

*Appropriation Bill, 2014*

*Wednesday, September 17, 2014*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Wednesday, September 17, 2014*

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015)**

**BILL, 2014**

[Fifth Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [September 08, 2014]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mrs. Nela Khan** (*Princes Town*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a very special good morning to you. This morning, I am very honoured to be given the opportunity to participate in this fiscal 2015 national budget. However, before I proceed, allow me to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, for her vision, her foresight and [*Desk thumping*] her leadership in taking this country forward and beyond in a positive way. And also to my colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy for his sterling presentation of the national budget that is now before this august Chamber.

Before I go further than that, this morning you probably would see me bright and exuberant and there is a simple reason, and that is, this morning I took the hassle out of the roadway. I took the stress out of the roadway and I chose the water taxi to come to Port of Spain. Along with me were a couple of my colleagues, the Leader of Government Business, sitting right in front of me; the Member for Fyzabad as well who was with me; and, indeed, we were expecting a few other Members of Parliament from the south, but I know, because of the traffic, they could not have made it to get to the water taxi in time.

Nonetheless, it took me one hour from Princes Town to San Fernando this morning, but it usually takes me 15 minutes and in the water taxi, smooth ride. It was like sitting on this chair without the hassle around you. So, I want to commend my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, on us having a good ride this morning.

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I also want to encourage the road users, more than that, those who drive to work and drive to do their business, to park and sail. It is the best way to get into Port of Spain and out of Port of Spain. Park and sail. And I want to implore everybody who has to come into Port of Spain, or most people who have to come into Port of Spain, they should try this. I am speaking in all glory this morning because it has always surpassed my expectations.

Mr. Speaker, this fiscal budget clearly demonstrates, not only business acumen and keen appreciation of international economic trends, but also a deep understanding of our local socio-economic realities. The People's Partnership Government has once again proven that we have the foresight and fortitude to bring to this nation a budget which gives priority to the well-being of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, with the Minister's chosen theme for this year's budget, Empowering Our People through Sustained Economic Growth and Prosperity.

That in itself, Mr. Speaker, speaks volumes for Trinidad and Tobago and, beyond that, do you know this is not the first budget in which the People's Partnership Government spoke about growth and prosperity? This has happened before. We have indeed delivered on our promises because this Government is serious about Trinidad and Tobago, is serious about the growth, is serious about our future and, indeed, is serious about your people as well.

From the onset, we on this side understand that effective leadership could only be achieved by listening to the people; by actively engaging our people and by walking in the footsteps of our people. In saying so, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, recently spoke to this during her historic piloting of the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill in another place where she said, and I quote: I am of the view that I must not lead from the tower, but from the battlefield. This is ground for quality leadership. It cannot come better than that.

The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, through the budget presentation, has very prudently created a fiscal roadmap which will enable this Government to maintain and continue in its pathway to empower our people through sustained economic growth and prosperity while safeguarding the well-being of the most vulnerable among us.

The People's Partnership will ease the financial burdens of our senior citizens whose pension was \$1,950 in 2010. It will now be increased to \$3,500 a month. Retired public officers who have so dutifully served this country will have their share of the pie as well. In 2010, they received \$1,950 per month. They will now receive \$3,500 monthly pension.

Self-employed persons will also be brought into the National Insurance Scheme, thereby ensuring that these persons will benefit from a pension upon retirement. These self-employed persons over the age of 57 will receive a one-off payment equivalent to three times their contribution and this, when I speak with my people in my constituency, they welcome the move as regards this one-off payment.

The family of slain members of our protective services will no longer suffer the financial strain with their loved ones who are killed in a line of duty. One million dollars will be placed in their estate. I say this because I know, over the years, we have lost a lot of people, uniformed officers, in the line of duty. It touched me recently when a constituent of Princes Town was killed in the line of duty, Officer Manwaring, who was killed at the Roodal Cemetery. You may recall that, and it really touched me when I saw the magnitude and the number of people who were there at that funeral and everybody wept at that funeral. It is an officer who died with his boots on and it is a commendable effort of this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Access to quality education at all levels, from early childhood to tertiary education has been broadened and maintained.

The health of our nation's children is secured, of course, with the newly constructed children's hospital, soon to be opened under the People's Partnership Government.

The Public Assistance Grant will also be increased by \$300. The Disability Grant, which was \$1,300 in 2010, will now be increased to \$1,800.

I know that elected Members, who are sitting here today, would have come up with instances with persons having to visit their constituencies and complaining about their Disability Grant, about pension where it is not enough in these modern days; the price of medication. We, as Members of Parliament, dip our hands in our pockets to financially assist constituents who come to see us as a result of this and I am certain, like my constituents have said, it is going to go a long way for them.

Mothers who, unfortunately, may not be able to fill the nutritional requirements for their young babies will receive financial assistance of \$500 a month for one year through the innovative Baby Grant Programme. This will assist mothers living in difficult situations. This will ensure proper nutrition and health needs for baby's first year. This will improve the chances of underprivileged children, having a good chance to a better future; a very welcome recommendation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

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I have said this in the Parliament before and I want to say it again today. When you want to see where a country is heading, see how it treats with its women and children, and I have said this before.

Free laptop: and I want to say to our colleagues opposite that a laptop, a computer today, is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Free laptop, free school feeding, school books grant, universal free education by 2015, Children's Life Fund, the Couva Children's Hospital, extended access to sound primary and secondary education and an increased availability and quality of tertiary education and vocational education as well. The National Parenting Programme as well, this is the vision and the foresight for our people of Trinidad and Tobago and today, again, I say thank you to hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. In saying so, I really want to say: who really cares more about our women and our children in this country? The People's Partnership Government does.

We are effectively combatting the scourge of crime through the training of personnel and the acquisition of equipment in keeping with international standards and best practices. Personal security and other security of our communities and country remain a number one priority of the Government.

The minimum wage bill: this move is welcomed by all. The minimum wage bill was \$9 an hour in 2010, then this Government increased it to \$12.50 and then, come January 01, 2015, the minimum wage bill will be \$15 an hour.

I personally see the minimum wage bill increase resulting in more productivity and, of course, it will allow for more persons to be able to afford a reasonable standard of living. In speaking with my constituents, this is another move that the constituents and Trinidad and Tobago really and truly do appreciate.

The introduction of the Constituency Fund is welcomed, not only by Members of Parliament, but by constituents as well. Before I was elected to this House, I served in another place, elected as well, where funds were available to elected members then and continues as well. We would have constituents coming to see us on many issues; that of personal issues as well. In that way, we were able to assist them, as elected representatives, by giving them some funding so that they could assist themselves.

Members of Parliament, elected Members, before the budget presentation very recently, were not able to even say such a thing as regards funding or trying to assist our people in a way that probably they would expect or in a way that would fulfil our hearts. And today, Mr. Speaker, I feel very comfortable with the new

introduction of constituency funds in the sense that we can now assist constituents when they come to see us.

As an elected Member of Parliament, I would see mothers, I would see families come crying in my office for assistance and the meagre sum that I work for, I dip my hands in my pocket and I try to help them because I understand what poverty is.

As elected Members of Parliament, we can treat with that and we can understand a situation like that. So I want to commend my colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

The People's Partnership Government is enabling a wider catchment of persons to become homeowners through more accessible mortgage programmes. The housing mortgage concession, including a new 5 per cent mortgage programme for householders with a combined monthly income for more than \$10,000 and less than \$30,000, as explained by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. This measure alone should ease the pressure off the HDC. This is applauded by the public for persons wanting to own their own homes and for those who qualify. There are people who think that they do not qualify. There are those before even the budget was presented, who always say they would never have a dream house and they would not know what it is to have a dream house. Mr. Speaker, this Government is allowing for constituents and the people of Trinidad and Tobago to have their dream house.

**10.15 a.m.**

The increase in fines for traffic laws, Mr. Speaker, is something I welcome. This morning I was able to keep my sanity with me. I came up this morning, like I say, with the water-taxi and the increased fines are something that we all are happy about, and it is time that we hit people where it hurts, and that is in their wallet.

Mr. Speaker, our network of roads and highways will be expanded to bring greater economic viability to communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. As the Member of Parliament for Princes Town, I speak for my constituents when I say that we are elated and eagerly awaiting the construction of the San Fernando to Princes Town highway [*Desk thumping*] and the Princes Town to Mayaro highway [*Desk thumping*] as was said by our Minister of Finance and the Economy. This is certainly going to make life easier. It has been a hot topic for my constituents for some time now and, very recently, I was talking to my colleague, the Member for Moruga/Tableland when he said to me, "Ah hope we

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get ah highway going to Moruga, so we could go and geh we scorpion pepper without ah hassle.” [*Desk thumping*].

Mr. Speaker, I feel for my brother here. As you know, Moruga is completely different; it is a different route as regards heading up the Naparima Mayaro Road, and it is an area where the last train leaves at 9.00 p.m. Poor guy, I really feel sorry for him. I know that his dream is going to come through as well that he, himself, is also going to get a highway from Princes Town heading straight to Moruga. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of development that we are talking about: building communities, building towns, linking bridges, connecting people. This is what we are all about as regards the People’s Partnership Government.

I have listened to the contributions from the other side and, indeed, it is unfortunate that they continue to persist in opposing every single movement or every single move of this Government. We on this side, Mr. Speaker, we propose to consult, then act, and when we act, we do it in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago as we were mandated to do in 2010. I do not understand and I cannot understand how just 12 people cannot see that this budget is for everybody and is about everybody.

As the Member of Parliament for Princes Town, as a former Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministries of the Arts and Multiculturalism and in Local Government as well respectively, I am able to say, quite confidently, to this honourable House, that the 2015 budget—similar to those budgets presented before in this honourable House by this administration—will have a tremendously positive impact on my constituents and, indeed, the wider population of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, these are but a few measures outlined in the 2015 budget, which will ultimately keep this country on its right foot.

I just want to turn your attention to the constituency of Princes Town as the Member of Parliament. I want to turn your attention to an eyesore, an eyesore in Princes Town, like my colleague, the Member for Moruga/Tableland and my colleague, the Member for Naparima as well, where we are plagued by landslips. Much works have started; much works are still to be done.

When I came into Parliament, when we were elected to Government, in Princes Town we had 180 landslips. Today, I can stand and say, out of the 180 landslips, we have already repaired 150 landslips. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I want to call the names of some of these roads where we have repaired some of our landslips. This is very important. It may not be important to some of our

colleagues on the other side, but it is very, very, important to us: Buen Intento Road, Sister's Road, the M1 Tasker Road, Jeffers Crossing, Brothers Road, Sister's Road, Buen Intento Road, St. Julien Road, 11 landslips—St. Julien Road is really, really and truly an eyesore, and we are working very hard to restore the entire roadway. I know works have started on that road as well—Lohar Road, Perry Young Road, Lengua Road, that is off St. Croix Road, St. Julien Road, again, on the Naparima Mayaro Road. Buen Intento Road, Tasker Road, Naparima Mayaro Road. Recently, we stabilized three landslips there as well—Thomas Ross Road, Dharamdass Trace, Ramnarine Trace, Old Piparo Road, Hoseinee Trace, McSween Trace, and those are just landslips. There is quite a lot that has been done as regards landslips and, as I said, I know there are quite a few to be done again, and for that I want to commend the Minister of Works and Infrastructure. [*Desk thumping*]

I also want to take your attention to some of the roads. As you know, south is the food basket of the nation, and Princes Town contributes to a big portion of agricultural growth and development, and we work hand in hand with all the relevant Ministries for a more effective delivery as regards the farmers and as regards agricultural access roads. Some of agricultural access roads that we have repaired so far—I have a list, allow me, Mr. Speaker. I have a list here and I say this because, like I say, this is important to us. This is important to me, as a Member of Parliament; this is important to my constituents as well, Mr. Speaker, and it is very important to us as the People's Partnership Government.

Some of the roads that we have paved are: Arch Road, Robinson Road, Pascal Road, Mahogany Trace, Julien Trace, Thomas Ross Road, Dharamdass Trace, Ramnarine Trace and Cipriani Trace. We have also done some road paving on the Old Piparo Road, Hoseinee Trace, Charlotte Street, Bonanza Street, Cyril Mohan Road, McLean Trace, Contention Street, Armour Street, Bromage Road, Piparo Link Road, Mayaro 6th, 3rd, 11th and the 9th Avenue in the Tableland area, bordering my colleague, Mr. Speaker—Farmers Trace, La Gloria Settlement, Sancho Branch Road, Khan Avenue 1 and 2, Sadhoo Trace, Gafoor Trace, Aldana Street, St. Croix Road, Rampersad Trace, Williams Street, St. George Street and St. Andrews Street.

Also, we have done some work on Sookdeo Trace, Junior Trace, Watts Trace, Brothers Road, Sister's Road, Hardbargain, Buen Intento Road, Pooran Street. This morning we are doing the Hope Road end as well. Quite a lot has been done, and I know there are quite a few more roads to be paved which is really the main artery to Princes Town. In my discussion with the Minister of Works and

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Infrastructure, he has given the undertaking that we will be starting very soon, Sister's Road, Brothers Road, Berridge Road, Nuckcheddy Road, Naparima Mayaro Road and, indeed, Garth Road.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also take your attention to some box drains that have been done in the constituency of Princes Town as well. We have done quite a few and, again, there is a whole lot more to be done as well. It is a long list as well and, like I say, it is important to us: Naparima Mayaro Road, Buen Intento Road, Sister's Road, Gransaul Trace, Old Piparo Road.

Mr. Speaker, I recall visiting some of these areas in my very early days, and you would see what the water flow from the roadway can do to someone's house. It is amazing, in a matter of a year or two years and, as a result, with the love, the care and the appreciation of this Government, we deliver the goods and services to our people. In that way, we were able to construct quite a few box drains that would alleviate the water situation; the water problem overflowing into people's houses: Sister's Road; Gransaul Trace, Old Piparo Road, Hoseinee Trace, Thomas Ross Road, Tabaquite Road, Nuckcheddy Road, Busy Corner, Guaracara Recreation area that falls within the surrounding of both myself and my colleague from Tabaquite; Eccles Village, Williamsville. Maurice Gobin Park, we have done some work around that ground as well as regard to box drains; Williamsville, Robert Village, Tableland; Yankee Dam, Williamsville, around the school area, Gangaram Trace, Daly Road, Samdath Trace, Khan's Avenue, La Gloria Settlement, Tableland Branch 1 and 2 and the list continues.

I want to reiterate again, like I say, it is very, very, important to us; it is very important to Princes Town: Naparima Mayaro Road, Buen Intento Road, Sister's Road, Gransaul Trace, Old Piparo Road, Hoseinee Trace, Thomas Ross Road, Torrib Trace, Seudath Avenue, Craignish Village, Cyril Mohan, St. Julien Trace.

Mr. Speaker, in saying this, if one were to drive to Princes Town today, as they would have done before 2010, Mr. Speaker, they would be able to see the difference as it is today: Paradise Avenue, Eccles Village, Williamsville; Robert Village, Tableland; Yankee Dam, Williamsville; Dyers Village, Buen Intento Road, Pooran Street, Ramnanan Trace, Daly Road, Samdath Trace, Farmers Trace, Mayaro 6th Avenue and Naparima Mayaro Road. Quite a lot has been done as regards box drains, as regards construction, as regards the constituency of Princes Town.

Mr. Speaker, bridges: we have done so much work for farmers as regards bridges, and I would want to just tell you a few of the bridges that we have

repaired which are: Mayaro 6th Avenue, Gafoor Extension Trace, Halls Trace, Pascal Trace, Gransaul Trace, again, where there are two broken bridges that were repaired recently—Pancho Trace, McSween Road, Halls Trace, Sister's Road, Hardbargain, Fourth Company Road, a bridge had broken there for quite some time and it has been repaired just a few months ago—Sisters Road, Hardbargain. Many bridges have been repaired under this People's Partnership Government, including that of: Fairfield Road, Nuckcheddy Road, again, Mantacool area that borders my colleague here, Mayaro 6th Avenue, Sister's Road, Hardbargain, Stafford Road and, again, Nuckcheddy and Lohar Road. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend, again, my colleague, the Minister of Works and Infrastructure as regards the works that have been done in Princes Town.

I also want to turn your attention to water. As you are aware, water is life. I heard my colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, when he said by 2015, of course, we would have water for all, 100 per cent almost, and I say this in the sense that Princes Town, as a constituency, has also had its fair share as regards water distribution. I say this because you would realize when I call the list of roads here that no more would people have to put out barrels by the road and wait for the truck to pass to do a delivery for them, and I join my colleague, hon. Seemungal, when he spoke about the very said thing in his constituency.

We have done quite a few small water projects which are at: Mayaro 6th Avenue, Tableland; Piparo Junction Road, Arch Road, Kissoon Trace, Neivet Trace, Sister's Road, Hardbargain, Sookdeo Trace, Dougan Trace, Junior Trace, Lohar Road, Busy Corner, Jagdeo Trace, Burial Ground Road, Jadoo Trace, Glenroy Settlement, Fourth Company, Hardbargain. Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because these people have never seen water flowing in a tap. They never knew what it was to open a tap and see water flowing in it: Dove Road, Hardbargain, Indian Walk into Matilda, Thomas Ross Road, Sancho Road, Sister's Road, Hardbargain, Halls Trace, Burial Ground Road, 3rd Branch Road, Buen Intento; Railway Road Reserve, Tableland, Local Road, McSween.

Mr. Speaker, when I say this, that people in those areas were not accustomed to water flowing in a line and, today, I really want to commend my colleague, the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources and, of course, our junior Minister as well for work well done. I am still awaiting my colleagues to come and officially commission those projects as well.

I want to turn your attention to recreation grounds. You would have heard me, last year, when I spoke on the budget debate, where I spoke about Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground which was torn down many years ago—I think it

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would have been in the NAR Government days, when that ground was torn down—and has always been proposed by Governments for repair. Mr. Speaker, I announce in this House that works had started at Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground and, today, I want to further announce that works at Yolande Pompey Ground have been completed. [*Desk thumping*]

Very recently, we commissioned the lighting on the very said ground and, today, I really want to commend my colleague, the Minister. Of course, the Robin Singh Recreation Ground, the Gangaram Recreation Ground, of course, where we did some lighting works there as well; Buen Intento Recreation Ground as well, Maurice Gobin Recreation Ground in which we turned on the lights about a week ago as well, and, of course, St. Julien Recreation Ground is completed, complete infrastructure and lights as well; Lewis Road, La Gloria Recreation Ground, Guaracara Recreation Ground, Sancho Road Recreation Ground and, of course, the recent development of George Village Recreation Ground as well; Tableland Recreation Ground as well in which extensive work had been done as regards the ground where we did a jogging track and we did the pavilion as well and, of course, the lighting aspect of it was well done.

**10.30 a.m.**

So now, Mr. Speaker, the grounds are fully utilized by residents in and around the areas. You have the women exercising, walking at nights, jogging at nights. You have games even in the night that are being played as well. Mr. Speaker, I say this because before 2010 you could have never seen any such thing in Princes Town, not at all, where you could have a ground fully utilized 24 hours a day, and today I want to commend our Minister as regards the lighting of the ground and as regards the upgrade of all the recreation grounds as well.

Mr. Speaker, I turn your attention to a new edition for Princes Town, in the rural areas that is, which is a bus service, and the people in the rural areas can now depend on this government service. These areas that I would tell you about would have been, like I said to you, park and sail, park and ride, and that is what people in the rural areas do now. They park their cars and they can take the bus and get out of the areas that they live, in rural areas, and come down to maybe the town area where they can get government transport as well. I want to commend the Minister of Transport for his initiative in giving us a bus in the particular areas. The newest route to join the fleet is Sister's Road, Hardbargain, the bus takes passengers straight into San Fernando, and again I want to thank my colleague, the Minister of Transport, as well.

Mr. Speaker, so much has been done and I want to turn your attention to some of the schools, the Eccles Village Preschool, Brother's Settlement ECCE, which was done by my colleague, the Minister of Education, the Riversdale Presbyterian School and the Princes Town East Secondary School; I want to commend my colleague for the good work that has been done to those schools and to also let him know that we will be planning very soon to open the Eccles Village Preschool, Brother's Settlement, in consultation and discussion with my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, La Gloria Community Centre, 2011/2012, we have done quite a lot of work there. We have also done the La Gloria Community Centre, the Sister's Road Community Centre, and I also want to commend my colleague as well, the Member for Naparima. I also want to turn your attention to some electrification projects, and we have done quite a few electrification projects in the constituency. Like I say, Mr. Speaker, when I took over the constituency in 2010, it was really and truly dilapidated.

It was something that you would go out and see and you would look at in your very early days and you would wonder if you would be able to fix all of that in one term. Mr. Speaker, and the question still bugs me, whether I can do it in one term, but in the event that I do not, I know the People's Partnership would return to Government and we would be able to continue more of the works. [*Desk thumping*]

We did some electrification work on the St. Julien Road, on Seecharan Trace, on Harry John Trace, on Stone Road, Piparo, as well, George Village, Tableland, Sookdeo Trace, Ridge Road, Ramnarine Trace of the Fairfield Road area, and I say this because in those areas it had been really dark, and it is particularly populated communities that people live in, they work in and they play there, and with the good work of my colleague, the Minister of Public Utilities, we were able to light up these areas.

Mr. Speaker, the social needs of our people in Princes Town are also being met in many ways than one, and we continue to do a lot of social work in the constituency, in the communities where I visit very often, where I listen to the cries of the people because I take representation very serious. I say so because I came from somewhere else, another place where I took representation very, very seriously, and as a result it is embedded in me; representation of the people, that is very, very important because we must understand we are elected by the people to serve the people, and those of us of the People's Partnership Government really understand what representation means.

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Mr. Speaker, I just want to turn your attention to the housing area; the housing area which is a burning issue for some of us, and which I know is going to be put to rest. I have a list of names before me in my constituency of persons who would have applied for housing, and with the hard work and the commitment of my colleague, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, who sits just in front of me, I really want to touch the area. Last year when I stood in this House I spoke about the construction of 500 houses in the Fairfield area. Five hundred houses as outlined by the Minister who would have said that we would have started then—yes, we have started the construction of those houses and, today, I can come to this House and say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the general public, indeed, 300 of those 500 houses are completed [*Desk thumping*] and, indeed, are ready for distribution.

With all these goodies, with all that is happening in the constituency, I want to thank all my colleagues, those who would have delivered for us in the constituency of Princes Town and those who continue to deliver for us. I express my gratitude to all of them. CEPEP and URP continue to be a driving component in the enhancement and the development of the constituency. We are definitely making progress while there are lots more to be done. Today, like I say, I wish to thank all my colleagues. I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and, indeed, I want to give full support to this Bill before us today. The Government has delivered upon its promises, not just to the constituencies that we represent, but to the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Amery Browne** (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I attended Queen's Royal College and I was taught then in chemistry class that all matter is made up of molecules and molecules are made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of protons, neutrons and electrons. But guess what? Science has progressed since then and there are over 12 particles, basic particles that have now been identified. Up to last year 2013, a new particle was identified, referred to as the Higgs particle; Peter Higgs, a Nobel Prize winner—the Higgs particle. This is a special particle because it acts as the glue that holds all of matter together; the glue, the binding force that holds matter together.

