



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

4th Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 21 – Number 8

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Friday 27th September, 2013

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*Leave of Absence**Friday, September 27, 2013***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, September 27, 2013*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received the following communication: Mr. Jack Austin Warner, the Member for Chaguanas West, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House; Mr. Patrick Manning, Member for San Fernando East, is seeking additional leave for a period of 94 days, with effect from September 29, 2013. This request was accompanied by a medical certificate from the specialist medical officer who has been assigned as the health-care provider for Mr. Manning since his return to Trinidad on July 31, 2012.

Hon. Members, it has also come to my attention that the hon. Clifton De Couteau, Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development and Member of Parliament for Moruga/Tableland, has fallen ill unexpectedly and has been hospitalized, and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. On behalf of all Members, I wish the Member a speedy recovery. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

CONDOLENCES**(BRIG. GENERAL JOSEPH THEODORE)****(MR. RAVINDRA RAMRATTAN)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on September 21, 2013, former Minister and Senator, Brig. General Joseph Theodore, passed away. As you are aware, Brig. Theodore served this country with dedication and honour for several decades in numerous capacities, including Minister of National Security.

On behalf of the Members of this honourable House, I know that Members would like to speak as well, so we will deal with this after.

On another matter, hon. Members would have also learned of the unfortunate and untimely passing of Mr. Ravindra Ramrattan, a son of our soil, who was tragically killed during the recent terrorist attack in Nairobi, Kenya. His tragic passing has left, not only his family and friends in Trinidad and Tobago in mourning, but the entire national community and others from all around the world who knew Ravindra.

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I also propose on your behalf to convey to the family of Mr. Ravindra Ramrattan our deepest sympathies.

I understand that hon. Members on both sides would like to pay tribute on this very solemn occasion. I call on the Leader of Government Business to make his tribute at this time.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the hon. Prime Minister and Members of the Government, in paying tribute on the sad passing of two illustrious sons of Trinidad and Tobago. We join in the sadness and the mourning being shared by the entire national community.

In the lexicon of the military there is a line of language which carries a special resonance. It is captured in just five simple words, “an officer and a gentleman”. These words emphasize what are fundamental characteristics of the finesse of a citizen, and they epitomize the life and unique bearing of the man many knew simply as “Joe T”.

Retired Brig. General Joseph Theodore, as you have outlined, had a long, illustrious and distinguished career in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. His astute leadership as an officer demonstrated steely resolve as a military official, but at the same time he also exhibited the strength of his character, responsive at all times to the demands of his profession, but with the higher responsibility to serve his God, his country and fellow man.

As we all know, he served as Chief of Defence Force defending our nation at a most critical time of great national stress and anxiety, at the time always conscious that the aim was not only military success, but engendering enduring longer and sustainable national peace. It was this unique type of leadership that led to his appointment as Minister of National Security in December 1995. He was described by the former Prime Minister as among the best of men that he ever knew.

Many have noted that this nation owes a debt of gratitude to General Theodore whose contributions are indelibly enshrined in the annals of our history. We certainly do, and I am very pleased to read into the record of the Parliament today and for the posterity of future generations, our deepest appreciation to General Joseph Theodore for his contribution to Trinidad and Tobago.

We on this side extend our condolences to his daughters Joanne and Nicole and all members of his family.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we also mourn the sad, untimely loss of another illustrious son, Ravindra Ramrattan, whose young life was abruptly ended last week at the hands of terrorists in a country far away from ours, but where young, bright Ravi chose to serve in a different capacity, seizing an opportunity brought to him by his brilliant academic achievements.

He turned away from a more glamorous life to serve in the developing nation of Kenya, serving as research specialist in his quest to help to achieve greater economic and financial independence for an African nation.

It was one of the saddest experiences (as I did, acting in the capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs), to receive, the news through emails and diplomatic dispatches of the callous and most brutal manner in which this son of our soil left this world.

Immediately we learnt of this senseless tragedy, and after consultation with the Prime Minister, our Ambassador to Uganda, His Excellency Patrick Edwards, who is also accredited to Kenya and with whom I have been in constant contact, flew to Nairobi to ensure that all arrangements would be made with the relevant agencies in Nairobi, to expedite the return of young Ravi to his motherland.

I wish to place on record our gratitude to His Excellency Patrick Edwards, to officials of the British Embassy in Nairobi and to the employer of young Ravi Ramrattan for their contribution towards making a reality, a speedy return of his remains to Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, we expect on Saturday afternoon that the remains of young Ravi Ramrattan would return to Piarco International Airport.

We also extend to his mother, Pārbati, and father, Bisnath, and all members of his family, our deepest condolences in recognition of this horrendous event. As a nation we are horrified, outraged and collectively shocked by this callous and utterly senseless brutality. Tributes continue to be expressed to this family by the many who knew Ravi in various spheres in Trinidad and Tobago and by his colleagues across the world.

Our hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar expressed to the international community our own sympathy and concern and our personal sadness, at the United Nations earlier in the week. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has indeed pledged to provide all support to the family at this very difficult time for that family, friends and loved ones.

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Mr. Speaker, with those few words, we again wish to extend condolences to the Ramrattan family on the loss of their son and by extension, a son of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words to associate myself and those on this side with the sobering sentiments expressed by our colleagues on the other side and certainly your comments as well which we anticipate.

Today is a day of recognition and sadness, as we pay attention to the passing of two of our citizens, one who in the form of Brig. Joseph Theodore, had chosen a life of public service, and that choice was to the benefit of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

He was a dedicated officer and his colleagues described him as one of the best. Those of us who are privileged to have known him, always regarded him as a gentleman with a quiet dignity. Mr. Speaker, he represents for us as a people all that is good in the decision of public service.

When a man of Brig. Theodore's capacity, capabilities and talents choose to make it available in the public service, it is to be recognized that that decision is one of selflessness.

He served in the military where he was charged with the responsibility of moulding a generation of officers, many of whom are still responsible for our security services, and then he entered the area of—I would not say politics, because I never viewed him as a politician—he entered government and served for a term as Minister of National Security. We acknowledge his public service and we also thank his family for the contribution they would have made in sustaining him.

Today, as we mourn his passing, we would like to extend our condolences to the family and all his friends and colleagues who would have had the opportunity of knowing and benefitting from his presence.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the sadness comes with recognizing that we are not alone in this world. One of the things about our people, people of Trinidad and Tobago, is that

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we are all over the world, and when the news came of Ravi's passing in Kenya, we have to acknowledge that whatever problems terrorists pose to people of their homeland, they pose those threats and problems to us.

Not for the first time we share in the pain of those who have been attacked by terrorists. It brings to mind the killings of 9/11 in New York of all places, and when we think that Kenya or Cambodia might be a safe place, there is the reminder that there is no safe place in the world today for anybody, regardless of your philosophy, your religion or your social standing.

We have lost one of our brighter sons, and one who certainly was destined to make a mark at the international level. But it is not our choice, so all we can do, Mr. Speaker, today is to acknowledge the loss and to share the pain of the parents, Mr. Bisnath and Mrs. Parbatee Ramrattan, who are experiencing that there is special pain of having to face the loss of a child. No parent could tell you how painful it is, in a way that you could share the pain, in totality of having to lose a child, and especially one so dearly loved by the parents and to have lost that child under such circumstances.

So we join the family today in recognizing the situation and sharing their pain and hoping that they will have the strength to go on in the face of this loss, and for a child who would never be forgotten.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that we here in the Parliament acknowledge the connection that we have to the loss of Ravi, because I am advised that Mrs. Ramrattan was a member of staff who had the responsibility of establishing our constituency offices. So from that standpoint, and on behalf of all my colleagues, I would like a special recognition to Mrs. Ramrattan on the occasion of the loss of her very dear son. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on behalf of all of us in this House I shall convey to the family of Brig. General Joseph Theodore our deepest and sincere condolences on the sad occasion of his passing. May the soul of the noble statesman rest in peace, as well as the soul of Ravindra Ramrattan.

I now ask all Members and those in attendance to stand for one minute's silence in respectful observance of their passing.

The House of Representatives stood.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, hon. Members. Hon. Members, I have received communication from Sen. The Hon. Timothy Hamel-Smith, President of the Senate, as follows:

“Hon. Wade Mark, MP
Speaker of the House

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Appointment of Members to the Joint Select Committees

Please be informed that at sittings held on Monday September 23, 2013 and Wednesday September 25, 2013, the Senate agreed to the following appointments:

- On the Public Accounts Committee: Mrs. Raziah Ahmed in lieu of Mr. Jamal Mohammed and Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir in lieu of Mrs. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight;
- On the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group 1), and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview: Mr. Gerald Hadeed in lieu of Mrs. Christlyn Moore; Mr. Elton Prescott, S.C. in lieu of Mrs. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight; and Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir in lieu of Prof. Harold Ramkissoon;
- On the Joint Select Committee appointed to enquire into and report to Parliament on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions: Mr. Anthony Vieira in lieu of Mr. Elton Prescott, S.C.;
- On the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group 2), and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview: Mrs. Raziah Ahmed in lieu of Mrs. Lyndira Oudit;
- On the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Accommodation: Mr. H. R. Ian Roach in lieu of Dr. James Armstrong; and
- On the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group 2), and on the Statutory

- Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview: Mr. David Small in lieu of Dr. James Armstrong.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that you cause this matter to be brought to the attention of the House of Representatives at the earliest convenience.

Yours respectfully,

Senator the Honourable Timothy Hamel-Smith, President of the Senate.”

VACANT SEAT
(ST. JOSEPH CONSTITUENCY)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you would recall that at a sitting of this House held on Monday September 09, 2013, I made a declaration pursuant to section 49A(1) of the Constitution that Mr. Herbert Volney had resigned from the United National Congress. Section 49A(2) of the Constitution provides, and I quote:

“Where within a period of fourteen days of the declaration by the Speaker the member does not institute legal proceedings to challenge the allegation that he has resigned or to challenge his expulsion, he shall vacate his seat at the end of the said period of fourteen days.”

Hon. Members, the period of 14 days ended on Monday, September 23, 2013, and checks have confirmed that Mr. Herbert Volney has not instituted legal proceedings to challenge the allegation that he has resigned from the United National Congress.

Section 69(3) of the Constitution states, and I quote:

“Where a vacancy occurs in the House of Representatives within the first four years of the life of the Parliament a bye-election shall be held to fill such vacancy not later than ninety days from the date of the announcement by the Speaker of the vacancy.”

Hon. Members, having regard to the foregoing, I hereby declare the seat of St. Joseph vacant.

PAPERS LAID

1. Administrative Report of the Siparia Regional Corporation for the period October 2011 to September 2012. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]

2. Annual Report of Taurus Services Limited for the year 2012. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
3. Tobacco Control Regulations, 2013. [*The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West. Before you rise—Leader of the House.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that we are in a position to answer question 1, and would ask that questions No. 2 and 3 be deferred for two weeks.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, just a point of clarification. Did I hear the word “further”? These questions are being deferred for another time, so the text should really read for a “further” two weeks. Is what you agreed to? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is right.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. Thank you.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Keith Rowley (Diego Martin West):

Purchase of Aircraft by Caribbean Airlines Limited (Details of)

2. With respect to the Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL) purchase of “wide-bodied” aircraft to re-establish a London route, could the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
 - a) What is the age of these aircraft, from whom were they purchased and when was the transaction initiated?
 - b) Whether any agent, local or foreign, was involved in the procurement process at any stage?
 - c) If the answer to b) is in the affirmative, what was the extent of the involvement and how much were they paid?
 - d) What was the total cost associated with the purchase of the aircraft?

- e) What is the total cost associated with the pilot training, storage, reconfiguration, upgrade and other related expenses in order to operate these aircraft?
- f) How was the transaction financed?
- g) On what date was the aircraft purchased and when were they put into scheduled service?

**Caribbean Airlines Limited London Route
(Details of)**

3. Could the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy state:
- a) What is the total cost incurred in relation to “wet-leasing” of aircraft for operation of the London route to date?
 - b) When did Cabinet authorize the expansion of CAL onto the London route?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Purchase of Eden Gardens Property
(Details of)**

1. **Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development:

With respect to the purchase of the Eden Gardens property at Calcutta Road, Couva, could the Minister state:

- a) Who were the owners of the property prior to its acquisition by the HDC?
- b) On what date was the property offered to the HDC by the previous owner?
- c) What was the date of the first valuation obtained by the HDC and what was that figure?
- d) What was the date of the valuation obtained by the Commissioner of Valuations?
- e) How much of the purchase price of \$175 million has been paid?
- f) When was this paid and to whom?
- g) What was the recommended valuation of Linden Scott and Associates for the purchase of this property?

- h) What was the source of the funding which facilitated payment to the previous owners?

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question No. 1 on the Order Paper.

Part (a): Mr. Speaker, may I note that in the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament, a question on the exact subject matter was posed by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and therefore, in the answer to question No. 26, in the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament, Monday, January 28, 2013, there are answers already on the public record for several questions asked, but I will continue.

Part (a), Point Lisas Park Limited.

Part (b), November 07, 2011.

Part (c), November 28, 2011.

Part (d), the commissioner's valuations in the sum of \$180 million was dated April 26, 2012.

Part (e) was on the public record on January 28, 2013.

Part (f), Mr. Speaker, upon execution of the deed of conveyance on November 09, 2012.

Part (g), the development was valued in the sum of \$115 million, having valued the development deductions of \$63 million were made for the value representing items of one, period for disposal of lots; two, purchaser's profit; three, stamp duty, legal fees and sales agent fees. The value stated on the report after all deductions were made was \$52 million.

Part (h), Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy pursuant to Cabinet approval for such a purchase.

Mr. Speaker, may I add that the development includes 275 well-serviced plots. These plots were provided with fully developed road networks, well developed

drainage, waste water treatment plants, facilities for electricity, potable water and other laterals for a complete housing estate to include 275 housing units.

2.00 p.m.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond on the *Hansard* record to what I may consider numerous falsifications and misleading statements made by those on that side during the recently concluded budget debate on the state of our education system.

Dr. Rowley: I object, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Speaker: Yes, hon. Member for Caroni East and Minister of Education, if you want to make a personal explanation you can so seek my leave. But in the cut and thrust of debates in this House, you can respond if allegations are made, adverse comments proffered, but you cannot take that particular item “Statements by Ministers” to respond to statements or in the cut and thrust of a debate, statements that might have been made by any hon. Member of this House. So if you are going in that direction, I would ask you not to go there; if you want to make a policy statement as it relates to whatever that takes place outside of this domain that is the purpose of a statement by a Minister, not to respond to any criticism made by a Member of this honourable House. So, if you are going that direction, I tell you do not go there. If you have to make a statement on a policy measure outside of this Parliament you are welcome to do so. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, my policy statement is in response to the questions, the statements that have been made on the other side and which have been published—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: I object! Unless we are going to have a debate, Mr. Speaker, I stand on—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I have ruled on this matter. I have ruled on this matter and, as I said, if you do not have a statement to make on policy—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Sit down!

