

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, February 26, 2021*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**URGENT QUESTIONS****Piarco International Airport Immigration Officers Shortage****(Steps taken to ensure Additional)**

Mr. Saddam Hosein (*Barataria/San Juan*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security: In light of the shortage of Immigration Officers at the Piarco International Airport, what steps will be taken to ensure that additional officers will be placed at the airport?

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, first of all, it is my understanding that there is no shortage of immigration officers at the Piarco Airport. As everyone is aware, unfortunately due to the pandemic, the Piarco Airport has not had the levels of traffic of persons coming and going as it once did.

In any event, the facts are as follows: they are normally 90 persons assigned—Immigration Officers—to Piarco working on a number of different shifts. Some of those officers, unfortunately, in that group of 90 have tested positive for COVID-19, some are also in quarantine. Nevertheless, out of that 90, there are 51 officers in that assignment of officers to Piarco who are still available and working five shifts at 10 per shift, and in the current circumstances, I am informed that this is sufficient.

There was a decision taken not to have a rotation of staff from the 1st of March, as would normally happen, which would be bringing up other staff from other areas of immigration to do shift systems at Piarco International as a result of the recent occurrences where a number of officers, immigration officers at Piarco have tested positive.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm to this honourable House whether or not Piarco is now operating from five shifts down to two shifts with limited officers?

Madam Speaker: Minister.

Hon. S. Young: As I just said, Madam Speaker, the 51 available officers are available for five shifts, at 10 per shift, at Piarco International Airport. And that is added to the contextual background I just gave that there is no longer the daily requirement of a full amount of immigration officers because of the lack of flights into and out of Piarco.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, having regard to the complaints by the Immigration Officers that they are not being provided with adequate PPE in light of combating this COVID-19 virus, can the Minister indicate whether or not any additional PPE would be given to these Immigration Officers?

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am not sure where the Member is getting this lack of PPE equipment being provided for the Immigration Officers at Piarco.

However, for the period, from the 4th of January to the 24th of February of this year, the AO II sent the following stock based on the request of the Immigration Officer V at Piarco: 1,000 gloves, medium, large and extra-large; 210

surgical masks, officers were previously given cloth masks; 140 bottles of hand sanitizer, the bottles being 250 milliliters; 40 bottles of 500 milliliters hand sanitizers; 20 spray cans of disinfectant. In addition to that PPE, it is the responsibility of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to sanitize the areas—the common areas at the airport and I am informed that they do the sanitization.

Madam Speaker: Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Repatriation of Venezuelan Citizens

(Steps to be taken)

Mr. Saddam Hosein (*Barataria/San Juan*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security: Having regard to the cancellation yesterday of the repatriation flight organized by the Venezuelan Government, what urgent steps will be taken to repatriate those Venezuelan citizens back to Venezuela?

Madam Speaker: Minister.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the historical aspect of this repatriation is that the Government of Venezuela, through the normal, appropriate protocols and channels via diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, reached out and said that there were a number of their nationals that they wished to repatriate themselves, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, not playing any part or participating whatsoever in that repatriation. That is the first information sent. When it came to the Ministry of National Security, that was then fed out to the necessary bodies, including the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, who on Wednesday red flagged that the particular aircraft, a Conviasa aircraft, that was to

be used by the Venezuelan Government, unfortunately fell into the band of sanctioned aircraft by the United States Government.

As soon as this was brought to my attention, we informed that in those circumstances we would not be permitted to grant permission for a sanctioned aircraft to come in. But due to the nature of this exercise arranged by the Venezuelan Government, a mercy humanitarian exercise to repatriate their own nationals, I immediately reached out to the United States Embassy personnel in Trinidad and had a conversation with them, telling them that we believed in these circumstances, the humanitarian nature of this exercise, we would like to know what was their position with relation to sanctions, the aircraft being one of those that fell into the sanction list. Overnight, the Ministry of Foreign—well, in addition, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs was working with National Security. The Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs was able to secure, in writing from the United States, that this particular exercise would not attract sanctions. Immediately, that information was provided to the Venezuelan Government and today, just before coming here, I have signed the approval for a flight at 6.00 p.m. this afternoon for the Venezuelans to be repatriated. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, why did the Minister of National Security not liaise with the US Government [*Desk thumping*] before the flight, to save Trinidad and Tobago from international embarrassment and hundreds of Venezuelans—**Madam Speaker:** Member—

Mr. Hosein:—from inconvenience—

Madam Speaker: Member, you are not allowed to make a statement, you ask a question. I would not allow that.

Mr. Hosein: Madam, am I allowed a supplemental?

Madam Speaker: Supplemental.

Mr. Hosein: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Why did the Minister not liaise with the US Government before, in the first place, to save Trinidad and Tobago from this international embarrassment?

Hon. S. Young: So, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: I am not allowing that question. Supplemental? Yes.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, did the Minister, in his duty, complete or do his due diligence to understand that this aircraft that was going to come into Trinidad was sanctioned, having regard to the fact that this airline was sanctioned since March 2020 by the US Government?

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. No matter how the Member tries to twist and turn what was just said, the facts remain the same. As the information was provided to the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the red flag that the aircraft was a sanctioned aircraft, which is in keeping with the policy and the procedure, immediately at that stage, the information was conveyed to the Government of Venezuela.

And parallel to that, we went a step further and reached out to the United States Government, to ask the United States Government, through the normal, understood, diplomatic and protocol channels, whether they would permit an exercise such as this, which is a mercy exercise and a humanitarian exercise. Fortunately, the United States Government took the position that yes, they would, and that information was conveyed. There was absolutely no stumbling in this process. There was absolutely nothing different that could have been done by a government that acts within the normal diplomatic channels and according to the normal protocols and procedures. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, in light of the supplemental question

asked by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, are you still proceeding with your question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, yes, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Immigration Division

(Supply of PPE)

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of National Security: Given that 11 Immigration Officers tested positive for COVID-19 and 50 officers have been quarantined, could the Minister inform this House whether all officers and administrative staff within the respective offices of the Immigration Division have been supplied with full personal protective equipment and other crucial materials given the COVID-19 pandemic?

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to clarify and to provide factual information to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not 11 Immigration Officers who have tested positive out of this group who are up at Piarco. Fortunately, at this stage, it is 10 officers. That number may rise because of the type of activity they were involved in and the type of interactions that they were having, but at this stage, it is 10 officers.

I use the opportunity, once again, to thank all of the Immigration Officers who have been on the frontline working from day one in this pandemic when called upon, not only those at Piarco, also those in the enforcement unit and those who serve the public of Trinidad and Tobago.

Secondly, it is not 50 officers who have been quarantined, it is 39 officers who have been quarantined. And as I said a short while ago, I listed just within the

last few weeks the amount of PPE equipment that has been supplied just for this Piarco operation since the 4th of January and that is sufficient. I also enquired and found out that these stores of PPE equipment would be held at the Immigration Division and they have not asked for additional PPE equipment or anything further. And this is all in addition to the precautions taken at Piarco for the building of the plexi glass, the sanitizing that I referred to a short time ago.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much. Minister, based on what you have provided, are you aware, not only at Piarco but at the other immigration offices, that Immigration Officers are functioning without an adequate supply of N95 and surgical masks? They are relying—

Madam Speaker: Minister?

Mr. Indarsingh:—on donations.

Madam Speaker: You have asked a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. Please answer.

Hon. S. Young: So, Madam Speaker, first of all the reliance and the request for N95 masks is something that anyone following the pandemic within the first month of the global response to the pandemic would know, N95 masks are not utilized or should not be utilized by members of the public. That is kept specifically for surgery and for those frontline health care workers dealing with positive COVID-19 patients.

With respect to the provision of masks, as I said, masks continue to be provided throughout immigration. All Immigration Officers, according to what I was provided with were initially provided with three cloth masks as well. The respective PPE equipment is being provided if there is a need for more. There are

the channels, for those officers who are concerned, to put in their requests and I am sure that they will be provided with whatever additional PPE equipment they so require.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, with respect to the sanitization of cubicles where Immigration Officers operate and taking into consideration that is the responsibility of the Airports Authority, have you collaborated with the Minister of Works and Transport to verify if the sanitization of cubicles, where Immigration Officers operate have collapsed and is non-existent between flights coming into Trinidad? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Young: So, Madam Speaker, first of all, the way we operate as an administration is we allow the public service with our guidance to work. So in these particular circumstances, I would not have to communicate with the Minister of Works and Transport. What I did is I spoke to the Permanent Secretaries at the Ministry of National Security, who in turn contacted the General Manager of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. And in fact, I was provided with the video evidence of the sanitization taking place.

What I was also told is that in addition to the general sanitization, in an instance like this, when there were positive cases that unfortunately arose from officers who were on duty at Piarco, specific sanitization took place in those areas, in addition to what is the general sanitization that takes place. Those who work in office areas through the public service would have seen over the past almost a year, the type of sanitization that is taking place in the offices. [*Desk thumping*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are two questions for oral answer. We

would be answering both. There were no questions for written answer, so therefore there are no answers to be circulated. Thank you very much.

Completed Cardiac Procedures

(Number of)75. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (Fyzabad) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister state the number of cardiac procedures completed under the Ministry's Special Health Care Programme for the period October 01, 2020 to January 31, 2021 in the following categories:

- a) coronary angioplasty; and
- b) coronary artery bypass grafting surgery?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Under the Ministry's External Patient Programme, the following cardiac procedures have been completed for the period October 01, 2020, to January 31, 2021:

- a) Forty-seven coronary angioplasty procedures; and
- b) Sixty-seven coronary artery bypass grafting surgeries, commonly called CABG.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister, for that information. Can you provide the number of patients waiting for these surgeries—the waiting list for each category?

Madam Speaker: Minister?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: I will have to circle back to you with that. I do not have that here. But what I could also tell the hon. Member, in addition to these patients being sent to the private sector, as you know, we also provide these services at North Central RHA and North Central RHA also provides angioplasty services and

CABG services, but I will circle back to you with the actual number. Thank you very much

Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

(Status of)

76. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Health: Could the Minister provide an update on the status of the proposed cardiac catheterization laboratory at the San Fernando General Hospital?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you again, Madam Speaker. The evaluation of the open tender for the proposed cardiac catheterization laboratory at the San Fernando General Hospital has been completed. However, the timing of the implementation of the project is subject to the availability of funding and must be considered now in the context of all the urgent priorities and demands in the health sector within the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you very much.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, in view of the significant cardiac disease in Trinidad and Tobago, can you perhaps give a closer indication of when this project might be started?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: As important as this is, every single thing in health now is important, every single thing in health is urgent. And as I said, we are trying to prioritize right now in the context of a global pandemic. We are trying to prioritize vaccines and all these things. So it has not gone off the radar, I give you that assurance and it will be prioritized as funding becomes available. Thank you very much.

1.50 p.m.

MINISTER OF ENERGY AND ENERGY INDUSTRIES

(LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN)

UNREVISED

Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has shown his inability to competently execute his duties to bring certainty and stability to the national energy sector;

Be it resolved that this House express its loss of confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Madam Speaker, today, this Motion, I want to state categorically, Madam Speaker, this Motion is not about a personal attack on Minister Khan, but it is about his lack of performance for the past five years-plus as being in charge of the energy sector, meaning, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. You see, Madam Speaker, this Motion is long overdue based on the evaluation of the Opposition Members evaluating Minister's Khan performance or lack of performance [*Desk thumping*] in the energy sector, which is the life and death and has given this country a standard of living that we all enjoyed over a numbers of years, Madam Speaker.

The performance of Minister Khan as the captain, the Minister, the leader of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries leaves much to be desired over the last five years, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, this Motion is not only about the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre who has filed this Motion or the 18 other MPs of the Opposition, but this Motion was filed on behalf of my constituency who has no confidence. The constituents of Pointe-a-Pierre have no confidence in Minister Khan over the last five years [*Desk thumping*] especially in Pointe-a-Pierre, Madam Speaker. Minister Khan who has been the head has seen the decimation of the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery and Petrotrin, Madam Speaker, under his watch. He has caused turmoil and hardship to the people of Pointe-a-

Pierre.

My colleague, MP for Tabaquite, even in her own constituency of Tabaquite, especially in the Gasparillo and the fenceline communities, single-handedly, Minister Khan has brought hardships to those communities. [*Desk thumping*] When you look at the belt—the Southern Main Road from Marabella Roundabout to Point Lisas Roundabout in the constituency of Couva South and Couva North, especially in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate—Madam Speaker, single-handedly, Minister Khan has decimated the Point Lisas Industrial Estate as we speak today. [*Desk thumping*] And the constituency goes throughout this country, Madam Speaker, from Point Fortin to La Brea, Fyzabad. Even my good friend in San Fernando West, even his area. And maybe he is silently happy that we brought this Motion of no confidence in Minister Khan [*Desk thumping*] because our constituencies border, Madam Speaker. So it is not only about the UNC constituencies, but it is about the entire Trinidad and Tobago who have no confidence in Minister Khan.

I have listened to Minister Khan over the last five years, Madam Speaker. When you listen to him and he espoused his experience: a senior Cabinet member who has grown up. He is a geologist by profession and other educational backgrounds—lawyer I think he is, MBA—and he has listed his experience in the oil and gas sector, Madam Speaker. He says he is second to none. But when you see and evaluate his track record in the past five years under this Ministry, Madam Speaker, which is the life of this country, it leaves much to be desired, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, so, and it is not only the Opposition or the constituencies. There is an article, Madam Speaker, written on the 24th of December, 2020. Now, on the 24th of December, 2020, would have been Christmas Eve, and I do not know

how many of us would have read the newspapers or the *Guardian* on that day. I was doing chores on behalf of my wife on Christmas Eve, getting ready for Christmas Day like many of us [*Desk thumping*] but there is an article that was written in the *Business Guardian* on Christmas Eve. So it is not only the Opposition who has no confidence in Minister Khan, but on Christmas Eve, 2020, there is an article written by one Curtis Williams, a well-renowned reporter and the headline is: “Please go now Minister Khan”. [*Desk thumping*] Now, I did not even know such an article existed until a good friend sent it to me last night. So when I filed my Motion, I was not even aware of this article on Christmas Eve, 2020, because I was still varnishing my floor, Madam Speaker. And I will get back to this article which is really, when you go through that article on Christmas Eve, 2020, it really speaks about my Motion here today, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, let me go through the lack of performance of Minister Khan over the past five years. Just recently, Madam Speaker, the *Trinidad Guardian*, 6th of May, 2020, last year, headline: “Crisis in petrochemical sector”; the *Oil & Gas Journal*, 8th of May, 2020, full-blown crisis in Point Lisas. These are not the Opposition’s words. *Trinidad Express*, 19th of February, this month, 2021, “Gas production fell by 23.6 %”, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, even Minister Khan on January 21st in an *Express* article is quoted as saying, and I quote, “Khan: Hard year for energy sector”. This is Minister Khan’s words just last month. He is saying the energy sector will have a difficult year, Madam Speaker. This is after for five years they said and they told the Opposition, we do not know how to run energy in the energy sector, Madam Speaker. They have maligned the Opposition, year after year, Minister Khan and his Government, that the Opposition knows nothing about the energy sector, Madam Speaker. And I want to quote from the first budget statement, Madam

Speaker, October the 5th, 2015, by the Minister of Finance, in his first budget statement and I quote, page 13:

“We must, therefore, take decisive action in our energy sector, to reverse the stagnation and decline of the last five years.”

Now, this is a very damning statement, because I want to believe that the Minister of Finance should have written this statement in his last budget statement in October [*Desk thumping*] because it really speaks about the track record of Minister Khan between 2015 and 2020. I know he took over in 2016 as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, but he is a senior Cabinet member and he would have played a role in 2015 in the energy sector, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in the *Oil Now Journal*, April 29, 2020, “Trinidad & Tobago oil production hits lowest since 1950s”. This is under Minister Khan’s watch, Madam Speaker, his leadership. And, Madam Speaker, over the past five years that Minister Khan—every year they come with the Budget Statement about increasing gas production in doing things for the energy sector, and all their promises have never materialized, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Even their numbers that they talked about have never materialized.

And you know what is happening in the energy sector under Minister Khan’s watch, Madam Speaker? Because of this Motion of no confidence, *Trinidad Express*, the 8th of May, 2020, “NGL profits fall 85%”. *Trinidad Express*, the 31st of May, 2020:

NGC National Gas Company makes the first ever loss in its 45-year history—Madam Speaker.

Under Minister Khan, for the first time in our history, the National Gas Company has made a loss; never before. They talk so much about the Opposition when we were in control of NGC and we took dividends, and we will come to that because I

know that is their narrative this afternoon, Madam Speaker.

Under Minister Khan, Mittal Iron and Steel Plant shut down in 2016. Methanol Holding Plant shut down, one, in 2017. The Pointe-a-Pierre Refinery closed in 2018 and I will expand on that later on. Yara Ammonia shut down in 2019 and they will come and say the plant is inefficient. Titan Methanol closed in 2020. MHTL M2 and M3 idle in 2020. Nutrien Ammonia Plant idle in 2020. Atlantic Train 1 facing uncertainty, Madam Speaker. Curtis Williams in the *Trinidad Guardian* 20th of July, 2020:

“T&T’s natural gas prices are no longer competitive both in terms of unit cost and in volume. COVID-19 or no COVID-19 that will not change.” —
Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Even the Minister of Finance, recently, on February the 18th, 2021, this month, Minister Khan in a post-Cab meeting briefing says, “We face serious gas issues”. This is the Minister of Finance.