Mr. Speaker, people have given their opinion on this budget, some more positive than others, some more negative than others, but in my humble opinion the missing ingredient in this budget, the key missing ingredient is that glue. The budget is not cohesive, we have no sense of direction from this Government after

that presentation. [*Desk thumping*] It is lacking in the glue that would hold it all together. The budget was an opportunity yet again, a missed opportunity from this Government, to tell us what its vision is for the future of Trinidad and Tobago, and to tell us how it intends to get us there. It was absent in that regard. We could identify the good, the bad and the ugly in the budget; that is easy to do, and, yes, there are protons, there are neutrons and there are elections—sorry—[*Laughter*]—electrons in the budget. That was a little bit of a slip, Mr. Speaker. We certainly can identify the sweeteners, and speaker after speaker on that side has gotten up and referred to the sweeteners. The sweeteners—yes they are there, but a budget is not just comprised of a handful of sweeteners. It is not just about the sweeteners, you are talking about developing Trinidad and Tobago. You are talking about much more than a handful of sweeteners.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about running a parlour. We are not talking about KC Confectionary or Charles Candy, it is not just sweeteners. What is your vision for this country? But, Mr. Speaker, in order for them to answer that question it would take leadership, it would take integrity, it would take wisdom, [*Desk thumping*] it would take foresight and, therefore, it is no surprise that those characteristics are absent in this budget because they are absent in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

There are sweeteners but the budget must be a lot more than that. What do they expect? What does the Minister of Finance and the Economy expect from the citizenry of this country? That question has to be answered. What does he expect from the private sector if he wishes to take this country forward? What does he expect from the labour movement? Those questions have not been answered in this budget at all, because this budget plays once again to the lowest common denominator, and a lot of the speeches on the other side play to the lowest common denominator. You know what that is, Mr. Speaker? “What ah cud get?” That is what this Government is about, playing to that culture out there in some “What ah cud get”, and that is their answer to this particular budget. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I will not be interrupted by the Member for Oropouche East, even though I will have a few words for him later in my contribution, so he better hold his peace at this point in time. He better do that.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the budget and the fact that it plays to that sense out there “Wats in it fuh me”, “What ah cud get”, as opposed to “What can we contribute to the development of Trinidad and Tobago”. There are patriotic citizens out there that would have been waiting on that signal since 2010 from this UNC partnership and they have not gotten it at all. It is playing into that culture of

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dependency, “What ah cud get”. Mr. Speaker, we are taking about contributions and I will tell you what I propose to contribute today. It would not just be criticisms, there are going to be recommendations, suggestions and ideas, and they would not just be coming from me, but I could tell you, contrary to everyone on that side, I consulted with my constituents on this budget. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Yes. I could spell it for you if you cannot even spell it, Member for Couva South. Saturday evening, 5.00 p.m., I met with my constituents, did a presentation on the budget and got their ideas in writing and verbally, so when I stand, Member for Couva South, as opposed to you, I reflect the views of my constituents. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot say the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, I move right along because time is short and they want to distract me. I have a lot to say. [*Interruption*] I know who you consulted with, Member for Oropouche East.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members, I think it is a bit too early, allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member, please.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the debate thus far has been quite lively. I have listened to all the contributions on the other side—very lively. We just had, my dear friend, the Member for Princes Town, who I would not trouble too much, except to say that many of her colleagues argued against the reality that this Government is disproportionately applying taxpayers’ dollars [*Desk thumping*] in the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, and if they had any doubts, Mr. Speaker, that contribution by my friend from Princes Town should erase any doubt that this Government is disproportionately expending the taxpayers’ resources. [*Desk thumping*] It is clear. It is clear.

She committed another cardinal error, really I cannot blame her too much, she is repeating the words of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, misleading Trinidad and Tobago in stating, categorically, that the old age pension was \$1,950 when they came into office. Mr. Speaker, that is a total fallacy. The old age pension was \$2,500, [*Desk thumping*] so I just want—in fact, I want the Minister of Finance and the Economy to apologize, because this is not the first time they have tried to mislead the senior citizens in this country—\$2,500. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West is deliberately interrupting me.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Lopinot/Bon Air, please, just cool it.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Be silent.

Mr. Speaker, \$2,500, so I want to correct the record, and I want the Minister of Finance and the Economy not to repeat that error when he does his winding up.

We also had contributions from the Minister of National Security, and I was appalled when he came here and he quoted John Delinger. The Minister of National Security of my country quoting John Dillinger, a renowned gangster, bank robber and a violent individual from the United States of America. But the Minister of National Security has many questions to answer, none of which he addressed, because he paints himself as this sort of superhero, he is defending the troops, and that is how he is trying to position himself—he is defending the troops against the citizens and all those who are attacking them. I do not know who are attacking the troops right now. That is how he is positioning himself, a zero-star general of the armed forces.

Mr. Speaker, but he has not indicated, besides that much lauded fund to pay for bereaved families who have lost members in the security services, what about taking steps to preserve their lives, because when you protect our borders, you do not just protect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, you also protect the police, the soldiers, the coast guard and every other individual, in uniform and out of uniform. That should have been his first responsibility. He has not done that.

**10.45 a.m.**

Mr. Speaker, he has not told us about caged rear seats for police vehicles; they are still very vulnerable when they put apprehended individuals in their vehicles. He has not told us about that. He has not told us about cameras in and out of the vehicles, so that the police officers could be safer, and the citizens as well could feel safer. He has not told us about body cameras and all the other recommendations that he has received over the years, and his Government has received. But it is just about money and that is it, a sweetener, and the country is going to be satisfied. This country is no longer fooled by this Government. We are not satisfied with those measures in the budget of Trinidad and Tobago.

He has not told us about the outcome of the death enquiry of Lance Corporal Curtis Marshall. Yesterday he pretended he knew nothing about it. Mr. Speaker, autopsy after autopsy; these are the same soldiers—many of them good people—now getting increased powers in our streets and our cities. It is my fear, if I believe the autopsy of Dr. Alexandrov and Dr. McDonald-Burris, it is my concern that we may have homicidal individuals in uniform. The Minister is saying nothing about it. The Chief of Defence Force is saying nothing about it. We have to be concerned. Multiple autopsies—*[Interruption]*

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He has told us nothing about the uniformed officers who were named in LifeSport—named in LifeSport. We are told of no investigation, no follow up, no outcome whatsoever. So when you are talking about securing the nation and protecting the troops, and so on, you need to come better than that, Mr. Minister of National Security. So I was very dissatisfied with his contribution. Fraud—that is what LifeSport is. No action taken, and these people are out on the streets interacting with citizens today.

He needs to tell us about the cocaine surgery and what became of that. I know the Minister of Health is not going to say a word about that—lips sealed. Maybe the Minister of National Security could assist us. The country is interested in these things. When they slip like that, that cocaine surgery, it gives a little peek, a little insight into a very dark world that very few in this country want to talk about, but it is the reality. It is my view that the last administration was making gains in dealing with that reality, that resulted in many changes in this country.

He has not given us an update on the Dana Seetahal SC situation, somebody who stood in this Chamber, a former Senator—silence; sweeteners and silence, not good enough.

Then we had contributions from some other Members. There was the Member for Oropouche East who focused really on attacking the Member for Diego Martin West, even though he had no clue what he was talking about, but that did not stop him, and I am sure it will not stop him in the future.

We had a contribution from the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, who decided to attack the late Dr. Eric Williams and say he had no clue about culture. Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West daring to address the legacy of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams [*Interruption*] even though on his best day, Mr. Speaker—I am addressing you—he is not fit to touch the latchet of the sandals of Dr. Eric Williams? [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not think the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West has a second chance to speak. I think you have spoken. Allow the Member to speak, because you are constantly interrupting. You cannot be constantly interrupting a Member, even though you are not disposed to what he is saying. That is the price of democracy. So could you allow the Member to speak in silence. [*Interruption*] Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, I am hearing you—I am hearing you. Allow the Member to speak in silence; no crosstalk. Continue, hon. Member.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, not fit to touch the latchet of the sandals of Dr. Eric Williams, on his best day. And you see the attitude; “two people beat a pillow in the road and police report is made” and all sorts of things.

[*Laughter*] That tells you the mentality of what we are dealing with in the Cabinet on that side.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy came and gave us a grand scheme about electric vehicles; oh, wonderful, a great gift, no VAT on electric vehicles. Does he know the cost of an electric vehicle even with VAT off? What about the import duty on such a vehicle? Even with VAT removed, those costs would be quite prohibitive. He says nothing about maintenance costs; refers not to the price—I did some research on the Nissan Leaf, which is probably one of the more affordable of the electrics. Do you know the cost of a battery pack? And these things can go wrong; anything can go wrong, these are mechanical items, electrical items. The cost of a battery pack for a Nissan Leaf is \$5,500.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** What about infrastructure for it?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Not TT dollars, US currency, and that is only if you have the old one in sound condition to trade-in, valued at US \$1,000. If you do not have the old one, if it is destroyed in an accident or something else, or somebody steals it, you are talking about 6,500 United States dollars, but they are giving a gift. That is to help ordinary people; that is a sweetener in their mind. People out there know the reality, and that will fall by the wayside, just like all the other alternative—  
[*Interruption*]

**Miss Hospedales:** CNG.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, yes, renewable resource, initiatives in past budgets; nothing has come out of it, but it is a sweetener. It goes out there and they are just hoping for the best. That is all they are doing, hoping for the best.

The Member for Chaguanas East, I am not going to dwell on him, boasting about the air bridge and the sea bridge, when the air bridge is in a state of collapse. This last August vacation period people were straining in both airports, because the new CEO of Caribbean Airlines has a bright idea, “Let us not put any more flights on the air bridge”; but he is boasting about it.

Sea bridge—he is boasting about his new cargo ferry, it is more efficient—not so?—more efficient. Not seeing it is running at minimal cargo capacity right now, sailing up and down fooling people, with very little on board. That is his vision of an efficient sea bridge. Mr. Speaker, we are moving right along.

Then you have the Minister of Finance and the Economy boasting about changing Standing Orders. I want to make a point here: that those changes in the Standing Orders to introduce a Standing Committee on Finance have less to do

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with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and have more to do with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, of which the Opposition is a part. So I take umbrage when I hear Ministers standing, and several have done, taking credit and boasting about that as a Government achievement, it is not; it is an achievement of us, the Members of the Lower House of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

What that committee now allows is that we can now focus on policy issues, which I am doing, in the budget debate, and allowing an examination of the figures and that type of scrutiny in a couple of days' time. So I am just clarifying that for the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Finally, in some of these responses, we have the distinguished Member for Oropouche West, who tried to rewrite history about youth development in Trinidad and Tobago—really, that was a sorry chapter in this debate—and started misquoting people about the National Youth Council, and so on. I just want to make it clear, that it is these same young people that she was misquoting, who developed during the last decade under a caring People's National Movement administration, [*Desk thumping*] who formed the Tobago Youth Council, the Trinidad Youth Council and the National Youth Council. They are now the young leaders of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are the future leaders of tomorrow. So let us give credit where credit is due.

They are found in all political parties. In the MSJ, many of them are there now, nurtured and incubated in those same youth councils; in the PNM, even in your own party. So far from being grateful to the UNC, they should all recognize the contribution of the People's National Movement to their development.

Well I am hearing some grumbling in the back there—I am hearing some grumbling. Maybe they want to compare with respect to youth development. Let us get ready to rumble. We are doing a comparison: in the right corner we have GATE; HYPE; HELP; YTEPP; Civilian Conservation Corps; Citizen Security Programme; OJT; UTT; MuST; MYPART; MILAT, the list goes on: mediation programmes, community telecentres. The list goes on and on and on. That is in the right corner.

The left corner, in their corner, what do you have? What do they have? LifeSport and baby milk grant. That is their innovation for the development of young people in this country. [*Crosstalk*] What else is there? Tell us, what else do you have? What is your innovation? What is the vision? Mr. Speaker, we spoke about the Higgs particle; it is absent. What is the vision? They could not say. All they could do is make claims that the youth should be grateful to the UNC, and all sorts of foolishness; not at all.

So let us set the record straight in that regard, and let us talk a little bit finally about this Baby Care Grant. I am not going to fall into the trap of trying to deny or argue against any assistance for a poor family in Trinidad and Tobago. I will not do that, Mr. Speaker, because I know how difficult it is out there. There are Members here who just recently produced offspring, some tiny offspring, and I congratulate all of them. I myself have an 11-month old. It is not easy to raise a child, and there are families out there struggling financially. So I acknowledge that to begin with.

But what my constituents have told me is that it is clear that the Government has not thought through any policy behind this Baby Care Grant. It is clear to them. It is clear in the words of the Prime Minister, who seems to have been making up the policy on the hoof, on the fly, as it were, because from day-to-day we are hearing a few words more: is it a cheque, is it a voucher, is it a grant, is it not? We will find out. Is it after birth, is it from October 01? We will find out. Is it for one baby, if you have twins, if you have triplets? We will find out; we will find out; we will find out. And then, is there anything, any programming associated with the grant? We will find out.

The latest thing they have thrown into the mix like a wrench is parenting programmes. They will all go to the National Parenting Programme. Let me tell you about this National Parenting Programme, the reality behind this National Parenting Programme. The Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, probably one of the more decent ones on that side, I would say, [*Laughter*] indicated that there are about 350 squatting communities on his radar screen, and many more other villages and communities in the country. Do you know how many communities have been touched by the National Parenting Programme to date? Eight; I could name them. Four of them are in Moruga and Siparia, and the other four are in Blanchisseuse, Felicity, Laventille and La Horquetta—eight in Trinidad and Tobago. This is the programme that the Prime Minister is throwing that baby care towards and saying that the mothers will get parenting training and so on.

Five two-hour workshops does not a good parent make, especially when these cannot be found anywhere. There is no fixed location, so it is like a roving service that two good NGOs are providing: Families in Action and the University of the Southern Caribbean. Roving, so you cannot predict, a citizen cannot know in advance really, that it will be in Diego Martin the first week in every month. It does not work like that.

So if a mother is giving birth next week in Las Cuevas, where is she going to go for her parenting training? I know where she is going to go for her grant. Some

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of them are already lining up—where is the Member for Tobago East—at the Ministry of the People and Social Development, believe it. That is Trinidad and Tobago. Some of them are already there, but that other piece is just a Fantasy Land of the Prime Minister, because it cannot fit, it cannot work. It does not mesh at all. It says the Government has not thought this through, that is what it tells me, but I am here to assist them and give them some advice in that regard.

This so-called National Parenting Programme, these non-governmental organizations are not properly resourced at this point, and they need increased support and they need some other players to help build this up to a national level. I would like to see it at a national level, but do not pretend it is there and do not say that the solution to the Baby Care Grant on October 01 is this programme. I have checked, and they are still living on Fantasy Island. That is this Baby Care Grant.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at programmes in other countries: United States of America; Republic of South Africa; Australia, and even in India, certain districts of India have very good holistic programmes, targeting young, vulnerable mothers, their families and the infants that they would bear. Even people like shockingly Hazel Brown, who I have never quoted in my life, and I probably will not do so now, but I am indicating that she has given her recommendation that this grant is totally inadequate. Let me see if I could use a few of her words: “It is not the appropriate answer”. Those were her words, “not the appropriate answer”.

**11.00 a.m.**

But, Mr. Speaker, there are facilities out there, and I want to recommend the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago, as a transparent, much more transparent than any other Government Ministry, audited every single year, an entity, an NGO that can make a huge difference in building support and a holistic programme to assist these young families to move out of vulnerability into a position of independence.

Families in Action—now they have provided increased subventions to all sorts of groups, churches. I would not even name some of them. Pastors who write columns in the newspaper and stuff like that. Increased subventions to all and sundry. But for some reason the Family Planning Association has remained at that same subvention since they came into office.

I want to recommend very clearly here today, that the Government, the Prime Minister, immediately meets with FPATT, has discussions with respect to scaling up programming for these young families, dealing with pregnancy, future

pregnancy prevention or at least planning of their families, dealing with training with respect to discipline, with respect to nutrition, with respect to care for a child, with respect to family cohesion and all the other inputs that are required out there in the communities. I would recommend a subvention, at minimum, of \$5 million per annum, to assist in that work which would be a drop in the barrel, just a drop in that baby care expense to the taxpayer. That would make that measure in the budget, that fiscal measure, sensible. As it stands now, Mr. Speaker, sounds good, it is a sweetener. I am not going to deny any family it, but it does not make sense from a policy, logic or developmental point of view. I want that to remain on the record.

Mr. Speaker, they should just talk to any district health visitor, senior nurse or senior social worker or medical social worker. In the days past, those individuals in the health sector, Mr. Minister of Health, were empowered to assist when a vulnerable mother would come to their attention or a pregnant woman would come to their attention. So even from there they would have supplies and other provisions. That does not exist anymore. That has all fallen down. It has all collapsed. So, we need more strengthening of systems, as opposed to grants and handouts and so on. And if you are giving the grant and handouts, make sure you are strengthening the system at the same time because in that way you would ensure best use of resources. Because the last thing that you would want, the best outcome would be for mothers to present earlier to anti-natal care, early in the pregnancy.

This grant does not contribute to that, but if resources are provided through our primary health care system, which has been collapsing by the day under this Government, it would encourage early presentation to the obstetricians and gynaecologists, better outcomes, healthier children, better future for the country. A very simple formula. And there are simple things that the Government can do to ensure that. I am not sure that they have an interest in doing so. So it is really more, as my constituents have told me, more sounding good than substance with regard to that grant. Just like the “Daniel Decree” and all those other things. And if they need to find money to give to FPATT, maybe they can find it by speaking of Daniel—Mr. Daniel, what is his name? The educator.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Adolphus Daniel.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes. Yes. Approved by the Cabinet. And your famous Dust Bin Divers, and all those other ghost NGOs that have been milking money from the Treasury, defended by the Member for Oropouche East and other Members of this Government.

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I just want to add one other point on that note for the consideration of the Government which is drug and alcohol testing for recipients of such grants. Because we know the dangers of expenditures of those types of resources and subsidies on the wrong products. We know that. We know that there are unscrupulous businessmen out there, no matter what systems are put in place, who would be very happy to exchange for alcohol and drugs, because these families are so vulnerable, we need to ensure layers of protection. So, I am going to recommend that the Government considers introduction of drug and—now I made the recommendation even for MPs. Some of them balked at that. I think, one MP who is no longer here was very offended by a suggestion that we do drug and alcohol testing for parliamentarians. It was subsequently repeated in the Senate and so. I believe that should be considered, but certainly with regard to such grants.

Mr. Speaker, but all of this would have been easier, adding these policy bits would have been easier if we had a social sector that was functioning the way it was designed to function. It would have been easier.

Mr. Speaker, when the last administration demitted office, already in place—I wish the Member for Tobago East was here—was a process of decentralization of social services delivery. The vision being, the vision being, in every neighbourhood and community you will have family case workers to work directly with the families. So something like this would have been an easy add-on, just another resource to empower those family case workers. A family case worker in every neighbourhood. You know what they replaced that with? The new vision—well it has now changed a bit, but in that Ministry was, the Minister must be in every living room on their television, pretending to be a social worker, displacing the professional staff, distorting the entire system, and politicizing giving out of a cheque, giving out of a card, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, as Minister of Social Development, I never touched a live TT card in my life, never did, and neither did my colleague from Arouca/Maloney. That was not our role because we did not want to politicize that programme. In fact, what we did, we commissioned a review, given all the allegations and so on, detailed review by Prof. Chadee, went through all of those recipients. Many persons were removed in that period. That process, I want to say, continued to some extent under the new administration, to some extent. Some other persons were removed who needed to be removed. And I lauded that. But then a dark era came to be where a rabid politicization occurred. The THA election, it was mass chaos, and from what? Chaguanas West, mass chaos! St.

Joseph, mass chaos! Where persons if you frowned at a politician or your face looking a little sad, a trunk opened one time, card. “Yuh get card. You want card?” Card. From Chile, where this programme originated, it was never designed to be like that. It was never designed to be like that. So let us try to improve as we go, as opposed to pretending we are improving, but really politicizing. That is what has happened, Mr. Speaker.

So the point I was making, if they were doing their jobs properly, it would have been easier to introduce this type of support through family case workers. The pilot project was already in train, you know. God alone knows what has happened in that sector now. It has all fallen to dust because of people trying to build a cult of personality around themselves, as opposed to developing systems. Again, lack of vision, lack of leadership, lack of integrity, lack of foresight, lack of wisdom. What do you expect?—United National Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about another issue, a related issue—fraud in the social sector. One of this Prime Minister’s first steps, very quietly on making herself Minister of the People and Social Development, was to fire a former retired police officer from the Ministry of the People and Social Development. That firing should have—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Warner:** He is back.

**Dr. A. Browne:** He is back I hear from the Member for Chaguanas West who has files on everything. He is back I hear. I would have expected strong police action because it is tens of millions of dollars that we are talking about. Strong police action; instead, cover up, silence, and maybe a return as I am being informed. It does not end there alone. It does not end there alone.

What about the Children’s Life Fund? What about the Children’s Life Fund? I want to challenge the Prime Minister today. Yes. You can boast. We can also boast because we contributed to the law. Right here in committee stage, and helped to make it as good as it could be because we wanted to see it work. But hold on! Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you have the facts. Mr. Speaker, I want the Government to clear the air on the information that has come to me, that a senior staff member of the Children’s Life Fund was identified as being involved in high level fraud, forging of cheques, defrauding of parents who had come to the fund, is now no longer there, but again there is no police action whatsoever. The desire is to cover it up, and pretend that all is well.

Mr. Speaker, all I am asking for is accountability. I am not denying the Government its PR and its sweeteners, but be level with the nation and tell them what is going on with a fund like this.

**Hon. Member:** I did not know about that.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Tell us what is going on. My colleague did not know about that. The nation needs to know, and just be factual about it. That is all I ask. That is the information that has come to me.

And then we are talking about young mothers. We have to talk about the anti-natal service in this country. And I have had some experience at the anti-natal clinic in the Port of Spain General Hospital where my wife and I chose to have our little baby.

Mr. Speaker, this staff, amazing and wonderful, precious gems from up above, but the conditions are atrocious, atrocious. So, we are talking—this Minister loves to talk about big hospitals. He is a hospital talker. He is a tertiary care man; fair enough. That is his training. But you see the basics are absent. The basics are absent. The basics are absent, Mr. Speaker.

So that anti-natal clinic where the majority—the largest in the country—of our mothers, those same vulnerable mothers pass through clinics like that, it is like an oven. I challenge you, Mr. Speaker, to spend five minutes there, you would break down in sweat. Like an oven. Simple measures that can be taken that do not cost a billion and two billion dollars, but it is not being done. That building itself at Port of Spain, the so-called maternity wing has been condemned years now, years now, and at any earthquake it can come tumbling down. But we are building hospitals and we are boasting about it. I do not think that there is any vision with regard to the health sector at all. And this Minister has been presiding over the decimation of primary health care in Trinidad and Tobago; decimation of primary health care.

Mr. Speaker, I had to beg, as a Member of Parliament, for the reopening of the St. James accident and emergency facility. And I just want to say that the Minister was noble enough to acknowledge that it was the intervention of and the advocacy of this humble MP that resulted in the reopening of that. [*Desk thumping*] So, he was noble enough to acknowledge that. But the fact of the matter is the staffing situation at these institutions, and the other ones they are extending and opening—I am glad to hear of any health centre that is having extended hours—the staffing situation is appalling and atrocious. And if you visit there, as I do regularly, the staff is under extreme strain. That is the literal truth; extreme strain, and it has affected morale.

What about the midwives? Oh, well, they are under extreme pressure. There is a lack of mentoring capacity there, and a lack of incentives for some of the

experienced or retired midwives to mentor and train the younger ones in terms of classes for pregnant women and so on. We need to do a lot more in that regard.

And I have correspondence here from senior nurses, nurse educators who have been complaining. They were invited to indicate their interest in accepting a three-year contract in December 2013. They were all given three-month contracts instead, and we are interested in the future of nursing in this country. Very, very disappointing.

They continue on those short-term contracts, no benefits, leave entitlement issues, receiving their salaries weeks late, two and three weeks late sometimes, no security of tenure. They are having serious, serious challenges, and this is affecting nursing schools in north and south. The school of midwifery, the school of community health and post basic nursing, nursing assistant training schools in north and south, and the school of psychiatric nursing. So there is a lot of work to be done. This is no joke. But we hear about the hospitals. I am glad. We hear about oncology. I am the happiest man. We have all lost persons to the deadly plague of cancer or cancers. I am happy, I would like even faster progress. Bravo. I am happy about that, I am not going to criticize that, [*Crosstalk*] Yes. Yes. I give credit where credit is due, but all of that is undermined by a complete breakdown in procurement in our health sector, basic drugs, basic supplies, simple things are absent. A lady comes in and needs assistance, they cannot even find a pad, a bed sheet. Do not even talk about a bed, far less for a bed. Basic drugs, antibiotics, anti-cancer drugs. Total breakdown, but there is a pretence that all is well.

We talk about hospitals. They chased away all the foreign staff, and now they are begging them to come back. I hope they come back. We need them back here right now. Again, not understanding the visionary policy that was there before. Training people, as well as bringing the best that may be available from elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, what about this children's hospital. Again, I am not going to fall into the trap of attacking a children's hospital, but I am going to ask some questions today. Because I am hearing about a children's hospital that has more adult beds than children's beds. That makes me a little curious. So, you have a children's hospital with 80 children beds and 150 adult beds. That does not sound like a children's hospital. And then they have added on this burns unit. That does not sound like a children hospital. And now they have added on a faculty of medical science, it is a med-school now. What? That does not sound like a children's hospital. So, who is running that show down there? It cannot be a

paediatrician or someone trained in the administration of child health because they will have to be a burns specialist as well. What is the organizational structure for this so-called children's hospital? I am sure the Minister will enlighten us, if he has clarified those measures because I very curious. I am very curious. [*Crosstalk*] Exactly. The Higgs is missing. There is nothing to bind it all together. A few sweeteners and a cloud of dust. That is the budget of this country.