Mr. Speaker:—I would suggest that for instance we—[*Crosstalk and desk thumping*] Member for Diego Martin West, if I needed assistance I would have

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sought that. *[Laughter]* I do not need any assistance. I am quite capable of taking care of the business of this House. *[Interruption]* So I ask the hon. Member for Caroni East and hon. Minister of Education, do not make any reference whatsoever to statements made by hon. Members of this House in your policy statement. You can make an overall statement, but do not refer to what members might have said in this honourable House. That is why we have debates! So when Members make statements that are adversarial or incorrect we rise and we respond, but we do not take that particular period under “Statements by Ministers” to respond or rebut statements made by Members. Okay! *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I am responding to policy—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: No!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: On the policy of public statements—*[Laughter and crosstalk]*. Mr. Speaker, public statements made on—*[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Statements made in the public domain on the newspapers and within the media. They were aired in the public, statements made in this House in the public domain.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker—*[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: I want to hear what he is saying.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, it was brought to my attention that in the—*[Interruption]*—on CNC3 reports and the newspapers—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Nah, man.” No!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—that the Member for Port of Spain North—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: “Nah, nah, nah!”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Port of Spain South/St. Ann’s West—*[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Member: “Nah, nah, nah.”

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I object!

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No, no, no. That was not in no newspapers. Never!

Dr. Browne: “Doh try that.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Dat was in no newspapers, neither the *Express*, the *Guardian* nor the *Sunshine*.” None!

Mr. Speaker: Can I ask that we defer that statement and let us have consultation with the hon. Leader of the House and the Minister of Education. [*Desk thumping*] And I seek the leave of the House to revert, once I am satisfied, to that particular item later on in the proceedings. So I would say that we defer that matter, because there is not a correct understanding of what is required. So, let us proceed, please. [*Desk thumping*]

SNC-LAVALIN

(GOVERNMENT’S TERMINATION OF CONTRACT)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, could you “quieten” down the House, please?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I know that we are very animated for whatever reason, could we allow the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East to speak in silence, in accordance with Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively. Continue, hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will hold a press conference.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Caroni East is disobeying you. He keeps talking. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I will take care of the Member for Caroni East in a short while.

Mr. C. Imbert: You sure? [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! [*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Imbert: You heard him, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I heard him en passant. Let us move on. [*Crosstalk*] Member for D’Adabie/O’Meara, please!

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Mr. C. Imbert: “They cyar help it.” I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) has confirmed by way of a media release published in two daily newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago in June 2013 that the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDEcCott), on the recommendation of CCC, signed a contract in February 2013 with SNC Lavalin to design a hospital in Penal;

And whereas CCC has also confirmed that the design contract for this hospital project was awarded by UDEcCott to SNC Lavalin, on the recommendation of CCC, on a sole selective basis without any competitive tendering;

And whereas it is estimated that the construction of this hospital project will cost the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago approximately TT \$1 billion;

And whereas SNC Lavalin is presently embroiled in allegations and findings of irregular payments to public officials, misconduct, corruption and bribery in projects in a number of developing countries;

Be it resolved that this honourable House urge the Government to terminate all existing contracts with SNC Lavalin for this hospital project and to cease and desist from entering into any future contractual relationships with SNC Lavalin or any of its affiliates;

Be it further resolved that the procurement process for this hospital and all such future projects in Trinidad and Tobago be subject to open and transparent competitive tendering.

Mr. Speaker, if you do a google search on SNC Lavalin, you would get almost 300,000 hits when you add the word “corruption”. [Interruption] So if you go SNC Lavalin you will get 300,000 hits. And when you go into each one of these articles you will discover that there are about 10 additional articles inside of each one. So, you might get a million hits if you check them all out, Mr. Speaker. However, notwithstanding that fact, our Government, and I am hoping the Government will clarify its position here today, because we are getting mixed signals from the Government, mixed messages: one day the contract is on, the next day the contract is off, the next day the contract is on, so we would like a clear, unambiguous, unequivocal statement from the Government—whoever is going to answer this Motion—with respect to what is the position of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to a contract with SNC Lavalin to construct this project in Penal.

Now, if you go into the newspapers you will see very confusing statements

coming from Government spokesmen in terms of who was responsible for this particular project. As an example, in June of this year an article was published in the *Guardian* entitled “Canadians and Govt refuse to take the blame”, and it reads as follows:

“Neither Canada nor the T&T Government is accepting responsibility for the selection of the company scheduled to build the Penal hospital. The...*Guardian* has been trying to find out why the Canadian conglomerate SNC-Lavalin was given the contract...although it is embroiled in bribery allegations.

However, political counsellor at the High Commission of Canada, Laurent Morel-à-l’Huissier, said all matters relating to the tendering and selection process of the hospital...should be directed to the T&T Government....

On why SNC Lavalin was chosen, he said, We ask that for questions on the tendering and selection process...you please contact the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.’ But in a telephone interview yesterday, CEO of... (UDEcott) Kurt Ramlal said Morel-à-l’Huissier must be mistaken. ‘I think all questions that relate to the contract must be directed to the Canadian Government because we had no control at all on the tendering or selection of this contract.’”

So, that was a statement made in June. The Canadian say “the Government of Trinidad and Tobago picked the contractor”; the Trinidadian say “the Government of Canada picked the contractor”. Who knows what the facts are? But, a very interesting article was published in the *Guardian* around that time as well, where our Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to Canada, Mr. Philip Buxo—and I have promised at some point in time to tell the Member for Oropouche East where I first saw this gentleman for the first and only time, but at some point in time I would tell him; maybe today. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Tell him now. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to Canada, “Don’t blame me.” T&T’s High Commissioner to Canada, Philip Buxo, a former director with SNC Lavalin is denying he was ever involved in the

SNC-Lavalin
[MR. IMBERT]

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selection process of the Canadian conglomerate to design the Penal hospital. In a statement yesterday, this is June 30, Buxo said:

“There is a vast amount of misinformation circulating in the local media about the proposed hospital...”—I wish to make it absolutely clear, I have—“no influence in discussions with respect to the matter of SNC Lavalin working in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Well, we have different information, Mr. Speaker. He sought to give an explanation. This is where one gets a clue as to exactly what happened. Buxo said he “was advised that...discussions between SNC Lavalin and the Canadian Commercial Corporation were initiated in 2011 through the Canadian authorities in Port of Spain. It involved...two Canadian companies that had expressed an interest in working in Trinidad and Tobago in the delivery of health care facilities.” One of the companies was SNC Lavalin. Buxo said the other Canadian company “had an interest in refurbishing the POS General Hospital. This left SNC Lavalin as the ONLY Canadian company that expressed an interest in building a hospital in Trinidad and Tobago from the ground up.”

Well informed. He said:

“It was against this background that the”—Canadian Commercial Corporation—“engaged in discussions with SNC Lavalin and recommended the company for the first phase of the Penal hospital.”

Mr. Speaker, this is the clearest evidence we have so far, that SNC Lavalin was selected on a sole selective basis without any competitive tendering for this Penal hospital contract. And let us look at this gentleman Mr. Philip Buxo.

Hon. Member: Who is he?

Mr. C. Imbert: Philip Buxo, Trinidad and Tobago’s High Commissioner to Canada was an executive of SNC Lavalin before his diplomatic appointment. [Interruption] T&T’s High Commissioner to Canada in his official bio, states for the past four years, High Commissioner Buxo held the position of director of the Caricom Region Energy and Infrastructure Division of SNC Lavalin, the leading and engineering and construction group in Canada which has an annual revenue of approximately Canadian \$8 billion. Buxo was appointed to his diplomatic post in 2010. So from 2006 to 2010, Mr. Buxo was in charge of all of SNC Lavalin’s infrastructure projects in the Caribbean.

As I said, he is very well informed as to how SNC Lavalin got the project, sole selective. He says they just walked in and say they want to build it and they went

ahead, but he worked for them for four years.

2.15 p.m.

He was in charge of all their infrastructure projects in the Caribbean, but he said he had nothing to do with it. So I am putting those facts on the table, Mr. Speaker, because the Government does not seem to want to tell us, how did it or the Canadian Government pick SNC-Lavalin?

Now, there are some things about the Canadian Commercial Corporation that I think we need to know as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. There are some things that we need to know. On its website, the Canadian Commercial Corporation advertises that it avoids the lengthy international tendering procedures that are associated with the usual international tendering, Mr. Speaker. In fact, CCC prides itself on getting around the usual international procurement rules.

Hon. Member: It is a skill.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is a skill. They promote themselves as having this skill. And I am reading now from CCC's website, and you go to a link called "International Commercial Business":

"CCC provides other countries with the benefits of government-to-government contracting, avoiding the otherwise lengthy international tendering process."

So it boasts. The Canadian Commercial Corporation which we are doing business with is boasting that it avoids lengthy international tendering procedures. And it is no wonder therefore, Mr. Speaker, since they do not have any—apparently, have any established procurement rules, it is no wonder that SNC-Lavalin could have got this project by simply having a discussion in Port of Spain with somebody in 2011. They meet in a room somewhere in Port of Spain, they talk about it, they say, "we want to do this project." It is no wonder that they were selected by the Canadian Commercial Corporation, because CCC prides itself on avoiding lengthy international tendering procedures. They short-circuit all of that. And I am asking the Government to look very carefully at your arrangements with this Canadian Commercial Corporation, because if its tender procedures are not consistent with the established norms, and are not transparent, and are not equitable, then, what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is doing by having an arrangement with the Canadian Commercial Corporation is it is setting itself up for the kind of scandal that is associated with SNC-Lavalin and this hospital project.

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I would advise the Government—as I said we are getting conflicting noises coming out from the Government, from the Minister in charge of UDeCott, the Member for Oropouche East, as I said he comes and he goes, but I saw a statement associated with him. It is published, reported in the *Express* of September 25, just a few days ago:

“HOUSING Minister Roodal Moonilal is expected to approach Cabinet tomorrow to recommend that this country’s arrangement with the Canadian government regarding construction projects be terminated.”

And I think he is on to something, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if, when the Minister—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Minister: Sherlock Holmes.

Mr. C. Imbert:—gave this undertaking, he knew that the Canadian Commercial Corporation boasts that it avoids lengthy international tendering procedures. He is definitely on to something, Mr. Speaker. He may get some resistance from some of his Cabinet colleagues though who may not want to take such draconian measures. But the Minister is definitely on to something. He is definitely on to something.

But let us move to other things, other astonishing statements made by the Canadian Commercial Corporation. They have a Code of Business Ethics, Mr. Speaker, which they published. Item three of their code of ethics goes as follows:

“Under no circumstances will CCC...knowingly offer, give or receive a bribe...The Corporation has, therefore, included in all its domestic contracts with Canadian suppliers a clause prohibiting the bribery and corruption of government officials. As such, should a Canadian supplier be caught bribing a government official while under a contract with CCC, the Corporation reserves the right to apply various sanctions including the termination of the contract with the supplier.”

So CCC is telling us that if one of their contractors or suppliers is caught bribing a Government official they reserve the right to apply various sanctions, sounds good on paper.

So let us take a look at SNC-Lavalin which the Canadian Commercial Corporation and officials from the Canadian Embassy are moving heaven and earth to try to persuade us in Trinidad and Tobago that we must accept this recommendation that this \$1 billion contract be given to SNC-Lavalin. The same Canadian Commercial Corporation which says, if any of its suppliers is caught

taking a bribe it reserves the right to terminate the contract. That same one is pushing hard to get Trinidad and Tobago to accept SNC-Lavalin for the \$1 billion Penal hospital project.

So let us see what SNC-Lavalin has been accused of and found guilty of, Madam Deputy—“ah sorry.” Mr. Speaker, I am terribly sorry. Your Deputy is too often in the Chair, you know, so I got a little tied up there. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: It is all right. Mr. Speaker, I am reading from a document that is published by Electricity Generating Companies in Canada, entitled:

“Situation Worsens for AltaLink’s Parent Company, SNC-Lavalin.

As the Canadian and international SNC-Lavalin corruption probes continue, AltaLink’s parent company’s business takes a hit. The Shriners have decided to retain control of the bidding process and selection of sub-contractors instead of making SNC the general contractor for their new hospital in Montreal...

Hydro Quebec has yanked a contract from scandal-plagued SNC-Lavalin, midway through its 5-year term...

First Quantum Minerals...has...suspended engineering contracts with SNC-Lavalin at Cobre Panama...”

And so on and so on, Mr. Speaker. So that is article number one.

Here we have an article from *Probe International*, August 3, 2013: “SNC-Lavalin corruption allegations abound—so why’s Canada promoting the company abroad?” And it goes on to say:

“The Canadian government is doing what it can to help corruption-plagued SNC-Lavalin get a lucrative contract to build a \$163-million Canadian”—that is TT \$1 billion: “hospital...in the Caribbean country of Trinidad and Tobago.

The behind-the-scenes—is—little known Crown corporation—the Canadian Commercial Corporation—to secure the deal has lawmakers and industry leaders in T&T crying foul and is giving Canada’s reputation a black eye...

Canadians should also be asking why their government is pushing any company, especially one being investigated by the”—Royal Canadian Mounted Police—“in the largest corporate corruption scandal in Canadian history, onto another country.”—Mr. Speaker.

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Another little tidbit that came out in this article:

“The T&T government, for its part, may not feel it can look a gift horse in the mouth. According to Trinidad and Tobago’s Guardian...Housing Minister Dr. Roodal Moonilal said T&T gets low interest rates and other preferential conditions because the arrangement is a government-to-government one...

CCC disagrees with the claim that it’s offering preferential conditions, saying that the project is not being financed on concessionary terms, or by the Canadian government, but ‘through commercial terms.’”

So why are we dealing with this company, Mr. Speaker. The project is being done on commercial terms with a corrupt company.

Mr. Roberts: Define “crap”.

Mr. C. Imbert: Define “corrupt”?

Miss Mc Donald: Corrupt, corrupt.

Mr. C. Imbert: I said corrupt.

Hon. Member: “De stick, de stick, take out de stick.”

Mr. Roberts: I thought you said “crap”.

Mr. C. Imbert: And, Mr. Speaker, the contract was awarded on a sole selective basis. Why are we doing business with this company, Mr. Speaker? And let me read for you from a Commissioner of Enquiry—there is a lot there if you go and look for it, you know. As I said it is 300,000 hits, I could not bring all 300,000 today. There is a Commissioner of Enquiry in Montreal, called the “Charbonneau Commission”, and I have here the report from one of the days when testimony was given before this commission, March 14, 2013—this year:

“SNC’s exec says his firm made illegal donations.

