



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Debates of the House of Representatives

3rd Session – 10th Parliament (Rep.) – Volume 15 – Number 8

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)**

THE HONOURABLE WADE MARK
SPEAKER

THE HONOURABLE NELA KHAN
DEPUTY SPEAKER

Wednesday 10th October, 2012

CLERK OF THE HOUSE: JACQUI SAMPSON–MEIGUEL

EDITOR: KATHLEEN MOHAMMED
Telephone: 623–4494

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THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JUNE 18, 2010

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VOLUME 15

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, I have received the following communication: the hon. Member for Tunapuna and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of this House during the period October 09, 2012 to October 23, 2012. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2012

Bill to amend the Births and Deaths Registration Act, Chap. 44:01 [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

MARRIAGE (AMDT.) BILL, 2012

Bill to amend the Marriage Act, Chap. 45:01 [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013) BILL, 2012

[Fifth Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 01, 2012]:
That the Bill be now read a second time. Question again proposed.*

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Public Administration was speaking on the last occasion and has 35 more minutes of original speaking time left.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the House was adjourned last night, I was saying to the hon. Members in this Chamber that the public service is a business as it provides and distributes goods and services paid for by the taxpayers. And if we all agree to that, then the public service is everybody's business, with all of us as shareholders.

Before the adjournment last night, Mr. Speaker, I also made two very important points, and these were two concepts enunciated by the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his budget presentation, value for money and ease of

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doing business. I demonstrated that in accordance with some of the world leading gurus, that the public service has a role to play in the ease of doing business and ensuring that there is value for money.

Mr. Speaker, I also started last night by speaking to the current status of the public service HRM architecture—the human resource management architecture—because we wanted to understand where we are today, and it is clear that when we do a review of the current structure, the HRM architecture of the public service is archaic, there are systems that do not allow for the effective management of the resources, it is a bottom heavy organization and there are a number of conflicts caused by tensions between contract employees and establishment employees; there is a lack of required competencies and accountabilities, inadequate performance management.

I also indicated and all of us know that, on the other side as well Members would know that, that we have a serious problem in terms of the appointments through the Service Commission Department, appointments and promotions the time taken, and, in addition to that, where contract employees are concerned, the time taken for the determination of terms and conditions. In some cases, this goes on for years.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we did in this last fiscal year is carry out a number of consultations, starting with our internal stakeholder, the public servants themselves, and I started giving you some of the comments that came out of those focus groups involving members of the civil service. I want to start with some of the frequently made comments in those focus groups.

1. The public service is not a healthy working environment; it is organized chaos.
2. We need to restore the pride and respect once held for the public service and public officers.

I am sure everyone will recall during the 60s and the 70s the respect that we had for public officers.

3. The basis for promotion should be revised.
4. The structure of the public service needs to change to incorporate technology that is available.

I get to dislike the name “clerk typist”. The position has evolved, yet the pay has remained the same. We perform so many jobs, we are not confined to just typing.

Mr. Speaker, these were some of the comments of the members of the civil service, and what that indicates to us is that there is a cry for the modernization of the public service by the public servants themselves. They are prepared to give more. They want to do more and we are not giving them the opportunity to do more.

Dr. Browne: Correct.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: On that basis, what happened is, we decided that we needed to look at a new HRM architecture. The problem there with that is that we must understand that if we are talking about an HRM architecture, people just figure it is an organizational structure.

When I am speaking to the HRM architecture for the public service, I want to say it involves the organizational structure, positions, job designs, salary classifications, career paths, capacity, capability, et cetera, the legislative and regulatory framework including those of central HRM agencies, whether it is the Service Commission Department, the Personnel Department, and the HRM processes themselves in the public service for promotions, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, in order to move forward to do this, I want to tell you that what I did over the last year, starting in November of last year, I asked for all the various HR agencies to come together, and we have heard the statements so many times that the HRM function within the public service is fragmented. You have the Service Commission Department, you have the Personnel Department, you have the Ministry of Public Administration, you have the PMCD and, therefore, I thought that we should bring together all the parties to discuss what is the way forward for the new architecture for the public service.

I want to maintain that these bodies are constitutionally independent bodies and, therefore, it was not our intention to get involved in how promotions or appointments are made, or selection of public servants. We were not getting involved in how terms and conditions are determined, but we were trying to get all these bodies together in one room so that we could collaborate to determine what is the new architecture for the public service. Therefore, we established something called the Strategic Human Resource Management Council, comprising the chairman of the Public Service Commission, who is represented by the deputy chairman; the Director of Public Administration and the two deputy public administrators; the CPO and her two deputies; the head of the PMCD, which is the Personnel Management Consulting Division of the Ministry of Public Administration; the PS of the Ministry of Public Administration and the PSD; and I chair that council.

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One of the things we came up with when we analyze the current structure, which is no news to anyone here, is that we have what is called a very pyramidal shaped or triangularly shaped public service. The service is large and bottom heavy, with a low ratio of professional employees to support staff, and if we break that structure, that triangle, into three levels, we will see that at the top of the triangle—what we call the level one—is very concentrated, with very few leaders who make all the decisions. Then we have a second level which is comparatively a small middle core focusing on professional services and providing optimal service delivery. But then, we have a very large group at the bottom called level three, where there is a large group of clerical and secretarial staff, who, Mr. Speaker, have upskilled themselves and await promotion. Some of these people who are operating in clerk typist positions have masters' degrees, and in some cases PhDs. It is amazing that this is the level that they are sitting in this organization.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say, however, that this is in fact the way most organizations of that era were structured and, therefore, I want to say that that structure served the public service during the era that we were talking about from—because the public service was established in 1962. The public service celebrates 50 years this year and, therefore, we pay tribute to all those public servants who made their contribution [*Desk thumping*] over the last 50 years to the public service.

Hon. Member: Hard-working people.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: But, Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is different, there is a complex range of functions to be provided by the public service and, therefore, we did not have the technology that we had then.

So, if we want to deal with the 21st Century citizen, who is informed and exposed to modern tools and systems used by progressive Governments, globally, to deliver public services, the expectations of the public service are ever-increasing, we need to define a new structure that is citizen centric. I want to say something. Although over the last 10 to 15 years there have been initiatives and efforts to transform the public service, these changes have not kept pace with the expectations of citizens. All of this inform the structure of the new architecture of public service.

In addition, we also looked at the requirements of performance-informed budgeting. You would recall that in last budget it was enunciated by the then Minister of Finance in last year's budget about performance-informed budgeting.

Just to give you a quick definition as to that, because it is important that we put all of this in context and, therefore, performance-informed budgeting links funds allocated to measurable results achieved. The budget is drawn up a way that looks at why money is allocated, and whether it is used to produce the desired results. It therefore requires public sector agencies to set targets and collect performance data, thereby strengthening Government's accountability mechanisms, and it presents an opportunity for sectorial collaboration on all these targets.

Mr. Speaker, this is the way of ensuring that there is efficient and effective use of resources. Therefore, we needed a new structure that could embrace technology, deliver service that is citizen centric in the shortest possible time frame with the highest level of service, the lowest cost, is timely but yet effective, and what that calls for is the delegation and devolution of authority and decision-making through the organization.

The new architecture that we came up with over the last year is one that instead of being pyramidal or triangular shaped, is diamond shaped, and it still has the levels one, two and three. So you still have a level one where you have the leadership of the public service, but that leadership must be capable of delegating decision-making down into the hierarchy of the organization.

Then at level two, Mr. Speaker—this is where the most changes will take place—is where we widen that professional technical stream, where we have public officers who can turn policy into action and who can take the right decisions in the shortest possible time frames and have that effected if we are to have effective service delivery.

At three level, Mr. Speaker, of your diamond—it is now very narrow at the bottom—is what we have catered for, the developmental of that multi-skilled individual which we have right now in the public service; those public officers who perform the range of integrated duties. Therefore, we realize that by having this second level, we are able to delegate some of that decision-making down into the organization, and even to the third level where we have the multi-skilled individual.

In addition, we cannot delegate decision-making or authority without accountability and reporting and, therefore, with that professional pool, we are able to get accountability and reporting.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me just speak to the bottom of the architecture which is level three which is the creation of the more modern and integrated jobs. It is the

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integration of the clerical and secretarial classes and the entry point to the administrative class into a new series to provide administrative support to Ministries and departments.

Mr. Speaker, we have designed and Cabinet has given approval for the establishment of the management support office series to be able to fill this third layer in the public service. At the entry point is what we call the management support officer I who is the entry level point, then above that is management support officer II which that person can perform more varied and complex tasks and providing more specialized services. At the third level you have what is called the management support coordinator who is supervisory and is capable of integrating the work of all the MSOs, providing quality control and supporting the work of the entire division.

Mr. Speaker, what that tells us is that by having this, we already have some of those multiskilled individuals who can start filling these positions in the public service. But, I want to say because of the new thrust to make sure that it is all merit-based that there will be a competitive process. The MSO series has gone for classification by the CPO, and we hope to have that classified before the end of the year. Therefore, we will provide a new set of opportunities for those upskilled individuals who want to enter the public service.

If I speak now to the level two, and just before I say that to level two—because what we are saying is that we are now going to be able to provide opportunities for even those at level three of the organization to go to level two. But, what is level two? We said level two is where we are talking about a whole set of new professional streams.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you would recall that we constantly hear the complaint of the number of contract positions created in the public service. The reason for that, and the evidence was there, if you look at the contract positions that have been created, they are in finance and accounting, some are in HR, some are in strategy and monitoring, some are in IT—information technology, and therefore it tells us that the public service did not keep pace with what was emerging, the challenges emerging, and the new professional streams required to service the public.

So, at level two, what we intend to introduce, which will be developed, the job specs for them would be developed over this next year, is the area of programme management in order to give effect to the performance informed budgeting; because, as I said before, this new architecture will be the vehicle to be able to

implement effectively the performance informed budgeting system. So programme managers will be required, in order to manage programmes where we have those set targets and where we will be able to monitor and evaluate your performance against those targets that are set, therefore, your budgetary allocations will be driven, will be informed, by those targets and how well you meet those targets.

Mr. Speaker, procurement specialists: we have to have procurement specialists who are accountable and responsible for transparency and value for money in all procurement processes. We have to have new areas of finance and accounts. Facilities management and logistics is an area that has never been treated with in the public service. There are no established positions but yet we have contract positions.

Information and knowledge management, because we know now that we effectively use tools to allow the sharing of information between employees and the public, and knowledge is not lost when employees are moved from one division to another. Strategy and monitoring, audit, human resources, and a very important area that we are developing in the professional stream is called the monitoring and evaluation stream which will allow for the monitoring and evaluation of your performance, so that you can ensure that you understand if you are meeting your targets.

This, again, will be done on a sectorial level. For example, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, they contribute to the same sector, and therefore within that area they can determine how well—what are they contributing to the development of that sector, specific performance metrics and how are you meeting those targets and that is the role of your M&E Unit.

Mr. Speaker, there was so much evidence telling us that this is what we needed to do in this particular structure and I want to give an example. We met with the Public Services Association, the council, and we had a consultation with them. One of the issues that came up for example, Mr. Speaker, is the dental technician. We have dental technicians classified at the level of manipulative, and today the dental technician, that role has evolved where they are able to go out into the schools and assess children. They are just not an assistant anymore to the dentist in the health centre. That is an example of where we continue to classify them as manipulative, their job function evolved and therefore, when they got the experience, they would leave the public service. So this is an example of where

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we take a group of people like that and move them into level two and classify it as a professional stream, because dental technicians or dental assistants is now a new professional stream.

Another example is the food inspectors. Food inspectors, that job, the whole role of it, has evolved. Mr. Speaker, that is another area that we would want to develop a professional stream.

Mr. Speaker, as I said that, let me just say that one of the things that we would be doing, and we have proposed in this new architecture, is to allow for renewal points throughout the entire architecture to bring new life and energy into the organization through entry points at various levels of the architecture. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that it would allow management trainees where development occurs through a programme of orientation, understudy and rotation. This development is needed to translate the intellect, intercapabilities and action on the job, but we cannot take management trainees and put them at the bottom of the organization.

In addition, we could speak to the returning of many of our scholars who cannot find places in the public service. This is one way of being able to ensure that those scholars, instead of coming into the AP programme, can move into the professional streams before they are promoted to the leadership level.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is AP?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: AP is the associate professional. Thank you, Minister. Our scholars, when they return, we put them on an AP programme, the associate professional programme, to allow them to develop and get experience before they fit into a public service position.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues here is how do we retain the best and the brightest in the public service and how do we get experts who are in technical fields, who may be desirous of coming into the public service? How do we facilitate that? We have looked at modern compensation systems. I do not think I need to say very much about the compensation system.

I heard a number of people in consultations over last week, after the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, speaking to the issue of compensation not being able to retain the best and the brightest. Therefore, we have to recognize that what has happened over the time—and I just want to say that the Personnel Department will continue working with the Public Services

Association in the conduct of the job evaluation exercise for the service, but public officers are crying out for an improved system for compensation, one that feels fair and we are heeding their call.

Modern classification systems have moved away from long and narrow grading structures, such as our classification and compensation plan, to a pay banding compensation method. Mr. Speaker, some of the benefits of pay banding, which we want to explore over the next year, is that it is an efficient method of placing jobs in bands in accordance with the value of that job. It changes the employee's focus on upward progression through the hierarchy to a focus on competency, development and growth, which will allow for lateral pay progression within the requisite bands, similar positions which are hierarchical in nature; for example, clerks I to IV will be placed in the same band and the differentiation will be based on the qualification and performance. While the pay bands are few, they are very wide; creation of a system of pay progression which is aligned with the rewards of performance, thus building a culture of performance, elimination of overlaps between grades which can create a feeling of inequity and flexible arrangements that will reward talent that is short in supply.

Mr. Speaker, why I read out those advantages, those benefits of this new system of pay banding is that, over this last month, a number of public officers went to a conference by the Public Administrative Institute in the UK and had such discussions. These officers include members of the Ministry of Public Administration, members of the CPO's office, members of the Service Commission Department, and, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, the President of the Public Services Association and two delegates from the union.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Chairman.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: The Chairman, sorry, of the Public Services Association. The reason for that was to be able to get a meeting of minds because we recognize that the existing system cannot continue into the future especially as we try to deliver this new-model HR architecture.

Mr. Speaker, let me quickly say that what we have recognized is that as soon as we are able to do so, we must ensure that, if we implement this new architecture, that there are systems for continuous review of the policy enabling legislation and structure of the public service to take into account advances in all the areas of the introduction of new skill sets. Why I said that, Mr. Speaker, is because, if you look at what has happened over the years, that system that we

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have today through the legislative and regulatory framework does not allow for us to have that flexibility. Therefore, this is why the public service was unable to respond to the many challenges over the years. So therefore, the creation of jobs, we need to ensure that they are flexible and encourage multiskilling. Therefore, as we create this new architecture, we must have a system that allows us to do so.

One of the issues here—let me just quickly say then, with this new architecture, we have been able to address the fragmentation of the HRM through the SHRM council, and we intend to expand the SHRM council to include other associations such as the Police Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission because, as I indicated last night, one of the things that we are doing is that we are moving away from just the renewal and modernization of the civil service to the renewal and modernization of the wider public service.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet has granted approval in principle and therefore to this new structure and we have started some of the planning for the transition programme. We have also drafted, as I indicated, the MS series and that is therefore classifications. We are, right now, Mr. Speaker, discussing with particular agencies, for this next fiscal year, pilot agencies, and later I will be indicating what are those Ministries that we have identified as pilots for this particular project.

Mr. Speaker, capacity building as well: we recognize that we cannot implement this new architecture without strengthening all our central HRM agencies. We have gone out, and you will see it in our PSIP projects, that we have gone out for the strengthening of the Service Commission Department, the strengthening of the Personnel Department, and, in addition to that, we are right now going out for—it is out already. It was advertised as something called the competency based management system.

The Public Service Academy which trains public servants has held a number of training courses in the areas of HR management including job description writing and what we call competency-based interviewing. What has happened, we have really eliminated the competency-based aspect in terms of the recruitment and selection exercises.

I am pleased to say today that we have out for tender a competency based management framework which will help bring greater objectivity to the processes of recruitment, selection and transparency, performance management, very important, and therefore, we are able to determine proper compensation for employees. The result will be a better fit between the requirements of the public

service and the skill sets of the individual public officers, but this must be complemented with the modernization, as I indicated, of all our HR agencies including the service commissions, the Personnel Department and PMCD. We signed an MOU with Canada where we expect to receive assistance in terms of the strengthening of these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just speak very quickly to this whole issue of contract positions. One of the problems that we have is that we have been hearing over the last year, a number of complaints about the number of contract positions.

10.30 a.m.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in 1990, we had 200 contract employees in the public service. In 2010, we had 11,000. All of the professional jobs and the integrated support functions have been created as contract employment for reasons that I gave before—because the public service itself was not able to keep pace with the development and establishment of professional positions.

However, in order to deal with this backlog in the CPO's office, we have moved towards standardizing contract positions, to ensure that we have a standard job specification for some of these contract positions, which will allow for a standard compensation package, and eliminate what happens when we take a year and two years to determine the terms and conditions for contract employees. It is really an unfair practice to contract employees to do them this. Therefore, we have taken all the clerical and secretarial—we have done 26 job descriptions so far, and we have started at the clerical and secretarial manipulatives; some HR positions; communications; legal, et cetera. We have eliminated hundreds of varying similar job descriptions through this standardization process.

Over the next year, what we intend to do, is to move forward with other areas such as IT; information management; financial management; auditing; M&E, because what we are doing is, we are using these contract positions now, the job descriptions will inform us in our exercise as we develop new job specs for the established positions. Therefore, we will be developing a cadre of skills at this current time, as we move towards that new architecture. So these people will have an opportunity to compete for those new professional jobs that are created at level two.

Mr. Speaker, what is important in this area is that from now on we will be able to have advertisements in the papers with the pay—when we see advertisements in the papers we do not see a compensation package. We will now be able to advertise the compensation package for that particular job.

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In addition to that, another benefit out of this exercise is that we have been able and Cabinet has approved, where employee contracts will be drafted and approved by the Ministries themselves, through their permanent secretaries, instead of having to go to the Chief State Solicitor. The Chief State Solicitor has set out a system, a methodology, in how they actually draft these contracts. In addition to that, there will be the auditor to ensure there is compliance with the methodology.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, we have gone out and we have dealt with a number of consultations with stakeholders, and I just wanted to name some. As I indicated to you before: the civil service—we have had consultations at the leadership level; heads of departments; permanent secretaries; deputy permanent secretaries. We have held consultations with the Public Service Commission; the Teaching Service Commission; the Trinidad and Tobago Public Broadcasters Association; and we have also had consultations with some of the—and later this month, in fact, we will have some more with some of the Chambers of Commerce.

I want to ensure that we also understand when we are building capacity in the line HRM functions, to enable the PSC to achieve long-stated goals, this will be a comprehensive exercise. In addition to that, I spoke last night about the integration across the public service, integration of an integrated platform. Part of that is that we have never—we want to implement something called communities of practice, and we will start with the HRM, which means that there will be standards set, so there will be a community of practice for auditors; there will be a community of practice for finance managers; communities of practice for HRM and human resource managers, Mr. Speaker.

In that community of practice, there will be standards and best practices shared in that community of practice, so we ensure that we standardize our practices across the public service, and that we meet best practices and we share experiences among the various—in that professional stream.

I want to deal with this vexing issue, the whole issue of the number of acting positions in the public service, and I want to deal first of all—these long-standing issues faced by public servants that are burdensome and really unreasonable. One of these as you know, Mr. Speaker, has been enunciated over several times, is the numerous persons holding acting appointments, sometimes for 10 and 20 years at the very lowest level of this organization. You will be surprised to know what was holding back these appointments. It was because, for example, at the clerk typist level and the clerk stenographers level, there was a requirement that you had to

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have shorthand; you know, they must have shorthand and they must do this shorthand exam, this Pitman exam. The Public Service Examinations Board had not had this exam since I cannot remember; I think it was 1992 or something like that, somewhere in the 90s.

As a result of that, I signed a legal order that ensured we were able to remove that requirement. As a result of that, the Service Commission Department was able to move forward in collecting data on all those who were acting in those positions and making them permanent. This has significantly impacted on the number of outstanding vacancies that we have in the secretarial class in the public service, and in many cases persons have been acting in those positions for 10 years. Hundreds of appointments in that category have now either been made or are in train.

Let me assure you that I am conscious of the constitutional independence of the Public Service Commission, and I maintain an appropriate relationship with that body and its administrative arm. I am happy to report that the Service Commission Department has installed for the first time several simultaneous recruitment teams dedicated to reducing the backlog of appointments in the civil service, something that has not happened for years. I could not understand, all it took was a collaborative effort among the various agencies to achieve this. The pace of appointments has already dramatically increased, and the Ministry of Public Administration is ready to provide support needed to ensure the success of this new initiative.

My Ministry has also been in discussion with the Public Service Examinations Board for the administration of a professional examination, for entry into the administrative class in this fiscal year. The last time this exam was held was in the 1990s; this has denied many officers—this is separate from the shorthand, Mr. Speaker. This has denied many officers an opportunity for promotion into the administrative class and has resulted in bottlenecks at the lower levels. This is not right, but there is now good news.

We are actively working towards beginning a preparatory training course in January 2013, for a period of six months culminating in the official examination being held soon thereafter. The exams board, along with the Public Service Academy, has already made significant strides towards developing the curriculum for this programme. I firmly believe that hosting this exam will only serve to boost the morale of our clerical officers, as they will see that we now recognize their efforts and want to see our officers develop, grow and—[Inaudible]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Speaker, I did not realize time flew so fast. Let me get on now to—when there is so much to say. There are other areas as part of this HR modernization effort towards—I wanted to say one of the things we recognized was that there are many existing systems out there—many other Governments have tried and have proven success in these areas.

One of the areas in the whole—this book by David Osborne, *Reinventing the Public Service* [*sic*], and there is *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*. I really want to tell everyone who is interested in the public service that they, should have a read of this book because we would understand how it is to remove the bureaucracy of the public service. We just have to have the political will to do it, and we have to have the will of the people of this country to say yes, this is what we want.

In terms of service delivery, last night I spoke to the whole multichannel access to services, the no-wrong-door self-assistance approach, Mr. Speaker. I want to just speak very quickly as to what this no-wrong-door approach is all about. The one-stop-shops for Government services, and that is, the time has come that we do not have to go to specific Ministries to have a service done. In fact, the Minister of the People and Social Development spoke to this issue, it is about integrating our service delivery platform. We should be able to go to any Government office in any part of this country and receive any Government service. Therefore, I can go to one teller in a Government office and be allowed to renew my passport, renew my driver's licence, obtain a housing grant—it is a one-stop-shop for Government service, and the technology allows us to do so.

I say this because I listened to the Member for Diego Martin West, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and I could not understand what he was getting at when he talked about decentralization and, “dey moving everything to Chaguanas”. Mr. Speaker, this country comprises of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] What is this issue? Why do we want to bottleneck Port of Spain and overcrowd for the simplest of Government services, a citizen must leave Moruga and come all the way to Port of Spain for that service.

I have news for the Members opposite, this Government is serious about taking that service delivery to the four corners of this country, to Icacos, to the south-west peninsula, to the north-west peninsula, to Toco, and that is what we will do with our one-stop-shops. Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago as I said last night—when we considered the opportunity cost, we considered what can happen to the effect in the quality of family life, when they have to take the time out to come to Port of Spain to pay taxes.

Think about the impact on the creativity of innovators, of entrepreneurs, on business, Mr. Speaker. Think about the quality of family life when we do not have to be queuing to go into the city of Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*] This is why I wanted to say this morning—this is why we have moved forward in terms of how we are dealing with our service delivery platform. One of the things that we have started is the service delivery charters.

Hon. Member: Do not worry.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: This is just for the benefit of Members. This outlines the organization's commitment to high quality service. We may have seen this when we go into private organizations. They have a service charter that tells us what is the maximum time I must wait before I am attended to. What is the maximum time for a transaction to be completed? How long must I wait before the phone is answered? How many rings? I must expect the public servants on the other side to be courteous. These service charters will go up on the walls of each of our Government offices. In some cases it may require that there may be waivers on fees for not meeting these requirements.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Administration has been collaborating with various public agencies for this. First of all, let me say that the Ministry of the People and Social Development in terms of the targeted conditional cash transfer programme; that service charter is well on its way.

The Ministry of Education, the CXC/CAPE/private candidates' examination, the Ministry and Minister of Education will expect to see his service charter going up on the wall very soon. The Ministry of Health, medical records—and recently, Mr. Speaker, we have started work with the emergency section of the San Fernando General Hospital; the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, grants, that office will also have a service charter.

The MPA awards and management for scholarships, in fact, the Scholarships Division of the Ministry of Public Administration will be the first to launch its service charter and have it up on the wall.

10.45 a.m.

I want to speak very quickly about ICT before going into Business Process Engineering. I know Members opposite had a serious problem when I made a statement that over the last many years, during the last administration's period—well, first, I spent close to \$1 billion in ICT infrastructure and what has been the impact? In just the same way we cannot throw money at a problem, we cannot throw ICT at a problem and expect that we will realize improvements if there are any, and they are marginal.

When we apply ICT—the only way we will realize significant improvements through ICT is when we are able to reform the accompanying business processes. Then and only then we will realize significant improvements. Therefore, ICT—again, too, in terms of value for money—must be more targeted and strategic investments in technology will see less duplication and more common underlying business processes across different agencies. We must use ICT to make sure we standardize our business processes and that they are embedded within the business processes; therefore, the reforming and re-engineering of our processes are in the context of the e-government platform. That is how we will get the connected service delivery and our one-stop shops, when we re-engineer our business processes.

Last year, we had a training programme, which we started, and we had a number of Ministries, including the licensing office of the Ministry of Transport—I cannot remember all right now, but all of these Ministries participated and we used an expert from Singapore because they are ranked number one for some years now in terms of delivery of government services.

When we are talking about using the e-government platform, as I said, with the one-stop shops it must be multichannel and, therefore, it is being designed that it can be done from your smartphone; it can be done from you Blackberry; it could be done from your home computer; but we must still offer that personal interface for that citizen who wants to meet with a public officer. Once we are able to bring in technology, we will find that we are able to integrate the back end of the public service, the transaction-type functions and free up more of our public servants to become customer focused, citizen centric.

The institutions that we worked with, which are in the business process re-engineering training programme are the North-West Regional Health Authority, the Ministry of Education, the Service Commission Department, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Transport, Licensing Division.

Let me speak very quickly to clustering because the use of clustering has been cited as a new economic development strategy, according to Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School and guru of competitiveness. It will allow for increased productivity, driving and directing the pace of innovation and stimulating the formation of new business within the cluster.

Government clusters can be a group of Ministries, agencies, statutory authorities and departments that provide related services. With technology and re-engineered processes, this is realizable. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, clustering allows us to implement monitoring and evaluation systems by sectors, facilitating the performance-informed budgeting and you can measure your contribution to each of these sectors of the economy.

Very important in clustering is that it allows us to implement something called shared services. We heard the Minister of Finance and the Economy speak about shared services in the banking sector. The potential areas for shared services are like human resource, finance and accounting, IT and facilities management, where a client Ministry will actually set up a service level agreement with a providing Ministry.

I am pleased to say that we have embarked on a pilot project for an in-house shared service model without reimbursements, meaning we do not pay for it. The client Ministry is not paying for it and it has started with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communication in shared services in IT, finance, legal and facilities management. We anticipate that the development of shared services, in tandem with clusters, will help us to maximize existing staff capability, increase efficiency and decrease expenditure.

Let me turn very quickly to scholarships. One of the problems that we have—and I want to say that this division has been working quite hard; one of the best known and widely used service is the Scholarships Division at the Ministry of Public Administration. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have heard all the complaints of the lack of transparency in the process of awarding financial assistance by the former administration of the then Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, to this day questions are still being asked as to how these decisions were made. I saw a letter to the editor in one of our daily newspapers from someone who is still incensed with the way that fund was managed, and the person is right to be upset even though more than three years have passed. On coming into the Ministry of Public Administration, I want to say that that must

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never happen again because of the distrust that has developed for the Scholarships Division of Trinidad and Tobago, the actual award of scholarships.

We have listened and we have acted and we have put in place several strict accountability and reporting mechanisms. What we done, as a key initiative of the Ministry of Public Administration, in February of this year, we launched a Scholarship and Advanced Training Information System called SATIS, which facilitates an online application process. This is not a hidden programme where the criteria for granting scholarships are unknown and unrecorded or where a personal note from the Prime Minister is all you need to get a scholarship.

Hon. Member: Which happened in the past.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: What we have done—which happened in the past with the past administration—I want to say that since we have implemented that system, we have had very good responses from the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The system is transparent and open. We have established—and Cabinet Members will know this—we went to Cabinet and we developed an evaluation framework for every scholarship that we offer to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and each of those evaluation frameworks is open and transparent. When you are making your submissions, you are able to follow that evaluation framework and design your submission.

With the SATIS system, you are now able to track your application. You know how many points you will get for your first class honours. You know how many points you will get for every diploma that you have, so the whole evaluation system has allowed for an open and transparent approach to the selection of candidates for scholarships.

Just to tell you some of the very key points that have been made by various Members, some are saying to us—and I just want to say that several applicants who have been using the system have complimented the MPA on the electronic system. It is a user-friendly system. Some say, “I feel like it is not a government agency. It feels like something I have seen abroad. I am glad that the Government is moving in this direction. I am glad I do not have to come to Port of Spain to fill out an application form for a scholarship.” That is the start of how we are moving, through technology, to make sure these services reach the doorsteps of our citizens. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would say this.

In addition, I wanted to say that one of the things that we have also done is establish an interim human resource management needs listing for Trinidad and Tobago which identifies priority areas of study critical to national development

and the award of scholarships. This document is already being used by the Scholarships Selection Committee and score all applications for scholarships offered to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development for collaborating with the Ministry of Public Administration in conducting the job vacancy surveys across the private and public sectors within Trinidad and Tobago and allowing us to establish this list.

The reason for that—because I know the issue was raised about these first class honour students—is that we are awarding a lot of scholarships in areas that are not relevant to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. What it does is that the Government does not get a return on the investment when you are compelled to hire and take on a scholarship winner in the public service and they are not making a significant contribution. In addition to that, the scholarship winner, who is returning, the scholar is frustrated because he or she is not really making a valuable contribution based on the area of study.

Yes, we are widening the number of professional areas in the public service and the private sector has opportunities, but there are still too many scholars who are going abroad, studying, spending a lot of money and yet when they come back, cannot make that contribution.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this year Cabinet approved the first class honour scholarship, but what we have approved is that the first class honour student is eligible for a scholarship, but it must be in an area—and there is a wide range that we have published—it must be in an area relevant to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is how we get value for money in this country.

Let me quickly turn to the other area about accommodation for our public servants. We have an area where we talk about outfitting and in that outfitting area, I want to say, it is an ideal opportunity. We have developed something called an outfitting policy, which will ensure that our public servants are comfortable in the area that they are working. We have designed it to ensure that all accommodation must meet particular criteria before selection and these facilities must be fit for purpose, well furnished, comfortable and conducive to high productivity. Very important, it must be safe and energy efficient.

Too many times, we have public servants accommodated in areas that are not ergonomically designed to ensure the high productivity of that public servant. We have designed a whole outfitting policy so that public agencies, when they are

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going to design or select accommodation, must ensure they meet these requirements. It is an ideal opportunity as well to boost the renewable energy sector because one of the things it is asking for is energy efficiency, to develop smart buildings so the accommodation must meet the requirements of being a smart building.

There are a number of e-government projects. I do not have the time to go through all of them. Again, too, we would know, under the IDB-funded public sector reform e-government, we have knowledge-brokering programmes. We continue the institutional strengthening of the CSO and brought on board a project manager. There are several other government projects that we would be pursuing under that loan.

Telecommunication: I just want to say very quickly that I would be working closely with the Minister of Science and Technology. What we have done over the last year—I could not understand why this never happened—is that we have looked at how we amend; we have developed a number of amendments to the legislation to ensure that there is healthy competitive behaviour in the telecommunications industry. The reason for that is that a critical element to achieving widespread access to affordable high-speed broadband services is important throughout the entire country.

One of the problems we have is that if the public service does not take up the e-government services and does not use it; if there is no uptake, there is no demand and if you do not have that demand in the public service, then it will not translate itself into the private sector. In order to achieve all of this, the e-government platform that we are talking about and the one-stop shop, we must have high-speed broadband services available. I want to just quote that for every 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration, we can expect an average of 1.3 per cent additional growth in national gross domestic product.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year, in order to ensure that we have healthy competitive behaviour, we have commenced work in the strengthening of the legislative and regulatory frameworks which Minister Griffith will be taking forward this year. In addition to that, we also developed the universal service regulations because we expect that the universal service itself would be used to help build out this infrastructure to underserved and uneconomic areas.

We have done pricing regulations as well. Minister Griffith spoke about numbering, number portability. We have gone to Cabinet and it is in the drafting stage right now—accounting separation, quality of service, data submission

regulations, et cetera, and we have developed the national broadband plan and strategy to ensure that we have that roll-out.

The reason I wanted to raise that issue is that one of the issues raised yesterday is this whole public/private partnership. The World Bank has been working with the Government over the last year with respect to this national broadband plan and strategy and one of the areas coming out is that the partnership for the broadband should be through a public/private partnership.

So when the Member for Point Fortin speaks—I was glad to hear her comments yesterday that this is a modern approach, but the negatives I heard about this PPP approach, I could not understand. I will pass this around [*Document in hand*] to tell you. This is a World Bank document that speaks to the area of the PPP approach in broadband communication. It has been tried all over the world and it has proven to be a success. I think that the cooperative model might be the one—[*Interruption*] You said that. I complimented you for that, Madam, but I heard other negative comments from others on that side with the PPP approach.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a minute. I am very happy about the approach, Minister, but what I like more than ever is that you would put the proper systems in place. It falls on you and they must leave it up to you to put the proper systems in place. I know that we can depend on you. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Madam, and I thank you for the vote of confidence. That is the way the new politics goes.

Let me just quickly turn to the whole issue of my constituency. I think I have another—

Mr. Speaker: You have 10 more minutes.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Speaker, we hear so much—I want to tell you all something and I must say this here today. I keep hearing about section 34—I am not going in that dangerous area, but I want to say something about section 34. Whatever happened with section 34, you know, at the end of the day, all of us inside this room are responsible for that and everyone should have gotten up and apologized. [*Crosstalk*]

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, all I am saying is myself and the Prime Minister—[*Crosstalk*]—I am just saying they should apologize to the nation as well, like everyone else who has done so.

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Let me turn to the constituency of San Fernando West. One of the issues here, the San Fernando Waterfront Project over the last year which has received a lot of controversial comments; there have been extensive discussions. I want to say that on coming into office, one of the things on my campaign trail is I promised that we would have dealt with the San Fernando Waterfront Project. What was very interesting to me is to see how many project plans were done for the San Fernando Waterfront, starting far back as 1975. Almost 11 plans, and they are too many to name, by various consulting firms all paid for by various the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things my constituents asked me on the campaign trail is to ensure that we take this work, we move on with this work, and that we add value to the work. That is what they did. When we came into office, they turned up at my office door, and they said Minister you made a promise. I said yes, I intend to keep that promise.

Mr. Speaker, these San Fernando West constituents who are—some are professionals, some are passionate, some have known this project for so long, came together and they designed, they came up, they reviewed all the various project plans from the past and they came to the major conclusions:

- That we needed to re-zone, relocate activities for more compatible land use;
- Reclaim, create land for development for recreational, commercial, industrial housing;
- We must have waterfront recreation developments;
- There must be a traffic hub;
- There must be marina development;
- You must use existing infrastructure along the old railway line to link Marabella and highway, thus addressing the traffic problems; and
- Large scale parking and shuffle system.

Why I say this, Mr. Speaker, when we speak to the San Fernando Waterfront Project, it is not just about a boardwalk, it is more than just a boardwalk. It is about all the stakeholders coming together and seeing a part they have to play in that particular project. Therefore, there will always be some controversy because you will always have conflicting goals amongst stakeholders; whether it is among the business community, whether it is among the taxi drivers, whether it is among

the residents, whether it is among the fishermen. What we have to do is to ensure that we can resolve those conflicts, and make sure that everyone is satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, the intention of the San Fernando Waterfront Project is to be able to ensure that at the end of the day we have economic growth for San Fernando; that the business community which claims so many times and complains about the dying business activity in the center of San Fernando is returned through this waterfront project—so, therefore, business people will move back to the center of San Fernando; and invest that there must be opportunities for recreation because there are no recreational opportunities in San Fernando. There must be entertainment because what has happened in the entertainment industry, most of our children have to leave San Fernando and go to Movie Towne and all over. When we did these consultations—I remember in Gulf City in particular, in the Gulf View area—the parents saying to me, Minister make sure within that project there are opportunities where my 18-year-old son and daughter can stay in San Fernando and be entertained. We must have a space for culture, entertainment, night life, Mr. Speaker.

The Waterfront Project was a 24/7. It was supposed to ensure that there is activity 24/7. Part of the issue is to ensure that we also maintain the heritage of San Fernando, so the architecture must be one that fits in with the architecture of San Fernando. It is not about tall buildings. I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really came out in the project is that many people who look at the Port of Spain Waterfront Project feel that the Port of Spain Waterfront is disconnected from the city of Port of Spain. The residents of Port of Spain cannot enjoy this particular project because of the Wrightson Road in between. So therefore, there is this pedestrian area to ensure that it connects to San Fernando so the San Fernando Waterfront Project involves a link from the San Fernando Hill, all the way down to the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that one of the issues here is that we have a number of heritage sites in San Fernando and one of them is that old railway station. I am sure many of you will remember “last train to San Fernando.” And there is that old railway station that we would like to refurbish and make it a heritage site that will allow for a museum, for example, to go into there. The whole thing is about when we are talking about tourism and the Minister of Tourism has promised to come, to take a look at the project, it must be—because tourists today, the global tourists—the Minister of Tourism, the global tourism industry is demanding sites where there can be that kind of educational opportunities; that link to history is what they are looking for. Therefore, Mr.