**11.15 a.m.**

Moving right along. Lack of implementation of reports, Mr. Speaker. Again, indicting this Minister of Health and his failure to hold to account a number of Regional Health Authorities that have been doing a terrible job out there. And if you do not have accountability, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, if you do not have accountability it reflects badly on you.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** The Eastern Regional Health Authority.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Hold on, hold on.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** That is a disaster.

**Dr. A. Browne:** From the couple of reports, no accountability. That is a 2014 report, indicting the North Central Regional Health Authority flatly. Everybody still there happy like pappy. No accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Bordeaux Report of 2013, Maternal and Child Health Care in Trinidad and Tobago, non-implementation of recommendations. Everybody there is happy like pappy, no implementation. I am going to pass to the Minister copies of various reports as well, just to assist him along.

The Eastern Regional Health Authority, mass and total chaos. And I have correspondence, I will just pass it to the Minister with regard to what is going on there. And it is just from a human resource point of view, it is a total and complete meltdown in that RHA. It requires emergency intervention.

**Mrs. Thomas:** They need a good HR manager.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yeah, they need a good HR manager. Maybe I could recommend my colleague.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** They need a CEO.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, they need that as well. The North West Regional Health Authority. Port of Spain is in crisis still, bed space—and I brought a matter here about a 91-year-old woman who was being suffered on a trolley for two nights.

Mr. Speaker, South-West Regional Health Authority, I would say there has been some improvement there. I do not know if the Government would want to

take credit for that, but I know that the staff would want to take credit for that, and some of the administrators down there. I am curious about the use by the Cabinet of the teaching, the so-called teaching hospital. Well, let us talk about that. All hospitals are teaching hospitals in Trinidad and Tobago. So that is just another little PR label they have put on a hospital, all hospitals—Mr. Minister, is that not so? [*Minister indicated no by nodding head*] “Ohh, come on man”, all right—are teaching hospitals. Anyway, I want to hear you on that one.

Mr. Speaker, so they have a Cabinet suite and whoever else has a suite in the so-called teaching hospital, and that is the new—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** What about the Point Fortin hospital?

**Dr. A. Browne:** Hold on, no, I cannot leave out Point Fortin. But, Mr. Speaker, it is all about hospitals for this particular Minister. But I want to talk a bit about the North Central RHA, a literal disaster zone.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the Cottle Report indicating major deficiencies in administration and systems. No heads rolled. No action was taken, and I want today, once again, to call for action against the board of directors of the North Central RHA. I do not know if I need to speak to the Prime Minister or Mr. Bharath or the Minister of Health in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I have other correspondence here from even the corporate secretary and other senior officials of the North Central RHA, making direct accusations against the chairman and other senior members of that Regional Health Authority, to the extent of alleged manipulation of minutes. I just give one quote from one of those complaints:

Your numerous and repeated verbal requests for me to perform duties which are not consistent with corporate governance best practices has frustrated my intention to properly guide the board and to ensure conformance with regulatory and compliance matters.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the Minister, I am going to pass this correspondence to him and these allegations to him, to do an immediate investigation, and do not just investigate, call for accountability, ensure accountability. Something has to happen there. It cannot be business as usual. And as a representative of the people, I am appealing to this Minister to take some action in this regard. Let the chips fall where they may. Let them fall where they may.

The nurses are also appealing to the Minister. I am going to speak on their behalf as well. They have a little sore point with that Nurses and Midwives

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Registration (Amdt.) Bill. They were unhappy with the lack of consultation. But they are also ashamed that the Minister has failed to address the reinstatement of motor vehicle tax exemption for travelling senior nurses, health visitors, district nurses, public health inspectors, even some doctors. There is no Health Visitors Training Programme for 2014, when most of our health visitors are over 55. What is going to happen there? God alone knows. You see everything falls back on the basics, and if they are not attending to the basics we are in trouble, no matter how many hospitals are built we have to start with the basics.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** You have one more minute of your original speaking time.

**Dr. A. Browne:** “Ahh”, we are on track. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit, I mention what happened—“oh”, I will use my minute, and I would like an extension if you would be so minded, to talk a little bit about the HIV coordination in Trinidad and Tobago. I listened closely to the Minister of National Security in justifying the positioning of the NOC in the Office of the Prime Minister. And you know what, he gave the exact rationale that was used back at the beginning of the last decade, to position the National AIDS Coordinating Committee, a multi-sectorial coordinating body in the Office of the Prime Minister. So it is good for his APCs and his, you know, all those other things, his computer screens, technology and so on, and Mr. Heera, but it is not good for one of the most devastating pandemics to affect this country and the earth today. So they have gone from, what is recommended by UNAIDS which is what we put in place—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central be extended by 10 minutes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I was saying, the exact justification they used for the NOC which we heard yesterday being positioned in the Office of the Prime Minister, it is the best place to be, but they have shuttled the HIV coordinating body and function out of the Office of the Prime Minister because they are not interested in that, send it back to the Ministry of Health where it was in the 1980s. And when last have you heard anything from them, Mr. Speaker? It has fallen into abeyance. There needs to be a complete change in how we approach that, because these epidemics do not go away, they do not go away. And you have issues of resistant infection and other things that would be the reality here as well as in other parts of the world.

This is serious business. And let us not talk about the STI service. In fact, let us talk about the STI service a little bit. Two years ago they moved the service from its primary location to a temporary facility for six months. Still there, two years later. The building is falling down, Mr. Speaker. I got a message from one of the staff members during this week, the ceiling of the lab fell in, all the celotex just simply fell on all the microscopes, et cetera, literally deteriorating before the Minister's eyes. And somehow nothing is happening in that regard, not a blade of grass or not a brick has been moved, and these are human lives we are talking about, these are constituents of all of us and the country needs a proper service.

Basic medication absent. Bactroban, Ciproflox, Penicillin, Penicillin in this day and age. Doxycycline, Valtrex—I mean some of these names might be familiar to some members on the other side—Flagyl. Some facilities are quietly using expired drugs, because the medical staff are very concerned about the welfare of their patients and sometimes you have to make a hard decision between not giving them anything or sending them out there with a prescription that you know they cannot afford or sometimes using a drug that may have just been expired. It is a rough situation. I remember the Minister brought a Bill some time ago to assist with procurement in the RHAs, it died and we have heard nothing since. I do not know, I do not know where we are going, Mr. Speaker, but we will hear the Minister's talk of these hospitals in a short while.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for the next 12 minutes or so on Diego Martin Central. They spoke a lot—[*Crosstalk*] calm down. They have spoken a lot about the constituency—[*Crosstalk*] I said what I want, I want—they have spoken about the Constituency Development Fund. But, Mr. Speaker, the MPs on this side have not been sitting down waiting on any Constituency Development Fund. We have had to be innovative, we have had to be resourceful and good advocates of the people within our districts. And I believe, I join with my colleagues in the pursuit of exactly that type of characteristic. It is also about advocacy. So a lot of work has been going on there, recognizing what was going on in the social sector.

I recruited a senior social worker and brought her into my office to assist, and you know what has been going on, we have actually been bringing undergraduate social work students to do training there, right there at the constituency office, because that is a good point, a good nexus, sometimes with vulnerable persons out there. The Ministry had not been doing their part, but we as Members of Parliament have to do our part. I mentioned the reopening of the St. James Accident and Emergency facility.

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I want to talk a little bit about a passion project of mine. A kitchen garden project, where constituents are brought in and provided with seedlings for a variety of vegetables and encouraged, not just seedlings but literature, and a sensitization session, encouraged to go and start their kitchen gardens and given a prize for the best kitchen garden at the end of three months. And that is going like a rocket in Diego Martin Central at this time, Mr. Speaker. It is all about empowering persons, not waiting on the Government and their Constituency Development Fund, but being innovative and making the best for your constituents.

I heard the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo talk about fruit trees. I did not wait on his initiatives at all, because we have to be strong advocates. One of the primary schools in Cocorite went to the farm, the Government Farm and purchased, filled the trunk of my X-Trail with fruit trees, some rare fruits that these children know nothing about. We went and planted it with some parents and members of the community. And they now have to nurture those trees, and children to come will be able to harvest peewah and soursop, West Indian cherry and other fruits like that.

There are still so many needs with regard—especially the primary schools in the community. I have been harassing the Minister of Education, there have been one or two drips falling from his trough, but certainly not the kind of input that we would need in Diego Martin. And listening to other MPs, I am getting a little bit jealous, because there are schools that require basic infrastructure, painting, termite removal and so on, that is not happening. What we have to do, what I have done, is go into my own humble pocket, meagre pocket with some volunteers and repaint the interior of a school and other things. It should not have to be like that.

The Cocorite fishing facility, I want to acknowledge the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo for indicating that some work will continue there. But again, I have not waited on them. My second employer in life was Thomas Peake and Company Limited. Many, many, years ago I worked in their hardware store. I approached them and said, we need a jetty for these fishermen and they have agreed. So whatever the Government does will be supplemented by the good folks at Peakes to assist those fishermen. So that is the kind of thing that we have been doing as advocates for the persons.

We need some further assistance. The Harding Place Recreation Ground. The last Minister of Sport had no care or concern, and I am appealing to the current one to assist. There is a little bit of a negotiation issue that the Ministry of Sport has a strong role to play to assist that community in getting access to those

grounds. The Surprise Recreation Ground needs lighting, we have been begging. I have some indication that they may turn their attention in that regard. We still need water in some areas. Thankfully, some of the projects that began in the last administration have been continued in the Petit Valley community, but it needs to be more aggressive, because the boast that I am hearing you making is not quite matched to the reality. So it is not their case of resting on their laurels.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure I only have about five minutes.

**Hon. Member:** Three minutes.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you. I cannot end without talking about flooding and I hear various agencies competing, who clean the most drains and who clean who drain and who—Mr. Speaker, the people of Diego Martin do not want to hear too much about that. And at this stage in the rainy season there is no cause for anybody to boast, because sometimes you clean a drain or a river at the beginning of the rainy season, guess what by now, completely overgrown again. These things do not wait on time so it has to be strategic, regular maintenance, and this pattern I am seeing now, of slash and burn cleaning where the subcontractors light a fire in the river and then clear it because it is easier to do, we have to stamp that out, that is dangerous to the environment. That has to be cut out. So there is no room for that.

If you want to talk about flooding talk to me because I have been there and I have seen it and I have been intervening. [*Crosstalk*] I will give you those details on another occasion. There are still families, the Peters family, the Member for Tobago East, I raised a matter here, they still have not gotten their house. I have shown all the big cracks, they are still there, no action by the Government. There is a Hypolite family from Sea Lots, the lady who lost the child and she has many other children. The Government promised her to rebuild her house for her, no action. She did not promise herself, the Government came there and promised on the media. No action or assistance.

Paving of Pitilal Road, the Member for Tabaquite is making all sorts of excuses, and I would just want to mention the Diego Martin Highway. We are happy the highway has been opened. But the entire new section is in complete darkness. I am told that T&TEC is charging the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure \$1 million to light the highway, and that is the keep back, where roads in South and other parts of the country are being lit the day they are opened because it is a different approach there.

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So I am appealing to the Government, solve that problem and put lights on that highway. We have already had a death, we do not want to have more, certainly not during the night-time. Light the highway, please. There is the issue of the traffic lights in Four Roads, which I do not think was the best solution. We are removing traffic lights in other highways; we are putting traffic lights in the Diego Martin Highway. There are some possibilities, such as a roundabout; the possibility of even an overpass, but a solution that is better than that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to end on the note of the vector-borne diseases. The Minister has heard a lot from me about that, and I will not stop. I am not satisfied with the efforts thus far. I am not satisfied with the coordination. I am not satisfied that the Minister has taken leadership, gotten the agencies responsible to do their job to the best of their ability. I am very dissatisfied, and every day I get calls from my constituents, entire families with Chikungunya.

The Port of Spain General Hospital, the Minister—I hope he checked it because I told him—has stopped testing—I am wrapping up—for Chikungunya. They have stopped, because they are saying those areas are—the prevalence is so high, it does not make sense. I have spoken to the doctors. That is the decision they have made. Mr. Speaker, people are crying out for help. There is a mosquito epidemic in the western peninsula.

I just want to end by describing this budget, in conclusion. I mentioned the sweeteners. This budget is like a Busta soft drink, full of sweeteners, but no nutrients for the growth and development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan):** Mr. Speaker—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Let him have it.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—thank you very much for recognizing me. I sat here this morning and I listened to the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Princes Town. But before I respond, I would like to first indicate to the population of Trinidad and Tobago that I am happy to be part of a Government where a Minister of Finance and the Economy could come into this Parliament

and produce a budget that gives the people hope, gives the people so much hope that they have not taken on this budget the way they did when the PNM was in power.

**Hon. Member:** Fear and trepidation.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** You see, Mr. Speaker, fear of things rising, stockholding and keeping and continuous buying was the order of the day before a budget presentation of the PNM Government. In this budget, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have been given a hope that their future looks bright. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Finance and the Economy stood here; taking insults from the other side, but kept firm, indicating and showing Trinidad and Tobago, the People's Partnership Government has what we call innovative thinkers; innovative and change thinkers; what we were put here to do.

First, I would also like to indicate that the hon. Prime Minister, in our budget meetings and the directions that she moved certain aspects of the budget disposition, in the only way that—I have to compare it to how the Prime Minister led the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill from the front. So I want to congratulate the Prime Minister for leading that charge of the budget. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the only thing I gathered from the Member for Diego Martin Central—he is a very good debater—was that he started off with electrons, protons and neutrons—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** He dead now.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—and being a scientist myself, about the Higgs particle, he talks about the glue that held it together, together with what—he forgot the electrostatic forces. He forgot that. [*Interruption and laughter*] But he spent the whole aspect of the first part of his contribution begging this Government to give him glue for Mr. Higgs. So I was trying to figure out who is Mr. Higgs, if it is the particle or the glue he was desiring. But that is his predisposition and I have no problem with that.

We heard about gloom and doom and everything else about the health sector, the social sector and everything else. I stood here and I could not believe I was listening to a Member of a Government who was there less than four years ago—four years, max—and it dawned upon me that—and I will go into it right away—four Ministers of Health of the PNM tried to build the Arima Hospital,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Oh yeah. Failed.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—the Point Fortin Hospital,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Failed!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—the Carenage Health Centre,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Failed!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—the Diego Martin Enhanced Health Centre,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Failed!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—the Sangre Grande Hospital,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Failed!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—the Sangre Grande Enhanced Health Centre,—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Failed!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—and they all failed. [*Desk thumping*] So I could not understand what was the tirade about, that we have not been building everything else.

**Hon. Member:** No glue.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** I take you back to the horror stories of the C40. The oncology centre, the sod was turned by Minister Rahael in 2005. The Member for Oropouche East said so. Nothing, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Member:** The Tobago Hospital.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** In 2001, when I was the Minister in the Ministry of Health with Hamza Rafeeq, then the Minister, we conceptualized the Tobago Hospital in 2001. We conceptualized it. If the Member for Diego Martin North/East would like to speak again, he will say it is true because he came after us. We conceptualized it and it took 11 years for the People's Partnership to come and fix it and open it.

So when you speak about delivery, one thing that was proven here today by the Member for Diego Martin Central, is that they talk, we deliver. [*Desk thumping*] So what we have done is looked at the health sector in an innovative manner. The Member for Diego Martin Central, the PNM Government, looked at

the nursing situation in this country and were afraid to harness it, and were afraid to bring nursing into the forward century and ongoing for the next 100 years.

**Miss Hospedales:** How you could say something like that?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** They were not! You were afraid to do it.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is untrue.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Yes, you were. They never looked at the legislation for nurses and the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act and decided to give the nurses the advance practice nurse. They refused to give that. They refused to look at the number of nurses that were not—the curriculum that was not being developed by the actual nursing fraternity itself. They refused to look at that. The Act itself never had the powers and functions of the Nursing Council. It was an ad hoc arrangement, and as a result of that, nursing in this country went all over the place, and it took the People's Partnership Government to start nursing training in 2010. We started it back.

All those things that the Member for Diego Martin Central indicated: One, the midwives, the nurses, the district health visitors, et cetera, we started—in fact, when I went back in the Ministry I started programmes, together with the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, moving that forward. We had to move in a different direction because there was a paucity of all district health visitors, et cetera. So if you have a paucity of district health visitors, how can you man the primary health care system?

The primary health care system is what we are pushing, the thrust in the Ministry of Health. So when the Diego Martin Central MP comes here and says, primary health care is destructive, how could primary health care be on the way down when we have opened the health centres later than everybody else? [*Desk thumping*]

We have started a process of increasing the opening times of the health offices, so I cannot understand how the Member for Diego Martin Central, and others, could indicate—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** They have medicine?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:**—that the primary health care system in this country is failing: Arouca Health Centre, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on weekdays; Cunupia Health Centre, 8.00 to 9.00; Arima District Health Facility, 24 hours; Chaguanas District Health Facility, 24 hours. I would not read all. Woodbrook Health

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Facility, 4.00 p.m. extended hours to 9.00 p.m. Before, it closed at 4.00. San Juan, 5.00 to 9.00; Maraval, 4.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. And I indicated that Saturdays and Sundays will be opened. Freeport Health Centre, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.; Tabaquite, 8.00 to 9.00. I could go on and on. Manzanilla Outreach Centre, 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if somebody really and truly listened to the Member for Diego Martin Central, and listened to what he said, you would swear to God that nobody has been treated properly in this health sector, when we have more than two million visits in one area. When I say visits, I mean recurring visits, in the Southwest Regional Health Authority and North Central—two million visits moving back and forth.

We have, in this health sector, produced an idea and a concept. Of what? Service-oriented medicine, not brown paper bag medicine, service oriented medicine. You see, what we did, we looked at what are the things that are affecting the patient or the target market more so than anything else: long waiting times, hospital beds, lack of the investigative function, blood and also service. It is this People's Partnership—and you all have been indicating that Minister Vasant Bharath is assisting the Minister of Health, and for that I am happy because the health sector is a very difficult thing to manage, and Minister Vasant Bharath chairs a health council with all of us, and we have put in place certain factors: one, the increased number of OJTs in customer service, close to 700. [*Desk thumping*] It is 500, soon to be 700. We are working up to 700.

They own uniforms. They are being trained, as we speak, to develop service and customer service care to patients as they walk in, throughout the hospitals. [*Desk thumping*] PNM did not think of that. What we have also done with the health council is increased the extended hours for all the health centres and we are looking at other aspects of parts of the health centre that are going to touch people in a customer service manner.

Now, we are looking at the upkeep and repairs of the health centres, and I hope to extend that, together with CEPEP, URP, in certain health centres, and I am asking also to extend that to the toilets and the kitchens in the hospitals. So in other words, not only are we increasing the employment and giving our people of Trinidad and Tobago the ability to run their own private affairs as a result of the CEPEP, et cetera, we are going to get service, and service in such a manner where the hospitals, the health centres, et cetera, will be cleaner, visually friendly and also at the same time, service-oriented medicine and care.

Now, that is the primary health care thrust in a physical aspect. The other aspect of it is going to be what we call the medical aspect of it. When you open these health centres at a later time, you must have doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians, et cetera, and also X-rays and point of care testing. Those are going to be placed in strategic health centres throughout the country and people would be served, with a primary health care service throughout those institutions.

You see, after 4.00 in the old days—and sometimes 2.00 in the old days—when the PNM was in power, you would have health centres being closed. People had absolutely nowhere to turn, and they created a culture of entering the Accident and Emergency system of the general hospitals, four of them. As a result of that, people got the culture of going there after hours because the health centres do not work.

**Hon. Member:** They had no choice.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Yes, they had no choice. Also, in the health offices, nobody saw it fit to put simple X-ray facilities, simple lab facilities and simple pharmaceutical facilities. They did not think of that. Shut the health centre and everybody goes to the main—because people get sick only from 8.00 to 4.00 in this country, it looked like.

The People's Partnership has understood that sickness occurs 24 hours, seven days a week. It is like the hospitality industry—all the time, so you must have access all the time. So when the Member for Diego Martin Central stands here and speaks in a manner—well, he is an Opposition Member, where he is going to stay for the next six years—[*Desk thumping*]*—it is far from the truth. Our primary health care system is going to be also a preventative method of approach. We are going to put wellness centres in all the health centres where you could enter and take your numbers, your sugar levels, your blood pressure, your weight, check your obesity levels, your eyes, et cetera, and I will go into more of that.*

In other words, prevention is better than cure. So the primary health care system is focusing now on management as well as prevention. As a result of that, we hope to decrease the number of people suffering in the next couple of years. For what? Cardiac problems, renal problems, eye problems, respiratory problems and cancers because we are preventing it. Something that was not done in the previous era.

**11.45 a.m.**

You see, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central speaks about “we are building hospitals”. San Fernando hospital has always, until recently, been overcrowded. No beds, people on the corridor, people—I mean, when you walk into the medical ward of the San Fernando hospital, it was a horror story and as Minister—when we took the decision to develop the Chancery Lane centre as a hospital, it was met with uproar from the PNM Opposition. However, today we are showing that those floors for the maternal and child floors themselves, and certain other aspects, together with a teaching system, we have created new wards, state-of-the-art wards, that when the population goes into the Chancery Lane hospital, what do they see? They see something that is akin to the best hospital in the United States of America. [*Desk thumping*] And you have to thank the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East for pushing and—[*Interruption*] “Yuh better stay”—for using the ability and the consultation with the Ministry of Health and the South-West Regional Health Authority to develop that level of customer care and hospital facility.

So, when we speak about development in this country, it is like development all over. It is there for the people, they see it, and the stories that I get out of San Fernando, together with the gynaecologic, the obstetric, the paediatric systems in that Chancery Lane hospital—and there are more wards to open—people are happy and people are happy with the level of service and also the level of infrastructure.

I want to turn a little bit from Chancery Lane because we are in the process of putting, in Chancery Lane, an MRI and a CT scan in place and a couple of other items, and developing San Fernando Hospital at a higher level to that of a hospital campus. When I came into the Ministry, I asked to see the plan for the hospitals. What are we going to put where over the next 50 years? Do you know that there was absolutely no plan for a hospital: San Fernando, Port of Spain, or possibly Eric Williams and Sangre Grande? There was no plan whatsoever. If they wanted something done, they stuck it there, and that is not how hospital systems work. In this day and age, one had to have a plan of where that hospital compound was going—what was going to happen. Specialist centres, they have to be located close to the main ward; gastroenterology centres, close to the operating theatre; cardiac centres, close to the—so what I am saying, it has to be defined in a proper manner.

In Port of Spain hospital, the nursing hostels were like a rat-infested area and this Government left them there. So when the Member of Parliament for Diego

Martin Central—the PNM Government left it like that. Rat infested, vermin infested, asbestos—everything and he left it there. We were able to convince the North-West Regional Health Authority and the people who were staying in there—which were not nurses to any big extent, they were external people with vagrants, et cetera—to move out and we demolished the area. That is now going to be an area to put a gastroenterology centre and clinic. [*Desk thumping*] It is going to be part and parcel of a PAHO building. Port of Spain hospital is going to be a full campus of medicine together with teaching, and as they say, hospital care. So, when the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central says that all we are doing is building hospitals, we are building hospitals with a vision together with the IADB input and they have proper procurement regulations. [*Crosstalk*] So what I am saying—I will come to staffing just now.

What I am saying is that there is a plan. Now, in four years' time, one has to now start to develop the plan. First, the thought has to come in, you have to think it out; after you think it out, you have to decide on how it is going to fit. After you decide on how it is going to fit, then you have to draw, you have to tender, you have to have the whole system in place. Right now, we are at a point, after due diligence by UDeCOTT, to develop Port of Spain hospital and San Fernando hospital and Arima hospital and Point Fortin hospital. Couva hospital has already taken off. So, we are at that position to poise to move this way. I shudder to think, should the population see otherwise and put this side back in office, all that will be gone. We will not have it again.

Because since 2005, I read the speech of the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, then Prime Minister, and may I say I was in the House at that time. I have been here since 1995. I have been hearing the budget speech on and on and on. I have been hearing the same thing from the PNM on and on and on and nothing has been delivered. So when the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin jumps and says, “Point Fortin hospital, when they building Point Fortin hospital”. What she is really saying is that she knows we have the capability to do it; they do not [*Desk thumping*] and I understand. That is why the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin is begging to get this hospital—this Point Fortin hospital. She says, “When are you going to turn the sod, I want the sod turned.” That is the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin telling me, because, you see, Mr. Speaker, she understands that they talk and we deliver, [*Desk thumping*] and she knows quite well, should the hon. Prime Minister call an early election, rather than September, she is out. So she wants to make sure that she does it before she goes. You see, that is the fear of the other side, so I understand.