MONTREAL—A top executive at Canada’s largest engineering firm has testified under oath that his company participated in illegal political financing in Quebec.

Yves Cadotte, a senior vice-president and general manager at SNC-Lavalin, told the Charbonneau Commission on Thursday afternoon that the engineering giant was solicited by parties at both the provincial and municipal levels...and responded generously.”

“Dey good, yuh know.”

“The company policy—never advertised or documented...but widely understood within the ranks—was to reimburse...employees for their political largesse at the end of each year...”

And what they would do is that, dozens of SNC employees wrote personal cheques as donations to the maximum amount permitted by law. You see in Canada, Mr. Speaker, political contributions have been outlawed for the last 20 years from companies. So companies are not allowed to make contributions to political parties in Canada for over 20 years. What SNC-Lavalin did, they are so smart, they get all their employees, individuals—persons can give up to a CAN \$1,000 in donations to political parties. SNC-Lavalin got every one of its employees to make a \$1,000 donation.

Miss Cox: My God.

Mr. C. Imbert: And what they did, they reimbursed those employees for their political largess at the end of each year through company approved bonuses. This effectively rendered the donations illegal.

“Between 1998 and 2010, Elections Quebec’s records show that SNC’s workforce (including the spouses of employees) was responsible for a combined \$1 million in contributions to the Liberals and the PQ. The money was split almost evenly between the two parties.

“In 2005, Cadotte...”—

This is the SNC Vice-President testifying.

“...the company agreed to a request from Union Montreal...handed over a one-time \$200,000 donation...

It was an enormous sum...it took...months to respond to...

According to Cadotte, SNC Lavalin covered part of its ‘commitment’ by secretly paying a bill from a communications firm...to Union Montreal. Even the...bill was a fake...it was a false invoice.

The other \$125,000 was delivered to Trépanier...”

This is one of the individuals—

...in cash—he said—he personally handed over the money in a parking lot near the campaign headquarters of former executive committee chair Frank Zampino.

So that is an SNC-Lavalin executive, Vice-President testifying before a commission of enquiry in Montreal that he handed over \$125,000 in cash in a parking lot from SNC-Lavalin to—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Parking lot in Port of Spain?

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no [*Laughter*] in Montreal. We have not heard about

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what happened in Port of Spain yet. We getting there, we getting there. But let me give you another report on the Charbonneau Enquiry.

SNC-Lavalin bid-rigging—

Hon. Member: Is it in the public domain?

Mr. C. Imbert: This is published, SNC-Lavalin, March 18, 2013.

“SNC-Lavalin bid-rigging scam extended beyond Montreal, exec tells inquiry.

For weeks witnesses before Quebec’s corruption inquiry have detailed a system of bid-rigging that saw a cartel of engineering and construction firms obtain public contracts from the city of Montreal in exchange for political donations.

Now it appears the scam extended south across the St. Lawrence River to Longueuil.”

And it goes on to talk about being solicited for donations by the Mayor of Longueuil and handing over cash. Mr. Cadotte said he personally delivered tens of thousands of dollars in cash to Longueuil political officials during an election campaign of 2005 and 2009.

So, I did not have the time to bring all the testimony from the Charbonneau Commission, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Longueuil.

Mr. C. Imbert: I did not have the time, you know.

2.30 p.m.

Another one:

“Quebec Corruption Suspects Gave \$2 Million to Federal Political Parties.

An ongoing public enquiry in Quebec”—this is this year, yuh know, Mr. Speaker, May 09, 2013—“has heard explosive allegations about illegal political financing, bid rigging, collusion and Mafia ties in the province’s construction industry.”

Hon. Member: Now it makes sense.

Mr. C. Imbert: Let me go now to an article from the Chartered Institute of Building—very recent article—and it is headlined:

“Canada’s laxity partly to blame for SNC-Lavalin scandal, says Transparency International.

The corruption scandal engulfing the engineering giant might have been avoided if Canada hadn’t lagged behind the rest of the world in its anti-corruption policies, says Canada’s head of Transparency International.

Janet Keeping describes her first thought as she watched a man board—a—“train in Calgary wearing...the logo of the Canadian engineering giant, SNC-Lavalin.

‘I thought, isn’t that a tragedy — the first thought that comes to mind’—when I see that—‘is the corruption scandal.’

She spoke not just as head of the Canadian office of the global anti-corruption watchdog, Transparency International...but also as a Canadian.

That’s because until recently, SNC-Lavalin...was a household name Canadians could be proud of.

But now it’s ensnared in a corruption scandal that seemingly won’t stop...

‘It’s sad, because SNC-Lavalin is the largest Canadian firm of its kind...’”

And then she goes on to say:

“...a...bigger part of the problem is Canada’s historical laxity in laying down the law against its companies’ corrupt practices abroad.”

So this is an article in the Chartered Institute of Building. Let me come with another one.

“SNC-Lavalin now banned from Canadian foreign-aid projects.”

And I want the Minister to listen to this. Listen to this:

“SNC-Lavalin...banned from Canadian foreign-aid projects.”

Hon. Member: What date?

Mr. C. Imbert: May 03, 2013:

“Scandal-hit Canadian engineering firm...has been told it can no longer bid for Canadian foreign-aid projects following its debarment from World Bank schemes...

The Canadian International Development Agency...announced last week”—this is May 2013—“that firms sanctioned by the World Bank for engaging in

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corrupt...practices will be ineligible to bid on CIDA-funded projects.”

Now, does the Minister know what the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, is? That is Canada’s agency for international development. They have banned SNC-Lavalin! They say:

“SNC-Lavalin...and many of its affiliates agreed to the 10-year ban from bidding on World Bank projects...”

And CIDA followed by banning SNC-Lavalin. So the Canadian International Development Agency has banned SNC-Lavalin, but the Canadian Commercial Corporation “pushing”. What is going on? What is going on, Mr. Speaker? We have to ask questions. If CIDA has banned SNC-Lavalin, why is the Canadian Commercial Corporation pushing SNC-Lavalin? What is going on, Mr. Speaker? That question has to be answered, and I am hoping that the Minister will give us a clear and—look, “it even had a newspaper ad”. This was drawn to my attention, Mr. Speaker. You know, there is so much “comess in de papers dese days”, sometimes, you know, I do not bother to read the papers at all.

Hon. Member: Read the *Sunshine*.

Hon. Member: Read this one. Read this one.

Mr. C. Imbert: This is a *Guardian*—an ad. “Dey published an ad, I think it was Monday. SNC-Lavalin put out an ad! Full page—*[Interruption]*”

Hon. Member: In Trinidad?

Mr. C. Imbert: In Trinidad and Tobago:

“We hear you and we care—an open letter to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.”

It goes on:

“I”—want—“to thank the people and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for their understanding, and reassure you we are not only the most capable engineering firm for this project”—this is the same hospital project—“but also one which strives to have the most effective and comprehensive ethics and compliance framework.”

“Dey puh out an ad in de papers” thanking the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago for their understanding in giving them this project! Ah ad, yuh know!”

Miss McIntosh: “Dey stupid!”

Mr. C. Imbert: They really must think that Trinidad and Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: The Government told them to do it.

Mr. C. Imbert: SNC “must be feel” that this is a banana republic, Mr. Speaker. They have to feel so, to put an insulting advertisement like this, talking about their “high compliance to ethics”.

Miss McIntosh: “Dey stupid.”

Mr. C. Imbert: SNC-Lavalin “say” they have a high compliance to ethics. Mr. Speaker, let me move on. Let us look at what has been appearing in the foreign press. *Huffington Post*, Canada, Business:

“SNC-Lavalin used secret code for ‘bribery’ payments” first published in May 2013.

“A division of Canadian engineering giant SNC-Lavalin has for years used a secret internal accounting code that former employees say was for bribes on projects across Africa and Asia, a joint investigation by CBC News and the Globe and Mail has found.”

And the code was “PCC” or “CC”. Whenever the code “PCC” or “CC” appeared as a line item, all the employees of SNC-Lavalin knew it was a bribe.

“An engineer who worked for SNC-Lavalin in Nigeria says he recalls being asked by his boss, Ramesh Shah, to make a number of deliveries of cash to a government official responsible for a World Bank-funded water and sewer project in the northern Bauchi state”—of Nigeria.

“‘It was done in cash.’ Chalamakunta”—da is a long one—“Muralidharreddy said in an interview from India where he now works with a different company...

(He) said the payments from his own pocket were made to Usman B. Alhaji, a Bauchi state official who was in charge of hiring”—SNC-Lavalin.

So they had a code, secret payments widely known, former engineer Ismail told CBC News. It was “firsthand knowledge in preparing technical and financial proposals” that you had to add 10 per cent in order to bribe foreign officials.

So let us see what more we can find out about this company. One of the things I found very interesting, *Huffington Post*, Business Section, January 25, 2013:

“Canadian engineering giant SNC-Lavalin”—

Listen to this:

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“paid \$160 million”—that is TT \$1 billion, eh—“in bribes to the son of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi...”

Let me read that over.

“Canadian engineering giant SNC-Lavalin paid (Cdn.) \$160 million”—TT \$1 billion—“in bribes to the son of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi...”

Cdn. \$160 million, TT \$1 billion in bribe; that is bribe, “yuh know”.

Miss McIntosh: Everywhere in the world, including here.

Mr. C. Imbert: I will tell you now. Relax.

“in order to secure contracts in the North African country, according to...documents obtained”—from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

It is out of the police, yuh know:

“According to the documents, which were used by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to obtain a search a warrant for a raid on SNC-Lavalin headquarters...the company’s former head of construction Riadh Ben Aissa, was responsible for funneling the money to...Gaddafi. Some of the bribe money was allegedly used to purchase luxury yachts and even a condo in Toronto.”

Miss McIntosh: “We coming close.” [*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Imbert: When did this happen? I will tell “yuh just now”. This article is January 25, 2013.

“...according to an email from an ‘anonymous insider’...Ben Aissa ‘organized more than 300 million [dollars in] payments to shell companies acting as intermediaries between SNC-Lavalin and the Libyan government...”

But it gets worse.

“The Royal Canadian Mounted police...”

Listen to this one:

“...documents also allege that senior SNC executives were involved in a plot to smuggle...Gaddafi out of Libya...during Libya’s civil war in 2011.

Cynthia Vanier, a Canadian citizen and SNC employee, has been in a Mexican jail for more than a year, accused of aiding the smuggling plot. A judge will

soon decide whether to send the case to trial...

The documents allege former SNC vice-president of finance, Stephane Roy was involved in the plot to smuggle Gaddafi to Mexico. Roy was forced out of the company last spring, as the arrests and allegations surrounding SNC-Lavalin's activities were mounting.

The"—police—"documents may shed light on the arrest of former SNC-Lavalin CEO Pierre Duhaime, who was picked up by Quebec's anti-corruption unit last fall on charges of fraud, conspiracy and use of false documents.

Duhaime resigned as CEO"—of SNC-Lavalin—"last spring,"—so that will be 2012 if yuh want a timeline—"after an internal company audit found he had signed off on \$56 million in questionable payments."

Bribes—Cdn \$56 million; TT\$400 million, or \$300 million. Let us go on: [Crosstalk] That is why "he is the UNC High Commissioner to Canada? Dah eh make sense."

Mr. Roberts: People are people. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: *Huffington Post*, Business, June 2012:

"SNC-Lavalin bribes six Bangladeshi officials.

Embattled engineering giant SNC-Lavalin allegedly offered large bribes..."

[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Members, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: "offered 'huge bribes' to obtain a consultants contract overseeing the construction of a 6.5-kilometre bridge over the Padma river...in the sub-Indian continent.

Among the officials allegedly bribed by the Montreal-based company was then communications minister...

The others are former state minister for foreign affairs Abdul Hasan Chowdhury; former secretary of the bridges division of the communications ministry...ex-director of Padma Multipurpose Bridge project, along with three businessmen working on the project."

That is Bangladesh—two ministers, public officials and businessmen.

Miss McIntosh: Africa, India, Bangladesh—

Dr. Browne: Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Ah not finished.” Not finished. September 18, this is very recent, very contemporary; last week:

“A former SNC-Lavalin executive charged under foreign bribery law.

Former senior SNC-Lavalin Group executive who oversaw the company’s bid to supervise the construction of a six-kilometre bridge in Bangladesh”—de one ah jus talk about—“a project that is stalled amid allegations of corruption - has been charged criminally under Canada’s foreign bribery law.

Kevin Wallace, 46, was arrested on Monday and released...

The RCMP also laid bribery charges against two others who they allege were part of a conspiracy to bribe Bangladeshi officials to steer the \$50 million contract towards SNC...

The World Bank pulled its \$1.2 billion (U.S.) loan for the project after corruption allegations emerged, and sharply criticized the Bangladeshi government for not adequately responding to this scandal.”

Bangladesh; let us see what else we could—Mr. Speaker [*Interruption*] Nobody arguing? We will see about that.

I think it is time now, Mr. Speaker, to deal with some information that is in the public domain that some of us may not be aware of. The World Bank has recently published its blacklist of corrupt companies and corrupt countries, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] No. “World Bank’s Corrupt Companies Blacklist Dominated by Canada.”

Hon. Member: Oh, wow!

Mr. C. Imbert: September 18, 2013. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, Members, please.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Canada has the dubious honour of being home to the largest number of firms on a World Bank list of corrupt companies. But virtually all of that can be attributed to one Canadian company— SNC-Lavalin, the construction and engineering giant...

Of the more than 600 companies now listed as barred from doing business with the World Bank over corruption, 117 are Canadian, the most of any country. And of those, 115 represent SNC-Lavalin and its subsidiaries...”

Miss McIntosh: Shameful.

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Mr. C. Imbert: That is September 18. “Dah is last week!” Last week!

2.45 p.m.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is more of that outside there in the international press.

Dr. Browne: [*Inaudible*] Satan!

Mr. C. Imbert: There is more outside there. I will have to read this one in a little while:

SNC-Lavalin spent 22 million in bribes to land billion-dollar contract.

I will get to that in a little while.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That sounding juicy! [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: And I also have this one: *The Hindu*, a newspaper in India:

“SNC-Lavalin corruption case: Accused interfering with court order...”

“Yeah”, *The Hindu*. You have the leader of a political party in India charged in court.

“SNC-Lavalin senior execs accused of hiding commission fees”

But what I found interesting, Mr. Speaker—I think I need to read this one.

Hon. Member: Read it!

Mr. C. Imbert: It is from a website called Canada.com:

“Canada leads World Bank blacklist of fraudulent companies thanks to SNC-Lavalin”

September 17:

“Canada leads the world in companies and individuals that have been banned by the World Bank from contributing to international aid and infrastructure projects.”

It goes on to speak about it.

“The World Bank says about”—US—“\$40 billion of the roughly”—US—“\$200 billion it has given out since 2008 has been stolen.”