So what have they done in the energy sector in the last five years? And they speak that they know about the energy sector and the Opposition does not know anything. It is better we do not know anything, because they seem to know everything and the energy sector keeps taking a dive. Everything is contracting in the energy sector, Madam Speaker, under Minister Khan’s watch.

So, even FDIs, foreign exchange, because our country is dependent, and has always been dependent on oil and gas that drives our economy, the reason that we are having forex issues is because of the non-performance of Minister Khan in the energy sector. [*Desk thumping*] When you look at the *Business Guardian* yesterday, Madam Speaker, it tells a story, it tells a story. On page 3 of the *Business Guardian*, “Moving from crisis to crisis” and there are three pictures: one is the production of oil and gas down, then you have COVID-19 affecting the

economy and then the forex crisis, Madam Speaker. I just want to read the first article in the release of “Moving from crisis to crisis” and it tells the true story:

“It was the former President of bpTT Norman Christie who once told a meeting of the Energy Chamber that for all of T&T’s resources and potential the major challenge the country faces is its penchant to take things to the edge before it pulls back and does what is necessary.”

And that is what Minister Khan has done to our energy sector. He has carried it to the brink, to the edge, Madam Speaker. And I am asking Minister Khan, based on the experience, when are you going to pull back? When are you going to show some growth and stability in our energy sector? When are you going to do something in our energy sector, because you have done nothing in the last five years, Madam Speaker? [*Desk thumping*]

Just recently, this month, on the 13th of February, Madam Speaker, there is an article in the *Express*:

“Cracking open T&T’s piggy bank to pay salaries...”

You know what that is, Madam Speaker? That is going into the HSF, our piggy bank and take—

Madam Speaker: Your Motion is very precise, eh.

Mr. D. Lee: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Okay? So just keep that in mind, what your Motion is.

Mr. D. Lee: Correct. And the reason why I raise this is because of the disaster in our energy sector which raises revenue for our country, Madam Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] or lack of revenue or lack of growth in our energy sector over the past five years under Minister Khan. That is why we have to go into our HSF to pay salaries, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Our royalties, Madam Speaker, from oil and gas are down. BPTT royalties

were down from \$480 million to \$164 million, a decline of \$316 million, Madam Speaker. Shell royalties were down. We only got \$10 million in royalties from Shell, Madam Speaker, a major player like Shell. BHP, a decline of \$58 million in royalties. EOG royalties were down from \$84 million to \$35 million, Madam Speaker, a decline of \$49 million underneath Minister Khan's watch, and they talk about royalties growing underneath them, Madam Speaker? Madam Speaker, Minister Khan has shown no performance in the energy sector.

Madam Speaker, I now want to turn to an area, and I will combine it together, of the lack of performance and—maybe it is a strong word—the destruction in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, Madam Speaker. And today, thanks to our Minister's lack of performance, oil and gas production is in crisis, Madam Speaker. The downstream sector has collapsed, royalties have fallen. The Petrotrin refinery is becoming scrap iron. They have almost breached international sanctions with Paria and I will come to that. The mining and quarrying industry area that is underneath Minister Khan's watch, not only gas production and pricing, but the mining and quarrying areas which are gazetted underneath him are in an abysmal state. We are losing royalties there, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, gas production has fallen by 23 per cent underneath Minister Khan, and this is from the Central Bank *Economic Bulletin* of January 2021, Madam Speaker. It is not the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre. The Minister of Finance, as I said, we are facing serious issues in our gas issues in production, Madam Speaker, February the 18th. Trinidad *Guardian* 21st, 2021:

“Natural Gas production averaged less than three billion cubic feet per day...for the first time since the 1990s.”—Madam Speaker.

The *Guardian* of 21 February, 2021, stated that in:

“...January 2021 natural gas production averaged 2,990 million standard

cubic feet per day...”

It has been dropping drastically, Madam Speaker, and the Minister has not been able to turn it around, Madam Speaker, yet the Prime Minister awarded him by putting him back as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries for a second term, Madam Speaker. So he has rewarded lack of performance, no performance, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The dilemma that is facing our energy sector is squarely on the shoulders of Minister Khan, Madam Speaker. When you look at rig days which has a correlation to exploration, in 2014, under the Kamla-led administration, our rig days were 2,442 average, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, 2019, under Minister Khan it has dropped to 1,445. In 2020, rig days is down to 822 under Minister Khan, Madam Speaker. It has been contracting and declining steadily under Minister Khan. Rig days, when you look at gas production, in 2014, under the PP-led government led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the gas production in 2014 was 4,071 million standard cubic feet. In 2019, it dropped to 3,588. In 2020, it has dropped to 3,044, and I think in October 2020, it had dropped to the lowest, about 2,900 somewhere there and that is on their website, Madam Speaker. Not a single year since this Minister has been in charge have the production figures been able to surpass the PP, the People's Partnership Government, Madam Speaker, and they want to tell us that they know how to run this country in the energy sector, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, 2020 production has been the lowest in the 15 years in this country, Madam Speaker. And do not let Mr. Khan, when he comes to rebut, talk about global prices and we are price takers and give us a set of international jargon. The fall in gas supply, Madam Speaker, was before COVID-19. So do not let them come to fool us here to tell me about how COVID-19 had a part to play. Because

the Minister of National Security said he had secured to ensure that production would have been maintained during the COVID period, Madam Speaker. It is there on the record. Our gas supply crisis is growing. Even before COVID, the Regulated Industries Commission, on the 10th of December, 2019, in the *Trinidad Express*, the Executive Director of the RIC warned that a natural gas shortage was slowly chipping away at the country's industrial base, Madam Speaker. The signs were there under Minister Khan. What did he do? Zero, Madam Speaker.

Each year with the exception of 2018, the Minister experienced year-on-year decreases in gas production. And the only reason why in 2018 there was a rise was because of the achievements and the work done by the PP Government putting things in place that bore fruit in 2018, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] If the PP Government did not do that, could you imagine what this country would have been like today, Madam Speaker? The Minister of Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and his colleagues, year upon year, going back to 2017, talked about more gas coming, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, my time is very short here today, and I want to turn to the failures of Minister Khan in the deep-water and shallow-water bid rounds, Madam Speaker. Minister Khan has yet to produce any deep-water bid rounds, Madam Speaker. I understand from his Ministry he is afraid to do it because he knows it will fail, Madam Speaker. He did a shallow bid round and it failed, Madam Speaker. Even in Minister Khan's words, he said:

“Energy Minister...Khan acknowledged that the bid round”—in shallow water—“wasn't as successful as he hoped.”

That was in May 2019. So he has done nothing, Madam Speaker. Even as far as acreage, Madam Speaker, he has done no acreage. No new acreages under him. The last one was done under Minister Kevin Ramnarine and the PP Government,

Madam Speaker.

Minister Khan spent years misleading this country about the Dragon gas, Madam Speaker, the Dragon gas. Madam Speaker, they placed everything on the Dragon gas. They took this country for a ride about the Dragon gas, Madam Speaker, and I want give you some sound bites. On *Newsday*, 01 May, 2019, NGC Chairman, Gerry Brooks: “More gas for TT”. That is about the Dragon gas. *Guardian* the 1st of May, 2019, NGC Chairman Gerry Brooks: the Dragon gas deal not dead. *Trinidad Newsday*, the 3rd of May, 2019: the “Dragon deal not in danger”. But I want to read an article on November 27, 2018, from the *Newsday*, “Dragon deal is unreliable”. That was the headline in the article: “Dragon deal is unreliable”.

“While the Dragon”—I will just precis—“deal is the Government’s remedy to end this country’s gas-supply shortage, it could be in danger of failing...”—that was part of the article.

“...the deal...between both governments”—Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago—“is fragile and volatile and has the strong possibility of not being realised.”

The article also went on to say, every time the writer or the person who said the release:

“...Each time I was met with intense secrecy accompanied by the political insults and hostility.”

And I end the article:

If not, the Government must reconsider this agreement for the sake of Trinidad and Tobago’s reputation. And they have the waste of taxpayers’ dollars on a project that could be stopped by a new government in Venezuela.

You know who wrote that article, Madam Speaker? The Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, “Dragon deal is unreliable”, since November 27, 2018, [*Desk thumping*] and they want to come and tell us that we do not know anything about the energy sector, Madam Speaker. So it speaks volumes that they do not know anything and their new PR stunt is the Loran-Manatee Field.

Madam Speaker, what about the Gas Master Plan that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister Young talked about? They are now talking about a 2030 Gas Master Plan, another pie in the sky. Madam Speaker, the crisis that is going on in Point Lisas—the gas price in Point Lisas—is all due to bad negotiations on that Houston trip in 2016, between the Prime Minister of this country who took Minister Young to negotiate and left out Minister Khan on that Houston trip. And today, Madam Speaker, because of that bad negotiations, the down-streamers of this country in Point Lisas are paying the brunt of those bad negotiations that took place in Houston [*Desk thumping*] and Minister Khan knows better, Madam Speaker. He knows better. [*Desk thumping*] Maybe he did not want to go on that trip because he knew what would have happened, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I want him to explain. So all the instability that is going on, all the CEOs of Point Lisas Industrial Estate who fear for the financial viability of their companies because of being asked to pay higher gas prices, falls squarely under the remit of Minister Khan and he did nothing to help them, Madam Speaker.

I want to ask Minister Khan about Petrotrin. You see, Madam Speaker, in 2017 budget statement—and I want to call on behalf of—we need a commission of enquiry into Petrotrin, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I am demanding, we are demanding a commission of enquiry, because Petrotrin does not add up—what they did with Petrotrin. Because in the Budget Statement 2017, the Minister of

Finance, under “Petrotrin” talked about:

“Petrotrin is a strategic economic and security investment as it meets 100 per cent of our liquid energy needs. It is an integrated company as it operates the country’s only refinery at Pointe-a-Pierre,”—this is a quote in the Budget Statement—“which is partly supplied from its own production from land and marine...It also employs 5,000...”—people.

This is in the 2017 budget.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege, the Member is demonstrating serious flu-like symptoms. Is he supposed to be here? I am raising this in all sincerity. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Attorney General, thanks for drawing it to my attention, but I believe every Member has been scanned and screened [*Interruption and desk thumping*] before their entry in here. I also just want to advise, I take it for granted that every Member is responsible. I also take it for granted that every Member knows the health protocols. Okay? So that I will allow the Member to continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to tell the Attorney General, I am fine, Minister, Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*] All right? I took a COVID test on my own, I am COVID free. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] Yeah, I will need that after.

As I close, my time is running out and I have so much to say, again, on the lack of performance of Minister Khan. Really and truly, I want to go back to that article of December 24th—12, where Curtis Williams says to the Minister, “Please go now Minister Khan”, please go now. And when you read the article, Madam Speaker, and I will quote from the article. The article says:

“It is no secret that...

Khan often insists that...”

And I quote and I just want to say:

“There are those who may argue that Khan is not the one to blame, they have seen how the minister of everything has all but usurped the power of the Minister of Energy, who is often forced to genuflect in his presence praising Stuart Young for doing the work that the substantive Minister of Energy should be leading, but there is also the question of Khan’s health and whether he has the energy to run the Ministry of Energy.

It is not just the fall in production that we must judge Khan’s performance by. He has overseen a botched bid round where a year later no block has been awarded nearshore and the bids made by Royal Dutch Shell and BPTT were almost not worth the paper they were written on...

Khan has been Minister of Energy and, to date, there is not a single deep water bid round...”—have been approved or put out to tender.

“It may not be apparent but the PNM has been in power for 14 of the last 19 years. In the last 11 of the PNM’s 14 years it has failed to award a single block for exploration.

Khan has had the dubious honour of overseeing the closure of Petrotrin, the collapse of the Point Lisas Estate...”

Madam Speaker: Member, just remember while you might be quoting, okay, you are adopting it. We refer to each other in here in a particular way. So maybe you can correct what you are quoting. Okay?

Mr. D. Lee: Sorry. I refer to Minister Khan, sorry, Minister:

“Khan has had the dubious honour of overseeing the closure of Petrotrin, the collapse of the Point Lisas Estate and it appears that...”—Minister Khan—
“is only allowed to be the bearer of bad news or defend the indefensible in

Parliament. Any good news”—in the energy sector—“is announced by the Prime Minister.

I have known”—this is the article—“Mr. Khan for a long time and he is always a pleasant man”—I agree with that—“But when it’s time to go we must exit the stage. We must all know when we can do no more.” [*Desk thumping*]

“Rather than being pushed out, the Energy Minister should do the honourable thing and resign”—here today, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Minister Khan—“...know this stint as Minister of Energy has been one of failure.”

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I will close now, but my other colleagues will ensure that we take apart the performance of Minister Khan systematically here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, and I have a lot more to say in my wind up. Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member? Member?

Mr. D. Lee: Oh, sorry, Madam Speaker. I beg to move.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. Member for Tabaquite.

Ms. Haynes: Madam Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve my right to speak.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Motion being seconded, I shall now propose the question for debate. *Question proposed.*

2.20 p.m.

Madam Speaker: The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin

Khan): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have a lot to say today in my half an hour so I would not waste much time in responding to the

Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, save and except he has continuously said that I claimed that he has limited or no knowledge of the energy sector. His contribution today has not made me change by mind. [*Desk thumping*] But, Madam Speaker, I will start with this, under the Petroleum Act, Chap. 62:01, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is the regulator of the energy sector and as such I accept and take full responsibility for the performance of the sector, through good times and sometimes through not so good times. But before I begin I want to make four fundamental points, not to the Opposition but to the country so that they could understand the dynamics of what is happening.

First and foremost, the dynamics of the energy sector, it is not played out here in Port of Spain. It is not about a Motion of no confidence from Pointe-a-Pierre against Trinidad's Energy Minister, it is decisions made in the boardrooms of international players that affect price and production. It is what happens in Houston, London, in The Hague, in Qatar and in Moscow; that is what shapes the energy sector because we are a global industry. Secondly, Trinidad and Tobago, we are fortunate to have some of the key global players in our industry. In upstream we have BP and Shell, second and third largest energy companies in the world; second only to ExxonMobil. We have BHP, the Australian giant, and EOG, a top US independent. On the downstream we have the likes of Proman, Methanex and Nutrien, global players in petrochemical, production and marketing. In the state sector we have the NGC, Heritage and Paria; that is point two.

Point three, this country's economic well-being, especially its foreign exchange earning capacity largely depends on the export of four commodities, crude oil, natural gas in the form of LNG, methanol and urea. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is right and I will say it again, we do not determine prices. We are at the mercy of the market. We are price takers whether we like it or not. When

commodity prices are high, revenue is high, but when commodity prices are depressed as it currently is, we suffer some form of economic shock.

The fourth and final fundamental point I want to raise, the point that Government revenue, especially from energy sources which is all of our concern is a function of three factors, production volumes, commodity prices and the untold story is the fiscal regime. Today in my short discourse I will show the interaction of these factors and demonstrate how this Government has performed creditably on all fronts to keep the industry viable in spite of COVID-19 and the softening of global commodity prices. For those of you, Madam Speaker, who have listened to me over the years, and it seems as though the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has done so, I am not one to cast blame, I take responsibility, but, Madam Speaker, I must contextualize this debate.

When the PNM returned to office in 2015 the industry was saddled with some major challenges, a continuum. There was declining production in both oil and gas but this was driven largely by low levels of upstream investment. There were outstanding contract negotiations between the NGC upstream suppliers and downstream gas contracts. The latter led to major claims on the NGC to the tune of US \$750million. Under this administration we have reduced those claims to a mere US \$363 million.

Thirdly, there was dwindling revenue, and I will deal with this later on because of more than generous fiscal incentives that were offered to the energy companies by the UNC. You all threw the baby out with the bathwater. Fourthly, there was significant revenue leakage as identified in the Poten report from 2011 to 2014 under the UNC because of LNG trading issues, largely as a result of transfer pricing and arbitrage. And fifthly, and probably very importantly, we met—and it is again a continuum, a major loss-making state enterprise called Petrotrin that was

about to have, if not attended to, a systemic impact on the economy. What did we do?

I will deal with Petrotrin first because it is in the constituency of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Madam Speaker, if Petrotrin was left unattended this economy would have had some serious systemic impact. The situation was so serious that the hon. Prime Minister himself addressed the nation on two occasions on the state of Petrotrin, in January 2017 and in September 2018.

The state of play was as follows: Petrotrin had a \$10 billion debt, a bullet payment of US \$850 million was due on November 2019. You know what is a bullet payment? Come up with the money or walk, you know. Where were they getting that from? At that point in time Petrotrin was owing the State in unpaid taxes and royalties, TT \$3billion. This one takes the cake, staff expenditure at Petrotrin made up 50 per cent of its total operating cost. There is no oil company in the world, and I can tell you that without fear of contradiction, where staff salaries made up 50 per cent of its operating cost. And more importantly now, the company did not have enough oil to run its refinery operation; it had to import two-thirds of the oil, 100,000 barrels a day and on every barrel you refined, you were losing US \$5. You were importing oil to lose money.

What did we do? The board of Petrotrin looked at it and they came up with the option, which was supported by the Cabinet, that we should focus on exploration and production and the terminalling facilities and close the refinery and put it on the market for a potential buyer or operator. We restructured Petrotrin. We formed a holding company and four subsidiaries and it is well known. And this is the assessment of the restructuring; Madam Speaker, I say here today, the restructuring of Petrotrin has been a success story. [*Desk thumping*] And I will go further to say that that probably is the understatement of the year. For Heritage—

listen to the figures—for the financial year 2019 which is its first year of operation, the company achieved a net profit of \$1.4billion, and for the 12 months ending September 30, 2020, it achieved an additional profit of \$884million after tax. Over that two-year period it paid \$1.9billion in taxes and royalties to the State, something that Petrotrin was not doing. This resulted because the lifting cost of Petrotrin had reduced substantially, that is the cost to lift a barrel of oil from \$35 to \$38 to \$28, and the fee lifting cost was a mere \$17. And listen to this one, its MOLO crude, which is the locally produced crude, was fetching good price on the international market.