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I also understand why the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central is pushing me to do the Diego Martin extended health facility. It is the same reason that the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin wants me to start the Point Fortin hospital, because he knows quite well, should an early election be called, he is not there either, because he was the protégé of the Member for San Fernando East. He was.

**Dr. Browne:** Fuad, talk about health, nah, man.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** I will talk about health. You see, Mr. Speaker, as they say, and I have been here for a very long time, I must stay academic—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 48(8).

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** I must stay academic and—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Have a seat, there is a Standing Order.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** What is the Standing Order?

**Mr. Speaker:** You made reference to Standing Order 48(8), I do not think it is applicable. Continue.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next time, Mr. Speaker, I think you should teach him the Standing Orders. Make him the Deputy Speaker or something, he might learn.

You see, I have decided to say this because the population has to understand something, and they have to understand something clear, that in—and I recommend them to get the budget speech for the last 10 years and look at it. And you will see in 2005, the Member for San Fernando East kept saying Point Fortin hospital, oncology centre; Point Fortin hospital oncology centre—2006, 2007, 2008, 2009—nothing occurred. So when I say to you, we are going to turn the sod for the Point Fortin hospital, very soon, [*Crosstalk*] yeah, I have the diagrams here for you if you want to see them. The Point Fortin hospital is going to be built. We are already on the way to doing the Arima hospital.

**Mr. Samuel:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Not so?

**Mr. Samuel:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** We are just about to sign the award to start organizing the Arima hospital. Not only will the Arima hospital be built, what we are also doing is enhancing the facility that is there at present. That itself was a dump when we

entered. People had to go to that dump under that regime for the last six years. When I walked into the Accident and Emergency area in that area, it was horrible. The lights were not working, there was dirt on the floor, the beds were bad and the whole system—the whole Arima health facility with a funny roof that the PNM put up there. I do not know if they were thinking they were building a church, but the roof was in such a manner like this, leaking all over and you could not fix it. The operating theatre, guess what they had in it? Boxes of storage. The dental area, what it had? Nothing.

So, Mr. Speaker, we took the decision, the hospital is going to take a while to be built but we are going to refurbish the Arima District Health Facility and we have the diagrams here to show you. [*Crosstalk*] I am very glad to, this is the diagram. That is going to be there. So, a couple of the blocks almost finished. We did not turn sod because we kept moving. The people of Arima have been given a health facility, a district health facility in that area and a hospital, and they are all going to be started. [*Desk thumping*] So that is the Arima health facility. I could go into and indicate how many of the beds we are going to get, et cetera, but I would not do that now because—[*Interruption*] Put that out?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Put an ad out.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Yeah, I will put an ad out.

The Point Fortin hospital, when we came into office, the plan for the Point Fortin hospital by that side, and the Minister in charge then, was to demolish the old hospital, and put the accident and emergency in a little building in Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Temporarily.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** That was a foolish idea, Mr. Speaker, because you were going to break down a whole hospital that was giving service to give you no service but a little area for accident and emergency. That was the thinking of the other side. That was the thinking.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Wastage.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Wastage is one and lack of innovation as I started off. What we decided to do is to find a proper piece of land and thanks to the Member of Parliament for Caroni East, he was then Minister of Trade and Industry—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Cadiz:** Chaguanas East.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Chaguanas East, sorry. He was then Minister of Trade and Industry. He was able to give us part of the eTeCK land to build the hospital, about 10 acres—*[Interruption]* Yeah, vision—with no fanfare or nothing at all.

You see, looking at the whole system, we wanted to keep, in Point Fortin, a service: obstetrics and also accident and emergency together with their surgical, medical and ward stay. That itself was a horror story when I went there: dilapidated buildings, leaking roof, defunct operating theatres, storage, curtains falling down. And if the Member for Diego Martin Central really wants to speak about that, it was a horror story, it was derelict, but people were being trogged inside. So what we decided to do is to refurbish the whole thing, refurbish that area. We are refurbishing the Point Fortin old hospital, after that we are going to turn the sod and build the new hospital, transfer the service across on that side, and guess what? Put in that area a rehabilitation centre, use it for rehabilitation.

Let us turn to Scarborough hospital. Scarborough hospital, as I started off by saying, it was conceptualized in 2001. We were there, I was there. And we started off with the hospital structure and I remember saying to the then architects that we needed an Intensive Care Unit in Scarborough. We must put that. And I was told by a Tobagonian who was there—and I would not call any names, he is dead now—you do not need any Intensive Care Unit in Scarborough, they could always fly them to Port of Spain. And I said you have to have an Intensive Care Unit there and we placed an Intensive Care Unit there, and I made sure that when I went back as Minister, it was there.

What was lacking though, Mr. Speaker, and I think we have done it now, was the MRI for Tobago. Tobago has no MRIs. They have one proper CT scan which is in the hospital and we have started—in fact, Cabinet has passed and it is almost on the way or on forward, an MRI unit for Tobago as well as something called a cardiac catheterization lab. That is going to be there. And all of this was done from the prodding of the Member for Tobago East and the Member for Tobago West.

### **12.00 noon**

So, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about a Government that is moving forward and trying their best to service the population in the manner that it is supposed to be serviced, as well as increase the service to the people, we are talking about what we have been doing. And you have heard, on our side, the majority of deliveries.

So, Mr. Speaker, building hospitals is one part of health care. You must have the infrastructure. You must have the service, but then you must have the human resources, and the whole cry is: where are you going to get the human resources? It is like, I get the feeling, Mr. Speaker, that the Member of Parliament on the other side is taunting us to fail. It is like a taunt. I know “yuh” putting up a hospital. You are not saying thank God people are getting a hospital, you know. They would never say thank God the people are getting a hospital. They would not say thank God they are getting a burns unit in Couva Hospital. They would not say thank God there are 80 more beds for children. What you will say is: “oh is a children’s hospital wha happen tuh yuh, yuh only putting adult beds. Oh, wey yuh putting a burns unit there for?” Rather than saying thank God you are putting a burns unit next to an industrial area so if people get burnt they go straight to the burns unit. Just taunting for failure, and now it comes across as, you know what, Mr. Speaker, “oh, yuh building all those hospitals, wey yuh going tuh get de staff?”

Mr. Speaker, we got 170 people, I think, from Cuba. I have lost count. We are going to get people from Uganda, and people from the rest of the Caribbean. We are going to go to India. We are going to go to the Philippines. Right now, Mr. Speaker, there are Chinese doctors working in San Fernando Hospital. In fact, today they are in the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. Doing what? Cerebral coiling, taking out—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramadhar:** What? “Dey doing dat here?”

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Yes. Yes. We have done about six of them already in the last three weeks, cerebral coiling. [*Desk thumping*] And we are having an MOU with China, with India, with different parts of the world, to organize the human resource. In addition—[*Crosstalk*] yes, cerebral coiling. Cerebral coiling and tumour removal are being done now in Trinidad and Tobago in the public hospitals. [*Desk thumping*] It is the first.

San Fernando Hospital, they took out a massive tumour which they said was irresectable. They took it out. So, we no longer have to outsource. So we are training our people in here to do it. Nurses—in fact I found out yesterday, Jamaica wants to send their nurses to Trinidad. St. Vincent and the Grenadines want an MOU and all the other—St. Lucia, Grenada. We have had about 18 nurses from Grenada. I met the Minister of Health from Grenada. She asked me: can we take her nurses because they do not have jobs and they are qualified nurses. I said bring them. They are here. The Prime Minister, our Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, what she did, she went to Caricom and she indicated to the

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Caricom Heads, send your nurses to Trinidad, she will take them and she directed me to do an MOU with them and we are doing that.

So, when you talk about human resources, nurses, which we have and we are training; doctors, which we have and we are training; ancillary medical staff, which we have, which is COSTAATT, et cetera and we are training. Cuba has asked. In fact I have asked Cuba—because they have a very good training system—to train our biomedical technicians, our haematological technicians and a technical aspect of what we have. You cannot run a hospital without the proper ancillary medical staff. So we are training them: radiographers, nuclear medical technicians, anaesthetic technicians and—[*Crosstalk*] we are doing that. So what we are saying, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the human resource aspect. We have a 10-year manpower plan, and it is here, for Trinidad and Tobago, how we are going to develop the human resource factors. It is almost at completion stage.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we hear the taunts of what you going to do, what you going to do, what you going to do, I understand what we have to do and how we have to move forward. In Government, I will tell you something, I was in Opposition for a while, Government, Opposition, back to Government. In Opposition it is easy to condemn, you know, very easy to condemn, and in Government it is very hard to create. We have been able to create and they have been on the other side condemning. So, I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to understand, in Opposition you are really—you have not created anything. You have not said anything to create.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Even when they were in Government they did not.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Well, yeah that is what I am saying. They do not know how to create. In Government, we have created so much. In fact I have lost count. We are not even publicizing how much we have created, and I think it is time we start doing that.

Heart surgery is normal. I mean, renal dialysis is increasing. We have created in this country, plenty aspects of health. You have to help me, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, to put out my book for—the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite has written about six books?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Ten.

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Ten. So, he is going to help me write the book on the health sector in Trinidad and Tobago and we are going to show exactly that they talk and we deliver. Remember that, they talk, we deliver.

You see, Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] I find you were a bit quiet there, you know.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk a little bit about training. Although training is the forte of the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, after the doctors and nurses come to us, then we develop the training modules afterwards for clinical training. The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, I know he is a doctor but apparently he is not too familiar with the teaching hospitals. Sangre Grande is not a teaching hospital, but we are making it into a teaching hospital. So all hospitals are not teaching hospitals, but some of the best work goes on in Sangre Grande Hospital. Some of the best doctors. I was a consultant/surgeon in Sangre Grande Hospital, consultant neurologist/consultant surgeon, then I went into Government. And I want to say something, when we were forcibly removed in 2001, in the 18/18 scenario, although we had more votes, I then was thrown on the breadline as a senior surgeon, senior reconstructive surgeon, senior urologist, and guess what, I could not get a job because I was a UNC, tarnished. I went to Sangre Grande Hospital. I used to help them out there from before but all of a sudden, when they heard I was doing work inside there and fixing certain things, the things that people could not fix, a directive was given to get him out of there.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** You were fired?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** I was not fired. I was doing free work. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, I have taken a decision not to be like that. So once somebody could develop the country in the manner I could see fit, I would hire you, no matter what party you come from because I think it is important. [*Desk thumping*] Because I felt the brunt of it in Port of Spain board, he is a UNC “doh” hire him. So, I had to build my practice outside. So what I am saying, I know what is teaching and what is not teaching, where the teaching occurs and what not, because I was trained in that.

So, I have also found out that the specialty training in our country needs upgrading. So we are going to work with the University of Trinidad and Tobago and develop, together with the Rural Society of Medicine in England, as well as the body called the ACGME in the United States of America, to develop curricula and plans to develop our surgical and medical specialists in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as nursing specialists. So, in other words, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about human resources and movement forward, that is the innovation, rather than waiting to get from aboard, where the specialty services are very, very scarce. We are going to create our own using the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The

plan is already in place and every single hospital in Trinidad and Tobago will be then a teaching hospital where the specialists in that area would be identified and recognized and you send the young doctors and nurses to be trained in that area.

So we will be taking care of that specialty status. So the taunts may not occur in the near future. You see, Mr. Speaker, we are expanding services throughout the public health sector, but expanding tertiary level care services—and the Member for Diego Martin Central said I am a tertiary care man because I am a tertiary-level surgeon. But being in the Ministry of Health I have understood something, that tertiary health care is there for people who have problems, but you have to prevent the problems.

In our country, there is a high diabetic volume of people because of genetics, as well as because of eating habits, because of lifestyle all over. We have commissioned the NESTT study, which is the National Eye Study of Trinidad and Tobago, where we are going to look at, Cabinet has approved it, the genetic makeup of somebody versus the eye disease that occurs and see if there is a genetic component to the eye problem. It is almost completed and people are randomly selected, although there was a bit of a cut initially. So we are going to know exactly what eye studies occur where in the associated genetics.

Also, what came out of that study was the need for retinopathy screening, which is the back of the eye. A lot of diabetics have scar tissues in the back of the eye, because of poor management of diabetes. And as a result of that they go blind very early and then they have to undergo what is called vitreoretinal surgery.

In Mauritius, Prof. Owens from the University of Swansea was able to look at that study and decrease that to less than 10 per cent. I have taken a Note to Cabinet and Cabinet has approved for us to start what is called a diabetic retinopathy training system. As a result of that, which will be in the near future, because we have money allocated in the budget for it, \$20 million, we are going to be able to assess, with means of visual machines, as well as treat eye diseases before they reach the stage of the need for vitreoretinal surgery. So a lot of people, almost 130,000 people, would be helped as a result of that.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health has recognized the need for training but we also recognize the need for access to medical journals, as well as the need for international studies. The Ministry of Health, in the last four years, we have started what we call the virtual medical library, it is called InfoMed Plus and it could be obtained from the site of the Ministry of Health [www.health.gov.tt](http://www.health.gov.tt). In

that, any journal that you would like to get, any search engine, medical journal, patient education, it even has the *Harvard Business Review* and there are also areas that the population could go into this, after registering, and extract information on the disorder, their treatment, every single thing on that website. So I recommend it highly to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the professionals. It is a free service. So we are looking at the development of the total individual in the health sector.

We have started a couple of public awareness campaigns, anti-smoking campaigns as well as the Fight the Fat campaign, the Love Yourself campaign, et cetera, and the Chikungunya virus campaign. We hope that will develop in such a manner to decrease the breeding grounds of the Chikungunya virus and the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

I just want to spend some time on the Fight the Fat campaign. Our country, together with the world, is facing an epidemic of obesity. We have a high level of obesity, and recently a university doctor, Dr. Granderson, indicated, according to a University of the West Indies study, that 50 per cent of our women are overweight.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Fifty per cent?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Yes, 50 per cent.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Wow!

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** They have gotten overweight over the last 10 to 15 years. Our children are becoming extremely obese. It has increased almost 30 per cent over the last 10 years and as a result of the obesity epidemic of children and adults, we are ending up now with a high level of non-communicable disease complications such as cardiac diseases and the need for angioplasty and cardiac bypass, et cetera, the atheroma blockage of the heart. People are dying younger as a result of heart attacks.

Kidney diseases, you are seeing kidney diseases from people in their early 30s and late 20s. You are seeing respiratory diseases. You are seeing high cancers. You are seeing different aspects, and it is a result of lifestyle diseases. So while we are there—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Avoidable.

**12.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Avoidable diseases. While we are looking at the one spectrum of management, hospital beds, cardiac, et cetera, and renal dialysis, et cetera, we are hoping in the next couple of years to prevent that amount, that volume of patients suffering from those diseases. What we have done campaign-wise, the Ministry of Health, is start the Anti-Obesity campaign, Fight the Fat campaign, Love Yourself campaign. If you do not love yourself, Mr. Speaker, you cannot love anybody else. We are hoping that that level of education will sink into the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to mention here, in the new Chaguanas health facility, we are putting into that area, a prototype—this is going to be there, Mr. Speaker. There is going to be a prototype, not only for accident and emergency and acute care services. It is going to be a total gym/wellness centre that people could go there and get their numbers checked as well as look at the obesity levels, and a programme is being arranged for them with checks and balances as they move forward. So this is the idea of the new concept of health throughout the country. It is going to be done throughout the country.

In the Carenage Health Centre which we are starting to build already, the foundation is down, and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West indicated that five Ministers of Health could not build it, and he is very glad that we are doing it. They are going to have a wellness centre also, as well as an A & E Centre, so we are doing it all over. So I do not want people to think it is Chaguanas and nowhere else. Carenage is going to have the same concept. In fact, we are looking at removing the area of the Rebirth House and putting that across there, so that is what we are doing.

Sangre Grande system, and I have heard—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Minister of Health?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Ten minutes, please?

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. The question is that the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Health and Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan be extended by 10 minutes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. This is a vision that we have developed, an innovative vision for health care in the country, both Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to mention something: in the Eastern Regional Health Authority—where the Member for St. Joseph had indicated while the Member for Diego Martin Central was speaking, that it is a horror story; I want to assure him that the horror stories that were done for that area were fabricated horror stories when people were trying to put the system in place, and the system has now been put in place and it is running very, very well.

Now, in the Eastern Regional Health Authority, the CEO and the Board of Directors, what they have done, they have already identified areas and health centres, where they will have exercise equipment and trainers in the Eastern Regional Health Authority, and we hope that goes through the whole system.

Now, I just want to take a little time to talk about the prosthesis. There has been a large, large response—the Senator talked about it. He was right. He said that there is a—we are trying our best to deal with the prosthesis problem. May I indicate, Mr. Speaker, the reason why there is a need for such prosthesis, more so in adults, it is because of diabetic feet, and the poor treatment of diabetic feet—people from both the patient level as well as the medical level. Diabetic feet, Mr. Speaker—we have a high diabetic population, right?—occurs when one does not take care of their feet when they are diabetic, they do not take care of their sugar, they do not take care of their body itself. So it goes back, when you look at it, to the prevention aspect of medicine, goes back to that.

Of course, we have to give prosthesis, and we are working out a plan to give prosthesis, but there are five suppliers, I think, in this country; they go from not good, to very good, from titanium to I think it was iron, cast iron. The Jaipur leg, people speak about it, but it is not easily—it does not allow the patient easy mobility. So we are working on a system where we could do two things. People with diabetic feet who could go to the hospitals and they will be able to be in a foot clinic, where you could look at their feet, and prepare shoes, orthotics for that foot. So it would not squeeze them, pinch them and we will decrease the number of amputations, and then also they are going to be fitted with the titanium legs, the prosthesis, and that is coming very soon.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to say something here this evening, and I am saying it now. I have asked the Member of Parliament for Caroni Central if he could come to my Ministry and assist me with that, as a consultant, because he

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was in the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and he was doing that together with the Ministry of Health—and marrying both the Ministry of the People and Social Development and Ministry of Health for prosthesis. [*Desk thumping*] He has indicated, Mr. Speaker, that he will give it consideration, because I understand—before he became an MP, he had gone a very long way in developing the foot clinics, et cetera. So I think the Member for St. Joseph will be very happy to hear that is coming very soon.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** What is that, the titanium legs?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** And also the foot clinics.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** So how Tabaquite got it already? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Tabaquite got that almost, about three years ago, when I was not there.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Well, thank who for it?

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** You could thank me. I am the Minister of Health. [*Continuous interruption*] So, Mr. Speaker, that is one thing I would like to put on the table. So I just want to say, we are currently having negotiations with Uganda, Nigeria, Cuba, Colombia, and the Philippines for health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that Barataria/San Juan has been very well treated by our People's Partnership Government. Most of the roads and drains, et cetera, have been taken care of and I would not name all. We are also in the process, and thanks to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, we are producing what we call the building activity centres with URP. URP has started to become what they call a delivery ministry in its own right.

**Miss Hospedales:** Where? Which constituency? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. F. Khan:** Barataria, East-West Corridor. [*Crosstalk*] Also we are looking at—[*Interruption*] come and visit. Mr. Speaker, we are going to put down activity centres, as well as a boxing gym together with pavements, roads, et cetera. The Member of Parliament for Naparima, the Minister of Public Utilities has lit up most of the grounds in Barataria. In fact, he asked, are there any more grounds, because we do not have enough.

So what I could say, we are on our way moving forward, and although—I want to end by saying to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, my telephone line is open for any complaints, and I am there to assist in any manner that anybody desires, because we see on this side, the health of the population is

everybody's business. I see Government as a continuum of everything else. I do not see Government as being—starting and finishing. What I do today, I hope tomorrow it continues, and vice versa.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I think it is a good time for us to have lunch. I understand lunch has arrived, this sitting is suspended until 2.00 p.m.

**12.23 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**2.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Moruga/Tableland. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Hon. Clifton De Coteau):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise before this honourable House to contribute to the 2014/2015 budget debate. I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Sen. Larry Howai, for the presentation of the Government's 2015 budget.

This Government, which is led by the astute hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, Member for Siparia, who is an inspiring, transformational leader, has for the past four years demonstrated its deep commitment to developing this beloved country of ours to ensure that the people who are at the centre of our national development, that their plans can live, and they can live fulfilling dreams. I am proud to be a Member of this proactive, forward-looking Government, a Government that comprises of messengers of hope, not hopelessness.

Madam Deputy Speaker, listening to those persons opposed to this Government, especially in this august Chamber, I reflected on my own days as a playwright, director, producer, an artiste of best village fame—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Best village fame, I am aware.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Yes, you are aware of that, you are a Community Development Officer, and also my success not only at the best village level, but at the Secondary Schools Drama Festival level.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in this august Chamber, listening to debates, and participating in debates, my artistic imagination sometimes goes into top gear. I say it has to be dramatic optics, they had to be performing for the camera. Madam Deputy Speaker, listening to some of them, you know something, “dey performing, dey wah good sound bites”.

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After the Member for St. Joseph's blood-pressure-rising performance, I met him and, "ah sey, whey yuh geh vex for? I asked him, whey yuh geh vex for, yuh was only ackin out something, yuh know? He say, yeah man, ah was only ackin out, that was optics, dramatic optics."

Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition say, and I tried to put it in dramatic fashion, "this is a budget of shame, this is a stumbling, bumbling disaster".

My good friend from Laventille East/Morvant cried out, "all our ideas, they take our ideas". They thumped their desks and chorused, "dey have no shame", their leader, in a solo soliloquy, "an election gimmick, unpleasant memories, we have been living with for the past four years", that is their leader. "PNM is not about yesterday's news, but today's reality."

The Member for Laventille West, looking very studious, interjected, "strategic camouflage budget". [*Laughter*] Madam Deputy Speaker, from their dramatic cacophony of sounds, I concur with their leader. I concur with the Leader of the Opposition, PNM is not yesterday's news, because for the constituency of Moruga/Tableland and even some of their own constituencies, PNM's yesterday's news was one of deprivation.

### **2.05 p.m.**

PNM's yesterday's news was one of neglect. PNM's yesterday's news was one of abandonment. PNM's yesterday's news was one of using people. PNM's yesterday's news was what you call chronological layers and layers of promises built up like sedimentary rock—broken promises; promises that were never fulfilled. Madam Deputy Speaker, as we will say, promises that never materialized. PNM are, indeed, messengers of hopelessness; messengers of hopelessness, of hopeless, broken promises.

PNM, he said, is not about yesterday's news, but today's reality. If they say we took their ideas, so be it, but the reality is that we are not only taking their ideas, we are also taking their supporters in the Moruga/Tableland constituency and in some other constituencies as well. [*Desk thumping*]

So we are taking their ideas; we are taking them. But I will tell you what. Ask some of their stalwarts in the constituency of Moruga/Tableland—and I got the lady's permission before I came here. Ask Millie Dyer—and the Member for Mayaro would know Millie Dyer—17 children she had; big family, plenty cousins and family—who gave me her consent to call her name.

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From 1966, a senior lady now, as she said, to 2010, she supported every PNM candidate. She opposed me in 2007 and 2010, you know. What is her today's reality? Today's reality, Laventille East/Morvant, I will tell you today's reality. Take note. Today's reality: "she gone". She "ent" supporting PNM again; "she gone". Today she has seen the light. She is supporting Coteau and the PP Government. Coteau, eh, and the PP Government. [*Desk thumping*] Not only has she gone, but her family and friends have gone, too. She has seen the true reality. She is also happy with the budget.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is the true reality? What is the true political reality for them on that side? Ay-ay-ay! Member for Port of Spain South in; Member for Diego Martin North/East in, based on his experience; Member for St. Joseph in; all the others gone, "dey" gone. "All yuh want to doubt dat"?

**Mr. Imbert:** Only experience?

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** [*Laughs*] You would know why. "All ah dem gone".

Madam Deputy Speaker, one contributor, opposed to the Government, said: "We have lost our paradise over the last four years", or words to that effect. What is the true reality in the constituency of Moruga/Tableland? Paradise lost? The true reality is that we are now beginning to unveil that true paradise and maximize the natural potential of this hidden paradise, Moruga/Tableland.

