

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON  
AUGUST 28, 2020**

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**SESSION 2021—2022**

**VOLUME 1**

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**SENATE**

*Friday, September 10, 2021*

**1.30 P.M.**

The Senate having assembled, and it being the first meeting of the Second Session of the Twelfth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Clerk of the Senate read the following Proclamation:

**REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

No. 20 of 2021.

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE KANGALOO,  
Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the  
Armed Forces

[L.S.]

CHRISTINE KANGALOO

*Acting President*

**A PROCLAMATION**

WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of section 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, that each session of Parliament shall be

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held at such place within Trinidad and Tobago and shall commence at such time as the President may by Proclamation appoint:

Now, therefore, I, CHRISTINE KANGALOO, Acting President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint the Red House, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, as the place at which the Second Session of the Twelfth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be held and 1.30 p.m. on Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2021, as the time at which the said Session shall commence.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the  
President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago, at the Office of the  
President, St. Ann's, this 24<sup>th</sup> day of  
August, 2021.

### **PRAYERS**

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam President:** Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Hazel Thompson-Ahye who is out of the country.

### **SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT**

**Madam President:** Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency The President, Paula-Mae Weekes, ORTT:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency PAULA-MAE WEEKES,  
O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the  
Armed Forces.

/s/ Paula-Mae Weekes

President.

TO: DR. MARGARET BURGESS

WHEREAS Senator Hazel Thompson-Ahye is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, PAULA-MAE WEEKES, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, MARGARET BURGESS, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 and continuing during the absence of Senator Hazel Thompson-Ahye from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the  
President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago at the Office of the  
President, St. Ann's, this 9<sup>th</sup> day of  
September, 2021.”

### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

*Senator Dr. Margaret Burgess took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

### COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES

**Madam President:** Hon. Senators, permit me to welcome you to the Second Session of the Twelfth Parliament. I do hope that everyone had a restful recess and returns to this Chamber refreshed and invigorated. As we return to this Chamber, we find ourselves still living with the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will recall that during the First Session I announced the implementation of various measures designed to reduce the risk of exposure of us all, Members and staff alike, to the virus. These measures included temperature checks and hand sanitizing protocols

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upon entering the parliamentary precincts, the requirement of wearing a black face mask at all times while in the Parliament Complex including in the Chamber. They also included the reduction of seating accommodation in the dining area, the introduction of a takeaway service in such dining area, and the stoppage of the suspension of sittings for tea and dinner breaks, all of which were measures introduced to limit congregation.

Members will also recall the introduction of speaking booths in which Members were allowed to remove their masks while making their contributions. The sanitizing of the booths upon the completion of a Member's contribution and before its use by another Member, and the installation of air purifiers in the Chamber to inactivate airborne pathogens and microorganisms such as viruses. These were among the measures employed to mitigate the increased risk of exposure faced in this Chamber by reason of the long hours of our sittings and the fact that these sittings occur in closed spaces.

Another such measure was the reduction of the number of persons in the Chamber at any one time. The number of Members on each Bench were reduced to eight on the Government Bench, three on the Opposition Bench and four on the Independent Bench. Staff members in the Chamber were also reduced and members of the public and the media were not allowed in the public gallery. Hon. Members, these protocols were instituted for the protection of all of us, Members and staff alike, as I have said previously and repeatedly.

Hon. Members, like the rest of the country and indeed the rest of the world, we as a Parliament yearn for a return to normalcy, even as we learn to live with COVID-19. In this Chamber one of the most significant steps we can take in returning to normalcy is for us to start increasing the numbers of Members who can remain in the Chamber at any one time.

Now that vaccines are widely available, an important element in our ability to increase the numbers of Members who can remain in the Chamber at any one time is the information we have as to the extent to which Members have been vaccinated. Such information will enable us to carry out our required health and safety assessments and to better understand and manage the level of risk associated with increasing the numbers of Members who can remain in the Chamber at any one time.

It will also enable us to assess and implement any required mitigation and prevention measures which are advisable in relation to increasing the numbers of Members.

The importance and the usefulness of this information was conveyed in a meeting held earlier this week with the Leader of the Government Business, the Leader of the Opposition Business, the coordinator of the Independent Bench, the Vice-President and the Acting Clerk to the Senate.

At this time some Members—as at this time, some Members have informed us that they are vaccinated. Some have informed us that they are not vaccinated and others have not informed us of their status one way or the other.