When we restructured Petrotrin, you all will remember, David Abdulah, Caroline Seepersad-Bachan, Kevin Ramnarine, and a lot of UNC operatives were saying, “The crude has no value, how will you sell it?” Today I can say Heritage’s crude is selling at Brent minus \$2. This morning Brent was \$66 a barrel. In December last year, 2020, MOLO crude which is Petrotrin’s crude, for the first time in my 40-year history in the oil industry sold at a higher price than Galeota crude. Member for Mayaro, you know Galeota crude was the highest priced crude in the country. Imagine Petrotrin’s crude which is now Heritage crude is selling at a higher price than Galeota, and all that resulted from the restructuring exercise. Added to which, Madam Speaker, with the \$1.4billion in profit, Heritage is also servicing the entire debt portfolio of Petrotrin and it caused a refinancing of the bond without a Government guarantee. They refinanced the US \$850 million bond without a Government guarantee based on the cash flow only of Heritage. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, Paria is similarly successful. It made \$109 million in profit in its first year and \$176 million in its second year. Paria has secured the fuel supply of this country. The story goes on, the Guaracara refinery was put onto the

market; what has transpired from then to now has been well played out in the public domain, and as we speak the Minister of Finance has indicated this, that we will be going back out to the market as a result of the faddled Patriotic bidder. But, Madam Speaker, from a loss-making position of \$2 billion per year to a profit of over \$1 billion a year is a net increase of over \$3 billion per year. This is a corporate turnaround of epic proportion, [*Desk thumping*] and I say that almost boastfully. In fact, to me it is a case for a corporate turnaround case study for Harvard Business School, very rarely do you see that.

Madam Speaker, as an adjunct to this we have also managed to bring one of Petrotrin's former projects to fruition by working alongside a private entity called NiQuan Energy Trinidad Limited. NiQuan who acquired Petrotrin's incomplete gas-to-liquid plant in 2018 has now successfully completed the plant and has commenced commercial production. This is a 4,000 barrel a day ultra-low sulphur diesel production coming out of natural gas. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, on Monday the 8th—that is not this Monday, it is the following Monday, I will be officially commissioning the plant and the plant is producing at its full capacity, and if the Member of Parliament from Pointe-a-Pierre behaves himself over the next week, I may invite him.

Madam Speaker, let me now deal with the upstream issues. Led by the hon. Prime Minister, this Government engaged the upstream energy companies and obtained the commitment of a US \$12 billion investment over a five-year period. These investment projects are continuing. And I just want to make this significant point for those of you who have been reading the newspaper, it should be noted that at this juncture that because of a shift to a low carbon future, where in some cases it is a zero-carbon future, oil majors have reduced capital expenditure in the upstream sector. Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker, is one of few countries in

the world where this did not happen in any significant way. BP, Shell, EOG and BHP, they have all maintained their levels of upstream investment.

I will go through some of them now very quickly because time is short. On the BP side there is a Maersk Discoverer rig, they are currently drilling the Matapal field and the Matapal field is supposed to come on stream in quarter one 2022, that will bring 400million standard cubic feet per day. The Cassia C compression platform which was expected to be on stream all now but there were delays because of COVID because the topside was being constructed in Mexico and the Mexico fabrication yard was hit by COVID, that production is now carded to come in the second quarter of 2022. Production from Ginger is expected to come on in 2023 and Macadamia SIP in 2024. On the Shell side, Shell is drilling Barracuda and Colibri in the east coast and north coast, that will bring on an additional 450 million standard cubic feet per day. And then there is the Manatee development, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre spoke about Manatee.

Madam Speaker, there is something called a unitization treaty where gas fields that straddles into national boundaries are subjected to unitization treaties. We, through the Prime Minister, have successfully decoupled Manatee from Loran. We had a meeting with the Shell CEO a couple of months ago, the Prime Minister, myself and Minister Young, and he told the Prime Minister never in his whole career has he seen something that like happen, [*Desk thumping*] but you are not speaking about that, you know, you all were criticizing Dragon. You all were glad when the US sanctions came and stopped the Dragon project. You all—the Member for Oropouche East wrote the US ambassador begging him to sanction Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] Today we went and decoupled our umbilical cord from Loran and nobody says anything and that production will come in, in 2024, 700 million standard cubic feet per day. But you do not say the good things, you know,

because your focus is so negative. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not blame you for being negative to the PNM, we are your political opponents but do not be negative to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] There is something more in this country than the PNM and the UNC, you know. There is something significantly more in this country at stake and unless we start to see that, this country is going nowhere, you know. [*Desk thumping*] On the BHP side there is another rig drilling for BHP. They are drilling the Ruby oilfield that is supposed to come on in November of this year. It will bring in 15,000 barrels of new oil production and all that will be terminal in the Galeota tank farm; Member for Mayaro, so you should not join this debate eh. All right? [*Desk thumping*]

The deep-water drilling exercise, we have found with BHP between 5 to 6 trillion cubic feet of gas. BHP has already applied to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to go into the market development phase. You know what that means. That is the final step before the declaration of commerciality and an FID, and once deep-water gas comes on stream, it will come on stream in 2025 and that will bring as much as 1 billion cubic feet of gas per day to this country. [*Desk thumping*] So the outlook of the future is good but oilfield projects have a gestation period. You cannot want production from this month go up by 200 million cubic feet per day the next month, you know, it does not happen that way. And if you can move a Motion of no confidence on an experienced energy Minister and your only narrative is randomly quoting a series of newspaper articles, [*Desk thumping*] something is wrong, you know, because the newspaper journalists themselves do not understand the industry. [*Desk thumping*]

I wanted to deal with some—Madam Speaker, could you tell me up to what time I have?

Madam Speaker: Time?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Yeah.

Madam Speaker: You have 11 minutes left.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Eleven.

There were fiscal matters which probably the Minister of Finance could deal with more explicitly than I can, but under the UNC you all had 100 per cent write-off on exploration expenditure in the year it was expended; that is madness. Imagine you are drilling an exploration well for US \$30 million and you are writing off that entire capital cost in the year it was expended; you have no tax liability then? Other capital expenditure was written off over a three-year period, we changed that, we put it over a five-year period and we stopped the 100 per cent exploration write-off. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Finance instituted a 12 per cent royalty on natural gas in 2018. We have collected \$7.2 billion in natural gas royalties which did not exist. So when the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre says, royalties drop in 2020, it dropped because prices were low. But if royalty dropped under UNC it had no royalty period. [*Desk thumping*]

On the side of LNG leakages which is an area I wanted to cover but I do not have the time, but the same Poten report said that this country was foregoing revenue in the tune of billions of US dollars per year because of transfer pricing issues coming out of Atlantic. Okay? And does the transfer pricing issue say? When you sell LNG it is priced Point Fortin FOB and under those old contracts the Point Fortin FOB price was based on Henry Hub prices. What was happening in the sector was that for tax purposes the companies were declaring Henry Hub prices but the actual cargoes were going into Asia, into China, into Korea, into Japan and selling at three times the price that was declared FOB Point Fortin and none of that additional revenue was getting back to Trinidad; we have plugged that hole. And, Madam Speaker, I will spend my last couple of minutes on—10

minutes on Point Lisas.

Madam Speaker, a lot has been said about the current challenges being experienced by the petrochemical sector in Point Lisas and attempts to blame the Government for these issues. It is only someone who is totally ignorant of how the industry works that can make such unfounded accusation. [*Desk thumping*] There is something called the gas value chain that has to work in its entirety for the industry to be viable. The gas value chain involves four components, upstream purchase price agreements, the midstream aggregator and transporter, which is the NGC; the downstream cost of production and the commodity market prices. A chain is as strong as its weakest link, any link in that chain breaks the whole chain is destroyed. So we now have to go into the gas value chain that deals with Point Lisas and bring some order.

We have engaged an international consultant called Gas Strategies out of London, an expert at that. And we have a team that includes—that is chaired by former Finance Minister, ORTT, Mr. Wendell Mottley, and I want to thank him here publicly [*Desk thumping*] for his service to this country. The team also includes myself and Minister Young and the PS in energy. [*Desk thumping*] And Minister Young and myself as Ministers, we are under direction from the chairman of the committee, Mr. Mottley. [*Desk thumping*] That is the respect we have for the guy. But what has happened in Point Lisas is really a precipitous fall in methanol and urea prices. That is the genesis of the problem, it has nothing to do with this Government.

In 2014 which you boast about, ammonia price was US \$500 per metric ton. You know what was the price in 2020, \$200; from \$500 to \$200. It has nothing to do with this Government, you know, and the \$500 had nothing to do with the UNC either, you know, it had to deal with international market conditions. In methanol

in 2014 the price was \$400; in 2020 it was under \$200, so there is an uptick and there is an upscaling of the price in the first quarter of 2021. Prices are now moving back up and we hope that that trend will continue and bring some sanity to the system. [*Desk thumping*] But on the shutting down of plants, plants have been shut down all over the world over this COVID period. During 2020 ammonia plants in China, Ukraine, France, Qatar and Brazil have been mothballed and idled. Methanol plants in Chile have been down.

Urea plants have been shut down in India, Bolivia, China, in Brazil; all these things are happening internationally, Trinidad is not immune. However, Trinidad has some advantages, our petrochemical plants have already paid back its initial capital investment and Trinidad and Tobago is still considered one of the lowest costs of production of ammonia compared to countries like Russian and Indonesia. So what I have tried to do, Madam Speaker, is to give a general indication of how this industry works. I could have spoken here for two hours, but all I have is half an hour.

So as I conclude, I want to say that I have outlined with the greatest honesty the challenges the industry faces and how we are successfully overcoming them based on sound Government policy. Under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley and his energy team led by myself and my technocrats, we will chart these rough waters ahead, and we are making significant progress and achieving great success. It is that progress that the Opposition UNC are very uncomfortable with because they do not like to see Trinidad and Tobago progress. [*Desk thumping*] So, Madam Speaker, as I conclude, this no confidence Motion has no foundation in fact or performance. Let me repeat that, this no confidence Motion has no foundation in fact or in performance. [*Desk thumping*] And just like the one brought against my colleague with the Minister of National Security, it will

fall flat on its belly. [*Desk thumping*]

And as I close, Madam Speaker, my final comment is this, the only Motion of no confidence that has succeeded in recent times was on August 10, 2020, when the country voted on a no confidence Motion against the United National Congress [*Desk thumping*] and returned in resounding fashion, the People's National Movement for another five-year term in office. And we plan to govern with honesty and integrity over this five years and transparency. I thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before the Minister clears his papers I would remind him, January 25th was also a Motion of no confidence [*Desk thumping*] and the party that he loves lost Tobago, a grand mandate, and lost in Trinidad and Tobago, three electoral districts. [*Desk thumping*] So keep in mind January 25th as you love to attach yourself to August 2020.

Madam Speaker, I waited with bated breath for the Minister to pull from the few pages he used, his letter of resignation and to relieve himself of the burden that he carries, a burden as the first Minister of Energy to preside over the historic and proud energy sector and to have it in such a state of decline, in such a state of under-development where today under this Minister—

2.50p.m.

And I would indicate to the Minister that our attack today is not really on Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan—you are 50 per cent of the Minister. There is a next 50 per cent that we will hear later today. [*Desk thumping*] You may be 25 per cent. I am being gracious that you are 50 per cent. So the other Minister of Energy and Energy Industries will speak later, but this Minister has presided over decline. The

gist of his contribution today is the medicine is working, notwithstanding the patient died. [*Desk thumping*] But the medicine is good.

When we were planning this Motion with the very distinguished Chief Whip, who has had the courage to put on the table this Motion. We planned for this Motion knowing that the Minister will respond after, and as we predicted, he would come and use some energy-like jargon and speak about decoupling, and speak about gas pricing and all types of jargon, but he will evade the fact that 5,000-plus employees are out of work, that tens of thousands of people have been left on the breadline, that today, areas in this country are suffering and under the poverty line because of the action of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and his Government.

He was quick to berate the Opposition Chief Whip to say he is not qualified, and he does not know what he is talking about, and this is a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who sits in a Cabinet where an engineer is the Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, we also made another prediction when we were planning. We spent long hours planning for this Motion. Indeed, we did not take this decision by guess, by “vaps”, it was well calculated. We knew they would come and attack Petrotrin and seek to ill speak the former Partnership administration, and carry that type of narrative. We knew that, that is why we were prepared for that.

You see, I want to remind the very distinguished Minister of a statement he made in the Senate on May15, 2017. Hear this, Minister Franklin Khan, he said and I quote:

“However, somewhere around 2009-2010 we dropped the ball, because upstream investment did not match the rate of production. It is what we call in the E&P business, walking up the down escalator, because the escalator is

coming down and you are trying to walk down. So you have to make investment just to stay where you are, that is what natural decline does to you. Wells decline naturally and you just have to keep investing to find new reserves of oil and gas just to keep your production stable, otherwise it will decline until it reaches the floor. Upstream investment dried up in 2009, 2010.”

He admitted that the major decline was not caused by the People’s Partnership, it was caused by a previous PNM regime of which he was a part. [*Desk thumping*] So you made a confession in 2017, which is good for the soul, but today blames the People’s Partnership, as you take the batting crease today.

The Minister knows, because I think he can read some basic English and understand some basic figures. The Minister knows that from 2010 to 2016, Petrotrin paid 20.3 billion in taxes, royalties and other statutory obligations. The Minister is aware that during this period only bpTT, with TT 37.1 billion and NGC with 32.3 billion, contributed more to the Government’s revenue than Petrotrin. In 2014, Petrotrin’s payments peaked at \$6.7 billion. All of this declined by 2016, it declined.

So today, they bad talk Petrotrin. It was a burden on the Treasury. Today I hear the Minister speaking: 50 per cent of operation cost was in staff. This is the same attitude they are taking to WASA. WASA be careful, Petrotrin is your future. [*Desk thumping*] But I am not here to talk about WASA today, I am here to talk about the energy sector and Petrotrin, because the delegitimization and, in some cases, the downright criminalization of Petrotrin, is what they will do to WASA. So hear this, when we came into office—

Madam Speaker: Member. Member. I find the word “criminalization” unparliamentary. Withdraw it, and I know you can find a better word.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I will withdraw the “criminalization”. I will say the delegitimization, and leave it there.

Madam Speaker, 2010 to 2015, oil production at Petrotrin was stabilized and, indeed, was increasing. Do you know that Petrotrin was able to secure a US loan of \$500 million without a guarantee from the Partnership Government? We hired competent managers, which they later fired. The Manning administration, and we must remember—because I think a child of his is on the compound somewhere here—the Manning administration and the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration made a mammoth investment in the refinery, made an investment, a multibillion-dollar investment in the refinery at Petrotrin.

Today, we have old iron at Pointe-a-Pierre waiting to be sold away as scrap, because of the incompetence of this administration. [*Desk thumping*] While the Patrick Manning administration, the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration made a multibillion-dollar investment together, because we saw the potential of the refinery, today, they have made Trinidad and Tobago what Guyana was 40 years ago, and Guyana has become what Trinidad and Tobago was a mere 10 years ago. That is the outcome.

To speak today about all these nice, fluffy investments—we have it in 2024, 2025. You know it is always happening in the future, but the country cannot take them seriously. They were in a conga line in Caracas. They were in a conga line celebrating Dragon Field, and just as today the Minister told us, “Do not worry about the suffering you face now, in 2025, 2024—” In 2016/'17, when they were in that conga line, they were telling us the same thing. So you cannot trust them, you cannot believe anything they say today about any investment for the future.

Madam Speaker, what you can believe and what you could trust is the word of some of the persons that we know. You know, the Minister has this problem,

and, it is the Government. It is a problem that they all face. You know, anytime they talk, they talk about they understand the industry, they understand the jargon. They understand the realities and so on of the energy sector, and not even the reporters, qualified, educated reporters from the business editions of newspapers, understand the sector.

So today they frowned when the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre was quoting Curtis Williams. Apparently they prefer Natalie Legore, [*Desk thumping*] but Curtis Williams, they frowned when he was quoting.

Madam Speaker, there is a quotation here as well I wanted to give you. You see, the Minister made another issue, which they always repeat. I mean, these are things they repeat with monotonous frequency, hoping your hapless, clueless citizenry, all of whom failed Common Entrance, will believe them. They said that the Partnership Government gave incentives, and to use the term the Minister used today, “throw out the baby with the bath water” and so on.

Madam Speaker, I just want to quote, in the *Trinidad Express*, March 14, 2018, outgoing regional President of bpTT Norman Christie, confirmed that it was the incentives of the Partnership Government that led to all the investments that we see, projects today, getting fruition. Let me quote Norman Christie. “So yuh doh like Curtis Williams. How about Norman Christie, yuh think he a little brighter? Yuh doh want to believe Pointe-a-Pierre, but how about Norman Christie then?”

He says:

“‘the carry-forward effect’ of the capital allowance incentive granted by the previous People’s Partnership administration is likely to depress the company’s tax payments to the Government in the future.”

He said that whatever projects that we are now seeing coming to fruition is because of the incentive framework of the former People’s Partnership administration.