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Speaker, that is why the project was—why can we not go to Naparima Bowl, enjoy a good play or a good concert? And that link straight onto the boardwalk of the wharf where you can go and have a meal after at a restaurant on the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development had gone out and a feasibility study is in process. Because again too, this project is an ideal candidate for the public/private partnership approach and several business people have been asking, they are very keen on getting this project started. I have been given assurances that the project will start over this next year.

The other issue, I just want to say with respect to San Fernando, is that we have gone through a number infrastructure projects in Marabella. I have said that a couple of times before in terms of the number of roads. I want to thank the Minister of Local Government, the former Minister of Works and Infrastructure, and the current Minister of Works and Infrastructure, for the number of roads through the PURE project that we were able to get paved. I am also happy to say that we have gotten permission to move forward with, I think, the Naparima Bowl as a heritage site. And there are a number of heritage sites in San Fernando.

We have also started the construction of what we call the restoration of the hundred steps. It is one that is known to all San Fernandians. Many of us used it at one point in time. Therefore, I am pleased to tell the citizens of San Fernando, my constituents, that that project has started as of today, thanks to the Minister of Local Government through the PSAEL. So that project is ongoing.

Another major project in San Fernando when we speak of URP and those areas is the women's programme. We have started and I want to thank again the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, you know, the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre because last year what happened is when the women graduated out of the training programme, they did such great work, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues there is that I felt that they could move forward into their own businesses. But some of these women need further help into how they actually form a business, how they prepare a plan, and they may lack the confidence to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises Development was able to assign an officer who could look after these women and who could actually give them the confidence to move forward in such a project. Minister, we have started that project and this year another batch of women have graduated and these women, through you Mr. Speaker, will also participate in that programme. [*Desk thumping*]

This is what this Government is about. When this Government speaks about change, it is about how we make things that did not work in the past, work tomorrow. I want to tell you that if we do not believe in change it will never happen. I know that words like change and transformation has become a football in this because of the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to tell you that at the end of the day all of us are here to make our contribution to this country. We have to remember all of us in this august Chamber must remember that we have children and grandchildren to come. What would they say about each and every one of us? We must remember that, Mr. Speaker, I want to appeal to the Members on the opposite side that we stop the politicking and get on with the business of the country. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I am having a problem here with my mike. Mr. Speaker and my fellow Members of Parliament, it is a distinct honour, of course, for me to contribute to my first debate in my capacity as the Minister of Tourism, and my third in this People's Partnership Government in this year of our blessed nation's Golden Independence Jubilee.

It would be remiss of me if I did not congratulate our newly minted Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai for a prudent and responsible people's budget that sets out the path for the economic growth and transformation of Trinidad and Tobago and wealth creation for all citizens. Of course, the reason we are here is to, first things first, is improve the quality of life for every single citizen of this country. I will especially like to thank also the hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamala Persad-Bissessar for her strategic leadership and guiding vision for the future of this beautiful country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the contributions of everyone in the tourism fraternity: the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, and the capable and hard-working teams at the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Development Company Limited. Of course, I will also like to say special thanks to the former Minister of Tourism, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, who really and truly started the ball rolling with the People's Partnership drive for tourism. [*Desk thumping*]

Tourism is key, Mr. Speaker, and let us not ever, ever forget that; tourism is key. Trinidad and Tobago offers a very distinctive and unique product within the Caribbean. Two islands, two different experiences and I want everybody to listen

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to this, but one nation. This is a twin-island State. Not one island, one place, and another island, another place; this is one nation.

The country's rich cultural diversity, year round entertainment, lush natural features and a friendly creative people provide all the ingredients for an exciting and memorable destination. Of course, we are probably one of the oldest destinations in the world—the first European tourist I think came here about 500 years ago since then, Europe has been one of our main markets for tourism.

Tourism is one of the seven pillars in Government's national diversification effort. In particular, pillar 5, a more diversified, knowledge intensive economy and of course, building on the native genius of our people, and all tourism industries all over the world are built on the native genius of the people. Tourism is highly labour intensive and capable of creating incredible linkages amongst many different sectors and generating significant foreign exchange. It is estimated that we have 30,000 direct jobs and another 35,000 indirect jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry. That is 65,000 jobs over approximately just over 600,000 jobs created in this country. That also represents in and around US \$1.5 billion contribution to the GDP.

Mr. Speaker, this People's Partnership is taking a brand new approach to tourism. Our vision for tourism is one where we can treat tourism as an industry, as a business. We are strengthening the policy and framework to ensure that tourism meets the needs of all its citizens from all walks of life for both economic and social development. We will create sustainable employment opportunities for our people, create international relationships and allow the world a taste of the finer things of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, an IMF report last year stated that we actually created in the service sector an additional 19,000 jobs in Trinidad and Tobago. Of course, opposite would not like to hear that, about sustainable job creation to the tune of 19,000. We will take our plurality and rich cultural diversity maximizing our tourism potential, utilizing multiple approaches to development. This includes the exploration and the expansion of all the variety of tourism products including, but not restricted to recreation, sport health, leisure, business, festivals, culture and ecotourism. Of course, that is not an exhaustive list.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is a network. You have to depend on airlift, airlines, airports, entertainment, tourism plant, hotel, sites, attractions, tour operators, transport providers, agriculture, manufacturing, the creative industry, and the list goes on and on. For the first time, we are building and strengthening the network to create the tourism product for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting in place mechanisms to ensure that there are sustainable benefits that enhance the quality of life for all our citizens. The citizens of this country must feel that they are very much part of the tourism thrust. Before we go into direct issues of tourism I need to deal with just one or two things, but I am not going to waste my very precious time in dealing with those opposite who have a problem with tourism.

Just to clarify a couple things, when the Leader of the Opposition in his presentation, made the statement about the former Minister of Trade and Industry and the issue of Tamana Park, and shutting down Tamana Park, I just want the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West to understand just a couple of things.

11.15 a.m.

Before you go and develop an industrial park—the size of Tamana, which is, I think, in excess of 1,000 acres—the first thing you have to do is to ensure that you have at least one, two or three anchor tenants who will want to come to your park before you put down one picket, before you dig one drain and before you move one blade of grass. That is what people do; you go and select the industry and find who are the people interested.

We were very, very, lucky with Point Lisas when Fedchem came here in the early sixties, maybe a little before my time. The fact is that the world has changed, and no longer it is because you can go and find one person to come in your industrial park, that the world is going to fly in to Piarco and everybody sets up a park.

We are competing with the likes of Central America; the likes of South America. Costa Rica was extremely successful, but they did it the right way. They went courting a particular company, knowing fully well if this one company came to that park it will attract others. Those on the other side, when they were in office, they failed to see that. What they like to do—those on the other side—the first thing they want to do is to spend money. That is exactly what they did with Tamana Park.

They went and expended close to \$1.2 billion of taxpayers' money—not money from Balisier House; this is taxpayers' money; this is not their money—then went and started to develop this park. The flagship building alone is over \$300 million, and there was not a single prospective tenant for the flagship building. To finish that flagship building, we need another \$150 million to \$180

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million to finish one building, and we do not have a single tenant as yet. So, at the end of the day, Tamana Park would run this country in excess of \$1.5 billion with no tenants.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to know, what we are doing, they hear we are shutting down the park! It is not a case of shutting down the park. We do not have that kind of money, and we find it very difficult to take good money and throw it after bad. So, the Tamana Park has to be properly planned. I am pretty sure that the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment, Sen. the Hon. Vasant Bharath, would deal with that in the other House.

A simple thing like the visit to Cove: exactly what happened in Tamana Park is what happened in Cove. You go and develop an industrial park in Tobago, for what? Who is coming to the industrial park? Are you going to encourage a methanol plant? Do you want to put down a soft drink plant? What do you want to do with the industrial park at Cove? So, again, before you put down one picket, try and figure out, who is going to be attracted to this? What are the incentives for the industrial park?

When he made the statement that the Minister of Trade and Investment refused to meet with the THA, and refused to go and see the park and to help them, that is totally untrue. On Friday, June 10, 2011, I went on tour with the said THA to the park to see what we could do, but we were already having problems with our own Tamana Park and so on. The THA built the park, I think, the THA would have a very good idea of who was going to go into the park and, therefore, they should be in a position to attract those people. We are going to leave that like that.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East who, again, I keep saying is my Member of Parliament, makes the statement: "Waving a magic wand! What are we going to do with tourism? Everything is down. Arrivals are down; there is no strategic intervention; we do not have a targeted marketing approach; we have no relationship building, we have nothing; absolutely nothing." The fact of the matter—I would deal with those figures later—is that from 2005, every single figure pertaining to tourism did this, it went south—every single figure. I want to know who was in office in 2005, between Trinidad and Tobago. Who was in office? So we would deal with that after.

One of the problems I have with the Member for Diego Martin North/East is that he treats tourism and the people who work in the tourism industry as though they are nothing. That is the attitudes that he has. How could you look at people who invest in hotels; how could you look at people who go to the hospitality

institute to be further educated—tertiary education—how could you look at all these people—65,000 of the people in this country who are involved in the tourism industry and you treat them that way? Shameful! That is why under those—I would never ever call the name in this Parliament. The people on that side, that is how they viewed tourism for decades. “If the tourist reach, he reach! If he ain’t reach, that is somebody else problem.” Not understanding the value of tourism. So we would deal with that afterwards.

When I was appointed the Minister of Tourism, I started one thing; go out. I went out to meet the people in order to find out what this business is. I was a businessman before politics, but every business has its own unique niche—the little things that you need to know about the business. So, I said, the quickest way of doing this is to go out and meet people. The first area I went to was, of course, Maracas Bay.

Now, I remember in 2006, the then administration had approved the sum of \$237 million to fix Maracas Bay. For the life of me, I could not figure out what would you spend \$237 million on, on a beach? Why would you want to do that? The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, he also made mention of that when he was sitting—I am not too sure where—somewhere over on the back bench on that side—he said:

However, we are able to find a quarter of a billion dollars to spend on the upgrade of Maracas Beach. It is not that Maracas Beach does not need attention; it is the question of Government’s priority.

These were his words.

How could we say that we cannot find money to build primary schools, especially the ones like Paramin which is the Diego Martin North/East constituency and Point Cumana?

He goes on, in other words, questioning the spending.

I say, well let me find out what the spending was, because I found it very interesting that we would actually expend that kind of money on Maracas Bay, so I started to dig. Mr. Speaker, by no means am I a forensic expert, but what I found was a couple things, and this would go on to another office afterwards for them to determine exactly what happened, because I am not too sure what happened.

The Tourism Development Company (TDC) at that time—this was in 2008/2009—went out for international tender, advertising this project in *The Economist*, in foreign media and so on. This is a tender to do developmental work

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on a beach. That is the first thing I found a little strange: why would we want to go out for international tender to do some repair work on a beach? So, I started to dig deeper, and the invitation to bid notices were published in several foreign journals including *Business Week* and on three websites with specific focus on the European, US and Caribbean construction markets. IDB notices were also advertised in the local press and on TDC's website. In all, 14 companies responded to the invitation to bid, and they were invited, obviously, to a pre-tender meeting to go through what this project was about. At the end of the day, six people, out of the 14, actually responded to the bid.

Out of the six people, the tenders evaluation committee which was made up of a fairly learned team; I mean, these are experts in different areas; they removed and took two immediately—they said well: "They can't even start to qualify." So, here it is, after this big international tender, we ended up with four bidders, and out of the four bidders there were three local and one foreign after the big hoorah of going—I would love to know what was the cost for advertising that particular tender in the international media? But, again, somebody else would deal with that.

So, the tender of evaluation committee is going through the bids. There is a benchmark of 70 points—those of you who do not cross 70 are out. Okay? The bid has two parts: there is a technical submittal and then there is the financial submittal, which is the way we are supposed to be doing it, because if you pass the technical submittal, then you are entitled to follow through with your financial submittal. So 70 is the benchmark. Out of the four tenderers that were allowed after the other two were removed—tender 1, 66.3; tender 2, 40.88; tender 3, 76.25; and tender 4, 67.58—one contractor, which is a local contractor, actually passed the 70-point mark.

However, when the tenders' evaluation committee went through everything, they found that 76.25 was hitting it close; they just scraped through the bunch and, therefore, with only one tenderer, they felt: "Look, what are we are going to do with this?" and they came up with two recommendations for the board of directors at the TDC. One recommendation was to scrap the whole thing—do not open the financial package from the successful tenderer, because we are going to scrap the whole thing, because we do not find that we got the quality of contractors that we expected to get.

Interestingly, in 2007, it was noted by the evaluation committee that there was a slowdown in the construction industry. I want all those contractors who were bawling and screaming when the People's Partnership came in, "that all of a sudden construction stopped"; this was in 2007. They said they were witnessing a

slowdown already in the construction industry and, therefore, there will be more contractors available now that should be tendering. So, the first recommendation was to shut down the tender, we would go back out for tender.

The second recommendation was to go ahead with the contractor that made the 76.25 points. That was the recommendation that went to the board of directors of the TDC. So here you had the tenders evaluation committee doing its work, and then that committee presents to the board of directors its findings. Well, strangely enough, I looked at a Minutes of a meeting of the board of the TDC and, lo and behold, the board with the director who was in charge of the tenders committee and who did not sit on the evaluation committee I must say—that director, however, was also a director—I am sorry to tell you—of UDeCott at the same time.

Dr. Moonilal: When was this?

Hon. S. Cadiz: I would get the facts. You are going to get all the facts, Member for Oropouche East. So here it is now, that director issued a directive saying: “We are not going to scrap the tender”, which is the first recommendation; “We are not going with No. 2 who is the only man who made the pass mark, what we are going to do is, we are going to go with the third lowest tenderer who just happened to be a foreign company.” As far as I am aware, that company was also doing work for UDeCott.

So here you had all the criteria set out; all the proper procurement; all the proper tendering procedures to be followed; you went through with all the foreign advertising and all this hoorah, and yet still when it comes to making the decision as to who gets this contract, you send to the Cabinet of this country, a recommendation that everybody rejected, but the one director had the say and you went ahead with that. So, you recommended to the then chairman of the board of the TDC, “Boss, this is what we are going with”. So, it went to the Cabinet.

Lo and behold, there were three items that were costed in the submittal to the Cabinet: one was the tender price of \$173-odd million; the other was project management fees which was not determined before and that was 7½ per cent of the total price of \$14.7 million; and then there was a third item which I cannot find—nobody has been able to give me that information of \$15 million for—hear it, this is a beach refurbishment—for furniture, fixtures and equipment at \$15 million. I cannot find that anywhere in the Minutes of the TDC; I cannot find it in the tender document. I do not know where this \$15 million came out from. So, the recommendation went to Cabinet, and Cabinet approved it.

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Now, one of the things that they talked about was the reason that they went with the lowest bidder—sorry, the highest bidder with the lowest points was because of speciality construction—the type of construction that was going to be required.

Let me tell you what the speciality construction is: demolishing structures, speciality; diversion of the Maracas Bay Road, putting the road behind where the car park is, speciality; improvement of the drainage, very special; installation of a high capacity wastewater treatment, a sewer plant, very special; upgrading of the existing car park, more than special; construction of a timber revetment along the beach to keep the sand back—well, you need real brains to do that one; construction of a boardwalk—where is the goodly Senator from the CDA who constructed a very nice boardwalk? Construction of a main pavilion—very special, construction of an events area for shows, for Machel and “dem”—very special; new toilet and shower facilities and an admin building—[*Crosstalk*]—more than special, and I like this one, additional coconut trees and basic grassing—very special, children’s play area and a place to play volleyball and football.

11.30 a.m.

Now, I want to know, when I sat—I was not in this political game as yet, okay—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Is that Chinese coconut or regular?

Hon. S. Cadiz: Well, it could have been, depending on the contractor. It could very well have been. The point is, here it is that you have \$233 million of taxpayers’ money being spent and the tender goes all this way. So when they start talking about the other side—and the reason I brought this up is, I particularly did not like the term that was being used by those on the other side, of deception and of trust, and when you tell me you need a specialty contractor to put down coconut trees in Maracas Bay, what is more deceptive? And you have breached the trust of the citizens of this country. That is the only reason I brought it up.

Mr. Speaker, this whole file will be transferred to another office, let them deal with that. But in the meantime I have gone ahead and started to re-engage the consultants with Maracas Bay and we are going to fix Maracas Bay, and it is going to be done at a fraction of the cost of \$233 million. [*Desk thumping*] I will tell you one thing; we will not breach one single rule of the TDC’s tenders committee. I mean, this is totally ridiculous—people coming with all their recommendations and you, one director, decide you are going to turn this thing in

another direction? No! Deception and trust, and that is what they are dealing with over there, which is just like the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East when he starts to talk about arrival figures declined, and what have you, he is very true. And, again, that is not deception or not trusting; it is a fact that in 2005, ladies and gentlemen, 2005 was the benchmark for tourism in this country.

That is when we had arrival figures to the tune of—let me get my facts yes. I am like Anil Roberts—sorry, like the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. All right, the benchmark for tourism in this country—the figure that we are working with is 2005 arrival figures. Mr. Speaker, 463,191 people came to Trinidad and Tobago. Okay? After that in 2006, 457,000-plus; 2007, 449,000-plus. You see the direction it going in? In 2008, 432,000-plus and the big year drop, 2009—of course that is after the 2008 financial crash—371,000.

So it was under the stewardship of the other side, both in the central government and in the THA that created this. So when I hear my representative from Diego Martin North/East start to pull rank on me and start telling me about we cause this, and we are not doing this and we are not doing that, they are totally 100 per cent responsible for it. So when you are talking about the figures, I want this population to understand, please, please, do not listen to only that; read the whole article, unlike some of the other Members that read half a sentence and want to come with facts and figures to this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the good news is—let us take the figure, 2009, 371,889. Well, something miraculous happened on May 24, 2010. Out they went; out the window. We were there for half the year and under the stewardship of the then Minister of Tourism, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, we go from 371 to 384. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man!

Hon. S. Cadiz: “We gone in the next direction.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Improvement! “All yuh only know bout decline.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: And—walk away! Walk away from the truth! Walk away from the truth! That is what “yuh” supposed to do. Mr. Speaker, in 2011—listen to the figure—402,000 people.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: So all the “lacuray and gambage” and noise that they want to make about the figures—

Miss Ramdial: Diego Martin North/East is delusional.

Mr. Roberts: Four hundred and forty for 2012 projection.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: Go and live in Jamaica. “Is bes yuh go and live in Jamaica.”

Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring those little things like that up. And of course, we have the Member of Parliament for St. Ann’s East, and look at the headline in the *Express*. This is a typical headline for the *Express*, by the way. “Howai’s budget fail tourism”. Okay? And yet still the figures are going in the right way, but “Howai’s budget fail tourism”. Well, I am not even taking this on, because that would just—

Mr. Roberts: “Doh worry with that.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: I am not going to worry with that.

So, Mr. Speaker, enough of that; enough of what they said, because they did not say very much and, therefore, we will move ahead now. What is it that this Government going to do about tourism? How do we view tourism? And to understand that, what I would like to do is to just give you—and, again, a lot of tourism is about figures, and “I is de worse figures man”, but I will have to bore you all a little bit with the figures for tourism and I will try and make it as palatable as possible.

So in order to understand some of the tourism figures let us look at the global view for tourism, and these are figures from the World Travel and Tourism Council, not from the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. Travel and tourism people is one of the world’s leading industries or economic sectors representing a major source of GDP, employment, export and taxes.

In 2011, the World Travel and Tourism Council expects tourism to contribute almost \$6 trillion to the global economy or 9 per cent of the GDP. It supports almost 260 million jobs. Let us get that—understand that—260 million jobs worldwide. Over the next 10 years tourism is expected to represent in excess of US \$10 trillion in business.

This year 2012—and again, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East “bawling and crying down” tourism every single time he meet me: ‘Oy, tourism boy; waste ah time. All kinds ah thing he is talking about.’ The

world this year is going to greet the one billionth traveller. Understand that, a billion people worldwide moving around this globe. Okay? A billion people, and yet still that side does not think that tourism is worth anything.

Mr. Sharma: Just ignore them; total waste of time.

Hon. S. Cadiz: By 2022, which we will be here, gentlemen, ladies, I am pretty sure—somebody, maybe not me, somebody else will make this statement—by 2022 it is expected that one in every 10 jobs in the world will be as a result of tourism and the hospitality industry—one in every 10. That is the global setup so understand that worldwide, worldwide, tourism is a major, major business. This is not, “if it happen, it happen, if it doh happen, it doh happen”.

Regional status: tourism accounts, again, for roughly 12 per cent to the Caribbean GDP. In the Caribbean 2.1 million people are employed, directly and indirectly. The Caribbean welcomed this year, 23.8 million people to the Caribbean. “That is after the first one come 500 years ago.” The occupancy rate for the Caribbean averages about 70 per cent, so the Caribbean tourism business is a very healthy business and there are territories within the Caribbean that depend wholly and solely on tourism. So, I would not go through all the stats but I just want you to understand where we are coming from with this.

The local position: Trinidad and Tobago. I understand 23.8 million people came to the Caribbean last year, out of that, just over 1 per cent, maybe one and a half per cent, actually came to Trinidad and Tobago. So that is what we represent in the whole scheme of things. The occupancy for Trinidad and Tobago is a major figure when you are dealing with tourism. The occupancy average for Trinidad and Tobago is 57.3 per cent.

Trinidad on its own represents about 58.6 per cent, which is a good average for tourism. If you are achieving over 45 per cent, 50 per cent, you could still bank some money. Okay? That is what happens. Tobago, however, the THA is responsible for tourism in Tobago; those on the other side have been responsible since when?—2002?

Hon. Member: 2000.

Hon. S. Cadiz: 2002?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. S. Cadiz: So it is 2002—Tobago’s occupancy is 30 per cent. There are hotels and guest houses in Tobago—if you call them up on a night they say we

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have not one single guest. That is how bad it is in Tobago. So we put that in the context of where we are in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, what do we look at now? I am a very positive individual. I want to know “how we fixing this thing”, because that is my first thing. “How we fixing it?” It is there; it exists; we have a tourism plant; it is not working; why is it not working and how are we going to fix it?

The first thing that we did—and again, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West—I do not know if you all remember when we announced the name of the new hotel in Tobago, the Magdalena Grand, and the Member for Diego Martin West scoffed, scoffed at it. “He say he remember coming from Trinidad or coming from Tobago coming to Trinidad on ah ol boat, with a set ah old weevils and ting in the boat and name of the boat was the Magdalena”—scoffed at it, just like the Member for Diego Martin North/East scoffed at tourism.

So, obviously, that side has a problem with tourism, but we “doh have that, we like tourism people, we pushing tourism.” We want tourism to work, we want to see from 66/65,000 people; we want to bring that employment level up to 100,000 people. We want to see the GDP, that tourism contributes to Trinidad and Tobago move from US \$1.5 billion to US \$3 billion, US \$4 billion; that is what we want to do. So every single day we are going to work to build tourism.

Coming back to the Magdalena. “Mr. Tobago”, the man from Mason Hall; he forgets that when we were doing the Magdalena, 24 local contractors in Tobago were employed, fixing the Magdalena. Those are Tobago contractors; those are Tobago contractors hiring Tobagonians, and he vex about that. So it is obvious—I know my friend from D’Abadie/O’Meara always says, “The man doh like people”.

Mr. Roberts: “But is true.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: But, sorry, I not too sure if that is true.

Mr. Roberts: “Is true.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: That project unlike many other projects in Tobago—that project stated in August. The first overnight guest came on the January 01—five months. This People’s Partnership, when you talking about performance and delivery, people understand that, we took a rusted hotel and in five months we brought it back, using local labour—brought it back.

Guess what? The project finished within budget. I want the other side to give me one single project in their tenure from 2002 to when they were booted out of

office in 2010, give me one single project that you all completed on time and within budget? We did that. Okay? We did that.

Mr. Roberts: You asking them hard questions, you know.

Hon. S. Cadiz: The current occupancy rate for the Magdalena is right within the national rate, which is averaging about 55 per cent. The Magdalena, a wonderful success; by opening the Magdalena we saved all kinds of airlift. There were major airlift issues going on at the time and we saved that by getting that hotel back up and running.

New investments: one of the things this Government is going after is new investments. We want to see this thing happening, and, therefore, we have established the Tourism Development Fund to save the businesses in Tobago. The Minister of Finance and the Economy alluded to that and I am pretty sure in the Senate, Sen. Bharath is going to speak about that at length, and the GLG, which is the Government Loan Guarantee for new investment—we have put all the incentives in place to make sure that anybody comes to the table and say, “Psst, I want to invest here in a tourism project”, “boop” it gone—instant!—which is a problem that happened.

In 2006, there was a new licensing regime instituted by the then administration. Now instituting the regime as far as foreign land ownership in Tobago—I do not have a problem with that. All through the islands you have to apply to the Governments for permission to get a licence to purchase property. In a sense, I do not have a problem with that; we have a very, very small land mass. The problem I have is that when they were instituting the land licence regime, they forgot to put in how we are going to do it. They forgot the regulations, and that is what caused the problem. So you come here as a foreigner—and in every territory, you have foreigners investing in hotel and tourism plant; so you come in, you see a property you want to buy it what have you, if after three years you cannot get an answer, where you are going?

11.45 a.m.

You have the money—you have “de bag ah money now to invest, you think you going to wait until whenever the THA or the central government figure that they are going to make the decision?” You are not waiting. You are going next door to Grenada, you are going to St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Seychelles or wherever you could get a—in Barbados they have no land licence regime. So, “if yuh cyar do it in Tobago or Trinidad, yuh going tuh go tuh somewhere else.” Therefore, one of the things that we are working on, and I know Sen. Tewarie is working on

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that, is to get those approvals. In record time we are going to be getting those approvals. That is one of the main changes that we are going to have there.

We are also going to be—the same way the Government has been sparking the construction of new hotels, the first one was the Trinidad Hilton—many, many years ago, Trinidad Hilton is 50 years old this year—the Hyatt, the Magdalena and we are going to be continuing in that trend. There are already approved hotel sites so you are going to start seeing new brand spanking hotels being constructed and that forms part of the tourism attraction. After people come here once, twice, they want to say: “where ah going tuh stay again? Ah tired staying here, ah tired staying there and ah want tuh stay in ah new place.” All of that augurs very, very well for the tourism industry. Every room that you add, you add two permanent jobs to that hotel and that is not taxi drivers and farmers and what have you, that is actually working in the hotel. Every room is two permanent jobs and that is what this People’s Partnership is about, creating the opportunities for permanent jobs. [*Desk thumping*]

Another thing, 2013 coming up, we will be hosting three tourism conferences, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference and the Travel Professionals of Colour. Trinidad and Tobago is trying in a very, very short space of time, to raise its profile, especially in the Caribbean and then, of course, outside, but Trinidad and Tobago is back in the tourism business. We are no longer going to be depending. “Ah doh want anybody tuh tell me”—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Back in business.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Back in business, Sir. “Ah doh want anybody tuh tell meh we are de best kept secret. Dat gone. We finish with dat. I doh ever want tuh know that we are best kept secret. I want tuh know we is the absolute best destination to go to.” So, we will be doing that.

Recently, there is a conference called the Routes conference and the Routes conference is not about cassava and yam. The Routes conference is about airlines routes and airports. Every year that sector meets to determine where we should be going. Where the newest destination is. Of course, it takes a little time. When you talk to these international people it “doh happen in de morning”. They will be planning now for 2014 or anywhere around that.

I want to show, on the other side, after all the noise “dey give meh about tourism and how it doh work and the figures bad and what have you”. This is a

copy of the *Airline Business Daily* dated Tuesday, October 02. I do not know if you all recognize this gentleman.

Mr. Roberts: “Aie-yaie-yaie, de Prince.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: This gentleman is the Prince of Port of Spain, Ambassador Brian Lara, who—how is that—went with us to the conference. And on the inside, we have an article on page 3:

Lara on drive for Trinidad and Tobago.

What I am trying to say is, again, the Ministry of Tourism and the TDC, we are not sitting down, we are taking every single opportunity we could find to promote this country and Brian Charles Lara, world’s best cricketer—in fact they describe him here as “de what, boy”? As the cricket genius.

Dr. Moonilal: Oh yes, yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, we are going after all of these airlines, after all of these airports, especially the Nordic countries, the Scandinavian countries, trying to bring—those are traditional markets—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh” better tell them where Nordic countries are.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Sorry. Okay. Scandinavian countries.

Mr. Roberts: PNM “eh know ‘bout dat.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: We are going after that. So, we really and truly—to get the airlift up. Now, one of the things with the airlift in Trinidad and Tobago, in 2005—and “doh” forget what I told you—was the highest arrival figures for Trinidad and Tobago. At that time, 87,000 people went to Tobago. Last year, 25,000 people went. Any of you who understand business and have the remotest idea of business, if your business falls off 75 per cent go home, lock up the shop and go home. One of the reasons for what was that we had nine direct flights going into Tobago on a weekly basis in 2005 and that has fallen off to four. So, hence the reason we going to the Routes conference, we bringing the Prince of Port of Spain, however we could advertise it, however we could promote it, get these airlines back into Trinidad, back into Tobago.

I want to pay special mention to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, who because of my budget—[*Interruption*] constraints, not constraints, yes that is a good word, but we all had to be here for the budget, the Permanent Secretary—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Or, your budget duty.

Hon. S. Cadiz:—Miss Juliana Boodram, led the delegation to Abu Dhabi and was extremely successful and here it is, we are going to be seen without a doubt and this is not just flying the flag, this is about serious discussions and getting these airlines back into Trinidad. We are talking about working and making arrangements with other airports around the world.

The business has changed; airports are no longer a government business where the plane lands and it takes off. That is no longer the business. Airports all over the world, they are looking for business. When you look at places like Orlando airport and Stockholm and what have you, these are people, they look at airports as a business. That is a whole industry. That is not about a runway. It is an industry and they want us to go. They want to see the flights coming in and out of Trinidad. So, that is a major area that we are going after there. Of course, there are a number of other things regarding the airport and I would deal with that soon after. I do not have too long again.

Well, we already know what the figures were for Trinidad and Tobago. And, again, when we are talking about the marketing of Tobago and the marketing of Trinidad, that is creating a lot of confusion in the minds of people. What are you selling? One minute, one group of people come up and say: “Come to Tobago”. As they bend the corner another group walk up and say: “Come to Trinidad and Tobago.” And “de fella say: ‘Well ah fella from Tobago now pass here. So wait nah, Trinidad and Tobago and Tobago is two separate countries?’” One is Trinidad and Tobago and one is Tobago? That is creating confusion in the minds of people and we are working with the THA for all of us to understand one nation. This is not a divided nation. This is one nation, Trinidad and Tobago, and we need to understand that.

Mr. Roberts: January coming “yuh know”.

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, that is how we are going to be working with this.

When the Minister, sorry, how could I say Minister boy? When the representative of the Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Hon. Member for Chaguanas East and Minister of Tourism 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. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Ah nearly finish.”

In 2009, again, let us—again, please, I want the Members to understand 2009, who was in charge. I know the other side likes to say: “All yuh going back again?” The fact of the matter is, we will continue to repeat it in this five-year term and when the other five-year term starts, we will continue to repeat it because Trinidad and Tobago must never ever, ever, forget what bad governance is and what mismanagement of the Treasury is. They must never ever forget that. In 2009, these are the reports. Hear the descriptions for Trinidad and Tobago: reported numbers up to November 2009 show a decline; arrivals from all other major markets declined, shrank. This is the fourth consecutive year of dropping levels of tourist arrivals. That is them. That is how they view tourism.

When the 2008 crash happened, half the Caribbean woke up the next morning and said: “Come fellas wha we doing? How we fixing this thing?” What did we do? The Prime Minister of the country, that was the Member for San Fernando East, I do not know how many of you remember he said: “So what happened in New York and London or last night with the financial crash, that could never affect Trinidad and Tobago” and that was their attitude; “it would never ever affect Trinidad and Tobago” but we are paying for it now and that is why we are so happy to have a Minister of Finance and the Economy like the Senator Larry Howai, in charge of the finances of this country, who could see all of that, who could trend and see and not make statements when the whole world has collapsed around you, the Prime Minister of this country bawl out: “it eh go affect yuh” and decline, decline, decline. Everything in here is declined and that is what they grow up with, decline, negative.

One of the other areas that we are going after is the cruise ship tourism. How are we going to do it? For donkey’s years, sorry, for many, many years Trinidad and Tobago went to attract the cruise ship. “Bring de cruise ships here, de passengers come, dey get off, dey go Maracas Bay, dey drive around bram, four/five hours jump back on de boat, boop and de boat gone. Yuh see de boat sailing out de Bocas by dat afternoon.” That was what we considered tourism. What I am looking at is: How do we attract those vessels down here?

When you leave Grenada and you travel south to Port of Spain, that is 100 miles travel with nothing in between, only water. To go back up to Grenada, it is the same 100 miles to go back up. That is 200 miles. Why would a cruise ship want to leave Grenada and St. Lucia and St. Vincent and come to Port of Spain harbour? Why would you want to do that? Therefore, we have to make it attractive. There are incentives that have to be offered. We have never really and

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truly gone after, for instance, the bunkering of ships and I am not talking about anything—and anything I read about subsidize fuel in the morning, I would have a problem with that. This is not about subsidizing anybody. This is about offering a fair price for bunker fuel for these cruise ships, offering other bunkering services. We never did that and, therefore, there was no real attraction to come south. We are the only refinery left, Trinidad and Tobago. Pointe-a-Pierre is the only refinery left in the Caribbean. Virgin Islands shut down, Curacao shut down. We are the only ones. So we are pursuing. We went ahead already to speak to these cruise ship companies about negotiating proper rates and what have you.

I am speaking with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs about what price we can sell fuel at to these cruise ships. Every cruise ship passenger for Trinidad, the data says, spend US \$60. If you go to St. Maarten, I believe it is like \$120/\$130 and that is what—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Minister.

Hon. S. Cadiz: And that is what we— no. That is what we are looking at.

Dr. Browne: I always give way.

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, these are things that we are looking at, changing how we do business—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: How is he knowing the price of fuel for cruise ships?

Hon. S. Cadiz:—is what we are looking at.

The yachting industry—again, the yachting industry tanked—really and truly is not what it was. Grenada has up the ante. The other islands have up the ante in services and in what they provide and we have to be better. I tell you something, our natural harbour in Chaguaramas is just perfect for the yachting industry, especially during the hurricane season and we are going after that, but we have to change certain things. We have to look at how immigration works, we have to look at how customs work, we have to look at how foreign affairs work, and I do not know if people know, an American citizen can get a maximum of 90 days entry into Trinidad and Tobago. European citizen, “yuh could spend how much time yuh want”. Why is an American citizen 90 and European unlimited? These are things that we have to look at. We would be dealing with the yachting industry.

Conscious tourism is not about Jah Rastafari. Conscious tourism is about a whole new look on tourism, which fits the profile of Trinidad and Tobago

perfectly. Basically, what conscious tourism is, that we do not want as a people, as Trinidadians and Tobagonians, to be looking at—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: Keep quiet “nah” please.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, Member could we get cooperation and allow the Hon. Member to speak in silence, please? Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Conscious tourism is about me as a Trinidadian, I do not look at a visitor as an object, the strange person walking into my village as an object, and I do not want the visitor to be looking at me as an object. So conscious tourism, that is the basis of conscious tourism, is how do you treat with people coming in as visitors and how we, as locals, how do we treat visitors and it is a whole, not a new way, but it is a way of, really and truly a different way of looking at it and what that does, it really and truly promotes ecotourism and everything that goes with it.

12.00 noon

A couple of other things, and I will go through quite quickly: sports, big, big, big time. Sport is a huge business worldwide. It is not about bringing international games to Trinidad and Tobago; it is about everything that has to do with sport. We are working with the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Ecotourism—again, a huge success all over the world. Trinidad and Tobago is perfect for ecotourism. We have at Grande Riviere, 20 years ago there were 40 turtles nestling on the beach—40 years ago—today in excess of 300 turtles come up on that same beach a night. That is as a result of the people; hats off to the people. The people of Grande Riviere should be extremely proud of what they were able to do over the 20 years. Every single beach on the north coast has turtles nesting now.

Data collection—we are working with immigration. Our data collection right now is from the CSO, which runs maybe 12 to 18 months late, and we cannot run a business with data 12 to 18 months late. So one of the things we are going to be doing is working with immigration and at least getting preliminary figures to understand what our arrival figures are, where these people are going, where they are staying, who they are, where they come from, et cetera, et cetera. We hope to be able to have that within a month of the arrivals.

Regarding Tobago Tuesday, again, the Diego Martin West MP asked me, “Yuh going Tobago Tuesday?” as though it is a big joke. Under that administration, how many Cabinet Ministers went to Tobago to work on a weekly basis?

Hon. Member: They went to fete.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, that is a very good answer; none. The answer to that is zero. I go to Tobago every single Tuesday to interact and work with the stakeholders in Tobago, work with the THA in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We have to fix this. I cannot fix this by sitting down in the office in the next tower on level 9, trying to fix issues in Tobago. You have to get out, pound pavement, knock on doors, make it happen, and that is what we are doing. So Tobago Tuesday will remain. It has been extremely successful, very, very fruitful—Tobago Tuesday.

Lifeguards—I do know if anybody in this House knows that the lifeguards currently do not operate under any statute. Lifeguards are lifeguards, and we are going to bring them into 2013, because it is going to take us until 2013 to really and truly bring them into today, where the lifeguards have real responsibility for beaches. That is something we are going to be revamping. We are speaking with the lifeguards, we are speaking with the union and we are going to revamp the whole way in which lifeguards operate and get that done.