On the information we have at hand at this time, we are not able to increase the number of Members who can remain in the Chamber at any one time. As at this time and until further notice the following health and safety measures will apply: Members who have either declared that they are unvaccinated or who have not declared their vaccination status are required to wear a double mask while in this Chamber or in the parliamentary precincts. Members who have either declared that they are unvaccinated or who have not declared their vaccination status are required to use the speaking booth when making their contributions.

An adjustment is being made to allow a maximum of five members of the

media, all of whom must be vaccinated to sit in the Public Gallery while observing the physical distancing requirements and save as just indicated all of the protocols which applied during last sitting will continue to apply during this sitting.

Since we have not yet received all of the information requested, we are not able at this time to make decisions about increasing the numbers of Members who can remain in the Chamber at any one time.

I wish to point out that all Members of staff who are operating in the Chamber are vaccinated. All members of staff who attend to our needs in the dining area are vaccinated. A decision about increasing the numbers in the Chamber will be forthcoming. That decision could have been made had we been in possession of all of the facts re Members' vaccination status. A decision will also have to be made about whether Members who have either declared that they are unvaccinated or who have not declared their vaccination status should be allowed to speak in the speaking booth with or without a mask or double masked.

Hon. Members, these are serious decisions to be made in an increasingly challenging time. But please bear in mind that the major concern as we return to this Chamber is protection of each and every one of us including Members who may choose to be unvaccinated or Members who, due to medical vulnerabilities, cannot be vaccinated.

It is also important that it be understood that there has been no decision to exclude any Member from the precincts or the Chamber. There has been no decision to exclude unvaccinated Members from this Chamber. All that the aforementioned measures seek to do is to assist in the protection of Members. I encourage each and everyone here to do our part in protecting the well-being of our colleagues and to cooperate with us to reducing the risk of transmission of the virus.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO REVENUE AUTHORITY BILL, 2021**

Bill to establish the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority and for related matters [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made:* That the next stage be taken on Tuesday, September 14, 2021.

[*Hon. C. Rambharat*]

*Question put.*

*The Senate* divided: Ayes 21 Noes 8

AYES

Rambharat, Hon. C.

Gopee-Scoon, Hon. P.

Sinanan, Hon. R.

Hosein, Hon. K.

West, Hon. A.

Browne, Hon. Dr. A.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Cox, Hon. D.

De Freitas, N.

Singh, Hon. A.

Sagransingh-Sooklall, Hon. R.

Bacchus, Hon. H.

Lezama-Lee Sing, Mrs. L.

Bethelmy, Ms. Y.

Ibrahim, Dr. M.

Richards, P.

Vieira, A.

Deonarine, Ms. A.

Seepersad, Ms. C.

Teemal, D.

Burgess, Dr. M.

NOES.

Mark, W.

John, Ms. J.

Lutchmedial, Ms. J.

Nakhid, D.

Lyder, D.

Roberts, A.

Dillon-Remy, Dr. M.

Welch, E.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (NO.2) BILL 2020**

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. the Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, having regard to the decision of the Senate on July 07, 2021, made pursuant to Standing Order 77(3), I beg to move that the Fisheries Management (No.2) Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established to consider and report on the Bill, and that this committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the First Session 2020/2021 and report by Monday, January 31, 2022. I thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **SHIPPING BILL, 2020**

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. the Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** Madam President, having regard to the decision of the Senate on

July 07, 2021, made pursuant to Standing Order 77(3), I beg to move that the Shipping Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established and report on the Bill and that this committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the First Session 2020/2021 and report by Monday, January 31, 2022. I thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** Madam President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, September 14, 2021, at 10.00 a.m. On that day we propose, as aforesaid, to deal with the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority Bill. I thank you.

*Question put.*

*The Senate divided: Ayes 23 Noes 6*

### AYES

Rambharat, Hon. C.

Gopee-Scoon, Hon. P.

Sinanan, Hon. R.

Hosein, Hon. K.

West, Hon. A.

Browne, Hon. Dr. A.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Cox, Hon. D.

De Freitas, N.

Singh, Hon. A.

Sagransingh-Sooklall, Hon. R.

Bacchus, Hon. H.

Adjournment (cont'd)

Lezama-Lee Sing, Mrs. L.

Bethelmy, Ms. Y.

Ibrahim, Dr. M.

Richards, P.

Vieira, A.

Deonarine, Ms. A.

Seepersad, Ms. C.

Teemal, D.

Dillon-Remy, Dr. M.

Welch, E.

Burgess, Dr. M.

NOES

Mark, W.

John, Ms. J.

Lutchmedial, Ms. J.

Nakhid, D.

Lyder, D.

Roberts, A.

*Question agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 1.53 p.m.*