[*Desk thumping*] He said it is:

“those incentives—which allowed BPTT to bring forward its capital expenditure allowances—were instrumental in supporting BP’s decision to invest US \$6billion...between 2011 and 2017, which led to the construction of the Juniper platform, the establishment of the TROC (Trinidad Onshore Compression project) and the discovery of 2 trillion cubic feet...of gas in the Savannah and Macadamia exploration wells, off Trinidad’s east coast.”

It was the Partnership’s investment framework and strategy.

Today you should be praising Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Kevin Ramnarine and others, [*Desk thumping*] that you have some projects that have borne fruit, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago today are not in the situation of the worst countries of the world, because of Kamla Persad-Bissessar, because of Kevin Ramnarine and because of that Government of which they were a part. This is Norman Christie speaking. This is not a reporter that you do not like in the newspaper.

Madam Speaker, Chairman Andrew Jupiter predicts:

Petrotrin to make a profit next year.

This was April 27, 2017, in the Trinidad *Guardian*. Who is Andrew Jupiter? Chairman of Petrotrin:

State-owned Petrotrin is poised to return to profitability next year according to Chairman Andrew Jupiter:

“In an interview with the *Business Guardian*...”—and so on.

He said:

Next year our plan is to make a profit in 2018 to 2019 because we have a strategic plan. As you know, we have a full plan.

And this is the issue.

In the few minutes I have left, I do not want to quote extensively, but a Chairman who they appointed had faith in Petrotrin in 2017. [*Desk thumping*] What happened? Was it the scare of a fake oil scandal? Was it the fear of investigations by police and the DPP in “Petrotrin books”, that you wind it up and throw all those boxes of data in a room where rain subsequently “wet it”, and it is now discarded? Was that why you closed it down? But they came and they vilified the workers. Remember there were stories about cleaners making X thousands of dollars in Petrotrin and so on, as if that was not part of a trade union agreement. That was part of collective bargaining, and today the Minister raised the issue, so I will respond to him as well.

You know, they came to the Parliament—and before I say that, the 2017 budget—I am just tying in former Chairman Andrew Jupiter—2017 budget, the Minister of Finance of this country, who is still the Minister of Finance, he said, and I quote:

“...an important aspect of the strategy to enhance the contribution of the energy sector...Petrotrin is a strategic, economic and security investment as it meets 100 per cent of our liquid energy needs. It is an integrated company...”

The Minister was saying this. He was giving praise to Petrotrin, and indicating that Petrotrin is on the rise and will contribute significantly to the economy in the years ahead.

What they did in layman terms is “dey mash up” Petrotrin into parts, and the part that was always making the profit, they now declare that part is now making profit. [*Desk thumping*] But it was always making a profit.

Madam Speaker, the refinery matter, I just want to close with that. We had predicted that Petrotrin—that in dealing with the refinery they were fooling,

bamboozling, cunning the workers and the union. There is a statement by the Minister of Finance, 20 September, 2019, hon. Colm Imbert.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Standing Order 48(6), “cunning, bamboozling”, please.

Dr. R. Moonilal: He does not like what?

Madam Speaker: The Member has stood up on Standing Order 48(6). You used three words, one of which I think you well know is all right. The other two, particularly the third one, I just ask you to withdraw those two.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I withdraw anything that offends the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: No, no, well it is not the Minister of Health, it is this honourable House.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Speaker, I withdraw anything that offends the House as identified by the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker, let me get quickly to Colm Imbert’s statement to the Parliament. It is dated 20 September, 2019. September 2019, in the build-up to the general election, he came and gave us an outline of the findings of all the committees, and indicated that the Government choice of the preferred bidder is indeed Patriotic Energies and Technologies Company Limited, and he boasted on that day. He beat the table. The parliamentary carpenter had to come and fix the table when he was finished. “He said is only a PNM Government could give workers a refinery to run.” It is only the PNM Government can give business to a trade union, and raised his voice with a crescendo that this was a great task of the Minister. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Point of order.

Dr. R. Moonilal: What Standing Order?

Mr. Imbert: Sit down!

Dr. R. Moonilal: “Who de hell he think he is to tell”— Madam Speaker, I withdraw that. I withdraw that. I withdraw that. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Just now. Just now. So Minister of Finance, you will apologize for just losing control there by blurting out, so stand up and apologize.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I apologize for telling the Member to sit down.

Madam Speaker: Good, thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Now can I raise my point of order please?

Madam Speaker: All right, thank you. Please have a seat. The other thing is that I have observed that somehow as transparent as the screen should be, apparently the travelling of the light through the dense glass is most probably affecting our sight, giving us some delayed response of the optic nerve. We all understand that when one Member stands, we allow them to make the point. Okay? And Member for Oropouche East, even though you have apologized, you are very seasoned, and I think you could control yourself much better than that expletive use of. Okay.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I ask the House to forgive me on my momentary—

Madam Speaker: We all have to try and temper the other. Yes, Member for Diego Martin North/East, I think you had a point of order.

Mr. Imbert: Yes 48(1). This is a Motion of no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. It is not anything to do with me and, therefore 48(1), Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, the matter deals with the refinery, which is a key asset in the energy sector. [*Desk thumping*] The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken a decision. It was communicated not by the Minister of Energy

and Energy Industries. It was communicated by the Minister of Finance, [*Desk thumping*] and the Government attempted in this manner to indicate that a preferred bidder was the company associated with the workers. We predicted that their proposal would be in the dustbin. Today, they have turned the procurement process for this refinery into “ol’ mas”. So while we had no J’ouvert and “ol’ mas” for Carnival, the “ol’ mas” was really Patriotic Energies, [*Desk thumping*] where in an unparalleled and miraculous series of events, they are meeting and treating with a bidder who has been rejected three times.

Mr. Imbert: Point of order, Madam Speaker. “And ah cyar tell him to sit down, because you will rule me out ah order.”

Madam Speaker: Member.

Mr. Imbert: He is disrespectful!

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, the Minister of Finance has stood up on a point of order. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, 48(1)—you hush! [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: No, no, no. It is either—

Dr. R. Moonilal: “I am not hearing dat.”

Hon. Member: “Yuh forget massa day done.”

Dr. R. Moonilal: “You think it is your grandfather or what?” [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance, I am on my legs. Member for Oropouche East, it is not all right to say it and then apologize. I think you know better. Okay? I am going to ask everybody, including the person who is talking about “massa day done”, and including the Member for Laventille West, who is speaking while I am on my legs, I will ask all Members to please observe the Standing Orders and maintain their calm. We have been talking in here about example. Okay? Example cannot be for only outside, it has to start from in here.

Mr. Imbert: The matter before the House is a Motion of no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. It is not a Motion of no confidence in the Government, 48(1).

Madam Speaker: And I have heard you. Please continue.

Dr. R. Moonilal: If he had done better in managing the refinery, we would not have been in this place today, where the procurement laws are being turned upside down.

Madam Speaker: Member, Member.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The Minister took all my time.

Mr. Hinds: Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(4). The speaker, the Member for Oropouche East made a very obnoxious comment about the Member for Diego Martin North/East's grandfather, in a derogatory, and in my view, racist way.

Madam Speaker: All right. I believe I had already—

Mr. Imbert: He did not apologize.

Madam Speaker: Before we moved on, the Member apologized and withdrew, and I said to the Member it is not all right to say things that should be not said and then apologize or withdraw. It was all dealt with. Member, you have one minute left.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I will end on this issue of the management of a refinery that received multibillion-dollar investment, that was under the charge of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. That today, because of the mismanagement of that process of bidding and procuring a lease operator, or a buyer for the refinery, today they have undermined every single

principle of procurement law. They have undermined every single principle of accountability in Government, and the refinery at Petrotrin, Pointe-a-Pierre, is to be sold as scrap iron, because of the lack of management, of care and incompetence of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime

Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, quite frankly I thought that my intervention here this afternoon would be a more taxing one, and an intervention where after both the mover of the Motion and the first speaker up for the Opposition, I would have had marginally to come to the defence of my colleague, Minister Franklin Khan, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. But the truth is there was absolutely nothing, certainly in the contribution of the last speaker for Oropouche East, that requires any effort and any response from an energy perspective whatsoever.

There may be a few things that were raised by the mover of the Motion, that I will get to in a short while. But, you see, Madam Speaker, in my few short moments here today, what I intend to do, through you, is to tell the population what has happened in the energy sector since September 2015, and to state facts that will be impossible to bring a different story to or a different light to, despite the best efforts of those on the other side, and those who may be paid to try and put a different spin on what the energy sector looks like.

First of all, I would like to start off by just a brief introduction and a brief few words of my personal experience with respect to the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Minister Khan.

Minister Khan is a very experienced geologist. In my interactions with him

and the privilege of being able to work with Minister Khan over the last five years, in extremely trying and difficult global circumstances in our energy sector, I have learnt a lot. He has shown, time and time again, in his own way and his own manner, when we are in the most difficult of negotiations, and when we are trying to strategize on the future policies for energy of Trinidad and Tobago, the amount of experience and expertise Minister Khan brings to the table in the energy sector.

I start my contribution by saying, for whatever it is worth, I have the highest levels of confidence in Minister Khan's ability as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*]

Because you see we have been through a very difficult journey. Coming in, in September 2015, Minister Khan as we all know was not the substantive Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. But the Prime Minister, nonetheless, from day one said to the country, that the energy sector is so important, under a PNM administration, to the development and the future of the country, that the Office of the Prime Minister would be involved in assisting and directing the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, as we went forward in rebuilding a decimated energy sector from 2015. And that is exactly what happens.

If the population looks at the record, they would see that the supposed Chairman of the Energy subcommittee of Cabinet attended no meetings between 2010 and 2015. Maybe that explains why we met the sector in the way that it was. Furthermore, I would just like to just put this on the record, the two most disastrous negotiations in the energy sector that have saddled this country with a burden, both on the production of natural gas, and worse yet, on the cost of sale of natural gas from NGC to a downstream, were negotiated by the UNC administrations, during their period of time in office.

In one, it was so ridiculous that they were negotiating a gas price for a

downstreamer that was supposed to go to La Brea. So they gave a cheaper gas price and a gas contract for the future, to the company as though it was in La Brea. The company then built itself in Point Lisas, but rather than try to renegotiate, try to fix that, they left it. Today, that is the single worst gas contract that the country of Trinidad and Tobago has to deal with. Who was it done by? A UNC administration. [*Desk thumping*]

The second one unfortunately that now is the worst yoke around the neck of the NGC, was unfortunately the CGCL gas contract, and CGCL contract. You see, they like to boast about foreign direct investment, and that is what they did. But we have heard, and we have repeated time and time again in this Parliament and elsewhere, that when we came in and met, there was a complete decimation of the natural gas allocation policy by the UNC administration, just around 2012, 2013, '14, '15, with respect to that contract. The first crisis we had to face as an administration coming in, is renegotiating the terms of gas allocation for that and certain other parts of the contract. That is energy sector UNC style.

During the period of time, they did not negotiate a single upstream contract. So I sat here and I listened to try and understand how they would say they were responsible for gas production, et cetera. What they did is they used fiscal measures, but those fiscal measures were not for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago, because the same fiscal measures that the Member for Oropouche East just spoke about, by the former President of bpTT, were really done to benefit those persons, to benefit the external, the upstreamers.

So what we have had to do from day one, and we have done, and I am going to give a very brief run through, from 2015, is re-negotiate and reposition for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what this administration has done in the energy sector. We came in, we met billions of dollars in claims against the NGC,

because there were gas curtailments prior to 2015.

When it was raised by the then PNM Opposition, we were told it was maintenance of plants, and it was maintenance of the upstream platforms, but that was not true. Also, not a single downstream gas contract, gas supply contract, was negotiated, because, you see, what NGC was, it was the personal treasure box and treasure trove. Madam Speaker, \$16 billion raided out of the NGC, which then tied NGC's hands at a time when NGC should be able to now use parts of that \$16 billion to invest and to divest their portfolio, but none of that was thought of. Rather it was: Let us use—and we know the history.

Take out billions of dollars in cash from NGC to build a Beetham wastewater plant that will never get off the ground. Take millions and billions of dollars out, and we found out at the time, for constituencies, to award overpriced contracts in constituencies using NGC, but that is not the energy sector style of a PNM administration.

https://trinidadexpress.com/business/local/outgoing-bpitt-boss-less-taxes-in-future/article_26d398a4-273f-11e8-b357-9b776c3c4e84.html

https://www.google.com/search?ei=aO88YI2kLqyq5wLz062wDw&q=Petrotrin+to+make+a+profit+next+year&oq=Petrotrin+to+make+a+profit+next+year&gs_lcp=Cgdnd3Mtd2l6EAxKBQgSEgExUABYAGCbIWgAcAB4AIABaIgBaJIBAzAuMZgBAKoBB2d3cy13aXrAAQE&sclient=gws-wiz&ved=0ahUKEwiN-ODgnI_vAhUs1VkKHfNpC_YQ4dUDCA0

3.20 p.m.

So on the upstream side, what did we do? On the upstream side, under the leadership of the Member for Diego Martin West, the Prime Minister, he assembled a team that included the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister,

myself, his Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and we began making the rounds. We began talking to—and it started with an Energy Spotlight to highlight to the people of this country what had happened in the energy sector, the leakages, how over the years the contracts were not in favour of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And we went to all of the boardrooms of the upstreamers: to EOG; to BHP in Melbourne, Australia; to Shell in The Hague; to BP in London and we stood as a team and said, “Look, the time has come, with the greatest of respect, for us to renegotiate better terms and conditions for Trinidad and Tobago.” Because, you see, that is what a PNM administration did, [*Desk thumping*] looking after the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

To stand on the other side and boast that what we did is fiscal policies—and what that basically means to the population, through you, these fiscal policies that they just highlighted, through the Member for Oropouche East, is they gave away tax, they gave away earnings, they gave away revenue for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And for what? For gas that is being pulled out of the ground and it disappears forever.

So what we did do? We went and we sat down and renegotiated, and coming out of the negotiations with BP, we got billions of dollars paid in cheques for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Coming out of the negotiations with Shell, we also got billions of dollars paid in cheques to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

They consistently talk about Houston and the meetings that went on in Houston and attacking the Prime Minister and myself. And here today I heard them say, Minister Khan was left behind. Absolutely not true. At the time, unfortunately, Minister Khan was facing some health issues and he was recovering, otherwise he would have been there at the forefront. But that is how a PNM administration operates, with leadership at the head, the Prime Minister directing and leading.

And we have said time and time again, we were not the ones who negotiated the price. But what the Prime Minister did is come off a plane straight away into a meeting with the highest levels of BP, and we pushed them and we told them, they have to break the deadlock.

And I was in the room and then I left the room and I called the NGC team, and this is an appropriate time to thank some people because, you see, when we came in as an administration, the NGC had been decimated. Not only had they taken all of the money out of NGC treasury and utilized it in non-energy sector programmes and projects, there was no leadership in NGC. None. None whatsoever. In came Mr. Gerry Brooks, and would like to thank him and Prof. Andrew Jupiter at the—

Mr. Ratiram: Standing Order 48(1). How would the Minister—[*Inaudible*] I do not understand the relevance—

Hon. S. Young: Well, you would not. You do not understand energy.

Mr. Ratiram:—[*Inaudible*] the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Madam Speaker: Okay. All right. So, Minister of National Security, I am going to give you a little leeway for you to tie in all of this to the point you wish to make—the overall point.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, as I said at the outset, it is to outline all that has been done in the PNM administration in the energy sector. I am responding at this stage directly to the allegation about Houston and that the Prime Minister negotiated these disastrous contracts. Absolutely not true. There were no upstream gas contracts negotiated in the period 2010 to 2015, and let the country know that left our gas sector in a complete disarray and a crisis.

Mr. Ratiram: Standing Order 48(1)—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. I understand the interruptions, you know,

and especially by that Member because as they are proving here today, there is no clue of how to run an energy sector. [*Desk thumping*]

Let us get now to the NGC. And I was about to thank Mr. Gerry Brooks, Prof. Andrew Jupiter for the work that they did, and then along came Mark Loquan as the president of NGC. And Mark Loquan and his team at the NGC are providing excellent support as the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries goes along now renegotiating contracts. Is the energy sector now in a much more stable position? The answer is yes. It is the global commodity prices that are affecting us. But for the first time, again, what went on from September 2015 is the new negotiation—the negotiation of new gas supply contracts by NGC with down-streamers.

And, you see, when they talk about plants closing down and this one and that one—what has happened is a PNM administration has stood strong and not buckled at the knees when certain down-streamers were trying to get more than their fair share. And the plants that have closed are, as Minister Khan said, inefficient plants. And none of this has anything to do with Minister Khan. It is all about the global commodity prices. But what have we done during that last five—the last five years? We have negotiated countless—assisted NGC in the negotiation of countless downstream contracts with the same Nutrien, with the same Methanex, right now with MHTL, Proman, with other down-streamers in the industry. None of that was done in the period 2010 to 2015.

On the upstream side, we have gas supply contracts from the upstreamers. We got a price from EOG, we got a price from BP, negotiated with Shell. Some of the things Minister Khan was not able to talk about is: what are the exciting times ahead, with respect to the deep-water finds by BHP. And it was the Prime Minister, in Melbourne, when BHP globally was getting rid of assets in the energy sector, that persuaded them that Trinidad remained a profitable province, worked with the

Government of Trinidad and Tobago, continued to invest in Trinidad and Tobago and you will get the returns. And BHP is here today sitting on the largest gas find for decades in the deep-water and we are currently in discussions with BHP to commercialize that.