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to run through very quickly a number of projects that were completed last year. The Member for Toco/Sangre Grande already mentioned a number of them which are the Valencia Visitor Centre, Knollys' Tunnel, the Toco Lighthouse, the new Keshorn Walcott Lighthouse. There are a number of projects that were completed, and they are all listed.

Going forward, tourism is key. We are going on a whole campaign for Trinidad and Tobago. Get Trinidad and Tobago to understand what the value of tourism is, where the tourism dollar goes, how far down the chain, down to the nuts man; that is from the owners of the Hyatt down to the nuts man in Trinidad and Tobago. They benefit from the tourist dollar, and we have to understand that, the value of the tourist dollar. So we are going on a campaign for that.

We already have quality campaigns in place, the TTIC, the quality assurance; we have all kinds of programmes running for small and medium sized hotels. All of that is being done.

Tobago—the airport in Tobago. I believe the Minister of Transport, the Member for Fyzabad, as he mentioned last night, we work very, very closely together, and we will be getting the Tobago terminal upgraded into a position where we would be very proud of our ANR Robinson International Airport.

Again, looking at all of that, basically, what we are looking at, what is the visitor experience? When a visitor arrives here, what is the experience? That is

what we are working with, to ensure that the visitor experience is no less and, in fact, superior to any other territory in the Caribbean.

So with new emerging economies and the industry expecting sustainable and profitable growth, we cannot continue with business as usual. As such, Trinidad and Tobago must keep, and will keep pace, with the industry's dynamic innovation and become globally competitive. It is not a magic wand, as the Member for Diego Martin North/East would expect us to believe. We do not believe in magic on this side. We believe in hard work. We believe in strategic planning. We believe in execution. That is how this People's Partnership operates; not with the magic wand that the other side used to do, and hope it work. They waved the magic wand and hoped it work.

The tourism sector was neglected. Tourism was treated—I am not too sure I could say this word in Parliament—maybe as an outside child, I will use that, by the last regime, and no hope as enunciated by the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Under this regime, this administration, tourism is the sector that would be used to diversify the economy, create employment and linkages in the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to mention very, very briefly about my constituency. Mr. Speaker, we have been working extremely hard in the constituency of Chaguanas East. The programmes that we have, the infrastructure that we have been able to correct after years of neglect, is just phenomenal, the amount of work that has been done, and we continue to do. Chaguanas East is a very, very special place. It is in dead centre of the island.

Really and truly, we are working very, very hard with the Minister of Local Government, with the Minister of Public Utilities, with the Minister of Transport, with the Minister of the People and Social Development, and the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, you name it, all connected, all working together. None of these Ministries operate in silos, we are all integrated, we all work together to ensure delivery to the people of this country, to ensure that the people of this country under the People's Partnership Government will be guaranteed a better quality of life.

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

The Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Rodger Samuel): Mr. Speaker, indeed I am grateful to be part of this budget debate. First

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of all I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy for a job well done. We all know that this Minister of Finance and the Economy did not have the privilege of a honeymoon period where you would have time to do a lot, but that he had to step into the game, pull immediately on the highway to get the job done, and, indeed, what a job he has done.

I am quite bemused though that we seem to be a headline society. We seem to be guided by the headlines of the newspapers. We seem to be stimulated only by headlines, and this seems to be the trend for those, even on the other side, who have opposed or who have criticized the work done by the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

We have heard so much talk, even by those on the other side, about how quickly it is assumed or purported that the Minister has shifted from the talk of austerity measures to one of stimulus. But that is another headline situation, as I read from the *Trinidad Express* newspaper of September 04, 2012. The headline reads:

“Howai hints at ‘austerity’ in budget”

Because we are headline society, most people probably never read the contents of the newspaper report, and we grabbed at the word “austerity” and began to accuse the Minister of changing his mind.

I just want to clear the air with this headline, because two lines down the Minister, according to Miss Carla Bridglal said that the Minister clarified the same day it would not be real austerity—same headline:

“It’s not really austerity but getting value for money. Some programmes need to be streamlined and focused on a bit better. The idea is to do that while taking some initiatives to stimulate the economy,”

The news clippings went on to say that the Minister:

“...noted that the budget will look at growth, but also address the areas in which the country needs to tighten up.

A lot of those areas relate to transfers and subsidies where we need to spend a little more time looking to how we can do it a little better,”

That is the content, while the headline just highlights austerity. Everybody seemed to have been jumping on the word “austerity” when really two lines down the Minister clarified what approach he was going to take in this 2013 budget. He

said later on that the big thing is food prices, the food price inflation, that we have to focus on, and that is going to be a bit of a challenge, as the Minister clearly defined.

So this idea of headlines as has been purported, and the idea that those on the other side talked about how they were so surprised that in less than a week, Howai has shifted from austerity to a stimulus budget, and questioned whether the presentation was him speaking or his political colleagues, I think we need to read contents rather than headlines, and ensure that we educate, because what we say in this Parliament goes on record. The nation listens to our messages, and we have got to be very careful that we are not sending the wrong messages to our society, and allowing the society to be misrepresented, allowing the society to have a wrong idea and concept of what we present here.

I want to urge all of us that we be very careful because people are listening to us. People are taking heed to what we say, and if we only read part of statements and if we only reiterate or underline one little word, then we are sending a wrong message, and we are saying to the nation that we can pick a word here and there and cause confusion. We have to be very careful of this, and we have got to speak the truth. We have got to ensure that whatever we say we back it up with substance, we back it up with facts and we make sure that the truth is revealed in this House at all times.

While we do that, we must always recognize that whatever we say in this House we must say it so that the nation can benefit, because it is only truth that can set people free. [*Desk thumping*] It is important for us to see that.

We been criticized as a Government that has not been performing, but I want to let you know that when you put out something with regard to performance and nobody could challenge it, nobody could say, "Well, you said you did this, but you did not," it says a lot for this Government. On two occasions we have been able to publish what we have done, what we have achieved, what we did for the last two years. We have been able to declare our stewardship, define it in print, and up to now nobody has been able to say, "Ay, you said you did this and it was not done." [*Desk thumping*]

Few governments, as a matter of fact, none before, have been able to now take their publication to the nation and say, "We have done this, challenge it." This is something that goes unheard of. As a matter of fact, it is not something that is the norm that any government could come and say, "Ay, this is the account of our stewardship. This is what we have done thus far for the period," and publish a

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report and put it in the public domain so that anyone can see it, anyone can read it, and if you want to challenge it, it is all there to be challenged. That has not been done.

It says a lot for the creditability of this Government, that we are not afraid, we are not ashamed to put in public what we have done, and that we will continue to do so for the next year and for the next two years and the next three years and the next five years. For as long as we are here, we will continue to ensure that the nation is clear as to what we have been achieving thus far.

The report itself would say that here it is a government is not hidden, but it is very, very clear to the nation that we want you to be aware as to how your money is being spent, what is being done and how it is being done across the nation, from constituency to constituency, without any sense of discrimination.

12.15 p.m.

Other speakers would have clearly defined—the Minister of Local Government, yesterday, would have clearly defined the amount of work that the Ministry of Local Government has done in every constituency. As a matter of fact, I became very jealous because when I heard of the kind of stuff being done in Point Fortin and in other areas I wanted to know, well, what on earth is happening to Arima? What is going on? Because we were struggling for a while, and I am hearing about so much things happening in constituencies and other areas, and I myself was taken aback as to the amount of stuff that is happening in other constituencies that really has nothing to do with—well, it is not a Government constituency as they call it, but I am sure that places like Point Fortin and those areas are happy because things are happening in their areas. [*Crosstalk*]

I want to assure, Mr. Speaker, that in many instances folks would ask me on the outside, you know, what kind of relationships we have with Members of Parliament because when they look at the television it seems to be so tense and so rough. But I want to say to the nation that besides all that happens in Parliament and the chit-chats and the to and fro, that relationships with the Government and MPs and those on the other side, Opposition MPs, is a fantastic relationship, and that there is no war per se, and there is no animosity at all, and this nation needs to know that, that there is no animosity. We speak, we chit-chat, we may tease each other, but at the end of the day we are all human beings and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and the relationships that we have are fantastic, and it is important for us to see that.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we think about the Minister's presentation on this year's budget, and the budget that will take us to the end of fiscal year 2013, we recognize though that, in the midst of it all, the Minister attempted in his presentation to clearly define, and I applaud him for his wisdom of stimulus because it is not about cutbacks but it is about discipline. It is not about cutbacks, but it is about growth, it is about investing and ensuring that the economy grows through the development of the infrastructure, through the discipline that we have so that we would not have the kind of extravagant expenditure and uncontrolled expenditure—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Wild!

Hon. R. Samuel:—and wild expenditure that this country was so accustomed to in the past, that this country had been plagued with so much in the past, but that now we need to have the kind of discipline necessary to take this country forward.

That is that is what this Minister was dealing with, and attempting to deal with in the midst of all of the situation. It was intended, though, as a refreshing and ideal situation, that we deal with job creation. And people talked about, oh, how the index about unemployment is wrong and stuff like that, but justification of this needs to come because people are speaking things in this House without facts, without proof. People are saying all kinds of stuff—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Member of La Brea is guilty of that.

Hon. R. Samuel:—in this House, Mr. Speaker, under parliamentary privilege, and really not justifying it with the kind of facts that are necessary to deal with it.

Mr. Indarsingh: Member of La Brea is guilty.

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, in his wisdom I commend the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for having wisdom, having a clear vision for the national economy. I commend him because in the midst of a global economic situation, yet the Minister of Finance and the Economy has been able to keep us in such a manner, keep this nation's economy directed and having a course of action, a focus, so that we can now show all other nations how we are able to manage our internal affairs and manage the economy of a nation successfully.

So, in the midst of it, regardless of the measures that would keep us under control, regardless of measures that would make sure that we do not have any kind of squandermania in this Government, this Minister of Finance and the Economy, in his gracious poise, in his gracious approach, in his simple approach—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: La Brea, La Brea!

Hon. R. Samuel:—has been able to, at all times, come to the nation in a simple manner and present a budget that the average man on the street can read and clearly understand because this budget really is their budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that as we deal with the economy of this nation, that the revitalization of the construction industry is important. And this is one of the highlights that the Minister of Finance and the Economy places on this budget: how we are going to revitalize the construction sector through the judicious spending on the infrastructural projects. And the Minister speaks also, and he recognizes too that this can be a tremendous burden and strain on the Treasury. This can be a tremendous burden and strain on the Treasury and plans really to utilize, what has been criticized, but what the world accepts as a PPP model, you know, this private-public partnership that has been approved and tried for so long, and that going that way is wise. And I applaud the Minister of Finance and the Economy for moving in that direction.

But not only so, we know that as a new Minister of Finance and the Economy, one of the things that have plagued this country over the last few years is the debacle of the Hindu Credit Union/the Clico situation. This Minister of Finance and the Economy with all of his experiences and taking an FCB from something that was not wanting to something that is viable and enriched, he now looks at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy from a financial standpoint in a positive way and declares that his purpose is to put an end, through this fiscal measure, to what he inherited, and what this nation and what this Government had inherited for the past couple years.

As a matter of fact, you know so much money was sunk into those industries, and now we have the responsibility, the Minister of Finance and the Economy now has the responsibility to deal with it, and promises to deal with it in manner that will decisively put an end to all the craziness that has happened in the past. And, Mr. Minister of Finance and the Economy, I want to urge you, I want to encourage you, I want to state that the approaches and the way you think about dealing with these investments, you have the kind of support from this Government, from all partners in this Government to ensure that this debacle be put to rest once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, when you hear about infrastructure, obviously I would smile because the constituency that I am so privileged to represent and serve has been left undone for—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Generations.

Hon. R. Samuel:—generations. [*Crosstalk*] As a matter of fact, if we were to put it as how old people will put it, we were left undone for “donkey years”. When I took office and became the MP for Arima, it was a sad time for those on the other side, but likewise, when we began to walk the streets and we continued to do an inventory—because you know, you walk the streets and you walk the constituencies but you begin to do and take an inventory of what is the status and the exact status of your constituency, and when we walked with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and representatives from the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, I remember one engineer saying to me, “Minister, I want to shock you, but every road in your constituency needs to be milled and repaved”; every road!

That was like something—I remember taking the Minister of Works, then, the former Minister of Works to Blanchisseuse and I wilfully asked him to go through from Arima, and he said to me on the way, he said, “MP”—in his own tone—he said, “huh, you have a task ahead of you, and whoever give you this constituency wicked.” Because you know, he made a joke about it. On the way he said, he almost got pregnant 14 times and he lost all the children on the way. It was so bad, the roads were so bad that he had to make a comment like that on the road. But, Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure you—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: The legacy of the PNM.

Hon. R. Samuel:—that this Government has taken up the responsibility to fix some 26 miles of road from Arima to Blanchisseuse. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, as we speak now, the drainage for the first eight miles—because it has to be done in eight mile trenches—

Mr. Indarsingh: Systematically.

Hon. R. Samuel:—and it has to be done systematically, and well-planned out, and as we speak now, the first eight miles of that road are being repaired. As a matter of fact, the drains, the drainage for eight miles, contracts are out. A part of it has already been done on it, and work continues to progress on those eight miles of road. And I want to thank both the former Minister of Works and Infrastructure, and the present Minister, and the Minister in the Ministry for working with us in Arima and ensuring that that happens. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, not only that, but we have been able to do something in Arima that has not been done in other constituencies. We have, and even on the Blanchisseuse

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Road, about five or six quarries that are doing their business and their trade there. And we have been able to call in these quarry owners, and get them involved in the repair of roads that their trucks and vehicles damaged. And they have all signed on with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to supply aggregate, Mr. Speaker, freely—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: For the first time.

Hon. R. Samuel:—freely, to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to ensure that those roads [*Desk thumping*] are repaired properly. First time, that we have now businesses that affect—and partnership with businesses to be part of the development of communities, first time in Arima; first time in this country that quarries are doing that in Trinidad and Tobago. And I want to applaud those quarries for being part of the process, because we always hear negatives about quarries that are raping the land and destroying the hillsides and stuff like that.

As a matter of fact, even those quarries, National Quarries and SIS and all these other quarries, Hermitage Quarry, they are all part of giving back to the communities and ensuring the roads are repaired. Hermitage Quarry is now going to supply materials along with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to fix La Retreat Road, to fix the Dump Road, to fix the Guanapo Road, to ensure that the community there benefits, and the giving back to communities, Mr. Speaker, something that has not happened in the past, something that has never happened in the past, and now, begins to happen, and it says that there is a changing in the tides. There is a changing in the approach to development of constituencies and communities, that people want to give back, and they have a Government that can work with them so that they can now help develop the communities that are affected. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend them for that, because for years Arima has cried out.

Hon. Member: For years.

Hon. R. Samuel: For years, for years, for years. As matter of fact—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: How many years it was PNM?

Hon. R. Samuel: We would not even go there; too long. And, you know, I always believe in the philosophy that “performance always beats ol’ talk”. And what is happening in Arima is a change. It is a change that is happening. As a matter of fact, we had an old police station from since 1890. The first part of it was built and then they did some renovations, and people have been crying out

because the Arima Police Station, what it does, it serves so many areas now because Arima is expanding, and those ancillary communities that are coming into area are populated, so that the catchment areas are broad and wide and the population is increasing. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, and now under this new Minister of National Security, the new police station is being built. Work started about a month or two months ago on a new Arima Police Station, something that was promised for “donkey years”. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I remember that the changes were taking place on paper so rapidly. One moment there was supposed to be an entire block that was designed to be a government complex with police station and courthouse, and then somebody went and buy out one part of it and built a mall, and then that changed, and changes and changes on paper, but nothing was happening physically. Now things are happening physically in Arima, a new police station.

Not only that, but for “donkey years” we have cried out for a hospital in Arima; a full-fledged hospital. A community that is five miles away from an international airport, and we were told, years ago, that Arima did not need a hospital, it needed a mortuary. Then we were insulted to say, well, you know, it does not need a hospital, it needs a special road from Arima to Mount Hope. Ministers of Health would have said that. And by the way, many of the Ministers of Health were from Arima.

Mr. Indarsingh: Remind us.

Hon. R. Samuel: They were from Arima, and yet what we got was an expanded health centre as opposed to a proper hospital.

12.30 p.m.

I want to declare onto you that in speaking with the present Minister of Health, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, I have been assured, I have the confidence that Arima Hospital will begin in this fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*] I want to assure all Arimians, all Arimians that this year this Minister of Health will begin the process of building a hospital in—[*Interruption*—and not only that, Mr. Speaker, but the present health facilities will be refurbished and upgraded, so that it can take the load off of the hospital by having same-day surgeries. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Health, when he visited the facilities—revisited the facilities, recognized that within that present facility there were the mechanisms for same-day surgeries. [*Interruption*]

No, no, let me tell you the problem. What happened was that before the 2007 election, they brought in equipment, and they began to propagate that they are

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upgrading the facilities for same-day surgeries, and right after the election the equipment left. All that was left in that theatre were the lights, [*Interruption*] and we visited. Member for Barataria/San Juan, we visited and we were told that, empathically, it was moved out after the election, and that theatre—those two little theatres became a storage room [*Crosstalk*] in the Arima health facility, and while that was taking place the community, the constituency and the burgesses of Arima were suffering and have to be complaining day and night, night and day that they cannot get the kind of services out of those health facilities at all. It is important for us to understand that.

Hon. Member: Under whose watch, Rahael or Narace?

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure you is that under this Government, under this Minister of Health, Arima would be well taken care of when it comes to the health facilities, when it comes to a proper maternity section, when it comes to child care, when it comes to all of that, this hospital in Arima will be something that Arima had looked forward to for many years, but it will become a reality under this Government. [*Desk thumping*] Under this Government, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, in the town centre of Arima—[*Interruption*]—we cannot tell you the last time in the town centre we saw roads black. [*Laughter*] Dr. Griffith could tell you that. We cannot tell you the last time we saw black roads, roads black meaning freshly paved. As a matter of fact, those roads in the town centre for “donkey years”, for years upon years, upon years, we called them “whiteman road”. You know why? “Don’t fall”. Don’t fall because “you sure getting a whiteman”. You know what a “whiteman” is, because we are down to stone. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in over 20-something, 30 years, now roads are being paved in Arima. People are shocked! People have come to me, called me and said, “we seeing black roads in Arima, we seeing something happening, what is going on?” I say because this Government has promised to take care of Arima and we continue to do so and we will continue to take care of Arima.

Mr. Speaker, it is so strange, for the first time—you know, we had the Minister of Local Government coming into Arima, sitting with the burgesses of Arima, finding out about their problems, interaction with communities and ensuring that when people have problems there is an avenue to voice their problems and there are quick solutions. Many of the problems that people have can be quickly solved, as long as the amenities are there and the will to do it is

there, and this Government has the will, surely has the will to supply and support the work of communities as we have been doing and as we continue to do.

So, I want to, likewise, commend this new Minister of Local Government for his tenacity, his drive, his verve. I want to commend him for what he is doing at this time, and likewise going into local areas and meeting with the people all over the country and hearing their questions, and working along with the local councils and corporations to help alleviate the problems. I was there, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister came to Arima and there was an issue and he said, Minister, come and talk with me here, this person has this problem. We were able to work those situations out so easily, it is a shame, and that tells you what this Government affords.

We are not a hidden Government. We are not a Government that would hide from people or not want to meet with people or would pull ourselves away from people. We are there to serve the people; we are people-centered, people-centric. We are there to ensure that our constituencies and the people of Trinidad and Tobago are properly well served. So, again, commendations go out to the Minister of Local Government, the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*] Over and over, you have to applaud them.

Mr. Speaker, the social services, and I have to speak about that because I remember calling the Minister of the People and Social Development, the Member for Caroni Central, and I said I need your help, and he just said to me, “when can I come?” And that says a lot. The Minister was able to bring his whole team into the constituency and then invite a lot of the constituents to be there, and offer the kind of services through their direct impact programme, to now help alleviate some of the problems. And not only that—share the information with the folks so that people can be aware of the kind of services that are available from the Ministry of the People and Social Development, which was a secret before.

As a matter of fact, there were so many secrets before that they did not even know where to find the secret, so that too was a secret. [*Laughter*] But now under the Ministry of the People and Social Development and under the programme of what we call URP Social, quite a number of social programmes are there to alleviate many of the problems that affect us in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, talks are on the way with the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, to deal with what we call in Arima, Bye Pass Road from Pinto to Tumpuna Road, and the reason for

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that is our purpose is to alleviate the congestion that goes south on to the Tumpuna Road on to the highway, and promises are made through the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, and talks are there to build a Bye Pass Road on the old train line from Pinto Road to Tumpuna Road, that would alleviate that bit of congestion and help us deal with that.

I also want to commend the Ministry of Food Production because of the work that they have begun and will continue to do with the farmers in my constituency, that entire Wallerfield area, that entire Aripo area, those areas in Brasso Seco, Paria; those farmers in those areas where the plan is to help uplift and upgrade the whole movement of agriculture in those communities. There is a new vision, a new approach, a new direction for agriculture, and a great deal is happening in agriculture even in my constituency, and I want to commend the Ministry of Food Production for that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me though, if I do not speak about the long-awaited administrative complex in Arima. Many a time we have had sod turning for the same thing. They have a big function, they turn sod; it “ain’t” happen for years; they have another big function, they turn sod; it did not happen for years, a big function—and this administrative complex in Arima probably has had the most amount of sod turning, it is a historical situation for years. As a matter of fact, if they continue turning sod so much, it “ain’t go have”—all the excavation for the building would have been finished because, why? The amount of sod that has been turned for this particular complex is a shame. [*Crosstalk*]

Years upon years, promises about “this Arima complex to be built”. As a matter of fact, to the Member for Tabaquite, if he goes back in his history, and the former Minister of Local Government, the Member for Fyzabad, would go back in history and recognize that that was supposed to finish in 2007.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. R. Samuel: As a matter of fact they turned sod two years before that and then again in 2006 for it to finish in 2007. But you know something, 2007 came, nothing. [*Interruption*]

As a matter of fact, throughout the country only one was built and it was in Chaguanas. Under this Minister of Local Government, this administrative complex, which is long overdue, will be built in Arima, and we must commend him for the work, and we will continue to support until this Arima complex is built in Arima. Long awaited, but I know with your tenacity it will be done in this period of Government.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I do not speak a bit about the issues in this country of where we are with regard to HIV/AIDS, and it is important for me to do this because much has been said, much has been purported, though in many instances the information that is being purported even in the media has been misdirected and is misrepresenting the facts, I would like to, in many instances, clear the air as to what has been happening with HIV in Trinidad and Tobago as it functions under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the term of office for the then National AIDS Coordinating Committee came to an end as it was aligned to the loan that was associated, more so, with the World Bank.

Dr. Browne: Not true!

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, this tenure had been extended, and then extended again for six months from November 2010 to March/April 2011. The tenure came to an end with the plans of establishing, according to the manifesto of the 2010 election, that the NACC will be then turned into a statutory body to now deal with HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago, and to ensure that the NACC would have the kind of teeth, would have the kind of bite necessary to take charge and lead HIV in Trinidad and Tobago.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, draft legislation for that is before the Attorney General—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Who?

Hon. R. Samuel:—and now Cabinet had approved that we set up what is called an interim HIV agency to lay down all of the foundational work that will now enable us to set the foundations for the statutory body.

We are now in the process—after having assessed all that has taken place in the past, one of the things that we have recognized over the years is that, though we had an NACC, the monitoring and evaluation effect had no impact. As a matter of fact there was no monitoring and evaluation unit in the NACC.

Dr. Browne: That is not true! That is not true!

Hon. R. Samuel: As a matter of fact, when I took office—*[Crosstalk]*

Dr. Browne: Will you be willing to give way?

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, when I took office and I had my very first meeting—

Dr. Browne: Member!

Hon. R. Samuel:—and I had my first meeting—

Dr. Browne: [*Turns on mike*] Member, you are incorrect.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please! Member for Diego Martin Central, you know what you have just done is wrong.

Dr. Browne: Is that so?

Mr. Speaker: No, you cannot! You have spoken. You cannot press the mike whilst another Member is on the floor, when you have—

Dr. Browne: Well, I asked.

Mr. Speaker: No! If he does not give way you remain silent, but you cannot just press the mike and speak to him. That is not proper! So, I want to advise you, no matter how animated we may be, take your points down, and the next debate you could talk about it, or you may have a press conference, but do not interrupt the Member whilst he is speaking. No matter how animated you may feel. [*Interruption*] I appeal to you to listen in silence. Continue, hon. Member for Arima.

Hon. R. Samuel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was given a responsibility to deal with HIV and to look at HIV, in having consultations with the then NACC, quite a number of questions were asked in our meetings. Questions like, what is our status? I was faced with the issue of very old statistics, statistics that kept saying that we had just approximately 20,000 people, and that was from 2009 statistics; statistics that were not up-to-date and real-time statistics, because we have never been able to have real time statistics when we deal with things like HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing over the past few months is working along with the Ministry of Health in developing the kind of data collection mechanism that would afford us the privilege of having almost real time data, so that we can now clearly know where we are at and how we need to then tweak our programmes and our approaches so that we can now be effective as we go forward in the future.

12.45 p.m.

So we have been working along with the Ministry of Health, we have been working along with the Ministry of the People and Social Development, because we recognize that in so many instance the social services that needs to be afforded

to people that are living with HIV have not been reaching those people. There are many people who are on medication and treatment that may not have a proper diet, and that we are working along with programmes, and we are ensuring that part of this new approach includes the Ministry of the People and Social Development, as we go into communities and help alleviate the poverty level through the poverty eradication programme, and help alleviate some of the problems that people who live with HIV are experiencing on an ongoing basis.

All of those things along with the new initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development with HASC, with the HIV in the workplace programme, and I must commend the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development for the advancements they have made. Just recently, the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, had been able to sign on much more businesses and entrepreneurs as part of the HASC programmes, so that HIV in the workplace is taken care of. As a matter of fact—and that discrimination and stigma in the workplace can be eradicated.

Mr. Speaker, for a sickness or a disease that has been around for close to 30 years—the first experience of it in Trinidad was in 1983, we still find in Trinidad and Tobago a high incidence of stigma, high incidences of discrimination in our society when it comes to people who are infected and who live with HIV/AIDS. This is something that we are working together with all of the stakeholders to help to try and alleviate so that people can recognize that with treatment, many people are living much longer today, and we will be in a society with people who are infected, but living for many years and can still be productive and be part of the productive mechanism of our nation. HIV is not a death threat. It is no longer a death threat.

We must be clear to this nation that the same way a person can live long with diabetes, they can live long with cancer, they can live long with any other sickness or disease, that people also with HIV can live a good and healthy lifestyle and be part of the productivity of a nation. We need to work tremendously hard, Mr. Speaker, to alleviate and ensure that the discrimination and stigma on people that are living with HIV is brought to zero, in the workplace, in the health sector, all over the communities, all over Trinidad and Tobago to make sure that discrimination is brought to zero.

Our quest as we launch our new HIV programme and our HIV drive, our national approach to HIV as it incorporates all of the stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago, all of the Ministries are now instructed through a Cabinet Note to employ HIV coordinators so they can now have effectiveness—[*Interruption*]*—*that is

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your note. They can now employ HIV coordinators to work in-house, because when I took office—when I wrote Ministries when I took office we just had coordinators in about three Ministries even though all of the Ministries—there were listed Ministries that were responsible for employing HIV coordinators. So there will be coordinators in the workplace working along with the ILO's approach to HIV in the workplace. That is now being enforced. This Government is enforcing it, Mr. Speaker, and we will succeed in dealing with HIV, in bringing it down to zero. Our plan is one new case is too much; one new case is too much, but HIV is still everybody's business.

There have been some successes with HIV. Persons living with HIV we know, are living much longer and the number of AIDS deaths, though it peaked in 1998 to 267, by the end of 2011, the figures stood at just about 42. So there has been much progress made because of treatment and care that is taking place because of the RVs, and the Ministry of Health along with many of the NGOs that are involved with HIV are doing a fantastic job in taking care and treating with people who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, despite the achievements of several successes, there is still need for this nation to be quite concerned and not drop our guard when it comes to HIV.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well said.

Hon. R. Samuel: There is need for a new radical approach in us getting to zero and it must be that HIV becomes everybody's business again and that we must now put it back on the front burner, and that we must now see it marketed everywhere, and we must understand that the education process even though there has been much education in the past target we need to now do it again and begin to channel the education process and target again throughout this nation again. So, Mr. Speaker, that is part of the process, that is part of this national plan, the new NSP 2012 to 2017—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Arima and Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and thank you to my colleagues for the support given. As I said, there is need for a revitalized, new and radical strategic approach to getting to zero. Seeing that HIV—if you are not

infected, you will be affected in one way or the other. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but HIV, if it is not controlled and if we are not all involved and we are not all participating, HIV can become a serious economic issue—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: It is.

Hon. R. Samuel:—and it is an economic issue, because of the cost of treatment. So far and thus far and until cheaper approaches are had, it still costs close to between \$11,000 and \$14,000 per year to keep one person on first line treatment in Trinidad and Tobago. Some US \$1,800 approximately per year to keep one person on treatment and if individuals are not disciplined and regimented to their treatment, then the possibility of shifting to second line treatment based upon how the reaction of their bodies and resistance are, it can cost this country even three times more per person annually. And that says that all of us have got to now think carefully as to how we deal with HIV, how we talk HIV, it has to be back at the tongue and back at the languages again on everybody's lips, that we can touch somebody and say protect yourself, be careful, HIV is still alive.

It has to be back on the agenda again in Trinidad and Tobago, because we have this tendency of kind of lapsing, because there is treatment, “well, I cool you know, it have drugs for that, it have medication for that”, and we kind of slip into darkness again and that is something we must avoid in Trinidad and Tobago. We have seen these tendencies in other diseases, when there is dengue, there is this clean-up campaign and everybody starts to turn down all those vials and vessels that may collect water and then after it subsides again, you know we go and we become reckless again and leave it again and there is a resurgence of the same thing over and over. We do not want a resurgence of HIV in Trinidad and Tobago, but that we take control as a nation and deal with it because it affects the lives of those in their most productive time. Between the ages of 15 to 49, the high levels of productivity where a nation benefits from people, people are being infected with HIV and we have got to understand that we have got to deal with it.

Success stories say that we have been able to reduce significantly almost 100 per cent success of the mother to child transmission in Trinidad and Tobago. That has been a success story because mothers are being tested early, and we are able to alleviate the transfer and remove the transfer of HIV from mother to child even though the mother may be infected, we are able now to prevent the child from being infected. That is a plus in Trinidad and Tobago. We need to be thankful for the work done by the Ministry of Health, their HIV department and all other institutions that are helping us in this drive to deal with HIV/ AIDS. Not only that,

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but we are now moving in the direction of taking HIV into the municipalities, into the corporations and into all of those districts to ensure that within those areas HIV is high and there are ways and means of now utilizing the strength of the corporations and the boroughs to now deal with HIV from that leadership level in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health along with the Office of the Prime Minister have held training programmes and capacity building workshops over the past year in areas of research methods and providing initiatives, HIV testing, counselling, monitoring, evaluation, surveillance and other workshops are planned, dealing with the psychosocial issues and gender issues of the HIV epidemic. We have found, Mr. Speaker, that though you have a lot of women testing for HIV/AIDS and going to have themselves tested, I must say that among the male population it is not as high as it should be. As a result, we would want to encourage our male citizenry to have themselves tested because you have more women going to be tested than men and that says a lot, that men, maybe it is still a psychological issue to go and be tested and to ensure that you are free from HIV in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the challenges in this epidemic has been the lack of timely and accurate statistics, and I said that a while ago. We are currently pursuing a number of initiatives in collaboration with our agencies such as the University of the West Indies—and by the way, in our meetings with the University of the West Indies, I found out in my first meeting that somewhere in 2007 or 2008, the University of the West Indies was contracted to design a software for the purpose of mapping Trinidad and Tobago, especially for HIV/AIDS. That software has never been used. As a matter of fact, when I had a meeting with the University of the West Indies just a few months ago, I found out that the NACC had paid \$200,000 or \$300,000 for the development of the software. It has never been used by the NACC for whatever reason, I do not know. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: Diego Martin Central will have that answer.

Hon. R. Samuel: We are now working with the University of the West Indies to train personnel in the software and that software now will be incorporated in our M&E aspect of dealing with HIV in Trinidad and Tobago. So that is a plus, and because of the cohesiveness with the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Ministry of the People and Social Development and the Ministry of Community Development, all of us are working together, the

Ministry of Health, we will now work rapidly together to bring the prevalence of HIV/AIDS closer to zero in the shortest distance time as possible and we need the support of the entire nation to do such.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind again, I want to commend the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his budget presentation. I want to commend him again for his approach in dealing with the economy and the finance of a nation, and I want to tell him thank you for being so simple in the way you approach things and in your presentation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Before we suspend for lunch, may I advise all Members that we have to manage our affairs very carefully between now and 10 minutes to 8.00. As you know under 63(6) of the Standing Orders the debate on the second reading must come to a conclusion at 10 minutes to 8.00. This is the fourth day of the budget debate. Of course, as you will recall when the Standing Orders were established in December 1961, there were 31 Members.

Today, we have 41 Members, but the days remain the same, four days. We will have to revise the Standing Orders to reflect the current reality. And in those circumstances, I would want to urge Members and to get your support that we have 45 minutes for lunch and during the tea break, we shall not suspend for tea. Members who are willing to have tea they can stream out. There are several speakers still to go and there is a limited time. So I seek your cooperation so that we can get through with the people's business at 10 minutes to 8.00 this afternoon before we go into what is called the Finance Committee of this very important Bill.

Hon. Members, at this time, we suspend sitting for lunch. We shall resume at 1.45 p.m. The hon. Member for Port of Spain South shall be leading the debate.

1.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain South. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to join in this debate, and before I start I want to join my other colleagues in congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for his maiden budget speech and I wish him all the best in his tenure as Minister of Finance and the Economy.

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Mr. Speaker, before I start, I want to make a comment on what the last speaker said, that is the Member for Arima. The Member for Arima stood for almost an hour and spoke about the HIV and what they were doing in that area, but I want to ask the Member for Arima: where is the National AIDS Coordinating Committee in all of this? I want to share with him that the HIV prevalence rate—and this represents the amount of lives saved—reduced considerably, from 3.2 to 1.5 per cent—a 3.2 high in 2003 to 1.5 per cent in 2008.

But yet, when this Government came into office in 2010, they recklessly closed down the NACC, that is the National AIDS Coordinating Committee. They unceremoniously sent home the staff. And I want to state, Mr. Speaker, that every responsible agency: the UNAIDS, PAHO, UNICEF, our Caribbean counterpart, they have all voiced their dissatisfaction and regret over what Trinidad and Tobago has done. So I want to ask this Member: why did he waste practically a whole hour when the unit that was responsible and doing a good job has been closed? What was the basis for closing down the NACC?

To crown it off, Mr. Speaker, some of the Ministers, for the last two and a half years, including the Member for Arima who spoke, have the audacity to wear the NACC badge.

Mr. Imbert: After they closed it down.

Miss M. Mc Donald: After they have closed it down. Complete hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker! Complete hypocrisy! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, there are lots of things that I want to respond to with respect to my colleagues on the other side, but in the interest of time I will deal with the responses during the course of my contribution. [*Interruption*] Member for Couva South, may I remind you that when you were speaking I remained quiet and I was not shouting across the room.

Mr. Roberts: Do not let him distract you. You go ahead.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh going real good.”

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh going good.”

Mr. Sharma: “I listening to yuh.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you, Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara.

Mr. Speaker, I read this budget and I have to agree with the headline from Saturday’s *Express*, October 06, 2012, that this budget is one of deception. I am

looking at a story by Kim Boodram and she cited Economist Gregory McGuire, and this is what he said. I quote, Mr. Speaker:

“We are living beyond our means and any sudden collapse of oil prices will result in the immediate collapse of this economy.”

He continued:

“...the 2013 budget ‘may not take us very far’ and the Government appeared to be ‘marking time’ in the hope of a big event, such as an oil or gas mega-find.”

Mr. Speaker, I am of the same view. This theme of stimulating growth and generating prosperity, as far as I am concerned, is simply hollow rhetoric. It was just put together, in my opinion, conjured up to create a sense of calm, a sense of apathy and false security among our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, as my colleague from Port of Spain North would have said, has far exceeded the realm of smoke and mirrors and cloak and dagger. Mr. Speaker, I look at the mannerisms of our new Minister. So many people have been duped by the Minister’s mild manner, his lovely words and his silver tongue. Mr. Speaker, I do not buy any of it. [*Desk thumping*] I do not, because, Mr. Speaker, as an attorney I will tell you, you have to lift the veil, lift the veil, Mr. Speaker, and see what is beneath there.

Let us look at the true circumstance—what is below that. Because if you listen carefully to what was not said during the Minister’s presentation, you would not understand the real budget issues. The budget is not just about the increase in premium gasoline, you know, Mr. Speaker; it is about the hardship that the poor people will suffer in this country [*Desk thumping*] when you increase super unleaded and diesel; when you remove the subsidies.

I want to tell you, and I want to read into *Hansard*—on Monday my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, made a point that the increase in the price of premium gasoline was contrary to the Petroleum Subsidy Act, which provides a mechanism whereby the retail price of gasoline paid by the consumers—whatever the type, whether super or premium—should always be lower—should always be lower, Mr. Speaker—than the cost of production of gasoline at the refinery. [*Desk thumping*]

I walked with the *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, to show this country—this is a *Hansard* from way back, Friday, May 31, 1974, when the then Minister of Industry and Commerce, hon. Errol Mahabir, laid in this Parliament the basis

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upon which the pricing should take place. Since then, other than a few vague and unconvincing statements made by the Minister, there has been a deafening silence on the part of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, in order to properly understand this issue and the intent of the Legislature with respect to this fuel subsidy, we need to look at this *Hansard* I have here on the debate which took place, as I said, on May 31, 1974. This is what Mr. Errol Mahabir, the then Minister of Industry and Commerce who piloted the Bill, had to say, and I am going to quote him, Mr. Speaker. He said:

“...the Government will require all the substantial oil producing companies in the country...to subsidize the price of gasolene, kerosene and gas/diesel oil on the local market. The mechanism will operate as follows. The petroleum marketing companies will purchase their supplies from the refineries at the same price as all...buyers”—in—“the world, i.e. the Low of Platts in the Caribbean. The marketing companies will then deliver the products...at a price below this.”