As you are aware, Moruga/Tableland is the largest constituency by way of geographical space—684 square miles. You come next. I am sure about that, verified by the Elections and Boundaries. We had at one time, we dubbed ourselves the landslip capital, which is a fact. Any geotechnical investigation would verify the fact, based on the kind of ridge that we are on and the "sapatay" mud, with 253 landslips in the constituency. Today, the landslip capital is— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** If landslips could "ah" vote, you win.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** "If landslips could ah vote, ah win". Today, we are the landslip capital no more. The interesting thing about this, and, as I said, any geotechnical investigator would have—if you look at the genealogical table of that, you would have found great, great-grandmother landslip, great-grandmother landslip, mother landslip, uncle landslip, "tantie" landslip, children landslip. As soon as rain falls, landslip. Have you ever gone and seen—today you go, you see the house there and tomorrow it has just slipped away? We have seen that.

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Member for Naparima, you have seen that. In Mandingo Road, we have seen that. Dr. Rambachan, Minister of Works and Infrastructure, he has seen it. It is that dangerous.

But today, we are remedying that. All those land stabilization programmes going on in the constituency, not only in mine, but in yours. La Lune, that would have been the great, great grandmother of all those landslips; today, that is under stabilization.

Lengua, opposite the Paynter cemetery, the families had to be relocated. Dougla City Corner had to be relocated. Cachipe, one of the longest landslips I have ever seen, 200 metres of landslip. Usain Bolt would have a little problem trying to run that. That is under stabilization and quite a number, over 50 land stabilizations were done and I want to commend the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and his Minister in the Ministry, Miss Roopnarine. [*Desk thumping*]

Two new primary schools, Kanhai Presbyterian and New Grant Government. I want to thank the Minister. And you know, the sad thing about New Grant Government is that for 30 years it had to be under somebody's home and, even worse, is the fact that the base of their supporters come from that area.

Yesterday, the Member for Laventille West, he was identifying some areas where they are getting roads paved and he said, "Sixth Company Circular", and I said, "PNM". He did not understand that. What I tried to show him is that we do not discriminate because that particular area is the base, is the balisier patch, and they neglected the school. That is to tell you how they care. The same way how they neglected your constituency.

Show me the areas that support the PNM. You know something, it is so easy to identify, if you are in Laventille, in town, and you are walking and you see telephone booths behind the house, you know that they are supporting PNM. So sad, in this age, telephone booths behind the house.

**Hon. Member:** Call of nature?

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Call of nature. Smooch.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have upgraded things. You know Moruga, we sent a new Bailey Bridge inside La Ruffin, L'Anse Mitan Beach and, for the Member for Arima, we want to let him know, the Minister of National Diversity, that even though we got the Bailey Bridge, we have preserved the heritage site of the Spring Bridge. But more so, I want to appeal to the Minister of Transport, because right inside L'Anse Mitan at one time before, as the Member for Mayaro

said, “they go and undevelop”—to use his words—Trinidad and Tobago, there was the steamship travelling from Moruga to San Fernando to Port of Spain—and if the steamship could do it, we could get the ferry—

**Hon. Member:** The water taxi.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:**—the water taxi. Why not?

**Mr. Imbert:** “I doh know nutten about that”.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** You do not know anything about that?

Madam Deputy Speaker, illumination of grounds: Marac, La Lune. We are going to upgrade the one in Grand Chemin that the former representative put there, who is still—anywhere I have a competition sponsored, he is going, “playing he kicking ball,” but he would not spend a cent—very parsimonious disposition. You understand me—parsimonious disposition. He “stingy”. He would not spend a penny to see the world spin; not a penny.

**Miss Cox:** Who is that?

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Penal Rock Ground—I do not know who is that; I am not going to call him. Penal Rock Ground, lights; Strivers Ground, lights; St. Cross Grounds, lights; Cumuto Recreation Ground, lights; Cunjal Recreation Grounds, lights; St. Cross Recreation Ground, lights; the state-of-the-art ground in Warwel Road, ground. [*Laughter*] I know if I say Coteau, what he is going to say. We like to say that behind doors. New pavilion in Oropouche South Trace, on the hill; new pavilion at Cumuto Recreation Ground; soon to be constructed, a state-of-the-art ground inside Ramkalia Trace, ground, off Kanhai Road. And in St. Mary’s, the swing vote area, ground.

The roads have been upgraded. [*Interruption*] Did I hear a “cacaphony” of sound, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Cacophony.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** I know it is always a vacuous comment. We can cacophony; you could say “kaycophony”; you could say it how you want it. It is foolish sounds. What paradise lost? What paradise lost? I say we are unveiling that paradise thing.

You know one Member from Chaguanas West, when he was on this side, pre-2010, he went and he said to the people out there: “If Christopher Columbus should come back here to Moruga, he would say, ‘I at home’”. He would still recognize the place because it was left in that state, that rustic state by that

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administration who, the same shame they bawling, “Shame! Shame! Shame!” They “ent” shame. They still want to go and represent the people to make a retrograde step; to take them into Jurassic Park, into backwardness, “douen”, one step forward and about six steps backward.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, if Columbus should come now, for the drama, he at ease, you know, because right through Marac, La Lune, they will give him pipe borne water to drink. [*Desk thumping*] They do not have to go in the river again. They are going to give him pipe borne water; not that desal plant with the little short thing that only pulling up sand. We have said, “Listen, it is time that they remove all those pieces of iron that are an eyesore in La Lune and develop a good beachfront for the people in La Lune”. They have asked for that.

He will go to Penal Rock area; he would get water as well because they promised the people; fooled them at an election; put down the pipeline; pipeline get rusty; they never got water, but they were living in hope, not knowing they were fed hopelessness. Today, they have water in that area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and soon—I have had that assurance from the Minister of Transport—because of the rapid rehabilitation of the roads, we are going to have the bus service again from Marac straight into Port of Spain. Madam Deputy Speaker, we talk about roads. There is a particular road, for 56 years, nothing was done to it. That Rochard Douglas Road, transformed now, box drains on the side from St. Mary’s.

**Mr. Baksh:** They call it Bridgetown, you know.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** What “dey” call it?

**Mr. Baksh:** Bridgetown now, lots of bridges.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Lots of bridges. If you see that place. No flooding again. Why? Because they on that side would have left it in that state of disrepair. And you know they are shameless. They are still going to the people and them saying, “Vote for we.” You know, “vote for we and I will set you free. Vote for we” and I will imprison you once again. I will put you back in chains if you vote for them, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Miss Cox:** “Yuh” campaigning or what?

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** My name is Coteau. What we are saying is that, under this Government—and thanks to the PP Government—we have had a lot of moving that rustic thing and a lot of improvements.

Let me come to the Ministry. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development was established in 2011 by the Prime Minister to ensure that dedicated attention is given to the issues of gender, youth and child development. What happened before? This was done to have, what you may say, some rifle shots directed instead of how it was all over the place, machine gun firing rat-atat, all over the place. This was done to focus. This strategy is very consistent with what obtains in some Commonwealth countries like Canada, as a leading example, and this is contrary to the view expressed by a leading Member of the other side who chastised the Prime Minister for structuring her Cabinet in this kind of meaningful way to achieve the Government's manifesto promises.

**2.20 p.m.**

I must mention that the Ministry has addressed a number of issues assigned to the Ministry, completing most of the actions stated in the manifesto. This is testimony to the competent leader who knows what is required to get the job done. Moreover, I want to congratulate the staff of the Ministry for its dedication to the vision and mission of the Ministry. Their combined efforts have ensured that we achieved our goals and objectives and contribute to the Government's aspirations to create an equitable, inclusive society, in which everyone counts and can enjoy an improved quality of life.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government has a holistic plan for human development. It would also be remiss of me if I did not express my heartfelt appreciation to the Permanent Secretary, Miss Sandra Jones and the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Miss Jacqueline Johnson and members of the executive team who have worked tirelessly and unconditionally to ensure that the Ministry realises its goals and objectives, and that equity and access are front and centre in the delivery of services. I am indebted to them as they always avail themselves at a moment's notice to tend to the public's business.

The efforts of each Ministry in the social sector are geared toward meeting the specific needs of the population within its mandate. In this regard, the Ministries of Education, Housing and Urban Development, People and Social Development, Health, Community Development and the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development have collectively, over the past four years, contributed significantly to ensuring that the standard of living of our people has improved significantly. Yes, the standard of living has improved. [*Desk thumping*] And you want to put them to reverse; to reverse that! I remember once when I was asked by the PM: "I understand you are going in a particular direction." I said: "Yuh doh jump from limousine into Prefect car. [*Laughter*]"

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Madam Deputy Speaker, we have collaborated—[*Crosstalk*] Yes, “Comedy Central”. I would tell you what, you know, I am glad, in coming to this—sometimes as a good teacher you ignore the direction of the sounds—somebody identified someone who just spoke and say: “Ah does like to hear he talk yuh know, yuh dus remind me of Comedy Central.” You understand me! That is the perception of the experience, but the experienced man is in with two others while the others are out. [*Desk thumping*] He is going—he does research.

We have collaborated to ensure that gaps are filled and the Government’s objectives are achieved. It is within this context that the need to support mothers who are in a vulnerable position was identified and the Prime Minister who is very committed to effective child development has introduced the \$500 grant, baby grant.

The renowned gender scholar and Deputy Principal—if you will permit me—of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, said this of the baby grant: This was “Gender scholar defends baby grant” by Andre Bago, *Newsday*, Thursday, September 11, 2014.

“Gender and development studies scholar Professor Rhoda Reddock yesterday launched a defence of social measures such as the \$500 baby grant...

Speaking at the American Chamber of Commerce’s post-Budget forum, the former Head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies and current Deputy Principal of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, said while there has been a lot of discussion of the \$500 grant, a lot of the debate has been indicative of prejudice against women.

‘There has been a lot of discussion in the media,’ she said, addressing the issue of the grant. ‘I think a lot of it is unfortunate and I would really suggest there is almost a misogyny’—M-I-S-O-G-Y-N-Y.

Do you know what is that? It is a sort of hatred or dislike of women or girls. I do not know who on that side hates women or girls; I honestly do not know.

“in the society and also maybe a belief that certain children are not as good as others.’ The forum was held at the Hilton Trinidad, Lady Young Road, St. Ann’s... The academic said there was a need for measures such as the grant.

‘For many poor parents, there are many demands of that first year,’ Reddock said, ‘What I want to say therefore is that the baby care provision is based on a recognition that something needs to be done to support parents in the managing of child-bearing and child-rearing’... ‘The State, private sector and

civil society all have responsibility for the establishment of a social environment that allows reconciliation of work and family and allows all parents especially parents who don't have the funds to pay for childcare, school transportation and all the other things that children require,' Reddock said. She noted studies have shown the first year of a child's life is crucial, meaning there are specific nutrition needs."

The holistic approach to a child's development has taken into consideration the essential ingredients for parents and caregivers to be effective in carrying out their caring responsibilities. Parenting programmes, skills training and personal development programmes, low cost housing, the increase in the minimum wage improved health care for families, gender-based budgeting, construction and refurbishment of initiatives to care for our most vulnerable children and youths are some of the key initiatives which will support the baby grant initiative.

The public condemnation from some quarters, especially our ardent detractors about this grant, they always look through skewed lens to guarantee they proffer "kuchoor", if I am permitted to use that word. Sometimes they always say the glass is half empty instead of half full. In caring for our most vulnerable, the grant for babies is done in tandem with other support mechanisms such as elements from the National Parenting Programme, all in keeping with the holistic approach to treat with those less fortunate.

The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, over the past three and a half years, has focused on developing the necessary framework for effectively managing the gender, youth and child development portfolios. In this regard, the Ministry focused on policy formulation, institutional strengthening, improvement of service delivery and building a robust monitoring and evaluation platform to measure growth and address gaps which may occur to ensure that success is achieved. I am pleased to report the Ministry's successes in this context.

Madam Deputy Speaker, gender: The Government is committed to ensuring that a gender policy is developed. The Ministry, through the work of a Cabinet-appointed committee was successful in having a draft gender policy document completed and submitted to the Cabinet for its approval. This policy outlines clear strategies to promote gender equality and equity. However, based on certain objections raised by faith-based organisations in respect to the definitions of gender, abortion and the legal age of marriage, the Cabinet has delayed its decision on the finalisation of the policy to address the concerns of these

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organisations. Some may say that it is taking too long to be finalised, but I assure you that the matter is being addressed.

This Government is one that seeks to listen to the views of all segments of the population before it makes a decision that would affect people's lives. We do not subscribe to dictatorship, whether it is enlightened or benevolent. We do not subscribe to dictatorship. We are here to serve the people, and in serving we have to consider the views of the various groups and make decisions largely on consensus. The voice of the people is what matters to this Government.

We note that under the last regime, the PNM administration, there was no approved gender policy. We wonder why, but they are going to come now and ventilate, in a very robust and belligerent manner: "Whey de gender policy? Why you all did not have one yourself? You all only get wise when you go into Opposition; you get expert then."

Notwithstanding, the Ministry has proceeded steadfast with the other initiatives to make certain that the capacity to build gender equality and to empower women in our society continues unabated, as well as drive the sector in the creation of an effective and sustainable social safety network for the poor and vulnerable. They are as follows:

The building of a strong platform to effectively address Domestic Violence. The Ministry in collaboration with UN women is working towards strengthening the State accountability framework and community based action to end gender-based violence in Trinidad and Tobago. This project focuses specifically on reducing violence against women through the strategies of increasing state factor competencies, strengthening accountability and promotion of social and cultural change, through youth-led and gender-responsive social communications.

The overall project is comprised of two main components namely:

- Conducting a participatory baseline review of legislative policy, programmatic action and consultation of multi-sectorial responses to address gender-based and sexual violence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of these reviews has led to the Domestic Violence Act being reviewed and the legislation will be amended shortly to address contemporary and emerging issues in society.

- Developing the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence for Trinidad and Tobago.

We also have the development of a tool kit for gender-responsive budgeting, what we call, the acronym, GRB. This was approved by the Cabinet and is being rolled out to key agencies. The GRB ensures that women are included in the budgeting process and receive a fair share of the resources of the country. Key administrators in Ministries were trained on how to use the tool kit.

Currently, the Commonwealth Secretariat is collaborating with the Ministry to finalize the gender responsive budget tool kit. In addition, a comprehensive action plan and pilot strategy to implement GRB in Trinidad and Tobago is currently being finalized.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry is also pursuing the establishment of a National Commission for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equity to protect, promote and safeguard the interests and rights of women in Trinidad and Tobago. The commission will also seek to promote women as leaders and agents of change. In the spirit of collaboration, the Government has completed its consultation with key stakeholders on the commission and the committee's report will be sent to Cabinet shortly with a view to establishing this Commission by 2015.

We are in the process of establishing an IT-based National Domestic Violence Registry to protect the vulnerable in our society. This will create that centralised coordinated data collection system on incidents that will drive the strategies to prevent such violence as well as data to establish rehabilitation services to meet the needs of those affected by domestic violence. This is being managed by a technical oversight committee comprising key Ministries and the Judiciary.

We have acquired houses to use as safe houses for victims of domestic violence, both male and female. These would be ready for use within three months. Construction of three additional safe houses which would include a safe house for males is expected to be completed by February 2015 for the latest.

We continue the training of lay responders to meet the urgent needs of the communities with respect to domestic violence cases. The lay responders for domestic violence will provide communities with trained personnel to respond to situations of domestic violence during weekends, public holidays and other standard working hours.

The Ministry is strengthening its hotlines, namely our Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-Save and Childline, 800-4321 to ensure that those who need to access these services can do so with much ease in their time of need.

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The Ministry continues its personal and skills development training for males and females in communities to encourage self-empowerment as well as create opportunities for self-employment. The main programmes are as follows, the Women in Harmony Programme. This Programme seeks to economically empower single female heads of households who face challenges because of their socio-economic status and lack of marketable skills.

One hundred and sixty nine women graduated from this programme in 2014 with skills in elderly care, agriculture, landscaping in communities such as: Basse Terre; La Savanne community; Newlands; Guayaguayare, Thick Village, Preysal and Lower Brothers. In June 2014, I had the pleasure of presenting these ladies with their certificates of completion, some of whom testified to being prepared to practise their trade as an entrepreneur.

The Defining Masculine Excellence Programme: this programme is aimed at stemming the tide of problems associated with the concept and perceptions of masculinity, and caters to males aged 14 and older. A total of 275 men have graduated from this programme from several communities, the latest being 55 men in Siparia on Friday, September 05. Some of these men testified to being prepared to take the mantle of responsibility for their homes, building the relationship between their wives and children.

The Food Preparation and Home Management Programme for men and boys 9 to 99, on Saturday, September 06, 2014, 118 men and boys graduated from nine classes in Food Preparation and Home Management. They came from the communities of La Gloria; Gulf View; Covigne Road; Brothers Road; Malabar; Pleasantville, Morvant and New Village.

### **2.35 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, gender equality is now recognized as a human right and is specifically targeted by the Millennium Development Goal. The current programmes and collaborative efforts among the civil society groups and the international bodies must continue, and they must expand as this Government builds the platform for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, youth: this Government is committed to youth development. In the 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographics Report, it was noted that there are some 387,272 youths in the age group of 12 to 29 in Trinidad and Tobago; that is approximately 29.2 per cent of the national population. It has taken steps to ensure that all the educational and social levels—

they must not be left behind. The approach to youth development is based on the strategic management principle which focuses largely on human resource management approaches. This is done with the understanding that planning for our youth is one of succession planning because they are today's and tomorrow's leaders. This is evident by the Colombo Declaration on Youth, 2014, where the youths and the World Conference declared that they want to be seen and heard and be active contributors to nation building.

Not only that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the governments of the world are now forced to include the youths in delivery of youth services, place greater efforts on marginalized youths and establish systems and mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of youths in the development plan. This Ministry is driving a concerted effort to treat with youth development, holistically, and has engaged all the key stakeholders from the policy phase to the current delivery and implementation phase; again, emphasizing this Government's collaborative and consultative mode of operation. The Ministry completed a revised National Youth Policy in keeping with Government's commitment to do so. This policy serves as a guide to the strategic management of the youth development in the country.

The vision for youth as espoused in the policy document is "For every youth... a place, a purpose, a plan". This well-publicized policy has been driving the youth development effort of the Ministry. The Government has kept its promise to focus on the establishment of new institutional arrangements to deliver youth services. A key recommendation of the policy is the establishment of a national youth commission. Through a Cabinet-appointed committee the Ministry has ensured that a business plan and organizational structure with proposed governance arrangements have been prepared and submitted to the Cabinet for its approval. This commission will be the delivery agency for youth services. The commission would be established in early 2015, and the National Youth Council would recommence operations by December 2014.

Based on the Selwyn Ryan Report, "No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk", a Cabinet appointed committee was established to review the management and delivery of youth development programmes by the public service. The committee has completed its work and made recommendations to:

1. rationalize youth programmes delivered in the public service; the committee continues to look at strength, streamlining these services pending the establishment of the Commission; and

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2. develop a National Youth Development Strategic Plan; the Ministry is engaging a consultant to develop the strategic plan and conduct research in specific areas which there is a paucity of or no information to make evidence-based decisions pertaining to youth development, especially for youth in vulnerable situations. The research agenda is to be rolled out in 2015.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let us look at the Youth Development Apprenticeship Centres (YDACs). The Ministry has reviewed the operations of the YDACs and has noted that over the years there has been drastic decrease in the student intake due to existing business plan of both centres. And who do we blame for that? The former administration. They were not interested in the youths, you know. [*Interruption*] I would ignore the direction of that sound.

So that the Ministry has reviewed the operations of the YDACs and have noted that over the years—I repeat—there has been drastic decrease in the student intake due to the existing business plan of the both centres. The Ministry, based on research, has identified a business model which would cater for a specific cohort of young people who are dropouts or those who find it difficult to function in the traditional school setting. In this regard, the YDACs are to be renamed Youth Empowerment Centres. The Ministry is being assisted by the University of Trinidad and Tobago to redesign the curriculum to focus on individual development of self and purpose, entrepreneurship and curriculum in an environment equipped for learning social development.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has a vision for a youth graduating from a Youth Empowerment Centre—that is a young man or woman who is prepared and ready to take on the responsibility of pursuing his or her purpose with a plan to contribute to this nation's development, purpose, place and plan in keeping with the vision. In fiscal 2014, it is expected that the total number of participants in both YECs would increase. Cabinet agreed to construct two Youth Empowerment Centres for girls, one in the north and one in the south, to meet the demand for young women with similar need. The Government will also be involved in the refurbishment of two centres for the young men at Presto Praesto and Chatham.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Gatekeepers project targets young men and fathers in our communities. Key outcome of the programme is male empowerment. The programme also facilitates creation of a place where males can, as a group, learn and confront problems and build teamwork in their communities. This programme is managed by the Toco Foundation. The

communities of Santa Cruz and Covigne Road, Diego Martin, benefited immensely from the Gatekeepers project as evidenced by the anecdotes from residents of a depletion in crime; testimony given by some male residents of how empowered they feel and more productive.

Some even spoke of how challenges faced in the home that seemed unsurmountable were now surmountable. The programme will be completed by March 2015 with the existing participants being fully ready to face any challenge. Madam Deputy Speaker, they talk, they talk, they talk; we deliver, and we will continue to deliver. [*Desk thumping*] The Ministry's programmes are designed for the communities and so carry components to train community members to carry on the work while the Ministry would monitor the progress of the programme and impact on the programme. Madam Deputy Speaker, this speaks to the Government's vision for people to be at the centre of their own development. You would see this theme running through all the programmes of the Government. The second year of the Gatekeepers project in Marabella and Carapo commenced in fiscal year 2014.

Youth volunteer: this was yet another high point of the Ministry. This programme focuses on building youth involvement in environmental sustainability, poverty reduction, food security and health wellness. We had three beach clean-up campaigns which attracted nearly 900 young people. We are partnering with other civil, community and international organizations, such as Habitat International to promote voluntarism. Our list of registered volunteers continues to grow; we now have 145 individuals and 10 non-governmental organizations.

The Ministry has promoted excellence for our youth, believing strongly in youth empowerment and advocacy. In this regard, the Ministry hosted the National Youth Awards, 2014, which honoured 145 young men and women in nine areas, such as community service, art and entrepreneurship. The Ministry has provided financial support to students to participate in the Global Young Leaders project at a cost of over \$200,000. They have provided feedback which has indicated that Government's support was well valued.

In keeping with the youth policy promises made by the Government, the Ministry recently launched the National Youth Directory to provide information to youth on the places they can go for support, services and information. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago that such a directory was produced. I want to encourage Members on the opposite side to view the document online or look at the hard copy. An application for the

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phone is being considered with a view to launching the directory in the electronic space shortly.

Refurbishment works at all the youth facilities have been undertaken at a total cost to the Government of \$26 million. The refurbished Basilon Street Youth Facility was reopened in August and several programmes are underway to benefit the young people within the area, and several others are on the cards for consideration and implementation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to place on the record that at some point the Member for Port of Spain South, who is not here, did say that I was disrespectful to her in that I did not extend to her an invitation. I just want to place on record that the research would show that an invitation was indeed sent to the Member for Port of Spain South. I am not like that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Your speaking time has expired. Do you require an extension?

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Yes, thank you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Moruga/Tableland be extended by 10 minutes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, you may continue. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** Thank you. Thank you, Members. Thank you for the support.

Madam Deputy Speaker, child safety and protection requires the involvement of the family, the child; and agencies in support of the family and the child and the community. The Ministry knows this well and therefore consultation and collaboration are some of the key strategies used for building the child protection and safety system. This is in keeping with this Government's character to have our people at the centre of the development process.

The Government has taken action to ensure that there is a National Strategic Plan for Child Development, 2011. Moreover, the Ministry has been working and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure has been put in place to have an effective child protection system whereby the Children's Authority could function effectively. It is to be noted that while the Children's Authority Act was partially proclaimed in 2008, the former administration paid very little attention to ensure that the supporting system and structures were in place to make this authority work efficiently. They did very little, precious little—normal story.

The authority has over 50 per cent of its staff now in place and continues to recruit to reach its full capacity by October 2014. The authority is working assiduously with the Ministry to ensure its full operation by October of this year. To this point, I point to the fact that the governance arrangements between the Boards of Management of the children's homes and industrial schools were not addressed. There were no clear guidelines on who should do what and take responsibility for what. In the school system the Concordat guides the relationship, but in this system a void exists.