I sit here and every time, Madam Speaker, I hear the other side talk about Dragon and the way they mock it, if they cared about Trinidad and Tobago, they would take a different approach. Because anyone who understands that gas and oil are finite resources, and when you pull up the resources and they go, it is not coming back, would know that the future of Trinidad and Tobago's gas industry to an extent, a large extent depends on cross-border gas.

So, yes, what was achieved with Dragon was phenomenal. We had a negotiated commercial term sheet and the price of gas was extremely competitive. We had even negotiated in there for the people of Trinidad and Tobago something called a power tranche, where subsidized gas would go towards the production of electricity but because the US sanctions came, that had to be put of ice. And all we hear in here is laughter and they are happy to see that Trinidad and Tobago cannot get a cross-border gas. But what does a PNM administration do despite all of the utterances of those on the other side—the first two speakers? We do not just sit there stumped. We then begin negotiating with Venezuela to de-unitize Loran-Manatee. And exactly as the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said, that was achieved. So now we have the ability to get the Manatee gas. These are things that, Madam Speaker, should not be underestimated.

Just to deal very quickly with some points made by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. He talked about going to the HSF, the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and was mocking the Minister of Finance for having to dip in there. But you know what? If there was still money left in NGC, that \$16billion, one might not

have to go there. [*Desk thumping*] So let the country remember—Madam Speaker, through you, let the country remember and listen to the hypocrisy and the irony of those on the other side saying, do not touch the rainy day fund, when they took \$16 billion out of NGC.

The next point I would like to clarify because it is being circulated in the public, they talk about royalties from Shell dropping to \$10million. Again, it shows a lack of understanding of the type of energy contracts. Royalties come from E&P licences, exploration and production licences of which Shell has a fraction. So Shell's payment of royalty is expected to be below because what Shell has is production sharing contracts and they pay through the production sharing contracts. So that is no point there at all.

The secrecy of gas deals. Again, anyone understanding anything in the energy sector would have to appreciate that all gas deals must be confidential. And I want the population of Trinidad and Tobago to know something now. In the years 2015 to 2020, the UNC and their operatives kept, with freedom information requests, trying to penetrate and get the answers and the details of gas deals. If those became public, we are no longer competitive as a gas province. But that is what the UNC will do to undermine Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Just to end very briefly, Madam Speaker, the only point that the last speaker, the Member for Oropouche East, made that was worth, in my humble opinion, responding to is when he talked about a multibillion investments in Petrotrin under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar-led government, the Member for Siparia. Let the population know that those investments failed because of a lack of management, simple management of the contracts, and cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. So yes, they might have been a good idea. What they did was burdened Petrotrin with over \$1.5 billion of debt and did nothing to manage what has

become scrap iron; the Samsung contract.

I wish I had time, Madam Speaker, to go into how Petrotrin was restructured but the simple point is this: a PNM administration between 2015 and 2020 took on a very difficult issue, the restructuring of Petrotrin that was bleeding and losing \$2billion a year, had a debt financing coming up that was negotiated by a PNM administration under a competent board. And again, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Wilfred Espinet and his team for doing what they did in restructuring Petrotrin and able to restructure the debt without a government guarantee. We have heard Heritage and Paria are now profitable and, Madam Speaker, those are but some of the examples of how a PNM administration deals with the energy sector as opposed to the decimation by a UNC administration. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*): I thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, after listening to the Minister of National Security, I would like to advise him to stay in national security where you are a failure and do not get involved in energy matters.

Hon. Member: Duppy boy.

Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, notwithstanding what was said today, I can stand here and say, without certainty, that when we left office in 2015, all plants in Point Lisas were operating and we did not have eight plants down as we do today under this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Madam Speaker, in addition, when we left office in 2015, there were no expired contracts between NGC and the upstream suppliers. I keep hearing that fiction in Parliament. I also find the comment about future gas supply to be inaccurate as BP had sanctioned the largest investment in this country's history in

August 2014. [*Desk thumping*] So give credit where credit is due. We were better than this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

And if there is any day that will go in the annals of history as a day associated with the destruction of our Point Lisas industries, it is that day in March 2017, when the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security, leaving out the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, they visited Houston in Texas, and hear what was the agenda, to develop strategies for expanding the downstream industries. They discussed offshore development, they also discussed BP's continuing commitment to investing in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, that represents the signal failure of this Government's involvement [*Desk thumping*] in the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, the remit of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, according to the *Gazette*, includes a National Petroleum Marketing Company and its associated companies of NATSTAR and NATPET, Madam Speaker. So I will be talking specifically about the Minister's lack of performance, his poor track record with NPMC.

Now, Madam Speaker, when one looks at the performance of the Minister with respect to NP, one understands that he is the worst Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in our country's, not only post-independence, but pre-independence history. This Minister is no Errol Mahabir. He is no Patrick Manning or Overand Padmore, or if we go back into the Legislative Council that predated our independence era, he is no Lord Cochrane, no Randolph Rust, no Colonel Drake. These were people of vision who had a sense that Trinidad and Tobago ought to be an important energy hub in the western hemisphere.

Madam Speaker, from 1857, our industry—oil industry has, with brief intermissions, continued to grow and develop. Today we witness its complete

destruction. My colleagues before me have spoken about the numerous industries that have been closed under this Minister's watch. Like those industries, it seems as if the National Petroleum Marketing Company of Trinidad and Tobago is on track for a grim fate due to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries' complete lack of vision.

Madam Speaker, I have worked in NP for 18 years and let me state, at this moment, I benefit from a pension and the company's medical plan. I saw the vision that NP's past leaders had for the company and for Trinidad and Tobago's place in the energy—global energy market. Madam Speaker, what I see now is a future of uncertainty and given this Government's track record, what we see for NP, and they have stated it—the Minister has stated it, is to sell the assets of NP as a prelude, coming before the shutdown of National Petroleum.

Madam Speaker, in 1972, NP was founded and the dream was for people to own and operate their industries. This was articulated in perspectives for a new society that came out of the Black Power riots. We bought NP in 1972 and we changed the "B", British and we put "N", National Petroleum. Almost 50 years later, this Government and this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries are destroying that dream by proposing to sell NP and we must ask, why?

You see, Madam Speaker, that Minister, that hon. Minister lacks vision. He and his Government, they think tactically and not strategically. They cannot plan for generations, for my grandchildren, our great-grandchildren. They are concerned with quick money instead of investing for the future. And we saw it in Petrotrin, we are going to see it in WASA and it has been declared the policy by this Minister for National Petroleum. Madam Speaker, under persons like Richard Toby—I worked with these great men— Richard Toby, Noel Wyatt, Ganace Ramdial; managers like George Lynch, Johnson, McCommie and Vivian Ramcharan. It was

a forward-looking company. We had workers—some alive today, Marlene Goddard—

Madam Speaker: So tie that into the Motion about the Minister—

Mr. R. Charles: Yes, I—

Madam Speaker:—of Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. R. Charles: Yes. Because the company had a vision then and now the company does not have a vision [*Desk thumping*] under his watch. I see the workers every day, they complain to me. Where are we going? And they called me to speak today, so I am representing the views of people who have lost faith in this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] Marlene Goddard, Linton Mason, the late Ms. Whitehall who died two years ago, Harold Ragoonanan; these people built National Petroleum.

Madam Speaker, we face a crisis in energy and they talk about the crisis, and therefore, they drop their guard and they tell you they can do nothing, they are victims, they are price takers, it happened all over the world. We cannot do—but I want to point them to 1972 when we took over the industry, it was more hopeless than now but you had—the difference was, instead of this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, I rise respectfully on Standing Order 48(1).

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Member, I think I understand what you want to do but, again, remember the Motion is on the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Okay? So please, bring that—whatever you are making—that contribution into that.

Mr. R. Charles: I will bring it and move on.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I will give you a little leeway.

Mr. R. Charles: The point, you see, I have to explain that what we face today is

not as challenging as what we faced yesterday, yesteryear and they succeeded, and therefore, this Minister should succeed. He has no excuse for not performing.

[*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Speaker, instead of living up to the challenges and moving us to the next level, they want to sell out the service station—this Minister—and that is why I bring it back to what we are discussing today. This Minister wants to and has stated that he is going to sell out the service station network, the main source of NP's revenues. Madam Speaker, this Minister—and I am tying it back to him—has proposed to close down the convenience stores, to shut down the port at NP in urgent need of dredging. His responsibility is to dredge that port so that the NP port built by Richard A. Toby can lead to the prosperity of that organization.

This Minister proposes in his plan, he has no forward plan for the lube oil plant—blending plant, starved today for foreign exchange to buy base oils and additives so that NP could produce automotive and industrial lubricants.

Madam Speaker, and part of this plan that this Minister has presided over is the emasculation of the worker representative at NP, the OWTU. Madam Speaker, it hurts. It hurts. I gave 18 years of my life to that organization. I want the workers of NP to take note that their narrative is already that NP's financial woes are as a direct result of wages and salaries. And I want to tell NP workers, “watch yuhself or else is left foot, right foot, balisier and out of NP house.”

They have gutted the procurement legislation so that they could sell the assets and I am talking about this Minister and his policy and his—not wanting oversight [*Desk thumping*] for the proposed fire sale of the National Petroleum. So they have gutted the procurement legislation so they could sell NP's assets in a fire sale to friends, family and financiers so that they can simple recuse themselves while laughing happily to the bank. This is the record of this Minister in an

industry that I worked in, I know about, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I remember a time—and this speaks to his watch and his treatment of workers representatives. Madam Speaker, I remember a time when president general of the OWTU were people of honour and respect and to be feared. As a manager of NP, when we heard Comrade Weekes was at the gate—

Madam Speaker: I am getting a little difficulty in tying what you are going here about the workers and the workers representatives, about the Minister and his—the mismanagement or mismanagement of the energy sector, the instability and so on.

I am getting a little difficulty with that. So I am going to give you a little time.

Please, tie it in—

Mr. R. Charles: Yes. Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker:—because I realize it is something, as you say, you are very passionate about.

Mr. R. Charles: I am tying it in.

Madam Speaker: But I cannot let the passion—

Mr. R. Charles: Yes.

Madam Speaker:—override the relevance.

Mr. R. Charles: I am tying it in to show that under this Minister's watch, the relationship between an industry, which falls under his remit by the *Gazette*, the relationship between that industry and the workers representative is not what it ought to be. Madam Speaker, and that speaks to the quality of leadership of this Minister.

Madam Speaker, under—here are the facts about NP and NP is under his remit. Under the tenure—well, between 2011 and 2015, NP consistently made profits. Based on after tax profits for the combined years, 2012 to 2015, NP paid \$26.7million in dividends to the Treasury. That was the result of an effective

management of NP's finances.

In the last five years, what has this Minister done? One of NP's major income generators is the franchise arrangements with service stations where each service station pays a percentage of earnings to NP. In addition, NP gets rental income from banks. I negotiated with FCB and in respect of the Gasparillo station, it was Republic Bank. They get money for Lotto booths, fast food outlets and other businesses operating to service—at the service station compounds. These were fixed revenue incomes. NP also gets a wholesale margin for the sale of fuels, income from sale of aviation fuel and bunker fuel, and automotive and industrial lubricants. What does this Minister suggest to deal with the economic challenges facing NP? Sell those assets so that NP remains a wholesaler alone? In a period of global uncertainty, why do you choose to sell fixed generators—generators of income—revenues? So that, NP may well follow in the footsteps of Petrotrin and all the industries ArcelorMittal, Centrin, et cetera, at NGC, WASA, T&TEC, by ceasing to exist.

And, Madam Speaker, we see a pattern that this Minister—a template of accusing the company of not making profits, not investing in infrastructure development and then saying it is a burden on taxpayers and then selling it. Madam Speaker, education officer of OWTU Ozzi Warwick told the *Sunday Guardian*, 14 February, 2021.

“...the management of NP give themselves 13 to 14 per cent increase and that can only be done with the expressed approval of the Board and the line Minister.”

So this Minister apparently approved a 14 per cent management increase while giving the impression that worker wage increases were to blame and then says, well we have to sell the gas stations to reduce the taxpayer burden.

Madam Speaker, this Minister and this Government is incapable of coming up with a vision that will take an industry like NP and take it to the next level. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, you know what were the plans—you know what the plans we had under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar government? We were talking to PDVSA people. I was involved. People like Acienagas and whatnot from CITGO in Miami. And the idea was to create service stations in Toronto, in Miami, in Brooklyn and in London so that—where Trinidad and Tobago residents live. So NP would have moved from being a national company to an international organization. That is the vision that this Minister is incapable of contemplating and developing, Madam Speaker.

So that, my view is that this Minister must resign. The Minister has failed to oversee the development of a sustainable [*Desk thumping*] restructuring plan. The Sixteenth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) examined the audited statements, the financial statements for NP for years 2008 to 2017. It defined areas, it identified areas for improvement. Madam Speaker, not one of these areas has been dealt with by this incompetent, clueless Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Madam Speaker, the areas: improved profitability, operational efficiency and poor return on assets; needed to improve that. Nothing done—address the procurement policy to include guidelines and limits to the CEO's power to seek and obtain exemptions from public tendering. Madam Speaker, the crisis in public tendering and the lack of oversight is apparent in the legislation that came to this House but also in what obtains to National Petroleum at the day as identified by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

It spoke about effectively managing its collection of trade and other receivables, improve internal fraud policy, perform a risk analysis on the possible

impact which the closure of Petrotrin will have on its operations. Madam Speaker, you would see it with the introduction of Paria. What is to stop the—and the privatization of service stations—what is to stop service stations from going directly with Paria and bypassing NP? If you want to destroy people and send them out of work, 550 workers, well come and say it. Do not try to hoodwink—and as you did with Petrotrin and as you are now doing with WASA, do not try to hoodwink—

Madam Speaker: Member, this is not about WASA, and you keep throwing it in. All right? This is about the energy sector. I keep reminding you that it is very narrow, the Motion that we have got here. All right? So that penchant, kill it.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. R. Charles: I will be guided. I would tell the Minister, you cannot smile your way out of a crisis. We are seeing the same pattern today with NP as we saw with Petrotrin. Run it down, say it is too expensive, complain that wages are too high, emphasize that the Government cannot maintain it, mamaguy the representative union, and sell it off quietly. Madam Speaker, if we had a business-minded Minister, he would have addressed NP's actual issues and mandated the board to take the necessary action to get NP back to a profitable forward-looking position without selling the assets. A visionary Minister would have tried to keep NP profitable for as long as possible and utilize those profits to prepare and redirect NP for a post fossil fuel environment.

Madam Speaker, we are moving to a future of sustainable energy, non-fossil fuel energy. So, NP's future is limited, let us say it has 10 years at most. Why is the Minister not directing NP to engage the University of the West Indies, Petroleum Engineering Department and international learning institutions, to be on top of the transformation of cars to hybrid cars and to electric cars, so that NP now

would be part of that revolution that is taking place? But it is closed down. So, Madam Speaker, when we look internationally, we have a lot of bright young people, people with Masters degrees coming out. The Minister needs to tap into that resource so that we could create an industry that will do good for our children and our children's children instead of being the failure that they are. I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Motion before us brought by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, in its preamble says and makes an allegation that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has supposedly shown an inability to competently execute his duties in bringing certainty and stability to the national energy sector, and then it goes on to ask for an expression of a loss of confidence in the Minister.

Madam Speaker, permit me to respond to the submissions made in this debate so far. I have to say that listening to my colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre in his presentation meander through a series of news clippings and articles, reminded me much of what it is like to look at the hon. Member whilst he tries to navigate his own constituency. A map is required, positions are given, but there is no gravitas in the structure. And I would like to put this into the context of the Motion, I would like to deal with this in the context of the facts.

Madam Speaker, what are we doing today? Today we are regaled by the second Motion of No Confidence in a Government Member. The first one was against my colleague the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the Minister of National Security. The second one is now against the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. And look at what this Motion is attempting to do. This Motion is coming to speak to confidence, and at a time in Trinidad and

Tobago when confidence is what is required to lift the country out of its difficulties, in managing the COVID pandemic and the fallout from that pandemic, the Opposition's entitlement is to come to the Parliament. The progress that they bring is to tackle the two areas of confidence that a country is searching for.

What is the effect to the average human being listening to this debate, through you, Madam Speaker? What do they hear? A bunch of statistics and technical jargon lifted from newspapers on the other side, making allegations that Trinidad and Tobago is somehow in a perilous state unlike any other place with respect to its energy industry. Then you hear the responses, the us and them. Madam Speaker, I would just like to say, I genuinely believe that the population is tired. It is tired and strained in listening to its Parliament. There is no benefit to be gained in a country; Madam Speaker, we are talking to the world today in this Motion. If you do a simple Google search, number of jobs lost in the oil and gas sector, the first item that pops up is 107,000 jobs lost in 2020 in the oil and gas industry in the United States of America alone. It goes further to BP, it goes to EOG, it goes to Shell and the wage freezes. And instead of our country witnessing its leaders stop and encourage citizens into a degree of confidence in their economy and their industry, it has to witness its parliamentarians talking about who did what and who did that. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, this takes us, most respectfully, absolutely nowhere where we need to be.