I will repeat:

“The marketing companies will then deliver the products...at a price below this.”

That is the law, Mr. Speaker:

“The oil producing companies will be required to subsidize, each in proportion to the number of barrels of oil it has extracted, the difference between the delivery price”—or the retail price to the consumers—“and the duty paid ex-refinery price plus a fixed margin.”

This is what you charge, Mr. Speaker. So it should always be below that refinery price. In other words, Mr. Speaker—and I am going to say it again—the law requires that the price of gasoline at the pump should always be lower than the ex-refinery price. [*Desk thumping*]

At present, the price of premium gasoline produced at our refinery is approximately \$4.75 per litre. As a result, because of the petroleum subsidy paid by the oil companies, the price of premium should never exceed the refinery price. So do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Our price—that is, a word to the wise is sufficient—it is supposed to be below \$4.75. [*Desk thumping*] I thought I should read that into *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is not about selective increases in national insurance benefits. Not at all, Mr. Speaker! It is about—and I would get into that—the impending collapse of the entire National Insurance System in this country. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister laid the Eighth Actuarial Report in this Parliament and I dare ask any one of the Government Ministers—any one—have you read it? Have you read the Eighth Actuarial Report?

Hon. Members: No.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Well, Mr. Speaker, for four days we talk, and we talk, and we talk, and we bash the PNM, but I want to just state, as I always say, the PNM has been adjudicated upon in this country on May 24, 2010. You will be adjudicated on in 2015! Whenever you call it, you will be adjudicated on! Not the PNM! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Very harshly too.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, this budget does not bring closure to the Clico issue. It does not. Instead, it will create more problems for current bondholders, those holding bonds between 11-to 20-year maturity. We will get into that.

This budget is not at all about placing education and training at the forefront of national development, despite the Government's insistence. The budget is really about cutting and restricting GATE funding.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: That is right.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, this budget is not about growth and prosperity at all. This budget is the worst example I have ever seen, of squandermania. [*Desk thumping*] This budget is shameless, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Speaker, I am going to look at some revenues and expenditure. Now, this Government has the audacity to come back to this honourable House for the third consecutive time to ask us to approve a massive budget deficit—\$7.6 billion, and this year they have broken all records. It is unprecedented, an expenditure of \$58.4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister is from the private sector. I am also aware that the Minister was the CEO, and I know that he knows what an audit report looks like—he knows it—and I would have expected the Minister, when he stood here last week, to tell us something about—do a comparative, what

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happened last year. Tell us what happened last year: “this is what we did; this is what we are going to do”, et cetera, and make the necessary adjustments. Nothing like that was done.

He claims that for his oil revenue he is going to increase it from last year’s figure of \$18.1 billion to \$20 billion; non-oil revenue, from \$20.9 billion to \$30.7 billion. The total revenue he is projecting would be increased from \$47 billion in 2012 to \$50.74 billion for 2013. His expenditure for 2012, \$54.6 billion, would be increased to \$58.41 billion, with a budget deficit of \$7.6 billion.

I ask the Minister: Mr. Minister, where are the new revenue streams to support this massive, unprecedented expenditure? Where are your new revenue streams? Share them with me, Mr. Minister. Share them with this House. Share them with the national community. We want to know where are you getting the revenue from.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister also did not say how he was going to fund this deficit. When I read one of the books, of course, you can do it by way of borrowing, and the Minister intends to borrow \$6.4 billion. If it is that your expenditure is \$58 billion and your revenue is \$50 billion, there is a shortfall there of some \$8 billion. He is going to be out of that \$8 billion. He is going to be borrowing \$6.4 billion. I guess on the rest he might be doing some sort of either internal or external borrowing for the next \$2 billion to make up that \$7.6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the question again: where is the exit strategy for this deficit financing? Whilst I agree, Mr. Minister, when you deal with deficit spending—many countries across the world would get involved in deficit financing. It helps to grow your economy, to rejuvenate your economy, to restructure our economy, but you must have a planned strategy.

I said it last year, I will say it again this year, what is your plan? You said you are going to reduce this deficit by 1 per cent of GDP per annum. So, if your GDP is \$88 billion, and you intend to reduce that by 1 per cent, then you are telling me, that you will do so, at say \$88 million every year. Why not 2 per cent? Why not 3 per cent? On what basis, Mr. Minister, did you select 1 per cent as opposed to 3, 4, or 5 per cent?

We are saying then, that you are budgeting for a deficit financing even past 2015, when you would be long gone from office. What is happening? You know, we keep asking these questions. We asked them during the budget debate. We are

going to come back here again, when we deal with a Finance Bill. Then you all are going to come back again around May/June for the Supplementation of Appropriation Bill, where you will come back to ask for more money. We keep asking, and asking. We saw last year where your predecessor came back and got another \$2.6 billion and skyrocketed the deficit further up.

Mr. Roberts: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Is the hon. Member aware that the GDP is approximately \$240 billion? So 1 per cent may be about \$2.4 billion. Therefore, in three years, \$2.4 could be about 7 which would bring the deficit into balance.

Miss M. Mc Donald: I think you need to look at your accounts. I think you need to examine it; all right? Understand the figures that we are using. I will make myself available. Once you are ready to learn, I can teach you. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, I have no confidence in the Minister's budget. The budget is flawed because the Minister's underlined assumptions are wrong. Mr. Speaker, let me state up front, that the Government cannot achieve this revenue projection—cannot; cannot.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to examine the performance of the energy sector. We have the energy sector and we have the non-oil sector or the non-energy sector. Let us look at the performances of these two sectors and see what has been going on there, to really have an appreciation as to whether the Minister can achieve his desired goals.

Mr. Speaker, with the present dismal performance in oil exploration and production, this projection cannot be achieved. Petroleum sector: the petroleum sector is expected to register its second consecutive year of decline; contracting by 1 per cent in 2012. The 2012 out-turn in this sector reflects contractions in refining, exploration and production, as well as it will affect the petrochemical industry, the petrochemicals like ammonia, urea and methanol. As a result, the sector's share of real GDP is expected to fall to 40.2 per cent in 2012 from 41.1 per cent in 2011.

Refining is also expected to contract by 4.2 per cent. Exploration and production is expected to decline by 1.1 per cent. The petrochemical industry is expected to contract for a third consecutive year by—though miniscule, still a contraction—0.8 per cent.

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According, to oilnergy.com—I always like to bring my research into it—the average monthly price of IPE Brent Crude has fallen from a high of US \$124 per barrel in March of 2012 and is projected to reach around \$100 by October this month, 2012.

Let us look at natural gas. Mr. Speaker, I predicted in my 2012 budget that the Henry Hub gas price would fall, and it did. It did fall to US \$2 per MMBtu in March of 2012. While the price of natural gas has rebounded to over US \$3 per MMBtu in August 2012—I am tracking it; I track it—it has begun to decline again.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Track you? Do not have time to waste, Sir. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: No tracking.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, that back in June 2011 natural gas was set at almost US \$5 per MMBtu. Mr. Speaker, these statistics indicate the point that I am making, that natural gas prices are very, very, volatile and perhaps the Minister might have set his price of US \$2.75 a little too high, perhaps—I am just stating. He will have the facts and when you are wrapping up you can advise me.

I also mentioned that warmer temperatures are not good for natural gas sales. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, for the week ending September 6, 2012, the temperature in—all the regions across the United States experienced warmer temperatures by approximately 7 degrees when compared to 30-year normal temperature. So it is on that basis, I am saying perhaps the Minister needs to revise his gas price. So total natural gas production declined by 5.7 per cent over the corresponding period between 2010/2011.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the petrochemicals: the production and export levels for ammonia, urea and methanol all declined in the period 2011-2012. Ammonia: during the first nine months of 2012—there are 11 ammonia plants—their production level fell by 4.1 per cent over the period 2010/2011.

With respect to urea production: urea production decreased by 22.8 per cent and the exports fell by 21.2 per cent.

Methanol: methanol registered a decline of 7.3 per cent between October 2011 to June 2012, over fiscal period October 2010 to June 2011. Exports in methanol fell by 9.5 per cent in the period under review. So that is how your energy sector performed and you see declines right through.

Let us look at how the non-energy sector has performed. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Minister cannot be serious, when he has budgeted \$30.7 billion up from \$28.9 billion from the previous year. The facts are that our main non-oil sectors have not been growing. Agriculture has been in decline, construction has been in decline, manufacturing has been in decline, tourism has been in decline—you said it this morning, Member for Chaguanas East. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Cadiz: Not from last year. From last year there has been an increase.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Does not matter. Does not matter.

Let us look at manufacturing. Manufacturing in 2012 declined by— I am using your figures, you know. It is your figures. I have not interfered with these figures. It is your figures I am using and I can interpret figures well. In 2012, manufacturing declined by 0.4 per cent in 2012, down from 1.1 per cent in 2011? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Yes, their figures.

Miss M. Mc Donald: The contribution of this subsector to real GDP is projected to fall slightly to 8.8 per cent in 2011/2012 over 9 per cent registered for 2010/2011.

Agriculture: lower economic activity also projected in agriculture which is estimated to contract by 4.9 per cent in 2012, following a negligible decline in 2010/2011; 0.1 per cent.

Construction and quarrying are projected to contract in real terms by 2 per cent in 2012—2 per cent. The subsectors share of real GDP is likely to be decreased also to 5 per cent, down from 5.2 per cent in 2010/2011.

Tourism: Trinidad and Tobago is expected to receive 357,159 air visitors during calendar year 2012, a decline of 4.8 per cent, when compared to 375,202 air visitors estimated to have landed during 2011. So, I am asking the question, exactly what does the Minister understand? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: He knows nothing.

Miss M. Mc Donald: What magic wand, Mr. Minister, do you intend to wave to get at a revenue figure of \$30 billion for the non-energy sector? What do you intend to do? I want to know. In light of the Minister's questionable revenue figures, his plan to incur expenditure of \$58.4 billion for 2013, in my opinion, it is far-fetched, it is insane, it is totally irresponsible and it borders on being ruthless. It is a country that you are running. *[Desk thumping]* As I said, I will not be

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surprised if you come back here next May/June in the Supplementation of Appropriation to ask for more money. I would not be surprised to see that deficit going to all nine or \$10 billion. I will not be surprised. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the Minister confidently states that his Government has returned the country to economic growth of 1.2 per cent for 2012. What is the basis for this claim? My colleague from Diego Martin North/East has dealt well with that figure—2012 is not yet complete. All the figures are not in and it is rather premature of the Minister to make such pronouncements as if they were fact.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, that with few exceptions the world is in a recession. Let us look at some countries. I always look at other countries and see what we are doing because we are not on our own. USA had an estimated growth in 2012 of 2.1 projecting 2.3 for 2013. Canada had an estimated growth for 2012 of 1.7 per cent and estimating 2.3 per cent for 2013.

Brazil had theirs set at 3 per cent. They slashed it, so their estimated growth is 2 per cent for 2012, projecting 4 per cent for 2013. China had theirs at 8.5 per cent and they slashed it to 7.7 per cent growth for 2012 and projecting 8.1 per cent for 2013. Spain, negative 1.5 per cent. Portugal, negative 3.2 per cent. France, 0 per cent. Ireland, 0.1 per cent. Greece—well they are in a class by themselves—negative 7.2 per cent. Germany, 0.8 per cent. Austria, 0.9 per cent.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, my opinion, my own reading of the situation tells me that we would be lucky to achieve 1 per cent growth for 2012, if so much.

Mr. Sharma: That is your projection.

Miss M. Mc Donald: There are simply too many downside risks, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, the Minister projects a rate of growth of 2.5 per cent for fiscal 2013, twice time his projection for 2011. How ridiculous this is? This is rather far-fetched. The Minister has to be a magician. Given our poor performance in oil and non-oil revenues and, bearing in mind, the downturn across the globe, Minister, I have to tell you as the young people, get real. Get real.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to the unemployment in this country. You know last year I searched high, I searched low, trying to get figures on unemployment and I recalled the then Minister berated me, abused me because I used the figures from Central Bank because I could not get anything from CSO.

The Minister said, “You are wrong.” I am wrong to use the Central Bank figures and my colleague here, the Member for Diego Martin West said, “So what dey want you to use?” I said, “Well, I don’t know.” He suggested, he proffered an explanation, he said they wanted to use your propaganda. I am not using your propaganda. I am not doing that. You see, and I said it then, and I will say it again, we need to become data driven in this country. You need to go and restructure and rejuvenate the CSO, so we will be able to get figures so we could make some informed, timely informed decisions. That is why I take serious objection to the Minister telling me and telling this country—at page 14 of his budget statement, he said:

“The unemployment rate in 2011...4.9 per cent reflected a level of full employment;”

I have some questions for the Minister. How is the Minister measuring unemployment? Is his Government including CEPEP, URP, colour me orange in the unemployment figures? That is one. Are you including the thousands of persons who have given up the job search in frustration, Mr. Minister? I cannot trust those figures. That 4.9 per cent, I cannot trust it and, again, today, I make my frustrated plea to the Government to do something about CSO, so we can have access to reliable and current unemployment figures and other statistics.

Mr. Imbert: They will never do that.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I totally debunk the Minister’s full employment claims because by his own admission, one-quarter of the country’s population is living below the poverty line. So what full employment is the Minister talking about? You have come into—when I say you, I mean the whole Government because you just reach—Government on a mantra of change. We are going to do things different.

Dr. Rowley: For the youth.

Miss M. Mc Donald: It is all about governance. Yes, and it is about openness, it is about transparency, it is about new politics. Where is the new politics man? Not here. It is about new politics.

Hon. Member: Accountability.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Tell the poor people of this nation why their circumstances have not changed over the last two-and-an-half years. Tell them that! Tell my constituents in Port of Spain South that we have reached full

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employment and they need nothing more. Just out of curiosity, Mr. Minister, if we have reached full employment, will we be importing labour to fuel the Government's so-called growth?

At page 24, you said you are going to grow the economy and one of the mechanisms you are going to use, is stimulating the construction sector. This is what you had to say:

“...we intend to create a construction boom across this nation.”

Now, when you create this construction boom and there is full employment on the other hand, where are you getting the labour from, Mr. Minister?

Dr. Rowley: “Same Chinese they was bad talking.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: Where are you getting it from? Tell me, are you going to bring in the Chinese? No, check with your Government. They do not want the Chinese here. They abused us and berated us when we brought in the Chinese.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing that inflation seems finally to be on the decline, but be that as it may, poor people in this country—and I single out my constituents of Port of Spain South—are suffering for lack of basic amenities. I should say east Port of Spain. How does Government spending \$58.4 billion help them? What is their share in this economic pie? Do they not have a right to share in this country's resources? I say, yes, Mr. Speaker, they should.

I want to say that this Government needs to go back—you, Mr. Minister, you need to go back and revise those figures. At least explain to us your inflation, your unemployment and all those projected revenues, because I am saying that if your assumptions are wrong, then the whole budget, Mr. Minister, is wrong.

I want to go into an area here, the national insurance, and I can tell you, as I said, the Minister laid in this Parliament this. [*Member displays document*] This is the 8th Actuarial Review of the National Insurance System. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: It has a nice cover on it.

Miss M. Mc Donald: “Well, the Opposition doh get the nice covers. We get it like this.”

Hon. Member: Just so?

Miss N. Mc Donald: Just like this. I am sure that people have not read this, but I took time out to read that actuarial report and almost everyone was delighted to hear the Minister's announcement of increases in the short-term benefits for

national insurance, and he did so. What are these increases? He has moved maternity benefits from 13 weeks to 14 weeks.

With respect to other benefit payments, they will be increased by 50 per cent—special maternity, retirement grant, funeral grant. All good! People would like that. Sickness benefit, survivors' employment and employment injury will be increased by 25 per cent in 2013 and 20 per cent in 2014.

In respect of minimum survivor's benefits, there will be increased benefits: the spouse now gets \$600; a child, \$600; dependant parents, \$600 if one parent is alive, or \$300 each if both parents are alive; and an orphan gets \$1,200.

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister did not say and which I will say this afternoon because I think that the national community should know this, is that right now the national insurance fund, the liabilities against the fund are so high that the funds are insufficient to meet the liabilities on the fund. The fund is broke. [*Crosstalk*] The fund is broke! It is a fact! Read your report. You all just come here and heckle and heckle the PNM, but it is the PNM that is educating this country. [*Desk thumping*] It is the PNM in this budget that is educating this country.

Mr. Speaker, let me read for you—I am looking at the executive summary. The first point I want to look at is the \$3.3 billion shortfall in accumulated assets at the end of the financial year 2009/2010, and that is essentially due to unfavourable deviations regarding investment returns. But that is not so bad. We have to look at the demographic pressures—Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I agree with you.

Mr. Imbert: I apologize.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I did not want to call my own into—

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not a problem.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, it is the demographic pressures that, to me, are causing the problems here at NIS. Let me tell you and I am quoting:

The number of persons at pensionable age 60 and over will increase from 161,005 persons in 2010 to 412,000 persons in 2060.

So that is 155 per cent increase. While the population, age 16 to 59—that is the population that is working; the contributory base, those are the people

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working to pay these people who are now over 60, will decrease by 18 per cent. So your contributory base decreasing and your pensionable age group increasing. The number of working aged persons for each person age 60 and over will fall dramatically from five persons to one person, and let me tell you what this means.

Currently right now, five working persons taking care of one pensionable person, but because that group is growing so much and the contributory base is decreasing, over time this is going to move from five persons supporting one pensioner, to a one on one situation. One working person supporting one pensioner.

Mr. Imbert: What?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, this is what the public is supposed to know. Let me continue:

Financial projections reveal that the system's expenditure will exceed contribution income.

Let me define what is the expenditure here as they use it here. It is the \$3,000 pension and all the various benefits that I just read out, as well as, the administrative cost. That is termed the expenditure for NIS.

So the system's expenditure will exceed contribution income from financial year 2012/2013. So as we speak, expenditure is greater than all the funds we have inside of there. It is greater. The total assets of the NIS will continue to increase—the assets will increase—until between 2026—2027, but after that there will be a rapid decrease and the NIS funds would be completely depleted by 2039/2040—oh Lord, Mr. Speaker—unless the Government does two things, increase contributions or decrease benefits or do both at the same time.

At page 12, there is a suggestion here. The Minister proposes to increase NIS payment from where it is right now, from 11.4 per cent to 11.7 per cent. I think that is from January 2013, Sir?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Good! But if you go to page 12, the report is suggesting that—and they give you a schedule here, this is how you are supposed in order to save—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Port of Spain South has expired.

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Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

2.30 p.m.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member for Laventille West, and of course, thanks to all my colleagues.

There is a schedule here, and the Actuarial Report, at page 12, Mr. Minister, is suggesting that between 2013—2017, the contribution rate should be 12 per cent; between 2018—2020, the contribution rate should be 15 per cent; between 2021—2040, it should be 17 per cent, and between 2041—2060, it should be 25 per cent. Therefore, this is how, Mr. Speaker, you need to save, and I am saying—that I am calling on every citizen in this country who has contributed to national insurance for all those years, stand up for your rights. Stand up!

I will tell you something else. There is a plan now, and it stated, to bring on 100,000 self-employed persons—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: For free!

Miss M. Mc Donald:—for free, but this is what the report is saying at page 75 of the report. I do not know if it is for free, they might be paying, but the point about it is, because he did not clarify, what this report is saying is that the self-employed persons had—[*Interruption*] Please.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, for Diego Martin North/East, could you assist us, the Member is being disturbed. Please.

Miss M. Mc Donald: In the interest of time, I would just highlight it. I am reading from the report. On the one hand, they said the self-employed persons had the opportunity to register in the past and to accrue rights when contribution rates were lower, but they did not. On the other hand, the self-employed persons may switch during their career from one status to another. Fairness suggests that these workers should pay the same amount for the same benefits with their salaried workers irrespective of their status. I hope that the Government takes this on board. So, I have put it outside there, and the Minister will have to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, in the interest of time, we have dealt with GATE and I think that two of my colleagues have already dealt with GATE so I will not touch that. I want to go to the growth poles. In the budget statement of 2011, at

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page 28, the former Minister spoke about opening up of new economic spaces and he created five growth poles.

The first pole includes the four Cs: Couva, Charlieville, Carapichaima and Chaguanas. The second one was deep south—the south-western peninsula. The third pole is east Port of Spain. The fourth is the north coast and the fifth is the north-east region of Tobago. At page 29, for east Port of Spain, because I am looking to see what is going on in east Port of Spain, he said the intervention here will also rely heavily on the creation of business incubators, targeting the arts and proposing to restore east Port of Spain into a heritage-like city like Old Havana in Cuba and Old San Juan in Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, the same thing was repeated in 2011.

What is happening here, and the Minister has given his commitment under sustainable city project and he has done it again in the 2013 budget—“you know what this is about, Mr. Speaker?” Out of a budget of \$58.4 billion, this sustainable city project, they are relying on the IDB—the Inter-American Development Bank. They have selected five cities from 117 cities in order to develop into some heritage sites. If the IDB, and for the last one, this is the third year, has not put a single cent, nothing has happened and this Government is sitting there waiting. So east Port of Spain gets nothing, absolutely nothing, until the IDB decides to step in.

Mr. Speaker, all I am saying, my understanding is, wherever one goes, one will hear east Port of Spain residents saying to us, “We need sustainable jobs”—“dats all they need, yuh know”, sustainable jobs—“we need housing.” Those are the two requests that east Port-of-Spain—from Duncan Street to Nelson Street to Beverly Hills, all over, that is what they will ask for. But, when I look at the budget, and I have been telling my colleagues that, this budget, to me, demonstrates inequitable distribution of resources. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I look at east Port-of-Spain. Whilst we are waiting on the IDB to build a sustainable heritage city, let me share with you what other areas are getting in this budget. Let me share with you, Mr. Speaker. That is why I am saying that the south growth pole and the growth pole with the four Cs, central, they are getting the bulk of this \$58.4 billion. Let me go through: An oncology centre to be built in Penal at a cost \$70 million; the Debe campus in Penal at a cost of \$509,358,377; a children’s hospital in Preysal at a cost of US \$150 million which is almost TT \$1 billion.

The campus of COSTAATT in Chaguanas at a cost of \$32.7 billion; the construction of an open campus facility in Chaguanas at a cost of \$160 million; the establishment of a skills and technology centre in Debe/Penal at a cost of \$39.3 million; the national aquatic centre in Couva at a cost of \$175 million. NALIS is going to start with building two libraries at Toco and Siparia at a cost of \$106.2 million. A new hospital in Chaguanas, I did not get the cost of that. A YTEPP building will be completed; that will be a training facility at Waterloo in Chaguanas, at a cost of \$7.7 million. The Ministry of Food Production would be moving to Chaguanas; the Ministry of Community Development would be moving to Chaguanas; the national cycle centre in Couva at \$255 million.

Mr. Speaker, look, “ah exhausted, ah exhausted!” [*Desk thumping and Laughter*] Three point five billion dollars and what is in it for east Port of Spain? [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Or Diego Martin.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Or Diego Martin, or Laventille East, Laventille West, Diego Martin North/East. What is in it?

Hon. Member: Nothing!

Miss M. Mc Donald: And you have deemed east Port of Spain; you have deemed Morvant/Laventille; you have deemed Laventille West, hotspots! What is in it for them, Mr. Speaker, when all these centres and buildings are completed and established? You have created sustainable jobs in these areas.

I asked the Minister a question: can you please tell me how much would be allocated to create sustainable jobs for east Port of Spain? Mr. Minister, I want to hear you on that.

I turn my attention to regional corporations. Mr. Speaker, I had indicated that I am seeing an emerging trend and that is one of inequitable distribution of resources. Permit me to share some figures with you re: the Government’s subvention to the 14 municipal corporations across this country, and I want to go through. San Fernando corporation got an increase in its subvention of \$9.9 million, representing an increase of 9.7 per cent for 2013; Arima got \$2.5 million, representing an increase of 4.2 per cent; Chaguanas got \$6.4 million, representing 9.3 per cent; Diego Martin, \$2.6 million, representing 3.5 per cent; Tunapuna, \$1.5 million, representing 9.9 per cent; Sangre Grande, \$6.4 million, representing 10.2 per cent; Couva, \$8.1 million, representing 9 per cent; Mayaro, \$1.7 million, representing 2.6 per cent; Siparia, \$3.5 million, representing 5.5 per cent;

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Penal/Debe, \$1.5 million, representing 2.6 per cent; Princes Town, \$5 million, representing 7.5 per cent; Point Fortin, \$6.1 million, representing 12 per cent; Port of Spain, \$933,567, representing 0.48 per cent.

Hon. Members: Ooooooh!

Miss M. Mc Donald: San Juan/Laventille—Laventille East and Laventille West—\$462,212, representing .034 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Discrimination! Shame!

Miss Cox: Discrimination!

Miss M. Mc Donald: “Yuh hear me.” Port of Spain, \$933,567.

Miss Cox: “Leh we hear San Juan/Laventille, again.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: San Juan/Laventille, \$462,212, representing .034 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Shame. Shame! [*Continuous Crosstalk*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Tell me, Mr. Speaker, is this not inequitable distribution of resources? Is it not?

Miss Cox: “Shame and dey up and down in Laventille!”

Miss M. Mc Donald: Is it not?

Miss Cox: “Dey love Laventille.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: And whilst I am on this, I have to respond to the Member for Tabaquite from yesterday. Member for Tabaquite, you stood there like “ah paragon of virtue” and you said that the mayor—sorry, Mr. Speaker. He stood “like ah paragon of virtue” and he said that we must make friends with the mayor and ask the mayor why he would not spend the \$41 million unspent balances for the people of Port of Spain.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, today, that I was never in any bacchanal with the mayor. We have a difference of opinion but we all breathe the same PNM. [*Desk thumping*] We all drink from the same lifeblood of the PNM! “So I doh have to make friends, ah was never his enemy.” None of us here; we were never his enemy. [*Desk thumping*]

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Hon. Members: Never! [*Crosstalk*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the mayor and the mayor said to me, he has made—and I want the Member for Tabaquite to listen good because when you come here, you must come here with the truth and nothing else but the truth! [*Desk thumping*] Fifteen requests were made especially under the last Minister. Fifteen requests! He called and he went to see you. The mayor had a meeting with you—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—and he pointed this out to you and he wrote you, and you told him that he needs to send in some letter detailing, giving line by line—“ah wrote it down”—line by line!

Dr. Rowley: Brick by brick!

Miss M. Mc Donald: On giving explanation for each line item what it is he want.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Miss M. Mc Donald: So why did you make that false accusation yesterday? [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: “Because he is ah liar!”

Miss M. Mc Donald: False accusation you have done. False! [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, so is the case with the regional—how much time do I have, Mr. Speaker? “Good, ah have enough time.”

I want to go to the housing issue. Let us go to housing, Mr. Speaker. “Ah going to housing.” [*Crosstalk and laughter*] Stand by, stand by, Member for Oropouche East. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Oropouche East in his contribution, and I have his *Hansard*, where he stated that the areas that are designated for construction of houses. I noted and I listened eagerly to hear about Port of Spain South, east Port of Spain and this is what he said. He said:

“The performance of the Government is what is troubling them, because when they look on and see”—what—“lands”—are being—“vested in the HDC, where we have...\$1.2 billion...so we can continue our work. When they look

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at the achievements across the board in terms of distribution of grants, construction of homes—we have three active sites at this moment, constructing over 3,000 housing units at Union Hall, Princes Town...Egypt, Chaguanas.”

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share something with the Member for Oropouche East, my colleague this afternoon, that 75 per cent of the housing demand in this country, in Trinidad, is along the East-West Corridor. [*Desk thumping*] From Carenage in the west to Sangre Grande in the east, 75 per cent is along the East-West Corridor yet we are seeing 3,000 housing units and nothing. What do I tell my people in east Port of Spain?

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about east Port of Spain. If you come behind the bridge, I take you to St. Paul Street, there are some towers there, “dey call dem” the Clifton Towers.

Mr. Jeffrey: “Who own, De Coteau own?”

Miss M. Mc Donald: This was built under—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Clifton De Coteau.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—the Member for Diego Martin West as Minister of Housing at that time, the hon. Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the plan of the PNM, the last administration, we recognized, when we looked at our Vision 2020 and the millennium development goals, one of the objectives was the eradication of poverty. And how does poverty manifest itself? One way is shelter and so, we had a plan. We acquired all the lands by the East End Foundry. When you come down the bus route, all the lands next to it, on the north side of it. You would notice all there is flat. We acquired those lands.

The first phase in the development of east Port of Spain was to put up those Clifton Towers and the second phase, when we acquired all those lands there, millions of dollars worth of land along the bus route, it is now a retention pond with water, bush, white birds swimming and mosquitoes. We were going to build high-rise apartments along there and it would have given us the opportunity to go to Duncan Street, Nelson Street and George Street and demolish all those buildings, because those buildings, the lifespan has come to an end. “So if yuh look tuh pong here, something drop, yuh pong there, something drop.” We were going to build these high-rise apartments down South Quay, move the people

from Duncan Street, George Street and Nelson Street and house them there and this would have given us the opportunity to rebuild the inner city. What has happened? My constituents come to me, “dey say: Madam MP dey painting Mango Rose, nothing happening with us; dey painting HDC apartments on St. Joseph Road, nothing happening to us; dey painting Bath Street around by Bassilon Street, nothing happening here tuh us; dey painting Plaisance Terrace up by John John, nothing happening tuh us.” What is going on with those buildings, George Street, Nelson Street and Duncan Street?

Mr. Speaker, it is not everything. They try to make it look as if everything PNM has done is bad, but if everything was bad “dey woudda never be sitting there, never.”

Miss Cox: That is right.

Miss M. Mc Donald: That plan I just outlined, that was the basic structure for the rejuvenation and the redevelopment of east Port of Spain and that is what I wanted to share.

Why not? If the Minister is creating this construction boom, why not go into east Port of Spain? All that land that is under water, birds and bush, why not—and mosquitoes—begin the construction? Why not do a construction boom in east Port of Spain? Start putting up some buildings. Be magnanimous and begin to put up some buildings along that bus route there and let us move the people from Duncan Street, from George Street and Nelson Street and house them and then you have—all you do now, moving, demolish those buildings and put up new high-rise apartments. That is what I want to share with my colleague from Oropouche East and Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: Ten minutes.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Good. Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the refurbishment of roads now. On the issue of roads in my constituency, I had submitted a list with five roads: Concession Drive in Sea Lots; Quevador Circular Road, St. Paul Street, Clifton Street and Plaisance Road. My understanding, from the former Minister of Works and Member for Chaguanas West, all these roads were already approved and just waiting to get started. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: “Jack just mamaguy yuh.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: However—I would not put it past him—portfolios changed and the new Minister sent me a letter stating that all prior requests would now be deemed null and void. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: I got one too.

Miss M. Mc Donald: You got one too. All right.

Mr. Imbert: We all did.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—and that I needed now to submit a new letter by August 31. I am saying it publicly, I did so and to date, I have not gotten a response, not even with the five roads that were already approved by the Ministry. I have now submitted a list with 15 roads. I am waiting to hear what he has to say.

Once again, you have heard me mention in this Parliament, the dance theatre at Picton. Mr. Minister, we deem east Port of Spain a hotspot. Before I demitted office in 2010, the foundation was already down for the first dance theatre in east Port of Spain, the Picton dance theatre. When the new Minister came in, Member for Naparima, when he came into office, it was disbanded. He disbanded it and that is where you will be able to get all the young people from that area coming together, learning to dance. These people go out. They go to Best Village “all around de place” and where do they practise their craft? They do it in somebody’s backyard, and all we were trying to do is to give them a little dance theatre. If you want to help with crime this is what you do.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I was dressing to come to Parliament and I got a phone call from one of my constituents telling me that a party is going to be held on the Duncan Street Basketball Court at the end of this month. “Dey say: we doh party no party, no pool party and no box ah food when de day come.” [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh know what we want? We want sustainable jobs like everybody else and we want proper housing like everybody else.” [*Desk thumping*] “We understand that everything cannot be done immediately, but at least show us that something is happening.” I said to my constituent: “I am going to Parliament today, I will champion your cause, so you listen and we will see what will happen thereafter.”

I want to take serious umbrage to what the Member for Chaguanas West and the Minister of National Security said: that the murder that happened is a PNM murder.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Nonsense!

Miss M. Mc Donald: That cannot happen. We feel as bad as anyone else. How can we say that that is a PNM murder? So, if a murder takes place in Couva, down south or what not, so what is that a PP murder? So we looking to see the areas now and we would call it a COP murder if it happened in St. Augustine, 'eh'? Or if it happened in Siparia, that is a UNC murder? Sometimes we have to be very careful in what we say and sometimes in the heat of the moment, when the adrenalin is running, we say all kinds of things but we have to temper our tongues.

Mr. Speaker, I see emerging in this Parliament here—but before I get there, when I came into politics in November of 2007, two things the former Prime Minister said to us. He said one politics is not for the faint hearted and two, never take anything personal. But inside of here, you stand and you make your offerings and you would not believe the little threats, the subtle threats and the abuse that you get, but I do not have a problem because I will talk as long as I am a Member of Parliament. I will talk.

Miss Cox: Parley.

Miss M. Mc Donald: That is right, I came here to parley, this is Parliament and I came here to represent my constituents and even though the Member for Couva North talked about—what is the word she was using?—

Miss Cox: Delusional.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—we are delusional. Member for Couva North, you could not have been sitting there if the PNM were delusional as you claim them to be. You could never be sitting there. [*Desk thumping*] You go back and think about the benefits that you would have derived from successive PNM Governments. Think about it.

Miss Ramdial: I hear you.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, what I have to state is that, from where I sit, as I said, I have gone through this budget. I am the last to speak on my Bench and I want to state that we cannot agree or put our support in this budget. We cannot do it. This budget is inequitable. This budget is deceptive—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: It is unlawful.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—and it is unlawful, and as such we will not support any of the measures in this budget until all of us here are equitably treated. All of us inside this room here, we rank *pari passu* and we will not accept being treated as any second grade MPs in this country.

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

The Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism (Hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege for me to address this honourable House in this my maiden speech as the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism. I am happy to be here. I want to say special thanks to the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his foresight and vision in pointing us in the right direction in presenting us with a great budget.

I want to thank the hon. Prime Minister for appointing me as the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism and so I am happy today. I would have liked to hasten to talk about the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism because it is a Ministry that I am terribly excited about. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am deeply involved in the arts. I like to play the drums. I play the cuatro. I play the guitar. You know, so I would want to hasten but I am delayed in my haste by some of the recent contributions that I have heard here, and so, as much as I am not of the ilk of responding to the PNM because they are their worst enemies, they are on a self-destructive path and have been so for a long time and as much as I would have preferred not to have to respond, I would take a few minutes.

I have found that very often, the people who bandy the idea of truth and call for truth are the ones who are the first inclined to use half-truths as truth. And so, that is the *modus operandi*. They present half of the truth as if it is truth. So, when the Member for Port of Spain South tries to create an impression—because this is the half-truth, you give statistical information and you create an impression as if the Government is trying to migrate everything or as if certain parts of Trinidad are not in Trinidad.

3.00 p.m.

“To create de impression as if people in Laventille cyar work in Chaguanas” is ludicrous, sorry, is crazy, you know. Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that this story and this use of facts and information, or use of statistics and information to suggest that the HDC is now involved in a migration of house building in certain parts of the country. I understand that this is the PNM agenda when they were involved in trying to migrate their people to “win election, they started up that.” [*Desk thumping*]

Now that the plan is being carried out—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Dey vex.”

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas:—“dey vex, and dey saying” it, as if we are trying to—but that was their agenda to move all the housing down to south, to Debe and to

Chaguanas, for whatever activity they had in their minds. Secondly, to suggest also that there is no interest in putting houses in the East-West Corridor, is also a half-truth and an innuendo meant to mislead people. We all know that the East-West Corridor is the most populated part of the country—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Exactly!

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas:—and that land availability is a problem, you know, but indeed a lot of houses are being built in the East-West Corridor. In my constituency alone, 1,200 homes are going to be put up in La Florissante, and there are hundreds of homes in Oropune. Unless they want us to go and build on the hill and we know what happened when they built on the hill. They built on a gravel pit that has to be—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Las Alturas.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas:—Las Alturas that has to be demolished. So, there is an unreality about their truth that is meant to misrepresent the facts, to create a distortion in the minds of people, and it is couched in a kind of language—I do not want to say what kind of language, but it is couched in a language to divide this nation, and that is their constant strategy, to create some kind of east-west/north-south, “we against dem type of attitude; dat is ah PNM agenda right through”. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rambachan: “And we exposing it.”

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Distance yourself from colonial thinking, that is what I have to say. Second, this issue about—and the whole thing continued into the other foray about not allocating money to Port of Spain. Somebody from the other side needs to explain and they need to ask the Mayor of Port of Spain, why is it that there has been over \$37 million unspent? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: How much? How Much?

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Thirty-seven million, six hundred and forty-six thousand, four hundred and thirty-six dollars.

Mr. Indarsingh: Repeat it. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Why are they not effectively spending their recurrent money in the interest of the people of Port of Spain? And if you guys, the PNM, were so interested in east Port of Spain, why is it in this state that you say it is in, after years of “dem people” supporting you wholeheartedly? I would have thought “if that is your biggest supporters”, you would have invested the most in them, and they would have been the shining city on a hill.

Hon. Members: Just right. Just right.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: To the *contraire*, it is just the opposite as you rightly say. Why have you left them in this condition when these people have been supporting you for all of these years? Explain to me, Member for Port of Spain South, why is it when the Mayor was asked to submit—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: “De Mare.”