A former Attorney General identified the need to address this but the matter was left in abeyance. This Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, has addressed the issue through a memorandum of understanding. This was developed to manage the relationship between the Government and the boards of the industrial schools and children's homes. The Ministry has taken action to modernize industrial schools and the children's homes in keeping with the mandate of the licensing regime for caregivers for children. This will be administered by the Children's Authority. Assessment centres are being considered to enable the Children's Authority to have the appropriate facilities to assess children who need its service to determine where they should be rightly placed.

What happened in the past? Children were just placed all over the place; no kind of proper assessment made. They were placed in a *vaille-que-vaille* kind of way, and that is why you have a graduation system going on at the moment. You put them in St. Michael's or St. Jude's, they graduate to YTC then they graduate to Carrera. [Interruption]

**Hon. Member:** That is the "balisier method".

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** "balisier method"—that is why they have the place so. So that is why all those young people who are suffering now, it was because of the whole "balisier approach", which was no proper thinking. They did not think it through. [Laughter]

Further, the Ministry of Justice has completed a juvenile justice policy—[Interruption] I like to titillate them. I like how you responded—[Crosstalk] Further, the Ministry of Justice has completed a juvenile policy—[Interruption]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, please, allow the Member to speak in silence. [Crosstalk] Address the Chair, Member.

**Hon. C. De Coteau:** I would like to respond; she told me something earlier, I would like to respond to her. [Interruption] Yeah, thank you. [Laughter] I cannot use that word in front of you, Madam. [Laughter]

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Further, the Ministry of Justice has completed a juvenile justice policy which guides the actions that should be taken to achieve restorative and rehabilitative services for child and young offenders. The Child Protection Task Force, which was appointed by the Prime Minister, served as a critical support in addressing long-standing issues which hindered the acceleration of the new child protection regime.

**2.50 p.m.**

The task force demonstrated the Government's commitment to involve the NGOs and CBOs in bringing solutions to problems which may be hindered by too much bureaucracy. The task force completed its work, and the implementation of the report is being monitored by the Cabinet. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will say no more, and the reports will be laid in Parliament soon after the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me touch on the family. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development will spearhead the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in November with the first National Family Day. I have spoken of the importance of the family in national development, and this Government plans to do a lot to strengthen our families in order to alleviate some of our social ills. You will hear a lot more about this event soon. All families are welcome.

The Ministry also plans a lot more activities for the period of celebration, May 2015 to May 2016, including a family rally in partnership with the faith-based network of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry must reach the bowels of our communities, and one way to do so is by building successful partnerships with community-based organizations.

The Ministry is engaging key response agencies, such as the police, Community Development and Education, with a view of ensuring a collaborative approach in responding to critical incidents involving the family in communities. This will lead to the creation of response teams which will include social workers, community workers and victim support officers who can meet the needs of families.

The Ministry completed its primary consultation with key stakeholders on the national parenting policy and is poised to produce the draft policy by December of 2014. The Ministry has embarked on a comprehensive National Parenting Programme. I want to say that: the Ministry has embarked on a comprehensive National Parenting Programme. I am sorry that the Member for Diego Martin Central is not here. To date, 620 parents have been exposed to the programmes

from the following geographical areas: Moruga, Laventille, Princes Town, Siparia, La Horquetta, Edinburgh 500, Blanchisseuse, to name a few. To sustain this programme, the Ministry is also training trainers in the community, and developing parent support groups within the community. There is an old adage which says: it takes a community to raise a child.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are sending a message to the community that they have a collective responsibility for raising the children within their communities. We must no longer say: “A for Apple, B for Bat, see for yourself”, this programme will be rolled out to all communities in Trinidad and Tobago through our civil society partners and community organizations. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Fiscal year 2015: the Ministry will continue to roll out all of its training programmes to families and communities in Trinidad and Tobago at a cost of near \$30 million. We will ensure that our industrial schools, children’s homes and community residences in Trinidad and Tobago meet the standards for licences, as caregiving institutions for our children, at a cost of an estimated \$40 million. We will reopen and put our six newly refurbished youth facilities into service for the youths to enjoy a friendly space, to engage in thought and work which will add to their personal development and that of the country.

In this august, verbal, gladiatorial Chamber, I wish to place on record that it is not my intention to be violating 48(4) and (6) of our Standing Orders. It is purely, I feel, hypothesis on my part, through my imaginative and dramatic mind. This Chamber is not only a verbatim, gladiatorial Chamber, I have said it once and I will say it again: this Chamber is magical. It is amazing that representatives who did nothing for their constituency while in government, suddenly become concerned and have abundant love for their constituency. [*Desk thumping*] Magical—this Chamber is magical. Some of them who bungled while in government, suddenly became experts in everything under the sun, once they go on the left side of the Chamber.

I am sometimes reminded—and again, I claim 48 not intended—of chapter seven, verses one to five of the New Testament, the King James version, especially verse five that says: thou hypocrites, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then shall thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. Let them cast out the beam.

**Hon. Member:** Preach here, man, preach here!

**Hon. C. De Couteau:** Some are like Saul of Tarsus—and if you know Saul of Tarsus—who captured Christians and brought them to public trial—he supervised the stoning of the first Christian martyr, Stephen—then they metamorphosize and they change into biblical Pontius Pilates; they wash their hands. Others, I would say—and they could research that—are political sociopaths. Others remind me of the biblical verse from psalm 51, King James version, verses one and two: wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

I will tell you something, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a smart budget, and they are coming for smart. The budget was specific, it was measurable, it is achievable, it is realistic and it is time specific.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

**The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar):** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute in this budget. Milady, it is obvious that the plan of the other side needs to be held up to the public light, so we will see exactly what the motivation of the Opposition is in this country and has been since this Government was voted unequivocally into government in 2010.

We have the Leader of the Opposition, who has come and has condemned this budget, as like many others of his followers, to have sought to have diminished the credibility of this Government, to have denied the truth of what is happening. Therefore, it is important for us to recognize, that it is not just what is said, but who says it and their credibility that matters.

Sometime ago, in this august House, we all were revolted by information dispensed by the Leader of the Opposition, that he had in his possession documents of emails that preached the worst sort of betrayal of democracy. Where a Prime Minister and the Attorney General and other high office holders were brought into the most awful disrepute of suggestions of potential murder and of bribery, and you name it, we were lorded with it.

I want now, myself—I have apologized to the individuals personally, and I shall do so publicly—as a fair-minded citizen, having heard from a person holding the august office of Leader of the Opposition of a once great and noble party, I expected that there should have been, at least, an iota of merit in the allegations. Troubled as we all were, this entire country has had to bear week after

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week, month after month, the circuitous devolution of fact that has now made it abundantly clear for all those who wish to know, that those allegations were baseless and without foundation. [*Desk thumping*]

But should it end there? Because I have not yet heard the Leader of the Opposition take responsibility for the evil he has distributed in this august House. It did not stop with him giving this story, it went on. You know, I reflected, and looking at the plan of the PNM, it is always about propaganda—always about propaganda—to deny those who have worked, and as the Minister of Health has told us, those who wish to create, they condemn.

I do not know if we could find out, if there has been any government in the history of this nation that has faced the barrage of no-confidence motions launched by the Leader of the Opposition. Do you know there were four no-confidence motions in this House? We won all of them, but let me tell you why I go there, because a no-confidence motion is a powerful thing. It has the potential of dislodging a legitimate government. He has used this tool repeatedly, in an effort to dislodge this Government. Based on what? Some bits of paper he claims that he received. “Irresponsibility” is the kindest word one could use, “reckless” is another, but “malicious” is the word that we should use, because oblivious to the reality of the thing— You know why we use the word “malicious”? Because malicious is when you know most likely the thing is not so, but if it serves your purpose to hurt someone else, you do it.

What is the internal mechanism that operated in his mind to say that I should bring this into this House, speak to it and then bring a no-confidence motion, when the entire nation was riveted for days on end, to hear what this thing was all about? If it was true, this Government rightly should have gone. However, as we waited, all we were regaled with were wicked statements not based on truth.

The reason I have opened with this is very simply to show you the hypocrisy of many of those who hold high office. When I came into politics, I said that the term “honourable” really ought not to be given on the basis that you were able to be voted in, but it is a title that you should work towards deserving and achieving.

When the Leader of Government Business, who I want to congratulate for a most brilliant response to the Leader of the Opposition, [*Desk thumping*] within moments it was obvious that all he had to say was tantamount to nothing other than smoke, mirrors, trickery and chicanery. We were hearing here in this Chamber that many of the housing projects that this country has had the burden to pay for, first of all, were bastard projects. The daddy did not want to own them,

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but then we hear the mommy also did not want to own them, so they became orphan projects. When we were shown photographs of buildings that were crumbling, that we spent \$20-odd million to build and many other millions to demolish, it was completely disowned.

But what is of great interest is that in a newspaper report in the *Guardian*:

“PNM ministers deny role in \$26m Las Alturas towers”

“He say, not me, she say, not me. Who do it?” Who was in government during that time?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Butlerite party.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** The ghost gangs we keep hearing about from the Member for Arouca/Maloney, I wonder if it was they who authorized these things? What happened here? But you know what is most significant?

**Miss Hospedales:** How you could authorize something like that?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** This is what is reported in the *Guardian* newspapers, dated September 14 in relation to certain matters that were put into the public domain there. This is what the learned and most noble and hon. Member for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the once great PNM says:

Rowley also questioned the accuracy and veracity of the 2007 HDC minutes that the Sunday Guardian received.

This is just about whether he was Minister when the project started; significant to a large part, but pales awfully in comparison to what happened here when a no-confidence motion was brought on this supposed emailgate. Quote:

“Who sent you that?”

Who sent him that?

“Why should I be answering to some faceless person in the HDC who is anonymously making accusations against me? If they want to come out and say something then let them unveil themselves.”

These are the quoted words of the Leader of the Opposition, on a matter important as it is. But what is good for him is certainly not good for the Prime Minister of this country, nor is it good for the Attorney General of the country, nor is it good for the Minister of Works and Infrastructure. I could go on and give you the list of

those he attempted, not just to damage, but to destroy, and in that effort, to destroy a government and to bring it down.

It is not the end, nor has it been the beginning of this man's reckless disregard for people's name and reputation and truth, and this nation must stand and say "Enough is enough". [*Desk thumping*]

**3.05 p.m.**

Because there is legitimate expectation on the other side that come election next year, they want to win. They have been boasting that they will. Could we have, as a nation, the ability to afford such a leader? And if it was just he, maybe we could curtail it but I am hearing now that the infection has spread throughout the length and breadth of his party, including the Member for Chaguanas West. I do not know who infected whom but the reckless disregard for truth is abundant and must be dealt with by the population of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Do you know that—we hear about "Tumble" what? "Tumbledee and Tumbledum and Tumbledum and Tumbledee."

**Hon. Members:** Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Tweedledee?

**Hon. Members:** Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Well whatever you call them. They are now in a death embrace. The PNM and the Member for Chaguanas West are but one. They act on the same basis. They are kindred spirits. They are—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. De Coteau:** Two peas in the same pod.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** "Peas is ah healthy thing, yuh know." They are but one, and I will tell you why, because it is not how you look, but how you think, that determines who you are. It is how you think that determines who you are.

The Member for Chaguanas West, apart from carrying on, they rap each other and extend time in the older period, congratulate each other and in unison condemn us. It is a frightening thing. The Member for Chaguanas West, in this Chamber in another debate, rose and said that the constitutional reform—I am just giving you a little sprinkling, and the country knows about many others—cost this country \$45 million. He must know, and if he did not know, he should have found out. There was a budget of \$20 million and because of the ability to try and do this thing to ensure that we respect every dollar of the taxpayers' hard-earned

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income, we were able to bring in all of it within \$13 million. [*Desk thumping*] But I do not want to be distracted by that alone. That is something to be proud of, yes.

But, this is the same gentleman, the Member for Chaguanas West, who brought—and I stood while he was still within the Partnership—and said that he ought not to be a Minister for certain things. The best of friends now, that unholy alliance to destroy the will and best hope for this nation, the People’s Partnership.

**Miss Hospedales:** We have no alliance here.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** You want to hear about alliance? Check them. They congratulate each other. I do not have to—This is obvious to all. Do you know now the best of friends working on the same agenda? How short are our memories, but yesterday was yesterday, today is today and we shall see about tomorrow.

**Miss Cox:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6), please. The Member is imputing improper motives.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “It hurting yuh?”

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, the Member thinks that you are imputing improper motives. I want to ask you to be guided and carry on. You may proceed, Member.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Thank you very much. You see the hypocrisy in politics has got to go and it has started and it will continue here. Do you know there was a no confidence Motion brought against our Prime Minister? And with your leave—it was brought by the Leader of the Opposition:

“Prime Minister’s Failure to deal expeditiously with the Member for Chaguanas West and former Minister of National Security”

When he was on this side, they want to bring down the Government because he was on this side. Now he is on that side, they want to bring down the Government because he is on that side. This, what is real? What is true? What matters? Is there any shame in this nation if it is that this is what passes here for politics in this august Chamber?

And I tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, with your leave I shall read:

“*Whereas* the private business activities of the Member for Chaguanas West and former Minister of National Security have been the subject of widespread adverse commentary, censure and inferences, both locally and internationally which were in conflict with his position as a Minister of Government; and

*Whereas* the actions and conduct of the former Minister of National Security have been the subject of widespread adverse commentary, censure and inferences, both locally and internationally; and

*Whereas* the former Minister of National Security and his business partners have been linked to, or associated with, a number of alleged investigations into alleged misconduct and/or alleged criminal offences, both locally and internationally, which have attracted widespread adverse commentary, censure and inferences, both locally and internationally; and

*Whereas* in the face of the overwhelming evidence of his unsuitability as a Minister of Government, the Prime Minister did not act expeditiously with respect to the former Minister of National Security:”

Business partners now. That is all right.

Do you know—I mean according to the document I got, this matter was actually debated on April 26, 2013—how much can change in a year? How much. This Member for Chaguanas West who holds as a badge of honour, because he has condemned this budget on credibility issues, when he stands in this Chamber and said from his other ability to disseminate falsehoods, giving *Sunshine* a bad name; giving even *Sunshine* a bad name, that he has received 25—at that time and I am sure many more now—pre-action protocol letters, meaning that people were offended that their names and reputations have been damaged in the process and he uses that as a badge of honour, when in fact it is nothing other than a badge of shame!

Because one wise man said in this very Chamber and it struck me as one of the most sensible statements I have heard, Minister Emmanuel George, yes, do not be surprised, when he said that the measure of one’s integrity is your willingness to defend the good name and reputation of another, and that is what we deal with here.

This Government was condemned. I do not know, but information has come to me, where he said that some Mr. Dulal-Whiteway, now deceased, God rest his soul, came to him and offered the property up at Santa Rosa for whether 15, 13, 12 or whatever million dollars, but he did not buy it. Information has come and I am still checking to see if it is real, but we need to find out if is real, that the true owners of the property, who claimed to have owned it since 2005—now this is a deal coming—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** It is 2004.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Sorry, 2004. [*Inaudible*] I do not know as a fact yet. We are making enquiries. The true owners never offered this property for sale to the Member for Chaguanas West. So was it then—now remember there is a no-confidence Motion about business partners and what?

“...linked to, or associated with, a number of alleged investigations into alleged misconduct and/or alleged criminal offences...”

I do not want to suggest for a moment that the true owners, if what he is saying was true, the true owners never tried to sell it but he tried to buy it from somebody who was not the real owner? Now, I do not know. I do not know. I do not know. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I started there, I would not end there. The infection I spoke of is a very wicked and insidious thing that I have heard nearly every Member of the Opposition speak to. They are about dividing this country, not just along the lines that they had in the past, which is just look after a certain small area of the country, but to divide it around the most dangerous thing.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(6). That is very offensive.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “What he say?”

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Trying to divide the country. What is that?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I would show you how.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** What do you consider as offensive, Member?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** The whole question that we are trying to divide the country. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** All right, Member, the Member for La Brea, thinks that you are offensive. I want to ask you to be guided as regard the debate at hand, please. Thank you.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** It is against my nature to be offensive but when the truth need be told, it has to be and I had not intended to deal with my friend from La Brea yet, but I shall do so now.

My friend from La Brea, [*Crosstalk*] “yuh threatening meh?” Come where? I am not going there, Sir. Never! Occupy there for as long as you want. Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know—I thought when you open your mouth in Parliament you have to check yourself, check yourself, check yourself and make

sure that at least what you are saying is reasonable first, but more important, that it is true. I heard—and it pained me when I heard it—that during the oil spill at Christmas that our unfortunate citizens along that coast—because I visited on New Year’s Day. My party, the COP, we took provisions—and I congratulate the members in the south for having put it together—met with the citizens, understood their pain. I made calls, best as I can. But there were people on the ground from the oil company doing work. I heard in this Chamber that nobody got compensation. I heard nobody there got compensation. But he did not stop there, you know. You know what the divide part is? He spoke about another oil spill in another part of the country that is associated with a different ethnic group background. That is what he did, and spoke that they got immediate compensation. Sir, please, with all due respect.

**Dr. Baker:** Racist agenda.

**Miss Cox:** What agenda?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** I am coming to you in a moment. Hold, hold. I have for you too. Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Try to avoid the crosstalk and make maximum use of your time. Address the Chair.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Here we go. The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs was called away from his busy work to respond. Now I do not know this. It is possible that the members of his constituency got their settlement and did not trust him to tell him, or that he knew and did not tell us the truth. What is the truth in this matter? Has there been any contradiction of what the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has said? But, you know what? At least the Member for La Brea had the decency when he went to the other thing to speak of, having heard a rumour.

He heard of a rumour that a port was going to be built and developed a most raucous argument that no port will be built over his dead body. Rumour, you know. He is willing to put down his body based on a rumour. You are following your leader too closely, Sir, because you cannot operate, if you expect for a moment in your imagination, to be in government, to operate on the basis of rumours, hearsay and misstatements.

Let me move on. You talk about divide? The Member for Laventille East/Morvant—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Cox:** Say Morvant.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “However, yuh call it.” This is what was said, that a list of names was handed down by the Prime Minister to the head of the Defence Force, is it?

**Miss Cox:** Do not go there.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Do not go there? You went there. With all due respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, if that were true, do you not think that would be a matter of high secret? And how could the hon. Member possibly have known about that? So I show you how unreasonable, first of all, the allegation is.

**Miss Cox:** Careful.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** But what is the reason? Unless, of course, the Member was present and saw the Prime Minister hand over this secret list. What is the reason for this? It must be to create a divide and separation within our armed forces, to create a tension that ought never to be there, because that is to whom we look when the country is in need of security and safety and defence. So that, when you attempt to break that discipline, that esprit de corps, that camaraderie, it is the most heinous of things. And unless you had the clearest evidence, videotape and a signed confession by the Prime Minister and also by the defence force leader that this happened, then you must keep your lips sealed and abandon the thought to pure rumour mongering because the damage that you do is extreme and unforgivable.

The Member for Laventille West, a man whom I had great expectations for, I could be wrong in life. Yesterday, they spoke about discrimination. Every single one of the speakers on the other side talk about nothing in the PNM constituency, nothing in the PNM constituency, nothing in the PNM constituency and back then go on to speak about things in other constituencies. Forget the fact that you had abdicated your responsibility to your safe seats all of the years that you were there. [*Desk thumping*] I am hearing men talking about—what? They want community centre now? They want basketball court now? “Yuh want dis, yuh want dat.” What were you doing for all the years that you were in power? What were you doing? But this is the evil, and that is why I am so risen here to speak on this matter, not just as the leader of a party or part of a government, but as a caring patriot and a citizen who wants to see a future of stability in his country. I would not tell you of the rumours I have heard of their intent to destabilize this country and make it ungovernable. I will not tell you about that, but I will go to the facts about what they say and then the others will draw their natural conclusions.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(4). There are rumours to destabilize the country. Standing Order 48(6), I am sorry. You cannot say that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, the Member feels that you are imputing improper motives. So I want to ask you again to be guided, as regards the debate before the House.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Anyone looking at the *Hansard* would appreciate the language that I use. I am very careful not to say it. But you know, we are talking—[*Crosstalk*] now I am not a slapper at least.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, yesterday we were regaled with all these statements of discrimination, when in fact—and maybe the Member for Laventille West could speak to what he had said that they got nothing. Do you know I was handed today, by the Minister of Education, a listing of schools, the truth, in “written writing”, where Mr. Cadiz? and I had some short time to peruse the constituencies and the expenditure, just by the Ministry of Education?

**Mr. Hypolite:** Talk about September 2014.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** “Yuh could talk what yuh want. If yuh done have de school already yuh doh go and build more when there is no need.” Right?

**Mr. Hypolite:** 2014.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille West and Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** “I open my mouth?”

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Members, please, please. Both of you have finished speaking and I want to ask you, Members, to allow the Member to speak in silence. If you do not want to hear him, I want to hear him. You may continue, Member.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** No, I do not have time as you quite wisely reminded me. I am not surprised of their troubled anxieties now, because the truth is going to bounce upon their heads now.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Tunapuna, a COP-held seat, Partnership seat, expenditure, \$10,708,000—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For repairs.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Tabaquite, as heartland as it gets—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For repairs and maintenance.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Repairs and maintenance in the period, \$10,938,000.

**Mr. Hypolite:** For what period?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** My constituency, St. Augustine, \$17 million. Thank you, Minister of Education. Laventille West—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hypolite:** Laventille West, over what period?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Hold on you will—“oh gosh man, oh God. Yuh doh know?”—\$29,285,000. Eh? [*Crosstalk*] Yeah he could talk how much he want, but gives the impression of high discrimination, when in fact he must have known the truth. Hiding behind numbers now? What time frame? Twenty-nine million is \$29 million. And those are the figures and the others that I have read.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Same period.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Same period. I feel discriminated against, Sir. Do you know—I am just giving you an example—they talk discrimination—in my little Ministry, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, so important these simple things are. Ask the Member for Point Fortin, which was the first office of the 14 we opened in this country? Where was it? “Ah not hearing! All de time dey getting up and making noise.” Which is it? Point Fortin.

In every single regional corporation, on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the People’s Partnership, this Government, the Government of all of Trinidad and Tobago, we said open 14 offices so that the people do not have to come to Government, Government goes to the people. [*Desk thumping*] But we discriminate! We discriminate!

Tobago, this land issue of titles, for years a most grievous pain in the heart of the people of Tobago. The first effort we made to fix that was in Tobago and I want to congratulate the Minister of Land and Marine Resources to have heard of the incredible work he has done in a short period of time, to deal with the issues of the people. And that is something that pains them, you know. You know what? If I could suggest it, maybe I should not, but the PNM, take out the “P” from there. Just leave it as a national movement because “dey doh like people.” They do not

like people. They did nothing, nothing, in terms of title and regularization, of meaning to the people. I want to tell the people of Diego Martin, that having spoken to the Minister, our next effort is to regularize and fix the land titles of the peoples of Diego; something that you have never done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to move on to some other things, you see, because I could take my seat now. But there is so much more that we must expose and this is the time to do it, and if we cannot do it in the Parliament we shall do it on the streets of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] so that the people will know what the truth is and what your game plan is. It is exposed. “De breeze blow and yuh petticoat lift and dey see de awful underwear of the PNM.” You have been exposed and this is the beginning. Because for four years we have had to endure this extreme—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Cox:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(4).

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is that?

**Miss Cox:** Offensive language. That is not parliamentary language.

**Hon. Members:** That is parliamentary language.

**Miss Cox:** “Raise petticoat and breeze blow? Breeze blow and petticoat raise?” That is not parliamentary.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Overruled. Member, you may continue.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Thank you. You see, we are unafraid of the truth. You see when I belong to a government that could move the provision of water from 18 per cent to 63 per cent “I real proud ah dat”. [*Desk thumping*] When I could belong to a Government that took an economy on the precipice side and bring it—

**Mr. Jeffrey:** “”Ahhh, ahhhh!”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Yeah, yeah, of course, it is painful. I want to hear you complain, complain, complain. Madam Deputy Speaker, we hear all the things. “Dey talking OPV. Dey talking economy. How much money dey save.” What happened to the people during the years when they were saving money and building this building that we now occupy? And they hold it up as—listen “nah”, where would you be if it was not for this building? What did they allow to happen to our Red House, eh? What happened when they spent millions and millions to put a tarpaulin cover for years and left it to rot?

Let me remind the citizens who may have forgotten, because we are a loving people and we like to forgive, but in our forgiveness we must remember that the danger is still real.

This building was never intended for a Parliament. It was created for the International Financial Centre. Your plan “buss” and that is why this Government took a decision to not allow this to fall into disrepair. As everybody knows, an unoccupied building will fall apart. We came here and we used it. The Hyatt that we are all very happy to participate in, let us not talk about the cost overruns on that.