Madam Speaker, the data before us can be extrapolated in any direction that you want. Madam Speaker, there were some useful mechanisms engaged by the last Government. There were some bad decisions engaged by the last Government, but that is not what we are about today. In answering this Motion and in responding to my colleague's performance, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, I can put on record now what the hon. Franklin Khan, the Minister of

Energy and Energy Industries has done to answer the difficulties that the hon. Member met. I do not need to go necessarily too far back to what the leadership of the UNC brought to the table. That, Madam Speaker, ended in 2015. The fact is that it is a matter of record that we were in difficult circumstances as a result of decisions made. So let me speak in support of my colleague the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to the following facts. Madam Speaker, it is a fact that in 2014, the percentage contribution to revenue, tax revenue for oil and gas was 36.1 per cent of our total tax revenue. In case people do not know, you earn money by taxes and royalties. In 2015, it fell to 23 per cent; 2016, 7.6 per cent; 2017, started to decline, 11.1 per cent; up 2018, 14.1 per cent; up 2019, 23.9 per cent; up 2020 to 23.3 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I must therefore in simple terms say that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has demonstrated an ability to manage in terms of statistical output, a recovery from a disaster, a low of 7.6 per cent in dropping from \$2.3 billion in revenue in 2014, down to \$418 million, an 80-something-plus per cent drop in revenue. The hon. Minister Franklin Khan, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has demonstrated a return in 2020 to \$2.7 billion. [*Desk thumping*] So let us just put it in simple terms: Fact number one, there was a bad situation inherited. Fact number two, we returned to surpass the revenue in 2014. I see one of my colleagues opposite shaking his head. I will go with the Central Bank statistics and data and information and I will speak with that. Let me put it in this context, Madam Speaker. It is very important to note as well, that in the return to revenue as a percentage of contribution, the price of oil and gas in 2014, oil was at \$97, gas at \$3.34, yielding \$2.3 billion. The price of oil and gas in 2020, down from \$97 to \$46, down from \$3.34 to 94 cents, and yet the revenue has definitely increased. So the simple position to Trinidad and Tobago, judging the Minister in

his performance is quite simple. He has had done well to shore up the revenue position notwithstanding the price of oil having dropped by nearly half, and notwithstanding the two-thirds drop in the price of gas.

Madam Speaker, let us deal quite simply with the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and permit me to address a point made by Naparima. The hon Member for Naparima boldly said to this country, in this Parliament today, that there was not a single expired contract in the upstream sector. Madam Speaker, that was true, but I want to testify now that in 2015, at the invitation of then Head of BP in Trinidad and Tobago, Norman Christie, the hon. Leader of the Opposition then, Dr. Rowley, now Prime Minister, and a team of us went to BP, and we were pulled into a specific room, we were showed the data at BP's level and then we were informed that BP itself was in a deep state of alarm. BP warned us that the gas contracts had not even been discussed and that they were in the immediate point of expiry coming after the election which was ahead. Then Norman Christie told Dr. Rowley, Leader of the Opposition, that it was such a panic that BP was willing to share its information then and immediately, and to provide what the gas contract should look like for Trinidad and Tobago, because it was unacceptable from BP's point of view that Trinidad and Tobago had not even bothered to start the discussion. And Norman Christie said to us quite simply then, Trinidad and Tobago will be against the ropes. It will have no negotiating power, it will have no negotiating room, it will have no negotiating time, and that therefore effectively, the country was in deep trouble.

So, Madam Speaker, whilst you hear Naparima glibly boasting that the contract was not expired, I will ask now to the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Siparia, who was the head of the energy committee of the Cabinet, whether it is a fact, as I have just put it on the record, as I can testify and own

today, that they have not even begun the discussions on the contracts, Madam Speaker. Now, Madam Speaker, permit me to note that whilst in the rest of the world, and if you look at Shell in particular, and you look at the number of closures of plants, you look at the number of projects that have been deferred, it is material to note that Qatar and Trinidad and Tobago are the countries that have kept full complement, compared to the management around the world. And I say that, Madam Speaker, because it is not lost upon me nor should it be lost upon the population who are yearning for hope and confidence, that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, the hon. Sen. Franklin Khan, in pioneering the work that he has done as capably as he has, has earned the confidence of multi-nationals, be it at British Petroleum, BP, at Shell, at EOG, at any one of the industry players, the confidence to continue investment in Trinidad and Tobago is apparent. And why is that apparent, Madam Speaker? It is apparent because the commitment to foreign direct investment in the period 2016 to 2019, stands at US \$12 billion. That is the other simple fact.

Madam Speaker, we heard the hon. Members opposite talk about competence and structure, and I would like to speak to the competence exercised by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Sen. Khan. Madam Speaker, it is another fact that Poten & Partners produced a Gas Master Plan in 2014, and at the period of analysis handed to the UNC Government, demonstrated that in the period 2011 to 2014, US \$6 billion per annum was in Poten's arrangement confirmed as the money that we did not collect; money that was lost as a result of transfer pricing. I wish to put on the record today my support for Minister Khan who led the Energy Spotlight, who yielded this information in the public domain. Madam Speaker, what is \$6 billion US to the people of Trinidad and Tobago per year? Six billion dollars per year is close to \$42 billion in TT dollars. What is that? It means

we have an annual budget of around \$53 billion. Madam Speaker, we are talking about nearly doubling our annual budget off of oil and gas taxes alone.

Madam Speaker, it is this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, who I stand to support today, who has said to the Trinidad and Tobago public since 2016: Number one, be informed of this information. It was that springboard that led to the pioneering discussions and involvement of the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to engage in renegotiating on a voluntary basis for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago gas arrangements yielding billions of dollars for Trinidad and Tobago. And, Madam Speaker, when you analyse that position, simple fact is that the identification of lost revenue through transfer pricing mechanisms or through poor accountability on the oil and gas taxation regime structure, demonstrates that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has performed admirably.

Now, Madam Speaker, I wish the population to be aware, there is no competition in government amongst Members of Cabinet. Madam Speaker, where I come from teamwork is to be celebrated. Where I come from the Office of the Prime Minister is the highest office amongst colleagues in the Cabinet. How could it possibly be odious or contemptuous for the hon. Prime Minister to have a Minister in the Ministry—Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister assist the Prime Minister? Madam Speaker, this attempt to throw the Member for Diego Martin North/East—sorry, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the Minister of National Security, pitting him against the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries; Madam Speaker, can I just say to the Members opposite, most respectfully, grow up. Simply grow up! It is a requirement of capacity that we are involved in each other's business. The Attorney General, the Office of the

Attorney General assists every single Ministry in Trinidad and Tobago in the structure of our enterprise. All the gas production contracts pass through the AG's office under my hand. All of the licensing arrangements under my hand. Madam Speaker, that is not something to be frowned upon, it is something to be celebrated.

So, Madam Speaker, I turn now, in the very few minutes that I have left, to deal with a most unfortunate view upon national petroleum. The hon. Member for Naparima pretends that we should listen to the expansion of how it was some 18 years ago when the hon. Member worked at NP, and then he regales us with the story about going with CITGO and PDVSA. Is that not the same Member that is inviting sanctions on Trinidad and Tobago if you talk to Venezuela? Is that not the same Member who is constantly agitating for condemnation of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago under the hon. Prime Minister Dr. Rowley for having a discussion on Dragon, for delinking Loran-Manatee and having Loran? Is that the same—does he honestly forget that CITGO is a subsidiary of PDVSA? Madam Speaker, it is just astounding the lack of logic that the Member for Naparima has demonstrated this evening. Astounding, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago the sale of gas stations is an issue for the Member for Naparima? The ability for people to own a gas station, the benefit brought by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to allow for the fuel retail margins to be adjusted so that profitability is engendered in the system, is something that the Member for Naparima frowns upon, or is the Member for Naparima protecting the NP gas stations given to friends and family of the UNC? Which is it? You see, Madam Speaker, it cannot be that the business of NP is affected because the sale of gas is still going on, the retail margin is improved, taxation therefore is improved, business levy is improved, Green Fund contribution is improved, and Naparima has a problem with that. Well, Madam Speaker, all that

I will say is that that is the most ossified anachronistic version, Jurassic version of business that I have ever heard enounced in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]
And I would just honestly like to tell the hon. Member that it is okay to go back to sleep, intellectually, it is okay to dwell in the 1970s. That is no problems. But, Madam Speaker, that is not the model of business that we subscribed to, we are into profitability.

I will wrap up now by saying, Madam Speaker, to Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is a most competent and measured statesman that has retrieved the situation in energy with commendable ability, and it gives me great pride to serve alongside the hon. Minister, and I wish to denounce this Motion brought by a meandering attack by the UNC. Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I listened to all on the Government side so far who have attempted to make an input in defending their Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, and no one has been able to make an impact in terms of telling the Opposition, or telling the country that indeed the Minister of Energy is worthy to continue to be the Minister in the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Madam Speaker, in the few minutes I have here this evening, it is important that I respond to some issues which have been raised in this particular debate. And the Attorney General, the Member for San Fernando West, who has exited the Chamber, spoke about what is the effect on the average citizen listening to this debate, and the population is strained and tired in listening to the Parliament.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I want to tell the Attorney General here this evening, that indeed the country is very tired of listening to him and the excuses that they have been putting forward as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spoke about leadership and confidence and so on and I will come to that at some point in time. But it is important also that the Attorney General launched or attempted to attack in the most unceremonious of manners, in the most illogical way, to my colleague, the Member for Naparima as it relates to his interest in national petroleum and the sale of gas stations. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side have an interest to raise issues, and if the Government has announced a policy pronouncement in the last budget presentation which falls directly under the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, we would want to ensure that there is interest, there is transparency in the divestment of all gas stations that fall under the ambit of the National Petroleum Company, and the Parliament is the place to raise it, and the Parliament is the place for the Government to provide the answers based on the queries and concerns of the Opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] So, we all have the right in the business and affairs of any state enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very quickly as I move along, the Minister of Energy—not the Minister of Energy but the Minister of National Security and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, when he came to the podium he indicated that he wanted to tell the country what had happened to the energy sector between 2010 and 2015. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to tell the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, led by Dr. Keith Rowley, that any bright spot, or the only bright spots in the energy sector which we have seen is recent time, for example, the Touchstone discovery in

Ortoire, BP, BHP's deep water discoveries and the new CGCL Mitsubishi Methanol Plant in La Brea, all these bright spots have been a result of the vision and the policies which were executed by the Government that was led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and that is what they are reaping today. Or if they can boast of anything, it is because of the foundation and the work that was done by the Government led by the Member for Siparia. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Energy in replying to the Motion which was so eloquently executed by my colleague the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, indicated that when he focused on Petrotrin, he indicated that the Government had to deal with Petrotrin, because if the Government did not focus on Petrotrin and closed down Petrotrin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago would have collapsed. And he indicated too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the company or the Government restructured Petrotrin created four holding companies and four subsidiary companies, and it was a success story for Harvard Business School to be studied.

4.20p.m.

I want to tell him that the only success story probably is the study that will be completed by the "Balisier House School of Economics". But more importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs here today, when the Government adopted or took the decision to close down Petrotrin, on whose authority did they act? Did he display the leadership that was needed at that point in time to competently analyze the recommendations, for example, of the Solomon report, Solomon Associates, to which his government paid approximately \$7.5million in consultancy fees? Did he display leadership being the line Minister in assessing the recommendation or the report that was handed in by the Mackenzie Group to which his government paid approximately \$28 million in

consultancy fee? Did he in a very responsible manner, and as the line Minister, the Minister with responsibility for Petrotrin and approximately 5,000 plus permanent employees and 4,000 plus casual and temporary employees under his charge, did he competently advocate, did he display the leadership within the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to the recommendations or what was put forward in the Lashley report?

And I ask the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, up till today he has not demonstrated the leadership to tell us which consultancy report, which professional report recommended the closure of Petrotrin, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this has been a Minister who did not display the necessary strength—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 55(1)(b). Every single Member has raised the issue of Petrotrin and its closure; 55(1)(b) please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, I would like you to tie up your point and as rightly raised by the Leader of Government Business, again, we could be bordering on tedious repetition. So, again tie in your point and move on quickly please.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am guided in the context but I am just elaborating and responding based on the fact that the issue of Petrotrin and the decision that was taken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and I am trying to tie it or attempting to tie it in as it relates to the Minister who had the line responsibility making or dealing with the issues that confronted him at the time in a very objective—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence at the lower end of the Chamber, please.

Mr. R. Indarsingh:—and in a very responsible manner, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is what we are all asking on this side, whether it was—he competently executed his duties on behalf of all and sundry and all the stakeholders in the

energy sector. [*Desk thumping*]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the workers, the 9,000 plus families of Petrotrin are indeed people who still need answers as it relates to the closure of Petrotrin.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, regrettably 55(1)(b). Every single Member has raised it and even the Member himself is now raising it for the third time; 55(1)(b), please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, Member, I will have to uphold. Please move on.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am guided as I take the opportunity to move on as it relates to the issues that we have on hand here this evening. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs also has within his responsibility as it relates to executing his duties is the very important company of Lake Asphalt. And in that regard I wish to bring to your attention a statement made by the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs regarding the future of Lake Asphalt on the 13th of January, 2021. The Minister of Energy said that the issue of Lake Asphalt is of such importance that the Prime Minister had appointed an Interministerial Committee to assess the situation and make recommendation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am forced to ask the question in the context of, what is the future of Lake Asphalt under the Minister of Energy? Because from where I sit it is an established fact that Lake Asphalt is a producer of high quality road paving, sealant and coating materials used locally, regionally and internationally. It has been engaged in the mining and processing of natural asphalt from the Pitch Lake over the years and the company has service markets via a network of customers locally, regionally and internationally. And Lake Asphalt has distributors and agents in China, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Nigeria, Japan, Ireland and Brazil and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister said that the plan is almost complete but

he is not in a position to make any disclosure regarding its contents as it first had to be submitted to the Cabinet and the Cabinet—and once that this is done the Cabinet accepts the recommendations that the Cabinet will implement a revitalization for Lake Asphalt. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an established fact that there are many reports that have been produced under the very watch of the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. In fact, I am reading directly from a document that is entitled:

Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago, overview and operations.

Dated the 8th of September, 2020.

But more importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is part of a government that has committed itself to being engaging in a number of consultations and under the mantra of, “Let’s do this together” and so on, and today the workers of Lake Asphalt do not know if they are coming, if they are going, what will be the future of their tenure in the operations of Lake Asphalt under the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs simply because he has failed to demonstrate leadership. He has reports, he has studies within his purview and he has been part of an Inter-ministerial Committee that has been appointed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago led by the Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley. And that Inter-ministerial Committee is led or is chaired by one Allyson West, the Minister with responsibility for Public Administration and Digital Transformation. And up till today we do not know what is the status of that particular committee and the future of Lake Asphalt.

And in fact, I am guided that the Minister has even received six letters of request from the Contractors and General Workers Trade Union to meet as it relates to discussing the issues of over 300 plus employees of the company and it has been treated with the highest degree of disdain and contempt by the Minister

who continues to treat, just as he treated the workers of Petrotrin and the recognized majority union, the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union. I think they want to create a world record in terms of the number of times that this Government will reject the Patriotic Energies. And in fact it is the only company, I think the only time that a successful bidder for an entity has been rejected on four occasions and today the workers incidentally are clamouring to know the future of this company—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two more minutes.

Mr. R. Indarsingh:—and under Minister Khan he has not provided leadership and competency as it relates to a new way forward for Lake Asphalt, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I end it would be remiss of me, because time is against me, if I did not speak to the issue of the economy of central Trinidad and more so Point Lisas. And it is an established fact that the decisions of the Government which Minister Khan is the lead as it relates to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the decisions that have been taken or adopted by the Government as it relates to the gas pricing has led to the death knell of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and the small and medium size economy of Couva and environs because the lifeblood of the small community of California and environs is directly linked to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. It is crucial, for example, the entrepreneurs, the contractors, the third party workers just to name a few, and the once vibrant and activity has dwindled, causing many small and medium size entrepreneurs to question the viability of their businesses.

In fact, because of the mothballing or the idling of five plants on the industrial estate and also the closure of companies such as ArcelorMittal, and Centrin and so on, it has impacted upon food establishment and bars in the area.

There were many mom and pop food outlets, doubles vendors and even a food court, Atlantic Plaza which also houses franchises such as Church's Chicken, Pizza Boys, Rituals, Subway and a KFC and the actions of the Minister of Energy has led to the death of the economy of Point Lisas and Couva from the Brechin Castle Roundabout beyond the Marabella Roundabout and that is the legacy—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member.

Mr. R. Indarsingh:—of Minister Franklin Khan and the Government led by Dr. Keith Rowley.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. [*Desk thumping*] I recognize the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Hon. Foster Cummings): Thank you—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have 20 minutes eh.

Hon. F. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to join this debate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear to all of us that the Opposition is now out of ideas, a lack of understanding of the Westminster system of government of collective responsibility and therefore by ill-advice somebody has clearly advise them on strategy that they must bring motions of no confidence against Members, individual Members of the Government. The public is growing very tired of this and it is also very clear by their repetition during their contributions that they do not have much to say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion of No Confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is misplaced and has no basis in fact. As a matter of fact, my good friend, the mover of the Motion relied heavily on quotations from a newspaper article to support this Motion. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that as they speak about no confidence we on this side and the citizens of Trinidad and

Tobago express full confidence in this Government, in the Prime Minister and in this PNM Government and we express full confidence in Minister Khan as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] And let me say to my friend from Couva South under this Government it is the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries not energy affairs. That was under your Government.

