaps you have not heard the stories, but I tried to do something about it.

When I left local government, I left a system in there in which a Minister could have contacted any local government corporation using television. They could just sit in Port of Spain and speak to an entire local government corporation, cutting down the time it took to travel from Rio Claro to Port of Spain or what have you. You know, they never told the Minister when he went into office that there was such a system in the corporation, till I told him.

Why did they not tell him that? Why did public servants hide that information from the Minister? Why did they not tell him then? There was a television production facility there, until I had to tell him and he went and looked for the equipment and found it. Those things were done to transform local government and to reach people and to communicate with people, and to save money and to deal with productivity. [*Desk thumping*] So we were dealing with these issues, and we were not afraid to deal with them.

When you govern, you govern with the soft issues in mind, but you govern with the hard issues also. The merit of someone who is good at governance and good at leadership is how you deal with governing over the edge issues, and those edge issues are mainly people edge issues. We must not be afraid to deal with the people edge issues when we govern in this country, because that is where we are failing as a society. We need a lift, and somebody has to take the lift. We on this side are prepared to take that lift and to lead this country. [*Desk thumping*]

We want to say that local government gives you the opportunity to provide leadership of locality, which is the kind of leadership necessary in order to take this country forward, and that will be part of the platform on which we will build our transformation programme for local government.

Madam Speaker, legislative changes, however, are not themselves going to make the impact upon quality and service delivery. I want to repeat: people and processes are going to do that. The hon. Minister is sincere in what he wants to achieve. I told the hon. Minister that it used to take almost nine months of the fiscal year between when you passed a budget and you got your first release in local government. I went through a process of process flowcharting myself, and found that there were 19 steps after a budget is passed before a local government corporation got something. When I revised it, I brought it down to about five steps. I had great difficulty in the Ministry of Local Government to get the people in the project unit to change. Everything that was done was done to frustrate. There were 20 per cent of the public service who held on the new ideas and the new vision. Fifty per cent sat in the middle and 30 per cent were there trying to undermine it. In governing you must never romanticize that 30 per cent. You must deal with that 30 per cent who are undermining your ability to manage. Because the 20 per cent that you need to carry, you need to reward them and you need to carry them forward.

You know what happened, Mr. Minister? In the month of July of the year preceding a fiscal year when I was there, I told the corporation based on your last year's budget come up with all the projects for the same amount of money that

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you want to do for the coming fiscal year, and they did it. By the time the budget was passed, within four weeks they got money to start doing projects, so it can be done. That is why in that particular year in which I was there in the Ministry of Local Government, 31 pavilions were started in local government, 16 bridges were repaired. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Minister, I am not standing here on an ego trip, but all I am trying to point out to you, with the right leadership, with strength, with courage, with process flowcharting, with the application of new management techniques, you are going to be able to transform local government. Local government is not a lost cause. Local government can be transformed, but you need to be very firm in what you want to do. We on this side are prepared to do that and we have begun to lead that transformation. That is why I urge you, Minister, to read this document. Find a copy and read it, and you will see how much it is coinciding with what you are saying.

A paradigm is required on the part of staff at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. You said you are going to do away with the Ministry of Local Government, you are going set up a Ministry of Rural Development. Maybe you are going to offer VSEP to all the people there in local government, maybe you are going to do that, but what I think is necessary is a change in the conversation from people telling you how it cannot be done to telling you how it could be done. You have some good people in there still who will be able to tell you how it could be done.

Our problem in this country is that we continue to speak and behave continuously as if we are perpetually in a developmental mode, rather than speaking and behaving as a developed country with a First World mind. We need to make an instantaneous leap and stop saying we will be and say we are or I am, and that would create a change in where we are in the country. That is what is happening. We continue speaking like we are developing. Somebody has to tell us what to do. We have got to take the bull by the horns and do what we have to do, otherwise we will never get there. What is required is new behaviours in the country—new behaviours.

**Mr. Hinds:** It should have started five years ago!

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, it started, except that some people do not want to recognize it. I am not here on any political trip. The Minister said that he won so many and so many elections. I want to tell him if you do not warm the eggs enough, the eggs will not hatch. So do not count the chickens before they are

hatched, Mr. Minister. [*Desk thumping*] Because I can tell you, a lot of the chickens who are sitting on the eggs out there, are running away and they are leaving the eggs cold. Look out, you might find that you are there as a leader, but you do not have followers very soon, and local government might show up some of that.

**Mr. Hinds:** “People must not tief the fowl either.” [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** The people who talk about “fowl tief” are the ones who are the biggest “fowl tief”, you know. Those are the ones who know how to “tief” fowl in the night. [*Laughter*]

The Minister is correct. If you are going to have a transformed local government system, you have to have new skill sets, new competencies. You have to have a different set of people, with a different set of skills working in local government. When you spoke about the quality of people, you are right again. Since local government will become a place where there will be so many projects, you have to train people in project management. Project management skills are going to be important.

Right now the quality of supervision is the worst in local government; that is why you have so many problems. Imagine it took five weeks, 25 days—the Minister of Works and Transport should find out this. Why it took 25 days in Gasparillo to build 50 feet of pavement within the last month and a half? During my time that never used to happen, but if you want to sit in the waterfront and not in your office, then that would happen all about. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] If you want to live the high life and look out at the sea, then what will happen?

[*Sen. Hinds rises to his feet*]

**Hon. Member:** “No, no. Sit down, nah!” [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Hinds:** “Is you who put the Ministry of Transport there.”

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** “Two buffs and yuh went back!” [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, what you will need in local government are not performance appraisals. Performance appraisals are after the fact; let everybody get satisfactory in local government. What you need are performance managers, people who manage performance. We are using the term “human

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resource management” in the public service, but we are still only involved in personnel management. Human resource management is a far different thing to personnel management.

I heard my colleague, the Member for Caroni East, saying how are you going to motivate the workers? He is right, that is part of human resource management. What kind of leadership are we going to provide that will inspire people and motivate people to want to deliver, to want to build their communities? That is going to be the challenge—that is going to be the challenge. You have to attract a higher level of people.

I am not saying that you do not want the grassroots in local government. You made a good point: who knows people better than the local government people? Local government people can help Members of Parliament if you know how to work with your local government persons. You have to attract a higher level of people.

But you know, it is interesting to me what the University of the West Indies is doing to train people for local government. I want to ask categorically the head of the department there, Mr. Vishnu Ragoonath: What have you done as head of a department to develop a proper programme in the university for local government? Because when I was there in the Ministry, I had meetings with him and others, and revamped the degree programme in local government, and I have seen nothing come out of it. This is why sometimes I wonder whether the university is operating on one level and the society is operating at a different level, because if you produce people, produce people who are useful to the society and the building of the society. So I ask him that today.

I want to ask the Lok Jack School of Business to whom the Ministry was paying \$60,000 to write case studies on the successful corporations and to bring back that to teach leadership in local government. What has happened to those case studies? I really ask, Mr. Minister. I was doing some things that involved the transformation of people—people.

### **3.30 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I am of the view, as I said earlier, that we need executive chairmen and mayors. But we are not going to achieve that with the kind of salaries we are paying to mayors and so on. We are not going to achieve it. People beat up on local government people, but let me tell you something, local

government people have a travelling allowance, but they do not have any taxes off their cars, and yet they are the ones whose vehicles act like ambulances in the dead of the night to take people to the hospitals.

In Port of Spain the Mayor gets \$20,890; in San Fernando he gets \$18,280. So, Port of Spain is more important than San Fernando. It gets worse, Chaguanas, which has more people than Port of Spain and a bigger geographic area, he gets \$17,040; Arima gets \$15,670; Point Fortin gets \$15,670; and the chairman of corporations, like Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, which is one of the biggest corporations, about 10 times the size of Port of Spain, gets \$15,670. How would you expect to attract people full time to work? And the Salaries Review Commission, report after report, year after year, they continue not to recognize the contribution of local government.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your initial 30 minutes have expired, you are entitled to 15 more minutes.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** You may proceed.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] So, something has to be done about the remuneration package and the conditions under which people are going to be working in local government.

Madam Speaker, I want to make a suggestion here today to the Minister for him to consider, when he deals with the legislation, that we have an Ombudsman in the country, but you have so many matters at local government that need to be resolved, and therefore you have to have some kind of municipal dispute resolution process or committees—a municipal dispute resolution committee in each one of the regions that will deal with disputes between the citizen and the corporation. I want to also suggest that if that does not work you move to a higher level and set up in this country municipal corporation courts, municipal courts. There are examples of municipal courts in other parts of the world. In fact, you can look at the Boulder, Colorado, Municipal Court as an example to see how that operates and how successful it has been. So, the municipal court I think is a very novel idea, but I think it is something that is going to be of some effect.

Madam Speaker, I would like to also point out that I agree about the local taxes, but I really want in a significant way to find out from the Minister exactly how you are going to develop the formula. Is it going to be like a THA formula?

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Because I have already alluded to the disparity that will result in the collection of taxes and so on, and we will have to find a way to really deal with the matter of funding.

There are some other matters that I think are important in terms of local government, which we should talk about in terms of the transformation. This Parliament, for example, reformed the Standing Orders of the Parliament, and to good effect. The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago recognized the need to amend the Standing Orders, and I was very happy when I learnt, for example, that when the Private Motion I piloted here was passed, that it will then be sent to Cabinet, and that there will be a process to make sure that it is implemented and what have you and so on. But, what are we going to do at local government? What are we going to do at local government with the same thing?

I tried to find out—well, you showed today, 35 years a matter has not been concluded with, with the cremation site. I asked Mr. Leo Doodnath, the Chairman of Siparia Regional Corporation, to give me some examples of delays in Motions, and here is one: Avocat recreation ground, acquisition ongoing, Ministry informed that they are presently awaiting valuation report and Solicitor General Report if deed submitted, April 22, 2004. Thirteen years and you cannot acquire that ground in Avocat, and there are hundreds of matters like that. Corporations passed their Motions and such. We will have to reform the Standing Orders. We have to bring accountability, and the accountability not only in the local government corporation, but in the Ministries.

**Hon. Khan:** That is Partap land too.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Sorry? Yes, it is Partap land. I was born in the village so I know. I played cricket on it.

But, it takes years for a plan to be passed. The thing is, there is no recourse. There is no recourse. No recourse whatsoever and the people suffer. We have also the matter of health and the environment. We had litter wardens. The litter wardens have gone home. Where are the litter wardens? What is going to happen to the litter wardens? Mr. Minister, the litter wardens are important. Even when we did not have—and let me tell you, those 143 litter wardens were trained during our time, you know. We brought those 143 litter wardens on board, trained them for a period of three months before they went out there. But, even before that we had a system of litter wardens in Chaguanas, and I want to show you the impact of litter wardens. Between August 2007 and June 30, 2008, 463 derelict vehicles were found in Chaguanas, and 285 were investigated and removed. Almost one a



day. Litter removal orders served, 172; number of persons complying, 127; and number refusing to comply, 15. And, the clean-up orders served in that same period, 363; 257 complied; 44 refused to comply.

However, when they refused to comply—and this is what I am talking about, strong management—we did not think about politics and who was a big businessman and so on, the number of persons convicted in court during that period was 17, with nine cases pending, and new cases being processed were 14. And, in fact, we had issued warrants for the arrest of three people who had failed to appear in court for litter warden offences. I was not afraid to do my job, and when you are in Government and you are governing you must never be afraid to do your job. [*Desk thumping*] You have to do your job. People will dislike you, but the majority of people in this country will like you for doing your job as you have to do it, Madam Speaker.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Lovell, you heard that? [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Lovell:** Do yours, too.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** So, what has happened to the litter wardens? What has happened to the litter wardens? That also is important. We trained public health officers; we gave 50 scholarships while we were in Government and we trained public health officers; but, today the public health officers, they claim that they do not have the powers to do what they have to do in the corporations. So, they go out and they visit but they do not have legislative power, legal power, and therefore you have to look at it to find out why it is they do not have the kind of power that they need to have.

I am very happy that the Minister of Health raised the fine from \$500 to \$3,500 with respect to lots. I used to do a different thing too. I used to take stakes and put it on the lot and say this lot will be cut under so and so, and you will be charged, and next day people—in Lange Park, all about—would go and cut their lots. Why could they not do it before? You see, this is a society where you have to have consequences for errant behaviour. And, if you want to change the society you have to have the consequences, and you must not be afraid to apply the consequences. Mr. Minister, you want change in local government, you are talking about transport and you are talking about reorganizing towns and so on. Right there in Chaguanas, and I will give you an example, because the Minister of Finance talked about incentives to build car parks and what have you. Twelve thousand square feet of land is standing next to the Chaguanas market. The Chaguanas market has to be removed. There are plans in the Chaguanas Borough

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Corporation drawn up while I was there to build a new market on 30 acres of land where the wholesale market has been set up in Woodford Lodge, which will have a bank and will have all the facilities, and give the people a proper place to come and sell their produce and so on, something really modern.

If you really want to modernize local government—because markets will remain under local government, modernize it. But you need a car park. And, why do you not get into public/private sector partnership so that you can build a 10-storey building there or a seven-storey building, four of which could be used for parking. Two of which could be used to remove all the vendors from the streets and put them there and they will pay to sell in an air-conditioned place, and in more humane conditions than exist in what is now in Chaguanas—a shanty town in the middle of the town [*Desk thumping*] harbouring criminals. There are criminals there; illegal play whe is going on right there in Chaguanas in that particular area there. I am not afraid to get up here and say it. It needs to be said because somebody has to do something about it, Minister of National Security, to rid Chaguanas in that area of the criminal elements that are in that place. [*Desk thumping*]

So, the illegal vending and vending which is a perpetual problem in local government can be dealt with, with some imagination, and I have given you one example where that can be done. It can also be done in Princes Town in the car park there which is like a hub, and in that hub you can keep the maxi-taxi hub and so on, but above that, like in the enlightened societies you can build the mall and you have everything going there. What prevents us from doing that? It is only leadership and action. That is why you say leadership is action.

Madam Speaker, there is so much that can be done. If you want to involve people in local government you have to have meetings of the council in different areas in the community. I used to have statutory meetings, and when we went to statutory meetings in the community, 300/400 people will come to this statutory meeting, and they will get a chance to address the mayor, address the chairman, and that is how you build. That is how you include people. That is the inclusivity that we are talking about. That is what we are taking about. That is where the change and the reformation in local government is going to come about. So, Mr. Minister, there are many areas where we break bread together with you in terms of what is good for local government. But you have to agree that talking about legislative changes is one thing; putting the legislative changes is another thing,

but that is not going to bring the change. The mindset has to be changed, and there are certain actions we have to take at the level of the communities in order to bring back that change.

I know you have a great vision for local government. I have that vision too. I live that vision every day, believe it or not. In fact, I would prefer to be a mayor sometimes than be a Minister of Government, because of the way that you can interact and be closer to the people and bring Government closer to the people. You would not believe it. It is interesting how much you can do that. But, the idea is unless you bring Government closer to the people by starting by bringing local government closer to the people, and truly empowering the people to make the change, you are not going to achieve very much.