Legal Affairs, hear this one. Legal Affairs Towers, “dey talking why yuh doh use it, why yuh doh use it, why yuh did not use it.” Let us not forget the corruption that is connected to the Legal Affairs Towers. When that building was delivered we were so expecting to have finally a space. There were 200 faults in the building but that is not the news. The news was that all we got was an empty space instead of a finished building outfitted. So that we, the Government, the People’s Partnership Government, had to find money, and we are doing it now, after we looked at different priorities. Like every mother knows, the first thing you do is look after the people and then you come up the line. Your priority was look after yourselves and the people catch their hindmost. So that Legal Affairs Towers, we now have to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to fulfil what they had promised in the original, and that is but one example of the things we talk about.

OPVs, every time “dey open dey mouth, OPV, OPV, OPV. Yuh know what de cost was?” It was \$1.4 billion, \$1,400 million. I could be wrong, maybe not by much. “But you know what they forget to tell or refuse tuh tell because dey doh like de truth? The OPV did not fulfil its contractual obligation. De boat could not shoot.” How could we, as a Government responsible to the people, accept such a vessel that would have been of no value out in the open waters? When in Trinidad and Tobago and every citizen still remembers “dat yuh pick up yuh phone, murder going down, robbery going down, nobody answering de phone. When dey do answer it we have no vehicles. When they have vehicles dey have no police.” What did this Government have to deal with?

As a friend was telling me, like if you come into a home, there is a fence outside, a gate to come in and then you walk into the home. But in the home itself, in the bedroom, “have” broken bottle. Out in the yard “have” broken bottle. Where do you clean? Where do you fix first, by the gate, in the yard or in the

room? And this is what, the philosophy, people first. So what we did is to look after the basic things, give police cars. They did not have? Fourteen hundred million could have bought 1,000 police vehicles. Think about that. So they wanted us to go and spend \$1,400 million for something that “eh wuking” first, or should we not clean up home space first?

And while they talk about that hypocrisy, they talk about guns come in, cocaine come in. We have seen in this country and we have heard it since the coup of 1990, that most of the guns and drugs that come into this country come in through the ports with containers; “container load ah gun”. You are hearing those rumours. “Container load ah drugs” and we have seen some busts recently.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Chickens.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Chickens, exactly. But why did they not put a single scanner on the port? Why? They must have known. Anybody in defence or in protective services will tell you that you must look after your ports. Do not go out into the 1,000 square miles of water out there when your ports are unmanned, unscanned? That was a scam. This Government has put scanners on the port to ensure that the first point of legal entry is dealt with. The other things, as we develop, will also be looked after. Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the priorities of this Government.

May I enquire how much more time I have, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You have until 2.41 p.m.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Right. So, you know, very often, in all the beautiful language and almost the poetic injury that we have to endure, we lose, we lose the truth of what is being dealt with. But what is critical is that as much as they wish to deny it, they come up with all sorts of fabrication—sorry, all sorts of explanations that people do not report crime anymore. That might be so to some extent. I do not know, but the official statistics is what we go by.

And if the police tell us that serious crimes have gone down 30/40 per cent, we must take heed of that, and any citizen going through the length and breadth of this nation will know that it is rare for you to travel more than a few miles without seeing a comforting blue light, and not just they are there you know. “When yuh pick up yuh phone for an emergency and yuh call”, there is a call centre waiting to answer your call and have assistance of the police or the fire and ambulance at your service. That is critically important. We are not saying that we are anywhere near perfect on that. We are developing that, but that is the intent and the priority of this Government and there is so much more, there is so much more.

**3.35 p.m.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government, as contrary to all on the other side who wish not to see the truth, let me remind, when we came into Government we had to remove this thing where they had given open and free-scale capacity to anybody to go and dig up land anywhere, call it a quarry, once it was less than 150 acres. That caused so much flooding and degradation of the environment, we had to restore some law and order to that, and return the need for a CEC, something as basic as that. This is the Government, if I am to believe what I am told, that had the sensitivity and sensibility to replant—through the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources which they condemned in its formation—over one million trees. Think about that for a moment, maybe, I think, the number is really 1.3 or 1.4 million trees. We can easily find that out, but if that is so, it means that every single citizen of this country, a tree was planted on their behalf. That protects the environment.

And as the Minister of Land and Marine Resources had indicated, the animals have rights too. They do. Because it is part of our natural God-given heritage. The life form in this nation is not just human. And that is why we had the temerity and the strength, this Government of which the COP is an integral part, and part of its ambition has always been about the environmental protection, to protect the animals and a moratorium on hunting. So that the animals have a chance to multiply, to live, so that our children will know for real, and not just on high-definition screens, what an agouti is, what a deer is, and not just read about it on their tabs or to be told stories of it, but to see it in real life. That takes vision. That takes sensitivity and sensibility. [*Crosstalk*]

**Miss Hospedales:** La Brea is not a part of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** “It looking so.”

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Now, you know, sometimes it is good to allow people to speak so that they expose their ignorance. Now before—I know my time is very limited—and let me just tell you, I came to this Chamber some time ago with a simple amendment to show you how we are people centric, people loving, people caring, and they are about—no, no, no, destroyers, bewail what is best for our people. A simple amendment to allow 300,000 of our citizens to have the ability to put their first names on their birth certificates. Many do not need birth certificates, but many others do. And now, in a more modern age, you cannot go anywhere without a first name on your birth certificate. I was regaled on the other side, allegations and propositions that it was to enable fraud for voter padding.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is a legitimate concern.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Ten thousand persons now have names on their birth certificates who did not before. [*Desk thumping*] Talk about vision, people centred. When we opened embassies and high commissions in different parts of the world, [*Crosstalk*] the capacity—please, please—have the capacity to do interviews and to do the work that would otherwise require our citizens who live abroad to come to Trinidad; 7,000 of our citizens have taken advantage of that—7,000. But you know, all the years of PNM rule, everything is about Port of Spain, Port of Spain, Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Still they have nothing.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Under this administration, in Arima because of your request, Sir, the Member for Arima, and in San Fernando, we opened full-fledged Ministries, full-fledged Ministries [*Desk thumping*] so that you do not have to come into Port of Spain. So that the traffic that you would normally endure, you do not have to, and make your life simpler.

Can I give you a big surprise here? Do you know how many transactions in this last year and a half have been done through these full-scale Ministries?—375,000. [*Desk thumping*] In the past those transactions would have had to come to Port of Spain. But I hope I am not discriminating. We are giving it to the people. Government to the people, for the people, by the people and close to the people. That is what it is about.

Tobago, how could I forget Tobago? That is one of the first places we did, full-fledged. Since we went online for company registration—60,000 registrations; this is improvement. When we are able to remove, together with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment working together, so that registration of company—minimum, it used to take 43, 40-whatever days—we now do it in three. When I came in as Minister, birth certificates in San Fernando took you one year to get. One year you have to wait for a birth certificate. We now do it in three minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** How long?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Three minutes. And you can go to any of the 14 stations that we have opened to register not just the birth, but unfortunately sometimes, the death. And on weekends, I remember once going with my brother-in-law looking all in Tunapuna for a registrar.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, you require additional time?

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Indeed, please, thank you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Augustine and Minister of Legal Affairs be extended by 10 minutes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member you may continue.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** Thank you very much. On weekends, when you had to go and find where this person living, this registrar of deaths—you are in pain and suffering and in grief, you want to be with your family and have to go and find—now you can go to any one of the centres on weekends even, and there is a number and you call them, and they will come out and do your death certificate, especially for our Muslim brothers and sisters who do not allow for the passage of more time, than is critically and absolutely necessary.

Talking about people-centred, there is something called a life certificate. I am not yet of the age, but quickly I am approaching it and therefore I became more sensitive, that many of our citizens, the most vulnerable—Member for Arima—have twice a year, sometimes to produce a document that says, “hey, I am alive”. And you do not just produce your document, somebody has to say, “he really is alive”. I saw that. A humiliating and embarrassing experience, for anybody, that is why it does not take much physical as much as it takes mental. He say, “Listen nah”, if the Ministry of Legal Affairs registers deaths and it is legally required for you to register a death, then if you are not registered as dead then you are deemed alive. [*Crosstalk*]

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

And we have worked—[*Laughter*—no, honestly, right, with the National Insurance Board, as a start for us to get rid of this requirement for life certificates. But not just them. You know, a lot of other Ministries and a lot of other providers now are patching in, and we are giving them all that they require to get rid of this, to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, the point that I am really building to is that we have been consistent throughout, from day one until now, that every single budget has been about the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] When I hear my friends and colleagues on this side whose ambition is not just to have power for the sake of

power, but to have power like a fuel in any engine to move this country forward, to make it better.

When I hear about the great work of the Minister of Education putting schools in every constituency, including and especially Laventille West, when I hear of the Minister of Health, of the things that he has done in every area of this country, where every health centre is now empowered and manned, so that our citizens have better health care; when I hear of the ambitions of the Minister of Transport—and you know yesterday, the Member for Laventille West talked about rapid rail, this rapid rail, rapid rail, right, thinking we have already started to forget that—and they are coming back with that, eh. Bam!—whether you want it or not, you are going to get it, but we led the fight against rapid rail together with the Member for Chaguanas West. I remember that. [*Crosstalk*] We led—and also the property tax which you promised to return. [*Crosstalk*]

I want to tell you something, Mr. Speaker. You know, they put it out as if it was some level of duplicity, when the Ministry of Transport had put out for proposal for a light rail for the cost of \$1 billion as if somebody “tief dey” idea. Nothing could be further from a light rail to a rapid rail. First of all, the rapid rail—\$26 billion.

**Mr. Cadiz:** No, not the first cost. The PNM overrun, eh.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** That is the stated figure up front. All right? We are not talking about the recurrent expenditure. We “aint” talking about the pre-feasibility that cost half a billion. We are not talking about that. The light rail that we were looking at because we want to fix traffic. Right? That rapid rail goes through the heart and soul of the East-West Corridor. Not along the roads, but through the homes. So, all those who attack this Government and talk about we “doh” want highway here, and we “doh” want highway there, I “doh” know what, and they partner with them. What will they say if that should ever return? The light rail was to go along the Priority Bus Route, above it, for \$1 billion. That is what we were looking at. The possibility of that, and these things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more time, but before I take my seat, there are some things I wish to say. I have dealt with a bit of the education throughout this nation. The Minister of Works and Infrastructure has been able—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** He could work.

**Hon. P. Ramadhar:** He could work. He could work—to bring in projects, and I am impressed because in St. Augustine, Mr. Speaker, I think I will need

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much more time which I do not have, and I will not press you for it. But I have a list of work that we were able to do in St. Augustine, including Oropune, another HDC development where they put no transport provisions for the people. They put no water tank for the people, no garbage collection for the people, nobody to fix the roads for them, and worse yet to have had a thousand of our citizens living there have to run across six lanes of traffic. Minister of Works and Infrastructure, thank you. We have a walkover for those citizens, [*Desk thumping*] the old and the young. And there are many other things.

I could talk about the traffic control that for years plagued us. And one Member, close to one Member in here, keeps rattling me about traffic, when in fact it has been fixed, thanks to this People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] The land issues in St. Augustine have been attended to, and I could go on and on and on. But before you tell me that my time is completely up, we have a vision for this nation.

And for my learned friend who I have grown not just to be aware of, but who I have grown to like somewhat, the Member for Diego Martin Central. When he spoke about the Higgs boson and particle, he forgot to mention it is also known as the God particle because it is the particle that really is everywhere and nowhere at the same time that brings everything together. And he had raised the issue, where is the glue? What is the continuity? What holds this budget together? You know what it is?

When I hear the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development looking after the labourers here, to raise the minimum wage, when I hear the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development speak to the new policies and the children awareness, when I hear the Minister, Member for Arima, and hear all my colleagues, you know what is the glue for this budget and all the budgets we have gone with before? Love for the people of this nation. [*Desk thumping*] When the people are put first, when the babies of this nation, for those parents who are below the \$3,000 a month limit, to ensure that basics could be met for nutrition so that their brain could be properly developed, how could anybody condemn that?

Of course, we will work with other organizations to ensure that it is made more efficient, but if a child's brain is not properly developed from early, then you condemn them to a life of second-class citizenry. And that is why the Member for Diego West could in this august Chamber, speak about "duncey head" children. We are about ensuring that every child is given every possibility to fulfil their God-given ambition and their potential.

And, we do so by looking after the mind, the brain, the body because the future we want in this nation is one where every citizen feels not discriminated against. Where health care is available to all, the best of health care, and that in terms of a safe environment, in terms of an environment that is safe, in terms of the environment that we could give to our children, to protect these things. I shall share with our partners in the Partnership a ground-up approach, as to into our next term, how we will engage the citizenry to be really part of Government so as to fulfil their personal and family's ambition.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I take—I am on one more minute—yes, one more precious minute. As I take my seat, let me just say that for the first time this country is seeing truly what a government and a democracy represents. Because a democracy is about looking after the welfare and the well-being of the people of the nation, and not just of a select few. Where big business, as important as it is, is not the priority, but the people and the human development that is necessary.

In terms of the creativity of the human mind, our IPO office—listen to the respect that our office—because we gave them every resource—the respect that this office, this little spot of land called Trinidad and Tobago, Apple Incorporated, chose Trinidad and Tobago's Intellectual Property Office to register, six months ago in confidentiality, the Apple Watch that the whole world is now waiting to get sight of. I just give you that example, because we believe, as our land space is limited, we must go to head space, and the future of this nation is about innovation, inventiveness and the creativity of our people. So that this budget enhances that. That is what they will not accept as true. But we know what it is, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago know and love us for it. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**3.50 p.m.**

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of the People and Social Development (Hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin):** I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Appropriation Bill, 2014. I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the hon. Senator, and our indefatigable hon. Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, September 18, tomorrow, 2014, Scotland will vote “yes” or “no” whether to continue as part of the United Kingdom. Uniting the Kingdoms of Scotland and England had been proposed for a hundred years before it actually happened in 1707. Suspicion and mistrust between the people of the

two countries had prevented the union throughout the 17th century. The Scots feared that they would simply become another region of England, being swallowed up as had happened to Wales some 400 years earlier.

For England, the fear that the Scots may take sides with France and rekindle the old alliance was decisive. England relied heavily on Scottish soldiers and to have them turn and join ranks with the French would have been disastrous.

Mr. Speaker, suspicion and mistrust between the people is the bane that we must excise from our country. I must engage the collective national mind with this matter because no man is an island. We are all part of the main, and we are all part of the main and this is an essential concept that the PNM has never understood—no party is an island; no island is an island.

“This is PNM country”, this is what they say, this is what they believe. But our demography is informed and influenced directly by our history of conquest and settlement—our Jahaji Bhai—where the Ganges meets the Nile and the Thames, the Euphrates, the Litani, the Mississippi and the Amazon.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of the People and Social Development’s purpose is to serve every citizen, all the people, not only the people of a particular region or ethnic constituency, misled to believe that they must eat first and everyone must eat after or not at all. We are not different cases here. We are not different tribes here, with distinct languages, territories, and ethnicities. We are all in the same boat; and sink or float, we have to live and love each other, while learning from the troubles of ethnic fratricide, division and traumatic conflicts that plague parts of Russia, Ukraine, the Muslim world, Pakistan, the Balkans, India, Asia, in Tibet, in China and the entire continent of Africa. That is why I mentioned Scotland, and our need to learn from the errors of others.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Williams and his PNM always operated as if there are two tribes here, two distinct tribes, two distinct peoples, some version of India or Nigeria, or perhaps Northern Ireland. The politics of ethnic hegemonic domination worked for PNM success for 30 years, a generation, and spawned much of the problems with which we are now challenged, widespread illiteracy—*[Interruption]*

**Miss Hospedales:** Who wrote that for you?

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** You want me to tell you a history of my profession?

**Mr. Sharma:** Just ignore.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:**—poor nutrition of the people, the children of poor mothers—tell her I am a lecturer 20 years—dysfunctional ghetto areas or settlements, a culture of dependency, a long list, of a genesis of PNM rule. Tobago has not been spared.

In addition, Tobago became a casualty and consequence of the way electoral boundaries were drawn, and the demographic facts reflecting historical patterns of settlement. It is true. According to Derek Walcott, Mr. Speaker, “the middle passage never guessed its end”, and the Fatel Razack also never guessed its end.

In the PNM’s Vision 2020 document, there is a recurring statement, Mr. Speaker, “Changing mindsets.” Vision 2020 demanded we must focus on “Changing mindsets”. Much has changed under the People’s Partnership Government—and I expect my colleagues to clap that—[*Desk thumping*] we have changed that, a whole lot in four short years.

But the PNM mindset is resistant to change. It is resistant to adaptation or adjustment to new circumstances. This is the challenge of this Government, this budget and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, how to abandon, to reject an anachronistic mindset, an old way of thinking about managing the politics and the society of Trinidad and Tobago to deal with differences in an inclusive manner. The Members of Parliament for Arima and Lopinot/Bon Air West demonstrated a keen understanding of these ideals in their contributions in this budget debate.

This is why the hon. Prime Minister established the Ministries of Arts and Multiculturalism, National Diversity and Social Integration and the Ministry of the People and Social Development. The Ministry of the People and Social Development was established to minister to the people, and we have an association called the main “People’s Issues Resolution Coordinating Unit” that incorporates:

1. Ministry of the People and Social Development
2. Ministry of Public Utilities
3. Ministry of Works and Infrastructure
4. Ministry of Housing
5. Ministry of Health
6. Ministry of National Security

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7. Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Resources
8. Ministry of Local Government
9. Ministry of Community Development
10. Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development
11. Ministry of Education
12. Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism
13. Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education
14. Ministry of Public Administration
15. Ministry of Legal Affairs
16. Ministry of Tobago Development, and
17. Ministry of Justice.

And it is this synergy through which we will administer our social programmes and all of the goods that will come from the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and we have several other agencies:

- HDC
- WASA & T&TEC
- 14 Municipalities
- Highways & Drainage Divisions
- Regional Health Authorities

And several other agencies to help to ensure that our people are well served.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to talk a little bit, while I, in my discourse, I will talk a little bit about what is happening in Tobago. I will talk a bit about what is happening in the Ministry of the People and Social Development and I will talk in the end about autonomy in Tobago, internal self-government and the PNM.

The destruction of education. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy said the Ministry of Education will get TT \$10.1 billion, and that some of that money will go to hiring more than 120 literacy teachers for secondary schools. We all remember the PNM boast, which became an annoying scream during the Manning administration: PNM has made this country 98 per cent literate. Well, if that were true, we would not have had the social pathologies we

now have which are the result of politicizing spending on education for decades during PNM regimes, while fooling the poor people that their children were being done a favour, by sending students to secondary school with no remedial programmes or hope of knowing how to read and write.

**Miss Hospedales:** Do not say that—no remedial programmes?

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** In Tobago last year, the Secretary for Finance told the world that Tobago is the worst education district, and that they were falling behind. This is after the PNM spent nearly TT \$30 billion in Tobago—the PNM administration from 2001—the Orville London administration, that my colleague Dr. Baker spoke about. We are determined, Dr. Baker and I, to build the human resources in Tobago. No lukewarm or lacklustre, inept PNM-led THA will hinder the educational development of Tobagonians, and Dr. Baker and I sit and watch. Everything we try to do, they block it. Everything we try to do in Tobago, they block it under the pretext that we are walking into the fifth schedule, while the PNM-led THA continues to bastardize, continues to miseducate and undereducate the children of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Tobago was a leading light in this country and still is in the older generations. I looked at the newspaper today and I saw walking—in the opening of the law term, I saw the Chief Justice, who is a Tobagonian, who went to school and church with me. And I saw next to him the head of the Coast Guard who is also a Tobagonian. There was a time when we held sway in Trinidad, and you all know that.

Now, we have since 2001 a watering-down of our education system, and Minister Gopeesingh knows that. A watering-down—it is a fact. And these people, they are more concerned with the carnal development of the girls and young people in the schools than they are with the spiritual and intellectual development of these children. And I am going to talk a little bit more about that later. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training established the MIC campus in Canaan, Tobago. The UTT campus in Scarborough bringing the Bachelor of Education for the first time in Tobago. The expansion of YTEPP with mobile units, the expansion of OJT services, science and technology centres, and coming soon, homework centres and literacy and numeracy centres will be established by the Ministry of Tobago Development and the Ministry of the People and Social Development in Tobago to ensure that no child in Tobago will be left behind.

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We have come to the point in Tobago where we used to be so, so successful, and we have come to the point where we are beginning to see things creeping in, like what you call hot spots in Trinidad, where there is much illiteracy, where there is low education, where there is poverty. We are beginning to see that—PNM scourge eating away at the fabric of our once very special society. There is nobody here who can tell me that I am not saying what is, in truth and in fact, happening.

Tobago I am asking you to line up your needs, your ambitions and your projects. And we promise you, Dr. Baker and I, we will be coming to you with the \$10 million, Mr. Speaker, and the \$10 million to make \$20 million, which we will spend in Tobago, to build human capacity. We are coming, in the villages, in the towns, get your projects ready, because no longer will we sit by and beg and plead with the Tobago House of Assembly to do something in Tobago.

The Tobago House of Assembly holds 34 estates, every one lying fallow. Thirty-four estates and the Leader of the Opposition here, the leader of the PNM, leader of the national PNM applauds what is going on in Tobago and harasses us in Trinidad, talking about no confidence in the Prime Minister, no confidence in the Government. And I am taking from my colleague, Member for St. Augustine, words that he is using: reckless, he is dangerous, he is reckless, he is making allegations on this Government that are reckless and dangerous. And he has a total disregard for people's name and reputation. And that we are going to stand up on, we are not going to allow that anymore.

So for fiscal 2014/2015, Tobago, I am promising you, and I know you are listening, I am promising you that things are going to change for the better. Remember that when people snatch your opportunities away from you on the guise of politics, they are spoiling your generations, your children, your children's children and their children. And in Tobago the governance is so parochial, if you do not belong to the PNM you cannot get a scholarship; you cannot get a piece of land. And I want Tobago people to understand as well—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Repeat it.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** You cannot get a piece of land; you cannot get a job; you cannot get a scholarship. I want Tobago to understand and I know you are listening, the Member of Parliament for La Horquetta/Talparo, the Minister of Land and Marine Resources is responsible, he is in fact the person responsible for all the lands in Trinidad and Tobago.

**4.05 p.m.**

There is a story in Tobago that all of the lands in Tobago are vested in the House of Assembly and this is where everything is held so that, you know, okay, it belongs to the House of Assembly so nothing can be done except Orville wants it to happen.

Let me tell you all something, and I am saying it from a legal standpoint—although I am not a lawyer—the lands in Trinidad and Tobago belong to the State of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** The “vested in Tobago” is an accommodation; it is not a legal document. It was never made legal, which is not to say that Trinidad or central government will come and run into Tobago and take away lands from the Assembly and give it to people, but which is to say, it can be done. I am saying here again, as I said before, that I am coming to Mr. London with my list of people who are not PNM people, who applied for lands in Tobago and cannot get; farmers who have been afforded land in Tobago but now they cannot get the deed because the House of Assembly will not give them the deed because they are not PNM people. And a lot of people who are getting 40 acres, 50 acres of land because they are PNM people are not planting a single thing on it.

**Miss Ramdial:** Hmm, terrible.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** So I am not talking about something that I am dreaming up. Everybody who is listening to me could give you 10, 15, 20 examples of those people. I am not trying to hinder anybody in Tobago from getting what they are getting, but I am telling you, the PNM method of giving inequitable distribution has to stop and we are not going to stand up anymore and watch it happen. We are the representatives for Tobago East and West, and we will represent you. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not want to couch it; I do not want to be too plain and I “doh” want to make it—but what I am saying, really, is that the central government can give out land in Tobago, but we have not done it out of respect for the accommodation that is called the Tobago House of Assembly Act, because I cannot call it, really, anything but an accommodation.

I am going to talk about that a little because I want to show you how the Leader of the Opposition of the PNM was one of the main persons fighting against internal self-government and autonomy for Tobago, and I will show you where in

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today's newspaper you would see the leader of the Tobago House of Assembly clamouring, climbing all over the walls now, to give Tobago autonomy, when in 2000, in 1976, in 1996, they were fighting. I will come to that in a while—fighting against it.