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: “De Mare?”—an analysis of his unspent balances in accordance with the prescribed Municipal Corporations Act, why has he not submitted it to date? All of these things need to be answered, and you can see why the use of half-truths and innuendoes is designed to corrupt the minds of people who would not give them a lot of thought. So, when you want to speak the truth, speak all of the truth and do not use “half de truth” to deceive people.

Mr. Indarsingh: Deception of the PNM.

Dr. Rambachan: But you are exposing them.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: So, Mr. Speaker, let us be honest in our approach to speaking the truth. When we talk about equitable distribution, as the Member for Port of Spain South would want to say, “doh” only talk about equity during one year, talk about equity over a period of time.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Talk about equity over a period of time, and if one area has not been getting over years, over years, over years, then it is conceivable that more things should be done there to bring them up to speed. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Tell us. Tell us. Tell us.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: So, talk about equity over time, do not look at one budget and say: “look dey giving more so, and so, and so”, speak the truth.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: And speak it all the time; be consistent over time. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: “De PNM not capable of de truth.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to contribute to this budget. As the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, and representing the people of Lopinot/Bon Air West, I am happy to be here today. Since my appointment as the

Minister, I have had the privilege to serve my fellow citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in this Ministry. I have always regarded it as the most important Ministry in the whole scheme of things. I know other people might have different feelings about that, but in my view, I am deeply convinced that the arts and even more so culture, the culture of my people is what ultimately allows us to fully understand ourselves and our place in the world.

It is culture that teaches us how to appreciate one another and to live harmoniously. No wonder culture has been so neglected on that side, but I will talk about that at another opportunity. It is our culture that helps us to make sense of what we are doing in this little tip of mountain that is jutting out of the sea. It is indeed culture that teaches us how to make a living, and how to make artefacts that help us mark the passage of time as we sojourn here on this earth. I am honoured to be entrusted with, as I would say, as the keeper of the flames, because when all is said and done and only the thing that remains, and the ashes remain, it is our culture, the way that we live, that will help us to rise out of the ashes.

Mr. Speaker, in this 21st Century, I want to talk a little about why I think culture is so important. In the 21st—in the 20th Century, culture has come to mean very significantly, the study of how we develop ourselves as a people and the way we live. Everything that is not attributed to genetics, things that we are creating as we walk, is our culture. It represents how we have been evolving as a people and the way we are creating things, the distinct ways that we live and how we continue to make experiences, and how we continue to make ways that relate to each other, how we continue to create the things that represent our creativity and our ideas. You see why this is so important?

There is a distinction between things we are making and the way we are in the world. It is culture that is at the base of how we go to work, and why we go to work and what we do when we go to work. It is culture that is at the base of why we value another human being, whether we will decide to take that person's life or no, or how we treat somebody; or what are our thoughts about our women, about our children, about work, our ideas about what we are doing here, where we are going, how we are going to live. It is culture that is at the base of all these things. That is why this is so significant.

It is why we must place special emphasis on this idea of making our culture, and indeed Trinidad and Tobago has signed numerous conventions that relate to protecting our culture, those that we have built, those that we have met and those that we continue to make; our folklore; our ideas. I say make, Mr. Speaker,

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because we make our culture every day; it is not a static thing. It is not like we say: this is Trinidad culture and we come here and that is what it is. No. We are making this every day by the ideas in our heads, the things we do—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Come on.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas:—the places we go, the education we get. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Dats direction. Dats direction.”

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: And you can see the behaviour that is carried on in Trinidad and Tobago today is as a result of the history of education, family life, everything that has been going on. So it is very important that we pay particular emphasis to our culture. It is out of our culture that we create our arts and our artefacts. So, I understand and I believe that the cultural industry and culture have a significant part to play in our development.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: When I talk about development, Mr. Speaker, I am not just talking about the industrialization of our society, where we feel that if we build things or we make structures they are considered as development. I am talking about a movement towards a more meaningful way of living, because all of us can attest to a time when the life that we live and the quality of our life was very powerful and strong, and we did not have as much toys as we have now.

“All of us could hark back to a time when yuh could leave yuh door open; when yuh could go by yuh neighbour; when yuh could go by de street; yuh could walk down de road; yuh could go by the beach in de night and make love or something and yuh did not feel any sense of fear.” Did I say that? Yes, I did. And that was a quality of life. The question is how do we keep our quality of life as we continue to move and develop Trinidad and Tobago? That is what we are about.

Indeed, Trinidad and Tobago has been blessed with a richness of culture, a richness of diversity, a richness of intelligence and a richness of creativity. The Member for St. Augustine spoke about the knowledge, the creativity and the kind of people. Every day this nation is blessed with—we think about it, Mr. Speaker, it is 1.3, 1.4 whatever, million people on this island, and we did better than India, at the Olympics, that has over a billion people.

It shows the talent, the creativity and the beauty that is here, right in this little nation of ours, and this is something that has to be protected. This is something

that has made us global leaders in a lot of things and highly respected the world over. There are so many countries that have so many more people than Trinidad and Tobago, and we could go anywhere and speak, and people will know us for something. They could know us for sports, they could know us for education, they could know us for culture, they could know us for cricket, beauty, everything.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: This is Trinidad and Tobago, and this is our culture, and we have to protect it at all costs. For too long, too long our culture has been treated as an appendage or some kind of attachment. I heard earlier the Minister of Tourism talking about the treatment of tourism as if it is a bastard child or an outside child, but I think we have treated culture and the arts as if they are, I would say like we pimp our culture, Mr. Speaker. There is a way that you use it for whatever beauty it has, but you really do not respect it; that is what pimping your culture is.

So we plan everything and on “de last half, we bawl, we should throw in some culture, and that means we find somebody and then we try to find ah formula.” “All right, we should have ah Indian dance, we should have ah African song, we should have ah drum, you know”, this kind of way of treating culture as if its only value is for what it makes us feel.

I am trying to make the point that this is the most valuable thing we have, and we should work hard at creating and supporting the kind of culture. We should support our creative industry and its contribution to the diversification of our economy. Indeed, one of our coalition stakeholders has said that our cultural industry is a billion-dollar industry, and all over the world people are aware of that.

The core mandate of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism is to provide an enabling environment for the support and the development of the arts and culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the People’s Partnership manifesto, our own manifesto; let me tell you how we articulate this. We call it:

“EMBRACING THE ARTS

Man Cannot Live by Bread Alone”

That is what it says right here. It means that we are sure that the creative industry in the arts can allow a significant portion of our population to make a living.

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It says:

“A nation cannot seek its development exclusively in political and economic matters. We believe that it is in the arts that the spirit of our people emerges and that the possibilities inherent in artistic endeavour need to be nurtured. A cultural environment that frees up our people for creative expression will strengthen national identity...”

And we need that.

“without in any way, stifling individual expression and diversity.”

It goes on to say:

“We will develop this vital sector on the following pillars:

- Respect the work of our creative people
- Use the arts to strengthen our national identity and to foster the spirit of unity in diversity
- Generate sustainable livelihood for persons directly involved in the arts
- Allow for the sharing of our creative products and talents with the rest of the world”

That is a formula for developing our artistes, developing the arts, developing a creative industry and taking it to the rest of the world, and that is what our Ministry is entrusted with. This Ministry was established in May 2010, through an amalgamation of—we had the culture division; the National Museum and Art Gallery; the national trust; the national library; information system; the archives; all of these we put together to create this Ministry.

3.15 p.m.

Today, we have a recent alignment of the Ministry and, indeed, we now have a Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration and I am sure we will be working closely together to drive this ongoing agenda. NALIS, the National Museum and Art Gallery, the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago and the archives have been removed from our Ministry and so we are focused clearly on the development of arts and culture. We are becoming specialists as the Member for Moruga/Tableland would say.

What is under our purview are the carnival and creative arts, cultural organizations, national days, festivals, steel pan, tassa, the National Carnival

Commission, the Carnival Institute, the National Academies for the Performing Arts, north and south, Queen's Hall, Naparima Bowl, the National Steel Symphony Orchestra, the National Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Theatre Arts Company.

As articulated in our strategic plan, the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism is committed to harness and facilitate the benefits of our country's cultural diversity in order to drive the economy. In this regard, it is important that we clarify our vision and our mission for this Ministry. The vision of our Ministry says:

Our vision is a Trinidad and Tobago shaped by its rich multicultural heritage, possessing a flourishing creative economy and building a knowledge-based economy.

We are here to be the driver that optimizes the contribution of our heritage and cultural sector to national life; to be a provider of equitable access information and the bridge that connects all our people and all our cultures.

As such, the Ministry provides critical support to the cultural and the creative sectors, while spearheading programmes and initiatives that strengthen our individual and our collective identity as we build nationhood. It is clear, therefore, that we have an interest in multiculturalism and diversity management.

Let me take a short time to clarify the idea of multiculturalism. When we talk about multiculturalism, we are not talking about apartheid. Apartheid was where you had one group over so and another group over so and neither the twain shall meet. That was a system that was based on disrespect; and a system that was based on division and a system that was on oppression. That is not Trinidad and Tobago.

When we talk about multiculturalism, we are not talking about the separate but equal doctrine. The separate but equal doctrine says: "Awright, we know that dey not so bad, but let us just stay in our own area." As the old song used to say, "You in your lil corner and I in mine." We are not talking about that—we reject that idea—nor are we talking about the melting pot theory. That was the time in the 1960s or the 1970s or somewhere there, where they believed that they should take everything, put it in a big pot, boil it for 100 years or more; keep it stirring for 100 years or more, then you turn out coffee-coloured people by the score.

Mr. McLeod and my colleague from Tobago East would remember that song. That was the old theory that you were not supposed to claim your identity, but

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you are supposed to get it mixed up. In other words, what we would call here in Trinidad, “douglarisation”. I know that the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara would like that, but that is not the idea of multiculturalism—to melt down everybody so that nobody has—we love the fact that there are different people in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the beauty of the thing. What we are talking about, multiculturalism, is that all of us are equal and we all have a right to be here; and that we all must play an active role in contributing what we come with to make this a much better space for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, all this information, the framers of our Constitution and of our nation understood this and wanted this. They put that in there—that this is a nation where every creed and race finds an equal place—they put it in that all of us should share equally from the common good. They put it in there, that all of us have equal right to life, to liberty, to freedom, to protection from the law, to join political parties, to unjoin if we want to, to speak. This is because we believe that everybody on this space that is called Trinidad and Tobago should be able to live to their full potential and make a full contribution to their own livelihood and to the development of the nation. They should bring whatever creative talent that they have to do that.

As a Ministry, we should create the opportunity and the space for people to do that. We should create all kinds of things and so I understand that the role of Government is to provide a facilitative and enabling environment so that the best can flourish. That is what the People’s Partnership is about—helping us and participating with us.

One of the many ways of this Ministry and the People’s Partnership Government, for example, is the way we disburse our grants and our funding to all groups in society regardless of religion, race, creed or class. In spite of what people might say or the judgments they might make, we have been doing that. All race, colour, creed, class, festivals, religion, it goes on. It speaks to the preservation of our cultural expression and our unique tradition, once again with a wholesome respect for diversity.

The manifesto continues to guide us as to what to expect and as I outline this part of the manifesto, what I would do subsequently is to go through what we have been doing and we can check against this to see if we have been fulfilling the mandate:

- “1. Create a clear policy for the arts
2. Create decentralised spaces for the expression and performance of the arts

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3. Facilitate the establishment of festival villages
4. Provide fiscal incentives for the promotion of the arts..."

This is in our manifesto because we understand and we believe in the arts and we believe in our culture.

- "5. Strengthen the enforcement of the copyright laws
6. Establish an independent body for the endowment of the arts to give financial and other support to individual artistes, artistic organizations, productions and festivals
7. Make cultural promotion an essential function of Overseas Missions
8. Support the development of a network of community museums, equipped with efficient systems for archiving and protecting our legacy of artefacts, documents, buildings, and cultural skills, both traditional and new
9. Enhance training of arts administrators, curators, art historians, archivists, and tutors, creative and technical practitioners"

and develop schools to carry out this curricula...

- "10. Facilitate research..."

and develop schools to carry out this curricula;

- "10. Facilitate research and development of the arts
11. Encourage the financial sector to introduce a window for the development of the arts
12. Enhance and facilitate the environment through which there is reciprocity between local and foreign art forms
13. Work with the sector to develop Business opportunities and partnerships and to channel investments"

I have read that out as our promise and I would articulate to you, Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing at our Ministry and our nation and people can check to see if this is being done.

I want to outline to you some of the major accomplishments so that, as I rightly say, people can follow. In reviewing the Ministry's major accomplishments over the year 2011/2012, we talked about policy development

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and right now, we have before this nation, and this month in particular we have prepared, we have had numerous consultations to develop a multicultural policy and a cultural policy. We have put that policy together and in this month, the 29th and the 31st, all of us here and in Trinidad and Tobago would be given an opportunity to participate in the finalizing of that document. That is consultation, People's Partnership style.

We met with them, we put it together and now we put it back out for people to participate and make further contributions. The 29th will be here in Trinidad; the 31st will be in Tobago; and everybody will get to make a contribution to the final document.

We also put out a policy on grants and subventions so that everybody will know who can get; how you can get it; why you can get it; when you can get it and "when you cyar get it. We doh have a secret fund nowhey. We doh have a place where we dolin out money to we pardners. We doh have a slush fund that we pretending it is one thing and we distributing it in another way." No, Mr. Speaker, we have a policy here, a grants and subventions policy that people will come to know. This is right now before the Cabinet for ratification and for passing.

This is governance, People's Partnership style—consultation. We are not of the kind of people who, when you tell them, "Doh do that", they say: "No, yuh gehing it, put that in your pipe and smoke it!" We are not of that ilk. We are here in collaboration and—talking about consultation, Mr. Speaker, this Ministry from the inception and continuing with my placement in the Ministry, has continued with detailed consultation.

I have been meeting with various groups—and I know that the Minister before me, too, has been doing the same thing—and these are some of the groups that we have met. We have met with our own stakeholders, NCC, TUCO, Pan Trinbago. We have met with the chutney foundation, tassa foundation, NCBA, NCDF, Naparima Bowl, Queen's Hall. I have met with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, National Parang Association, the first people, the Carib people, the Warahoon people. I am not just talking about meeting a man in the street and saying, "Ay Warahoon, how yuh doing? yuh know?" I am talking about having a meeting. My Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary and advisors meet with all of these organizations. We have met with the Pichakaaree people. We have met with the Ramleela people. We have met with the Artistes' Coalition, the Muslim's Women Association, Ethiopian Orthodox Youth, the Maha Sabha. We have met with all of these people; the Emancipation Support Committee.

We talked earlier about expanding through our overseas missions. We met with ACP, African Caribbean and Pacific Group. We have met with the Deputy General Secretary and the General Secretary. We have met with the ambassadors; we have met with the High Commissioner for India; with the Chinese ambassador; with the Guatemalan ambassador, the Colombian ambassador, the Nigerian ambassador; we have met with all of these people because this is consultation People's Partnership style. This is not "put it in your pipe and smoke it". This is how we do business, Mr. Speaker. That is with the goal of creating meaningful collaboration because the Government cannot do it and should not be involved in the details of these things. We are here to provide a supportive and an enabling environment and to create the best options for our people.

Let me talk about some of the cultural manifestations that are Trinidad and Tobago and where we are going with those things. Let us look at carnival. With regard to our festival carnival and the parade of the bands, there was an increased number of launches throughout the country. For example, there was Mayaro, Caroni, Biche, to name a few. This was done in an attempt to raise awareness levels about the festival in its entirety; to serve to boost interest and participation in regional carnival activities. Regional carnival committees were set up and they enjoyed increased funding from the Ministry because we encourage the healthy expansion of our community.

One of the Ministry's innovations, the Carnival Village, was recreated this year. It afforded local and foreign visitors the opportunity to be exposed to the rudiments of mass production an array of local cuisine, along with daily and nightly entertainment. Additional funding was allocated to this initiative which saw hundreds of people daily, 500 people daily, passing through.

Even up to recently, we met with all the stakeholders within the concept of carnival to clarify the smoothness of carnival. Every year, there is a fuss around the movement and the struggle to get bands in and out of the Queen's Park Savannah. We have worked on that already. As a matter of fact, we had a workshop and a forum, where all the stakeholders came together and contributed to mapping out a new way of doing and being.

For Carnival 2012, the Ministry disbursed \$2.68 million in grants to unsponsored steel bands and \$1.4 million in grants to various cultural groups to assist in their preparation. So, we are preparing for the festival early this year, which is in February, and even for 2014 because we have already met with all the stakeholders. We have met with them individually; we have hosted a forum; we also propose to forge greater partnerships with the private sector. The hon.

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Minister of Finance and the Economy has indicated incentives such as 150 per cent tax relief for business and corporations who make contributions to the arts and to artistic organizations and to organizations that are registered with the artiste registry. So, we continue to create ways that will stimulate the artistic and the creative industry.

3.30 p.m.

We continue to collaborate not only with organizations but with Ministries. We are collaborating with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and I have a meeting with the Minister of Legal Affairs about rights and copyright and intellectual property that we need to secure the major works of arts and production that we are doing in Trinidad and Tobago, and that continues, Mr. Speaker.

Additionally, we are proposing closer links with international organizations. Mr. Speaker, it would interest you to know that we have received repeated requests from African countries, in particular, to participate in mas; to come here to participate in mas, for us to go there and create mas—Ghana, Uganda, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa; from Latin American countries, Colombia. It goes on.

We must not forget that there are Trinidadians in the diaspora from Toronto, New York. They have a duty to maintain the art form on which they model their various Carnivals throughout the world. Carnival is a spectacle and it is spectacular. It is one of the creative industries that provides us with the best opportunity to become the centre of something.

There are over 50 carnivals. Some people say close to 100 carnivals happening all over Trinidad and Tobago, all over the world, and that has been spurred on from Trinidad and Tobago. This is different and they were reminding me that carnival Trinidad style is different to Brazil, Rio. What they have is like a street parade. We have the creation of mas. I have recently been talking about initiating a study on the use of Carnival for bringing peace and harmony to nations that are troubled by war and internal strife.

Not just for mas, for playing mas sake; we have come to enjoy it in its raw sense that it is a wonderful thing to us. But we know here in Trinidad and Tobago that when it is Carnival season “there eh no fighting going on, nobody eh killin nobody, nobody eh shootin nobody. Dat eh happenin!” We need to study it and what are the exact elements of it that we could reproduce.

Countries have asked for this. They say, we have been plagued with internal fighting and war and strife and struggle, probably something like this would help

bring our people together. That is a rich source of information, and what we call in the scientific field, a prevention science model for dealing with internal strife in a country, how we could bring people together, have a good time and put your worries on the shelf. We could teach them how to sing calypso and forget about their worries—so, all of that.

Let us move on to talk about our cultural heritage. We have created what we call the “Remember When Institute”. Heritage remains high on the Government’s agenda because we are cognizant of the importance of reinforcing our cultural patrimony with our younger generation and mindful of how this assists in the development of cultural confidence.

Cultural confidence means that you are not subject to cultural invasion. Invasion is the feeling “dat wah you have eh so good and somebody else own is better than yours” and so you begin to assume a personality of some other place or some other State. So you are invaded culturally, and along with that culture comes a whole set of values and behaviours that might not be consistent with your country. What we working on here is a “Remember When Institute”, to give our people cultural confidence, that what we have is as good or better than anybody else’s. That is the “Remember When Institute”.

We have set up a web page, we have started in September 2011, and the institute’s aim is to safeguard our traditional knowledge folklore; intangible cultural heritage and cultural art form, via the employment of sophisticated techniques of cultural anthropology and research, to facilitate meaningful contribution to a multimedia archive of indigenous culture and folklore that captures and disseminates for our citizens the important details of our history and culture as a nation.

The institute ensures access to a unique cultural archive of field recordings and interviews dating back to the 1970s and before. This is being captured by the Culture Division, now defunct National Cultural Council. In our continued efforts to promote the unique cultural heritage of our twin-island Republic, the Ministry created a virtual presence for the institute, so that the world can learn about the myriad aspects of our Trinidad and Tobago heritage. From “chowtal” singing to mouth band music, from old time stories to herbal remedies, all of these things that are happening on this spot, in this place called Trinidad and Tobago—people are now.

It will be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note that there have been over 8,000 hits on that web page across the globe, ensuring that the work of promulgating our unique cultural heritage remains in train.

Hon. Member: Excellent!

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Second is the evolution of the steel pan exhibition. The evolution of the steel pan and pan in art exhibition is a main showpiece that amplifies the international regional and local interest; the national musical instrument of Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not need to repeat the oft statement we make about the steel pan, and it is the only instrument invented in this century; but it is! Up to this week, I was at the dragon boat festival with the Chinese people. The Chinese Consular was here and she was just looking on in awe and saying to me, this is something very unique. We normally “doh say very unique eh,” Mr. Speaker, because that is a redundancy, but that is what she said to show how astounded she was. This is something very unique that you all have here; talking about the steel pan. We have to reach a place where we embrace this, we have such cultural confidence around the steel pan that we are able to use it for what it is worth.

We have had five major showings of this evolution of the steel band exhibit. Right now we have a major exhibit in Piarco. Those of you who have travelled and you walk through the atrium, you would see our exhibit there and it reminds us of the steel pan, of the evolution. [*Crosstalk*] We are going to install a major steel pan as we collaborate with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Minister who was there. This year was our 50th Anniversary Independence Exhibition, and in spite of the “goat mouth” that people trying to put on it—well “bad mouth” let me say that, “doh” want to bring goat in Parliament—[*Crosstalk*]—in spite of the “bad mouth”, this 50th anniversary and jubilee celebration was an astounding success in terms of coordinating with our Olympic success and raising the spirits of our people and helping them to rally around Trinidad and Tobago, and to re-instill that cultural confidence as I have mentioned.

In our continued efforts to promote, protect and preserve the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago, and celebration of our 50th year of independence, the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, in conjunction with the Airports Authority, has installed that thing in the atrium; the display was featured centre stage. If you saw the welcome we had for the Olympic athletes—it was just a phenomenal display of our people in that atrium at the exhibition there. [*Desk thumping*]

That continues to be the elevation of the steel pan. Let me just say that as the Minister of Finance and the Economy has said, within the next year we are looking to complete the Pan Trinbago headquarters. [*Desk thumping*] We got assurances from our engineers and from UDeCott that this is what is going to

happen, Mr. Speaker. That thing has languished through—I do not know. Sometimes when I think about the previous administration and how they treat our culture and our people, it is just complete disrespect. Whatever complications there might be, it takes just will and commitment.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they say Laventille has the most amount of steel bands per square mile and all the people who have been crying crocodile tears about east Port of Spain, if they were so committed, why did they not finish this thing? Notwithstanding that they had—they were in the position to deal with it, because they were the Minister of Community Development and Culture. They were in the position to deal with it too. But we continue to pretend as if we care, “oh so much” about Laventille. The most signifying thing about Laventille is the steel pan; such a creative and a wonderful thing. Nothing has been done. Nothing significant has been done. But we are going to finish that, Mr. Speaker! [*Desk thumping*]

We continue to work with UNESCO for the promulgation of the national inventories—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. R. Samuel*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues, and friends all, for allowing me this opportunity to continue.

Hon. Member: “Yuh going good!”

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: In order to hasten on, let me say that we have signed the UNESCO Conventions. Our Trinidad and Tobago—the call for submissions for the national inventories of intangible cultural heritage and world cultural natural heritage was made based on our ratification of the UNESCO Conventions. That is related to culture which mandates that national inventories be generated.

These local inventories are precursors to recommending elements for inclusion on a prestigious international list of culture related to each prospective convention. What this is, is that we have things in Trinidad that we consider to be intangible culture like our sayings, and our folklore, and our traditions, and ways of being—intangible culture. And we have things that are tangible culture, things

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that you can see, our material culture, things that you can place your hand on. In the tangible ones, we have those that build, and those that nature builds. UNESCO is trying to protect these things, saying that these sites and these things contain the history of the world, and we have signed on to that. So, we have asked the country on the whole to make submissions to this list, and so far we have received over 800 submissions of things in Trinidad and Tobago that could actually be on the intangible list or the tangible list; built or natural. We extend that again to the nation to make submissions to this list. Out of this, we will be choosing things to try to get on to the world heritage list that could be recognized the world over. Very important, Mr. Speaker, and our Ministry continues to work with UNESCO and the diversity Ministry to make this a reality.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in the continuation of talking about cultural industries, we have a project called the Art of Success, the Mentoring by the Masters Programme. This programme is an outreach activity of the National Registry of Artistes and Cultural Workers, entitled the Art of Success. I would talk a little about the National Registry of Artistes and Cultural Workers just now. It is a mentorship series that facilitates knowledge transfer from professionals to junior practitioners in their fields. We have had five individuals: Dr. Kim Johnson, in media arts; Errol Ince, in music; Mr. Krishna Persad, in dance; Mr. Zeno Constance, in theatre; and Mr. Rodney Ramjit, in Ramleela. These mentors would be recognized in an awards ceremony in December 2012, where the work of their mentees will be showcased.

We have had music in the music schools in the communities— Music School in the Pan Yard— a programme of a music school in the communities project was launched on June 16, 2012. Its main objective is to contribute to the holistic, professional development of musicians and increase the levels of music literacy of all steel bands. The first phase of the programme saw the establishment of music schools in six pan yards, evenly spaced across the country: Skiffle Bunch, Potential Symphony, Casablanca, Couva Joylanders, Exodus and Sangre Grande Cordettes.

An element of the project that was launched, in response to feedback from the artistic community, is the Artiste in Residence initiative. Each school is in the base of operations for an esteemed musician who will mentor the students and tutors and compose a piece, especially for them, at each venue. These individuals include Messrs Leston Paul, Roy Cape, Errol Ince, Anthony Woodroffe, Pelham Goddard, Joseph Joey Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, we also launched the pan camps as an important component of the music school. The project is geared towards providing meaningful developmental activity for young people on the national instrument. There are 451 young people who have taken part in this programme in Laventille: Arima Angel Harps, Colomo Kings, Hummingbird Pan Groove; in Curepe, Scherzando; Tornadoes; Starlift, Silver Stars; La Brea Nightingales and Sforzata.

It would be interesting to note that I have already started a dialogue with the Minister of Education in relation to developing magnet schools for the arts; a place where—*[Interruption]* I like that. I am getting big support from the Member for Tobago East because she is an artiste herself. Schools where you can continue your secondary education, but it also helps you focus on the arts and artistic endeavour; you can focus on that.

I am sure the Minister of Sport would be interested in that also where he can have a sports magnet school, as the case might be. So far we have started a dialogue with the Minister of Education and I look forward to the development of that. *[Interruption]*

Visual and performing arts: the development of the competencies of the visual and performing arts and the management of the disbursement of grants and subventions.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to promote cultural diversity through the subventions and grants that we give. The Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, during fiscal year 2011/2012, continued its work in providing support for the rich cultural diversity in Trinidad and Tobago by funding the work of a myriad of cultural organizations to the tune of \$27,309,000. The Ministry continues to support the events which celebrate our cultural diversity as we support the requests for national festivals such as Divali, Eid, Emancipation, Indian Arrival Day, Shouter Baptist Liberation Day.

Apart from the previously mentioned festivals, the Ministry provided funding towards community-based festivals such as Hosay, Orisha Rain Festival, St. Peter's Day, Fish Festival, Phagwa and others. The Ministry also funds persons and groups that do significant quality work in the sector throughout the year. These projects fall into the spheres of the performing, visual and literary arts or community-based projects and programmes. We continue to work with festival development, dance festivals and we have participated in Jamaica, Cuba, et cetera.

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Mr. Speaker, in January and February of this year, the Ministry conceptualized and funded a pilot project entitled the Calypso Enhancement Project. It aimed at increasing audiences for the calypso product. As you know a lot of tents, et cetera, have been complaining about the lack of attendance. The Classic Russo calypso tent was selected as the tent at which the Ministry conducted this pilot project. They had about 50 persons in the audience per night—I am hastening on, Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism also hosted the National Symphony Orchestra of the United States as part of its ongoing work in cultural exchanges. I am hoping that Members of the other side, and the nation in general, is matching this up against what I read out earlier as to our promises in the manifesto, and you would see that we are bang on target; we are right on target.

We have hosted concerts in July and August—the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of Independence. The Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism hosted a national arts showcase in NAPA north. This featured Pan on a Higher Note, participation with Tambores de Cabildo from Colombia; alternative music, spoken word; Trinidad and Tobago Unified. We had the Lord Bryner calypso competition. We had participation with Southex Promotion to produce the Independence Chutney Soca Monarch competition. We had a national song competition from which we have culled a whole number of new national songs. We had the Red, White and Black Parade.

Mr. Speaker, in September of this year we went down to San Fernando and promised the people that we would be opening NAPA south campus, and that is open. [*Interruption*] In that count, I want to correct my friend from Arouca/Maloney. I know she did not do her research, probably, when she said—Apart from that over \$308 million in cost overruns at the south National Academy for the Performing Arts. This is extravagant spending.

Mr. Speaker, this is the furthest thing from the truth. I have checked with my people and they have assured me that there have been no cost overruns, which we have managed. As a matter of fact, the only additional cost has been to move the sewer line because it was not foreseen that it was there and they had to move the sewer line. That was the only cost overrun.

So, I would advise the Member for Arouca/Maloney that before she talks about things, and calls numbers, she should go back and check her figures. I advise the Member for Arouca/Maloney to check her figures before she talks about things.

Hon. Member: She is misleading the House.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: I know she did not intend to mislead the House; it is just that she was ill-informed, misguided or something. [*Interruption*] I have limited time and I do not want to waste it on that kind of thing.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism has been involved in cultural mapping. We are in a process right now where we are establishing the quantity of cultural artefacts from cultural practitioners that we have in this country so that we can more meaningfully address them and we are going to see that happening soon.

I spoke earlier about the National Registry of Artistes and Cultural Workers; the registry was launched in 2011 and to date a total of 91 individuals, organizations and cultural projects have been registered. The national registry is pivotal in our policy of grants and subventions since all groups or individuals requesting grants and funding from the Ministry are required to be registered with the national registry.

Hear the beautiful thing about this, Mr. Speaker: once you have registered with the national registry you are entitled to solicit funding from corporations and the corporations would get 150 per cent tax break. This is to support the arts. [*Desk thumping*] That is a beautiful thing.

We continue to promote our culture overseas and to collaborate with missions abroad so that we could move our culture and provide the opportunity for our people to present the culture and to sell their culture and to sell the cultural artefacts abroad. We have had cultural exchanges because Trinidad and Tobago has signed a number of cultural treaties and exchanges with Cuba, China, Nigeria, Colombia, Guatemala, India and we have had exchanges and participation with all of these countries.

Coming with this fiscal year, we would see development of festival villages. We would be establishing festival villages throughout Trinidad and Tobago where we encourage local villages to adopt a particular festival and become known for that so we could develop a form of indigenous tourism. I would be talking with the Minister of Tourism further to set that up. [*Interruption*] That is right.

We are looking at developing decentralized spaces and you would see that in our manifesto—decentralized spaces for the expression and the performance of the arts, and these decentralized spaces would allow for greater participation and appreciation for the arts.

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We are looking at the training and the ongoing professionalization of the arts and all the ancillary things that support the arts; and coming in the next year you would see arts and cultural trade shows, and expo, that would present the best in arts and cultural development worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, in the last remaining minutes of my contribution that I am a member of the People's Partnership and I am happy to be part of the Government. [*Desk thumping*] I say this from where I stand, as the Member of Parliament for Lopinot/Bon Air West, and the significant development that I have seen in my constituency within the last two to three years that we have been in Government.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen, from an infrastructural standpoint, retaining walls; I have seen rivers shored up; I have seen rivers straightened out; I have seen roads built; bridges built; Lopinot Road, Lane Street. Right where I live, in my village, there is Lane Street. Lane Street was a street, since I was small, it had no road; it was gravel and no drains at the sides. When I went to Lane Street—it is the street right behind my house—I went there with the local government councillor and the people in the village said, “Listen, successive governments for the last umpteen years has come in the street and say they going to pave this road and it is never going to happen. If this eh happen in you all term, doh come back in here at all.”

Mr. Speaker, Friday—I do not want to say it, but I will say it—I ran away from Parliament for half an hour and went to Lane Street. We had a tent there; dancing in the street, Mr. Speaker. There was road paved; there were drains on the side, [*Desk thumping*] and the people were ecstatic. That is just an example.

I can go on to talk about George Boyce Park; I could talk about Garden Village Recreational Grounds; I could talk about D'Abadie Recreational Grounds; I could talk about Sherwood Park Community Centre. [*Desk thumping*] Sherwood Park is the neighbourhood I grew up in; all my family live there. When we were growing up in Sherwood Park, nothing was going on, no development. Since I have been there, all the roads have been paved. They have a brand new community centre built by URP Social. A brand new community centre; we paint it red, white and black. You know what? Next week we are having a grand opening there, again, there would be dancing in Sherwood Park, what they call the Congo. That is what I got.

All of this is happening because of this Government, Mr. Speaker. Land regularization; talk about Windy Hill—over 300-and-something people have received their certificate of comfort and they are getting deeds. [*Desk thumping*]

That was our commitment when we went in there. They have roads, streets and we are looking at putting lights there.

We talk about education; we have been visiting every school in our constituency; we have an after-school programme; we have a scholarship fund in our constituency; all of that because of the People's Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on. I always talk about when Marsican Pan Tent fell into the Mausica River. I called the Minister of Works and Infrastructure at the time, the hon. Member for Chaguanas West. I called him—I think it was a Sunday or a holiday or something—[*Interruption*] It was a Sunday. The same morning the pan tent fell in the river. He showed up in the morning; the engineers showed up in the evening at four o'clock and the work was done in a week's time.

Mr. Speaker, I used to think that these were impossible things, you know. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is the change we vote for.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: I am telling you.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful. The UN World Commission says— on creative industry and creative diversity— that the relationship between culture and development should be clarified and deepened. I hope our contribution today helped with that. First of all, in clarifying that our culture is important; secondly, that this administration, the People's Partnership Government is committed to the development of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and we would be willing to consult and participate with everybody to make that happen and that, in the long run, our culture would take its place in the diversification process and in making its contribution to the development of the economy and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

4.00 p.m.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very honoured to participate in this debate on the budget for 2013. But, before I start, I just want to commend the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. the Hon. Larry Howai, and also give the same level of commendation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was once the previous Minister of Finance.

You see, as a medical doctor and a surgeon, we believe in specialization, and the People's Partnership believes in specialization. So, I just want to take a couple

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of minutes and indicate what I mean. An economist is somebody who is trained to develop procedures and policies based on an economic structure. That is what an economist does.

A financial person develops the financial movement of what the economist does, and provides the policy direction. When we came into office in 2010, believe it or not, we needed an economist to develop procedures and methods of approach for our economy because, as we have heard throughout this whole budget debate, the economy was in shambles.

So, the hon. Winston Dookeran, the Member for Tunapuna, was the appropriate person to do that for the People's Partnership, and he did it quite successfully stabilizing the ship, as we say, and continued for two years while the global climate was one of recession, turmoil and economic mismanagement. We still see it in Greece, in Spain and continuing in the eastern bloc—America has not recovered—but yet we have not felt the effects, as I would say, of that turmoil. I have to hand it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was once the Minister of Finance.

Now, as we move into our mid-term—well, I would say, once you move into mid-term, you are moving into election—we do need a Minister who is adept at the financial parts of moving an economy. So, the economist has done his policy and now he needs somebody to move it forward, and this budget is a budget if it is looked at and developed, would show exactly how prosperity could come if one takes on exactly what is in this budget.

It was surprising to see that the Member for Port of Spain South read the same budget that I read, but all she got out of it was the price of super and diesel was going to rise. I have not seen that in the budget. I have looked for it, but then she says: “You have to look and see what is not there, and when people see what is not there, we end up wondering if that is part of when somebody is wandering in a public place.” [*Laughter*] So, Mr. Speaker, I want to debunk that argument completely.

I want to go a little further and say that the Ministry of Health has always been considered a Ministry that took care of sickness, and the sickness that it took care off—I would say that 90 per cent of the budget that is given, is really taking care of 10 per cent of the population, and the 10 per cent of the budget is usually taking care of the 90 per cent of the population. I make that point to say that prevention of the population for certain chronic diseases and non-communicable diseases is more important, at this point in time, than taking care of all the other

complications. Now, mind you, the complications of the NCDs and what we have are necessary. But the thrust of my budget contribution would be prevention, because once one can prevent illnesses, the cost factor that goes up with taking care of the non-communicable diseases goes down.

So, we are in the process of building hospitals. I want to come to the hospital in Point Fortin—I would do that in a while—the hospital in Arima; the hospital in Sangre Grande; the penal chronic disease centre with emergency services and the children hospital in Couva. Those are the basic hospitals that we have earmarked for 2013, 2014 and 2015. If you look at the budget documents, the 2013—2015 PSIP has been included in the budget documents. Usually, we do not get a three-year budget PSIP.

I just want to start by indicating that when you look at the SSIP, the strategic plan for the Ministry of Health starts off by improving the health status of the population, and first and foremost is prevention, care and treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases. The second part is treatment, prevention and care of communicable diseases such as dengue, tuberculosis, HIV, maternal and child health and mental health wellness. Those are the basic foundations of what the Minister of Health would be doing this year, in addition to the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health has certain core values and principles upon which it works: one is professionalism. We at the Ministry of Health have started to ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of health services by trained and competent professionals. We have started to develop a system of customer service, total quality, with commitment to excellence in our health care systems and all our services.

We have started to do client centredness, an emphasis on the delivery of health services that is responsible for customer needs and preferences, and it all would be evidence-based, relying upon the research and data and information technology which would be driving the decision making at all levels. Together, Mr. Speaker, it would consider and bring about good governance of the health sector.