People want to participate, eh. Do not ever fool yourself. People want to participate. People want to be part and parcel of this new change. They want to be. People want to govern themselves. People want to make Government irrelevant. The way to empower people is to make Government irrelevant in their lives and to give governance back to where it belongs. Give it to them. And local government is the best place for you to do that. But, are we sincere in what we are saying here? Are we prepared to close the gap between what we are preaching and what we will practise?

The Minister made a point, he said local government at the end of the day is all politics. I hope you are wrong. I hope it is all about people rather than just about politics. [*Desk thumping*] Because at the heart of our development are our people. But, you see, Mr. Minister while you say all of this, can the people trust you?

**Hon. Member:** No

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Do the people really trust you at this point in time?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** In the last nine months, or eight months and a half, what have you done to win the trust of the people in this country?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Nothing.

**Hon. Member:** Absolutely nothing.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** You have spoken, and you have spoken well, and people have admired you on Channel 4 and so on. But, do the people trust you? And the people are growing less and less trustworthy of the Government of Trinidad and

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Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] When you can make no intervention to make sure that the people who are owed by OAS are paid, something is wrong. When you can make no intervention or even indicate the legislation, quickly, that would have protected the ArcelorMittal people and people who would come after them, people are not trusting you, because they are saying that your word is not going to bear fruit.

Madam Speaker, all of this will work on the basis of trust. That is how it will work, on the basis of trust. But you have a Government who cannot be trusted. When you have a situation that occurred a couple days ago, where so many people in civil society asked that the SSA Bill should have been given a chance for more checks and balances, and the Government ignored that and went on with what they had, people are going to trust you less. [*Desk thumping*] At a personal level, Mr. Attorney General, you disappointed me. I thought that you were a person who had a little bit more heart for the people of the country.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Give me your reflections on Ramdeen.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** You disappointed me.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Give me your reflections on Ramdeen.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** I speak about my perception of you; you will speak about Ramdeen.

But I thought that you would have listened, but you fell into the same general grouping of all your colleagues by saying you are in charge and you will do what you have to do. [*Desk thumping*] I am disappointed in you. Coming from a rich political legacy like the Seukeran family, you disappointed me, Mr. AG. You really disappointed me.

**3.45 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I am very happy to contribute in this debate. I am really very, very happy. And again, I compliment the Minister for what he said and I compliment his intentions. But a lot of good roads they say have been paved with intentions but they were never paved and I hope that he can really pave them and that people will be able to drive on them to a new future and a new vision and a new reality. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Madam Speaker, I am indeed very pleased, as long as the Member for Tabaquite would listen, I am very pleased to be afforded the opportunity of contributing to this debate. My pleasure

is even further amplified over the fact that I served as a councillor for a period of five years [*Desk thumping*] at the Arima Borough Council, where I also served as the deputy mayor for some time. And therefore, Madam Speaker, I have walked the road.

Madam Speaker, I want to join with my colleague, the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government in congratulating the Elections and Boundaries Commission for their diligence—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members! I would like to hear the Member for Arima, please.

**Hon. A. Garcia:**—for their hard work and for their commitment and for their report that they have provided us today and I am sure that the members of the Elections and Boundaries Commission will continue to go forth and produce excellent work.

Madam Speaker, before I go into the meat of my contribution, I would like to take the opportunity to examine some of the statements made by the Member for Tabaquite. I begin by saying that the Member for Tabaquite and myself always shared a very close and cordial relationship.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I hope we still do.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** In fact, at one time he even served as my lecturer—

**Hon. Members:** What!

**Hon. A. Garcia:**—at the—you forget that?

**Hon. Member:** Which school?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** At Arthur Lok Jack.

**Hon. Member:** Aaa!

**Hon. A. Garcia:** I want to also remind him—

**Hon. Member:** Arthur Lok Jack?

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** The good, the bad and the ugly.

**Hon. Member:** Arthur Lok Jack? “What course yuh take?”

**Hon. A. Garcia:** When he corrected my paper, among all the students who were under his charge, I scored the highest. Remember that, Sir? [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Members:** What you get, a D? [*Laughter*]

**Hon. A. Garcia:** But today, Madam Speaker, I think the Member for Tabaquite fell short, fell woefully short in his contribution. Towards the end of his contribution he made a sterling plea for us to trust and to trust him.

Madam Speaker, when I was councillor at the Arima Borough Council, I at one time trusted the Minister of Local Government. But the Minister of Local Government betrayed the trust of all the councillors and the burgesses of Arima, when he failed to live up to his promise. I am sure he will remember the contribution he made at the Arima Borough Council where he promised that the administrative complex would have been built by July 2012. He made that promise.

**Hon. Members:** Old talk.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** When I asked the question whether funds were identified and whether a contractor was appointed, his answer was in the affirmative. He said, yes, but nothing happened. So the trust that he is asking us to give to him, I certainly cannot repay that today because you have betrayed our trust, Sir.

**Hon. Members:** Ohhh! That is why he gave you the A. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated, I was a councillor at the Arima Borough Council during the period 2010 to 2013, but I was the only PNM councillor at the Arima Borough Council. The Member for Tabaquite spoke about the CEO failing to carry out the dictates of the council during that time and that is true simply because the six other councillors were incompetent. The only competent councillor was the People's National Movement councillor. [*Desk thumping*] And this was reflected, in fact, that in 2013 local government elections that were held on October 21, 2013, I was the only one who was returned. All the others were defeated and the PNM saw all seven of its candidates being elected to office at the Arima Borough Council. [*Desk thumping*]

So today, the Arima Borough Council is staffed with competent and effective councillors who are now doing an excellent job at the Arima Borough Council. In listening to the Member of Tabaquite I wondered what he was doing when he was the Minister of Local Government.

[*Dr. Rambachan shows a booklet to the hon. Member*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes, good question. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** I wondered myself.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** He spoke of the—and I will deal with that in a while—because he spoke about so many things that needed to be put in place. He spoke about new behaviours, he spoke about new skill sets, new competencies. We need performance managers and he had the opportunity of putting all of these things in place and he never did anything.

Madam Speaker, the Member of Cabinet just brandished a document that was produced by the PP Government. I read that document from cover to cover when I was a councillor. I found it uninspiring.

**Hon. Members:** Ohhh!

**Hon. A. Garcia:** I found it paled in comparison to the PNM Manifesto that dealt with local government. [*Desk thumping*] And therefore it is nothing to be proud of.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite sought to diminish the gains that the Ministry of Education was able to achieve over the fact that every school was opened on time, not only in January but also in April.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Not at all. We have one school still closed.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** And he mentioned the fact that there is one school that is down but it is only one school that is down and that is because of a faulty aged-back system that was not attended to, it was not maintained over the last five years of the PP Government. What has happened now—[*Crosstalk*] the former Minister—

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister for Caroni East, please observe.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister for Caroni East, I see you are very well familiar with the Standing Orders when it comes to invoking it against others. Please observe them. Thank you. Continue.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was speaking about the difficulties that are now being experienced at the Aranguez North Secondary School and that school had to be shut down because of a defective aged-back system that has now seen fiberglass invading the classrooms, which, if left unattended will have severe health consequences for the students. We have put in place a system of collaboration with the Barataria North Secondary School that will see those students having the opportunity and the ability to receive their education. So have no fear.

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Madam Speaker, my good friend, the Member for Caroni East, former Minister of Education, would know that he left behind a plethora of problems that beset the education system. And it was left to the Member of Parliament for Moruga/Tableland and myself to correct many of these ills. In terms of local government we have been working with our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government in ensuring that local government would really be able to provide the level of governance and management that will allow for proper service to every citizen of this country. However, we are aware of the fact that local government as exists at the moment has been stymied because of its “unability” to meet all the needs of the various burgesses. This Government has identified the—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is not “unability”—inability.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** This Government has identified the need for local government reform as articulated by our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. And we are doing everything in our power to ensure that the local government as exists in this country will be reformed. But let us just take a look at what happened with respect to local government. Let us go back in time, just for a moment.

Local government in Trinidad and Tobago started with the Royal Cabildo way back in 1592, and that was the seat of Government in St. Joseph by the Spanish colonists. That local Cabildo exercised executive powers. It appointed chief judges, it supervised markets, it dealt with strict repairs, it dealt with levying duties and taxes, even on liquor shops and it did many things that are done now by the local government authorities. But this system of Cabildo was abolished in 1840. Later on we had the Town Council of Port of Spain and then the Town Council of San Fernando, and as our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government indicated just now, the County Councils in 1845 that came into effect as a result of the Moyne Commission. From the Cabildo to local government and the THA we now have a system of local government that is in dire need of reform and certainly we are doing our best to ensure that the reform that we are contemplating will benefit all our citizens, in fact, all our burgesses in Trinidad.

Madam Speaker, allow me a few moments to focus my attention on Arima. I am fortunate to have served Arima in two capacities. As I said before, I was a member of the Arima Borough Council serving as a councillor for Malabar South and also as Deputy Mayor and now I have the opportunity of serving as the Member of Parliament for the Constituency of Arima.



**4.00 p.m.**

When we examine the Arima Borough Council, you would see that there are 20,137 electors divided amongst seven electoral districts: Arima Central, Arima North East, Arima West/O'Meara, Calvary, Tumpuna, Malabar North and Malabar South. When we examine the reports of the EBC where this is concerned, as again indicated by the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, there have been some shifts with respect to the boundaries, I just want to go a little deeper into some of these arrangements or some of these shifts.

In Malabar South, for example, the report shows that 690 electors from one polling division have been transferred to the electoral district of Tumpuna and therefore, Malabar South now has 3,858 electors. When we look at Tumpuna, 827 electors from another polling division were transferred to the electoral district of Arima North East. Tumpuna now stands at 3,994 electors. When we look at Arima North East, 522 electors in one polling division were transferred to the electoral district of Calvary. Arima North now stands at 4,346 electors. Calvary now stands at 4,040 electors; Arima Central remains at 4,064; Arima West/O'Meara remains at 3,853 electors and Malabar North remains at 3,982 electors. This was an attempt to ensure that there was some level of equity so that all seven electoral districts that form the Arima Borough Council subscribe to the dictates that are found in the legislation.

In 2010, as I indicated before, at the end of local government elections, the People's National Movement had only one councillor, the Opposition had the other seven, but in 2013, I am reminded of the words of a former Prime Minister when he said "Not a damn seat fuh them" and they were devastated in that the PP Government failed to achieve—not even one seat. They failed to achieve—not even one person to represent the interest in the form of aldermen. All four aldermen, because of the quantum of votes received, were given to the People's National Movement. So now the People's National Movement has seven councillors and four aldermen.

When we look at Arima—[*Interruption*] they are working much harder and more diligently than they did in 2010—2013. They work and they are working much better than they did when we had a local government Minister in 2012 who did absolutely nothing for local government.

When we look at Arima, we would understand that Arima enjoys a beautiful history and it is this history that we need to preserve, and this is exactly what our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government is trying to achieve. The

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cultural diversity of Arima is truly a reflection of the composition of our population in Trinidad. In Arima, we have what we refer to as the famous Dial which was a gift to the people of Arima by a former Mayor, Mayor Francis Wallen, in 1908. Arima has seen vast expansion and because of this expansion and this demand for land and houses, we found that in 1980, the Borough of Arima was expanded from one square mile to four square miles but we remained with the seven councillors. The increase in economic activities, the construction of new schools—and I will talk about that in a while—all demanded an increase in the services that are provided by the Arima Borough Corporation. We have been able to see quite clearly that in order for the burgesses of Arima to benefit from the services that are due to them, there needs to be serious reform in local government.

Madam Speaker, on every occasion, when I sit in my constituency office and the people come to see me, they come with two major requests. One is for jobs and the other is for houses. In terms of jobs, the majority of people are relying on the Arima Borough Council to supply them with jobs which they do not have the ability to do but with local government reform, this will provide an opportunity, a beautiful opportunity for employment to blossom in this constituency and in this borough.

Where crime is concerned, Arima is no stranger to the scourge of crime that has been plaguing our country and with our plans for expansion of the borough police to 100 persons, that will certainly assist to a large measure. And more so because the municipal police, they will be on the ground and they will have a closer link with the community and they will have the opportunity of knowing exactly what goes on in those communities.

Madam Speaker, we have a problem with respect to contracts awarded not only in the Arima Borough Council but I have heard this all over. When contracts are awarded, in many cases, those contracts are awarded to persons who reside outside the borough or outside the municipal corporation. A classic example was the regrassing of Princess Royal Park, commonly referred to as the Arima savannah. The contractor who benefited from that contract came from Penal. He had no affinity with Arima and the work that he did was disastrous. It was terrible, it was poor. If that job was done by a contractor who came from Arima, that contractor would have done it with a sense of pride. [*Desk thumping*] And this is what we are trying to correct with our local government reform.

I now come to our schools, our education system. In Arima, there are four secondary schools and 11 primary schools. Although our schools are in a state of

reasonably good repair, it is important for us to ensure that they remain like that or that they are able to provide the education that our burgesses deserve. Our Government has as its mantra the provision of quality education, and if we are to provide quality education to our children, access to that quality education is very important. And therefore, our schools must be well protected, our schools must be well equipped, our schools must be well ordered.

With our local government reform, we will have contractors residing in the area who will be able to provide the services to ensure that our schools are kept in tip-top condition. We will provide the opportunity for our children to be able to access the quality education that this Government is determined to offer. It is important therefore, Madam Speaker, for us to understand that the reforms that have been enunciated by our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, contrary to what was said by the Member for Tabaquite, are steps in the right direction.

Our 2013/2014 manifesto customized and tailored to each municipality public input during consultations that were had with the nation. In 2013, as I said before, we had a very successful local government election. Our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government has successfully concluded consultations in the 14 municipal corporations. Our Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Mr. Khan, as soon as he was given that portfolio he immediately began the mandate that was given to him to ensure that the new Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government was able to transform and put things in place to transform local government.

This Government, our inclusion of rural development has added to a reformed local government model which will enhance the quality of security services with municipal police as was said just now; the corporations will be able to have more staff, to implement the new model of governance; employment will be increased nationally; economic activity will result from the activation of communities involved at the local level in service that they will be able to provide to the burgesses. And this initiative will facilitate the devolution of authority that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government seeks to reform this current system of governance.

Our goal is to ensure that all citizens are served effectively and efficiently. Revenues raised in the new system will be used in the respective municipalities when the reform is complete, and fiscal systems will be established that will benefit all. Madam Speaker, I quote:

Change is life and life itself can only continue with change.

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We are ready to bring about the much-needed change required. We endorse and support the 2016 Order of the EBC. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**4.15 p.m.**

**Miss Ramona Ramdial** (*Couva North*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Coming on the heels of my parliamentary colleague, the Member of Parliament for Arima, I am sure that his former lecturer, the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business, will not be very proud this afternoon after that contribution, [*Desk thumping*] especially coming on the heels after the Minister of Local Government.

Madam Speaker, it really is surprising to stand here and to listen to the Member of Arima speak when, at this time, many secondary schools have received no money for the running costs of the schools for 2016. [*Desk thumping*] Principals and management and staff, they are in a bind. So for the Minister of Education to stand here and speak about his good work, together with his Junior Minister speak about his good work in the Ministry of Education is, of course, misleading the Parliament at this time.