Dr. Jefferson Davidson has a book named, *The PNM Versus Tobago*. It is historical since the inception of the PNM that Tobago has been fighting Trinidad PNM for everything, including autonomy, including self-government, and it was always the PNM. Every other government, every other dispensation, fought with Tobago. The Panday administration; the Robinson administration; the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, brought a Bill to the House for internal self-government for Tobago, and I will display, when I go along, how in every instance the PNM fought against it, and made sure that nothing happened. And now that Mr. London is in the final years of his time, he is fighting, tooth and nail and saying, Oh, the happiest moment of his life was when he saw Hochoy Charles sit down with Orville London and Neil Wilson and Ashworth Jack, political rivals for decades—[*Interruption*] Today's papers, *Newsday*, page 7. [*Crosstalk*]

“...sitting down at this forum saying this time around, ‘we taking it...for Tobago’.”

Tobago, let me tell you something, Ashworth Jack was not there. That was Sunday. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what. I belong to the People's Partnership. I am a member of the People's Partnership and I am a Member of this august House, and we have never had to fight the People's Partnership for autonomy for Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And I want my colleagues to hear this. There is absolutely no fight—absolutely no fight.

We have another instance here, where Hochoy Charles of the TPT—Tobago Platform of Truth, in the *Express* today is saying—[*Interruption*] Just now, I will ask you to ask her, Mr. Speaker, to allow me. Leave me, let me do it.

**Mr. Sharma:** Just ignore—that is only nuisance value. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Leave me, let me do it.

**Hon. Member:** “Allow meh, leh meh do it.”

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Leave me “leh meh do it”.

**Hon. Member:** “Gih she ah—talk, man.” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** She would not understand and “dey doh know how tuh”—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** “Gih she ah Tobago talk, man.”

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** “Dey cyar spell nuttin we say in Tobago. Mr. Speaker, *Hansard* cyar spell nuttin.” If I talk Tobagonian, *Hansard* would not know what to write. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] “Wha dem ah go do? Wha dem ah go do? Lemme doh go dey”, because my Trinidad people would not understand. That is a new language.

Hochoy Charles “saying if dey eh get autonomy when dey make dis push, dey going tuh de United Nations”.

**Hon. Member:** Tomfoolery.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Daddy used to say that, tomfoolery. Mr. Speaker, we do not have to fight.

How I get all there? I want to go into the Ministry of the People and Social Development, “yuh know”. Mr. Speaker, “we doh want tuh fight; we doh have tuh fight de People’s Partnership to get autonomy for Tobago.” We never had to fight. That was a condition in our manifesto that we negotiated before we came into office. That is something that the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for, and are getting, and we brought the Bill to the Parliament in January 2013. [*Desk thumping*] But, of course, Mr. Speaker, the Calcutta ship come “een an swing dat”—swing that at the last minute, and Tobago people regret now. The Calcutta ship come in, in the campaign, it come in, in the house to house; it come in, in the packages with the money; it come in with all kinds of things, and it come in with all kind “ah” magic—coloured magic—and that fear factor come in, and then people regret today. Because what “dey gettin? Nutting!” Make-work programmes!

Tobago had one of the best work ethics in the world. I can tell you that. We worked hard. I have a great-uncle who worked his land until he was 97, up on Back Hill in Charlotteville.

**Mr. Sharma:** “Dat is de same age wit Jeffrey?” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Mr. Speaker, work ethic, hard work—you know, sometimes in Tobago—and this might not be something that I should be saying, but in Tobago they equated us with a race. They used to equate us with a race and say there are three races in Trinidad and Tobago: African, Indian and Tobagonian, and they used to say we had that work ethic that you know that you have to struggle and then you will gain.

If you go about Tobago, Mr. Speaker, “ah bet yuh, yuh eh fine any kinda”—now an den, because of some circumstances, you will find a shack. Other than that, ordinary people build mansions because they understand how to work; they understand how to save and they understand how to make bhagi and—we eat everything; everything that passing: crab, “gouti”. I think we have a little—what you call that—close season these days.

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes, yes, moratorium.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** “So yuh could really see gouti and guana and all kinda ting jes running bout de place—and Cocrico jes runnin about like yard fowl an ting”. But we are a very industrious people, and we know how to make a living. We have never had the whole set of handouts that some people get. But now, our children who go to secondary schools are coming out and the House of Assembly is giving them make-work jobs. You go to work and you go at “de side ah de road and yuh eh do nutting”, and in our schools it is now—graduation is “ah ting where yuh dress up an go; is not ah thing where yuh come out wit ah piece ah paper”. And I am putting that squarely on the shoulders of Mr. Orville London who became the Secretary for Education in 2001 and he was also the Chief Secretary, and he sat and presided over the demise of education in Tobago.

I want to say something else, Mr. Speaker. I want somebody to get up and say—because “ah doh really like tuh go” directly at some people. Tell me what are the qualifications of the Secretary for Education in Tobago? I hear people talking about the qualifications of the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. Let them tell me on this side, what are the qualifications of the Secretary for Education to Tobago?

**Hon. Member:** A whole bunch of UWI.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** A whole bunch of what?

**Hon. Member:** UWI.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Somebody will answer the question. “I doh have tuh answer de question”. But you see, somebody talked earlier about “de mote in dey eye—de mote in somebody’s eye. Dis PNM section pulling out de mote everywhere and leaving the big beam in dey own eye.”

**Hon. Member:** Corruption.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** “Big beam in dey own eye. Lemme go back to de Ministry ah de People lil bit and den ah go come rong again.”

The Ministry of the People and Social Development, led by the hon. Prime Minister as line Minister, is doing a fantastic job in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] A fantastic job. Our PSs: Yearwood, Edwards, John. I want to call a few names: Ghany, Denny, Tagalie. I want to say that because I want them to hear me: Borel, Quammie, Furlonge, Phillips, Ali, Williams, Lezama, Mohammed, Jack. “Ah doh want tuh leave out anybody, but ah cyar call everybody”: Sara, Layne, Clarke, Rouse, Sandy, Dean, Phagoo, Skippy, Richardson.

I want to say thank you for the support that you have given me, for the support that you have given the line Minister and for the hard work you do. We have pockets in the Ministry, of PNM people who are stymieing our operations and trying to make sure that we fail, and it will not happen. We will not fail! [*Desk thumping*] We will not fail! Because when you think you are blocking me from getting something, you are blocking one of God’s children who is sitting there, in need. So you are making sure that you make so much problems in the Ministry that a man “cyar” get a wheelchair who needs it; that somebody “cyar” get surgery who needs it. And you are sitting down there trying to win an election?

The People’s Partnership is committed to the next generation and not the next general election. [*Desk thumping*] That brings me to some of the things we do. We “gorn” to visit the first triplets and those persons with first triplets—if you have triplets now, Ramona, accordingly, you will get am—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Ramdial:** What? [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** Next rounds! Next rounds!

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:**—\$1,500 a month. “I hear dem heckling yuh bout dat.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Minister Gopeesingh, Member for Caroni East, [*Desk thumping*] and Minister Karim. I spoke a little bit about Minister Karim before—what do I call him? Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. Sorry for saying their names, Mr. Speaker—for the kind of work that education is getting in this country. Trinidad and Tobago is seeing a windfall in education as never before. [*Desk thumping*] So many schools are being built, so many things happening, and we are partnering with them to make sure that everybody is served.

Mr. Speaker, let me just talk a little bit here about the Baby Care Grant. The Baby Care Grant that the Prime Minister announced on Saturday, September 06 is a grant of \$500 per month for a period of one year for mothers and newborns. It

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is mostly, primarily to assist mothers living in difficult circumstances. It is intended to ensure proper nutrition and health needs in the first year of life, and to improve chances for underprivileged children, having a good chance at a better future.

We are also backing this with universal preschool education by 2015. [*Desk thumping*] The Children's Life Fund is ongoing. We all give 5 per cent of our salary. The Prime Minister gives 10. And we are inviting the PNM people, again—PNM parliamentarians—to give 5 per cent of your salary.

**Hon. Member:** Not them!

**Mr. Partap:** Never! Not one cent!

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** What is your rationale for not giving a cent to the Children's Life Fund? The Children's Life Fund is not for the children of parliamentarians on the Partnership side, "yuh know". The Children's Life Fund is for all the children of Trinidad and Tobago. So how can you say, "I am not giving anything from my salary to the Children's Life Fund"? Which one of your leaders would bring you to that point?

**Hon. Member:** They do not like children.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** "Well, ah coming tuh dat." We have the Couva Children's Hospital coming; we have expanded access to primary, secondary and tertiary education. Which country, where—where do you have free primary, free secondary, free tertiary education? [*Desk thumping*] When you go to school you could get a free breakfast—or free "breakfases". "Ah hear yuh giving plenty breakfast"—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Both.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Free breakfast—59,000 breakfasts, and free lunch. Which part of the world will you get all of that? Free bus to go to school. Trinidad and Tobago is blessed with a Government that is serving the people in a fantastic way. [*Desk thumping*]

**4.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Jeffrey:** We always had that. We always had that.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** What you always had? Free pre-primary education?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Yeah. Under PNM, we had that.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** What is pre-primary?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Under PNM, we had that.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** I went to school under PNM—

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Under PNM, we had that.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** I never went to pre-primary school.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Free lunch, free breakfast.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Increased availability and quality of tertiary and vocational training.

Mr. Speaker, now this Baby Care Grant has come and it has hit the PNM like “ah” bolt from out of the sky. Why are they so afraid of it? There are 40 countries in this world that give a baby grant. They call it all kinds “ah thing”—bonus grant. Every time people start to argue about where Trinidad and Tobago is going in this country, they start to talk about Singapore. Singapore has a baby grant. Australia has baby grant. Brazil has baby grant. Mexico has baby grant.

Mr. Speaker, if we had a longer time like last time, like we used to have, I would give you some details, but help for families and children, benefits for maternity, benefits for paternity, benefits for adoption, help with the cost of the new baby, benefits for all your children. All of this in Australia. The Australian Government gives the baby bonus grant. You are talking about it. And they have grants for second child, third child, fourth child, fifth child. What is wrong with us giving our mothers, what is wrong with us giving the mothers of our children who need it, a helping hand?

“Children bring joy to the family.”

This is what they say in Singapore:

“The Baby Bonus Scheme, which was introduced on 1 April 2001, supports parents’ decision to have more children by helping to lighten the financial costs of raising children. The Baby Bonus Scheme consists of two components - a cash gift and a Child Development Account.”

The Prime Minister, when she speaks, will explain what we will do with the Baby Care Grant and how it will be expanded. “Doh wanna stay too long on that.”

I just want to go back to some words that the hon. Member for St. Augustine used and among them was “irresponsible”. He made a statement about “the daddy did not want to own it”. He talked about responsibility. [*Crosstalk*] You said that,

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those words. He talked about hypocrisy. He talked about shameless behaviour. I want to show you a picture, Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I have permission to show a picture here. I have permission to show a picture. A picture of a house. [*Member shows a picture*]

**Hon. Member:** Where?

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** A picture of a house in Charlotteville. Many of us have no idea, or most of us know where we were born. I was born in Scarborough General Hospital. But most of us cannot tell where we were conceived, most of us. This property is a property that I have decided to spend some of my \$10 million on to make it a transitional home for young girls—[*Crosstalk*] do not forget I am from Charlotteville, you know—a space of peace and a learning centre for young girls [*Desk thumping*] who are the victims of paedophilia, because it stands as a monument to a story. It stands as a monument in the village to a story. We are determined to use it as a place where, like in Piparo—the Member for Arouca/Maloney spoke about Piparo.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I also have this to show. [*Member shows a second picture*] This was a place that was used, people say—because I was not here when that whole thing took place. I was living in the beautiful place called New Zealand. People say that this was a place where dastardly things happened, evil things. The Member for Arouca/Maloney talked about Piparo, about New Horizons.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is not New Horizons there.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** This is Piparo, which is next door to New Horizons.

**Miss Hospedales:** Right, thank you very much.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** I will tell you why I am showing you this. Because I could not bring everything, I have New Horizons too. But out of evil, cometh good. So just as in the home in Tobago, we will use it as a monument against paedophilia, we are using this as a monument against the drug taking. This is a rehabilitation centre. [*Crosstalk*] You understand? So out of evil, cometh good.

But my colleague here, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, said that this New Horizons has absolutely no residents. These are the residents of New Horizons. [*Member shows a third picture*] Now, you see, when you come here, as is the penchant for the PNM, this picture was taken on Sunday and if you want better proof, you can look in the picture and you will see me there talking to the

residents. We have blurred the faces of the people for privacy. But this picture was taken on Sunday, “day before day before yesterday”.

And the Member for Arouca/Maloney came here and she wet us all about. Wetting after wetting. [*Crosstalk*] Listen—Mr. Speaker, I am not going to allow anybody to jump all over the Member of Parliament for Caroni Central. [*Desk thumping*] Nobody. [*Crosstalk*] A fantastic man gave his blood and sweat and tears to the Ministry of the People and Social Development. [*Desk thumping*] A fantastic human being and I follow and I go where—I follow his lead and I am saying here the work that he has done—[*Continuous crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, Member, please.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** The work that he has done is phenomenal.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to expose those, otherwise other people outside would go away with the impression that the Member for Arouca/Maloney was telling the truth.

**Miss Hospedales:** I was.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Now, the New Horizons facility that she is talking about where there are no residents, that place is being refurbished. So these residents have been spending like the last two weeks over at the Piparo place.

**Miss Hospedales:** Oh gosh, it have no people in the place. You need to speak the truth.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I do not think that the PNM understands what is truth. They do not understand what is truth.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, please, please.

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Sir.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** These are the residents of the New Horizons. So if you are building and you are breaking down and you are doing all kinds of things, leave them between the rumble to satisfy the Member for Arouca/Maloney. The Piparo centre is next door, it is a stone’s throw—you could just walk across the yard.

Now, it is very technical what you do with street dwellers, very technical. We do not have laws that say you can drag anybody you want off the streets.

**Miss Hospedales:** You drag them already.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** “She kind ah disturbing meh, Mr. Speaker, you go protect meh, please.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Who is that?

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** The Member for Arouca/Maloney. She is running a continuous—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, if you want to sit next to the Speaker, you can come, but please, do not continue to disturb the hon. Member who is making her contribution. Continue, hon. Member, please.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I just had to go over that because of that distraction. Let me continue with the baby mothers. The Leader of the Opposition denounced the subsidy for baby mothers saying it will lead to dependency. Dependency? The PNM is talking about things leading to dependency? We already have a dependency syndrome in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, as established, it is 4.30 p.m., we are going to allow the Member to complete her contribution, original speaking time as well as the extra 10 minutes, and then the Leader of Government Business will advise this House on the next steps. Continue, hon. Member.

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The prospects for human capital development dwarfs the cost of the programme, and when you add the lessened evil of social pathologies that result from ignorant, illiterate citizens that did not get help from their Government, I wonder who the Leader of the Opposition desires to serve or what was meant when his party had the slogan We Care, We Care. It is obvious that they do not care about our country’s children. Mr. Speaker, our leaders must be symbols of a break from the past mindset and the People’s Partnership demonstrates that. No vehicles or instruments for entrenching perverse or dysfunctional mindsets.

Mr. Speaker, I need to talk a little bit about the health care system. We applaud the Member for Barataria/San Juan for what he is doing in Tobago for health care. We have to applaud the fact that the People’s Partnership Government finished the state-of-the-art Scarborough Signal Hill Hospital. We must applaud that. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Health this morning talked about MRI for Tobago and scan machines for Tobago and all kinds of other things that we really need to have in Tobago. These problems—and Dr. Baker, I think you should talk with him too—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** You cannot refer to the Member—

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Sorry. Member for Tobago West, I think you should talk to him too about the diabetic problem and work with him. I want to applaud the People's Partnership Government for seeing the needs of our people and for the lifestyle changes that we must make.

Mr. Speaker, physical infrastructure in Tobago. It is clear to see that all the roads in Trinidad and Tobago have been built and upgraded all over Trinidad and Tobago by the People's Partnership, especially in the parts of Trinidad—of Trinidad, I am saying—where from generation to generation, roads were neglected and that is so everywhere it seems. That is central and south, just as Tobago is neglected; some places in the east too. But generally, the PNM had a very urban kind of development plan and they did not care whether you had a highway going anywhere, as long as you were doing Port of Spain.

The People's Partnership has changed that and is determined to cut out all that waste and inefficiency that had been going on. People are trying to put the problem on us. The genesis of this problem did not start in the year 2010. We inherited that problem. As we try to spread out and to decentralize and build up the whole country, we have such opposition in this House. This is not a matter for one party to play Pontius Pilate or holier than thou, but for all of us to stop grandstanding and build institutions that will make us look better, more transparent, than Sweden, than Canada or any transparent, efficient, developed country. We are fighting against the mindset entrenched by PNM rule. Forty-two of the past 58 years since 1956 and for the first 30 years, from 1956 to 1986, it was the complete domination and hegemonic control that institutionalized the mindsets that PNM Vision 2020 says we must get rid of.

In Tobago, PNM ruled 2001 to present. Not one single new road going anywhere. Maybe 50 metres of road between Garden Side Street and Bay Street, if you know where that is. The Windward Road is an obstacle course. The Bloody Bay/Roxborough Road is in shambles. The link road from L'Anse Fourmi to Hermitage is a horrible disaster.

**4.35 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is about buildings, it is also about buildings. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy is to facilitate new office accommodations for public sector workers. Are we opposing that, as some oppose nutrition for babies? But what is happening in Tobago, Mr. Speaker? The PNM-led THA is stifling Tobago.

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Look at the Scarborough Library, I call it the Lego library, they started building it somewhere in 2004 or 2005, and it is still being built. The Taj Mahal, the tallest building in the world took two years to build, and we are still building our library. [*Laughter*] When they got it to the stage where we thought we would get into it, because it was built, they started to break off parts of it, because they said it was too heavy and it was sinking, they started to break off parts. If I had more pictures to show, I would show you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of State in the Ministry of the People and Social Development has expired. I am sure you would want your extension, hon. Minister?

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is that the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tobago East and Minister of State in the Ministry of the People and Social Development be extended by 10 minutes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I look at leadership in Tobago, I cannot avoid thinking of the history of Haiti, of one-party dictatorships in Africa. I mean, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Papa Doc, and I remember Emperor Bokassa and General Abacha. I remember Dr. Rowley was leader and must have interacted with the Tobago PNM politicians for many years, but it was declared that, “Calcutta ship coming fuh you” under his stewardship. That is the mentality of the Rowley/London leadership in the 21st Century. The most important infrastructure development we need in Tobago, and in Trinidad and Tobago, is ideas, the infrastructure of ideas that sustains perverse mindsets, needs to change.

Mr. Speaker, let me go to the *Hansard*, 2015 financial year—of the hon. Leader of the Opposition:

“Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Finance and the Economy reported to us was the allocation for the Tobago House of Assembly, with the impression that it has got a generous allocation. The point I am making is that under the Dispute Resolution Commission, the Tobago House of Assembly is supposed to get between 4.0 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the budget—to the Tobago House of Assembly. That has nothing to do with whatever else is spent in other Ministries by other Ministers for the benefit of Tobago.

This Minister, and others, have been consistently giving the impression, for praise, that Tobago has got this generous allocation by adding what they have allocated for the THA to what they have spent in other Ministries, and that aggregated sum is presented as the allocation to the THA. That is hoodwinking in any dictionary.

And while that has been done, Mr. Speaker, if we look very closely at what the THA has requested and what they got, you will see the nature of the problem. Because you could easily have gone away last Monday and get the impression, as some person might have got in Tobago if they did not see the details, that Tobago was treated very fairly and evenly by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing is further from the truth.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to go to *the Hansard* of October 23, 2000, and I want to quote from the same now Leader of the Opposition. I want to say, he said:

“My colleague from San Fernando East spoke about how we had to fight resistance in Tobago to build the Claude Noel Highway. They know that. They know how we had to fight resistance to build the Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive School where it is there today. They know how we had to fight resistance to build the Bon Accord Housing Estate and the Buccoo Housing Estate. There was political resistant with that. The same way these people put their political well-being above the needs of the people of Tobago there were those who had other ideas before.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the question: If we do not treat with the real problem of accountability when we give Tobago whatever percentage of money, how is that going to change the pattern of behaviour which has led to the impasse that now faces us? If we do not change or we do not clarify the interpretation of what the Assembly can or cannot do, or what the Central Government is or is not responsible for, how is a larger amount of money going to solve the problem? Is it not possible that all we would get is some more mismanagement, more profligacy...”

Mr. Speaker, I want to go so fast.

“...and more scandal in Tobago instead of Ringbang and ADDA, we may get ‘Bang Bang’ and ‘Ad Bang’. We do not know! Because what has happened is that the people in Tobago who have been managing Tobago’s money have misbehaved and you cannot then come and say that the reason is, that we were not getting enough money.”

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Mr. Speaker, I am pointing to the fact that for some people, where you sit depends on how you stand. And the Leader of the Opposition, present Leader of the Opposition, when he was in Opposition and there was another administration, he had a lot to say about accountability in Tobago. We are saying—when he was in Government too.

We are saying that he talks about accountability in Trinidad and no confidence in the Prime Minister and no confidence in all kinds of people and degrades people, but he does not talk about the fact that the Auditor General cannot get anything out of the House of Assembly. The last Auditor General Report for the House of Assembly was 2005. So for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, there has been no Auditor General's Report on Tobago. Why? Because the Tobago House of Assembly will not facilitate the Auditor General.

Yet, the Leader of the Opposition does not say a word about the Orville London administration, and the fact that what he said in these papers in 2000, he said: the House of Assembly is a runaway horse. Mr. Speaker, I want to endorse again, and I have said it here before that the Tobago House of Assembly, the PNM-led Tobago House of Assembly in its present administration, is a runaway horse. And the fight that they are thinking they have to fight for internal self-Government here, and more autonomy, and money, is a non-existent fight.

The People's Partnership Government brought internal self-government to the doorstep, to the threshold, and the PNM on this side walked out of the debate. Mr. Speaker, we could have debated it. We could have said, let us agree to disagree, let us debate. Let us say we do not want this. We want more taxes. We do not want to pick up taxes. We want to make laws. Let us debate it. Let us go, right out if you want, to referendum. Let us do what is required to ensure that Tobago gets what Tobago needs or deserves.

I am saying here, that the People's Partnership and the Member for Siparia—our leader—is committed to the equitable distribution of the national purse, the national pie in Trinidad and in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Now that Mr. London has come nearly to the end of his tenure, he wants to create a legacy for himself. So he is saying, the happiest day in his life was when he sat with those other people. Mr. Speaker, the happiest day in my life will be when we all get honest about this whole matter, and arrange a settlement between Trinidad and Tobago, and this Government will drive the process. [*Desk thumping*] The process will not be driven by anybody who is looking for some name for themselves. This Government will drive the process.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a deafening silence. When Mr. London was in charge of Tobago 2001—2010 and the Member for San Fernando East was Prime Minister, not a peep was heard about autonomy for Tobago, nothing was said. Neither did Mr. Rennie Dumas talk about it—neither did the Leader of the Opposition here, neither did my predecessor, Mr. Stanford Callender. None of them asked Mr. Manning, come and give us internal self-government, nobody. When Mr. Hochoy Charles was in charge of Tobago as Chief Secretary, and Mr. Robinson was in Trinidad as—or Mr. Panday or whoever at the time, he never asked him to come and bring internal self-government, and bring more money from the national purse and more autonomy, never. All of a sudden everybody is jumping all over the Member for Siparia, jumping all over, like some people here have a penchant for abusing women, [*Crosstalk*] and because she is a woman, some people here find they could do anything and say anything. Well, I am not going to support that. [*Desk thumping*] As much as I support autonomy for Tobago, I cannot support the abuse of women, and I cannot support the abuse of the goodwill of the People's Partnership in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I endorse the budget. I support the budget. I congratulate the hon. Senator who brought the budget, and I congratulate and applaud our Prime Minister for her vision. I want everybody to understand that when we were fighting as a matter of fact—the Tobago House of Assembly legislation which was passed in 1996, it is a great improvement in relation to what it had before.

As a matter of fact, the Opposition did not support the reforms which the Government had advanced, and whatever the reasons are, the fact of the matter is that the Opposition was of the view that we were going too far, there was too much autonomy for the people of Tobago, and that came from that Parliament in which the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West opposed autonomy for Tobago.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, September 18, 2014 at 1.30 p.m., and to indicate that we will continue the debate, an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Before putting the question, hon. Members, I have received communication from Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, seeking leave of absence from today's sitting. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

I have also received communication from the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, hon. Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Siparia, who also is seeking leave of absence from today's sitting. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.48 p.m.*