You see, Mr. Speaker, what has been happening—what I inherited in 2011 or 2010 was a system that the Ministry of Health overseered where there was destruction in all the major health facilities. When the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central speaks about toilets that are non-functioning; toilets that are unusable—no toilet paper and so on and the toilets are being fixed—this has been ongoing for the last 10 years. When we left in 2001 comfort and service was a priority.

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Last year, while I was touring the hospitals, I noticed that the facilities of the toilets, the kitchens and the walls, et cetera, needed some level of upliftment, because the majority of people in our country go into these places and cannot use them. We have put a plan in action where all these facilities would be addressed, and they are being addressed at present. So, when the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central indicates that there are people fixing the toilets and, at the same time, women are using them, that is correct but, at the end of the day, we do not have much women who fix toilets, we do not, so we are using whatever we have. I have asked the Minister of Local Government, we have both embarked upon a plan that we would have the URP medical, and they would be deployed in the health offices and hospitals to do just that, refurbish the health centres and hospitals, supplementing both things.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health is like a large world in its own right. In it you have the administrative general body which is the Ministry itself, and the delivery part of the Ministry is the Regional Health Authorities. You have the north-west, north central, eastern and the south-west regional health authorities.

The South West Regional Health Authority takes care of a very large part of the population. The North Central Regional Health Authority takes care of more the central area, but in the North Central Regional Health Authority there are more specialized services. The Eastern Regional Health Authority is not as advanced, but it is coming on, and it takes care of the eastern part of Toco, et cetera. The North West Regional Health Authority is a very large area like south west. These are the delivery part of the Ministry, and these Regional Health Authorities are used to develop the system of health care in this country; the delivery part of it.

Port of Spain, which is the North West Regional Health Authority, has approximately 600-plus beds; San Fernando has about 550—600 beds, eastern has about 200—250, but the North Central Regional Health Authority, Eric Williams, has only 220, beds. So, when we hear a lot of the horror stories coming out of north central, it is because of the number of beds that are not available.

So, the Ministry of Health has embarked upon dealing with the infrastructure development of the country, making sure that there would be enough bed spaces for acute and chronic cure. In doing that, the hospitals that are being built, we do hope would take the load off these central hospitals.

In 2009, the Point Fortin Hospital was withdrawn after it went for tender, I think. The PNM Government was responsible for building that hospital in 2009,

but it stopped. That hospital was supposed to be built on the site of the old hospital. When we came into office, we realized that had that been done, the old hospital would have had to be demolished. If the old hospital was demolished, the people of Point Fortin would have had no health facility available. There was not even an area earmarked for accident and emergency for the people of Point Fortin.

The Ministry of Health searched to find an area for it, and we could not find something of a substantial nature to put an accident and emergency area in Point Fortin. So, the plan became now, how could we demolish the old hospital? We do not have an emergency health service and, at the same time, everyone was supposed to go to San Fernando Hospital which was already overburdened, overused with no bed space and we are now in the process of doing the Chancery Lane Complex to accommodate that. So, the decision was taken then to find a new site for the Point Fortin Hospital and allow the old hospital or the hospital that is existing to remain as is, serving the needs of the people.

It took a while for that hospital site to be found. The Member of Parliament for Point Fortin accompanied me on a couple sites and we found a site which was good for both of us. I must say to the Member for Point Fortin, I think you are a very active Member and an active representative, and if the Mayor of Port of Spain takes your place in the next election, I would ask the Prime Minister to bring you across here.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Aie-yaie-yaie!” It is all right. No thank you. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: You should not have offered her.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: However, after that, we had to have a design user brief made for the Point Fortin Hospital. That has since been done, and it has been sent to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, because it is a concessional loan from the Chinese Government. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy would then send it on. They have already had talks with the Ambassador for China, and they have asked for a feasibility study in the same vein that they asked for a feasibility study which takes place—how many beds? What would be the human resource? What is needed? And we have to do a full plan on the feasibility study prior to getting the loan. That has gone off. So, hopefully, that negotiation would take place very soon, and we will be able to put the stakes down and start work on the Point Fortin Hospital, I do hope in the dry season, early next year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So, you are saying the first quarter.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I just hope so. All right, once that negotiation takes place.

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The Cedros area as you mentioned, Cedros at one time had a mini hospital. There were maternity areas; there were paediatric areas, et cetera, and now they have a district health office that we have started negotiations to open on a 24-hour basis for the people of Cedros. [*Desk thumping*]

Also, I was told, by the end of the month, we would have an ambulance there together with a 24-hour service with paramedics and doctors. I have signed off on the money for that, so you would have that for the people of Cedros and, at the same time, we have tendered out for the nursing quarters so that the nurses could stay there 24 hours. So, hopefully, we would have a sort of a 24-hour system. I am also looking at the possibility of putting a small district health facility to service the people of Cedros and the people of Icacos. So, that is happening there.

4.15 p.m.

You have also asked about the dialysis centres. The dialysis centres were supposed to have been started three years ago under the watch of the People's National Movement. That continued and continued and what we have found recently, there was a problem with the sublease of the land from the State—the state land to be subleased to the awardee of the contract. The awardee needed approval for negotiation with their financiers. That is still in limbo and they are negotiating that part of it from some aspect of the movement, so that is Port of Spain and San Fernando. It is coming to fruition but it is taking its procedural time. It is not like the private service where we could just take something, the procedure has to be done correctly in the public service. So that is those two hospitals. The Arima hospital—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Samuel: Better.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The Arima hospital—as the Member of Parliament for Arima spoke about—has been sent out for tender. The tenders have been passed in about a month and a half ago and they are going to be evaluated, and when they are evaluated then we will start work in Arima. [*Desk thumping*] In the interim, in Arima, what the Ministry of Health has done, the Arima—I do not want to call it hospital, it is not a hospital.

Mr. Samuel: Health facility.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Health facility—that the PNM has put there, for about how long—10, 15 years?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: With this monstrous kind of roof that is leaking throughout the system. What we have decided to do is to take off the roof entirely and put a roof that is user-friendly and easy to maintain, and also increase the maternity aspect of it. The paediatric aspect of it: we will have paediatric clinics, maternal clinics. We will even have an obstetric ward—one theatre I think is working, which is same-day surgery. We are upgrading the accident and emergency: they contracted NIPDEC to get it going, and it is being done at this point in time.

The initial cost was \$70 million but it has now gone for a complete movement to about \$170 million—so I will be going to Cabinet to increase it. Cabinet has already approved the \$70 million. That is being done in Arima, and Arima will have its district health facility as well as its hospital, and we are going to move back that—and that is going on at this point in time.

The Sangre Grande enhanced facility—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Minister, could you give way? Thank you very much. I noticed that you have moved on from Point Fortin, but just to go back if we could regress a little bit. Thanks for the update on what you have given me and we are very hopeful, of course, but granted you are going to a new site, which means that you would not move to the new hospital in perhaps another two to three years—can we have improved interim service? As it is, we have that problem of no nurse—severe problem of lack of nurses and doctors; we have no same-day surgeries; we are doing no deliveries; we are not doing normal deliveries. So we have a problem with service.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I will answer it. I have directed, and also I am working with the CEO and the Chairman of the South West Regional Health Authority to put in exactly that what is happening there; in fact, it was supposed to have been done. We are fixing the roof, we are fixing certain parts of the old hospital to make it, as they say, user-friendly, and the obstetric part, the nurses; we are enticing the nurses to come. The problem with Point Fortin is that many people, many doctors and nurses, find it very difficult to go to Point Fortin. So what we are doing—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “That is allyuh idea.”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Well, this is it. Once we have the highway it will just—

Hon. Member: But that will be three years hence.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I am doing negotiations with the different countries—I would say it is going to be Philippines, India, Cuba, Nigeria and Uganda. Also I am trying to entice nationals to come back because there is a shortage of radiologists, surgeons, obstetricians, so we are working to see if we can get that from Cuba. However the ones that we have gotten from Cuba need to be under supervision for a while before we allow them to go on their own in the district hospitals. So that is being looked after.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: So we go back to Arima—I was on to Sangre Grande. Sangre Grande hospital: we started off by the enhanced health facility—that is in the hands of NIPDEC, and recently I have put on the front burner the Sangre Grande hospital, so the Member of Parliament for Sangre Grande should be happy about that. I would like to personally thank the Member for Oropouche East—UDeCott. Recently, I toured the Chancery Lane complex—floor two and floor three—it is world class, [*Desk thumping*] it is well done. Minister, it is about 60 per cent local contractors.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sixty?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It is about 60 per cent local contractors—a wonderful job. When it is open—hopefully, we will get the first two floors open by December or early January—you will see what we are saying about state-of-the-art. It is going to be maternal clinics and—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We know from Siparia District Health Facility.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Yes, and it is nice. I think the people of San Fernando will be well served and the other floors will be opening in a couple of months.

Mr. Samuel: Trinidad benefits.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Yes. Then we go to the children hospital in Couva. Negotiations for that have been done. The Ministry has sent the feasibility studies and the loan is being approved, and that work should start very soon in the new year. So, that hospital will have 80 children beds, I think, and about 100 and something adult beds, a burn unit, as well as a trauma unit together with emergency services—and that will be in the Couva area. All right, that is being done. Let me do a little bit on Mount Hope. The PNM Government has neglected the women's hospital in Mount Hope for years.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: The one we built?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No. No. You built it but you left it alone.

Mr. De Coteau: You leave it to deteriorate.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It deteriorated to the point that they wanted to demolish it and put that hospital in Mount Hope—Eric Williams. Is that right, Minister?

Hon. Member: That is the history.

Mr. De Coteau: “It is like making a child and not minding it.”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: However, what I have done, I have asked the engineers to look at it. NIPDEC has looked at it and they have found that it is sound. We are refurbishing it to increase the operating theatres. We are going to put a mortuary and the mortuary is going to be working; the CSSD—and at the same time what we are also doing is putting a two-storey structure on the eastern side of the building that will house—I should read it out—it will house a two-storey building with space for administration, counselling, treatment rooms, consultation and examination rooms, a multi-purpose area, medical records area. It will all be inclusive of medical equipment and the external works, together with a colposcopy unit. I think you would like that.

Hon. Member: Yes, very good.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: In fact, NIPDEC has it right now. Cabinet has passed it almost a year ago, a little less than a year, so it is an ongoing programme. We are also sprucing up, making the waiting area user-friendly, and making it in such a manner that people will like to go there, to the level of a First World hospital. [*Desk thumping*] So that is what we are doing. That is a part of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. When you look at the headings, in it you see \$75 million, basically, for outsourcing—for treatment of nationals in private institutions, medical treatment for nationals in institutions, \$75 million.

Hon. Member: Why we have to pay so much?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The thing about it, when you look at that, that \$75 million has to go into the public sector. That \$75 million is a result of outsourcing. Outsourcing of what? Cardiac services, neurosurgical services, CT scans and dialysis. In 2009, the RHAs outsourced a total of about \$41million, 94 per cent of that was attributed to the South West Regional Health Authority. However, if you look at the figures, in 2012, when I started outsourcing, the figures dropped from \$34.5 million to \$1.1 million. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Excellent!

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Great job!

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The reason behind that, what I found—it was very easy for a doctor or somebody in charge to sign a form for outsourcing, so you do not have to do it in-house.

Hon. Member: Explain what you mean by outsourcing.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Outsourcing means if you have intensive-care problems, cardiac problems, renal problems—all you have to do is just sign it and send it to a private institution. Now if a private institution could do it, the hospital system could do it; but the problem about it is if the hospital system is not doing it and the private system is doing it, then there is no training and no continuity of training in the public system. Because the University of the West Indies—the medical students and the specialists who are training, utilize the public system to do that type of work. [*Crosstalk*]

In 2009, the Eastern Regional Health Authority was \$27.6 million and 40 per cent of that was going to West Shore Medical and 26 per cent to Medical Associates, and if I keep reading it—I mean, when you look at this document, the North Central Regional Health Authority for the period 2009, et cetera, a total of \$62.6 million. For that was open heart surgery, \$33.7 million; angioplasty, \$11.7 million; angiography, \$3.8 million; 56 per cent of that went to Caribbean Heart Care Medcorp Ltd and 29 per cent to ACI.

The key outsource areas to the RHA was open heart surgery for \$14.4 million, neurosurgery \$42.5 million, intensive care \$25.5 million, angiograms, et cetera, \$15.2 million, and it goes on. Now, what I am saying to you—forget the Member for Diego Martin North/East—

Mr. Indarsingh: “He have no legacy as Minister of Health, boy.”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: What I am saying is that if the level of outsourcing is at such a level, it means to say that that amount of money that is supposed to be going in the public health system is moving out, and it is very easy to do that because at the end of the day the Ministry of Health—in fact we bailed out the regional health authorities to approximately \$17 billion recently, trying to get at ground zero.

The Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities usually sign an annual services agreement of what we expect from them based on the money that we are giving, and if you look at what the subventions are to the Regional Health Authorities, you will find out that in this coming year: North West Regional

Health Authority it is \$702 million, an increase of \$92 million; Eastern Regional Health Authority is \$280 million, an increase in \$29 million; North Central Regional Health Authority \$749 million, an increase of \$73 million; and the South West Regional Health Authority is \$796 million, an increase of \$157 billion because they have to pay for the other hospitals and the systems that need refurbishment.

It goes to show that there is an increased subvention to the Regional Health Authorities. That increased subvention could be haemorrhaged out if you look at the outsourcing and the type of service will not be there, so when we look at it—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is outsourcing?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Outsourcing.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “He saying no. You say you looking at it or not?”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, I have stopped the outsourcing.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You have stopped it?

4.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I have stopped the outsourcing, however, as a result of that what has been happening is we tend to need more intensive care beds; we tend to need the open heart surgery; we tend to need the angiograms and angioplasty; now, I am going into that—CT scans in south more than anything else.

In the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, we have two cath labs; one is not working, which is what we inherited and we are trying to start her up, the other one is forever going on the bum, giving trouble. However, what has happened we have now signed a maintenance contract for three years, so that will be a thing of the past. We also are starting to put a system in place, so disposables for the cardiac surgery, the angioplasty and angiograms will be readily available. Also young doctors are coming back with the training in open heart surgery, so we are going to try to do most of that in-house and put that money into that system. What we are really doing is developing our own in-house public hospital system of open heart surgery, angioplasty, and in doing so, developing a training module. People can come and be trained at that level. What has happened over the last couple of years is that not many people were trained in open heart surgery; not many people were trained at all because it was basically outsourced.

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As I go into training, the University of the West Indies, I have asked them to have discussions with Johns Hopkins to develop a plan where we could start training sub-specialists. What occurs at this point in time, if somebody needs to do subspecialty work, be it medicine, surgery, pathology, et cetera, they have to go to England usually, Canada, the United States, those are the countries, sometimes Jamaica. These countries are closing their doors. The European countries have basically closed their doors. Canada is difficult to get into. The United States, we do not get to do the specialty that we desire, and Jamaica tends to give most of the first places to their people from Jamaica. They do not have enough places.

Trinidad and Tobago's system is such that we do a very good undergraduate, but then the subspecialty work is not there. So what we are doing is partnering with Johns Hopkins, the University of the West Indies—to develop all the subspecialties: neurosurgery, cardiology, cardiac surgery, ENT, pathology, hematology—all, and develop that system hopefully. I am working with the Minister of Tertiary Education to see if we could go through that system.

Dr. Browne: What kind of time frame?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I am trying to do it within the next year. I am having discussions, hopefully we could start in the next year. We are going to start with one or two of the main areas. We could do cardiology, neurosurgery, hematology, and we are doing ENT, the DM programme, and we are doing orthopaedics. We are going to have an exchange with Johns Hopkins with people coming to train and going back.

What we are trying to is to set up the system so that subspecialty programme will kick off, because we do have a surgical DM surgery already. We have that already, but we do not have the subspecialty programmes.

We have a shortage of radiologists. We have ultrasonography; I am talking about the ancillary services. I am hoping that the Minister of Tertiary Education would develop a system where we would increase the amount of biomedical technicians, the amount of ultrasonographers, the amount of pathology technicians, anaesthetic technicians, as well as nursing practitioners—service that level. [*Desk thumping*] That is work in progress at this point in time.

As I mentioned nursing practitioners, recently in the last couple of months you might have heard that there was a sort of impasse between the Ministry of Health, the Minister of Health and the nursing council. I would like to say a little about that. What was occurring, the exam from the nursing council, there was

approximately, I would say on average, a 50 per cent failure rate throughout the system. As a result of that, 50 per cent of the students failed. This has been going on for a long time.

Sometimes people fail three times. The legislation is such that if you fail three times, you are out of nursing completely, and you have to re-apply to start back from year one and continue back three or four years to reach the level at which you left. I have asked the nursing council to set up the remedial classes, and I am in the process of working the legislation to change it. What we are looking at, and we are coming to an agreement on, is that it is going to be a Caricom initiative, because the Minister of Health of Barbados was basically in agreement with what I was doing. Barbados has taken the same direction I am taking.

The nursing council will be responsible for looking at the programmes. The University of the West Indies, COSTAATT as well as the University of the Southern Caribbean, would be responsible for accrediting the programme, that is one. Two, they will also be responsible for the exam. The exam will be there, however, after the final year of the normal university exams, the students can enter the workplace as, for want of a better word, eligible nurses. They will be ready to write the exam under a year. Now, if you write the exam and you are not successful, you could still work in the system at a lower salary. If you pass the exam you go to RN, and then you are able to work in Caricom. It is what you call the RENR exam, the Caricom exam that is going to be in the nursing council's hands.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Is it endorsed by Caricom?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Yes, it is being endorsed.

Dr. Browne: Nursing council?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Nursing councils of Caricom. That is where it is at.

Mr. Indarsingh: They are against the regional integration process?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It is the integration process. The exam prior had two essay questions and two multiple choice. It is going to be overall multiple choice. So it is going to be an objective exam rather than a subjective exam. That would take care of the pointing fingers. That is a work in progress, and we hope to bring the Nursing (Amdt.) Bill through Parliament.

Another initiative of the Ministry of Health, and you have heard about it with the Minister of Finance and the Economy, is the development of the

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public/private partnership. When we looked at it in the Ministry of Health, we found that if one were to try to develop on an overall basis all the specialties, it would be impossible and it would take a very long time to get at a level that is ready for training and medical tourism. Those are the two objectives: medical training and medical tourism.

What we are looking at, and we have to discuss it with the Minister of Finance and the Economy to put the system in place, that there will be a partnership between the Ministry of Health and private people who are specialized in developing hospital programmes such as cardiac programmes, ophthalmological programmes, pathology, et cetera.

Dr. Browne: It is almost like outsourcing again.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It is not outsourcing. It is development. Outsourcing is when you get the private sector and nothing comes out of it. This part will be training in the system. They will be allowed to do private work, but the money used for the private work to put into the public system—so nobody will pay anything. That is how it is going to work.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Foreign people you are looking at?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: We are looking at that model, and I will tell you why I am mentioning it here. The ophthalmologists have gone on a programme with the Moran Eye Center in Utah. They have taken some of our young ophthalmologists and have shown them how to do various procedures, such as small incision cataracts, vitreoretinal surgery, we have a high diabetic population here and we have a high amount of retinal proliferation. It is a highly specialized and highly skilled surgery. I met the people from the Moran Eye Center from the University of Utah. They are willing to come to Trinidad and Tobago to set up a complete specialized eye centre here as a public/private partnership, to train our people in Trinidad and Tobago, similar to the Bascom Palmer Eye Clinic. That is a stand-alone centre for excellence in eye care. So we are looking at that and having negotiations.

Mr. Indarsingh: That is development.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: There is also another group who are willing, and they are looking at developing the radiotherapy, chemotherapy and oncology centres. However, if you saw the newspaper on Monday, the National Oncology Centre went for tender on Monday by UDeCott. The plans are all in place, all drawn up, and they are in the tendering process. Hopefully, we should be able to start some

type of work by the first quarter of next year, and they have given me a time frame of 24 months to completion. Well, I hope. You have to hope.

Member for Diego Martin Central, one has to live in hope. If one has no hope then we end up living on the PNM. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Browne: You were going good.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I was going good and I said something bad, right? Okay. [*Crosstalk*] The National Oncology Centre had an up and down history, a history that went up and down. It went through the history of the PNM, back again and back to us. I will tell you something: as a result of that, we have a cancer strategy in Trinidad and Tobago. I think you all know about the cancer strategy. There are certain priorities. [*Interruption*] I want to give them the exact specifics, but anyway.

The National Cancer Strategy—the implementation of the cancer plan is to, one, construct the National Oncology Centre and develop a comprehensive ionization radiation protection policy. If you look in the headings, the estimates, you would see that there is a part of it for IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency, \$1.5 million. That is for membership from the IAEA. We are the first country in the Caribbean to join the IAEA.

You are well aware that we had a radiation problem last year. It kick-started the move to the International Atomic Energy Agency. They came here and looked at everything else. Once we become members, that type of system and service will be free. They will be able to train people on the international radiation regulations. In fact, that has already been laid in Cabinet, it is in the hands of the Attorney General.

Dr. Browne: Was there a problem with their report?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, no, there was no problem with their report.

The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development will be dealing with the radiation regulations, and that will be coming out of the OSHA system.

There will be in the cancer plan, as I said, prevention, early detection and screening, as we all know; surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, and it will be a complete plan. For the building of the National Oncology Centre, which has gone out for tender, we were able to acquire the plan by the Farrow Partnership a couple of months ago. As a result of that, we were able to

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get the services of Farrow Partnership, the ones who developed the plan and we did some change management on the plan.

In that you would have a building—I will read it:

The project is designed to serve the ambulatory cancer treatment needs of the country population as defined by the National Oncology Programme. There will be twenty-four inpatient beds and they are proposed for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences building in Building 7. There will be approximately 6,600 square metres of building space. The first building contains over three levels. Level one is primarily occupied by the Radiation Treatment Programme, the outpatient clinic service, the same-day surgical services, the high density radiotherapy, brachytherapy and public areas, four radiation treatment rooms—they call them bunkers. In these four radiation rooms, they have four linear accelerators. I have since taken out two of the linear accelerators and put one, a PET scanner, and also the other one we call a cyberknife, and the other two linear accelerators.

The cyberknife would be state-of-the-art that moves together with the organ itself, so it is accurate and stereotactic. So if you are going to radiate an organ it is not going to be an overall radiation, it is going to be a direct approach radiation. The PET scanner is something that is necessary in this country, because there are not any in the Caribbean right now, and that would be in the oncology centre.

4.45 p.m.

Hon. Member: When, when, when?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: “Eh?”

Hon. Member: “When that coming?”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It is coming, “it coming”, hopefully by January—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Excellent.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan:—once UDeCott evaluates it, we will get—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. C. De Coteau*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you colleagues for extending the time. The second floor will be a 21-station chemotherapy suite. It will have a treatment-planning CT suite, pharmacy and support services for medical physicists, radiation therapists, dosimetrist, biomedical engineering, as well as the clinical oncology staff.

The third level will be the administrative office, teaching facilities. There will be a full pharmacy service including an area to mix chemotherapy drugs, and a general drug-dispensing unit, a STAT lab will be included to facilitate blood work in that area.

Dr. Browne: Is this public/private partnership?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Well, no. I am determining exactly if we could do it in the public sector fully. Sometimes I tend to wonder if it is possible, but we want to see what comes in with the tender. I will tell you something: this is highly specialized things—highly specialized work. We are having, once I am reading it—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: The danger of outsourcing.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan:—no, I do not want to outsource this “for nothing”. This has to stay fully public because it would keep whatever cost factor down, so I am trying to keep this in-house, but I may have to bring in a consultant at this level because to put in a cyberknife and linear accelerators, et cetera, is not an easy kettle of fish, and we need to be specific in that. Now, we also have—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do you have people who could deal with that?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, we have people.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do we have specialists?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, no, no. We have Trinidadians abroad who are willing to come back home, so I am negotiating to ask them—the problem with the Ministry of Health—I will tell you something. There is a shortage of a lot of personnel, and you have to remunerate them well, and they will come.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But that is it.

Hon. Member: Dr. Browne will specialize. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The National Oncology Centre, Mr. Speaker, will have the non-direct oncology treatment and supportive care for patient counselling and palliative care. In cancer management, Mr. Speaker, one of the most important parts of cancer care is palliation, terminal care, and our country has been falling down drastically on palliative and terminal care. We, on the other hand, are promoting the use of palliative care.

I have asked the chairman of the North Central Regional Health Authority to put approximately 24 beds where the old Caura Hospital was—we are refurbishing it for the Palliative Society of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is a non-profit organization, who are willing to now set up a system of palliative care, and this year is going to be their second year of functioning. It is going to auger well for the system because sometimes in Trinidad and Tobago when somebody has cancer, and gets treatment, they go home, the family has a problem taking care of them, especially in the late stages of cancer, and as a result of that it is difficult. It is emotional trauma, as well as physical trauma. So, palliative care procedures will take care, and hopefully train people for counselling, as well as care of the terminally ill patients.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Quality of life.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Quality of life. In the St. James Radiotherapy Centre—our National Radiotherapy Centre, we are in the process of building a small linear accelerator to service the patients across that side. It is hopefully going to be a bunker—fast bunker, with mobile system. What is lacking in that area is a CT scanner—a CT scanner in the National Radiotherapy Centre. All the CTs are outsourced. All. In fact, they are outsourced to specific private centres. I have asked the social workers to stop the outsourcing until it is ratified by the Ministry of Health, rather than doing it and then—it is approved, sorry, rather than doing it and ratifying it.

In other words, I am in the process of putting a mobile CT scanner because there is not much room to put in a full one. So a mobile CT scanner would be going to the National Radiotherapy Centre. They are right now doing HDR brachytherapy, and also they have a breast clinic—a fantastic breast clinic, and that breast clinic is doing very good work for reconstruction, as well as mastectomies and reconstruction of women with breast cancer. [*Crosstalk*] That is going on at this point in time.

Also, there is an area in St. James where we are going to put a full rehabilitation physiotherapy centre, and it is earmarked and it is ongoing. So, the

Member for San Fernando East can go there instead. But we do have a need for north and south rehabilitation centres. Now, what you may think that I am speaking about is rehabilitation and service. There are simple things that could be done, not expensive things that could make life very, very easy for people at that level.

Dr. Browne: You said that you stopped approving the CAT scan.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, I said bring it to the Ministry of Health for approval, do not approve it and then ratify it because what tends to happen— *[Interruption]*

Dr. Browne: How does that affect the time? *[Crosstalk]* I understand it would affect the time.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: It would not affect the time, it cannot, not a week, a week cannot make a difference because the medical aid system—I have revamped the medical aid system in the Ministry. The medical aid system is no longer what it was before, where you send something and wait long. I have made sure that the Chief Medical Officer and a new team is taking care of that. So, once you send in something, and it is urgent, it is done very fast. I had to put some controls there, Member for Diego Martin Central, I had to put some control on that. I may go back to the other, but the controls have to be in place first.

Dr. Browne: You know that there are some cases pending now, so I do not want you to feel—

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: No, no, no, I understand that. Also, let me thank you as you are speaking together with me, right, for indicating the need, since it is your area, to reopen the emergency centre in St. James. I remember we had closed there. I want to thank you for that because the problem with that emergency centre was that it was not well advertised. It is now well advertised, and it is being well used. *[Crosstalk]* So, all right, it is good.

Mr. Speaker, it is an overall cancer strategy. We have a satellite chemotherapy area in San Fernando, one in Sangre Grande, and one in St. James, so we are covering the area. My dream, Mr. Speaker, is to cover the four corners of Trinidad and Tobago and the centre. So anything that occurs, people would have easy access. You see, for too long people have been always going to the main bodies for service rather than going to the periphery, and each year one is supposed to have a theme. My theme is, closer to home for this year. What we are going to do, and the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite is assisting me, and I see we have gotten about \$125 million for infrastructure works. All the health centres would

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be upgraded now to a system and a level where they can be utilized for that in homes—as they say, close to home treatment.

I just want to say something else because I know that I am running out of time, and I think that we have a serious problem with the non-communicable diseases in this country, a very serious problem. In fact, our main, main problem is diabetes. Almost about—of the non-communicable diseases—50 per cent are diabetics; and if you think about diabetes, diabetes affects the eyes, it affects the feet, it affects the heart, it affects the kidneys, and it affects every single thing that you could think about. Quality of life goes down.

Hypertension is another killer. It affects the heart, the eyes, and it increases the level of strokes, et cetera. Smoking and cancer go hand in hand as they have been correlated, and the cancer of the lung and cancer of the bladder are attributed to smoking. We also have indiscriminate sexual activity for cancer of the cervix. I just want to touch a little bit on that.

Cancer of the cervix: in fact, we are one of the few countries in Caricom which started the use of the HPV, human papillomavirus vaccination, immunization for girls at the age of 12 and 13. It can also be used for an older age group, but the efficacy is better at that level. So that is being done—well, first we start with the education movement, and then consent by the parents or guardians, and we start giving that legal Gardasil very soon. So we cover that on a yearly basis. [*Crosstalk*]

No, you have to do pap smears, thank you. [*Crosstalk*] You have to do pap smears, you still have to look for it, but the incidence of the cancer of the cervix—and my friend the Member for Caroni East who was the number one obstetrician and gynaecologist in the country—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Still is. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. F. Khan:—has indicated to me that that is a wonderful, wonderful thing, and I want to thank Dr. Naraynsingh, Dr. Pottinger and Dr. Sherene Kalloo for helping me make the decision to go that way. [*Crosstalk*]

The other aspects of it, I just want to touch a little bit in the last couple minutes that I do have. Mr. Speaker, there is a very, very dire need for us in this country to work on our lifestyle changes, as well as our dietary habits, as well as our vegetable intake, and also educate our young children about the dangers of MSG in fast food because there is a link between MSG and our childhood obesity. Most of the fast foods in this country are laced—and also in America—with

something called MSG, monosodium glutamate, which is found in Maggie seasoning, bouillon cubes, and every single aspect of food.

Hon. Member: All the Chinese food.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Soy sauce.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Soy sauce—it is called vetsin. It was developed in Japan, in a place called Ajinomoto, and it is in everything. You may not see the word MSG, but you might see the words glutamic acid. If you do not see glutamic acid, you would see hydrolyzed soy protein or hydrolyzed protein or something to that order. Once it is mixed in the food—it is what they call an excitotoxin. It goes into the system, goes into the brain and stops what they call the satiety centre. The satiety centre tells you when to stop eating, okay, and it is an addictive type of compound that makes you eat more. That is why we have a whole set of young children obese, want more of the junk food, with empty calories, and as a result of that—if you look on the Internet, the dangers of MSG, everything would come there, and you will see it. [*Crosstalk*]

So, what I am looking at is to develop an education pattern where I can start attacking that, attacking sugars, attacking overuse of salt, overuse of that. You see, once we start on the preventative aspect of life, increase the activity level—and by the way, Mr. Speaker, I was told that there is a wonderful gym upstairs, on the 7th floor.

Hon. Member: But do you use it?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: I use it. “Ah using it”, and there is a personal—two personal trainers there. They are asking that the Members of Parliament please come upstairs to the gym. I want to welcome the Prime Minister for coming [*Desk thumping*] and in doing so, Mr. Speaker, we will develop what we call our healthy lifestyles, and I want to commend the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East. He has lost close to about 25 pounds already. [*Desk thumping*] He is no longer eating any sugar, any carbohydrates, he is exercising, he is sleeping and he is eating a lot of vegetables, no alcohol. So, I want people to emulate his lifestyle—in fact, I am trying to emulate it now.

Dr. Browne: His lifestyle?

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: Yes, that lifestyle.

Miss Mc Donald: “Tell Tabaquite.”

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: So, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] Okay, Member for Port of Spain South, let me just finish. I just want to say something.

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[*Crosstalk*] Trinidad and Tobago was responsible for getting the NCDs and the United Nations General Assembly, so we have to practice what we speak. Sir George Alleyne has said that we have taken the forefront in this, with the “Fight the Fat” campaign. I want to commend the staff at the Ministry of Health. I want to commend all of them in the Ministry of Health who have been working together with me to do this programme, and it has been taking root. In fact, we have branded it, believe it or not. When I went to PAHO, everyone in PAHO knew about the “Fight the Fat” programme.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Fight the Fat”.

Hon. Dr. F. Khan: The branding is excellent, and it is NCDs, decrease salt, decrease sugar, healthy lifestyles. I want to thank the Prime Minister because last year in United Nations General Assembly it is what she spoke about.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everybody, and I did not get to my constituency, but my constituency is well taken care of by myself, by the Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, The Member of Parliament for Caroni East, the Member of Parliament for Mayaro, all the Members of Parliament. I have been well served. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Collin Partap (*Cumuto/Manzanilla*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I come before you today in this great House as the Member of Parliament for the great constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, the members of which over the last few weeks have wholeheartedly expressed their support for this budget, the People’s Partnership budget and the People’s Partnership Government, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, our Prime Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the Finance Minister, Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai, on his first budget presentation, which is designed to stimulate growth and generate prosperity in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was utterly disappointed, but not surprised, at the responses put forward by the Member for Diego Martin West, and his usual “should of, could of, would of”, but failed to deliver when they were in Government. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is the—how do you say it?—DNA of the PNM to talk when they are the Opposition about what they should have done when they were in Government. This was made very clear by Miss Ramona Ramdial,

the Member of Parliament for Couva North, my dear friend next to me, the Member of Parliament for La Horquetta/Talparo, when he spoke on agriculture, the Member for Tabaquite, when he spoke on local government, and my dear friend the Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan, when he spoke on health. [Interruption]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I must say it was the worse budget presentation [sic] I have ever heard in my three years as the opposition council and my two years here in this House. This budget presentation [sic] of the Member for Diego Martin West failed—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Budget reply.

Mr. C. Partap: Budget reply—to inspire the imagination of not only his Members here before us, but also the population as a whole.

Hon. Member: What is new?

Mr. C. Partap: Nothing new, nothing new. Madam Deputy Speaker, in his reply to the budget he labelled it as a panic budget, a “rachifée” budget. But, that is not so. We are picking up the pieces left behind by the squandermania that they have had for the last eight years. [Desk thumping] Their last budget, “Strengthening Efficiency, Addressing the Challenges”, was so much “rach” that they ended up losing the election in 2010 [Desk thumping] and we are here to pick up the pieces and put things right in this country.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. C. Partap: Let me just give you a little snippet of what PricewaterhouseCoopers said in a response to the then PNM’s last budget. They said and I quote:

“Of greater concern however is the ongoing absence of real incentives to the Petroleum Sector which continues to be the engine of growth for the economy. The Honourable Minister—then—Karen Nunez-Tesheria, Minister of Finance—“has noted that the Government is in the process of discussing a new fiscal incentive regime. However this review has been ongoing for an extended period and there is little to suggest that we are close to establishing a regime that ‘will encourage exploration and development activities...while maintaining the global competitiveness of our major sector.’”

That was the review of PricewaterhouseCoopers back in 2009 and the response to the 2009/2010 budget.

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Madam Deputy Speaker, that just shows, whatever they have said in the last three days in Parliament must have fallen on deaf ears. They have failed to show that we are indeed, pushing this economy forward. The Trinidad and Tobago National Human Development Index of 2012 stated that Sangre Grande, Mayaro and Rio Claro are among the poorest regions in this country, with the lowest annual household income and lowest levels of education.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Member of Parliament for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you know it is heartening to know that the People's Partnership Government has put so much work, infrastructural work, work in education, health care, agriculture and tourism into the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, and also Sangre Grande and Mayaro. You know, I could sit here and I have about 10 pages of what was done infrastructure wise in my constituency. Ten pages. I mean, it is mind-boggling, and for the first time the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, the people of Hay Street in Cumuto—you know, long left abandoned—have finally gotten water for the first time. [*Desk thumping*]

And as the Member for Mayaro, Hon. Peters said, the people of Biche and Plum Mitan will be getting water soon because the pipeline is being run, right now it is at Cushe. It is in Cushe, and it would be heading towards Biche and Plum Mitan very soon. Those people have not had water. As the Minister said, when you drive through Mayaro, you would see barrels, the black barrels and the blue barrels; when you drive through Biche and Plum Mitan, you would see the same thing, black barrels and you would see the big WASA barrel there, the community tanks where people have to go to get water. Long are the days that that would happen again. No longer will it happen again in our constituency, the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla.

It is because of the foresight of this Government that we are seeing such development. I gave the Member for Tabaquite some roads to be done, and it was done within two months. [*Desk thumping*] He has asked me for more, I really want to detail it but I cannot, but I really would like to thank him for the work that he has done, and the work yet to come, and I want to go through that list here. [*Interruption*]

I would like to thank Dr. Fuad Khan, the hospital is on its way; it will be there in 2014. The Member of Parliament for Baratania/San Juan, the Minister of Health. [*Crosstalk*] I would also like to thank the Member of Parliament for La Horquetta/Talparo, the Minister in the Ministry of Food Production, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the first time we are going to see the fishing depot in north

Manzanilla, it will finally be built under this Government. People in north Manzanilla, when you go there—and I visited there about three weeks ago—they tie their boats on mangrove trees and there is an inlet that they have to put the boats in. There is no storage facility, no electricity, no road leading there, nothing, and for the first time, they will be getting relief and the fishermen of north Manzanilla and the Manzanilla area will have a proper depot where they could have their catch, store it, and let the vendors come and take it there.

I would also like to thank the Member, there is going to be a revival of the citrus industry in Cumuto. [*Desk thumping*] Remember, Cumuto/Manzanilla is an agrarian constituency, and the revival will help. There is going to be over 200 acres of rice in the Plum Mitan area.

Hon. Member: Two thousand.

Mr. C. Partap: Two thousand, sorry. Two thousand acres of rice in the Plum Mitan area; land that is now going to be reused for rice planting—and as he spoke yesterday on the reduction of the food bill of Trinidad and Tobago—that will help, and my constituency will benefit. There is also going to be the revival of the Marper farms. The Minister and I toured there about, four weeks ago?

Mr. Seemungal: A month ago.

Mr. C. Partap: A month ago. [*Interruption and laughter*] And this revival of propagation, and it was before, probably about 15 years ago; it was the main propagation station.