IT technicians, Madam Speaker, within the Ministry of Education, have not been paid and soon TUTTA will be coming at the Ministry of Education to represent these IT technicians for their salaries. Retired teachers are still to get their back pay. So instead of rushing to move to the Education Towers across the road, Madam Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 44(10), please.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** No, I am responding.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Do you know Standing Order 44(10)?

**Miss R. Ramdial:** I am not reading.

**Madam Speaker:** Members.

**Dr. Khan:** Garcia was reading.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan. Member for Couva North, please continue.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as I was saying, instead of the Member for Arima and the Ministry of Education

rushing into the Education Towers—where they would be moving to later on this month—I think that money should be used to pay the hard-working IT techs, [*Desk thumping*] the contracted workers and the contracted social workers that are attached to the schools before that moving cost is implemented from one area to the other.

Madam Speaker, I also want to reiterate that the Member of Parliament for Arima spoke about his good work as a councillor there over the past five years and from 2013 to the present time having 11 PNM councillors controlling that particular corporation.

**Mr. Garcia:** Seven councillors.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Seven councillors, sorry, controlling that corporation. But he is unable to state what they did during that period of years, coming up to being in government and I make mention of the Arima market. There is no Arima market. The transportation hub: there needs an improvement with the transportation hub. They were in charge, since 2013, of that regional corporation. They were in charge of the funding and how it was allocated and all of that. And he boasts about that but at the same time you have the constituents of Arima suffering because of the lack of their implementation.

Madam Speaker, the People's Partnership Government, within the corporation of Arima and environs built bridges, the bridge in Guanapo; the Blanchisseuse Road was refurbished; and in addition to that [*Interruption*] no, no, listen to me, please. Madam Speaker, can I crave your indulgence?

**Madam Speaker:** Members, please be guided by Standing Order 47, which allows interruptions in a particular way. I would also like Members to be reminded that every contribution in this Chamber is directed to the Chair. So that, if a Member does not have my leave to stand or is not raising an objection under a particular Standing Order, once it reaches the ear of the Chair, I consider it being directed at the Chair and being grossly disrespectful. Continue, Member for Couva North. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In addition to that, the Member for Arima made mention of a contractor from Penal coming to do a project in Arima. What is wrong with that? Are you trying to say that a contractor from Penal should be discriminated against because he qualified legally to come to Arima to build a project? What it is that the Minister is trying to perpetuate within this House? That is discrimination at its highest order.

Again, Madam Speaker, I am just bringing that out. But again, to me that seems to be the PNM policy of discrimination according to geographical location and otherwise. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Education spoke about the schools that are being built under his leadership at this point in time, but I want to remind him that within the constituency of Couva North, in a very tiny village of Orange Valley, the ECCE Centre is stalled, Mr. Minister, and there are many schools and ECCE Centres and other educational institutions that have stalled under this current leadership of the Minister of Education. And, therefore, the Minister needs to be very honest with this House and not only say what he is doing and what has been accomplished, but also talk about why it is that schools in different constituencies within this country—to me it seems to be only the UNC-held constituencies. Again, discrimination at its highest order. [*Desk thumping*] So, Madam Speaker, those are some of the issues that I want to bring to the fore with respect to the contribution from the Member of Parliament for Arima.

Going back to the Local Government EBC Order, I just want to make mention that we are, of course, in support of this and I really would like to say that the Minister of Local Government has been doing a fairly good job with his consultations. And in my research, I have gathered some of the feedback that the Minister would have garnered in his movement from area to area. For example, Madam Speaker, in the area of Port of Spain, from his meeting, the residents brought up the issue of homelessness, and probably the Minister in his winding-up can talk about homelessness and how they are going to deal with the homeless people in Port of Spain.

Again, another feedback session spoke about crime, garbage collection and the defining of the city boundaries. In addition to that, they spoke about converting abandoned buildings in Port of Spain into spaces for vendors and they suggested a municipal court for municipal matters to put ease on the Magistrates' Court. The Member for Tabaquite spoke about that municipal court.

The Minister also—in the Borough of Chaguanas, the feedback there, they were primarily concerned with garbage collection and sanitation. So that is something that needs to be dealt with at the Chaguanas Borough and the Minister will need to, of course, talk about how we are going to deal with that, with respect to the reformation of local government.

In Sangre Grande, their feedback session was, of course, very productive and they spoke about the administrative issue and the hindrances and the bureaucracy that exists within the corporation, in order to get resources and to have delivery in a timely manner.

It is very, very noteworthy to say that the Minister, at that particular consultation, said and I quote:

A significant portion of the resources in this country has been on urbanization and urban development.

And, of course, we all know who was in charge for most of the years of governance in this country and we have always said, as a former Government and now being in Opposition, that a PNM Government and their idea, their ideology of development was really focused on urban development and we have said it many, many times. And I think the People's Partnership Government did well when, during our tenure for five years we focused on rural areas. [*Desk thumping*]

We focused on spreading the resources to rural areas to every single constituency. Madam Speaker, not one of those MPs across on the other side, the PNM-held constituencies, can say that they did not get resources during our tenure of the People's Partnership Government. We focused on rural development.

You know Madam Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Moruga/Tableland should not talk because in today's newspaper he is lamenting the fact that his constituency is not getting the resources from his Government to fix the roads and deal with the things. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Francis:** I lamented the fact for the last five years.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** For the last five years.

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I would like to hear the contribution of the Member for Couva North. Please allow her to proceed.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the former Government, the People's Partnership Government, of which I was a Member, we distributed the resources equitably across the board. At this point in time—you know, and I can go on to give examples. I can go on to give examples but I will not indulge in that. What I am saying is that based on the feedback sessions, our very own Minister of Local Government admitted to focusing on urban development and urbanization over the past years.

Being a former Member and Minister of Government in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, there were areas, even in my constituency, for 25 years without a pipe-borne supply of water. And why is that? In areas of south and central, pipe borne—an absence of pipeborne supply of water.

In the constituency of La Horquetta/Talparo, I remember the former MP stated that for 100 years, [*Desk thumping*] the residents and the constituents of a

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particular village never had a pipe-borne supply of water and I am sure he is unaware of that. Yes, it is one of the oldest communities in Trinidad and Tobago. Go and do your homework MP, you will find out. Madam Speaker, really, 100 years, yes. [*Crosstalk*] No, it is 100 years of the community being in existence. Right?

Really and truly there were constituencies that suffered viciously under the previous PNM Governments and even with this one now, this new PNM Government that we are seeing, where we have a lack of resources going, especially not going to the UNC-held constituencies, and I want to give some examples. As the Member of Parliament for Couva North, I have written to the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts in recent times. I have made requests to the self-help board in recent times, the CEO and the Chairman of the self-help board and the officer attached, and I have three families within the constituency of Couva North, fire victims. Under the self-help board you are, of course, able to get an emergency grant, so you can start rebuilding and I have asked and I have been asking. I have been begging since December of 2015. These families have not been able to access their self-help grants. I wonder if there is a lack of heart coming across from the other side.

In addition to that, we have seen also persons applying for different resources from within the constituency, including that of councillors through local government and they are all being told that there is a lack of funding, funding is not coming as they would expect and all of that. But at the same time, the Minister of Local Government needs to take a proactive approach and do something now in the interim.

Yes, it sounds good: We are speaking about local government reform and modelling and liken it to the THA model and I will come to that. Because the Minister, I think, is very brave to go around this country speaking about local government reform and likening it to the THA model. Whilst the model may be good, the model has failed the Tobago people. It has failed and I will talk a little bit about that later on.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the issues that we have. In addition to that, we have infrastructural challenges. I have written to the Minister of Works and Transport. I have written to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, as a Member of Parliament, asking for resources to clean the natural water courses, for drainage works to be done to prepare for the rainy season and for possible flooding and for flash flooding. I have gotten no response and we have gotten no resources. I can walk with the copies of my letters to this House if



they do not believe me, but we have been writing and I have been speaking and I have been asking. So, if it is that we are not getting funding and resources from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and then we have the local government Ministry in charge of centralized funding and resources, so to speak, and it is not coming from either/or, what are we to do as a people?

What I am really saying to the hon. Minister here this evening, through you Madam Speaker, is that whilst all of these plans are grand and everybody is in for it and all of that, there are real-life issues and the reality is, what are we doing now to alleviate some of these problems? And it is true what all of my colleagues have been saying previous to coming to the House and during the past seven months of this new Government in power, nothing has been done. Nothing has been done. And when you write, you are not even getting a response. And I must say here today that the only sort of response that I seem to be getting is from the Minister of Housing, and I want to commend him here this evening for that. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, it is now 4.30. This sitting is suspended for 30 minutes.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Miss R. Ramdial:** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before the tea break as I was saying, I was making mention of the role of the Minister in his national consultation on local government, at the Preysal High School—spoke about the value and power of decentralization, and used the Tobago House of Assembly and the US State of Vermont, as examples of local autonomy. From time to time after that, as the consultations continued across Trinidad and Tobago, we would have heard again, the THA coming up as it being an ideal model for local government reform and for the devolution of power, and for local government resources to be delivered in a more effective manner.

Madam Speaker, the THA as we know, has become infamous in Trinidad and Tobago, for first, not submitting financial statements in a timely manner to the Auditor General's Office. There has not been a report on the financial status of the THA since 2007, an Auditor General's Report. Therefore, in recent times we have seen in fairness to the THA, that they have made an effort to submit documents, but again, not in a timely manner. Therefore, to talk about and to liken local government and the reformation of local government to the THA model, is something that we need to be very, very mindful of.

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To me, the THA would be the worse model to implement for local government reformation. We have seen over the years, in many Committees in Parliament that we have sat on, we have seen in questioning the THA and their financial operation, that they have really come short in doing what is right by the people, in terms of accountability and transparency of their financial transactions, and how they run the Tobago affairs under the THA. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, we need to be very, very mindful of how we accept that type of ideology, moving forward with respect to local government reform. I will talk about what it is that we had in place, and our consultation, and what that brought forth during the years 2012—2013, when we had our national consultations on local government.

What we need to take note of, especially, Madam Speaker, is that of the disparities in salaries. Now, when we do a comparison between the THA and what is happening in Trinidad, with respect to the boroughs and the corporations, there is a huge disparity in salaries. According to the '98 Salaries Review Commission, the salary of the Chief Secretary of the THA is \$41,030 per month, and that is inclusive of, of course, transport facilities, subsistence allowance, housing, entertainment, vacation leave, overseas travel facilities. The travel grant for the Chief Secretary for the THA is \$36,800 per annum, telecommunication facilities, medical benefits, pension and gratuity, the Deputy Chief Secretary and the Secretary/Assistant Secretary, the salaries for those persons range from \$25,240 a month, to \$19,150.

So, in itself, in that structure, you are seeing a deep disparity among the Chief Secretary and, of course, the officers directly beneath him, and that is something that needs to be addressed. If the Minister is speaking about likening local government reform to that of the THA model, is it that we are going to see a revamped remuneration package, for our councillors and for our mayors here in Trinidad? Is it that we are going to be on par with what is taking place with the THA model? I will support an initiative like that if it comes to that, because as the Member for Tabaquite previously said, that the salary for councillors and mayors and corporation chairmen, is woefully inadequate, as it stands right now. Of course, he spoke about the disparity in salaries with respect to the Mayor of Port of Spain, and the Mayor of Point Fortin, where that range is by at least \$5,000—\$6,000, a disparity of that amount. Therefore, we need that equality across the board when it comes to proper remuneration packages, for our officers who serve and of course, they are the first responders to the general public.

So I would support a salary review and, of course, an increase in salaries for our councillors, our chairmen and our mayors here in Trinidad, if it is that the

Minister intends to hold fast to the THA model, where we see that the Chief Secretary's salary and his Deputy Secretaries and all of that is extremely high. I think \$41,000 is on par with that of the Prime Minister and Ministers of Cabinet in Trinidad and, therefore, is either we reduce across the board, and make it equal for all. Or we increase across the board, so that everyone can enjoy a proper remuneration package. So that is something that I want to put forward to the Minister.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, when you look at the THA model, you are seeing, because of the autonomy and so much power that they have on to themselves, that in some cases they have been unable to explain operations in various units within that THA model, the agricultural unit, be it the agricultural unit, the transportation unit, et cetera.

When we sat here for our budget review and we went through the balances, the statements, there were some projects that were allocated funding, and allocated moneys, and when questions were put to the officers from the THA, they were unable to explain well, an update, or give an update as to what is going on, or, how much moneys have been expended over the years and all of that, with a promise, of course, to send the information later on to Parliament, which we did get. But at the end of the day, having so much power given to a body or an autonomy, there needs to be proper checks and balances, over these institutions. [*Desk thumping*]

It is really a travesty of justice I would say, to a certain extent, to have so much power given to a body, and not have proper accountability and transparency, and even integrity of those said officers who, in some instances, as we know, I do not want to say accommodate but, of course, we know of allegations of corruption with some of these operations at the local government level, both at the THA level and, of course, at the local government level here in Trinidad.

So, Madam Speaker, this is something that we need to address in moving forward. I think that the councillors, and the chairman, mayors, they work extremely hard. They are, of course, as I said before, the first responders to the public, and they need to be properly remunerated. [*Desk thumping*] For many, many, years before, we have had these councillors being abused out there. We all know how it goes on the ground. As Members of Parliament, we know what exists and the reality of the situation, and therefore, I think the time is now.

During the People's Partnership tenure in Government over the past five years, this was something that we took on board. We had started to lay the base

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down, with respect to revamping the remuneration packages for these councillors. We had also spoken about the criteria and requirements, Minister, with respect to choosing candidates and councillors, and competent persons, persons with a solid educational background. Because if it is that you are going to go according to the THA model, and give so much autonomy to the structures that you are putting in place, then you would need competent, qualified people to manage this particular operation that you are going to implement. Of course, it will take years and years, and at the same time, I want to caution the Minister, do not let what happened to the THA, happen to that model down here, when implemented for local government.

As far as it goes, as much as we have oversight committees, and we have bodies who will—and the Auditor General's Office and all of that, there needs to be an extended system or strategy, Minister, with respect to oversight on these regional corporations and boroughs. So that is something that we need to take into our own hands and be very proactive with that.

Now, in a World Bank Institute study done in October 2000, they spoke about corruption at the local level, and strategies for combating corruption. If you look at the White Paper laid on Local Government Reform by the People's Partnership Government, we spoke about building sustainable institutional reforms at the local level, which will include design of a participatory strategy, starting with a strong political will to reform. So the political will needs to exist. I think it exists on both sides for local government reform, because as Members of Parliament, we understand the daily challenges that we go through, with respect to access to resources for our constituents. So your political will must be strong to move forward with local government reform.