Let me say, in support of Minister Khan who has been doing an excellent job in this Ministry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when—

Mr. Ratiram: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 44(10), please. The Minister is reading a script prepared possibly from one of his colleagues in the back room there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Cummings: You thought my script had reference to Couva South in it? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is also a strategy of the Opposition to raise very frivolous matters in relation to Standing Orders. But we will press on to let the citizens of this country understand your incompetence as an Opposition. You were incompetent in Government and you are even more so incompetent in Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

When we inherited the Government in 2015, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we inherited a country in crisis and chaos and they do not like hear it, but I thank you for waking me up. They do not like to hear it but we inherited a country in chaos and we inherited an energy industry also in chaos and crisis. [*Desk thumping*] They would wish that we forget their sins of the past and that we bury it under a bushel but the work put out on this country between 2010 and 2015 is what has this country in the situation it is in today. And thank God for a PNM Government if there was not one, one would have to be created. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, their track record in the energy sector is laid there for

us. They raided the NGC, they raided the coffers of the NGC to the extent and for the benefit for their friends for \$1 billion contracts to the persons that we are well familiar with and to build pavilions in Oropouche and other places. During that tenure the country's energy situation was totally mismanaged. And if we speak about confidence then I want to express confidence in Minister Franklin Khan for leading the charge in bringing our energy industry and our energy concerns back on track. [*Desk thumping*]

That government weakened the country's position by granting generous capital allowances to the upstream industry, to the extent that the revenue that we should be getting from that sector almost dried up. And were it not for the foresight and planning and leadership of our Prime Minister, the hon. Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley; were it not for the experience and guidance of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries; were it not for the guidance and cooperative team effort of other Members of the Cabinet today the revenue position of this country would have been significantly worse. And so if we want to talk about the Minister and the work that he has been doing let us look at a few facts laid before us today.

As a result of their mismanagement the Government had to engage these upstream companies and we are well aware that the Prime Minister led a team that went out to meet with these companies and as a result of that engagement the Government was able to obtain a commitment to the investment of over 10 billion in upstream from the upstreamers. Of this amount to date, over 8.5 billion has been invested by the upstreamers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this Minister and under this Government natural gas production has increased from 3.3 billion cubic feet in 2016, just after we took over office, to 3.9 billion cubic feet in 2019. And today it has stabilized around 3.6 billion. And all of this is in the context of a global pandemic. All of this is in the context of recession in various countries across the

world. Yet instead of getting on board and supporting what is clear and concise direction for the economy of this country all we have is obstruction for obstruction's sake.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, time and time again we have looked to the Opposition to stand and represent and do all that they can according to the oath of office that we all take and time and time again the country is sorely disappointed. This Government under this Prime Minister and under this Minister ensured that there was finalization of the gas sale agreements between NGC and the upstream companies. All of this during the so-called Partnership UNC Government of 2010/2015 was left in abeyance, unattended to. I would have thought that if it was one area that this Opposition would not venture close to discussion on would be energy and energy affairs. Because their track record speaks for itself. It is the PNM, firstly if we go back, the energy fortunes of this country and the foundation that was laid for us to be enjoying the standard of living that we enjoy now is PNM policy, dating way back to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, dating to the acquisition of the international firms that were here operating back in the 80s, all of that is PNM policy. The La Brea Industrial Estate, PNM policy. So I would have thought one area that the Opposition would not attempt to tackle would be to talk about the PNM's performance in energy and energy affairs in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look at the Government's policy in relation to National Petroleum Company, several speakers on the other side have raised that issue and I wish to respond. It was made very clear that in terms of the new business model for NP that the sale of those franchise units, those gas stations would go to the dealers, the first option would be to the current dealers. So all of this talk to grab newspaper headlines about sale to friends and family, et cetera, it was very clear, the Minister of Finance presented in the budget in this House, it

was made very clear that the first preference would be to the current and existing dealers.

What is this Opposition about a new business model? For decades the dealers have been complaining about the thin margins and now they would be getting an opportunity to invest and to own these stations so that they can then do the necessary improvements to the business to bring about increased profits. The sale of these stations will of course bring in much needed revenue for the country at this point in time and of course across the world we know that it is a liberalized industry so that they would not be bogged down by the margin set by the wholesaler. All of this would be to the benefit of these many business people who operate gas stations across Trinidad and Tobago. Clear, concise and very good PNM policy.

And then of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of time has been spent on talking about Petrotrin. Almost every speaker on the other side spoke about Petrotrin and they do that because they really operate a lot by vaps. Any issue that comes on the current news stream in the media guides the Opposition in their behaviour and practice. So that if they think that Petrotrin is a discussion that would attract a certain amount attention they would spend time on that. But we know and the country knows that the company was operating at a significant loss and a drain on the revenues of the country. And this Government took action that today sees the companies that now operate in that industry coming out of the restructuring, both Heritage and Paria producing profits after a very short time in existence. Certainly that is a vote of confidence for the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and a vote of confidence for this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the current scenario we can definitely say that there are several successes that we can point to when it comes to the performance of this

Minister. Let us look at the increase in the royalty rates. Facing a situation where we were unable as a country to get the required revenue from the energy industries this Government engaged in a restructuring of the royalty rates and therefore as a result of that, that adjustment saw an increase in revenue for royalties from 305 million to a current 3.5 billion. Well, that was in 2019. Had this policy decision not been taken by this Government that revenue would not have been to the benefit of the coffers of Trinidad and Tobago. And so we can look at other decisions that would have been taken under this Government and under this Minister. I spoke about the upstreamers already, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the agreements, the agreements with the upstreamers, the agreement with the down-streamers that were left all of those have been settled, most of them have been settled. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in September 2020 Government executed two major agreements and the licence extension with BP Trinidad and Tobago LLC. And these decisions were just left, it was just like the boat sailing without a motor under the previous Government.

The Member for Couva South spoke about Lake Asphalt and let me just indicate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a Cabinet Committee that involves the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, the Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation and the Minister of Labour was appointed to look at matters relating to Lake Asphalt. That Committee has concluded its report and the report will soon be receiving the attention of the Cabinet. And so I just want to indicate that that matter of Lake Asphalt is under active consideration by the Government at this point in time.

In relation to renewable energy, this Government has committed to the protection of the environment and therefore as late as 2018 the instrument of ratification to the Paris Climate Change Agreement was effected, all of it under the

current Minister that the Opposition speaks about.

4.50 p.m.

Government has continued in a leadership role in the industry, and in the region, for instance, have entered into memorandum of cooperation with Guyana, Grenada and Barbados to provide technical assistance. I have been able to point out, and several of our speakers before me have been able to point out, the leadership, the experience and the competence of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in this Government and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we stand solidly in support of our Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] We do not live in a silo. We live in a very small global village now because of technology, and therefore, what happens across the world is going to affect us here on this twin island state.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries spoke in response of this Motion and pointed out the decrease in prices on the global market in relation to urea, in relation to methanol, in relation to natural gas, in relation to crude. The prices we enjoy today were not the prices enjoyed during 2010—2015. The question is: What do you do with the resources that come to the country? Is it wasteful spending, or do you take the very limited reserves, the very limited resources and put it to the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? That is what this Minister has been doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two more minutes.

Hon. F. Cummings: How much time, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Two more minutes.

Hon. F. Cummings: Two more minutes. Thank you.

So in winding up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that this Motion—I will not say that this Motion is a waste of parliamentary time because that is the right of the

Opposition to bring any Motion that they see fit. What I would say is, bring matters to the Parliament that would allow the citizens of this country to look at you and say, “Here is an Opposition that has the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago at heart”. [*Desk thumping*]

So I wish in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reiterate and to say that we stand solidly behind the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries as he continues along with the guidance of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of this country, to chart a course for our energy sector that only the people’s national government can do. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Tabaquite.

Ms. Anita Haynes (Tabaquite): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me to contribute in this very important debate brought to us by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, and I think if one accomplishment the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries can say he has, is that he got the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo to re-join the chat and come in here to join this debate and defend his tenure. [*Desk thumping*] So I think if you accomplished one thing, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, that would be it. Because as I go through the importance of this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Attorney General and the Minister of National Security and well, of course, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who I knew from the other place, but what was interesting in the Attorney General’s contribution is this question of—and as well as the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, this issue of we should all have confidence—we should all have confidence. We should all have confidence because that is what the nation is looking at us.

The nation is looking at us and they want us to all portray this sense of confidence in the sector, and that is what we must do. That is part of responsible governance.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where is confidence derived from? Something must bolster that confidence. You must be saying something to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, this went well, this is going well, this is the hope for the future. That is where the confidence is derived from. As I contribute to support the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and the Opposition in this Motion of no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, I do so in the full knowledge that we are absolutely correct because the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago has no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] And I can say that because in their frequent interruptions of my colleagues—because when one of my colleagues was speaking the Minister of Finance got up to say this is not a Motion of no confidence against him, and then the Minister of National Security had to be mentioned, but why is that so, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It is because they have all assumed the responsibilities of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

So it brings me no pleasure to raise no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, but we are reflecting, this is a formality for what the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago has already done. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, it is heart-breaking to look on as a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has to take licks for an announcement he does not even get to make. The entire Patriotic saga that is going on, it is the Minister of Finance leading, yes and that is an energy related issue. [*Interruption*] Yes, agreed, but that is what I am saying—now, you see, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries—my maiden contribution in the other place I spoke right after the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries so I will always remember that, and the first half of his contribution here today was the first part of his contribution in that Appropriation Bill and it is the same thing. So I have a soft spot for the Minister of Energy and

Energy Industries and the history lessons that he will always provide us with. But what I am saying to him is do not let people set you up to be the Good Friday “bobolee” and taking licks for decisions that you are not making. [*Desk thumping*]

And so, when we say as the Motion describes, that he has shown his inability to competently execute his duties to bring certainty and stability to the nation’s energy sector, the first question that any of the Members opposite ought to answer is whether or not there is certainty and stability to our sector. They did not seek to answer that. Instead they chose to pad their responses with either, (a), COVID is the problem, so let us all hunker down. Let us duck and hide and wait for this time to pass. Now, that is very easy to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a very simple argument to take because it is easy for the population to digest that there has been a pandemic. But if they were to be factual, you would see that the closures in Point Lisas were happening before 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. [*Desk thumping*] You know, as I prepared for this debate, I looked at all of the contributions of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in terms of the Appropriation Bills, which is where the Ministers will get up and state what their intention is and how they intend to improve the sector, or in the case of this Government they will come and talk about 2010—2015 ad nauseam and leave it at that. But on May 15, 2017, in a Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year), in discussing—and I will not go into any detail, but in discussing in very, very flowery language the negotiations in Houston, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said that meeting literally determined the economic future of Trinidad and Tobago for the next 10 years.

So we are in that 10-year period, and what I find interesting here in this debate is the level of cognitive dissonance coming from the other side. Because on one hand in 2017, you would say that the negotiations will be responsible for the

economic outlook of Trinidad and Tobago for the next 10 years, but if things are not going well, all of a sudden “it is not us”. It is not us. So therefore—

[*Interruption*] Yes, the UNC basically. So if it is good, you want to take the credit. So when you thought it was going to be good you had no problem up and down and around town taking all of the credit, but as soon as it turns, it is everybody else’s fault and the UNC’s fault. Amazing. But you know, the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo went on and on to tell us that we ought to be grateful for PNM policies. PNM polices have us where we are today. But everybody in the nation is saying we are not in a good place. So therefore, that tells us that PNM policy is the problem. [*Desk thumping*] That is the only logical answer to go from. We are in a state. We have problems that the Minister of Finance last week started to speak about the financial crisis that we are in, to recognize all of these things, to recognize that all of these things are going wrong. To say that it is as a result of PNM policy, but then not to admit that the PNM policy is the problem, it is really ludicrous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

But I want to raise because the Attorney General—the Attorney General came here with a new found tone. I am finally happy he was able to check himself and his tone changed for today’s debate completely, 180, and I can appreciate that because he is speaking to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and saying, “Listen, we as a Parliament could do better”. “We ought to do better”, and I will agree with him. But what he has to recognize is that any social studies class will tell you that Parliament has an accountability function, and this is the place that the Opposition gets to hold the Executive to account. [*Desk thumping*] One of the ways you can do that is by filing a Motion such as this, and therefore, you should not have an issue with the Motion. It should be easy for you to say these are the reasons, this is what we have achieved, this is how we achieved it. No, but that is not what we got.

Right? We are being told, not just as an Opposition, but as citizens of this country, that what we must accept from persons we put in charge—because let us not forget that in seeking to govern you would have told the population that you had the answers, the solutions to the problems that we face. And then once you have gotten the opportunity to govern, all answers out the door and now you are telling us that, “it is just not us”. “What you want us to do? Everything bad globally. The entire world in this state. We cannot do anything.” And that is a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So for you to express confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, it cannot be that he has a nice résumé, he knows a lot about the energy sector. It cannot be that. You have to be able to say to the population that from 2016 when the Minister took office to now, he has been able to accomplished X, Y and Z. What we are seeing as a nation is that from that time to now, our entire sector is crashing. [*Desk thumping*] I heard the chuckle every time someone on this side mentions Curtis Williams who is well known as the Minister of Finance’s favourite journalist, and the reason they could—I mean, I always note what the modus operandi is, which is, if someone is saying something that the Government does not like, there is no actual counter. There is just an attempt to ridicule. There is just an attempt to invalidate a structured well-argued opinion as opposed to offering your counter. So I will not allow the Government to attempt to ridicule a journalist who has a perspective that if they were doing their job they would be able to answer. But the fact is they have not presented any solution, and therefore, when Curtis Williams says:

“Make no bones about...T&T’s energy”—that it—“is in trouble and...”—it—“is”—increasingly—“clear...that the government and the Minister of Energy seem incapable of finding solutions...”

—their answer is to ridicule the journalist as opposed to bringing the solutions. And that is why we can all stand here, every Member of the Opposition can come prepared to say that we have no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Not because—nobody is saying that he is a bad person or he does not mean well, but because in a time of crisis when we need innovation, creativity to get us out of the slump, we are being told hold your hand, hope for things to get better. I think years ago the Prime Minister told us pray for gas. That is the solution that we are being presented. That is the solution.

Imagine, every other government in the world is coming to their population with ideas and solutions to come out of the crisis. Our Government is insisting on setting the lowest bar possible, the lowest bar possible, and not meeting that bar and still expecting us to come here and say in the spirit of governance—because they are telling us that is how we will be seen as responsible, that that is how we must come here and support them in their inaction. But that is a dereliction of our duty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we come here and clap and applaud inaction, incompetence, and an inability to move us forward, we would be doing a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And then when I am asked who has no confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries out of the Opposition, only the Opposition? Last year I met with the Petrotrin retirees and those persons who were very afraid about their pension plans and their health care plans, and I raised a Motion in this House, a Motion that was answered by the Minister of National Security which goes back to my initial point that we can very well say that we have no confidence because the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has so many deputies we have no idea who is in charge. But the Petrotrin workers—and I heard the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo talk about

using Petrotrin because it is a topical issue, but I am from South, the Member knows that.

Those of us who sit on this side, a lot of us feel the direct impact of the closure of the Petrotrin refinery. [*Desk thumping*] The direct impact. This has nothing to do with newspaper headlines and what not, because those of us who sit on this side are the people who get the messages, the voice notes, the Facebook messages from the workers who are still to this day unemployed. [*Desk thumping*] The Gasparillo community which falls squarely in my constituency is still reeling from the impact of that closed refinery, and then every time there is a press conference and a switch and you are not quite sure what is going on with our billion-dollar asset, while it may be funny to those of them on that side, it is the lifeblood for a lot of people who live in the areas that we represent. [*Desk thumping*] And so, when you can stand here and express confidence in your colleague because you have a party line to go on, but can you then reasonably go outside to your constituents and say, "Listen, the energy sector is performing well". "You could have hope." If you were able to do that, you would have said it here today but you did not. Not one person on that side said it here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you are talking about energy in Trinidad you are talking about the bread and butter of this entire nation. [*Desk thumping*] This discussion that we are having here today as to whether or not the Minister is performing, and the idea that the Government is presenting to the public that no government intervention would help us, it just goes to show a very lazy approach to governance because the role of the Minister is to work as part of a Cabinet to create enabling conditions. So to take the resources that we have below ground and to make above ground conditions such as contracts and the enabling environment viable so that it can be monetized for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, has the

Minister been doing that? Has the Minister presented at any point in time what are we going to do as a nation to pivot away from what we are facing today?

And so, you can come now and you could talk about barrels of oil—and the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo coincidentally was wrong about the gas production per the day as per the data from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. The gas production today is lower than it was in 2016. So the Minister did not in fact manage that well. But going beyond those things, going beyond the numbers, you have to listen and you have to look at what is happening with the human element, the human side of our energy sector. And what we are facing today—I remember when I was about to go into university, studies to get into the gas sector were the most booming. That is where you had to go. Those persons in Trinidad and Tobago now, are the people who are unemployed and underemployed. That was done squarely under their tenure, and then you want to say to those persons who are looking on and listening, that things are going well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at some point in time this Government must stop and take stock as to whether or not they have—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you have two more minutes.

Ms. A. Haynes: Thank you—that they have done anything to actively get Trinidad and Tobago out of the slump that they have put us in. And when they do that self-assessment, and by us bringing these Motions, Motions saying that we have no confidence in the Minister's ability to govern under his Ministry, we are giving them an opportunity to assess themselves critically and not mamaguy the nation constantly. And I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Kennedy Richards (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to join this debate in not just defending, but adding to the good name

of a very distinguished Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. And when we say defence, it means to say that you have something to defend, and today based on colleagues on the other side, there is not much to defend. This entire Motion and this Motion's preamble brought from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is questioning basically the competence and the ability of the hon. Minister regarding the stability of the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago. And this entire Motion today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seems to be coming from a reporter in Trinidad and Tobago.