Hon. Member: Prestigious.

Mr. C. Partap: Very prestigious, and it has fallen into decay over the last eight years, but finally we are getting it put back. Marper will be back on the map so to speak.

Hon. Member: Very good.

Mr. C. Partap: I have spoken to the Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, and the roads such as the Caigual Road, Balata Hill Road, the Cumuto Main Road; in three parts will be rehabilitated. Also the Cunapo Southern Main Road and that is the road going from Biche into Sangre Grande.

There is going to be some developmental works on that road also, and that is going to ease the burden of people in my constituency when they have to leave Biche and Plum Mitan to go up to Sangre Grande. The North Manzanilla Road will also be rehabilitated. The two bridges, one in the Guaico area and one in the

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Cunapo Southern Main Road, will also be rehabilitated. The Los Armadillos Road is also going to be rehabilitated, and I think that has started last week under the Ministry of Local Government. There is going to be the St. Marie Emmanuel Road that is up for rehabilitation.

Hon. Member: “Hmm.”

Mr. C. Partap: No, no; do not say “hmm”—the Member for Diego Martin Central, your dad lives close by, he is going to benefit from that road.

Dr. Browne: Keep my dad out of your debate, please!

Mr. C. Partap: “Don’t say hmm when I am speaking.”

Dr. Browne: Leave my dad out of your debate! [*Crosstalk*] Have some respect.

Mr. C. Partap: St. Marie Emmanuel Road is also going to be paved.

Dr. Browne: “Don’t go there!” [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Can we have some order in the House! You may continue, Member.

Dr. Browne: “Don’t go there!” Have some respect!

Mr. C. Partap: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, the St. Marie Emmanuel Road, and that is going to be a collaboration between the Ministry of Work and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Local Government, because that road has been abandoned, for over 20 years it has not been rehabilitated and landslips.

I know the Member for Oropouche West also visited that area about four weeks ago also during her tour of the constituency, and I thank her for—
[*Interruption*]

Miss Roopnarine: And the Minister.

Mr. C. Partap: Pardon, and the Minister, I almost forgot. I would like to thank the Minister of Works and Infrastructure also, during that tour, they stopped by and the saw the dilapidated condition of that road.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

This is a road which is an access road to Sangre Grande, and it is very important and it has been left to decay for over two decades, but help is on the way. Also, the Minister and the Member for Oropouche West—the north Oropouche Road, paving will also start on that road. The box drains have already

been done and now the preparation has started, and the paving will begin. That should be done pretty soon, and I would like to thank her for that. Also, the extension of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from Cumuto to Sangre Grande, the Bye Pass through Valencia, will be opening soon, and that is going to help tremendously with easing the traffic in Valencia on your way to Sangre Grande.

There is going to be a High Court opening in Sangre Grande, the building is going to be built through the Ministry of Justice, and that is going to help in the decentralization of the criminal justice system. No longer would you have to go all the way to Port of Spain to file a High Court matter, you can do it right there in Sangre Grande. I would also like to thank Minister Fazal Karim for bringing the COSTAATT centre to Sangre Grande. That has helped tremendously.

Hon. Member: “So much thing we do there, boy?”

Mr. C. Partap: I have not finished, I have pages. COSTAATT in Sangre Grande, and I know the Prime Minister is going to come and open it very soon, and we are waiting. [*Desk thumping*]

Over 300 people have been registered, and it pulls in people from Toco, from Mayaro, all the way down from Barrackpore comes there. [*Interruption*] I hope I have enough time to come there. That COSTAATT centre has the nursing programme, and I know that will help Dr. Khan in the training of nurses. You know the Sangre Grande Hospital is one mile away from the COSTAATT centre. There is a young lady that works at the regional corporation and she does night classes at the centre, and she lives one and a quarter miles away from here. So, it shows you that for this Government, education has been a real thrust, and also— [*Desk thumping*—I almost forgot, the opening of the Biche High School. It used to be in the constituency of Nariva. Also, the Biche Presbyterian Primary School, which is lower down the hill, has also been opened.

I would like to thank Dr. Gopeesingh, today I know there was a problem at the Biche RC School and within sending the note to him, within two hours the contractors went there and they have done the surveys and work should start pretty soon on that school.

Mr. Speaker, so much work has been done in Cumuto/Manzanilla, I mean, I cannot even begin; the roads, education through the COSTAATT centres and the opening of the high school, and it shows that this Government is one for the people, and the people of Cumuto/Manzanilla have been very appreciative [*Desk thumping*] and I would like to express their appreciation to the Prime Minister, to the Ministers and to the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

5.15 p.m.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Before I go into my substantive contribution today, I would like for us to recognize that today is a very special day, it is the Chinese Double Ten Day, 10th October, 10/10 [*Desk thumping*] And it is a lucky day, because today, Mr. Speaker, our new Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Hon. Senator Larry Howai, of Chinese heritage and ancestry, will be celebrating the passage of his first budget in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I join this debate. I see it as a privilege to contribute at this time. This is the year in which our nation is celebrating our 50th anniversary of independence. This has been a year in which we have been focused as a Government and as a people on the very strong bonds which bind us as a nation and which bind us in patriotism to our land. As I raise some of the points with respect to Budget 2013, I will demonstrate and attempt to do so, to show that Budget 2013 is a testament to my Government's patriotic commitment to Trinidad and Tobago, it is indeed, a people's budget. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when I speak of patriotism, I speak of it in the sense of its fundamental meaning, which is to say, essentially, it means loyalty, it means devotion, it means dedication and commitment to the people of our land, to our family, to our community and, indeed, to the great nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Because, you see, a country is not only about boundaries and hills and valleys and rivers and grasslands, it is not only about geographic space, a nation, indeed, Mr. Speaker, includes that sense of commitment, of dedication, of devotion and of loyalty which we term patriotism. And I see, respectfully, that this 2012/2013 Budget is one that reflects that commitment and dedication. It is, therefore, one of which I am very proud and I fully endorse and commend to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Before I go into some of the details of the budget, I want to first thank the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, his very able staff for presenting to this House a budget, Mr. Speaker, which is one that reflects thrift, it reflects compassion and heart. But at the same time, it is a budget that displays a sense of personal responsibility and individual independence, all the attributes which we say will stimulate growth and create greater prosperity for the citizens of our land.

Mr. Speaker, allow me also to thank all the Members of this honourable Chamber, all my colleagues on this side, Ministers of Government and the MPs for their support, their hard work, their inspiration, their very tireless endurance and courage in the ongoing battle that we face every day in our quest to govern our country in the best interest of the people who elected us to serve.

Mr. Speaker, to the numerous NGOs, civil society, labour organizations, business organizations, individual citizens here and abroad, to all those who held consultations with the Minister and with other Ministers over the past few months, who communicated their much valued thoughts via oral submissions, telephone calls, emails, text messages, memos, we offer our gratitude to them. They have all helped to shape the very foundations on which our Government and this budget rests. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, the voice of the people committed to equality, committed to liberty and progress for all, has helped to shape the budget that has been presented. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Members of the Opposition for their constructive criticism. I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy will give due consideration in his deliberations. I would like to thank also and note, Mr. Speaker, the work done by the hon. Leader of the House, the Member for Oropouche East, [*Desk thumping*] in taking us through this very lengthy debate and to thank also the Member for Port of Spain South, the Chief Whip for the cooperative efforts of both sides, Mr. Speaker, in taking us through some very long days and evenings. And, indeed, in such a manner so as to allow us to finish this budget debate within the time stipulated in the Standing Orders. To them I say thank you, and to all Members for their contributions in this regard. [*Interruption*]

And let us turn now, Mr. Speaker, to the—oh, that is so. Every single Member of Parliament in this House, save and except for the Member for San Fernando East, who has been excused, every single Member of this House contributed in this debate. I think that is a tremendous achievement. [*Desk thumping*]

When we look at some of the comments coming in about the budget, Mr. Speaker, this budget, we would see that there have been some very positive reviews, and so in the *Newsday* of October 02, 2012, headline: “Doctors pleased”. But this is not the Partnership, this is not the Government saying this: “Doctors pleased.” *Trinidad Guardian*, Tuesday October 02, 2012: “Police body happy with fiscal measures”. Tuesday October 02, 2012, the *Trinidad Guardian*: “TTUTA happy with budget allocation for education.” Wednesday October 03, again in the *Trinidad Guardian*: “NATUC welcomes Government labour plans”.

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The hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development would be very happy to hear that. Friday October 05, 2012, in the *Newsday*, “AmCham backs removal of fuel subsidy”.

So there are several other comments like these, these are just a sprinkling. And this does not include, Mr. Speaker, it does include the amount of phone calls, text messages, emails, BBM, the Facebook pages, the social media, all the commentaries coming in are of very positive views for Budget 2013, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Why is it important that we look at the reviews, both as I say constructive criticism, as well as the positive reviews? Indeed, as I say, we have always demonstrated we are a Government that is willing to listen first and then lead, and so we will take on board the criticisms, as I say the constructive criticisms coming from here and elsewhere.

But why is a budget statement and the documents accompanying it so important? It is because the budget is the blueprint for the future, it is the strategic document which will guide us and, indeed, take us along the pathway to what we want to do for the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So, instead of responding, Mr. Speaker, and I do not intend to do so, to all the individual claims, the attacks, the misinformation, the scare tactics employed by some to discredit our budget, I would not go into those specifics, Mr. Speaker. Many of our line Ministers and MPs here have dealt with the cut and thrust of those, Mr. Speaker.

I think we want to see where this budget document places us, because that sets out, as I say, it gives us a clear sense of priorities which we hope all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago share, indeed, including hon. Members of the Opposition. This budget, any budget is a blueprint for the future, as I said, and this particular budget comes at a critical time in our country's economy and in the world's economy, at a time when such economies are ready to come back from the edge of a global economic downturn and, therefore, it should not really become a tool in petty debate for political gain.

Instead, I ask the hon. Members on the other side, as I, indeed, ask on this side that we put aside the natural instinct to oppose and instead to pick up responsibility we all share as representatives of the people, and to represent the people honestly, frankly and deliberately. So I would ask that we put aside the scare tactics, the scare tactics which talked about—and the scare tactics, Mr.

Speaker, are also untrue, the accusations that we are—about fuel rationing, that there will be fuel rationing. Totally untrue. Every reasonable citizen out there knows that that was not happening, will not happen. It is a scare tactic.

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessry SC: Mr. Speaker, there were threats that we were going to close down UTT, the University of Trinidad and Tobago. And, indeed, those who are asking, “Who said that?” I am sure the *Hansard* record would reflect those who said it. I am not going to get into each one said “X, Y, P and Q”, “he say; they say; them say.” The records are in the *Hansard*, and so the scare tactic, Mr. Speaker, about closing down UTT, all of us inside this room know that is untrue. Why would anyone want to close down UTT? Why?

My Government has been committed to education. My Government has always seen education as a passport to a better quality of life. [*Desk thumping*] My Government has always seen education as a key to better jobs, more sustainable jobs. Indeed, in a former incarnation in Government, we were the ones who gave every child a place in a secondary school, and we are very proud of that. We are now focused on bringing universal pre-school education to the young ones, we started that programme, and that programme is ongoing. We have pledged that we will grow the tertiary education sector, because why? Human capital development is one of cornerstones of the philosophy and the underpinnings of the People’s Partnership; human capital development. [*Desk thumping*]

So, we have pledged that we will grow the tertiary sector, and this is where UTT comes in, as well as UWI, from the 46 per cent that it is at the moment, already grown from when we came into office, we want to grow that to 60 per cent, that is our target, Mr. Speaker, which is what you would find in some of the more developed countries.

And how do we do that? By creating more spaces in the tertiary level institutions, in the same way we were doing, creating plant, places and teachers in the pre-school sector. Indeed, the Ministry of Tertiary Education is very involved in some of the very UTT programmes, new ones for early childhood care education, so that they would have the teachers as we expand that sector.

So, I am saying why would anyone want to shut down UTT? And I can only see it as a scare tactic, Mr. Speaker, and any reasonable person seeing what is happening will know that it is totally false. At the moment, Mr. Speaker, UTT boasts of almost 6,300 students; six thousand, three hundred students, Mr.

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Speaker. Twenty-two per cent of that came in since we came into office, Mr. Speaker. In addition, new programmes, there have been about 24 new programmes, we are growing that tertiary sector. We will continue to grow that tertiary sector because, again, education is the key out of poverty. Education is the passport to sustainable jobs, and we would do that. So nothing could close down UTT.

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, my own son attends the University of Trinidad and Tobago. I am very proud of it. [*Desk thumping*] I am very proud he is a student of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. And so like many other parents, an opportunity is provided right here locally for our children to pursue an education, and we are very fortunate because this particular campus is close to where he lives, and he is quite happy. He is the father of two young babies, my grandchildren, and it suits him very well that he does not have to travel long distances or go far away. So I thank the Ministry and this Government for the spaces provided for the over 6,300 students—six thousand, three hundred children—in this country who can access education in UTT. [*Desk thumping*] So we will never close it down, Mr. Speaker. We will not close down UTT.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is more important that we focus on where we can all agree and that is a better commitment to crime prevention, a commitment to better jobs, a commitment to better wages, a commitment to more economic development, a commitment to better health care for all, better schools for our children and for their children. These are the things I think both sides and, indeed, every right-thinking citizen will agree, that we will all agree on these matters.

And, in short, I think it is time that we care more about delivering a better Trinidad and Tobago to this generation and to the next one. And so I ask that we join together to work together on those issues which we all agree upon, which I say is for a better Trinidad and Tobago in every sector and in every way, and that is what we must do, to do the right things for our citizens and for those of us in Trinidad and Tobago. And we can agree on matters, as I have said, and we can honestly disagree with each other. We would not all have the same point of view at every point in time, but clearly there must be things we stand for, that patriotism, as I said, that devotion, dedication to community, to family, to country, Mr. Speaker, and we can, therefore, join in that effort for our land.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I see the vision of my Government, the philosophy of our Government, and the Government of this country is one for a better life for all. It

does not matter where you come from, Mr. Speaker, whether you come from the north, the south, the east or the west or you come across the waters from Tobago. It does not matter what space, place or race you belong to, our vision is for every citizen of Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago. So whether you live in Laventille or Longdenville, whether you live in Cedros or Charlotteville, whether you live in Point Fortin or Parlatuvier, it does not matter. It does not matter whether you live in Debe or Dibe, it does not matter if you live in Scarborough or San Fernando. And so, Mr. Speaker, I am saying our vision, regardless of class, race, space or place, we see that there is and must be equal opportunity for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you know where our hearts lie. The grassroots of this country have seen a demonstration of a different kind. They have seen one of concern, of compassion and one that is people-centred. From the moment we took office, we embarked upon a programme of people-centred development, the likes of which this country has never seen before. And so, in little villages, in remote areas, in rural communities, in areas hitherto overlooked, underdeveloped, we have brought development for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Ministers are all here. The Minister of Legal Affairs just talked about Point Fortin—there is development in Point Fortin—where you can access with the registry there and different parts of the island, schools in different parts. The Minister of Health just spoke, talking about the hospitals. And so it is untrue, Mr. Speaker, and it is untrue and scare tactics to say that this Government is discriminating and that we are only putting projects in certain parts of the country. That is discriminatory. [*Crosstalk*] That is totally discriminatory, it is false, Mr. Speaker, and I want to place that on the record. [*Desk thumping*]

So when for 40 years and 50 years, and 60 years, there were communities in this country that got absolutely nothing, not a word was said, today, any part of Trinidad that you go in, any part of Tobago you go into, you will see development taking place. [*Desk thumping*] Everywhere you go, in the villages, in the rural communities, but we do not leave out Port of Spain, we do not leave out the cities, there is development that is also taking place. And Ministers here in their portfolios have described the development that is taking place throughout Trinidad and Tobago

Mr. Speaker, you know how proud I am when I drive down going south—and those of you who have never gone south, we always come to Port of Spain. Those of you who have not gone south, take a drive down there and when you see you get off the highway, at the bottom of the highway and you just look in front of

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you, you see the most massive expansive development, the Point Fortin highway, Phase I. [*Desk thumping*] As Minister Roopnarine said, almost 60 per cent complete. In every PNM budget for 50 years they have been promising to build it, but we are 60 per cent complete in Phase I of that highway. [*Desk thumping*] So when you say we are discriminating, so everybody coming from north to south, all along that highway will benefit. And, yes, Madam from Point Fortin, we will reach Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] I tell you that, I promise you that, we will reach. They could not do it in 50 years [*Desk thumping*] but we will continue to develop every part of the island.

Mr. Howai in his budget statement, he talked about what we will be doing in the north-west peninsula, so we are not just going down with the highway down to the south-west, we have talked about our plans to take us up to Chaguaramas, to talk about development of that north-west peninsula as well. So how can you say that we are only about development of certain areas?

When you read—I do not know, I just said to Mr. Howai, I did not see one single Member on that side pick up any of the budget documents. I do not know if they even read them. I do not know if they read a single one of those, but if you did, you would see all the development projects, the Social Sector Investment Programme, the Public Sector Investment Programme, and indeed the budget document itself. You will see what happened in the last fiscal year, and you will see our proposals for the coming fiscal year.

Therefore, nothing is further from the truth than to say that we are developing only certain sectors. That is a kind of code way of speaking, you know, it is code, and it is very dangerous, Mr. Speaker. The documents in black and white, the evidence, the empirical evidence will bear out those statements are totally false and without merit. [*Desk thumping*]

And so you will see business booming in the cities, you will see in the country towns, in the villages; you will see new construction everywhere, new buildings, road paving, box drains, schools, health centres and water lines, so much more in terms of development. That is where the development, Mr. Speaker—that is where our hearts lie, in every single part of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And so we will go in the north-west peninsula, in the south-west peninsula, [*Interruption*] we will go up to the east, Mr. Speaker, north-east and north-west.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, may I?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I think someone wants to let us know they have just arrived.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, let us have some respect in this House, please. Allow the Prime Minister to speak in silence. I shall protect the Prime Minister against any disruption [*Desk thumping*] in this Parliament. I am going to ask all Members to be silent whilst the Prime Minister is speaking as a Member of this honourable House. Continue, hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, when they ask where is the development in Trinidad and Tobago, I want to say, do not look at the tall structures, look for that development in the eyes of happier, healthier children, look for that development in the eyes of the elderly, and with the men, women and children of our land. Look for it in the hopes and expectations of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, our vision is not a pie in the sky vision of 2020 high-rise buildings. Our vision is not about sky rises and high rises. Our vision in this Government, Mr. Speaker, is about people rising. [*Desk thumping*] So, in keeping our vision of people-centred development, we will build the schools and the hospitals and the recreation grounds, the sporting grounds, all the facilities throughout the length and breadth of our nation. Ministers will tell you, you do not have to wait till 2020 to get a passport, you do not have to wait till 2020 to get a birth certificate, a driver's permit. So many other documents with the touch of your finger, sitting in your home, through this Government you could access Government services in your home. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our vision for our children, in keeping with our vision in the context of the world stage, our children will become computer literate, not in 2020, right now, they are becoming computer literate [*Desk thumping*] with the almost—what is it?—55,000 laptops distributed to our children in schools. They do not have to wait till 2020.

And you know a very interesting thing happened. Over the weekend, my little grandson, his cousin visited him and the father of his cousin said, "It is time to go home". He does not want to go home because the two young ones are having so much fun. So the father is telling the cousin, you know, "boys need to go home when it gets dark because, you know what, there might be zombies out there." So he came and he asked, he said, "Grandma, what is this about zombies, is it true?" Now he is six going on seven. What is it about zombies? He said, "You know what? I have to go on the internet and Google that." Go on the Internet and

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Google it. That is the opportunity. When someone was complaining the last day about the computers and whatever is on it and not on it, I said those who could afford to buy, their children have it. What about the children whose parents could not afford to buy? [*Desk thumping*] They said they will steal the computers. Up to now only one was stolen, and guess what, recovered almost instantaneously.

Dr. Moonilal: “Ah PNM tief dat.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Then those on the other side called them “duncey head children”—

Hon. Member: Shame, shame.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—man, “duncey head children”.

Hon. Member: I remember.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: When we were building the schools in Biche and in Brazil, and all the “lagahoo” and “douen”, [*Crosstalk*] they have always had that disrespect for the children whose parents cannot afford what their children can afford. We have always said that every child must be given the opportunity to access education and to access the computer, and they get all the benefits that a good education can bring. [*Desk thumping*] So I say when I talked of our children being computer literate, at the moment I am advised 55,000 students or children have computers, thanks [*Desk thumping*] to the People’s Partnership Government, and 4,000 teachers have computers too from this Government. Our plan is and we will do it because we have done it in year one, 2010; and we did it in year two 2011; we did it again in year three, 2012; we will do it again in year 2013, 2014 so that in our fifth year of Government every single child from Forms 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, will be with a computer and be computer literate. That is where our vision is, Mr. Speaker.

The father of the nation, Dr. Eric Williams, said once, “The future of our children is in the book bags.” I say today in this world, the future of our children is in the computers and the laptops in their book bags. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a people’s budget. I think it is appropriately labelled in that manner because it signals to every investor and every construction company, every employer, each student, each farmer, every citizen who yearns to see a safer country and to protect himself, they will see a series of initiatives that will change the course of our history in the shortest possible time. The people’s budget is born out of a philosophy which guides our leadership, people-centred, Mr. Speaker.

So the time has come, in my respectful view, for us to do what is necessary to give confidence to the nation, to create strategies to produce results in the short term and in the medium term. We have completed our first task, that was to bring a level of fiscal responsibility to the management of the nation's affairs as a result of the very prudent stewardship by former Minister of Finance, hon. Minister Winston Dookeran, the ship is now steered out of the troubled waters of wanton wastage and squandering of our very valuable resources. [*Desk thumping*]

The situation we met was so disastrous, so much needed to be done, we have done so, but at the same time we made sure that we took care of those who were most in need. We invested where it matters most, whilst at the same time we delivered to the neediest in our society. And so if you look at the areas of emphasis on social programmes, we will look at people-centred budgeting, as I say. We believe that level of well-being and quality of life should be the most important measure of a country, whether we achieve this with the macroeconomic fundamentals or not, we must ensure that we are achieving developmental objectives of the well-being and the quality of life of our citizens.

So people must be empowered with the tools and the knowledge to build their own communities and to a larger extent, the entire nation. We believe people are an integral part of a country's development. And so what people-centred development reflects is an approach to development, facilitating communities, self-reliance and social justice, participatory decision-making in crucial areas affecting their own lives. This philosophy, which underpins our Government recognizes that whilst economic growth is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for human development.

There is need for other critical social and environmental factors which we must also take into account. And so we place emphasis on the social programmes, health care, education, employment, community development, families, gender issues, disability, ageing, housing, sports, skill development. These are the people-centred issues for building human capital. And so if you look at the key Ministries in the *Social Sector Investment Programme 2013* Mr. Speaker, we will see at page 89 that out of some 21 people-centred development projects, 15—and I must compliment the Ministers on this side—15 out of those 21 spent 100 per cent of their 2012 budget allocations [*Desk thumping*] to implement their programmes. Fifteen out of 21.

We look at page 89 of the *Social Sector Investment Programme*, we look at page 87, we look at the indices, we will see all the programmes, what we have achieved and implemented in fiscal 2012, and we will also see what we propose

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to do in fiscal 2013. So when you stand to say we have implemented nothing, we have done nothing, please read, it is there in black and white, please read it, and you will see the programmes and the achievements and the proposals on the way forward.

Mr. Speaker, I say further when we deal with people-centred budgeting and poverty reduction, you will see why in the *Public Sector Investment Programme* which is the other book, *Public Sector Investment Programme*, we will see at pages 6 and 7 and the appendices, and especially at page 180, in this document that we have allocated 36.1 per cent of the PSIP to poverty reduction.

5.45 p.m.

I come back to people-centred and taking care of the most vulnerable in our society. Whilst we do that, we are also concerned to grow the economy, the budget “Stimulating Growth, Generating Prosperity”; so whilst we help the vulnerable, whilst we allocate 36.1 per cent of the PSIP to poverty reduction, we also allocated 35.6 per cent of the PSIP to economic growth, job creation, competitiveness and innovation. [*Desk thumping*] So we are doing it from both sides. [*Desk thumping*] The social sector programmes, whilst we stimulate growth, as the Minister has pointed out, and we generate prosperity.

So, I see this budget, this people’s budget as the engine of growth and prosperity, accelerating the speed of solutions to the nation’s most pressing issues: Crime, jobs and the economy, health, education, agriculture, housing, as primary areas of concern. Crime-fighting, jobs in the economy, helping those most in need, the vulnerable, housing, health and education; these are the areas we focused on in our people-centred people’s budget.

If we look at the budget statement itself, Mr. Speaker, presented by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, how do we intend to achieve these objectives? First of all, let us look at it: creating environment for growth. The Minister of Finance and the Economy disclosed the initiatives, strengthening the competitiveness of the economy, crime and national security.

Further, the Minister pointed to the initiatives in the 2013 budget for stimulating growth. What are these? Infrastructure, the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, which I just spoke about, infrastructure, public/private partnerships, a concept we have talked about last year but which we intend to fully implement in fiscal 2013.

The Minister spoke about stimulating growth through stimulating the construction sector, and initiatives that we see there in this budget will lead us

into a construction boom such as we have not seen for a long time. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister speaks about stimulating growth in this budget, which is a programme of public offerings. That, too, will stimulate growth and bring prosperity.

The Minister speaks about initiatives for diversifying the economy. And where will these be in? Financial services, the tourism sector, the sport sector, information and technology, the gasoline conversion to CNG, in the creative industries, in the maritime industry, in agriculture, in manufacturing, energy, small and micro enterprise, developing national sports. The Minister of Sport would be happy to hear.

So these are the initiatives, Mr. Speaker, in the statement which are fleshed out in the Public Sector Investment Programme, the Social Sector Investment Programme. And, Mr. Speaker, this document, the draft estimates of expenditure, whilst they are very useful, they just tell you the money amounts, but you need to come to these documents, the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, the *Social Sector Investment Programme*, for flesh to be put on the bones that are contained in the draft estimates, and we will see the initiatives there.

Further, for this budget, stimulating growth and generating prosperity, we talk about developing the quality of life, maintaining social protection, National Insurance Board increased benefits, housing and homeownership, environment and water resources, transport. We talk about broadening the knowledge base, access to quality education, higher education, skills training, expanding the health and services sector, and restructuring of CEPEP and URP, a very important initiative. When we talked about 4 per cent and so on, as being identified or defined as full employment, the concern was raised that these jobs are not sustainable jobs, the CEPEP and URP, but were contained in budget 2013 as outlined by the hon. Minister. There is an initiative to convert these jobs, to convert persons from these jobs into gainful employment in the private sector. [*Desk thumping*] And how are we going to do it? The initiative, I recall correctly, is to give a 150 per cent tax deductible—

Is this how it works, Minister?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—tax deduction for when you absorb persons out of these programmes. So there are initiatives for sustainable jobs from those sectors but, indeed, in many of the other sectors, as I have already described.

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And so, Mr. Speaker, in this document, too, there is a very important statement, and this has to do with Tobago. Mr. Speaker, at page 46 of this budget statement, the Minister of Finance enunciated very clearly the intention of this Government, the commitment of this Government to the people of Tobago. I will quote from page 46 with your leave, hon. Speaker, in the budget statement:

“During the current session of this Parliament, this Government will table legislation for internal self-government for Tobago for the consideration of hon. Members” of this House.

During this session of Parliament. I think we are in the 12th Session of the Parliament—not 12th, we are in the 12th Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: 10th Parliament.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The 10th Parliament, the Third Session. It is our intention, Mr. Speaker, to lay in this House for Members to consider legislation for internal self-government for Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this has long been a sore point for the people of Tobago. The people of Tobago have always been made to feel by some of us in Trinidad that they are orphan children, or they are second; but our anthem very clearly tells us, “side by side we stand”. Trinidad and Tobago, Tobago and Trinidad. Where is our commitment? Where is our commitment in all these years of the legislative history of this Parliament from those on the other side in all the incarnations in government, never lifted a finger—

Hon. Member: Shame, shame. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—to give any legislative effect to the people of Tobago? None. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Shame.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mouthed platitudes.

Mr. Speaker, it was the last UNC Government who worked, first of all, to provide and to legislative for the Tobago House of Assembly Act. Since then, Mr. Speaker, there has been nothing by the last administration.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Member wishes to say something. I will give way to him, you know, the Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Roberts: Very rude.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I mean, really, I listened to him for one hour and 59 minutes—

Mr. Roberts: And painful.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—last Friday. And so I am saying, you see when you speak the truth, it hurts.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It hurts. [*Crosstalk*] It hurts, you have to grumble and mutter under your breath, [*Crosstalk*] but I will not be deterred by your mutterings. I will not be deterred.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, please, the Leader of the Opposition, please.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will not be deterred, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: You cannot bully the Prime Minister, boy.

Hon. Member: “Boy hush yuh mouth nah.”

Dr. Rowley: She is throwing words at me.

Mr. Roberts: You cannot bully the Prime Minister. You cannot bully her.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Did I call your name, Member for Diego Martin West? Did I call anyone’s name?

Mr. Roberts: “You ain call no name.”

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, please, let us have peace.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, but if the jacket fits—sorry, Jack “is not yours” but let Jack wear it. If it fits, wear it; if the shoe fits.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about Tobago, and this is where the truth offends some persons and there we see—

Mr. Roberts: Pseudo Tobagonians.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—I do not believe that any citizen of our twin-island Republic failed to notice the fact that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, when he spoke for one hour and 59 minutes last Friday in his reply—

Mr. Warner: And said nothing.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—barely mentioned the word “Tobago” during the course of his presentation, except to talk about what, TOP and bottom, which

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one winning election. That was all it was about. There was not a plan mentioned, not a programme mentioned, Mr. Speaker, in this great plan they have for when they take back power.

Hon. Member: Rapid rail.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: There was not a plan, Mr. Speaker, for Tobago.

Hon. Member: Rapid rail.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And that is not new. Over the years, if you look at the budget statements made by the former administration and in their contributions, you will find very little mention of Tobago, Mr. Speaker. So this very conspicuous omission, in my respectful view, speaks volumes, it underscores the absence of any policy, the absence of any proposal and the absence of any initiative from the Opposition in respect of our sister island, Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, it is also noteworthy for consistency, that the PNM's manifesto in the last general election was equally silent, similarly silent on any plans, programmes, policy initiatives for the development of Tobago. Is that by guess or by chance? In stark contrast, Mr. Speaker, the promise of my Government on page 63 of our general election manifesto is, a constitutional relationship between Tobago and Trinidad—the truth offends.

Mr. Speaker: Members of the Opposition, please, please, allow the—let us have silence, please.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The truth always offends.

A constitutional relationship between Tobago and Trinidad, where Tobago would have the constitutional authority to treat fully with all matters under the Fifth Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 40 of 1996, within the framework of the sovereign democratic State of Trinidad and Tobago.

I heard an hon. Member on the other side asking, “Who pass that THA Act?” Who was in government in 1996?” Who passed the 1996 Act, Mr. Speaker?

So, in order to give effect—we continue in the manifesto—to this policy, the People's Partnership Government will take the following steps:

We will review the matters listed in the Fifth Schedule of the THA Act, No.40 of 1996, and other relevant sections;

We will bring to the Parliament a Bill to amend section 75(1) of the Constitution so as to give the THA executive and legislature, authority for matters under the Fifth Schedule and other matters incidental thereto;

We will amend all the existing laws to be consistent with and give legal and administrative effect to the new constitutional relationship between T & T.

The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, as I said, reiterated our commitment to building a firm and secure partnership with our fellow citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this, in our manifesto, did not land out of the sky or off the air. This, Mr. Speaker, was the proposal and has been, at the insistence of the leader of the TOP, Mr. Ashworth Jack. [*Desk thumping*] When Mr. Jack joined this Partnership, Mr. Jack made it very clear that he will cooperate with the Partnership, he will work within the Partnership, in order to ensure that that pledge we made in our manifesto was fulfilled and we will fulfil that pledge in our manifesto. [*Desk thumping*] Because the Partnership is based on mutual respect and appreciation of our very unique Trinbagonian identity and the need to reverse decades of political inequitable treatment and the consequential marginalization of the people of Tobago.

Tobago is not an annex of Trinidad, you know; it is an equal partner with us as a nation. In recognition of this, simply a fundamental political ideology, my Government completed recent consultations on the Green Paper on internal self-government in Tobago. Consultations were widespread. We want to thank all those who participated, and so on. Over 10,000 copies of this Green Paper were printed and distributed through public offices, length and breadth of Tobago and Trinidad. Copies were also on the Internet for easy download. The report of Dr. Hamid Ghany submitted to the Cabinet; the proposals for reform are meaningful and fundamental but they are premised on the concept of equality and respect for our twin-island Republic.

So, while I note the Opposition's political intransigence and publicly-declared refusal to cooperate with us in passing legislation to bring about long overdue reforms to Tobago, I say that the efforts of our Government will not be thwarted. The hon. Leader of Opposition is on the record as saying he will not support any bill that requires a special majority. Mr. Speaker, I say to him, reconsider when it comes to granting internal self-government for Tobago. They deserve it; they deserve it. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Do so at your own peril.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are committed to bringing the legislation to this House to reform the constitutional relationship with Tobago, Mr. Speaker, for development of Tobago. It is in this vein, I am pleased to announce that the Constitution (Amdt.) (Tobago) Bill, 2011, as I said before, will be laid during this session of this Parliament and will be given a strong priority. [*Desk thumping*] The Bill will be geared towards strengthening Tobago's internal self-governance and create a platform for economic growth and development.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is for too long we have heard the cries of our brothers and sisters in Tobago.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are unable to legally own their most precious asset, the land on which they live, because of historical events. Unlike here in Trinidad where many can get a title to their land, people of Tobago are deprived of land titles, totally deprived. And so, Mr. Speaker, generations have lived on the same plot of land which had been given to younger generations but they have no legal title to the land. If you have no legal title, you cannot take it to bank for collateral, you cannot use it in any way as an asset because you do not have title. You cannot even take a mortgage to pretty up your house or to improve or build the house, Mr. Speaker, because that land title—and, you know, apart from the monetary value, land is such an important sense of belonging to a country. When you have land title to a piece of land in your country, Mr. Speaker, your navel string is buried there.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much hon. Members. Mr. Speaker, I was speaking about what land means, and in Trinidad we have the programme—in Tobago, “Land for the landless”. So I am very happy to announce that the hon. Attorney General has retained the services of Mr. Russell Martineau, SC—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Oh boy!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—who is in the process of drafting a Tobago Land Bill to correct this—[*Desk thumping*] The aim of this law will be to regularize the issue of land titles for the people of Tobago. In the meantime, the Minister of Legal Affairs is working on another system, so conjointly, we will work as best as we can to grant land titles to which the people of Tobago are entitled.

Mr. Speaker, there is just one thing; we talked about no plans, no programmes and so on. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, in his contribution, spoke about the one plan that he was very sure, that should he—well, should that ever happen—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: A nightmare.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: A nightmare as he termed it. Should he ever take the reins of Government that the one plan, the one programme will be, to bring back the “Racket Rail”. To bring back the “Racket Rail” programme. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, I could not see anything else, but that plan and programme as being the fulcrum of development for Trinidad and Tobago. That really boggles the mind because the Member for Diego Martin North/East, when he was a Minister, we looked at the article in the *Newsday*, September 30, 2009:

“Minister of Works and Transport Colm Imbert gave figures to the Senate on Monday which suggests the cost to plan the...rapid rail (a project which has since been placed on hold) is about \$450 million.”

We talked about the 485.

So the Minister himself, the then Minister—\$450 million, that was in 2009. By the time we get to 2010, *Newsday* article Thursday, March 25, 2010, the Minister is now saying:

“...Works and Transport Minister Colm Imbert proclaimed that construction of the Trinidad Rapid Rail would begin in...2010, with the first train rolling out of Port of Spain about three years later, after expenditure of some \$15 billion...”

Hon. Member: “Ooh good!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Fifteen billion dollars. Wait! He is saying that:

“...provided of course, there are not any cost overruns.” [*Laughter*]

Fifteen million—this is a report in the *Newsday*.

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Mr. Speaker, lo and behold—that is March, 2010. Lo and behold, 2010, 2011, 2012, two years later in this very Chamber, the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, made a great revelation. So in 2010, it was \$15 billion. The hon. Member tells this House that this programme now:

“...expenditure on the project was projected to be \$20 billion...”

Hon. Members: “Ooh good!”

Dr. Moonilal: Twenty! Where the \$5 billion come from?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Twenty billion dollars! So listen, in two years—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: In Opposition.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—from \$15 billion it increased by \$5 billion more to \$20 billion, and by the time they get back into power, it will double to \$40 billion, if they ever get there. [*Desk thumping*] Now, I have no quarrel with using railways. In principle, there is nothing wrong, no objection to railways as a mode of transport, but the issue here is one about transparent procurement regimes. And it is to this I now turn, Mr. Speaker, the whole troubling issue of transparency in procurement of government goods and services. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, order, Member for Diego Martin Central, please.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, as I say here we are committed to development of Tobago under the THA Act. And I want to deal with BOLT and the THA. There are certain transactions taking place in Tobago. Two come to our attention. One was raised by the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara last Friday and there is another one. These two transactions attempt to utilize what they call the BOLT structure, (Build-Own-Lease-Transfer). The first was the Milshirv, the administrative complex at \$143 million. The second is the \$250-million Tobago aquatic centre and indoor sporting complex.

Hon. Members: What! What!

Dr. Moonilal: Two hundred and fifty million dollars?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Now, the Minister of Sport passed me a document here and this is the national aquatic centre, and look at this document, [*Holds up document*]—all the plans and proposal. This is the national aquatic centre here, for the whole of Trinidad and Tobago at \$193 million.

Mr. Roberts: VAT inclusive.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And here is this aquatic centre where they are proposing through a BOLT agreement to build it for \$250 million.