I know that the Minister is quite experienced and aware that this is not going to happen overnight. This is something that may even move to a new Government, not particularly that of a PNM Government, but may have to continue. So, structures and mechanisms will have to be put into place to ensure a continuum of local government reform and strategies moving forward.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, some of the tools that can be implemented to ensure that the corporations and the boroughs are run effectively is that, firstly, of citizen participation. And what is citizen participation? When we speak about citizen participation, I refer to programmes, entities or services that can be created to improve citizen participation in Government. And this would mean regular meetings, having civil society participate in Government, ordinance

or other legal mechanisms that can be implemented and, of course, performance indicators for the delivery of key services, through feedback from the general citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Another important tool to ensure the effectiveness of local government reform, and administrative procedures is that of public hearings. So the public can access the information given whether on a quarterly basis, or an annual basis or even a monthly basis, from the administrators of the corporation and the boroughs, to the constituents of that particular area. So public hearing is an effective tool, and they can be updated with respect to knowing how development is occurring within that particular area.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, you know, we always like to boast about having the mechanisms in place with respect to collecting info and data, but having a computerized data system that would allow for proper information to be collected, and for little, but not little, but for simple services to be delivered to the people, will prove to be very effective. That was one of the plans that we had as a People's Partnership Government, to move forward with a computerized data system. Because in many of our corporations when you go today, and I am sure that the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna would attest to this, it is still pen and paper records and files and it is there. So we need to find a way quickly, Mr. Minister, to computerize our system, so that information is readily available, and that we can respond and allocate resources adequately where necessary.

Auditing commissions, Madam Speaker, and I spoke earlier about the Office of Auditor General. Auditing commission is an important tool or mechanism by which we can clamp down on local corruption at that level, and also have proper accounting to the people of that particular area and, by extension, central Government. So having an auditing commission is also very important.

### **5.15 p.m.**

In our White Paper of 2013, after our local government reform, we spoke to that auditing commission also—to implement an auditing commission—to deal with expenditure.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, monitoring and evaluation—that is also a very important technique such as public budgetary hearings—the computerized public works monitoring systems and local workshops, and these tools would monitor and evaluate. It is similar to performance indicators. It will evaluate how

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progress from within that particular borough or corporation is coming along. So this is another important tool that the Minister can look at in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

I just want to reiterate, Madam Speaker, that this is nothing new. I know that it exists in some form or fashion at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and by extension in every Ministry, but there needs to be an upgrade of such tools and mechanisms. We need to have our public officers reaffirm their commitment to continue to work in the best interest of our constituents at that level.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, as I move on and I made mention of our local government reform consultations—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Couva North, your initial 30 minutes have expired, you are entitled to 15 more minutes. Do you intend to avail yourself of it?

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, you may proceed.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about our local government reform that took place in 2013. We had 14 public consultations in every corporation just as the goodly Minister has had over the past couple of months. From those consultations, Madam Speaker, we had 2,000 persons attending. The three key deliverables that were focused on were: quality services, better communities and stronger council with a team for devolution, and it is the same that the Minister is trying, but not trying, but it is the same that the Minister has intention of implementing.

It is of importance to note that the weaknesses identified—and it would be the same or more or less the same—are as follows: the legislative framework is inflexible and does not facilitate change; the strict bureaucratic structure needs updating and enhancing; the duplication of services needs to be done away with; lack of funding for state mandates and regulations; inadequate human resource, accounting, auditing fleet asset, project and performance management systems; non-existent quality control measures; lack of cohesion planning and economic development at the local level; conflicting goals between national and local needs for budgeting. This is very, very important, Madam Speaker, because we can

come here and speak about national development and then go back to our respective constituencies and realize that we are woefully short of meeting national development at that local level.

Some of the weaknesses that were identified were: community participation and involvement. I spoke about how we can go ahead to implement community participation and citizens participation. No sustainability in the delivery and access to public goods and services at the local level; lack of vision and strategic thinking by councils; lack of passion by councils in fulfilling their mandates; generally slow rates of implementation; non-existence of LED programmes to facilitate self-sufficiency and constant conflict and lack of trust between council and administrative staff and inertia in dealing with customer complaints. These were some of the weaknesses identified during our consultation period which the Minister himself now is privy to. So these are what we need to work on, Madam Speaker.

I also want to make mention of the code of conduct for members of T-T-A-L-G-A or TTALGA, as they like to say. This association is very, very important. The code of conduct for mayors, councillors, chairmen, vice-chairmen is very, very important in moving forward. We would have heard the Member for Tabaquite speak about having a passion to serve and, of course, being inspired also by the institutions, but having a formal arrangement where a code of conduct and, of course, review of these councillors and chairmen are always looked at is very, very important also.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, as Members of Parliament, we are faced daily with situations and, of course, with challenges in terms of delivering resources to our constituents. I understand that and I know that and I want to say that I am very optimistic and hopeful that with this local government reform that we will, of course, see an end to such challenges, not an abrupt end, but, as the Minister would say, a phasing out of the old system into a new system. But I must caution again that the THA model that the Minister is purporting out there—I know that he would clarify later on when he gets up to wind up—but that THA model is a dangerous and serious thing in alluding to, in trying to bring about local government reform because we have all had our nightmares with the THA in terms of scrutiny and otherwise.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, I want to say that the Minister is responsible, and I said it earlier, is responsible at this time, in the interim, for providing the necessary resources through the funding of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and even other Ministers under Ministry of

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Rural Development and Local Government like the works and infrastructure and all of that. They are responsible, in the interim, for providing the necessary resources so that people can deal with their problems, issues can be dealt with and we can have proper infrastructure; we can have proper markets when we visit our constituencies and we can have proper roads. That is the responsibility of local government.

At this time, as a Member of Parliament, in a UNC-held constituency, we are not seeing the level of service and delivery as expected. And, again, I would go on to reiterate that it is not because—you know, it would be very sad to note and to say that politics are playing off at the end of day. Politics is playing off, it is a PNM Government in control now. They are in charge, as they like to say, and because of that the UNC-held constituencies are without the resources or the necessary resources even when we are very specific, and we request them via letter or a phone call or some other way of communication.

So it is very, very important that we not wait for the local government reformation and transformation to take place and wait for the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to implement before we deliver. It is necessary that it continues, the delivery continues. The Minister at this time should place a lot of emphasis on listening to the Members of Parliament and responding to their calls for resources in many different areas, and by extension all of the Ministers.

Madam Speaker, it is not without a level of frustration sometimes that we Members of Parliament face when we go to our constituencies and we are, of course, bombarded with roads issue, rivers, natural watercourses and drainage and all of that. So, I am making a plea to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to see how best his technocrats around him can equitably distribute the resources to the various constituencies so that we too can have happy constituents. Because as politicians, it is our job to make the lives of our constituents and the people of the country satisfying, satisfactory, comfortable and happy and, therefore, as a Member of Parliament, I have been faced with brick walls. I made mention of it earlier and I speak for my colleagues also who have been faced with brick walls when it comes to accessing the necessary resources.

I also want to say responding to a letter is not just what we are looking for. We also want to see action behind that. [*Desk thumping*] So, you respond to a letter, you acknowledge that we need resources and then you deliver to us in some form or fashion. Again, I would reiterate when we were in Government we did not discriminate. [*Desk thumping*] I would be honest to say that. Every single



Member of Parliament when then in Opposition approached us we would find some way to assist. Even if we could not do it, we would go into the constituencies and we would tour. I remember touring with the Member of Parliament for St. Joseph even though much was not done after, at that point in time, but we toured. We communicated with you. We came and we tried to assist at that level. I am sure nothing still.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Nothing happened.

**Miss R. Ramdial:** Exactly. Still nothing has happened. Madam Speaker, I just again want to reiterate that we on this side support the EBC Order. Minister, you have a huge task ahead of you and test, so to speak. I want to say that we are optimistic. The groundwork has been laid. We have had numerous consultations. We have been out there, the previous Government. We have done some work in local government in terms to set the base up for reform and all of that, and we really hope that you would take it seriously. I know that you are serious, Minister. We really hope that you would take it on board as to what we have to say here at this point, and to also listen. Because the Member for Tabaquite was a previous Minister in local government and he made mention of some issues and scenarios to you, and I know that you would have taken them on board, and to listen to what we are saying as Members of Parliament, because right now as a Government, you are coming across as very arrogant and inaccessible. That is just how it is; arrogant and inaccessible.

So, at the end of the day, you have some time ahead of you to make up for that, and I really hope that you would continue to serve in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I know you have good intentions, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and, therefore, we support the Order. We support local government reform, however, I do not think we support the THA model or the ideology of going to that THA model [*Desk thumping*] of full autonomy and no accountability and no transparency. Why it is we have been waiting since 2007 for the Auditor General's report? So, Madam Speaker, with that, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for 10 minutes.

**5.26 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.35 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tunapuna. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Esmond Forde** (*Tunapuna*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to join this debate today and I must say that I must extend gratitude to the Leader of Government Business, Member for Arouca/Maloney, for granting me the opportunity to speak at this debate. She did not mention to me whether it is as a result of my track record of being a local government practitioner for over five years.

**Hon. Member:** Very good.

**Mr. E. Forde:** I will leave that up for you all to say. Right, for the last five years at the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation—[*Interruption*] I thank you, Member for Tabaquite—and also the vice-chairman of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation from 2013 to 2015. Probably it could be testimony as a result of my elevation to be a Member of this honourable House as the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, [*Desk thumping*] and, as a result, I give God thanks.

Hon. Member for Couva North—you know, I have my prepared speech but I just want to, you know, make one or two comments that she would have identified. She spoke about discrimination with regard to contractors, and, yes, at the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation most of the contractors that worked within my electoral district were basically, we had a saying, south of the Caroni Bridge; you know, for whatever reason most of them came from south of the Caroni Bridge. This is why the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government is pushing basically for the reform in order to minimize or to eliminate that amount of discrimination so that local contractors within the local electoral district would be utilized in the first instances. That is one point which I would like to really, you know, rebut, based on her debate.

The other aspect she spoke about was with regard to funding, and it is true, I spent five years as a local government councillor. Three of those five years were under a UNC-controlled centralized governance and a lot of the funding was held back. We would have had Minister Sharma, we would have had Minister Rambachan, who is now the Member for Tabaquite, we would have had hon. Marlene Coudray and on many occasions developmental funding, ongoing debate on ongoing development for projects, was always held back during their regime. The Tobago House of Assembly model, she is saying it is not a model to copy or to put in stream but the only negative justification she can speak about is with regard to the delay in financial auditing that has been taking place. That is the job for the internal auditor, right, but with regard to the plan, with regard to the whole

model of that Tobago House of Assembly model, under the Chief Secretary, Orville London, is ideal, and we on this side would be looking at that model as we continue along with the local government reform.

The last thing Members on the other side should really speak about is with regard to transparency, accountability and integrity. She spent a lot of time talking about that again, and, again, hon. Madam Speaker, we on this side are all about good governance and we are going to ensure that with this local government reform, transparency, accountability and integrity will be the main pillars as we go forward. Selection of candidates, you know, again, she spoke about that. Everyone knows the People's National Movement has a rigorous, rigid, fair and democratic process in choosing their candidates, and we choose the best candidates, [*Desk thumping*] to say, I could be one of the testimonies as a result of that, and all my Members on this side.

Madam Speaker, computerization—we are in 2016 and, definitely, any local government reform would have to ensure that we look at computerization, look at the auditing functions as we go forward. The hon. Member for Couva North spoke about consultations in 2012; yes, they had consultations but none of their Ministers—three during their term between 2010 to 2015—brought no legislation, no Bills to this House in order to make local government reform a reality. So it is only talk and talk that the hon. Member for Couva North would have given us. She spoke about, also, they did the same, a number of consultations, but keep in mind it was not at the same cost, and that is very important. It was not at the same cost. So this is why we are here today debating this reform, and we are going to minimize discrimination, which would be one of the main things, with regard to products and services, delivery, in order for the burgesses so that all the communities can benefit.

I would also like to spend two minutes on the Minister, the Member for Tabaquite, no legislation was ever brought by you, Sir. You would have spoken on many occasions about justification and what you have, and you spoke about your local government policy booklet on modernization and transformation, but you all brought not a Bill, nil legislation, zilch to this House during the last five years. Within eight months of Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley attaining office to be the Prime Minister of this country, and the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government [*Desk thumping*] is now piloting this Motion in order to ensure that local government reform will be a reality. [*Desk thumping*]

People empowerment, who else can talk about people empowerment? Statutory meetings, everyone knows statutory meetings were held on a monthly

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basis going out to rural districts, other areas, so that we can get people involvement, empowering the people and burgesses of the communities as we go forward. Under the chairmanship of Alderman Edwin Gooding at the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation we held numerous statutory meetings in various districts, Madam Speaker, during our term.

One thing he said that I think I totally will accept is with regard to local government practitioners being remunerated, you know, in a better position. Definitely there is need for increased, whether we call it stipend, whether we call it a salary, travelling, vehicles, and so on, definitely. Councillors are the first point of contact, we are the ones that come into day-to-day contact with all burgesses, whatever the situation, personal, private, you know, I mean, we encounter different aspects on a daily basis. So, definitely, there is need for some sort of justifiable remuneration as we continue along.

You spoke about urban bias, Member for Tabaquite, and, again, yes, rates and taxes will be collected by the various corporations but you would still have your allocation, your budgetary allocations, which would come from the Ministry of Finance in order to ensure that, across the board, each one of the 14 corporations would ensure that they have the necessary buying power to ensure that development takes place within the various electoral districts. So, definitely, there is no need to worry about an urban bias, and then keep in mind that even though we are talking about eliminating the Ministry of Local Government there will still be a Ministry of Rural Development to ensure that some of those rural areas would not be neglected by this People's National Movement Government.

Self-sustaining communities, especially in the rural areas, being denied; definitely that would be a thing of the past as we continue along. The municipal police—yes, we know that we will have to bring legislation to this Parliament in order to ensure that the necessary levels and roles of authority are respected with regard to the Ministry of National Security, and, of course, we will be looking along those lines. We need to ensure adequate staffing of municipal police, and we also need to ensure that proper working conditions exist for them. At the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, where I spent five years, we had a total of four municipal police, four members of municipal police for a period of time. We have heard of Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation being the largest throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and no way those four officers could have done the duties in order to ensure that we had adequate supervision within the necessary communities.

So, Madam Speaker, those are just some points that I just needed to rebut with regard to those two Members, and I know from debating you would justify in your debate what you need to say, and at the end of it the hon. Member for Couva North said that she would be supporting the Bill, and I accept that gratefully. Again, we often hear the saying, “to whom much is given, much is expected”, and today, Madam Speaker, the Tunapuna constituency, that I have the privilege of representing, and the party to which I belong, the People’s National Movement, expect leaders to lead. Leaders must always do the right thing. In our election campaign of 2015 one of the pillars of our campaign was with regard to good governance, and, I repeat, good governance, Madam Speaker, good governance is the key to having a good democracy.

Madam Speaker, in keeping with the construct and positioning of the support, an enabling system to ensure maintenance and ongoing efficacy of good governance and local government reform, we also indicated that we would not only obey the laws of the land but seek to make adjustments, and this is why we are here today, this day in May, with this Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2016. I must remind you or inform you that during the campaign of 2015, some eight months ago, we the Members on this side acknowledged and highlighted that one of the possible failings and functioning of our political and administrative reasons in good governance was, and still is, that local government is the local government system.