The most prominent name on the World Bank list, by far, is SNC-Lavalin, which has been mired in scandal for the last two years. Of the companies banned for corruption and fraud, SNC-Lavalin has”—over one 100—“entries on the blacklist...”

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And it goes on to confirm that the World Bank has debarred SNC-Lavalin from its projects for 10 years, Mr. Speaker.

Here is another one, international news:

“...The Canadian company which carried out the controversial feasibility study into the multi-hundred billion dollars Reko Diq gold and copper mines in Pakistan has now been declared by the World Bank as the world’s most corrupt...” company.

I will read that again.

“The Canadian company which carried out the controversial feasibility study into the multi-hundred billion dollars Reko Diq gold and copper mines in Pakistan has now been declared by the World Bank as the world’s most corrupt corporation and blacklisted in dozens of countries.

According to the blacklist of the World Bank released two days ago, out of the 250 companies, 119 belong to this one Canadian...”—company—“SNC-Lavalin...”

SNC—

“...has been banned in Malaysia, Malta, Saudi Arabia...”—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And we welcomed them here.

Mr. C. Imbert:—“Algeria, Angola, Austria, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica...”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The world!

Mr. C. Imbert:—“Mexico, Egypt, India, Dominican Republic, Russia, Nigeria, Tunisia, Korea...”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The world!

Mr. C. Imbert:—“...Mongolia, Panama, Peru, Brazil, Puerto Rico, South Africa and Uruguay.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: But we want them!

Dr. Rowley: Except Trinidad and Tobago!

Mr. C. Imbert: Except Trinidad and Tobago!

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Yes. Shameful, shameful.

Mr. C. Imbert: We want to give a contract to them. We want to give a contract to this company, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Welcomed by the UNC.

Hon. Member: The most corrupt company!

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: No, you go for your full 75 minutes.

Mr. C. Imbert: I know, but how much time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: Your first 45 minutes would be at 2.50 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: So you have two more minutes—*[Interruption]*

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker:—and then you have another 30 minutes.

Mr. C. Imbert: I will go straight.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Take your full time.

Mr. C. Imbert: I think I have made my point, but I think I need to reinforce my point now, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Go to the CCC.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, what I find so curious about this, with all of this that I have read, and there is so much more that I can and I will read about this company and its activities, and the fact that it has been banned all over the world, what I find a bit disturbing is the pressure coming on the Trinidad and Tobago Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development and even me. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, I had the unfortunate pleasure, after it was announced that I had this Motion, to have a number of requests made to me—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: To visit.

Mr. C. Imbert:—to meet with the Canadian Commercial Corporation, with SNC-Lavalin and so on.

Hon. Member: Wow!

Hon. Member: “A-a!”

Mr. Roberts: What!

Mr. C. Imbert: “Ah not joking.” I had—requests were made to me to meet with them.

Miss Cox: Who? Lavalin?

Mr. C. Imbert: This week. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “They want to build ah bridge in Maraval? They want to build something for Tobago.”

Miss Cox: “Tell them come here.”

Mr. C. Imbert: I did not meet with them, Mr. Speaker. I was not born yesterday. [*Desk thumping*]

But I want to let the Minister of Housing and Urban Development know—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “How they get yuh, man?”

Mr. C. Imbert: “They email meh.” I want to let the Minister of Housing and Urban Development know that you are not dealing with pushovers, “eh”. The persons who are pushing for this company are very experienced.

Mr. Roberts: “We eh fraid dem!”

Mr. C. Imbert: I am just saying they are very experienced.

Mr. Roberts: “We eh fraid dem!”

Mr. C. Imbert: I want to read into the record—I do not know this gentleman, I do not know him from Adam—but I want to read into the record the curriculum vitae of the present Canadian High Commissioner in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] I think I need to read his CV into the record. If you would just give me two minutes, I will see if I can locate it.

Dr. Moonilal: Pressure! I would not like you to.

Mr. C. Imbert: If I cannot locate it, it is all right, I have a document that will give me enough information, but needless to say, Mr. Speaker, the present Canadian High Commissioner who came here in this year, 2013, replacing a lady, I think her name was McDonald or—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Karen McDonald.

Mr. C. Imbert:—the namesake of the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Member: She was a good Commissioner.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Under whom it started.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes. This gentleman is a very, very experienced man. He has been a politician in Canada. He has been all over the world in various postings. He has been involved in all sorts of agencies in Canada. [*Crosstalk*] But I just want to read something from the Montreal *Gazette*.

Hon. Member: Montreal *Gazette*?

Mr. C. Imbert: “Yeah”, the Montreal *Gazette*.

Dr. Browne: “Must be a sunrise.”

Mr. Roberts: *The Sun*.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is not *The Sun*, it is the Montreal *Gazette*. July 03, 1987—“and doh ask me why I get this from”.

Mr. Roberts: “Dah is wey Calder Hart reach to?”

Mr. C. Imbert: [*Laughter*] “Must be!”

“The office of former solicitor general Gerard Latulippe broke government rules last year by not reporting a contract worth about \$73,000 awarded to a Montreal consulting firm owned by friends of Latulippe and lawyers linked to his former law firm.”

I am saying this because I think the Minister of Housing and Urban Development needs to know he is dealing with a seasoned practitioner. You see, the current Canadian High Commissioner was the Solicitor General of Montreal. He resigned in 1987.

“In the week before Latulippe quit, The Gazette investigated his department and confirmed that:

Latulippe awarded a contract...to the Montreal law firm Denis et Comtois, which in turn farmed out part of the contract to Latulippe’s girlfriend, Diane Fortier.”

Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Dr. Moonilal: Fortier.

Mr. C. Imbert: [*Laughter*]

“Fortier, a Montreal lawyer, worked for Latulippe’s former law firm...until she was fired last week.

Latulippe’s office awarded three contracts worth a total of about \$83,000 to

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Premar...Two of the contracts were awarded directly by the minister”—this is Latulippe—“while the third was awarded after Latulippe told his aides to invite Premar to submit a bid. Only one...was ever recorded in spending commitments.

Before entering politics, Latulippe signed a severance agreement with McDougall Caron under which he was to receive a percentage of the fees paid by his former clients in return for helping the firm retain the clients.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Hmm! Papa!”

Mr. C. Imbert: So you are not dealing with any pushover here, Mr. Minister. You are dealing with someone who was a solicitor general in the province of Quebec and had to resign because of allegations of conflict of interest and improper practices. He has been in the Canadian politics for a long time. So I just thought I would bring this information to the attention of Members of this House.

When I read this man’s history and I realized that he had a controversial history, I understood why I was being sent all these documents telling me how wonderful SNC-Lavalin is. He even sent me this that I think the Minister may have had. He may have received this too, some sort of managerial review of SNC-Lavalin done by the Canadian Commercial Corporation that says—listen to what they say:

There is no evidence of any unethical business practices on the part of SNC-Lavalin in the development...”—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Could you imagine that?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “We stupid!”

Mr. C. Imbert: This is what it is saying:

“...no evidence of unethical business practices in the development...of this project.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: We foolish.

Dr. Rowley: And he is sending that to Members of Parliament here.

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Sending me that! They must really feel I born yesterday, yes.” But, Mr. Speaker, when you go through the world press—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: “They sent it to me too, yuh know.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Pardon?

Dr. Rowley: “They sent that to me too, yuh know.”

Mr. C. Imbert: You as well?

Dr. Rowley: As Leader of the Opposition, they sent that to me too.

Mr. C. Imbert: “But yuh ent tell meh nothing.” [Laughter] But, Mr. Speaker, when you go through the world press—

Hon. Member: “He now letting yuh know that?”

Mr. C. Imbert: *Stabroek News*, June 27, 2013:

“Man arrested in Panama for corruption had planned cancer clinic in”—Trinidad and Tobago.

“Arrested on corruption charges in Panama last month, Dr. Arthur Porter once had plans to extend his chain of cancer clinics to”—Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: This is in June 2013.

“Porter was arrested en route to...”—Trinidad and Tobago—“in May...”

I will give you the date now—May 2013.

“on charges of conspiracy, embezzlement, fraud and breach of trust against the Canadian government. Porter and his co-defendants—former CEO of the Canadian conglomerate SNC-Lavalin Group...”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Ooooh!

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Again!

Mr. C. Imbert:—“Pierre Duhamie and its former executive vice president Riadh Ben Aissa—are facing charges in connection with a multimillion-dollar bribery scandal.

SNC-Lavalin has been retained by the Canadian Commercial Corporation to build the Penal hospital for the”—Trinidad and Tobago—“Government.”

Hon. Member: “That in the *Stabroek News*.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, *Stabroek News*.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Um-hmm!”

Mr. C. Imbert: “They lock up this fella in Panama.”

Dr. Rowley: “On he way here?”

Mr. C. Imbert: “He passing through here.” [*Crosstalk*] He was using Trinidad as a base for his activities.”

But let us move now to this one, September 24, 2013. [*Continuous crosstalk*] Mixed messages. Mr. Speaker—[*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I appeal to Members on this side, this side here, the Government side, especially in the back, [*Laughter*] you are going to get your chance to speak. You cannot be engaging in crosstalk and commentaries whilst a Member is on his legs. Could I ask Members to hold their fire and at the appropriate time they will speak.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you may continue.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, from what I am hearing in the crosstalk, the Minister’s response should be very short. “We have terminated our arrangements with the company” and sit down. [*Laughter*] Let us hope that is what we are going to hear from him. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: And more!

Mr. C. Imbert: He may say some more. Mr. Speaker, September 24, 2013, *Probe International*:

SNC-Lavalin debarment from World Bank projects because of its corrupt ways may...

“Look how they talking about—“this is not in Parliament, yuh know. This is outside in newspapers, yuh know, listen to how they talking about this company”:

“SNC-Lavalin’s debarment from World Bank projects because of its corrupt ways may force the company to withdrawn from bidding on a contract to construct a massive dam in the Democratic Republic of Congo.”

What are the countries I called so far: Bangladesh, India, Canada, now Democratic Republic of Congo.

“At stake is a contract to build the Inga III Dam in the African country, which is expected to cost anywhere from \$12 billion to \$20 billion...”

Wow! “That is real money, boy. That is US \$ they talking about.” [*Crosstalk*]

“The World Bank has already committed \$50 million to the project to complete environmental impact assessments...”

Financing for the project is expected to come from public sources...the Africa Development Bank, [*Crosstalk*] the World Bank, the French Development Agency,...” et cetera.

And the essence of this article, Mr. Speaker, is:

“...because SNC-Lavalin and more than 100 of its affiliates are barred from bidding on World Bank-sponsored projects, the engineering giant’s involvement with—this project—could well be in jeopardy. Even more so as the African Development Bank...has a cross-debarment agreement...”

So “anybody that the World Bank ban, the African Development Bank ban”, which is what the Canadian International Development Agency has done. [*Crosstalk*]

So they have these agreements between these international financing agencies, Mr. Speaker, that if the World Bank has caught a company in corruption and has banned it, the African Development Bank will ban that company as well.

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In Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency has a similar policy—“if the World Bank ketch yuh tiefing they will ban yuh too.”

So, African Development Bank banned them, World Bank banned them, Canadian International Development Agency banned them—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Buh we love them.”

Mr. C. Imbert:—“we doing business with dem.” And they are putting out an ad saying how much they love us and how much we understand, you know, how understanding Trinidad and Tobago is.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: And they want to leave a legacy for us.

Mr. C. Imbert: *Probe International*, September 07:

“Officials from Bangladesh are hoping to have a representative attend an Ontario hearing against two former SNC-Lavalin employees who stand accused of bribing officials in the developing country...Bangladesh Anti-Corruption Commission ... has applied for a visa to send its legal adviser...as an observer to the pre-trial hearing for the ex-employees who face charges of corruption in connection to the country’s”—US—“\$1.2-billion Padma Bridge project.”

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Mr. Speaker, I think, as I said, what the Government needs to do in addition to terminating all contractual arrangements with SNC-Lavalin and following the lead of the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency, and sundry other entities and countries and agencies all over the world, Mr. Speaker, in addition I am asking the Government, look very closely at all arrangements with the Canadian Commercial Corporation, because that is the problem.

If you look at the Framework Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Canada, you will see that the Canadian Government in that agreement has designated the Canadian Commercial Corporation as its agent in order to implement these projects. So the Framework Agreement is the problem, because you have signed a Framework Agreement with Canada and they have designated the Canadian Commercial Corporation, but the Canadian Commercial Corporation does not follow standard procurement procedures.

I mean, you have heard it out of the mouth of the Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to Canada himself. He said there was a meeting in Trinidad. It is published. He said it himself. There was a meeting in Trinidad and SNC-Lavalin offered. They came and they made an offer to construct this hospital, and as a consequence everything was then set in motion, under the Framework Agreement through the Canadian Commercial Corporation. We cannot be doing business with a company, whether it is a state company or not, that does not follow established procurement procedures, Mr. Speaker.

It is obvious that this project was not put out to tender. Why did the Canadian Commercial Corporation not invite competitive bids if they wanted to promote Canadian business, because that is what they do—if you think about what the Canadian Commercial Corporation—if you look carefully at what the Canadian Commercial Corporation does, it promotes Canadian business; it promotes the export of Canadian goods and services and Canadian skills, to the rest of the world. That is what it does. That is what it is set up to do.

But why, if it wanted to get involved in this project in Trinidad and Tobago, why did the Canadian Commercial Corporation not invite competitive tenders from suitably qualified contractors in Canada? I would have been so much more comfortable, Mr. Speaker, rather than hearing from the mouth of the Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to Canada, hearing him telling us that the SNC-Lavalin expressed an interest in the project—I think we need to read—this needs to sink in, this needs to sink in, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We have time.

Mr. C. Imbert: Buxo—I am reading from a *Trinidad Guardian* article of June 30, 2013.

Miss Cox: Buxo Potts?

Mr. C. Imbert: No. Phillip Buxo—

“...who returned to Trinidad and Tobago on Friday night,...said he was advised that discussions between SNC-Lavalin and the CCC were initiated in 2011 through the Canadian authorities in Port of Spain.”

Now, is Mr. Buxo not telling us the truth? “Yuh know what he is saying?” He is saying Canadian Commercial Corporation, SNC-Lavalin and the Canadian High Commission got together and discussed the involvement of this company in this Penal hospital project.

It only involved “two Canadian companies that expressed an interest in working in T&T... One of the companies was SNC-Lavalin.

The other company had an interest in refurbishing the PoS General Hospital. This left SNC-Lavalin as the only Canadian company that expressed an interest in building a hospital in”—Trinidad and Tobago—“from the ground up.”

So a group of people sat down in Port of Spain and spoke about hospital projects—two Canadian companies. “One say I want to refurbish Port of Spain General, the other one say I want to build a new hospital”. And from that, this is how this thing happens, Mr. Speaker.