Mr. Roberts: “Ohhh goood!” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It appears that the THA negotiated an arrangement which was designed to bypass and circumvent the provisions of the THA Act. In particular, section 51 of the Act where it states:

“51. The Secretary may—

- (a) with the approval of the Assembly, borrow by way of overdraft, such sums as the Assembly considers fit for the discharge of its functions; or
- (b) with the approval of the Minister, borrow sums by way of term loans for the purposes of capital investment.”

This issue of using the BOLT structure has very significant implications for responsible fiscal management. If it is unaddressed, you would have unbridled expansion of future liabilities for the THA and inevitably down to the central government. If the central government is left out of the loop on these then how can we budget appropriately?

The THA was prepared to mortgage the future of the children of Tobago without any form of accountability or transparency. Each use of the BOLT structure without the knowledge or the approval of the Minister and the Cabinet creates increased financial requirement to service the lease finance payments. So you have future liabilities. That is one of the reasons in the first place why you had section 51(1)(b) of the THA Act. If that is left unchecked what will be the limit through these financial arrangements of debt that you have been incurring? What would happen if the THA then could not meet these debt payments that they created—the lease payments? If they are in breach of the lease agreements could they walk in and put them out of the THA structures and buildings? Ultimately, the central government would have to bail them out.

So recently, Dr. London, hon. Chief Secretary of THA, he went on the offensive to defend the BOLT structure. Maybe he knew the implications of what the THA had done. In an article titled “TOP supports BOLT” dated October 3, and this is on the THA website, Chief Secretary Dr. Orville London says:

“...over the past 12 years...written and oral representations had been made to various ministers of finance by the PNM administration in the THA...to borrow...”

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And they have not had any luck.

It is clear from this that Dr. London is aware that the Minister of Finance and the Economy must provide the authority for borrowings, because they applied. In another article entitled “BOLT...” controversy, dated September 11, 2012, it is stated that:

“The Assembly is not authorized to borrow on a capital basis without approval from the Minister of Finance.”

Chief Secretary said the Assembly had approached the Minister many times, many times, and was told no. Well, Minister I do not know if you were approached about this particular project, perhaps you could let us know. Then he said that from the articles on the THA website, from the Chief Secretary’s own statements:

The THA used the BOLT mechanism as the means to circumvent section 51(b) of the THA Act.

Mr. Speaker, at minimum, this would be against the spirit of the Act, and a maximum it would be a breach of the law. Financial advisors have advised that the BOLT structure, and in particular the leasing element as proposed by Zoit Developers Limited for building the aquatic centre, is in effect a borrowing on the finance lease. If we look at legislation elsewhere we would see that borrowing money means, inter alia, amongst other things, entering into finance lease arrangements or arrangement that are of the same or a substantially similar nature.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the legislation in New Zealand, New Zealand Public Finance Act and others, that is one test as to whether something is a borrowing. If we look at international accounting standards again, they say, ownership of the asset is transferred to the lessee at the end of the lease term—build-own-lease-transfer, that is what BOLT is. Again, that test is fulfilled, it is met. And the lease contains a bargain purchase option to buy the equipment at less than fair market value. Again, that test is met, indicating that these BOLT arrangements are in fact financing borrowing arrangements.

When we see the documents and we look at the statements on the THA website itself, we see that these conditions are met and these leases, these BOLT arrangements are in effect borrowing by the THA contrary to the THA Act, section 51. But it goes further, the Tobago aquatic centre—if we go through the chronology of events with respect to this Tobago aquatic centre, by letter dated

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January 16, 2012, and addressed to no one in particular, it says:

Dear Sir/Madam,

Adam's Project Management and Construction Limited through its managing director, submitted an unsolicited tender offer for the Tobago centre in the sum of \$149.8 million.

Listen to the numbers. Adam's letter dated January 16, 2012.

Thereafter, one week later, by letter dated January 25, 2012, addressed to Chief Secretary Orville London, Zoit Developers Limited through its secretary, Ms. Vana Woods submitted an unsolicited proposal. I understand nobody asked for this, you know. Nowhere is it tendered or nowhere it is seen. Unsolicited proposal and it is now saying \$233.5 million to build this aquatic centre. So from \$149 million by Adam's you go up to \$233 million by ZOIT. The wording of the letters from Adams and Zoit, they are very instructive. Adam's letter states:

We are pleased to enclose our tender offer for the project.

Was there a tender put out? Was it advertised? How did it become a tender? The ZOIT letter however, is even more instructive. And I quote, it says:

Further to our letter of introduction to your good self...

And remember the good self was Chief Secretary Dr. Orville London

Further to our letter of introduction to your good self on the December 13, please find attached our proposals.

From December 13 to January, proposals for this building—these facts beg these questions now. How did either of these companies become aware that this aquatic centre was to be constructed so as to make the offer, make their tender, make their proposal? Was there a request for proposals or any form of tender? Were these companies hand-selected to make proposals and if so, on what criteria were they selected? Was this project put out for tender, advertised, was it in anyway made known to the public? If not, why not?

Mr. Speaker, proposed BOLT agreements are put out for public tenders. Indeed, the full-page advertisement that the Chief Secretary put out here he listed other BOLT arrangements. The very first one is this—he said—these things are great you know—for example, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure Head Office in Port of Spain was built on a BOLT. Mr. Speaker, look at what that BOLT document looks like. [*Raises document*] Look at this. And it recites in it, dated August 20, 1995 at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure Head Office, a BOLT

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agreement. In it, it says: that whereas a request for proposals dated May 6, 1994, the Government invited tenders for design, finance and construct of this headquarters. If you look at the other BOLT documents, that is what happens. You put it out and people send proposals and they tender. There is absolutely no evidence of any such document for tendering for people to put in their proposals. So how did these people know? Where did they meet? Were they in a hotel somewhere having tea and coffee? I do not know.

Mr. Roberts: Balisier House.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Where were they meeting? How did this happen? And so the agreements were put out. We have no evidence of that happening.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying, this initiated by some kind of tender, public requests and so a search in the companies registry reveals now about Zoit. This is the company, Zoit Developers. November 10, 2011, Mervyn Campbell applies for a name search reserving the name, Zoit Developers Limited. Here is the name search when the company was registered, Mr. Speaker. [*Raises up document*]

6.15 p.m.

What date? November 10, 2011. November 15, 2011, Zoit Developers Incorporated; certificate of incorporation: Z462 of '95. Directors: Mervyn Campbell, Keith King, Lennox Lewis. And here is a company, incorporated November 15, 2011; it is referring to a letter of introduction December 13—one month later—to Mr. London for a proposal for a \$233 million facility—aquatic centre—a company incorporated a few months before making these unsolicited proposals for a multi-million dollar contract.

Hon. Member: Calder Hart gone! Calder Hart here.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, November incorporated; December, letter of instruction; January, full proposals, designs, everything in it; all the designs sent in.

After January 2012 now, in response to the request communicated by the letter March 19, 2012—so they have sent it in in January—March 2012, the Chief Administrator of the Division of Finance of the THA, they asked Project Specialists Limited to evaluate the proposal and in their report dated May 03, 2012, PSL raised serious concerns and advised the THA against going forward on the proposal. If you look at pages 6, 14 and 15 of the report—I have a copy here passed to me by our good friends in the TOP.

Mr. Speaker, I quote from page 15:

The client should note by acceptance of this proposal it would incur annual recurrent expenditure between \$18.95 million and \$22.38 million.

Mr. Roberts: Ohh! “Nah”!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Guess what? And that did not include maintenance costs. They further say in the report, Mr. Speaker, that the proposal was significantly overpriced, poorly structured and if market rates were used, the finance instructed over the THA and so on, they could save over \$100 million.

The lease used an interest of 8 per cent when a mortgage could be had by an individual for 6 per cent.

So why is the THA borrowing at 8 per cent? It continues:

By letter dated July 13—so we have November incorporated; December introduction letter; January proposal; May report; letter dated, now this is after the report, July 13, 2012, from Mr. Anslem London. Incidentally, I think he is the cousin of the Chief Secretary? [*Crosstalk*] Yes, I think so. He is the Secretary of Finance and Enterprise, and here is the letter, given to me again by my friends from the TOP, Ashworth Jack and others.

In this letter, Mr. Anslem London is writing to Ms. Vana Woods, the secretary of Zoit Developers, and copied to the Chief Secretary, and it states:

I am pleased to inform you of the decision of the Executive Council that the letter of interest be issued—to whom—to Zoit Developers Limited for the construction of the Tobago Aquatic Centre and indoor sporting complex.

Mr. Speaker, the letter asked Zoit to amend its proposal. How is that transparent? Were there other bidders afforded the same luxury? When the TOP broke the story, carried in the *Tobago News* on September 27, 2012, this is what the Chief Secretary said. He denied the project was approved, first point. Then Dr. Anslem London, his cousin, said that there had been no agreement between the company and THA—no agreement. ““There is no project””, he insisted, as reported in this *Tobago News*. “All we have done is receive a letter of intent”, and the report indicates that they promised to release all details of the proposals at the post-executive council.

Now, that story was September 27, 2012. At the post executive council the following Wednesday, he was going to release all the details. I am advised, no such details have been released at any point in time. So, Mr. Speaker, they said there is no project; all they have is a letter of intent.

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Mr. Speaker, I have also received from our friends in the TOP, a copy of an email from Joel Jack—and who is he?—Programme Coordinator, Division of Finance and Enterprise, Tobago House of Assembly, on or about September 12, and this is suggesting totally differently. The email from Mr. Joel Jack says:

The project has been approved by the Assembly—Bacolet Aquatic Centre and indoor...

What did he say?—only a letter of intent. What did Dr. Anslem say in the press report? No project; only a letter of intent.

Project proposed to Assembly to design, transfer—to build lease, transfer, for how much?—\$250 million.

So the proposal was \$233 million, but he jumps it now to \$250 million.

Project assessed by independent project specialist and approved. This is, in effect, a lease arrangement just as with the agriculture building.

That was the Milshirv building that you spoke of. And listen to this part of the email:

The THA needs the project to start now for obvious reasons.

Mr. Roberts: What! What are these obvious reasons? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, there have been serious problems with this, but the THA seems that they wanted to go on with the project, and so the questions which are arising: what actually happened here? How did this happen? And why were these developers handpicked and chosen for what is happening here?

This is a significant financial commitment, Mr. Speaker, but it is for 20 years, at about \$20 million a year, taking you up to \$400 million for a \$250 million facility, and on top of that, THA has to pay what?—the maintenance costs over the 20 years for this building, at a detriment to the people of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I do have several other things to say, but on Saturday I will deal with those. [*Desk thumping*] Today, what I would like to say, that matter—and I will come back to the Shirvan Administrative Complex, because the same thing happened where a company incorporated one month; by the next month, got a—what was it Anil, for that project?

Mr. Roberts: \$320 million.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three hundred and twenty million. Land transferred for \$12 million; \$320 million—we have a lot more on that project to share with you.

But what is frightening is that they registered a deed of lease from the THA to Milshirv, and in that deed of lease, they refer to an office lease attached as “Annex B”. I have searched the Lands Registry up to this morning; up to before I came, there is no “Annex B” attached to the deed of lease registered from THA to Milshirv.

What is it that you are hiding there? That deed of lease was made since November 21, 2011—THA to Milshirv for \$10 a year. It refers to an “Annex B” which contains the terms of all the agreements that would happen after. It is nowhere in the registered document. And up to now—today is what, October 10. So from November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, almost 11 months an incomplete document, hiding, it seems to me, what were the real terms that they agreed to. This is highly irregular, Mr. Speaker, and I want to know why that document was not registered—as it should have been—at the same time as this deed of lease between THA and Milshirv. And we will talk more about it.

But what I want to say, the whole procurement process, again, no tenders, no RFPs, no advertisements, nothing of the sort. The chronology of events: Milshirv incorporated October 03; November 15, 2011—one month later—the THA buys the land from them; one month later.

Mr. Warner: Himself to himself.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And then six days later, as Minister Alleyne-Toppin told us, November 21, THA leases it back, and then we come with this lease where the office lease is totally missing. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$322 million here; we are talking about \$15 million in rentals and so the whole integrity of the THA is in question.

The man who said all of this first—they tell us it is an election gimmick when Minister Roberts raised it. Do you know who raised it first? The respectable Mr. Reginald Dumas, and he asks the THA to explain. Mr. Dumas says: “Listen, explain”. And in today’s *Newsday*—this is election gimmick? I do not think Mr. Dumas, a man of great dignity who worked in the public service at the highest level, will stoop to any election gimmick. He was the first one who explained this, and he is now saying: “I’ll sue the THA if they do not answer about this \$322 million deal”.

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So what do we do? We know that the procurement regime in this country—in the few minutes I have left; it is very important what it is I propose that we do. Mr. Speaker, we know that the procurement issue has been a sore point for years. In 1961 is the legislation governing procurement of government goods and service. Since then there has been a plethora of instruments created by the former regime by way of special purpose companies to bypass the CTB and to set up their own rules and so on. We see Nidco; all these 14 special purpose companies to really not use the CTB.

In 2005, the then administration brought a White Paper, but they never brought it into law. And so we came in, Mr. Speaker, in this Government, and we said within 30 days of the convening of the Parliament, we will lay the legislation for procurement. So said, so done. We laid it in June. [*Desk thumping*] We established a joint select committee. That committee carried through its work in the second session of the Parliament, so we have the reports from the JSC.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting, first of all, that the projects, Milshirv and the project with respect to aquatic centre, be halted pending proper clarification and investigation. [*Desk thumping*] Secondly, the matters be referred to the Attorney General, the DPP and the Integrity Commission to be investigated for any misfeasance and any breach of the law. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition, we have said that—

Mr. Warner: Audits.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, I have already asked the Minister of Finance and the Economy for the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to carry out a central audit on these projects. [*Desk thumping*]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, my own Government remains committed to procurement legislation, because every dollar that is corruptly taken is one less dollar for schoolbooks, for book bags, for food, for clothing, [*Desk thumping*] for hospitals, for buses, for every item that we need. [*Crosstalk*] Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we propose to send before the Legislative Review Committee, the report of the joint select committee and, in addition, this document.

This document has been prepared by the Joint Consultative Council for the construction industry; the Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute; the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce; and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association. This document is a draft Bill, 2012—“Draft

Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Bill, 2012”, which will be sent to the LRC for consideration for the laying of a Bill in Parliament for procurement.

You remember when we set up the joint select committee? [*Desk thumping*] The Opposition refused to participate. I have seen right now, Mr. Speaker, there are issues that are arising with respect to procurement—I think it is in the newspaper—about boards and so on. Mr. Speaker, it has been so entrenched that it has become systemic; the procurement practices, the illegal practices and those that are inappropriate. They have become systemic.

Therefore, the only way we can root it out—where the other side failed for all of the 40-how many years they were in government; never laid procurement legislation in this Parliament—we will lay the procurement legislation; we will lay this, Mr. Speaker, with the LRC, and we will bring procurement legislation for transparency and accountability in public affairs, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

As I close, we have much more to say as well, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] I say history will judge us on what we do now. The future of our children and their children lies in the hands of all of us here, as representatives of the people, and so we must do all that we can to ensure that the job that we do will redound to the benefit of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago—start from there—every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago in every part of Trinidad and Tobago, as I said throughout the land, and then it means that they can judge us later on.

They will not judge us on cronyism and nepotism and corruption and divisiveness and accusations and so on; they must judge us on ensuring that there is people-centered development and that we take care of the needs of every single citizen. That is what we must ensure, and we must not end up in this Partnership—and I give the warning to my Ministers, as I close—we must not end up as those on the other side who have never dealt with procurement issues, who have remained—and up to today remain—with civil lawsuits being filed, and there may be criminal, I do not know, but certainly, civil lawsuits for corruption and misconduct in public office.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this budget to this honourable Chamber and to all our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago, as a great budget which will take us to stimulate growth and generate the economy, and prosperity.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

6.30 p.m.**The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):**

Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring the debate on this 2013 Budget to a close. Coming after the Prime Minister is an extremely difficult task. She has said nearly everything I had to say. [*Laughter*] Nevertheless, I shall certainly seek to round off the comments which she has made.

The closing of any debate, especially one as important as the national budget provides the opportunity for political theatre. Nonetheless, I believe it is also a moment for sober reflection as we contemplate the challenges and opportunities before us.

I thank each Member for the contributions made over the past few days in this honourable House. These contributions have been helpful in identifying areas where further clarification is required or more thought needed.

I would also like to thank the general public and the business community for the positive manner in which they have embraced the proposals in this budget.

I would especially like to thank the various business chambers including the American Chamber that has commended the Government on the country's positive macroeconomic indicators, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufactures Association that has commended the initiatives for stimulating economic activity and the announcement of a number of construction projects utilizing the public/private partnership model, as well as the Energy Chamber.

I would like, particularly, to note the comments made by the Energy Chamber in respect of the supplemental petroleum tax. The Energy Chambers has indicated that the changes in the supplemental petroleum tax or SPT introduced in the 2012 budget and I quote:

“...are not just welcome but actually vital for the long-term future of the oil industry...”—The Chamber anticipates—“that this would positively influence potential investment decisions and should help to bring on a number of smaller oil fields in shallow marine areas.”

This is more than a statement about the fiscal measures relating to the energy sector in the budget, it is also a statement about the diligent and insightful work being done by our current Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs Much has been said within the national community of the declining level of oil output, but these are initiatives that have a five-to-seven year gestation period to bring them to

fruition. For output to be increasing now, action was required at least five to seven years ago. I have every reason to believe that the actions being taken today will result in expanded output in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, we have focused on the private sector in this budget as this is one of the sources of the investments needed to boost the growth momentum that is building in the economy. I shall be inviting the business community to a consultation on November 2, aimed at discussing the means by which we can facilitate the implementation of the measures contained in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, a second area of focus in this budget, but one which was not emphasized as much as I would have liked during the debate, is the labour sector. Capital cannot create value without labour in some form. We recognize the importance of the labour movement to the development of our country and confirm our intention to seek to work to formulate measures by which we can partner for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has already signalled his intention to develop a workable social compact. The reception of this budget by the labour community and the labour movement has been generally good and we look forward to developing on this further in the future.

Mr. Speaker, individual Ministers have spoken at length on their plans for the upcoming year and their performance over the past year. However, I would like to use this opportunity to emphasize for the benefit of the national community some of the milestones achieved by some of the Ministers over the past year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Works and Infrastructure who completed the Couva/Preysal Interchange, completed the rehabilitation of the Naparima Mayaro Road from Rio Claro to Agostini Village, completed nine kilometres of highway to put a third lane north-bound from the Chaguanas overpasts to the radio station and fixed the Mount Pleasant landslip after 27 years. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Sport who has commenced construction work on the aquatic centre, the national cycling velodrome and the national tennis centre. He has completed 32 recreation grounds over the past year with another 64 in various stages of upgrade. He has launched the LifeSport Programme across 33 communities employing and training 1,980 at-risk young men.

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I would like to thank the Ministry of Health for the opening of the cardiac ward at San Fernando and the Minister who introduced the “Fight the Fat” Programme and who also introduced a new search engine, which allows all medical journals to be accessed online free of charge and which contributes to better research on patient care.

The Ministry of Local Government, the new Minister in the last three years has launched 260 core and community projects in the URP, utilizing 160 small contractors. [*Desk thumping*] He has completed a new policy document for local Government which would be launched in November.

In the Ministry of Education, I would like to congratulate the Minister who constructed, during the past year, 13 primary schools and completed 27 Early Childhood Education Centres—[*Desk thumping and interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Not in Paramin.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—and provided ICT training to 4,800 school staff members; [*Desk thumping*] To the Ministry of Food Production—agriculture—who completed the allocation of 4,023 acres of land to new farmers, completed 200 kilometres of access roads and built 300 irrigation ponds. To the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training who has completed five on-the-job training centers up to 2010 in Port of Spain, Chaguanas, San Fernando, St. Augustine and Scarborough.

The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has also completed the Innovative Workforce Assessment Centres which were successfully launched last year. What this means is that our carpenters, masons, welders, electricians, plumbers and hospitality workers can now be certified with the Caribbean vocational qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, a number of other initiatives have been undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago by the Ministry, but, I would like to especially note that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has commenced the bachelor’s of education programme with 53 students at the Tobago Technology Centre, Milford Road, Canaan, Tobago. I want to congratulate all the Ministers on their accomplishments over the past year.

Mr. Speaker, what was the major thrust of the policy framework for this 2013 budget? Statements were being made about this being an austerity budget and I really would like to deal with this particular issue.

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I would like to read this into the record. What I said in the *Trinidad Guardian* on July 05, 10 days after taking up this office was that growth is the priority. Let me quote what I said in the *Trinidad Guardian*:

“For me, the issue is really growth more than trying to balance the budget.”

At the time I said that—and I quote:

“I was reading an article in the Financial Times by Krugman and Layard... in which they were saying that the IMF had done an analysis of 173 cases where austerity had been put in place and in most cases such austerity had led to economic contraction.”

I went on to say that:

“I am not saying that there is not going to be any austerity. I recognise that we have to look for value for money and I recognise that there would clearly be areas that we would have to pay attention to ensure that we manage our expenditure properly.

But I believe we do have a good fiscal position. Our balance of payments and foreign reserves continue to be strong. And therefore there is room for us to try to create the conditions under which we might be able to grow the economy.”

Mr. Roberts: Thank you for clearing up that.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Again, when I spoke after the IMF meeting on September 05, 2012, what I said was, and I quote page 16 of the *Newsday*:

“I would say that we have to come up with a judicious mix of stimulus measures to move the economy forward while at the same time identifying areas in which we’ll have to implement some austerity measures in order to...get best value for money.”

This followed up on my statement reported on September 4, in the *Express*, when I clearly pointed out that what I was talking about was getting value for money. I said, and I quote from the *Express* of September 4:

“Some programmes need to be streamlined and focused on a bit better. The idea is to do that while taking some initiative to stimulate the economy.”

I then went on to say that: the rest of the Caribbean is facing austerity and austerity in a real sense.

We don’t really have austerity here. They (The Caribbean islands) have high debt to GDP levels, relatively low foreign exchange reserves and their main

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product—tourism—is probably going to face some problems. But certainly Trinidad and Tobago has a degree of fiscal space.”—

Again I emphasized—“We have relatively low debt to GDP levels, we have relatively low unemployment and we have strong cash flows.”

Mr. Speaker, I have been consistent on every occasion in what was said to the media and on an ongoing basis prior to delivery of the budget. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: That is mischief.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Focus has always been on growth with a reform agenda attached to the growth initiatives and this is exactly what this budget provides.

To be very clear, let me reiterate this Government’s strategy for this economy which focuses on three broad areas:

1. Stimulating growth which will result in increased revenues for the private and public sectors;
2. Refocusing Government expenditure to create better value for money; and
3. Building a competitive economy through focused investment and a targeted reform agenda.

Initially, we shall focus on infrastructure investments because the net present value of such investments is at the highest that it has been in a generation.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand the role of the private and public sectors in the development of the economy. When, as has currently occurred in the global environment, there is a withdrawal of private sector investment, it is imperative that the Government steps in to make up the shortfall.

This is what several governments throughout the developed world are doing. As private sector confidence returns, the Government can withdraw or reduce its involvement. This is what this Government is doing by way of fiscal policy. This can only be done in a particular macroeconomic context. Again, I say this Government has the strong balance sheet and the fiscal space to adopt this strategy.

I now turn to some of the specific issues raised during the debate starting with my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who has raised several

questions regarding the growth and unemployment figures provided in this budget. [Interruption]

Mr. Warner: The economist from Diego Martin.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Mr. Speaker, official estimates of the Gross Domestic Product of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are not prepared, revised or amended by the Minister of Finance and the Economy or the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. These estimates are generated entirely by the Central Statistical Office based on latest available—[Desk thumping]—economic data forecast methodologies and analysis available to it at the time the estimates are prepared. The CSO determines whatever revisions are to be made to its GDP estimates as new information becomes available, or as new statistical methods are introduced. The credibility of the GDP estimates are guaranteed by the expertise of the CSO statisticians, whose judgment in these matters is entirely independent.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, revisions in the *Review of the Economy 2012* to the GDP estimates for the period 2008—2011 are not new or novel occurrences. Similar revisions are made by the CSO every year. In last year's *Review of the Economy 2011*, the estimates of real GDP were revised for three back years, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Likewise, in the *Review of the Economy 2010*, revisions were made to four years, 2006—2009. Similarly, in the *Review of the Economy 2009*, which was published by the previous Government, revisions were made to four back years, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Mr. Speaker, in each of the five reviews of the economy documents published by the previous administration during the years 2004—2008, revisions to GDP estimates were made to either three or four back years. I believe, therefore, that it should be abundantly clear that revisions to past GDP estimates are to be expected as a normal part of the economic updating process. I should add that this is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago.

The United States and the United Kingdom regularly amend their published data, and I would like, Mr. Speaker, to draw attention to a report in the *Financial Times*, dated July 25, 2012, speaking of the US economy, the large economy in the world, and I quote:

“In 2010 and again in 2011, huge revisions showed that the recession of 2008-09—in the United States—“was much deeper than previously thought and the recovery from it was weaker.”

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The *Financial Times* went on to say that:

“The revisions are made because detailed statistical information—such as numbers from corporate tax returns—can take years to finalise.”

Speaking of the United States economy, they went on to say:

“For example, early estimates of the final quarter of 2008...showed a contraction of 5.4 per cent at an annualized rate. But in July 2010, that was revised to a fall of 6.8 per cent and in July 2011 it was revised further to a 8.9 per cent slump.”

So, Mr. Speaker, there are continuing revisions of data on an ongoing basis.

In the United Kingdom, also, the *Daily Telegraph*, on the August 24, 2012, again reported that:

“The first reading of GDP”—for the UK—“was only based on 44 per cent of the total data that is used to determine the ‘final’ estimate...Today’s first revision is based on around two-thirds of the data used to produce the ‘final estimate’ so we could yet see further upward revisions...”

Throughout the world, these amendments to data do occur, as they do occur here, and as they have occurred on an ongoing basis over the last decade, but I suppose the real question that the Member was asking was: has the economy grown and has unemployment really fallen?

While there is more to be done on both fronts, the fact is that employment numbers have increased. For the first quarter of 2012, the numbers of persons employed rose to 596,100 [*Desk thumping*] from 578,000 at the end of December 2011.

Dr. Moonilal: Eighteen thousand more in a quarter.

Mr. Imbert: That is about a year ago.

Dr. Moonilal: That is the first quarter—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: First quarter of this year. Retail sales have increased and private sector lending has increased. These all point to improvement in GDP numbers.

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

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I would add that, in the context of the slowing global economic environment, the maintenance work being undertaken in the energy sector and the dislocation caused by the TCL strike, the performance of this economy has been exceptional.

Mr. Speaker, I now respond to comments made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, as it relates to his allegation that somehow the Government broke the law, namely the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Untruth. Scare tactics.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please!

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I have received the opinion of attorneys from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs [*Interruption*] and I wish to state, categorically, that there has been no breach of the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act. [*Desk thumping*] That Act has always operated and continues to operate as intended, to provide the mechanisms—

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

Hon. Member: Put him out.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—to fund the subsidy on petroleum products; collect the levy from oil companies that is used to offset this subsidy. This levy is paid into a fund, the petroleum products subsidy fund. The levy is placed into this collective fund and moneys utilized go towards the subsidy payment on petroleum products. There is no distinction made between the individual subsidy amounts on the various fuels in the law as regards the application of the levy collected. For over a decade now, the amount of money paid by oil companies as a levy—

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

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—has been insufficient to cover the subsidy on transportation fuels. The estimated total subsidy claim for fiscal 2012 is \$4.41 billion, and a total levy payment for fiscal 2012 is estimated at \$668 million, which is only 15 per cent of the total subsidy claims. This will result in an estimated total Government subsidy liability for 2012 of approximately \$3.74 billion or 85 per cent of the total subsidy claims. In summary, the levy is woefully insufficient to cover the subsidy. The difference is a liability which is met by the Government.

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Mr. Speaker, the MP for Diego Martin North/East said he went to PricewaterhouseCoopers budget memorandum and, on page 22 to be precise, he says:

“If you go to the Pricewaterhouse budget memorandum, if you go to page 22, you will see that the subsidy on premium gas is 73 cents; the subsidy on super gas is \$1.83 and the subsidy on diesel is \$2.71.”

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I am quoting from the *Hansard*.

Mr. Imbert: Well, that is not true.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: I too have looked at page 22 of the PWC report. These figures are based on a West Texas Intermediate oil price of \$79 per barrel. These must therefore be dated figures. These figures change on a monthly basis. He then adds the 73 cents from the PWC report to the previous retail price of premium \$4 per litre and gets \$4.73 per litre, and says this is the real price of premium. He then assumes that since the new retail price is \$5.75 per litre, the Government is making a surplus and is breaking the law.

Hon. Member: That is true.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: To quote him:

“I dare say that the Minister is in breach of the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act—”

Mr. Speaker, let us examine the facts. Using the new October 02, 2012 retail price of premium gasoline of \$5.75 per litre and using the September 2012 ex-refinery price of premium gasoline of \$5.84 per litre, excluding VAT, the true market price for premium gasoline would be approximately \$7.08 a litre including VAT. [*Desk thumping*] This means that the subsidy on premium gasoline, at present, is \$1.16 per litre.

Mr. Imbert: Where he get that from?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: This means that the Government continues to subsidize premium gasoline. This is from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. Mr. Speaker, it gets better. The price of premium gasoline was increased from \$3 per litre to \$4 per litre in September 2008, by the former Government of which he was part. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

In the months following, during the period November 2008 to May 2009, the average local crude oil price was \$44 per barrel and the average ex-refinery price

of premium gasoline was \$2.53 per litre. At these price levels, a surplus of \$61.6 million was generated on premium gasoline. Over the entire fiscal year 2009, this resulted the net surplus of \$41 million on premium gasoline. Overall, however, a subsidy amounting to \$1.4 billion existed on all other products excluding premium gasoline. This resulted in a net subsidy of \$1.36 billion for fiscal 2009.

So, Mr. Speaker, a surplus was generated on premium gasoline in their time. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] However, even if a surplus were to be generated on premium gasoline, this would not constitute the breach of the law as the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act envisages that the subsidy and the levy would be treated in totality for all fuels.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You misled the Parliament.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: So in summary, the Government continues to subsidize premium gasoline at current and forecasted oil prices.

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

Mr. Imbert: It is the Prime Minister—

Mr. Speaker: No, no. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Do not bring me into this. I am not interfering with you. Do not bring me into your nonsense.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: [*Crosstalk*] So in summary, Mr. Speaker, the Government continues to subsidize premium gasoline at current and forecasted oil prices. Even if there were surplus on premium, this does not constitute a breach of the law, as the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act envisages that the subsidy should be treated in its totality for all fuels.

Two other matters which were raised during the debate relate to the allocation to the Leader of the Opposition and to the Parliament Channel. I want to say to this honourable House that, compared to actual expenditure from 2012, the allocation in these two areas represent increases over the 2012 numbers. This notwithstanding, we recognize that these are two institutions vital to our democracy, and we have no objections to making the required adjustments at the appropriate time. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, questions were raised regarding the reduction by one of the hon. Members in the allocation to the Ministry of Food Production, but these reductions arose because of the transfer of the Estate Management and Business

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Development Company and state lands to the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Resources. [*Desk thumping*] These resulted in a transfer of more than \$600 million from the Ministry of Food Production to the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Resources to facilitate the transfer of these two departments and organization, or collectives, from the Ministry of Food Production to the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Resources.

Mr. Speaker, a question was raised regarding the reduction of the deficit by 1 per cent with a GDP of \$88 billion. Perhaps I can correct that by saying that the figure of \$88 billion represents a deflated GDP number using 2,000 at 2,000 deflator. The fact is that the current GDP in money terms is \$153 billion. One per cent of this number is \$1.5 billion. The calculated figure also takes into account the projected growth figures. So the numbers used by the hon. Member in the Opposition was really incorrect, and I hope by this explanation we could correct it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there were questions raised regarding the Point Fortin Hospital and the dialysis centre, but I believe that the hon. Minister of Health addressed those, so there is no need for me to go into those.

7.00 p.m.

I need, however, Mr. Speaker, to make a very important point concerning the National Insurance Board. A statement was made that the National Insurance Fund is broke. That statement is totally false and misleading. The fund is a long-term investment fund, and at times, as to be expected in funds like these, they will have surpluses and at other times, they will have deficits. The fund has a huge cash reserve amounting to billions of dollars and can meet all its obligations as they come due.

Mr. Imbert: For how long?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: The point being made by the actuaries is that if nothing is done, the fund can run into problems over the next three decades. However, the arrangements being put in place by the board include: a change in the maximum insurable earnings and an increase in the contribute rate which will take place over the next three decades. We have started that process this year with a small increase to 11.7 per cent from 11.4 per cent in the contribution rate, and that increase will go up in 2014 to 12 per cent, in 2014. So, Mr. Speaker, we have already taken steps to address the current deficit in the fund and we expect that as with all long-term funds, we will address and deal with these matters as the time progresses.

I would want to say further that the increased benefits were recommended by the actuaries, and they are well within what is acceptable and prudent for the fund. So I think that it is very important that the media walk away from here understanding that the National Insurance Board, and the public as a whole, understand that the National Insurance Board is very whole, very solvent and capable of meeting all its obligations.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, a question was raised by one of the hon. Members on the timing of the receipt of the review. First of all, let me say that the actual amount transferred this year was \$1.3 billion. That figure is larger than the amount in the estimates and represents the final numbers based on the computations at the end of the year, based on actually realized prices which were earned by Trinidad and Tobago from its oil and gas resources.

So this year, a total amount of \$1.3 billion was transferred into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund—that is TT dollars—that brings the fund to a total value of US \$4.5 billion. [*Desk thumping*] The figure is almost twice the number of \$614 million—that is the \$1.3 billion which was in the original estimates which we had provided prior to knowing what the numbers were for this year. Mr. Speaker, the review is outstanding and I want to advise this House that this was one of the first matters that I addressed when I got into office. The report, I understand, is almost completed and I expect to receive it by the end of this month and to be able to table it before this honourable House by the end of this calendar year.

Mr. Speaker, a question was raised concerning the assumptions of the natural gas price used in the budget. The weighted average price received this year was \$2.85 for our gas. This is above the number, which we budgeted last year, of \$2.75. We have maintained that price at \$2.75 this year because we expect this position to continue during the course of this year. In fact, we expect this to improve as we continue to divert cargos of LNG to South America, Asia and Europe. As a consequence, we thought that the US \$2.75 price was acceptable and reasonably conservative.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a query was raised as to whether Tobago has received its agreed allocation. I can give the categorical assurance that we have adhered fully to the requirement of the Dispute Resolution Agreement. Not only have we given Tobago the required 4.03 per cent of the national budget, but we have also allocated through the various Ministries additional funds which will bring the amount which Tobago receives to 5.5 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Warner: And that was done even with no audit!

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Mr. Speaker, we have identified a clear strategy for achieving our goals. We have established a road map to bring our budget into balance. We shall balance the need for creating the confidence and trust of our citizens in our fiscal position with the need for supporting growth and development, and for generating quality jobs and prosperity. The maintenance of stimulus will underpin our growth dynamics which are being anchored on an increasing private sector involvement in the economy and improving competitiveness.

Central to this process is our commitment to consultation with all our stakeholders, and a commitment to generating prosperity for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now resolve itself into Finance Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause, as well as the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before the House goes into Finance Committee, I would like to request that all persons who are not affiliated to and with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to kindly vacate the Chamber, and as soon as the committee stage is through, the officers will reinvoke you to join us, but this is a stage in which it is left only to the Members of this honourable House and the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his technicians. So I will ask the officers to ensure that all strangers leave at this time. The House will go into Finance Committee as soon as it is cleared.

Bill and Estimates committed to Finance Committee.

7.11 p.m.: *House resolved itself into Finance Committee.*

9.38 p.m.: *House resumed after Finance Committee.*

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, October 19, 2012, at 1.30 p.m. To serve notice on my friends opposite, on that day it is the intention of the Government to deal with Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper, and time permitting Motion No. 2.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Expression of Appreciation to Staff

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to record our gratitude and our thanks basically for the proceedings over the last few days, to your good self, to the Deputy Speaker of the House, the Member for Princes Town, to the staff of the Parliament, Hansard editors and all staff including the security staff. We want to thank you very much for the patience and for the accommodation in these surroundings which were comfortable, but if I may respectfully say, would be a little more comfortable if we were not so cold. We do want to thank you very much and to all Members again, we thank you the hon. Minister of Finance and I think we deserve an evening of rest today.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, may I join the hon. Prime Minister as well in thanking everyone. I just want to say that Parliament is this country's foremost representative institution. It has a very prominent role to play in the budgetary process. The budget as we know is the most important economic tool of the Executive. Therefore, the budget debate is a key parliamentary activity and it offers a crucial opportunity for Parliament to promote the interest of those it represents. That is why, traditionally, the budget debate has been a lengthy one to give each Member wishing to join the debate an opportunity to do so.

It is in this vein that I wish to thank all the Members who participated in this key annual debate. Additionally, hon. Members, I would like to thank the staff of the Parliament for their continued service and support to the Members. [*Desk thumping*] As you know, it takes a very strong and humble person to work behind the scenes with very little recognition to ensure that others do well. Finally, I would like to thank the police officers who worked tirelessly throughout the sittings, ensuring our safety. [*Desk thumping*] The service provided by the Parliament staff and the police officers allow us as Members of Parliament to carry out our duties in a comfortable and secure environment.

Now, I know the hour is late, but you know it has become customary at the end of each budget debate in this honourable House to have what we call an after-budget get-together, and I have so provided the necessary hors d'oeuvres and

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refreshments so that we can imbibe together. So, I would like to invite all hon. Members to the Members' Lounge even though you can spend a few minutes, and let us engage in some light refreshments and hors d'oeuvres.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.43 p.m.