We definitely need to look at the reform in order to ensure that accountability, to ensure that equal distribution of the wealth of Trinidad and Tobago is equally distributed among the electoral districts that exist within Trinidad, and also with the Tobago House of Assembly in Tobago. Madam Speaker, our colleagues on the other side came out to defeat this proposal, looking back to past attempts while seeking to overlook and hide their own five years of neglect of their promises to the contrary. Their claims of expertise in the areas of good governance and local government reform leave much to be desired. We would have heard the two debaters and, again, they are not in a position to justify in order to say what positives they would have done during the period of five years in order to ensure that they would have remained on this side.

**5.50 p.m.**

Local government is local. At the end of the day, burgesses, communities are interested in what takes place on their streets, are interested in what takes place where they live, in the area that they traverse on a daily basis. So the potholes in

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front their homes, the street lights, the WASA leaks that they are presented with on a daily basis, these are their main concerns. So definitely we need to ensure that with the changes that are due to come with the local government reform Bill, as the Minister mentioned, which will be coming sometime soon to this House, we look forward to ensure that communities will continue to develop, that growth will be able to take place and that communities and burgesses will be able to receive what they desire within their communities.

Madam Speaker, the laying of this particular EBC report in the House today at this time will attest to the importance we have placed on local government systems. The report before the House this afternoon has an initial date of June 2014. We are now meeting in May 2016, merely eight months upon attaining office in September 2015.

We have heard for the last five years the other side's mantra: serve the people, serve the people, serve the people. But serve the people in what capacity? Serve the people how, I may ask today?

Again, I have been the local government councillor for the Auzonville/Tunapuna area, and on many occasions it was toing and froing, fighting on a daily basis in order to ensure that I got the services and amenities within my area, in order to ensure that again Auzonville/Tunapuna would have obtained a share of the public pie within the community. In what way can we look at serving the people? We can say they were extremely correct. They served the people in what way? They served the people how and have they served the people of the Trinidad and Tobago on a table of bad governance?

It is clear, the People's National Movement now controls the reins of power in Trinidad and Tobago, and it is clear that as a result, local government reform plays a critical role. When we look back, local government entails every particular aspect. Local government served the people in many ways and we can identify: solid waste management, canine control, rodent control, removal of derelict vehicles, supply of truck borne water, implementing of immunization programmes, inspection of food premises, processing of building plans, cleaning and clearing of drains, installation and replacement of street lamps, emptying of septic tanks. Madam Speaker, I could go on and on—repaving of roads, construction of vending facilities, maintenance of pavilions, open spaces, recreational facilities, and disaster management. Local government is all encompassing in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. This Government is playing a critical role in ensuring that local government is given the pre-eminence that it deserves in order to ensure good governance as we continue on.

I must say that this 2013 Manifesto of the People's National Movement is the only political party that would have done 14 individual manifestos for the 2013 local government elections. It shows the uniqueness of local government. So for Auzonville/Tunapuna within the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, there was one manifesto. For Mayaro, for Siparia, for Penal/Debe, for Diego Martin, for Sangre Grande, individual manifestoes because, again, local government is dynamic, local government is all encompassing. Again, we on this side have seen the importance of it in order to ensure that we look at it from that important point of view to ensure good stability and good governance as we go forward.

Madam Speaker, we on this side will continue to demonstrate good governance. We will continue to demonstrate authentic leadership style. Having been processed through the local government system—I would have identified my accolades already—I stand in this honourable House today in order to support this Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2016. [*Desk thumping*]

My colleague who would have spoken earlier said he was the Deputy Mayor of Arima and also the councillor for the Malabar area, now Minister of Education and also the Member of Parliament for Arima. We are testimonies in this House, along with my colleague from Diego Martin Central, the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Darryl Smith, another local government product coming out of the local government system in the Diego Martin area.

We also had the alderman, hon. Faris Al-Rawi, Attorney General, and many others who would have gone through, because again, we on this side, the People's National Movement, a dynasty, an institution that continues to produce. In this House we have today three present Members who would have served during the 2010/2015 term, now serving as Members of Parliament and Ministers and, of course, Deputy Speaker of this honourable House. [*Desk thumping*] That is good testimony to authentic leadership and good governance under our Prime Minister, the hon. the Right, Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley. I thank him for the opportunity to serve.

For many a year we have heard and experienced failings and inefficiencies or both, of the local government system. I repeat, it is just one of the forerunners' processes, procedures needed to fertilize and grow the tree of governance that will bear fruit of good governance, not only in this dry season, but continuing thereafter in Trinidad and Tobago.

This Order will allow holding of elections in cities, boroughs, municipalities, corporations and also the Tobago House of Assembly. It will also allow for the

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burgesses, communities and other institutions resident in cities, boroughs and municipal corporations, such as Tunapuna/Piarco, resulting in their burgesses having a greater say, a greater role, a greater influence and impact on their daily lives and relationships with their governance structures.

The hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government would have mentioned that there are 14 corporations: five municipalities, nine regional corporations; eight being controlled by the People's National Movement, six by the United National Congress. A total of 136 electoral districts of which 84 are in the control of the People's National Movement; 46 UNC, three COP and three ILP. They need not worry, with this reform, equal distribution would take place. The Members for Tabaquite and also for Couva North spoke about the idea of discrimination and the idea of equitable distribution of resources. Yes, the rates and taxes will be retained by each corporation, but budgetary allocations would come from central government as we continue along.

We on this side—and I expect and not anticipate—with the confirmation of this Order, the laying and passage of the local government reform Bill in the near future, to no longer witness the obscene spectacle of local government bodies claiming discrimination of goods and services; equitable distribution in terms of funding and procedural practices; practices which give rise and contribute considerably to mismanagement, inefficiencies, waste, damage to and the loss of services to our burgesses and communities, such as experienced by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation.

The hon. Minister spoke about the nine main points or the nine pillars on which the local government reform would be standing. He identified four of them. One that we could equally speak about, which is very important, is with regard to fostering and creating a formal consultative process and forum, where NGOs, CBOs and other civil society groups and interested parties can comment on and critique the projects, plans and programmes of local government bodies before they are implemented, and make recommendations for improvement. An open-door policy, where members of the public, burgesses, constituents will be able to go to the various regional corporations, voice their concerns, voice their inhibitions, talk about what they would like to see within their areas, in order to ensure that again they play their role in local government.

Madam Speaker, another pillar that we would like to ensure is to completely restructure and decentralize the system for the implementation of local infrastructure projects, to allow municipal corporations to engage directly suitably qualified local contractors for drainage and road works, among other



infrastructure projects, to allow work on these projects to commence in a timely manner. The bureaucracy, the red tape that we would also talk about, the protocols. Not that we are going to provide loopholes, but we are going to put legislation in place in order to ensure that things are done on a timely basis.

We talk about contractors, yes, those same contractors, once they are utilized within your community, will be able to hire burgesses and constituents from within. We heard from the hon. Minister of Education, the Member for Arima, speaking about the resurfacing of the grass area in Arima, an outside individual doing the job. We talk about the pride. We talk about the idea of individuals doing it with a certain amount of commitment. So the individuals from Tunapuna, the contractors from Tunapuna will be given work in the Tunapuna area. Persons and burgesses within Tunapuna will be allowed to work with these contractors. They will be allowed to work with pride, with commitment, in order to say yes, we are developing Tunapuna, we are developing St. Augustine; we are developing Maracas, we are developing Caura, El Dorado, Tacarigua; and they will take the pride in order to ensure. Those are some of the things that we would like on this side to ensure when the local government reform takes place and passed by this honourable House.

Madam Speaker, we the people of the Tunapuna constituency and the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation expect and anticipate many improvements with the confirmation of this Order and the revised arrangements which are expected to flow from this, with the local government reform Bill in the near future. May I note and bring to the attention of all and sundry, that Tunapuna and the Tunapuna/Piarco region, all the areas covered by this Motion will undergo the most adjustments and changes.

We have heard for many years that Tunapuna/Piarco encompasses the biggest physical area in terms of land space. We have heard of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation having over 270,000 members—people within the community. With the information in this Bill, we have 169,000-plus electors for the particular area. So in terms of being the highest, Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation is the largest of all the 14 corporations.

In this new Motion, there is room where provisions will be provided for one more which will be the Carapo area, where it has been clearly identified that Carapo will now form its own electoral district, and then there are some nine changes within the other 15 electoral districts. So Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation will now have 16 electoral districts in local government and slight

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changes with regard to the boundaries. I am seeing one of my constituents, Mr. Nigel Henry, is in the public gallery. I know he is here to get first-hand information on the necessary EBC changes here this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, we the people of Tunapuna, and may I say the people of the Tunapuna/Piarco region, have always risen to the occasion. We have heard of Tunapuna being a marginal seat, and who wins Tunapuna wins the election. [*Interruption*] St. Joseph too, San Fernando West—the top five, but Tunapuna is what? Number one. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] However it be, we cannot bring in Nigel Henry now to debate that, all right.

**6.05 p.m.**

But, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day Tunapuna constituency and the Tunapuna/Piarco region want their fair share. We look forward to this reform, we look forward to the EBC changes, we recommend the EBC changes, we recommend the idea of the Minister coming forward with the local government reform Bill as soon as possible in order to ensure that this reform takes place and catapults the Trinidad and Tobago community into the type of governance we would like to see. As a follower and a participant in authentic leaders and leadership, I can only do the right thing and support the confirmation of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2016.

Again, Madam Speaker, we can talk about local government and the positive nature that it can have on the politics of Trinidad and Tobago, the importance of development of Trinidad and Tobago, and we look forward, on this side, in order to ensure. It would have also slipped me to mention in terms of the social aspect that local government also perform, and we on this side in the reform are also looking forward to that aspect where the councillors will be individuals that can recommend, to the Ministry of Social Development, individuals who can so qualify or who may be fitting for a TT Food Card, for disability, for grants of whatever nature. Even with regard to the situation of housing, because councillors, and as the Member for Tabaquite said, if you are a good councillor and a great councillor you would have total communication, total control of your particular area.

**Mr. Singh:** Only dogs do recommend.

**Mr. E. Forde:** That is a good thing. That is a man's best friend. And it is important to ensure that the local government councillors and with regard to individuals, and the rigidity, and the democratic nature that the People's National

Movement carries through with regard to the selection of their candidates, I, as the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, will have no worries, will have no concerns with regard to the selection of candidates.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Tunapuna, your original 30 minutes are now spent. You have an additional 15 minutes, do you intend to avail yourself of it?

**Mr. E. Forde:** I would like to ensure that it would not be that long.

**Madam Speaker:** You may continue.

**Mr. E. Forde:** Thank you. I look forward to those things. Councillors work along with the Ministry of Health and Insect Vector with regard to Zika, dengue, Chikungunya or CHIKV, mosquito spraying, seeing about abandoned lots maintenance. Right now within the Tunapuna/Piarco region they are doing excellent work with regard to the cleaning of abandoned lots and eradication of all these various diseases in order to ensure that, again, the region will benefit from the different services they provide.

There is definitely need for reform. Simple things as in schools, a pipe, a toilet to be adjusted, some minor repair where the local government councillors or where the workers within the region can go in and see about, we have no jurisdiction in order to go in and see about those things. The bureaucracy that takes place with having to go through the Ministry of Education or Education Facilities Company Limited, simple things can be done and we are saying with the reform everything within your local district, the government agencies, the local schools, the local churches, they can now benefit from this reform, and they will benefit from these reforms.

So, Madam Speaker, again, as I said, I am grateful for being selected to speak today on this local government reform, and I am sure that the Leader of Government Business and Member for Arouca/Maloney who knows of my track record would have definitely [*Desk thumping*] when it came up, said, yes. So, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for my contribution today and look forward to the passage of this Bill and also to the further contributions of the local government reform Bill. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is not my intention to prolong the House on the debate of this Bill [*Desk thumping*] but there are two important considerations for the hon. Minister and the presenter of

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this Bill to consider and, of course, to respond in a brief manner to the contributions by the Member for Arima and the Member for Tunapuna. Just some small points there.

First of all, the last speaker, the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, two major themes in his contribution came out, one on performance and one on equity. And there is no question that we on this side can pride ourselves for eternity that the People's Partnership Government in 2010 to 2015 had been the best performing Government in this country, ever, so it is history. [*Desk thumping*] And even though we may be on this side, that is the people had their views on it, and the PNM is on that side, may I remind colleagues on the other side that it is approximately 2,500 votes in three constituencies that made the difference between they on that side and we on this side. The three constituencies that we lost were: Tunapuna, La Horquetta/Talparo and Moruga/Tableland. And when you summarized the—approximately 2,000 in St. Joseph and so on, and you divide it by half, if half those people who voted for PNM had voted for the People's Partnership it came out to only about 2,500 votes or voters that separated us from there to here. [*Desk thumping*]

So, when you blow your trumpet, the people have put you there, but within a space of eight and a half months the people have seen the error and the mistakes that they have made. Some are very quiet about it, some are more vocal, but the people are suffering, some of them are suffering silently, and they have indicated that the PNM has really betrayed the trust and confidence that they would have had in this Government. And everyone knows now that within eight and a half months nothing has been happening. And, that has been said time and time again, so I would not continue to dwell on that.

So, on the question of equity, also our Prime Minister during 2010—2015 always maintained the dignity of having to serve all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It was a people, centred Government, and in everything we did as a Government and as Ministers, we have been led by the hon. Prime Minister, we did it for all the people for the entire country, and in every Ministry whether it is in works, whether it is in education, whether it is in health; whatever area, whether it is public utilities, the work of the People's Partnership Government had been spread across the country in an equitable fashion and an equitable manner. And people would say up to today that it was a performing Government that worked for all the people. They may have their reasons why they

did not support us in the end, but the people have their right to choose and we respect their choice. But it is our right now to keep the Government in check and let them be responsible for what is happening. [*Desk thumping*]

So, in terms of performance and equity—and we can go on to speak about all the infrastructural projects and so on, but that is not for today. We can pride ourselves in value for money, and I as Minister of Education I can speak about the equity in the construction of schools across the country. And when we left Government after five years, our Prime Minister at that time had indicated, to the Minister of Education, that the infrastructure in the education system, the 476 primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, and the 134 secondary schools, and over 200 ECCE centres, we have to bring them to a beautiful state so that the children could have a beautiful environment in which they can have their education.

And we went about to construct new schools, 102 new schools were constructed by the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] And you can check it. [*Interruption*] I am just responding to—

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, might I remind you of the provisions of Standing Order 48(1).

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence to respond to the statements made by the hon. Member of Parliament for Arima on the education system, and I was referring to—

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, I would remind you of what the contents of the Motion is, and even though you may be responding, I have been sitting here, I heard the hon. Member for Arima, and even though schools were spoken about, it was spoken in the context of what local government reform will do.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** In that context, Madam Speaker, no local government reform will be able to help in the construction of 102 new schools with the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] No local government reform will bring on the construction of another 98 schools across the country. [*Desk thumping*] And even with good intention the Minister speaking about bringing all the regional corporations to help in repairs of schools, it is with pride and a privilege that as Minister of Education, the Education Facilities Company Limited was able to do over 5,600 repairs and maintenance projects in all the schools of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, I would remind you what is the subject matter. You have been allowed a little leeway, but please come back to the relevance of the Motion before this House.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am just asking the question, Madam Speaker, can this be done by local government? [*Desk thumping*] I will ask the hon. Minister to answer on that issue when he is winding up. I want to respond to the hon. Member for Arima, the Minister of Education, when he said that he inherited a litany of problems. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Plethora.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Plethora of problems. Plethora. Well, a litany, plethora, a multitude of problems.