Come on, even in Trinidad and Tobago we “doh operate in dat way”, Mr. Speaker. “Ah mean even as bad as this Government is,” I do not think I have heard of an instance where three men sit down in a room and say “I want to do this project and a man say, no problem man, I go organize.”

Dr. Rowley: A billion-dollar project.

Mr. C. Imbert: A billion-dollar project. As bad as the Government is, I do not think that is how we do business here. I mean I am always willing to be surprised, but I do not think—but to think that this is what they are telling us. This company comes, it makes an offer; they sit down, they say, “No problem man, we have a Framework Agreement, we have the arrangement, the Canadian Commercial Corporation—“bam” they get the contract.

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And therefore, I am telling the Government go beyond the termination of this contract with SNC-Lavalin and look very closely at how you do business, because at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I read out the comments coming from the Government and coming from the Canadians. The Canadians said they have nothing to do with the selection of the contractor. The Government said “we have nothing to do with the selection of the contractor”.

Even during a motion I brought to this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, on procurement—I brought a motion here; I believe it was towards the end of June, 2013. We even had a response coming from the Minister of Planning, who said that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had nothing to do with the selection of SNC-Lavalin for this project, Mr. Speaker.

Here it is, *Trinidad Express*, June 29, 2013:

“Canadians selected the contractor, says Tewartie.

The recommendation for SNC-Lavalin to be the contractor for the \$1 billion Penal hospital came directly from...”—the—“...Canadian Commercial Corporation... Planning Minister Dr. Bhoew Tewartie said yesterday.

Speaking in the House of Representatives, Tewartie quoted from a letter signed by the regional director of Caribbean and Central America Canadian Commercial Corporation, Luc Alarie, addressed to the chief operating officer of UDeCott, in which he said CCC ‘supports and encourages you to retain SNC-Lavalin to provide the services to complete the scope of works and detailed design documents.’

Tewartie also read another letter from Alarie which said CCC confirmed...it had engaged SNC-Lavalin as its Canadian supplier.

‘This is a decision of the Canadian Commercial Corporation’” Mr. Speaker.

And he spoke about government-to-government arrangements and he said:

“The”—decision—“about the (selected) company”—does—“not reside in your hands. You may make other arrangements having to do with local content but because of the nature of the government-to-government arrangement some control in the selection of the main contractor is under the responsibility...of the party with which you are negotiating and this is precisely what...happened here.

‘You cannot rest on the lap of either UDeCOTT or the Government of Trinidad and Tobago the responsibility for the contractor...’”

So that is what Dr. Tewarie said, the Minister of Planning. He said, “Not us; the Canadian Commercial Corporation picked them.” And then you have Mr. Buxo saying they had a meeting in Port of Spain and they picked SNC-Lavalin, Mr. Speaker.

If you are not going to scrap the Framework Agreement—which, as I said, I think the Minister was on the right track when he made that comment, that he was going to make a recommendation to the Cabinet to terminate the Framework Agreement—then at the very least, Mr. Speaker, the Government needs to make serious adjustments to the Framework Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Canada; at the very least, Mr. Speaker, because that Framework Agreement has locked us in to this Canadian Commercial Corporation which has its own unusual strange way of doing business, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, there are some warning flags that are coming up with respect to the Canadian Commercial Corporation. Earlier on I read the code of ethics, the Business Code of Ethics published by the Canadian Commercial Corporation where they said that if any of their Canadian suppliers is caught bribing anybody, they will exercise their right to terminate contracts.

Now, how much more evidence you want that SNC-Lavalin bribing people? They have people testifying before a Commission of Enquiry that they walk into a parking lot with a suitcase full of cash and give it to politicians in Quebec, Mr. Speaker. All over the world they try to extradite men from Canada back to other countries. They are attempting to extradite Canadians to face trial in India, Bangladesh, other places, Mr. Speaker. “They have a whole set of men lock up right now.” All over the world, Mr. Speaker, there are corruption allegations with this company. Corruption is endemic in this company, Mr. Speaker. And what they are trying to tell us is that they have cleaned up their act and the hard part about it is, the things that people are going on trial for now are things that happened two, three, four, five, six, seven years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: When did it happen?

Mr. C. Imbert: The things that they are going on trial for now, some of the things happened this year, last year, the year before, four years ago, five years ago and so, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Browne: There is a legacy.

Mr. C. Imbert: There is a legacy of—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: A rich history.

Mr. C. Imbert:—corruption in that company, Mr. Speaker. And they are trying to tell us that in one year—after 10 and 20 years of having secret accounting codes for bribery, paying out bribes to Gaddafi of a bil—I cannot believe that, Mr. Speaker—\$160 million in bribe? TT \$1 billion in bribe, and trying to smuggle Gaddafi out of Libya to Mexico? And they have a Canadian SNC-Lavalin executive locked up in Mexico awaiting trial for that you know; for an attempt to smuggle Gaddafi out of Libya.

Hon. Member: “Who they want to smuggle out of Trinidad?”

Mr. C. Imbert: They are accused of corruption in Africa. They are accused of corruption in India. They are accused of corruption in Cambodia. They are accused of corruption in Canada, Mr. Speaker. This company is trying to tell us, and the Canadian authorities are trying to tell us they have cleaned up their act, everything good—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Best people to do business with.

Mr. C. Imbert:—must do business with them, “nice people man”, honest, diligent, hardworking. Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable.

Dr. Browne: It is an affront.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is an affront. I find these approaches to be unsophisticated. I feel insulted, Mr. Speaker. I feel that my intelligence has been insulted. I feel that Trinidad and Tobago has been insulted.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Oh, yes.

Hon. Member: “Um hmm, um hmm.”

Mr. C. Imbert: I think it is an attempt to insult Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Browne: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: They see us as a banana republic; they think that we are swinging from trees in Trinidad and Tobago. And we will have none of it, Mr. Speaker! We will have none of it! [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: None of it. None of it.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is insulting, insulting. You bribing Gaddafi \$1 billion, and you want to come here and build hospital in Trinidad and Tobago. We will have none of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: None of it.

Dr. Browne: We will have none of it.

Mr. C. Imbert: So Mr. Speaker, I urge this honourable House, I urge this House to urge the Government to terminate all arrangements with SNC-Lavalin—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: And CCC.

Mr. C. Imbert: And I urge the Government to extricate itself from this straitjacket it has found itself in with this Framework Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Canada, where we are locked in to these very bizarre contractual arrangements with the Canadian Commercial Corporation, Mr. Speaker. It is not in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not.

It is a fact that the Canadian Commercial Corporation has been doing business with Trinidad and Tobago for some time now, but the spotlight is now on the way they do business; and having discovered the way this contract was awarded, Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Government to revisit and to remove itself from any contractual straitjacket with the Canadian Commercial Corporation as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I am hoping we are going to get an unambiguous, unequivocal, clear-cut statement from the Minister, that we will hear what the country wants to hear, Mr. Speaker, and that we can move forward as a country and not find ourselves with this baggage, and not find this poison being introduced into Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I beg to move, I beg to move.

Mr. C. Imbert: Oh, I am so sorry. I beg to move. I beg to move.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion and I reserve the right to speak.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

3.15 p.m.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My friend from Diego Martin

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North/East is encouraging us to go home early and seeking to persuade me to make a one-line statement to the House.

Mr. Imbert: “You talk nah, talk.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, if I were to subject myself to his advice, I would indicate to the House that, at the meeting of the Cabinet yesterday, a decision was taken to terminate all contractual arrangements with SNC-Lavalin. [*Desk thumping*] So, the line for you is, as of today, we can say to SNC-Lavalin, *au revoir*. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, that is what my colleague encouraged me to say, but it would be remiss of me, of course, if I do not take his Motion a bit more seriously and confine some remarks to his Motion and to respond to some of the matters raised by my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the Member for Diego Martin North/East for filing such a Motion and encouraging debate on a matter that has engaged our attention for some time in the national community. It allows us an opportunity as well, not only to respond to the Motion but, to place on the public record our correspondence, our interaction between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and its agencies, relevant to this matter and the Government of Canada and agencies relevant as well, particularly the organization that my friend made reference to, the CCC and the SNC-Lavalin.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Commercial Corporation was founded in 1946. It is a federal Crown institution of the Government of Canada, used to promote international investment on behalf of the Government and people of Canada and promote businesses, contractors and other organizations across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, in the contribution of my friend, in his Motion, I would just read again into the record what my friend encouraged us to resolve. His conclusion is:

“Be it resolved that this Honorable House urge the Government to terminate all existing contracts with SNC-Lavalin for this Hospital Project”—in Penal—*“and to cease and desist from entering into any future contractual relationships with SNC-Lavalin or any of its affiliates;*

Be it further resolved that the procurement process for this hospital and all such future projects in Trinidad and Tobago be subject to open and transparent competitive tendering.”

That is what my friend has asked us to consider and to support him in this resolution, Mr. Speaker, and I will speak to those two matters in a moment.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East is now well known as a Google master and produces no shortage of information to the House.

Mr. Roberts: Google master.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I often refer to him as the most researched MP I have ever worked with and often the most incorrect MP I have ever worked with. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Mr. Roberts: But on this note—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But I noted, Mr. Speaker, in his argument he called upon the Government to terminate the framework agreement, because the framework agreement gives life to the Canadian Commercial Corporation.

Mr. Imbert: “Not so?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Whereas in his resolution there is no resolution to terminate the framework agreement but to terminate the contractual arrangements with the company. So we have made our announcement. You should be happy with the announcement. But you have gone further to address the framework agreement, because the framework agreement really gives life to the CCC and future participation in the health sector; it is a framework agreement for the health sector.

Mr. Speaker, the institution known as SNC-Lavalin has also been around for some time. My friend made a statement a few moments ago. I want to read it. He said some of these problems that they are facing, these allegations of corruption and scandal and “bobol” and they sought to—what?—take out Gaddafi, they sought to rescue Gaddafi in Libya.

Mr. Imbert: Imagine that!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Imagine that; a company seeking to build a hospital in Trinidad is accused of seeking to help Muammar Gaddafi out of Libya.

Mr. Imbert: Imagine that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And he said that this is a legacy of corruption; legacy. I asked: how long? He said this is two, three, four, five, six years.

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Mr. Imbert: Long time, long time.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Long time! But you see, Mr. Speaker, there is a greater responsibility and burden and liability to my friend and his colleagues opposite. You see, the Canadian Commercial Corporation recommended SNC-Lavalin to this Government. But who recommended them to the former government? Who recommended them to the former administration? It was not the CCC.

Mr. Imbert: I want to—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, my friend did not tell us, and maybe he is not aware—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: He did not Google “dat”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: but—he did not Google this one—you see SNC-Lavalin—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I have to wind up, you know.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—was appointed project manager—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Oh. Oh!!

Mr. Imbert: Ultra-Low Sulphur Diesel

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—to provide project management service for the Ultra-Low Sulphur Diesel project (ULSD) work being undertaken at Petrotrin.

Mr. Roberts: “Ohhhh!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, do you know when this contract was entered into?

Mr. Roberts: PNM.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: March 27, 2009.

Mr. Roberts: “Ohhhhhh!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The board of Petrotrin, led then by—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Malcolm Jones.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—I think the former chairman was Malcolm Jones—awarded a contract to SNC-Lavalin for project management services at a meeting of July 15, 2009, when they would have known of this legacy of corruption. The original contract value was \$42 million.

Hon. Members: “Ooooo!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The current contract value, with approved variations, due to delays, is \$102 million.

Mr. Cadiz: “What currency?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the overall project, the budget has increased—this overall project at Petrotrin—from US \$350 million—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: US?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—US \$350 million to US \$425 million. That is TT \$2.5 billion.

Hon. Members: “Ooooo!”

Dr. Gopeesingh: Two point eight.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, \$2.8 billion.

Mr. Cadiz: “And dey want to know how dey build ah billion dollar—“

Mr. Roberts: “Wey San Fernando East?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: SNC-Lavalin, engaged by Petrotrin, signed contract July 29, 2009.

Mr. Roberts: “Oh goood!”

Mr. Cadiz: “Dey was not corrupt then? Dey was not corrupt then?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they should have alerted us to this legacy of corruption, which they encouraged on Trinidad and Tobago soil and then come today, pious, holier than thou, to tell us: fire them! fire them!

Mr. Roberts: “How we go fire dem?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Which we did, but you did not.

Mr. Roberts: “You hire dem!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You did not. You hired them and you encouraged them.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And you encouraged variations—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Where Malcolm Jones?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—on this project.

Mr. Imbert: This is what year?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So that the former administration in 2009, entered into these contractual arrangements with SNC-Lavalin. Mr. Speaker, his Motion states:

“terminate...with SNC-Lavalin or any of its affiliates”

Should we terminate this arrangement with Petrotrin?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Should we terminate it? Yes or no, “yuh doh have to stand up and make a speech.” Should we terminate it? You see, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Oh Lord!

Mr. Roberts: “Pressure, boy.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—this is what we are faced with.

Mr. Roberts: PNM again.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So when the former administration and—*[Continuous interruption and crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—senior Cabinet officials of that former administration should have been alerting us to some of these issues—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—because they ought to have known.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They ought to have known. They had to wait for Radhica Sookraj to tell us about SNC-Lavalin—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: “Aaaah.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—in the *Trinidad Guardian* and then they jump up. “Dey say: terminate, terminate!” *[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: “Oh gaddie.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And then they Google to tell us “how much corruption dey in. Dey want tuh make a Gaddafi escape and dey want to bribe dis one and pay campaign fuh dis one.” You know, it leaves one to wonder, just to wonder, how much bribe they may have paid in that period 2009—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Ooooh!” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—how many party contributions they may have made, since my friend advances that this is their modus operandi—

Mr. Roberts: “Which car park they gone in?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—which car park they may have gone in, who they may have bribed and what they may have done, if my friend is to be believed that this is the character of this international contractor.

Mr. Roberts: Balisier House car park?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Which car park. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put that on the record because it reeks of the hypocrisy that we come here and talk about.

Mr. Speaker, I made the point before that Members of the Opposition seek to tarnish the Government with the brush of corruption and they do so at every material time—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “At dey own risk.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and they have now entered into a phase of what is called pre-corruption scandals. Even before something happens, “dey stand up and say dat corrupt, dat bad, dat gone. So if somebody buy some equipment, “dey say dat is corruption because dey planning to get a contract.” Nothing happened. And they have invented this all the time, this line, to brand and rebrand and colour and paint and tarnish the People’s Partnership. That is why today, we have to set the record straight. We have to set the record straight. [*Continuous interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, may I also add—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, please, just one minute. Could I ask that the House observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) and allow the Member for Oropouche East and Minister of Housing and Urban Development to speak in silence? Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, for the record, SNC-Lavalin was hired

by the former PNM administration and fired by the administration of the People's Partnership. That is for the record.

