

**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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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, September 10, 2021*

**1.30 P.M.**

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

**UNREVISED**

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, 2020.

### **PRAYERS**

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### **COVID-19 PROTOCOLS**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, as we all know, it has been 19 months since the World Health Organisation has declared the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic and Parliaments the world over, just like ours, have had to institute several measures to safeguard its several stakeholders, including Members and staff, and to ensure the sustainability of parliamentary processes.

Hon. Members are now well familiar with the measures which were effected at the commencement of the Twelfth Parliament on August 28, 2020, which were as follows:

- (i) the wearing of black face masks at all times while in the Parliamentary Complex, including in this Chamber; and
- (ii) the sanitizing of their hands and requirement of temperature scanning upon entry into the Parliamentary Complex.

I announced further measures during the life of this Parliament on October 05, 2020, which stipulated that:

- (1) the number of Members permitted in this Chamber at any one time was 26, inclusive of 14 Government Members and 12 Opposition Members;
- (2) that suitable accommodation for the viewing of the sitting was made for Members throughout the Parliamentary Complex;
- (3) in the event that the division was called, Members were allowed a maximum of three minutes to return to the Chamber;
- (4) in accordance with the general practice, any Member who entered the Chamber before the result was declared, shall be allowed to vote;
- (5) two speaking booths were installed in the Chamber;
- (6) black face masks were to be worn at all times except when speaking within the speaking booth;
- (7) that Members could use either booth as there is no Government or Opposition Booth; and
- (8) notwithstanding the speaking booth arrangement, a Member could opt to speak from his or her desk with the black mask on.

Hon. Members, with the passage of time and, more so, in response to developments with the virus locally, I have varied the protocols and safety measures by which we operated, all in the interest of safeguarding the health of our Members and staff, and in furtherance of the national effort in the containment of the spread of the virus.

Hon. Members may further recall that on May 24, 2021, I reminded Members of the existing COVID-19 safety measures and announced additional measures which, inter alia, for the operation of this Chamber:

1. reduced to the barest minimum the support staff and Clerks to allow for effective parliamentary operations; and
2. limited the presence of Members in the Chamber at any one time to eight Government and six Opposition Members.

In many quarters of the world, and including in our Republic, citizens have expressed fatigue with the various measures which have been introduced in response to the virus, and the emergence of several vaccines have fed a groundswell for a return to normalcy. In fact, the World Health Organization advises that vaccination offers a path to normalcy as it prevents serious illness, the requirement for hospitalization and death; and it has been widely published in our media—traditional and social—the urgings and efforts of our Members to have their constituents and the wider population avail themselves of the vaccines provided locally which, arguably, may be considered in support of the return to some semblance of normalcy.

It is my hope that we too can begin to return to normalcy of parliamentary operations by examining our risks and implementing measures which may prevent and mitigate such risks to Members, staff and to the wider public. In an effort to assess our risks, I had previously requested of the Leader of the House and the Opposition Whip to provide data related to the number of vaccinated and unvaccinated Members, and although I am in receipt of some data, the data available is not yet sufficient to determine fully the new measures which can be considered and adopted on a path to normalcy.

For the information of hon. Members, I wish to advise that all staff who directly and indirectly are involved in parliamentary operations and the provision of services related to the comfort and safety of Members are fully vaccinated and have done so voluntarily.

Hon. Members, I wish to advise that in the absence of full information regarding the number of vaccinated Members, the following measures shall take effect from today.

Accommodation in the Chamber: The number of Members allowed in this Chamber at any one time will be 14, that is to say, eight Government Members and six Opposition Members.

Double-masking requirements: Unvaccinated Members will be required to double-mask at all times whilst in the parliamentary precincts and in the Chamber. In such case, the outer mask must be black. Other Members wishing to double-mask and Members wishing to wear a face shield in addition to their black mask may do so.

Use of the speaking booths: All unvaccinated Members who wish to make a contribution, regardless of the length, will be required to utilise the speaking booths.

The Public Gallery: A maximum of five media personnel at any given time, all of whom must be vaccinated and masked, will be permitted in the Public Gallery. I wish to advise that the restriction on visitors to the Public Gallery will continue.

Members' Dining Room: The measures instituted for the use of the Members' Dining Room, as established nearing the end of the First Session, will continue.

Hon. Members, for the removal of any doubt, all other measures which have not been expressly varied, and which were in place in the First Session of this Twelfth Parliament, remain in place.

I wish to assure hon. Members, that, as more data becomes available on the number of vaccinated Members, there will be an ongoing evaluation of risks with a

view to adopting a path to normalcy. I must emphasize that by these new measures, no Member, unvaccinated or vaccinated, is being barred from the Parliamentary Complex and/or from this Chamber, but measures are being put in place, as done hitherto, to protect all Members and staff in the execution of our constitutional obligations. I anticipate the full cooperation of all hon. Members with the safety measures as has obtained over the past year.

In closing, I welcome all Members back and wish you all good health and safety, as we discharge, in our customary robust and vigorous way, our duties to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.

### **PAPERS LAID**

1. Draft Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) (Tobago) Order, 2021. [*The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)*]
2. Firearms (Use of Pepper Spray) Order, 2021. [*The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds)*]

### **STATEMENT BY MINISTER**

#### **Budget Day**

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the honour to advise that Budget 2022 will be read in this House on Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of October at 1.30 p.m. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (Establishment of)**

#### **Representation of the People (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2020**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, having regard to the

decision of House made pursuant to Standing Order 79(3), I beg to move that the Representation of the People (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2020 be referred to a joint select committee hereby established.

Be it further resolved that this Committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee in the First Session and report by Friday, December 31, 2021. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):**

Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of September at 1.30 p.m. at which time, Madam Speaker, we will consider and debate the Draft Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) (Tobago) Order, 2021.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 1.46 p.m.*