May I remind the House, Madam Speaker, in reference to his statement, that if he considered the construction of 102 new schools and 98 under construction, 5,600 repairs and maintenance projects across all the schools in Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] 95,000 students getting laptops, 6,000 teachers being trained with ICT, two million textbooks given to students—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1), again.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member. Hon. Member for Caroni East, I have warned you, I am cautioning you, please get back to the subject matter of the Motion.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, all these areas cannot be dealt with under a local government portfolio, and therefore when the decision is made to deal with the whole education aspect, and two of the speakers spoke about education, I want to humbly suggest that these matters that we are dealing with cannot be handled in a proper manner by local government.

In addition, if there are 14 regional corporations, well five municipal and nine regional corporations, and you have to do construction or repairs of schools, you have to set up 14 parallel management structures, it is not by “vaps”, you have to go for tender, you have to evaluate the tender, you have to understand what needs to be constructed. So, you have to have project manager, engineers and a plethora of personnel [*Laughter and desk thumping*] across the 14 corporations; five municipal and nine regional.

**6.20 p.m.**

So I want to draw a parallel to the Regional Health Authorities which the former hon. Minister of Health has always been saying, we move from a situation

where the Ministry of Health had controlled health and it was the PNM administration in 1994 that brought on five Regional Health Authorities, four in Trinidad and one in Tobago. And we are seeing now that there is a redundancy in the whole management of it and whether that is working to the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember 1994, Madam Speaker, I was there. Your Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was the PSA President at the time and I was representing, at that time, the NAR on the discussions with respect to the Regional Health Authorities, which is, they were speaking about decentralization, not devolution of authority, was decentralization. And whether we can say now that that is working properly is a question we have to ask and answer with discussions and debate, whether the Regional Health Authorities model is working well. So now, when the hon. Minister is speaking about—I want to congratulate my distinguished colleague, a management expert from Tabaquite, the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite on his contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

You saw excerpts of his lectureship ability when he gave his contribution on his management aspects of what is really required in the regional corporations. So are we going to set up 14 parallel bodies trying to do the same thing and whether this is something that the PNM administration will have to consider, because you may have the duplication about 14 times, the type of personnel you have in one regional corporation and multiply it 14 times, and whether that will be cost effective, whether it will be efficient and whether they will be able to do a competent job. It is something for their consideration.

The other point I—I cannot leave, Madam Speaker, I must respond to the question of the aged-back system. He spoke about one of the schools—that was Aranguez Government Secondary—which he inherited with an aged-back system. It was the PNM Government that made sure that, PNM Government was the one in 2009 who made sure that the aged-back system was the system for central air conditioning for all secondary schools and we inherited that mess from them with almost \$15 million to \$30 million more. [*Crosstalk*] I am just closing down—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I would ask you to leave that point because it is irrelevant. It was said in a particular context, and therefore if you can come back to the subject matter, if not, I will exercise my powers against you not speaking to the relevance of the matter.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, the House is well air-conditioned, that is fine, that is beautiful, but the schools are not well air-conditioned because of the PNM.

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Madam Speaker, there are two areas I want to ask for consideration on the Bill.

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** There is no Bill.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I heard that you retired twice already. Have you gone into retirement?

**Hon. Member:** Motion.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** On the Motion. The first is, we have 14; five municipal corporations and nine regional corporations, we have 136 electoral districts. We are asking for a total evaluation and analysis of the electoral districts across the country, because as the hon. Minister would have done his research and found that in the municipal corporations like Port of Spain, Arima and so on, Port of Spain, for example, will have about one councillor to about 3,000 or 4,000 burgesses or even less than that. And in other regional corporations you will have one councillor to 8,000 to 9,000 constituents. So while these five municipalities have the amount of electoral districts fixed, they have them fixed, you cannot change that amount but you can modify the regional corporations. You can move them to—from the basic four to seven or eight or nine or 10 or 11 or 12 depending on the number of people. I think the time has come for consideration of these municipalities whether we need to have those numbers of councillors and so on, the councillors one to 3, 000, one to 4,000; that needs to be looked at and I offered that across to the hon. Minister for his consideration and his team.

The second point on that, the constitutionality of the local government issue. The local government elections is not constitutionally enshrined. And it is something—but my hon. Prime Minister between 2010 to 2015 was considering, and we had to deal with that and that is why we went out on consultations on that, but unfortunately, that came to our thinking and we were not able to conclude that. But local government election cannot be called at times, this is why PNM cancelled or postponed local government five or six times in a previous incarnation. So it is not constitutionally enshrined to say that it must be called during a particular period of time. And therefore it is something that has to be looked at whether you want to bring it under the constitutional remit and make sure that it is embodied within the Constitution that local government elections must be called.

So, Madam Speaker, I would have liked to respond more on what the hon. Minister said, but I have the respect for your ruling and in the ambiance of the



House where we do not want to detain the House much more, I would want to say thank you for allowing me the opportunity to respond to the other side on these matters. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Shamfa Cudjoe):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I was not scheduled to speak today but I was inspired to join the conversation because I found it quite intriguing, and this is a matter I used to pursue when I was in the Senate. Now, this matter of local government reform is something that we on this side are very passionate and committed to.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the success of democracy depends on the decentralization of power and the fact that we are moving to bring power closer to the people is a very positive thing. Local government transformation, it brings the government and the governed closer together. It gives the people on the ground, the citizens of this nation a greater say in their own development. It fosters unity and cooperation, ownership of the development process and a cohesive approach to sustainable development. And the People's National Movement, we on this side are very passionate about such.

Now, Madam Speaker, I just want to place on the record my total support for considering the Tobago House of Assembly model [*Desk thumping*] as we embark on our local government transformation process.

Now, Madam Speaker, before a Tobago House of Assembly was established in Tobago we the people of Tobago would have had to come to Trinidad for just about any and every thing. The Tobago House of Assembly in 1980, you could see progressive development in Tobago under the different administrations just because Government was being brought closer to the people. There is serious improvement in the delivery of our systems, serious progress has been made.

Now the fact that we are borrowing elements of the Tobago House of Assembly model means that we are going to enhance our structure and our operations. I think that the Tobago House of Assembly has a wealth of knowledge and experience which could greatly assist as we seek to advance and enhance the way we do business and the way we operate in local government here in Trinidad.

Now, Madam Speaker, I listened to the contribution from the Member for Couva North and I find it passing strange that the Member used the majority of her time trying to make a link between late submissions or late reports of the Auditor General for the Tobago House of Assembly and malfeasance of the Tobago House of Assembly. And I want to place categorically on record here today, Madam Speaker, there are no accusations of malfeasance. Not one

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Secretary being brought to the court [*Desk thumping*] or to prisons on any matter of corruption or anything of that sort. [*Crosstalk*] You had your chance and we let you speak, so ease it up.

So, Madam Speaker, the Auditor General Report, and you know what, it is strange that you would single out the Tobago House of Assembly because I sat on the Joint Select Committee that would have looked at municipal corporations and other state bodies and so on and many of their administrative and Auditor General Reports are outstanding. As a matter of fact, I remember last year being a Member of the Senate and the Auditor General admitting that it had been over two hundred and twenty something years, when you look at the different years in outstanding report.

So there is work to be done in our institutions as it related to the Tobago House of Assembly, the municipal corporations and the Auditor General has its work to do. The Tobago House of Assembly is not perfect, neither is the municipal corporation or the Ministries. When you look at the operations of the Tobago House of Assembly, we cannot compare to some of the scandal and the corruption that has been taking place here in Trinidad in these same municipal corporations and the Ministry. We do not have anything to compare to a LifeSport; we do not have anything to compare, Madam Speaker, to Hoop for Life; [*Desk thumping*] we do not have anything to compare to an SIS scandal. We do not have anything to compare to a section 34 or Prisonsgate. So, Madam Speaker, as much as the Member speaks of allegations of corruption, show me one—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** I would like to hear the Member for Tobago West, please. Please continue.

**Hon. S. Cudjoe:** So while there is much talk about allegations of corruption, Madam Speaker, they are unable to identify one serious case. So I want to place on record my support for considering the Tobago House of Assembly model. Of course, the THA model cannot be transplanted here in Trinidad because our model is more sophisticated than what you have here in Trinidad, but I am sure that there are lessons to be learnt and elements that could be taken and used here in Trinidad.

So, Madam Speaker, when you look at the way our work is done in Tobago as it relates to TEMA, our TEMA model, our Tobago Emergency Management Agency model is used as a template up the region. [*Desk thumping*] When you look at the way primary health care is delivered in Tobago, that too is used as a

template for the rest of the region. Social services, come on think about it, Madam Speaker, for Members of Parliament to have to come to Parliament or to a Ministry to ask about disability grants and food cards in your constituency. If we can bring these services closer to the people, we know the people who are in need of social assistance, we know the age, we know the people who would need surgeries and so on, if we can bring these services closer to the people it would redound to the benefit of not just central government but to the average man and woman and child in our communities.

So these are some of the things we ought to consider. As we seek to improve and enhance our methods of local government, we have to ensure that the necessary legislation and systems and structures are established to ensure that the strong does not trample on the weak and that it is done properly. I am going to take this opportunity also to raise the usual items that I have been bringing to the attention of the people of Trinidad and Tobago as we look at local government.

In Tobago, we have 12 electoral districts. And we ought to consider what if we end up with a six/six result. So I have always been a proponent, I have always tried to raise the matter of having an odd number for Tobago, whether it is developing a 13th electoral district. Because we would have learnt from here in central government when we had 36 seats and now we have 41 seats so it is an odd number. So I wish that we would consider or the Elections and Boundaries Commission would consider a 13th electoral district.

### **6.35 p.m.**

There is also a section of the EBC that speaks to separating the electoral districts by physical landmarks like highways and waterways and I think that there are some invisible demarcated lines, I should say, that we ought to consider as it relates to villages and how they operate and their culture and things of that nature. And finally, I think that the Elections and Boundaries Commission ought to have an educational project or programme so that people feel more comfortable and that their work is being done in a transparent and accountable manner, so we understand what we are doing. Because sometimes, when the results are not in your favour, some people tend to want to question about the operations and the systems and the mechanisms of the EBC. So I think it is very important that there be a robust education campaign so that we as citizens could feel comfortable with the operations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

So, Madam Speaker, as I said before, nobody is perfect but the Tobago House of Assembly is certainly a light in a darkroom as it relates to governance. [*Desk thumping*] There are many lessons to be learnt, we are not perfect and we

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certainly do not have a criminal record like that we have seen in other bodies related to the State.

So, Madam Speaker, with those few words, I sincerely thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Acting Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to wrap up this debate on the Motion before us. I just want to thank all the Members on this side who have contributed and added some greater level of clarity to this Motion. I also would like to thank the contributions from the Opposition Bench. [*Desk thumping*] I think some of it—it is a basic consensus that they would support the Motion of the EBC which is a given really because based on convention, we do not really propose amendments or anything of the sort to that constitutional body. And secondly, the fact that, by and large, the Opposition and the Government seem to be reading from one page in terms of local government reform. There may be some difference as to the details of the structure but, by and large, there is consensus. But just let me go through some specific issues raised by the various speakers.

Before I do that, Madam Speaker, I just want to spend five minutes, probably max, on the whole concept of rural development because we keep talking rural in the context of the regional corporation and the very fact that I am the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. Madam Speaker, the concept of rural development was developed by this current administration, in particular our Prime Minister, Dr. Rowley, being a rural child himself coming out of Mason Hall in Tobago. And, by and large, what seems to happen in the development of Third World countries in particular is that when you do classic economic analysis for projects, there is something called market size. There is something called population density.

So when you are looking to make an investment to have a rate of return and a payout, the urban centres will always draw capital to itself. And if that free market system is allowed to operate unchecked, what will happen is that the development in general will be gravitated towards the population centre. So this administration took the position that for rural development to take place, there has to be direct Government intervention, direct Government policy intervention and that was the concept behind rural development.

I want to make the point that rural development and rural underdevelopment, as we speak, has nothing to do with politics, it has to do with economics. I quote, for example, Toco/Matelot, largely an African community, strong supporters of

the PNM. As we speak, they suffer from rural underdevelopment. Moruga, myself being a former Member of Parliament for there but now the current Member for Moruga, an African community, deeply rural, underdeveloped. And then we come now to Cedros/Icacos, largely an East Indian community, very strong supporters of the United National Congress but they suffer from the same symptoms as Moruga and Toco/Matelot because it is about the competition for capital.

And that is why in the concept of rural development, we have said, the purpose of the Ministry of Rural Development—and I differ with Member Rambachan—it is not to urbanize rural areas, it is to give them a level of development where they have the facilities and the amenities that are similar to the urban centres. So what we will provide are an economic seed and connectivity. And let me quote our two flagship projects at least for the next two years in these areas: One, the Toco ferry, to provide a fast-ferry service. From Toco to Tobago, it is only 22 miles but from Port of Spain, it is a whole long course. So you can have a ferry service almost on the hour, every hour from Toco.

And that sounds good but what about the connectivity. [*Interruption*] The point about it, that is why we have designed—and the tenders have gone out for a route alignment—a first-class arterial road from Valencia to Toco. [*Desk thumping*] So here is the economic model for Toco: a sustainable fast-ferry service from Toco to Tobago running approximately on the hour or every two hours and a first-class arterial road from Valencia to Toco, and that will provide the economic seed for development; that will bring sustainability to the Toco/Matelot community and, in particular, the St. Andrew, St David Counties of the past and the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation.

We go to Moruga. The first major project that will be implemented by this Government—and tenders will be out next month—is for the Moruga Fishing Facility, the Moruga Fishing Port at a cost of \$200 million. [*Desk thumping*] That will sow the economic seed for Moruga and the connectivity. A contract has already been tendered in the Ministry of Works and Transport through NIDCO to have a full upgrade of the Moruga road from Petit Café junction straight down to Marac and we will be fixing all the landslips on the road, doing route alignment where the landslips are extremely bad and realigning the road. [*Desk thumping*]

I am also, as we speak, looking at Gran Couva. I have met with a group from Gran Couva. A young guy—a young boy and he has so many ideas. I have met with him and we will be doing Toco/Matelot. [*Interruption*] No, we do not want to be accused of bias. So one of the third areas that I am trying to focus on is the

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Central Range—beautifully placed, lovely scenery, cocoa estates. They have sustainability in agriculture and we could move into a rural programme in places like Gran Couva and Brasso. So, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to make the point that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is focused. It knows what it is doing. It is a double Ministry now, Rural Development and Local Government. But let me come back now to specific rebuttals on the local government process.

I want to compliment the Member for Tobago West because TEMA, the Tobago Emergency Management Agency, it is probably the best run institution in all of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] They are so up to mark so to speak. I made a visit to TEMA last week when I visited the THA in this whole consultation process. They have a database that if a category 2 hurricane is to hit Tobago, they can identify the individual houses that will be at risk and then you can go on an evacuation plan, not to evacuate the whole village but you go to the specific houses that, in the model, will be destroyed by a category 2 hurricane. If it increases to a category 3, it expands as to what other houses you will come to.