Mr. Roberts: "We did not hire dem."

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Motion says:

"Be it further resolved that the procurement process for this hospital and all future projects be subjected to open and transparent competitive tendering."

And I ask my friend: When they embarked upon the construction of NAPA and SAPA, through a government-to-government arrangement with China, did they do that by open competitive bidding? Did they do that? Did they do that? And when my friend sat in the Cabinet and gave approval, and I have the Cabinet Notes and Minutes that approved the construction of SAPA and NAPA—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: And he was present.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—through a government-to-government arrangement with China, did my friend insist that it be through open competitive bidding? He did not! He did not! And the Chinese Government chose a contractor and the contractor came and they constructed. My friend from Diego Martin West called NAPA, I think—what?—an oversized aeroplane engine. [*Laughter*] And they operate. Mr. Speaker, in government-to-government arrangements, whether you are dealing with China, Austria, Canada, wherever, you do that because there is something favourable in that and generally, what is favourable is the loan and the conditionalities of those loans with lower interest rates.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, for this particular project, I am informed that the interest rate was 2.6 per cent as opposed to a market rate of 5 per cent. I ask my friend, when they chose CMEC, China Machinery Engineering Corporation for the aluminium smelter project with no tendering, at a cost of US \$740 million—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Oooh!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—where were you? You were in the Cabinet.
[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: TT \$4.5 billion.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The numeric Member for Caroni East tells me it is what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: TT \$4.5 billion.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is TT \$4.5 billion—the aluminium smelter. Did you go to the Chinese government and say, listen open competitive tendering before you build the aluminium smelter?

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, you did not. You did not. But today you bring, be it resolved that all these future projects must be open and transparent competitive tendering.

Mr. Speaker, when you deal with government-to-government arrangements, the Government that is giving you the loan, they will have an agency promoting their domestic interest through investment, foreign/direct investment, and they will also have a preference for a contractor from that jurisdiction, and they may ask you to accept that. In negotiation, you may or may not, but they will encourage a particular contractor. So Shanghai Construction did the NAPA/SAPA; CMEC was earmarked for the aluminium smelter. Mr. Speaker, for the record it was this Government that terminated the arrangement for the construction of the aluminium smelter in the public interest. [*Desk thumping*] We did that.

I had the opportunity to go to Beijing, China and to meet the leadership of the Export-Import Bank of China, and I want to tell you they were not pleased when we did that. They were not pleased and that reflected itself in our conversation. We made a commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the public interest to cancel that project, and we gave the assurance that it will not undermine and damage our relationship with China, although they were not pleased at the time. So this Government has also terminated contractual arrangements with other Governments outside of Canada. So we are not afraid of that.

I must draw your reference and put on the record, it was just yesterday in *The Huffington Post* I understand, read by millions of people across the world online, there was a headline:

“Trinidad and Tobago Taught Canada an Anti-Corruption Lesson”

A little country like this, [*Desk thumping*] 1.3 million people:

“Trinidad and Tobago Taught Canada an Anti-Corruption Lesson

After weeks of maneuvering by the Canadian government to secure a lucrative

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contract in Trinidad and Tobago for...SNC-Lavalin, the government of that Caribbean nation has announced that it isn't interested in dealing with a company that has 'difficulty in passing the test of confidence.'"

Mr. Speaker, I mean in this *Huffington Post*, they quoted the housing Minister, Dr. Roodal Moonilal who said and I quote. Well, I am quoting myself here, but the newspaper:

"I feel that there is public concern and lack of confidence in the contractor...and the position of T&T's reputation. All projects, especially government-to-government arrangements, must bring"—with it—"confidence in the public interest."

Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I quote myself from the newspaper. Mr. Speaker, they also mentioned the Member for Diego Martin East, I must say:

"The Canadian government should take note: both Dr. Moonilal and Mr. Imbert...points."

So they gave him a little line there.

Hon. Member: "Doh try dat." [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: For us, for a tiny nation in the Caribbean to stand up to a developed country like this and get a headline: "Trinidad and Tobago Taught Canada an Anti-Corruption Lesson", Mr. Speaker—[*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]—because you hired them in 2009. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] The article goes on to praise the Government and the stance of the Government on this matter. And it says:

"The SNC-Lavalin Penal...deal could not pass the smell test..."—and that was—"the root of the problem..."

Trinidad and Tobago lawmakers had the good sense to see that." [*Desk thumping*]

So they praised you too. So that was the commendation we got in the international press.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Then "dey say", we did that under pressure. Well, we did that under pressure. I want to tell you, when you terminate arrangements with a Government as we did with the smelter project—I went to China and I

faced the heat, the red heat in Beijing. I am very sensitive to terminating contracts. Now, there was a newspaper article today—I do not want to call the writer and so on, a columnist in the *Trinidad Express*, raising this issue that we acted—we were brave in acting now, but we took so long. When you terminate—this is not the construction of a box drain. It is not the construction of a box drain, you know. This is a multi-million dollar, mega project on a government-to-government arrangement. When you terminate these things, there are political and diplomatic implications, there are economic implications. We have enjoyed a relationship with China and with Canada for decades. You cannot take these decisions lightly. You cannot do it without much consideration. You cannot do it without much engagement.

Mr. Speaker, we worked quietly behind the scene, and I will read into the record some letters in a few minutes. We worked behind the scene. I have also met officials from the CCC, the diplomatic mission in Port of Spain. I have been in touch with UDeCOTT on this matter. We had been working behind the scene when you believed we were doing nothing, and when some people believed we took so long to act. You do not get up by “vaps” and decide, you read something in the newspapers, and we terminate a government-to-government arrangement. It does not work like that. There are long-term implications for your diplomatic relations, for the healthy relationship we enjoy in the Commonwealth, in the community of free nations.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I act as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am aware of that side as well. So, Mr. Speaker, we had to consider this matter. We had to engage with the relevant agencies to have discussion on the matter, and we did. There are several pieces of correspondence that I would like to read into the record. You see, there is what is called an Early Services Agreement between UDeCOTT and SNC-Lavalin, and for the record, this agreement was signed on February 26, 2013. On February 26, 2013, an agreement was signed, called an Early Services Agreement between UDeCOTT and SNC-Lavalin. For the record I just wanted to state that it was in April 2013, two months after the signing of the Early Services Agreement, two months after that the World Bank imposed a 10-year ban on SNC-Lavalin and its affiliates from bidding on projects funded by the Bank.

When that contract was signed, the World Bank did not impose that sanction on this company and its affiliates. It was not in effect. It was two months after it was signed. So we did not sign a contract with SNC-Lavalin against the backdrop

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of a World Bank ban. We did that two months before. It was April after February that the World Bank acted. Mr. Speaker, in our relationship with this company, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the UDeCOTT acted in good faith at all times; at all times.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Canadian Commercial Corporation that, by a letter to the UDeCOTT, June 20, 2012, addressed to the chief operating officer, the CCC stated, and I quote:

“...CCC supports and encourages you”—UDeCOTT—“to retain SNC-Lavalin to provide the services to complete the scope of works and detailed design documents. SNC-Lavalin could be retained through an initial independent contract that can be linked to the final...commercial contract for the construction of the...Hospital.”

So that there is an initial contract that could be linked to the final contract, but it is not, and this was June 20, 2012. So that recommendation from the CCC came eight months or so after the World Bank took that action.

In a letter to the CCC, the UDeCOTT had indicated our very deep concerns over the issues raised, and in a letter from UDeCOTT Chairman, Jearlean John, sent on July 12, 2013, to the Canadian Commercial Corporation, several issues were raised. We reminded the CCC, that it was the:

“...CCC”—that—“wrote to UDeCOTT supporting and advising UDeCOTT to retain the SNC-Lavalin to provide design documents under an initial independent contract.”

Mr. Speaker, we reminded the CCC that by correspondence in June 2012 and November 2012, we asked in clear terms that SNC-Lavalin be subject to a due diligence exercise. We had received a commitment from the CCC dated July 19, 2012, where we were advised that the CCC was in the process of completing its due diligence exercise.

We also wrote back November 01, 2012 indicating that UDeCOTT had indeed engaged SNC-Lavalin. This correspondence created a reasonable impression that an appropriate process for the procurement and engagement of SNC-Lavalin had been employed; this was a direction. The document on July 13 also asked the CCC to please undertake further due diligence and testing of the company, in light of negative reports that have surfaced.

We indicated to the CCC that news reports have cast the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and UDeCOTT in a significantly negative light, confidence of

the local industry and with it our international partners have been undermined, with the implication that UDeCOTT had entered into improper arrangements. Those reports undermine public confidence and called into question the propriety of the government-to-government arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, having regard to recent public utterances by Canadian officials, it appears that the project is at risk relative to the contractor selected, and to be selected by the CCC. UDeCOTT, therefore, seeks clarification on CCC's position on this and whether the due diligence exercise is ongoing.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point I am making, that since July 2013, this is September, UDeCOTT was already on the ball in terms of getting from the CCC their commitment to due diligence and also to ensuring that this was the most suitable contractor; since July 2013. We did not make a song and dance of this, there was no press conference, media conference and so on, because government-to-government relationships are very delicate. One has to be very careful in dealing with these matters, particularly as they may relate to terminating contractual arrangements with foreign companies and also, given legal issues that may arise.

Mr. Speaker, in a much more recent letter dated September 12, 2013 from the chairman of UDeCOTT, again, it is a four-page letter, which I will not read extensively into the record, but to highlight again our call to the CCC as the prime contractor, who intended to subcontract to SNC-Lavalin, we again confirmed our commitment to the project, but expressed our very deep concern with the selection process and indeed with the character of the subcontractor identified.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, UDeCOTT stated in the September 12 letter to the contractor, to CCC, and I quote:

“By letter dated the 12th July 2013 CCC's attention was drawn to certain adverse reports that surfaced in the public domain...The concerns raised were material and legitimate. I asked that you confirm that the process for the engagement of SNC Lavalin was in keeping with the highest standards of governance and leading procurement practice.”

The letter goes on, Mr. Speaker:

“I received a reply under the hand of Marc Wittingham, President and CEO of CCC, on the 17th July 2013”—which—“confirmed...that the due diligence process carried out by the CCC was not yet complete.”

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Mr. Speaker, it was in process but not complete.

The UDeCott had certain expectations which we communicated to the CCC. We asked that they:

- “(i) Confirm the process for the engagement of SNC-Lavalin was in keeping with the highest standards of governance...
- (ii) Provide a comprehensive explanation of the process by which”—the company—“was selected...
- (iii) Provide an explanation as to why SNC Lavalin was engaged as the preferred contractor before the due diligence process was complete.
- (iv) Give a comprehensive description of the due diligence process that was undertaken or being undertaken...

At all material times the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through UDeCOTT has sought to give effect to the Framework Arrangement and”—its—“obligations.”

We try to enter into any relationship:

“in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago...”—We—“...will not consider entering into any contractual agreement that is tainted by a perception”—of corruption—“or which cannot meet the objective standard of transparency, accountability and international best practice.”

Mr. Speaker, I may also add that pursuant to the Early Services Agreement, on a particular clause in that agreement, the Government is on sound ground to move to terminate the contractual arrangements pursuant to clause 9.24.1(f).

I raise this to make the point that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago took this matter very seriously and acted—did not sleep away on the wheel—even though we signed the contract before the World Bank banned this company.
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Two months before.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Two months before. When this company came to Trinidad in 2009, at Petrotrin, for that project, I asked whether the Government then had done a due diligence on this company, where the CCC was not involved and where the then Government contracted that company without the CCC—whether they had done that due diligence. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: They did not.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Because, today, the Member tells us there is a legacy of corruption dating two to six years with SNC-Lavalin, maybe longer, when his Government—as a senior Cabinet Minister he would have sat in Cabinet and approved—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—contractual relationships. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: True.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Member told us to ensure that projects are subject to open and transparent competitive tendering when all contracts to build the SAPA, the NAPA, the aluminium smelter and others on government-to-government arrangements were not done through that process.

Mr. Speaker, in a government-to-government relationship, it is not only the low interest rate—cheap money as some people call it—but there are significant conditionalities that deal with the transfer of technology—training. In our project on Chancery Lane, done through a government-to-government arrangement with Austria, you will not believe it, but 90 per cent of the workers are local—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Local content.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—local content—and we have been training workers who are now in elementary trades and skill. We have been transferring technology and training them in very sophisticated building techniques, so that when they are finished with that project, they have a greater value as employees. In fact, you can enter that project as an unskilled worker and leave that project as a skilled worker.

So there is a value to government-to-government arrangements, but the host Government exerts some influence in selecting contractors because they also have criteria to ensure that there is equity; to ensure that given their domestic framework for investment, that various contractors get various opportunities across the e*Crosstalk*] the Opposition Members have been on this mission, this campaign to taint this Government with corruption. I just make one reference. In the public space, in the Parliament, Members Opposite and/or their colleagues elsewhere cast aspersions on the conduct of NP and the Board of Directors over a particular matter involving a contractor—local contractor this time—and they sought to criminalize and demonize local contractors in this country, who, if they bid to empty a garbage can, they will say it is corruption—and they did that.

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Just today, I am reading in the *Daily Express*, page 47, September 27, 2013:

“Integrity Commission Clears NP

In the matter re: Public Tender for the Lease of Tractors for Haulage as advertised by...National Petroleum...in January 2011, the Integrity Commission has ended its investigation into claims of impropriety...”

And it states, and I quote:

The Integrity Commission considered these matters and did not find any evidence to take it forward.

They did not find any evidence, Mr. Speaker. They found the complaint to be frivolous, vexatious and not made in good faith and terminated the investigation. In fact, they terminated the investigation but this is after we demonized and criminalized contractors—changed the name of their company or changed their name by deed poll after you hear your name in the public space in this way—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You know, in this way. That is what they did, Mr. Speaker, but today, a good two years later almost, we must read in the newspaper, “NP in the clear”, front page—“Integrity Commission finds insufficient evidence against fuel distributor on Gopaul contract”.

They have called on a goodly gentleman, who made those allegations, to apologize. A gentleman has been called upon to apologize. I saw in the same newspaper, a house with three or four storeys in it. I do not know what kind of Mahal is that.

Mr. Roberts: “Da a hotel”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they have called upon the gentleman making the allegations to apologize and he should. You know what he said on radio? He said, “Although the Integrity Commission cleared them, I feel in my heart there is something.” *[Laughter]* He could be getting a heart attack. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Griffith: That is in their genealogy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: If he said he feels in his bones something is wrong, then he “have” arthritis. “I feel in my heart.” Now the Integrity Commission said, We—“terminate the investigation”—it—“is frivolous, vexatious”. He said, “I feel

in my heart something is wrong.” But he does not feel in his heart that he cannot explain a four-storey house—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Harm.

Hon. Member: In Maraval.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—in Maraval. He cannot explain that. How much is it? Sixteen million dollars or so. He cannot explain that, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: A parlour lawyer.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But he says he feel in his heart something is wrong with that thing. [*Crosstalk*] And, Mr. Speaker, for the record, I want to go on.

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, the Member is imputing improper motives, 36(5).

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: To whom? To whom?

Mr. Roberts: He is stating a fact.

Mr. Speaker: Overruled. Continue!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: To whom? Mr. Speaker, in July 2011, remember, race issues at the Integrity Commission concerning the Member for Siparia and a choice made early in our term of office to temporarily reside in Tunapuna. The Integrity Commission, that matter was reported. They dismissed that. There is an article in *Newsday*, Friday, July 29, 2011, “Integrity Commission clears PM”. They reported that, too, as if it was a breach, corruption; but this is their approach. You paint and you taint and you brush everything corruption, hoping that you say it long enough and it sticks.

Hon. Member: The house of Hinds.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Chaguanas West is not here, I do not want to say too much about him, but he is also on this “mauvais langue” campaign all over, branding the Government of which he was a part for three years, corrupt. The only Government Minister before the police right now on corruption allegations is the Member for Chaguanas West. He is the only Government Minister, but then goes every night hoping that this will sell. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Previous Minister.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Previous Minister, a previous Member of the Cabinet. He is the only one before the police on allegation, “eh”, but every night, corruption this, corruption that, hoping that this sticks; and a similar matter here

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before us on this Motion.

When we learned of these problems, the Government acted swiftly—correctly in my view—ensured that given the sensitive nature of government-to-government relations, that we acted properly and with much consideration.

Hon. Member: A responsible Government.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is being responsible. You cannot read everything on the Internet. You cannot, Mr. Speaker, google everything and go and take a Cabinet decision. When they ask you: where you get that from? “I goggle that.” You do not do that. You have to engage the CCC. You see, they did not. They did not seek to do that at all, but came with the Motion. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: It is just coincidentally—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The daily—quotes in the Motion, daily newspaper reports, in February 2013. But you know, Mr. Speaker, why did they not alert us to this before where they had a former relationship with the SNC-Lavalin? Why did they not come to the table and say raise the matter in Parliament before? Why? Is it because they dealt with the particular company?

My friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, promised to tell us where he first met the High Commissioner to Canada—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: If you allow me to wind up—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: If you allow me to wind up—[*Inaudible*].

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—he knows very well where he met that person—

Mr. Imbert: If you allow me to wind up.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and what he was doing there.

Mr. Roberts: By Franklin Khan.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He knows very well what he was doing there.

Mr. Imbert: “All yuh—[*Inaudible*]”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: May I add that this is not the only government-to-government arrangement we have in place.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*] discriminate.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, there is a government-to-government arrangement involving the Government of China for the construction of the Couva children hospital and, like the current arrangement, it was the Government

of China who expressed a preference for a contractor. We did not face some of these troubles with that arrangement. For Chancery Lane, there is a government-to-government arrangement with the Government of Austria and their executing agency, VAMED, in which they have selected contractors, but it is a host of local subcontractors that are working there.

There was a government-to-government arrangement by the former administration, I believe, with China Railway for the construction of the Scarborough Hospital. I ask my friends opposite: Did you do that by open tendering? Did you do it that way? They did not. They spoke—at that time they did not do it. They did not tell the Government of China how to operate. So, you see, it is this hypocrisy that we are addressing as well. So you come today with the blacklist from the World Bank and tell us, with this blacklist, that this company and all its affiliates corrupt and did not tell us that the company was also working for Petrotrin under the PNM administration.

Hon. Member: Yeah, omitted.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They omitted that. Omitted, Mr. Speaker, when there may be persons known, who may have been involved in that directly—known persons to some of us in the House involved in that arrangement directly, but today the same company they hired, now come to say that they had US \$163 million in bribe; that they sought to collect that.

4.00 p.m.

You see, Mr. Speaker, they understand well—and we understand well—that if you try to pelt mud—to fling mud as we say—sometimes mud might stick. But, on this matter, when they felt we were silent, they thought we were doing nothing, that is why they came out by filing a Motion, by public statements.

Hon. Member: Oh yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They thought we were doing nothing, Mr. Speaker. They thought we were doing nothing. But, today, when they recognize that we were, Mr. Speaker, dealing with the matter—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: That was yesterday.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but I am quoting from UDeCOTT documents in July, in September, in August, when we were on to this matter—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They want to omit that too.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but they want to omit that, Mr. Speaker, because the UDeCOTT today is not the UDeCOTT of the past. Notice there is no attack on UDeCOTT, but there is an attack on SNC-Lavalin and, today, there is a new dimension to the Motion which was not stated on the CCC.

Now, I want to indicate to the Member that one could also consider addressing the issue that he has raised with the Framework Agreement, Mr. Speaker, because the Framework Agreement, as the Member is aware, speaks to the involvement of the CCC—*[Interruption]* Yes, it is at (3) in the Framework Agreement.

The Government of Canada designates the Canadian Commercial Corporation as its coordinator for the projects conducted under this agreement.

The Member has now raised that question as to whether we may consider terminating the Framework Agreement given that, but that is a separate matter, Mr. Speaker. That is a matter that one could consider, but the CCC is an institution of the Government of Canada, a Federal Crown institution, Mr. Speaker, and they may have concerns with its procurement procedure. The Member for Diego Martin North/East read in detail some of those matters from the CCC, and they are matters that one could consider but, at the first point, at the first step, Mr. Speaker, is to consider the SNC-Lavalin situation because you see, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development and Leader of the House has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Hon. A. Roberts]*

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the highest standards of good governance, to the highest tenets of good corporate governance, but also to maintain our diplomatic relations to ensure that in all our doings, we do not affect our international relations.

Mr. Speaker, there were projects over the years—and I want to remind my friend opposite—when information came to light about allegations of corruption in NEDCO with the disbursement of loans—

Mr. Roberts: Oh my goodness.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—at the NHA refurbishment programme, there was a \$3 billion deficit at WASA, where they said they had 1,000 PNM party members employed by WASA. There were millions of dollars of corruption allegations in the health sector—no tendering for the \$100 million national cancer centre. Mr. Speaker, there were corruption allegations with the management of the CDAP Programme—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: PNM is a cancer.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You remember a company called Eastman and Associates?

Mr. Roberts: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Anybody remember that, connected to members of the board of the North-West Health Authority also with contracts for human resource services, directly linked to the board?

Hon. Member: PNM style.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: “Gangnam style.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—there is a \$300 million cost overrun at the hospital construction site. Mr. Speaker, the famous Cudjoe construction, anybody remember that?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Mr. Roberts: No, remind them.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: One hundred and twenty million dollars in contract to Cudjoe construction. What they do?

Mr. Roberts: Who is Cudjoe?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, all of these matters arose under their administration—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: “Doh talk ’bout Tarouba.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and you notice I am saying—well, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Oh God, headache.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—my Minister of Sport invites me to talk about Tarouba.

Hon. Member: “No, ah doh want”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It started at 275—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and that is taxpayers’ money from the Treasury. In fact, what they did with that is, “Dey put dey hand in de cash register and took de money.” They thought going through government-to-government was too long.

Mr. Roberts: “Yeah, dey just grab!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Dey just grab!” They opened the cash register, saw money and grabbed it!—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Dey called that raffing.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and they said, “We building the Brian Lara Stadium.” It started at 275, it went to?

Mr. Roberts: \$1.1 billion.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: \$1.1 billion, and it is not ready for school boy cricket—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Griffith: And still climbing.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and climbing. Mr. Speaker, we have estimated that it would take another—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: One eighty-five.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—185 and maybe more than \$185 million to complete the project, Mr. Speaker. That stadium is so designed that it can seat I think about 10,000 people, but if it rains not one spectator is covered—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Not one.

Hon. Member:—not one is covered, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The media room at that facility; when the media is there if they are looking at a cricket match, they have to turn left and right between a post. [*Laughter*] So if you bowl a ball you could see the bowler, and then you have to turn, move the post, and then look to the batsman.

Hon. Member: “Fazeer cyar call no LBW.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So the ball must be slow. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker,

the VIP rooms there, they are 10 x 10. “You put two chairs and a lil table dey could hold two people in the VIP room.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: “Or three Imbuts.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the redesigning of that facility is considerable—the covering and so on. In all fairness, I understand the pitch is good. The people say the pitch is good.

Mr. Roberts: “No, de ball is rattin.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But the drainage is bad—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “The ball is rattin.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “The ball was rattin?” Well, the Minister says, “the ball is rattin”—but the surrounding drainage work is poor. In fact, it flooded away already in the lower floors, basement floors of that facility, but that is TT \$1.1 billion taken from the cash register.

Mr. Roberts: Great is the PNM!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Do not speak about that at all, Mr. Speaker. They do not talk about the legal fees they spent; they do not talk about the hundred million dollar construction extension project at Crown Point. “We doh hear about that.”

So, Mr. Speaker, on this business, when you come to the House, you must come with clean hands. My friend, you know, it is very sad that in your 75 minutes which you took your time and ensured that you covered, you did not once remind us that it was your Cabinet and your administration that presided over the first entry of SNC-Lavalin in the energy sector. You did not tell us that. If you did tell us that then, you know, we would know that you come clean, you come clean.

Mr. Sharma: And the most expensive one.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And the most—how much billion is it, Member for Caroni East? Four—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh:—Four point five billion.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—TT \$4.5 billion, that project at Petrotrin. You see, Mr. Speaker, they will not come with clean hands, and therein lies the problem. It is not a question of the Government looking to the Opposition to say, you know, remind you of your corruption or your bad old days, as defence for anything we do. It is to remind you of the hypocrisy, and to remind the national community of the hypocrisy. So when they talk today about makeover, rebranding—Mr.

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Speaker, they have invited—I understand they spent some money for the Member for Diego Martin West to rebrand. He put on a scarf.

Mr. Roberts: Yes. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That was the rebranding, to put on a scarf. Mr. Speaker, rebranding is more than wearing a scarf or that “type bling”. It is being genuine and honest with the population to admit your mistakes—indicate that you are sorry for what was done, you are sorry—and if you have a chance again, you will not do it.

Mr. Speaker, my friend from Diego Martin North/East, he knows very well the issue of the *Su*—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Oh Lord.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—that is a boat that never float—how much million?

Hon. Member: Fifty-four.

Mr. Roberts: Forty and then it went up to 73.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: TT \$73 million to buy a boat that never float. Mr. Speaker, we tried to sell it, nobody would buy it. We said, “Bring it from Chaguaramas to Port of Spain”, they could not bring it there because they said it would sink—between Chaguaramas to Hyatt, it would sink.

Hon. Member: They were told do not buy the boat.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they were told, do not buy the boat—[*Interruption*—no, who was buying that, SNC-Lavalin? Mr. Speaker, it was the consultant report for design of the “racket rail”; \$500 million gone—\$529 million gone, and we are not closer to this “racket rail”. We had to stop them in their tracks, Mr. Speaker. If we did not intervene in 2010, it may have been another \$500 million gone. Hear the numbers I am talking about, “eh”: \$300 million; 150, 500.

Mr. Roberts: “And dey say dey coming back with that.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they say that no—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is a new plan.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but that is Vision 2030. Vision 2030 is to return the “racket rail”. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: “Oh goooh!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is to build six smelters in an island off Otaheite. [Crosstalk] That Vision 2030 is to continue what was left off on May 24, 2010. That is their vision. I think the former Member for Oropouche may have written that; who has now surfaced as a consultant of some sort to my friend opposite.

But, Mr. Speaker, the population of Trinidad and Tobago must rest assured that it will not be easy for my friends opposite to return to office. It is not that we crave office so we want office, and let me make the point. We have often said that we are here for a time, we will do our job; we will deliver. Mr. Speaker, this is a Government where, in five years, we delivered two hospitals; in five years—the Chancery Lane Hospital and the children’s hospital.

Dr. Rowley: You build that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You will never ever, Mr. Speaker, have that in your life; two hospitals, Mr. Speaker. [Desk thumping] This is an administration that will build the south campus of the University of the West Indies; Mr. Speaker, the south campus of the University of the West Indies. And you know what is the latest propaganda? They are now calling us “the box drain Government”. [Crosstalk] You see, that is what they are calling us. So people who have been crying for decades and years to get a box drain, they now dismiss it, you know, Mr. Speaker, with contempt, that we are a box drain—we are proud that we are dealing with drainage in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Roberts: “And he does park on de box drain.” [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, we are proud that we are dealing with rural neglect. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Except in Diego Martin

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh does park on de box drain.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And, Mr. Speaker, “they in office” 40 years! Today it flood away in Diego Martin, they blame this Government. We are to blame; 40 years they were in Government.

Hon. Member: Blame PNM.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Forty years but “it flood away in Diego Martin”—but that is the Partnership, they responsible for that.

Hon. Member: Blame PNM.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Forty years they could not put no drainage plan, Mr.

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[HON. DR. R. MOONILAL]

Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, since coming into office, we have been able to deliver, but we have to continue particularly in the area of drainage.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And you are right, more work has to be done in the Diego Martin area, but we will not accept this contempt by calling us a “box drain Government” because there are people in this country, if you meet them in your office or on the street, they will tell you it is 20, 25 years they are waiting for a box drain and roads. Mr. Speaker, we are paving roads today that were last repaired by the British Government.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We are paving. Mr. Speaker, when we came in they ask: “Whey de money gone?” When we came in we had to deal with the Clico and HCU debacle; the mess they left us in.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Diego Martin Highway.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, we had to deal with that problem which we have dealt with due to this Government—the former Minister of Finance, Winston Dookeran, Senator Howai and the Government and the Cabinet—we have dealt with that. That is the problem they left us with, Mr. Speaker.

We are dualling the highways, the byways, all over. In Diego Martin as well, I believe, there is a heavy construction project there in Diego Martin. In Valencia, we just cleared the path, relocated residents, so that we will continue that bypass, the Valencia bypass.

Mr. Roberts: “Wow.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they talked about the Point Fortin Highway. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Delivery.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: From “thy kingdom come” they were talking about it. We have opened on August 30 [*Desk thumping*] the first phase of that highway.

Mr. Roberts: I used it this week.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes.

Hon. Member: Forty minutes from the airport to reach—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: This week, at a meeting at my Debe office, the Ministers came very early, surprisingly early. When I enquired they said, “Well, the highway was very helpful.”

Mr. Roberts: You saved 25 minutes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, this is delivery. They talk—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: We deliver.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—we deliver. [*Desk thumping*] They talk and they will continue to talk, “eh”.

Hon. Member: Like Pizza Boys.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They will continue to talk; we will continue to deliver, Mr. Speaker.