They have a database on everybody who would need a wheelchair coming out of those houses and they have monitoring systems. I mean, it is unbelievable. Sometimes I wonder what our ODPM is doing. The ODPM director bought 30,000 body bags in the last administration. That is all I remember of ODPM. However, I want to say I compliment the Member for Tobago West in terms of TEMA and also social service delivery and it is because of the THA, we have a plan to include social service delivery as part of the local government reform because it is so effective in Tobago.

When you go to Tobago, you just know things run better than in Trinidad. Their whole delivery mechanism is superior to ours and it is largely because of the governance structure for delivery of services in Tobago through the THA. The THA used to be the Tobago County Council. [*Interruption*] The THA used to be the Tobago County Council and look where they have reached, because of proper legislation, empowerment and devolution of power and authority. So while we cannot—[*Interruption*] As I said, we are not duplicating but we will be putting something, not identical but similar and that is the key word. You know there are similar triangles and identical triangles. We are doing similar but not identical for the THA model.

I will go to the Member for Couva North because she took issue with the THA. I think the Member for Tobago West did a good job in rebutting her but I just want to say also that the THA's accounts; the issue was never really with late

submission of the accounts, you know, the issue was always with the process of the auditing from the Auditor General, and they kept asking for additional information and the years just passed. So while they probably were delinquent by about a year, this whole idea of seven years that the THA did not submit their accounts has not been true. [*Desk thumping*]

And the Member for Couva North insistence based on that issue only, not to use the THA model, is flawed in logic and to understand the THA, Madam Speaker, we have to understand—and let me bat for Tobago here—Tobago is a different island. We are one island subdivided into corporations. The island of Trinidad was first and then Lord Harris made counties and then the NAR made municipal corporations. Tobago has always been an independent island with a totally different history from Trinidad. The British married us without anybody giving consent and here now, we have to live through the 100 and so years of the relationship to Tobago, and for the first time, Tobago is telling Trinidad, listen, I am different to you but I am part of you, give me my autonomy. And I want to go on record as saying this administration plans to upscale Tobago and one of the campaign promises of the PNM is that Tobago will be granted the full internal self-Government and autonomy under the PNM administration.

The Member for Couva North also spoke about, with the reform process, we must have competent councillors, and we know that. If you are giving them more responsibility, you need “ah higher, ah better” cadre and calibre of councillors but that is the responsibility of the political party, I cannot legislate that. The PNM’s screening process I can vouch for because I sit on the PNM screening committee as its vice-chairman, it is chaired by the political leader so I know that we will be putting things in place in the PNM to get the calibre of councillors that we need. The ball is in your court.

But I want to say and to caution that when you seek public office in Trinidad through the electoral process, you cannot have no criteria. The only criterion is you must be 18 years and over and do not have a criminal record, because you cannot set a bar legislatively to say you must have a degree or you must have A levels or you must have 10 years’ experience. It cannot work so. This is a democracy and everybody is entitled to seek public office and some of the best politicians and leaders and administrators we have produced in this country have come from Moruga: Kamaluddin Mohammed, Errol Mahabir—

**Hon. Member:** Lionel Seukeran.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Well, Lionel Seukeran and Jarrette Narine, okay. I mean I can speak on the PNM side and if you had a chance, you would speak on

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the UNC. Jarrette Narine has been one of the best local government practitioners in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

He went on to become a Minister of Local Government. So I just want to say that while we are conscious that we need a higher calibre of councillors, we have to be careful that legislatively we stay away from that.

**6.50 p.m.**

With regard to oversight, we are saying that one of the issues that came out of the consultation was oversight. Everybody brought up that point. Invariably, in the 14 consultations everybody was concerned about oversight. I had proposed in the consultations we will have the Auditor General, we would have the Ministry of Finance who we will be directly reporting to. This administration wants to establish a general accounting office in the Parliament that will seek some online audit function for the Ministries of Government. If that project kicks off in earnest, I can see that being expanded to have oversight of the 14 municipal corporations.

But having said that, who will guard the guards? That is the question we continuously ask. Okay? So we cannot be scared of empowering people because at the level of building a society you have to have confidence in your people. We have so many young graduates coming out. We have so many leaders on the horizon. We have so many new—a cadre of new leaders that are coming out and we have to put the ball in their court and we have to let them understand that they are taking over the leadership. They are probably watching us and criticizing us for not being transparent and for being corrupt. And this is a new generation that wants to lead and there are so many good young people in this country, Madam Speaker, and I think it is time we pass the baton in their hands and this local government reform process will do just that. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me go to Tim Gopeesingh. “I ain see nothing here on the page for you.” So excuse me. I do not want you to feel that I am slighting you, Member for Caroni East. Okay? But I could not take any notes for you because I think you were rebutting the Minister of Education and the Member for Arima. So, I apologize. Okay?

Member for Tabaquite, an experienced practitioner in local government, a former local government Minister, a former Chairman of the St. Patrick County Council at the time, a former Mayor of Chaguanas until Jack Warner overthrew you and Ganga Singh, Member for Chaguanas West. Madam Speaker, the overthrow of Suruj Rambachan as Mayor of Chaguanas.



Madam Speaker, let me get back on course. The Member for Tabagite raised the point of the inequity in the tax base and that is particularly true, but the tax base, that alone will not provide the full budgetary requirements for the corporation. However, there are challenges in implementing that and we are still working out a matrix to determine how this will work. I will give you an example, Point Fortin. Point Fortin is the smallest borough. It has 36,000 electors—well burgesses, cities are citizens. If we include the Atlantic tax base in the Point Fortin Borough, their income just shoots through the sky. The same thing Couva/Tabagite/Talparo. If we include the Point Lisas tax base, their revenue stream will shoot through the sky, and then we are left with corporations like Sangre Grande, Mayaro whose tax base, based on property taxes, will be minimal. So we will be working out a matrix as to how we will do that, but the principle of allowing regional corporations to collect municipal taxes as it relates to land and building and property taxes is still valid but we will have to work out a matrix as to how this is done and how do we provide the top-up or the scale-down, as the case may be, in terms of the budgetary allocation. We are still contemplating the details of that.

A lot of recommendations have come from the consultation that we should have, as the Member for Tabagite also suggested that the percentage of the national budget as per the Tobago model. I make no firm commitment on that. That process is still fluid and we are looking at that.

The will to implement the transformation, mentioned by the Member for Tabagite. He produced a document there that he was flying. “I flying this document”. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, let me just say something here. There is no local government Minister in the history of Trinidad and Tobago that did more research, prepared more reports and did more consultation than the hon. Hazel Manning when she was Minister of Local Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Then we came down to 2013, and then Minister Suruj Rambachan, he had consultation, he had report. I tell the consultations every time, when I went to the Ministry of Local Government they had a pile of reports high so, on local government reform.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** High how?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** About this.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** From the ground up?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** From the ground up, yeah. And what we found out, and I did not study the reports but I browsed through a lot of them, and basically

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what they were saying was the same thing. What they were saying all made sense, but then still nothing happened. And why nothing happened is because, as a society we suffer from inertia and under-development is defined by inertia, because nothing happens. Decades passed and nothing fundamental or strategic happens in our society because there is not the will to do it, the political will to do it. And what we are saying this time—this administration, under Dr. Rowley, we are not kicking the can down the road further. That is basically what we are saying.

Because intuitively, and let me make another point here. Human beings do not like to give up power. Centralized power is part of the human psyche. The only politician I knew who gave up power voluntarily is a guy called Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, one called Perestroika and Mandela to a lesser extent, but Perestroika was one of the most fundamental political events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and intuitively do not give up power.

For this local government reform to take place I set one criterion. For this local government reform to take place, it must have the total buy-in of the leader; the total buy-in of the Prime Minister, and I want to go on record in this Parliament to say that while I am championing the process of local government reform, it is being orchestrated from the top. This process has the total buy-in of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and it is going to happen. [*Desk thumping*]

Finally, Madam Speaker, I want to make the point that this local government reform process is apolitical. It has absolutely nothing to do with the political landscape. The powers we are planning to put out to the local government bodies will be equally administered with an even hand. So the power of the Chairman of the Diego Martin Corporation, which is all PNM, will be the same power as the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, which is all UNC, and every combination therein and within. So it is nothing to do with politics, because in this country if the people of Penal/Debe decide to vote for UNC, that is their right. Just so it is the right of the people of Diego Martin to vote for the People's National Movement and it is us as politicians and leaders to have to win people over, and when you are in government it is your duty to win people over so that you can bring them on your side and the best way to bring them on your side is to show that you are altruistic and you believe in people-centred development and that you are going to deliver the goods and services that they want. [*Desk thumping*]

The other issue I want to raise is that as part of this local government reform process, we are really going to propose that we have full-time councillors. Okay? We are going to have full-time councillors so that the issue that was raised by the Member for Couva North about remuneration for the councillors—because I want to make it clear that the Minister of Local Government does not set the salary of councillors. The salary of councillors is set by the Salaries Review Commission. Once the Salaries Review Commission deems you to be part-time they would administer their remuneration package to so suit; just as they treat you on the Opposition Bench as Members of Parliament, which is a part-time position, according to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. You are talking on behalf of the councillors. You have to start to talk on behalf of yourselves too now. Because you see your job as full-time. The power structure, especially as it relates to the Salaries Review Commission, sees you as part-time, you are being paid as a part-time person and you claim to be doing a full-time job. So even parliamentary reform is required in the context of this.

And, finally, Madam Speaker, we have identified some of the challenges that currently face the local government system. It has been identified as political interference and political perception. Let me deal with this political perception issue. When the PNM Government is in power, the UNC-run corporations perceived and perceive that they are being victimized and they are being starved of funds. When the UNC is in power, the PNM corporations perceive that they are being starved of funds. I do not know which is right or which is wrong, but what I am saying is that this local government transformation process will put that right because we will be now allocating greater level of funding, for the first time, to the regional corporations in Trinidad.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You have to put it in law.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** We have to put law if we want to set a specific percentage target, otherwise it would be left to the central government administration at their discretion. We are still looking at what is the best matrix and the best formula to use. Because you see, Tobago is separate because the Tribunal ruled that 4 per cent is the limit but we cannot budget in a country to whereby legislation, we keep setting percentages. We will be handcuffing the system. Okay. I said I make no judgment or no final judgment on that matter but we are looking at it in all seriousness and all earnestness.

And finally, the pro-administration, as we currently speak, I dealt with that in my presentation, that we need a revamped administrative structure, a revamped delivery system with new skill sets and new competencies within the corporation.

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So, Madam Speaker, I know it is not—I will be breaching the Standing Orders if I bring you into the debate but I just want to go on record and say you yourself should understand what I am saying, as a former Chairman of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, and a good one at that. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to recommend to this honourable House the adoption of the Eighth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission under the Municipal Corporations Act and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50, for the purposes of the local government election.

Also, I want to encourage the Opposition in particular to continue their support, right now it is still lukewarm coming on warm, for the local government reform process. I want to see the temperature rising on that side, as it relates to this agenda and I will prepare the policy statements and the legislative reform for presentation to this Parliament in due course. Having said that, Madam Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

**7.05 p.m.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the draft of the “Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Order, 2016” be approved.

#### ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, I would like to crave your indulgence to return to the Order Paper, and return to “Motions Relating to the Business or Sitzings of the House, and moved by a Minister”.

**Madam Speaker:** Does this meet the concurrence of the House?

*Assent indicated.*

**Madam Speaker:** Leave is granted.

#### JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENT TO)

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that Mrs. Glenda

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Jennings-Smith, be appointed to serve on the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration in lieu of Miss Shamfa Cudjoe.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to May 20, 2016 at 1.30 pm.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are two matters that qualify to be raised on the Motion of the adjournment of the House, filed for the Members for Caroni East and Tabaquite. I will now call upon the Member for Caroni East.

#### **Welcome and Ragoonanan Roads (Unfinished Projects)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Mine is a very simple Motion, in terms of requiring some answers from the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, under whose jurisdiction work had started in my constituency from the Ministry of Works and Transport, well, not my constituency, but the constituency of the people I represent, Caroni East. That is with particular reference to people who feel very unhappy and discomforted, as a result of work that had been started by us, but we had not been able to complete, because we were no longer in Government, but it was started by the PURE Programme of the Ministry of Works, on the Welcome Road and Ragoonanan Road; Welcome, coming to Ragoonanan Road.

There are hundreds of homes there where, close to about more than 1,500 citizens reside, and because of the work that had started, in terms of the box drains, because that road was really dilapidated. Amongst all the work that had been done in the constituency, we did quite a lot of work, but that one remained outstanding, as had been started by the PURE Programme. A contractor had started the work there and they stopped, started again and stopped, and then the change of administration took place.

Work continued for about a month or so after the administration changed, but then stopped altogether. Many of the people felt so unhappy that they wanted to do the same thing that has been happening across the country, in terms of burning tyres, and doing all sorts of things that are not in conformity with the law. You know, people should not be burning tyres and putting things across the road. I am not in favour of that at all. If you want to say that you are unhappy about something, there is a way you can do it.

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I spoke to the residents. I told them that I will bring this matter for consideration, and get a response from the hon. Minister of Works and Transport. It had been started by the PURE Programme, but the Minister—I wrote the Minister, because when we came into Opposition, the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, I think, wrote all the MPs. I know I got a letter from him, asking us, what are the priority roads that we need to have repaired?

I got a letter from that, and I gave him 12 roads, in a matter of prioritisation. I had written him on this matter for the Welcome Road and the Ragoonanan Road people, and the Minister did respond. I thank the Minister for responding—indicating that he is now putting it through to the hands of the regional corporation, and that he will get in touch with us again. He will write the regional corporation and indicate what is happening, and we will get to know what is happening. But, hon. Minister, through you, Madam Speaker, the regional corporations as far as I remember, each councillor gets about \$30,000 a month, to run their business. The hon. Minister spoke just a while ago about the regional corporations.

So, that volume of work, it is a long road, needing box drains on both sides. The road is terrible. There is a lot of dust that is flying in the atmosphere. There is an Early Childhood Education Centre close by. The children are becoming very sick as a result. The school has to be closed, and netting and so on put.

So I am appealing on behalf of the residents of Welcome Road and Ragoonanan Road, to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, and even through to the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, to see how they can bring some alleviation of the plight of the residents there, and bring some degree of comfort, and some health back to them, because of the amount of dust in the dry season that they had been experiencing. So far they feel comforted that I will bring the matter here, and based on that, I will have to report to them to see how they think about it. So, I look forward to some support from the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, to alleviate the discomfort of the residents in that particular area.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to begin by indicating my regret for the suffering and the pain that the persons of Welcome Road and Ragoonanan Road must endure, but I rather suspect, Opposition

Members, behaving the way they do, might very well be giving the impression that someone else is responsible for their plight. So I hope that the few minutes I have, they will understand where we are at.

Now, Welcome Road and Ragoonanan Road are located in the district of Caroni. Welcome Road is approximately 3.5 kilometres in length, and Ragoonanan, approximately 2.8 kilometres. A road condition report revealed that Ragoonanan Road itself, the pavement, that is to say, the roadway, was described as good, although it required additional concrete drainage works, box drains and so on.