When we started, this administration, we introduced the Children’s Life Fund. Unless I am mistaken, Members of the Government pay how much money into this life fund? A million dollars a year, is it? The Minister of Health will know off the top of his head, how much money Members of Government pay into the Children’s Life Fund. It might be a million dollars a year. Mr. Speaker, no Member of the Opposition put a dime into the Children’s Life Fund that has saved the lives of how many children?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: About 81.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: About 81 children are alive today because of that Children’s Life Fund which they refused to put “two cents” in and they condemn it. When they were in office, some child was going to die and they tell him. “Go and have a barbeque, go and have a curry-que—”[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Cake sale.

Mr. Roberts: Your party condemned it!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—bake cake to get \$200,000 for a life-saving operation. That was the lack of compassion, of care. Former Minister of Health said—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Sixty thousand.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—sixty thousand dollars is the limit and children died.

Mr. Roberts: And paid for their funeral with it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Today the Commissioner of Police says, “He does hardly have to sign barbeque ticket and card and permission and so on.” That is a thing of the past. [*Desk thumping*] The laptops: 70,000 laptops to the school children. [*Desk thumping*] “Dey say doh give dem that, it would be stolen.”

Mr. Roberts: “Dey say doh gih dem.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, one was stolen, and we believe it is a PNM who thief it. [*Laughter*] One was stolen—[*Desk thumping*]—but it was recovered, Mr. Speaker.

4.15 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: “Nah. Nah. Nah. Nah.” Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). Who PNM steal what? [*Continuous laughter*] A PNM who stole it.

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah”, hon. Member, I think you should withdraw that, please.

Miss Mc Donald: And apologize.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that and apologize to all the thieves for calling them PNM. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, okay, let me move on. In closing, again, Mr. Speaker, I want—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Is Hinds who thief it. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: “Um hum.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, oh yes, I understand the arrangement that is made, so that at this juncture I will give way for another matter.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you will have to adjourn and then I will come back, go ahead and finish up.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sure. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before moving or putting the question, I have been advised that the hon. Prime Minister would like to make a statement to this honourable House, I therefore have to revert to the item “Statements by Ministers.” Do I have the House approval?

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Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: The ayes have it.

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: The ayes have it.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: You want a division?

Hon. Member: No.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Division.

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Well, there is no need for a division right now, because the majority has said yes, but if the Members insist on a division let—a division, a division, a division, a division, a division. [*Crosstalk*]

The House divided: Ayes 22 Noes 11

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Mc Leod: Your language could be a little bit more elegant than that.

Dr. Rowley: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Mc Leod: Your language could be better and more elegant than that.

Mr. Roberts: You are rude, Rowley. Rude!

Hon. Member: But I have more time—

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please! Please! [*Crosstalk*] Please! Please! Please! Let us have some respect in this honourable House. And Member for Diego Martin West, I find your language—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Yes.

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Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker: No. No. Wait. You wait. You wait. I find your language to be quite insulting—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Yeah.”

Mr. Speaker:—and offensive.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I heard you a short while ago.

Hon. Member: Rude.

Mr. Speaker: And very rude, if I may say so myself.

Dr. Rowley: I am not a child.

Mr. Speaker: And wait. No, you wait, you wait. I am on my legs; I do not want you to speak [*Crosstalk*] whilst I am on my legs. I do not want you to speak whilst I am on my legs. You cannot behave like that.

Hon. Member: Because he is a leader.

Mr. Speaker: Allow the division to take place in silence. Continue, clerk.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Sharma, Hon. C.

Ramadhar, Hon. P

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, Hon. J.

Khan, Mrs. N.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

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Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Cox, Miss D.

Hypolite, N.

Mc Intosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, with a division of 22 Members voting for the Motion to hear the hon. Prime Minister to speak under that item, 11 Members voting against, no abstentions the Motion has been approved by majority. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Further clarification. I rise on a point of clarification.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right!

Mr. Speaker: What is the point?

Dr. Rowley: Our objection had nothing to do with the Prime Minister and her statement. In fact, we anxiously await her statement.

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Miss Mc Donald: That is right!

Dr. Rowley: Our position was with respect to the Minister of Education and the Standing Order which we in fact postponed, and we are objecting to that.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, we did say that.

Dr. Rowley: Our objection had nothing to do with the Prime Minister.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mr. Speaker: All right. Well, may I advise this honourable House that I have been advised by the Leader of Government Business that the statement that the hon. Minister of Education wanted to make earlier will now be made next week, and I have been also advised that the hon. Prime Minister would like to speak, and I put it to the House; a division has been taken on that matter. So I have clarified the matter?

Miss Mc Donald: No.

Dr. Rowley: That was not the matter of our objection; it was your reference to the statement by the Minister.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. Rowley: Our objection was to the statement by the Minister—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Of Education. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley:—and in fact—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: And not the Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley:—I would like that clarified. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: What I am saying is that statement is no longer before us, and I am saying that the hon. Minister of Education has advised that he is deferring that statement to the next sitting of the House.

Dr. Rowley: So it was that [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: And that is what is before—I have cleared that matter.

Hon. Member: Say sorry.

Mr. Speaker: So at this time, I call—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker—

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Mr. Speaker: I have heard you. I have heard you. I have called—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I rise for the parliamentary record.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot speak whilst I am on my legs.

Mr. Roberts: No discipline.

Mr. Speaker: What is your final point, hon. Member?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to get into contention with the Chair; I try my best to cooperate with the Chair. We had before the House, or we have before the House, our order of procedure, which is the Order Paper. The Minister attempted to speak in the context of the Order Paper we objected, the matter was deferred for consultation, I do not know with whom, then you made reference to this Minister's re-entry into the Order Paper. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. Rowley: Whether it is to come back today or next week it requires the permission of the House, on that basis we objected, because we do not think that we should go beyond the slot in the Order Paper where the Minister was ruled to be not in contention. So, therefore, when you mentioned that the Minister's statement is to be deferred to next week, we took it that you were saying that to the House for the House agreement and not for a dictate from the Chair. It is on that basis that we objected, within our rights to any deferral today or next week, and that is what we asked for the division on—the House's position on the deferral; it has nothing to do with your continuation into the comment about the Prime Minister. And I want the parliamentary record to so reflect. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Exactly!

Mr. Speaker: All right. I think I understand what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. So, the vote that we have taken we will have to defer that matter—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Re-vote.

Mr. Speaker:—having regard to how the question was put. But having regard to what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, the matter that the Opposition really wanted to vote on is the statement that the hon. Minister of Education wanted to make earlier, and I would say, in those circumstances, I understand

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your submission, and I appreciate that. But could I now get the House agreement that we revert to “Statements by Ministers”, and in this context I have been advised that the hon. Prime Minister would like to address the House. The hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

St. Joseph By-Election

(Details of)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much, and all Members of the House, I thank you for this opportunity to make a very brief statement.

Mr. Speaker, by the end of this year, Trinidad and Tobago, the landscape, would have been coloured by four separate elections; two of those elections have already passed: the Tobago House of Assembly elections and the Chaguanas West by-election. Mr. Speaker, two are in front of us; the local government elections is carded for October 21, 2013 and with the declaration by your good self, hon. Speaker, today, of the vacation of the seat of St. Joseph, there would also be before us the St. Joseph by-election.

Mr. Speaker, it is significant to note that this has been a departure from the past when elections were deferred, deferred, and deferred—postponed, deferred, time and again, because some probably felt holding them was not in the political interest of the ruling party at that time. That is not so today, Mr. Speaker. I have said before and I say again, now, that the Government that I lead will always put the people’s interest ahead of any narrow political interest, and that we will be judged by how we serve the country first, and party second.

Despite the universal mid-term dip in popularity felt by Governments around the world in office, the People’s Partnership Government did not seek to defer any election beyond its constitutionally or legally due date [*Desk thumping*] even though, Mr. Speaker, there were mechanisms we could have employed so to do. And we witnessed in the last administration local government elections being postponed by Act of Parliament once, local government elections being postponed by Act of Parliament twice, local government elections being postponed by Act of Parliament three times.

The former administration came to this House and postponed the local government elections using their parliamentary majority. We have

that majority too, Mr. Speaker, we have it now, but we have not used the majority to abuse the rights and the public interest of Trinidad and Tobago as a whole. [*Desk thumping*] And so, Mr. Speaker, we on this side, we are not fearful of the people's assessment of our performance. My colleague here was listing some of the achievements of the Partnership Government, and we reiterate the point: others talk, we deliver—[*Desk thumping*—others talk, we deliver.

As a Government we learn from that judgment by listening to people; it is the reason why we are a partnership. So while our opponents publicly shouted—you know, they were out front there, taking front, as they say, before front takes you—opponents were publicly shouting, “They will defer. The Partnership will defer the local government elections. They will defer the local government elections.” Indeed, the Mayor of Port of Spain publicly came out and asked for local government elections—You remember that?

Hon. Member: “Um hum.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Mayor of Port of Spain, Alderman Louis Lee Sing.

Hon. Member: Who is that? Who is that?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Mayor of Port of Spain, [*Crosstalk*] he publicly called—from the PNM—publicly asked to postpone the local government elections, in keeping with their modus operandi, postponing once, postponing twice, three, four times, Mr. Speaker. We did the right thing, and so we say the records would show democracy is strong in Trinidad and Tobago, today. And, Mr. Speaker, it will become stronger as we seek to pass legislation and arrange very important matters; one such piece of legislation has already been passed, that is to do with the proportional representation in the election of aldermen to sit on the local government councils.

We have in this term, on the legislative agenda, the right of recall to MPs, and, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, the ruling of the hon. Speaker on section 49 and 49A, which demonstrates—is interpreted as a partial right of recall, where one Member is elected on a party ticket and thereafter resigns from that party it triggers section 49(a), and thereafter the declaration that the Member must cease to function as a parliamentarian and thereafter bring legal action in 14 days; if none is brought, then the seat, as declared by the hon. Speaker today, has been declared vacant. That is a partial right of recall, but I know when we had conversations in 2010 and we talked about right of recall for parliamentarians; that legislation is partly drafted, it would be examined by the LRC and by the Cabinet to come forward.

St. Joseph By-Election
[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

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A third area in deepening democracy, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the issue of term limits for Prime Ministers. We made that commitment, I made that commitment; that is also drafted and will be before the LRC shortly, and so we would have kept some of these promises that we made when it comes to democracy and the functioning of our democracy. Mr. Speaker, I want to advise this honourable House today, that in keeping with good governance practices and democratic principles, the seat of St. Joseph, having been declared vacant today, the date for the by-election in St. Joseph—I have advised His Excellency, The President—shall be November 04, 2013. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: “Alyuh ready?”

Hon. Member: We ready.

Hon. Member: “Alyuh ready?”

Mr. Speaker: All right. Okay. All right, I am ready. All right, okay, I am ready here. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Republic Day Greetings

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, hon. Members, our country celebrated its 37th anniversary of Republican status on Tuesday September 24, 2013. It is appropriate for us to record our collective pride as a Parliament and people on this historic achievement. I now call who will be speaking on behalf of the Government on the occasion as we celebrate Republican status, which took place last Tuesday. I now call on the hon. Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development to speak. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Yes.

4.30 p.m.

The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, our struggle for independence was not one that had us engaged with bows and arrows, nor with guns. It was a struggle that was very disciplined and that had taken us from where we had come. So concerned we were about really establishing very fully the independence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we moved to Republican status on September 24, 1976.

On the occasion of our 37th Anniversary of that very historic declaration, I, on behalf of the Government, wish to extend, just a little belatedly, very warm greetings and blessings I wish to say, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago on such an achievement, and to remind all of our people of the importance of those very important watchwords that were bequeathed to us on the occasion of our declaration of national independence, the watchwords which must serve us well as we celebrate our 37th year of Republican status. As we go into the future, especially in a world that has become more competitive, we must be reminded of those watchwords: discipline, production and tolerance.

God bless our beautiful nation.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to acknowledge our celebration of our Republican status. As you know, we started out celebrating Independence, which was our separation from the colonial status that we so deplored. We were quite happy with our independent status from 1962 to 1976, when we got a new Republican Constitution, which, I dare say, is still not fully understood by many people in this country, that the Republican status is not as we thought and spoke as a child that you could misbehave because you are in a Republic. So you were quite often asked or told that this place is not a Republic—meaning that you cannot do what you want. That is how many of us grew up thinking about “Republic”. However, the Republican status was meant to give that supreme authority to the people over the management and ownership of the statehood that we acquired by becoming an independent nation.

It was a little surprising to us when a government of Trinidad and Tobago, in fact, did remove from our days of celebration, Republic Day. I want to put on record our great appreciation to the Government—the Manning Government at the time—which returned us to the location of putting Republic Day back on our list of celebrations, because that development of putting the power in the hands of the people and taking it away from the throne of Buckingham Palace was a very significant development. We always felt that it was significant enough to retain as a day of celebration and a holiday in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is against that background, that on this occasion, with the coming of Republic Day on September 24, 2013, that we would have celebrated last Tuesday and I hope we would have reflected on the importance of this development, and we will continue to acknowledge Republic Day as a very significant—if not the

Republic Day Greetings
[DR. ROWLEY]

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most significant—celebration in Trinidad and Tobago. Unlike other celebrations which are sectoral or partial, Republic Day is all-embracing. It is not a Catholic day, it is not a Hindu Day, it is not a Muslim day, it is not a Tobago day. It is the only holiday we have which, without doubt, embraces all the people.

As mentioned in our Anthem, regardless of race, colour, creed or class, Republic Day is, in fact, our national day. I want to commend it to all those who will reflect on it, and as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, that this Republican status will work for us in acknowledging our individual status as citizens, acknowledging our power and control and the trust that we place in those who govern us, and that we will hold them accountable, and let Republic day be a reminder to all.

Happy Republic Day to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on Tuesday, September 24, 2013, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would have observed the 37th Anniversary of our twin-island nation as it became a Republic. Even at the current juncture of this Tenth Parliament, our Republican Constitution remains as important as when the first Parliament was convened on September 24, 1976 as a sovereign democratic State.

The Constitution as the supreme law of Trinidad and Tobago continues to play a critical role in parliamentary procedure. In particular, one of our most fundamental rights, and that is, I quote: “The right of the individual to equality before the law, and the protection of the law” should be the vanguard of each and every Member of this honourable House, when we sit to conduct the business of the House.

I join with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the hon. Leader of the Opposition to wish each citizen of Trinidad and Tobago a happy Republic Day. May God continue to bless all past and present parliamentarians and Heads of State whose noteworthy contributions have helped to shape our wonderful nation.

Hon. Members, before putting the question, may I once again extend my profound apologies to this House for misinterpreting the statement made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I want to put that on the record and to extend my apologies to this honourable House.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.38 p.m.