Welcome Road, the pavement, very poor, both Welcome Road South and North, because it is two segments of it. While the Ministry recognizes the importance of these thoroughfares to the people in those neighbourhoods, as the Member indicated a while ago, this really falls within the remit of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, but here I am today, having to answer for this situation. So that is the first important point.

Of course, as the Member alluded to a while ago, on an annual basis, and I intend to continue this, we seek to find out from Members of Parliament and from the regional corporations, what are the roads that require particular attention in their particular constituencies or regions, cities, boroughs. This is typically sent to our PURE Division, where they would analyse the problems, assess the work, put a costing to it, and we will treat with it to the extent that, of course, money permits, and this is how the situation generally works. These roads were attended to by the PURE Programme in that regard.

But, Madam Speaker, I have a record, a woeful record in front of me. Let me help the residents of those areas to understand. In 2011, a contract was given to Shambrin's General Contractors to do some drainage works on Ragoonanan Road. It cost almost, just 900 and something, almost \$1 million. In 2012, a contract was given to another firm, Ellis General Contracting Services, to do some drainage works for \$760,000. In 2012 again, Ragoonanan Road, a contract given to General Maintenance Services Limited to do some concrete drainage works, \$1.2 million. In 2015, a contract was given to FORSO Limited to do drainage works along Welcome Road, because typically you try to do the drainage first, and then the pavement; it appears just over \$1 million, about \$1,000,069. In 2015 again, a second package, a second contract, to Global Competitive Strategies Limited, to do concrete drainage works along Welcome Road again, for just over \$1 million Madam Speaker, this is the line that is very important, when you look

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at the column, the report that I have in front of me, the status says: all 100 per cent complete; every one of them.

Then we go now to the biggest one. Welcome Road again, 2015, Seereeram Brothers Limited, \$5.5 million of work, and the scope of works included 1,300 kilometres of box drains, inclusive of 350 metres of sidewalk, construction of driveway entrances to some residences, strengthening and rehabilitation works for approximately 950 metres of roadway, and paving of 950 metres of roadway. This I want the residents to hear, the status of this, according to the report is 35 per cent complete; \$5.5 million, eh. And listen to what the report says: the concrete drainage and road works package is incomplete, due to financial constraints experienced by the contractor. Completed are approximately 497 metres of concrete drains and 200 metres of sidewalk slabs. So, Madam Speaker, altogether, between 2012—2015, the State paid contractors \$10.4 million, and today, I have to sit in this House, and hear the Member for Caroni East tell me about the need for urgent and critical works in that area, yeah?

So I want to as well say, just en passant, I encountered an outstanding package, moneys owed to contractors in the tune of \$475 million in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Some of the contracts issued without any writing whatsoever, about \$60 million worth of them. Two claimants went to court recently and the judge had some scathing comments to speak, about accountability for State resources, which will be held up in due time. This is the situation that we inherited, but it falls to us to work it out. At this time, we have some money challenges in this country. We did not have it in the last five years, or at least we did, but they kept it a secret, they even lied, but now we know.

**Hon. Member:** Unparliamentary.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am sorry. They even—let me withdraw that—[*Interrupted*]

**Madam Speaker:** Minister, just withdraw that, please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is unparliamentary. [*Interruption*] They continued to stay as far from the truth as they possibility could. [*Desk thumping*] It appears they do not feel comfortable in the atmosphere of truth.

So, Madam Speaker, we have the project in view because we understand the citizens are suffering. Notwithstanding \$10 million and three years, and today, we have to hear about urgent and difficult. So I have to ask as I conclude, if \$10.4 million was spent on these two roads between 2012—2015, and today, the



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Member has to tell us about urgent and critical need, I must ask, what went wrong? Why are the residents still made to suffer today? Who did the poor work or none at all? Who abandoned the residents in the course of this work? Put more colloquially, who stole the cheese? [*Interruption*] And who let the cheese grabbers out? [*Laughter*]

As the Member for Diego Martin Central once said in answer to similar questions, ask yourself. But we have a duty, we have a responsibility. We have made a promise to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to improve their circumstances with the little resources we have available. We are confident as we eradicate waste and graft and corruption, we will produce for these people far more than they ever had, with the little resources we have because ours have “barakat”; theirs had done.

**7.20 p.m.**

We will approach this programme as soon as funds become available, because if the country missed it, we are experiencing some challenging financial times and circumstances, but help is on the way. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

### **Water and Sewerage Authority (Restoration of Roadways)**

**Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise with your permission to bring to the attention of Parliament, and in particular WASA, the matter of the quality of restoration of areas of roadway, especially my constituency, which have been dug up for repairs and also to repair damaged or broken water mains, or to replace old mains with new mains, or to put in new mains altogether. Madam Speaker, this matter is a very serious matter because the quality of restoration of roadway throughout the country by WASA has been a problem. While one may think it is just a matter of the quality of restoration, it has implications for life and limb.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind if you read the newspapers from time to time about the complaints made by drivers whose vehicles fall into these potholes which WASA dug in order to do work and did not fill up, and then it got deeper and people had to buy shocks and repair their vehicles and what have you. But, more than that, there have been incidences where people have lost their lives, where people have got into serious accidents and ended up in the hospital

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with broken limbs and what have you and damaged in a very serious way. So the matter that I am raising is not just a matter that should be taken casually, but it is a matter that should be taken very seriously.

Madam Speaker, in fact, you know, some areas have now become obstacle courses. I am telling you, if you drive in areas of my constituency where they have dug up along the side of the road, what has actually happened—and these are roads paved as recently as two years—the road has narrowed. My fellow Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, for example, driving from Avocat Junction to South Oropouche, you have to actually drive around ends on the roads now. You drive into Siparia Old Road by Avocat Premiere houses and they have dug up the road across the road and they have not fixed it. They are just ignoring things there, because WASA is telling you: “We have no money.”

Madam Speaker, in my constituency, several areas have been dug up and for the intention of the Minister, I have made a list: Light Pole 94, Bonne Aventure Main Road; Light Pole 71, Bonne Aventure Main Road; Light Pole 9, Guaracara Street; Light Pole 56 Moonwash, Light Pole 66, Moonwash; Light Pole 85, Thompson Street; Light Pole 7, Thompson Street; Light Pole 25, Bonne Aventure Main Road; Light Pole 65, St. Fabien, and in St. Fabien where a number of places have been dug up due to the broken mains water have leaked, and I can take you, Madam Speaker, and show you houses that have collapsed as a result of this water running down from the WASA lines and damaging the foundation of houses.

A \$400,000-plus house now leans like this [*Shows motion with hands*] and these are very serious matters. WASA does not want to take any kind of blame or any kind of responsibility. There is always some kind of legal face that they are setting up. Light Pole No. 2, Springland; Opposite the police station on Henry Street—opposite the police station they have dug up the road and have not fixed it; Bedeau Street, Gasparillo; Guaracara, Tabaquite; the crossing on Poonah Road just after Sandstone Road; Springville Road, three areas not patched properly that have been dug up; Caratal, Tortuga; Forres Park Road near the Jesus Resurrection Church.

In front the church, they have dug it up and have not fixed it. The patrons of that church go there every Saturday and Sunday and they have to go round these holes. One is about nearly 100 feet long that they have restored in a bad way, and now you cannot even drive over it. Bocal Trace, Forres Park. I do not want to read the whole list, but there is a whole number of areas, Madam Speaker, which I think the Minister has to look at.

Why is this happening? WASA has probably two groups which do these repairs: one is an internal group that they have in-house and the second one, the external contractors. It is very obvious now that some of the contractors are taking these repairs for a joke. The contractors are not technically competent. You go on the site where they are doing the repairs, and you will see they do not even have the proper equipment to do the job.

For example, Madam Speaker, when you are building a road and you dig out the road, you put in back sand, and then you put crusher run, and then you take at least a five or 10-tonne roller and you roll that. When they dig out the road, sometimes they are not even putting back crusher run and they are just putting the asphalt on it, so that when you drive after a period of a couple of hours, the whole thing sinks and then that is a whole puddle of water and then it sinks further and so on.

Madam Speaker, they have cut the roads in certain places to put in lines, and when they go back to pave back the road they are paving within the two lines, so that there is a channel on this side and a channel on this side. Even if it is an inch wide water begins to get into that, and now when you drive on the road, like you drive along Forres Park Road, you will see an entire drain on the side of road that was supposed to be pure asphalt.

The standards that were set by PURE when I was there at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure meant that they had to pave at least one metre on both sides of the channel that they cut so that you would have it properly sealed; that, to me, is not being done again. So you have a very, very poor management and poor supervision and poor quality work being done by WASA and their contractors or agents in the restoration of these roads. They are also using poor quality materials, Madam Speaker. There are certain standards for the quality of material that is being used.

Madam Speaker, as I understand it, from my colleague when he was Minister responsible for WASA, whenever road works had to be done they would place, in the budget, money to restore the roads. This is why under my colleague, Mr. Ganga Singh, when they dug up the Bus Route going from Arima to Port of Spain, if you go back there now and you see the quality of restoration, it is good restoration. The Bus Route was properly restored because he personally supervised it and ensured it was really done. Why can we not have that same standard across the country? Why can that standard not be enforced?

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Madam Speaker, there was a coordinating committee set up between WASA and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure as it was then called to ensure that the standards are enforced, to ensure that the proper restoration is done. What has happened to that coordinating committee? What has happened to the regular meetings that were supposed to take place? What has happened to the meetings where WASA would tell the Ministry, look, we are going to have to be digging up those roads therefore do not go and pave? But now you are still seeing areas that they paved, WASA is coming and digging it up after. The whole system it seems has broken down.

I want to make some recommendations with respect to how this might be dealt with. We are sitting in this Parliament today and we are discussing this matter, and the hon. Minister, good natured, would get up and he would respond for 10 minutes and, Madam Speaker, I am sorry to say but that would be the end of the matter. WASA is not going to be listening to us, but there is a joint select committee or joint select committees of this Parliament. I am asking today, based upon what is transpiring here, that the joint select committee consider, through you, or through whoever, calling a special meeting to ask questions that we as Members of Parliament raise here on matters of the adjournment so that we can get something done on behalf of our constituents forced by the Parliament, which has oversight over what is happening in the country. If the Parliament has oversight over the budgets of the country, then the Parliament must also have oversight and be able to intervene where the agencies failed. The joint select committees are, in my view, one of the places they can be called upon to respond to some of this.

Madam Speaker, I also think that WASA is obligated, Mr. Minister, to do an internal review of the quality of contractors that they now have and what is happening; an audit of the quality of supervision that they now have in terms of what is happening there on the roadway; and thirdly I believe that WASA should institute the system of retention of moneys, whether it is 10 per cent or 20 per cent, they should institute that, so that where within three months the road deteriorates after they have done the repairs, this retention money can then be withheld and the roads can be restored. Madam Speaker, I thank you for this intervention. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to my colleague on the other side, and I smile because it is interesting after spending close to 40 years in another place to start a new career in this House, and listen to people who give the impression that

all these things that are taking place are taking place within the last eight months. [*Desk thumping*] I listened to someone who held the portfolio of Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, I must not defend my constituents. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** It is interesting also that he was a Member of a Government who used certain clichés: your Government working for you, water for all—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Pipe, pipe and more pipe. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Brig. Gen. A. Antoine:** Suddenly they recognize that the contractors are using poor quality materials, in the last eight months; and there are bad contractors working on our roads, in the last eight months; and they produce substandard works, in the last eight month. [*Crosstalk*] But part of the problem, Madam Speaker, is caused by an individual who went around laying pipe all over the country—laying pipe in Siparia, laying pipe in Tabaquite. [*Desk thumping*] He was just laying pipe all over the country. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] I realize even in Tobago he wanted to lay pipe—pipe, pipe, pipe and more pipe—and the result is that when you lay so much pipes all over the place, the pipes leak, they leak, especially as the saying goes, “hurry bird does build bad nest.” So in your haste to lay pipe, you did not lay the pipes properly and now the pipes are leaking all over Tabaquite. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker, the Water and Sewerage Authority currently repairs approximately 3,000 leaks per month in Trinidad and Tobago with an estimated 90 per cent being done on the roadway resulting in need for road restoration works. Road reinstatement is done in two phases, as the former Minister of Works and Infrastructure knows. There is a temporary phase and there is a permanent phase. The temporary phase is carried out soon after the leak is repaired so as to allow citizens to use the road. During this phase, the pipes are pressure-tested to ensure that there are no more leaks. This is done in terms of 1.5 kilometres at a time. Once there are no leaks, permanent reinstatement of the roadway is done.

Now, this gives the impression that WASA is not doing or the contractors are not doing a good job, but my colleague on the other side knows because he was a super Minister in the past government, Minister of road and infrastructure, so he understands. He says that both himself and WASA had collaboration. So he knows that the first stage is a temporary stage. [*Crosstalk*] Once they are pressure tested and there are no leaks, the permanent phase comes in.

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The permanent reinstatement utilizes hot mix asphalt and it is undertaken on an average of about six to eight weeks after the initial repair has been done. That is the problem. That is something I intend to deal with WASA to ensure that the permanent job is done in a shorter period of time, [*Desk thumping*] but that is something we inherited before, more than eight months ago. It is this that contributes to the many complaints received about WASA's poor quality road repair. I have to do a lot of work with WASA because of what transpired over the last eight months—W-A-S-A was changed, to my colleagues on the other side, help from my colleagues on the other side, to “workers against smooth asphalt”, because of the activities over the years.

**7.35 p.m.**

The Tabaquite area has benefited from a significant amount of repairs to leaking mains, which resulted in the high volume of work restoration in the area and have contributed to the length of time for completion of road restoration works in the area. Madam Speaker, a major contributory factor to the recent delays was the need for a review, by the new board of WASA, of the procurement arrangement and practices leading to pipe-laying and road restoration. This is to eliminate corruption and ensure that the authority gets value for money in the award of road construction contracts, and in the future we will tend to spread the contracts over a wider amount of contractors rather than a small group of contractors who have been accused by my colleagues on the other side of giving substandard work.

In this regard, road restoration, a reinstatement is currently being undertaken by WASA in-house crews in order to improve the delivery time, response times, and reduce the inconvenience to residents. WASA has increased the number of crews for both leak repairs and road restoration. Madam Speaker, as it pertains to road restoration there is a close collaboration, as my colleagues on the other side mentioned, between WASA and the Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry of Works and Transport determines the protocol to be followed, including specification of standards.

This Government, Madam Speaker, is cognizant of the critical importance of the road network to be sustained to the sustainable development of communities and the well-being of our residents, and I apologize to the residents of Tabaquite for the inconvenience caused by this roadwork. [*Desk thumping*] In this regard,

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we remain fully committed to timely completion of road restoration and repair works so as to reduce inconvenience to the affected residents. Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I just crave your indulgence, I know you have to put the question, but I crave your indulgence to indicate that on the next sitting of the House, on Friday 20<sup>th</sup>, we would be dealing with “Committee Business” and we would be dealing with Motion No. 2 on the Order Paper, which is the Motion that says:

“BE IT RESOLVED that this House adopt the Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2015.”

Thank you, Ma’am.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that this House do now adjourn to Friday, May 20, 2016, at 1.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.38 p.m.*