Another Member, the Member for Naparima, would have said that the Government needs to institute universities like UWI, UTT and get bright young people involved in the energy industry, and based on this report I am here to let him know that the Ministry has initiated a five-year mentorship programme with 40 first-class Bachelors or Masters with distinction graduates. In so doing, they are already developing the human capital and already development the future of the energy industry, and that is PNM policy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] It appears, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Opposition does not understand their role as Opposition, hence they would utilize an important tool as a Motion of no confidence in such a way.

As a matter of fact, no confidence Motions left, right and centre. Today it is the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, tomorrow, who knows. It could even be the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande. We will leave that for another day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An excerpt from the UK firm, Poten & Partners, this firm advised that Trinidad and Tobago was systemically being denied of its revenue entitlements of LNG over a period of 2010—2014. So approximately US \$6 billion per year. Put that into TT, that is somewhere over TT \$200 billion over that period of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Opposition is very good at saying who is unable to do their job, Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, not one solid recommendation has been made since this Parliament has been opened, for this Twelfth Republican Parliament. However, this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must look at three things in 2021, concerning the energy industry. Firstly, in order for us to ascertain competence we must look at the outlook of the energy sector prior to 2020 which is pre-COVID; secondly, the significant losses within our industry, local and international context upon rapid onset of the pandemic; and, thirdly, the actions and steps taken to stabilize and increase efficiency and effectiveness in our energy sector which was led by our Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to the article Business Edition, *Newsday* entitled, “Energy boost” by Carla Bridglal on Thursday the 10th of January, 2019. This speaks directly to the Government through the Minister’s handling of the stabilization of the local energy sector through the editorial, let us deal with the facts from the editorial. Fact 1: It is a fact that the TT Energy Chamber in 2019, predicted a modest recovery for the local energy sector. That is one. Fact 2: Those predictions were made based on the increase of exploration works for example, by the trust, by BHP in the development of the Ruby project and that project produced 274 billion cubic feet of gas and 13.2 million barrels of crude oil. Those are facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How could an incompetent Minister be leading such greatness for Trinidad and Tobago?

It is also a fact that since 2018 the production of gas began to trend upwards, since falling dramatically from the peak in 2010 which was a whopping 4.3 billion cubic feet per day to a relatively increasing rate of 3.5 billion cubic feet per day in 2018. It is also a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that through the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister, encapsulated by the well-equipped experienced Minister of Energy

and Energy Industries, we made interventions within international companies and stakeholders that sparked discussions for exploration and production in our energy industry in Trinidad. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2019 it is also a fact that bpTT already outlaid a plethora of projects either being executed or in an advanced planning stage. These are just a few examples to show the competence, capability, and the progressive-mindedness of Minister Franklin Khan, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

There is also a claim that the People's National Movement, under this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and our Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, left the oil and gas sector to die. That is untrue. That is untrue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This report, and I read from this report:

Oil production is on the upward trend reaching as high as 60,000 barrels per day in April 2020. Oil production has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and currently averages 57,000 barrels per day. New discoveries by BHP and Touchstone will result in an increased oil production over the next 12 months.

We heard the Minister in his response today showing how the effects and the actions taken by this Government will affect the economy in a positive way.

In 2019, Heritage achieved a substantive profit of \$1.4 billion in revenue, a strengthening workover performance rate and enhanced productivity and efficiency. The local and regional market was not left undone. They received an uninterrupted supply of 13.4 million barrels of oil under the restructuring and the introduction of new oil and gas in the administrative regimes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the track record of this Government when it comes to progressive-mindedness, experience, stability and certainty in the energy sector is bar none. [*Desk thumping*]

5.20 pm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as much as the Opposition tries to ignore it and cast aspersions, the pandemic did have an effect on our energy sector and it had a dramatic effect on our energy sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Brent oil prices fell more than 60 per cent from a peak of 69.75 in January 2020 to a 17-year low of \$26.33 by March 2020. That was no doing of the People's National Movement, Dr. Keith Rowley or the PNM. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was an oil crash like none other according to "Climate Home News" on the 13th of May, 2020. In this article it postulated international savagery of the pandemic on the global energy sector. For the first time since the Second World War, Shell has cut its dividends, oil price morphed into negative percentile in the United States of America. Tankers filled with fuel parked up in the Singaporean street. These troublesome news is what the world was facing and we have a Government and a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who still has this country going strong.

The Opposition will want this country to believe that we control the oil prices or the geopolitical market and because, after all, "God is ah Trini", we could stop the negative effects of oil and gas in the world. This Motion and the behaviour by this Opposition is to misguide and to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Tancoo: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(4).

Hon. Members: What?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pardon?

Mr. Tancoo: Standing Order 48(4), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Proceed.

Mr. K. Richards: Okay. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he could go with 48(4), 48(3),

48(2), right, [*Desk thumping*] this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today “is facts eh know”. This is not the Member for Point Fortin or Kennedy “making this up eh know”, this can be researched, “this is facts”. When the—

Mr. Ratiram: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 44(10) please. [*Crosstalk*] The speaker continues to read directly from a script prepared for him. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Proceed.

Mr. K. Richards: When the pandemic hit, our Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley established the “Roadmap to Recovery” Committee.

Mr. Ratiram: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 44(10) again, he is not speaking to the Speaker, he is reading directly from a script. And can you guide kindly accordingly please? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just one second, Member, one second. Member, I have ruled and again, yes, we know we have the Standing Orders but let us make proper usage of the Standing Orders, please. Okay? Proceed.

Mr. K. Richards: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, when the pandemic hit, our Prime Minister established the “Roadmap to Recovery” team and he offered every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago—“and ah watching yuh direct in yuh eye”, all right—every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago an opportunity to contribute towards that. And in that “Roadmap to Recovery”, they recommended sustained initiatives and activities to maintain a vibrant energy industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some of the other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we are currently sitting on the crossroads of energy, some of the things that were implemented by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries are: one, a creation of mitigation reporting and verification system to provide accuracy of emissions generated by the industries in Trinidad and Tobago; collaboration with UWI and UTT as well as

a successful Heritage company to pursue projects aimed at managing carbon dioxide emissions which would be tasked to identify storage for carbon dioxide and potential oil productions. “Dah was never done” in this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank God for Dr. Keith Rowley and this Minister of Energy and Energy Industries that we have progressive and forward-thinking strategies going on for the next generation. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, I just want to touch on something that a lot of people have not touched on which is renewable energy. Under this Minister and this Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, they have set about to ensure that renewable energy is something that we can rely on in Trinidad and Tobago for the future. Governments come, governments go, they did not do that but Minister, hon. Franklin Khan did that. As I conclude, this Motion shows yet the immaturity of the Opposition. This Motion shows a deliberate intent by the Opposition to mislead the people of Trinidad and Tobago into thinking that a hard-working Member of Government does not have their best interest at heart in this country. This Motion also shows that this Opposition plays petty politics instead of putting the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago first.

And before I close, I just want to leave the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries with “ah lil quote” by Tupac, “keep yuh head up, yuh doing well”, we support you. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rai Ragbir (*Cumuto/Manzanilla*): Thank you, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am honoured to stand here before you in this august Chamber to speak on this very important issue of a Motion of no confidence in Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking at the *Gazette* No. 155, Vol. 59 dated 9th of September, 2020, I see that the National Quarries Company Limited falls under the purview of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Mr.

Deputy Speaker, I am so happy I saw this. In my constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, I am being plagued and harassed in a very nice way by my constituents about the illegal quarrying that takes place and many letters have been sent forward to the various Ministries, to the EMA, to the police, et cetera. But why does this quarrying take place? I will tell you what happen. These large vehicles damage the rural roads of places like Caratal. The edges of the road have been damaged. They create potholes. So the thing that I want to tell you here—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is not in charge of roads and oversized trucks. Please, Standing Order 48(1). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, I think it only has one Speaker in this Chamber. Overruled. Proceed.

Dr. R. Ragbir: What I was about to say, the implications of lack of management of the illegal quarrying has disturbed the flora and fauna of a comfortable village. On top of that, they have constant deforestation. Who is responsible for that? Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. [*Desk thumping*] It falls under his purview. Now this does not happen in Cumuto/Manzanilla, I am sure my colleague in Toco/Sangre Grande will have the same issue, but because construction has slowed down, you will find that it is not so much of an issue, but the people who live in these rural areas, it is an issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now turn to an article written by the Trinidad *Express* by a columnist Ralph Maraj [*Crosstalk and laughter*] and if you will permit me, June 28, 2020.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence, silence. What date, Member? What date?

Dr. R. Ragbir: Mr. Deputy Speaker, June 28, 2020. May I continue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed, Member.

Dr. R. Ragbir: It has to do under what the last speaker spoke about, renewable energy. Trinidad and Tobago has fallen in the way of renewable energy. There have been over 190 countries producing renewable energy. And right to our next door neighbour, Barbados which seems to be popping up very often that they have in their country, white solar panels almost in every house and they have their National Energy Policy 2019—2030 designed to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy. And in fact, Jamaica has the same headway of renewable energy to promote from 20 per cent to nearly 30 per cent by the end of the decade. But where is Trinidad and Tobago in renewable energy? We concentrate on our oil, our gas, our future but we need to preserve the future for our children.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what is happening now is that we have our young children who are graduating from the university with all the brain power of renewable energy in a modern world that we need to make sure that in this structure that we have, 2021 and beyond, that our Minister of Energy and Energy Industries comes to be au courant with what is happening in the rest of the world. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a medical practitioner, I have seen a fallout of the energy sector, not only Petrotrin, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. People have no money. They now have private health care as attributed to by the MP from Tabaquite. Now, these people now come to access public health care so that is an increased burden on the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. So that reminds me, in Caroni (1975) they had closed the industry where thousands of workers now had to access public health care.

Now, I will tell you something. One of the things, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that one of the features that these people have, apart from chronic diseases, are anxiety, stress, depression. In fact, I dare say the more jobs

you lose, the more depression and more suicidal thoughts that you have, so we have somebody to take that responsibility. So the more you close down the energy sector which was to be our bread and butter, you will find more and more people being depressed. So we have a society that is now combined together with this pandemic of people who are lost and are hurt and are reeling from lack of employment, lack of opportunities and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it falls under the purview, it happened under the watch of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

Our children are crying because they are thinking, you know, “I want to be ah petroleum engineer, I want to be ah civil engineer”. All these technical/vocational courses that have taken place, all the tertiary institutions, where are the jobs for these people? Somebody needs to be responsible. Every Government of every nation needs to take responsibility for the people of the nation, for the young ones who have no future in this country. And I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happens now is that the tears are falling on the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. The tears of these children are falling on that because they have lost their way, they have no future.

So what do we do in this instance? We do not know but we are here today to discuss the no confidence Motion against the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and it is important that we make a decision where we go there, from 2021 onwards. He has been there, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, for the last five years and he continues to be there. But as Point Lisas Industrial Estate and other downstream industries are closing down every single day and our valuable sources of foreign exchange are dwindling every day, what do we have? We need to stop fighting as a Government and as an Opposition. We need to unite together for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and for our young people that it

will have some form of sustainable future in this country and beyond.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our patrimony has been lost. Our energy sector has dwindled up to a point that I do not see as a point of any return. So if we have no foreign exchange to buy valuable oil and gas reserves, what happens to our children? And I will take it down to our children because our patrimony as it reduces, what happens then? Trinidad and Tobago—somebody—needs to take into account that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has to be responsible for all these tears falling on people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to be long. I mentioned initially about the illegal quarrying, the renewable energies and the loss of jobs and no employment for our young people, and with that in mind, if I add all of these things and what has been said before, I do not want to be repetitive and say what has said to my colleagues on this side but I want to just say I support the Motion by the MP for Pointe-a-Pierre of no confidence, and I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Firstly, let me say off the bat that I completely reject this Motion and I have complete confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Let me just indicate that from the get-go.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the point of a Motion of no confidence? Especially in a two-party democracy, a two-party parliamentary system where the Motion is bound to fail. What is the point? I would think that this Motion would have some point if Members on the other side had brought evidence that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries had committed some transgression, such as abusing privileges for tax-free exemptions for motor cars such as has occurred by Members on the other side. [*Crosstalk*] I would expect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries would be accused of some

crime, but instead what does the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre tell us? He blames the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries for low oil prices, for low gas prices. He blames the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries for the global pandemic and its effect on the energy sector. As far as I am concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is frivolous, it is trivial, it is a complete waste of time.

But—*[Interruption]* But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you where we in the Ministry of Finance have looked at trends in terms of revenue from the energy sector since the 2016 period when the Minister took over to now. And what we saw, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(1). I do not see where the Minister of Finance as he told us previously, what he is talking about has to do with a Motion of no—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Thank you, Member. Overruled.

Hon. C. Imbert: What? It is not just the Motion that is absurd, it is the Members opposite that are absurd. I am talking about tax revenue received from oil and gas—

Mr. Hosein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4) please, 48(4) please.

Mr. Young: “48(1) on ah UNC—”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: 48(4)?

Mr. Hosein: Yes, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You want to clarify?

Mr. Hosein: The Minister said that all of us on this side are absurd. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What? Let me hear that? Let me hear you again? What the Minister said?

Mr. Hosein: He described Members of this honourable House as being absurd. He

cannot do that.

Mr. Young: He said those on that side actually.

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

Hon. C. Imbert: “Aaah”, that was an absurd intervention. [*Desk thumping*] So let me go now to the point that I was making that Members opposite clearly do not want me to take because the Mover of the Motion accused the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries of being responsible for the decline in oil prices, the decline in gas prices, and the effect of the pandemic on the oil and gas sector. So let me tell you how we see the performance of Minister of Energy and Energy Industries through the lens, through the eyes, of the collectors of revenue in the Ministry of Finance.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Now, when I look at tax revenue from oil and gas companies, in the heyday, in the 2010 to 2015 period where oil prices reached as high as US \$100 a barrel and then dropped to \$26 in 2016, what I see is a trend. In 2014 when oil was pushing past US \$100 a barrel, the total revenues from the oil and gas companies made up 36 per cent of revenue of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Let me repeat that. When oil was \$100 a barrel, the revenue from oil and gas companies was 36 per cent of total Government revenues. As prices began to collapse and as prices dropped from 100 to 80 to 60 to 40 and then went down to 26 as I said, the revenues also declined as a percentage of total Government revenue. So in 2015, it dropped from 36 to 23. In 2016, when oil dropped to \$26, it dropped to less than 8 per cent.

But what I saw, Minister Khan came in 2016, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, it dropped to 7.6 per cent in 2016 because of the collapse of the oil price and the oil sector. In 2017, it rebounded to 11 per cent; in 2018, 14 per

cent; in 2019, 24 per cent. So what I see in the Ministry of Finance is the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries coming in in 2016 and I see tax revenue from oil and gas companies growing from a low, in 2016, when oil collapsed from 8 per cent to 11 per cent to 14 per cent to 24 per cent, that is what I see in the Ministry of Finance and I think the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries deserves congratulations for that performance. [*Desk thumping*]

When I look at royalty on oil and gas, what I see in 2014 when prices were \$100, I see that we got \$2.3 billion in royalty. That dropped to \$1 billion in 2015, the last year of the other side, the last year they will probably see Government for about 25 years. And then because oil prices collapsed because royalties are a function of volume and price, royalties went down to \$418 million in 2016 and then because of a number of measures that were taken in terms of stabilizing our oil and gas sector and increasing revenue from our oil and gas sector, what I see is that in 2016, royalty had dropped to 418 million because of the collapse of the energy sector, but in 2017, it went back up to 883 million; in 2018, 2.1 billion and in 2019, \$3.5 billion. So what I see in terms of the effect on the Exchequer on the Treasury, I see royalties growing from 400 million to almost 900 million, then 2 billion, then \$3.5 billion. That, as far as I am concerned, is performance. [*Desk thumping*] So I do not buy all the ole talk on the other side, all the screaming and the carrying on. I am not sure exactly what they are trying to say.

And I can also say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I have seen in terms of activity in the sector. You had BHP commencing exploration in 2016 in deep water block TTDA which resulted in a discovery in the LeClerc field for which BP has given notice of commercial potential in 2017. I saw discoveries in Macadamia and Savannah. I also saw the Trinidad Regional Onshore Compression project, the TROC, coming on stream in 2017, increasing production by 200 million standard

cubic feet per day. I have seen the Juniper field come on stream, I have seen the sanctioning of the Angelin field. I have seen DeNova come on stream in the last two years, in 2018. I have seen Shell complete development in its Starfish and Dolphin fields. I have seen BP sanctioning the Cassia Compression project and the Matapal field development. I have seen BHP drilling wells in deep water. I have seen the Ruby project, that discovery which will increase oil production within the next couple years by as much as 20,000 barrels a day. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that in the Ministry of Finance because we—Madam Speaker, sorry, I did not see that you had returned, apologize.

Madam Speaker, I see—*[Interruption]* I see oil discoveries, I see gas discoveries, I see oil and gas companies sanctioning projects. I see increased revenue, both on the tax side and on the royalty side. That is what we see and then in 2020/2021, Madam Speaker, what is happening in the world? It seems the Members opposite would like to forget that we on this side have had the very difficult and unenviable task of managing a global pandemic. They would like to forget that. All over the world, countries are struggling with the effects of the global pandemic, all over the world, and what has been COVID's impact on the energy sector, Madam Speaker. They would like to think that it had no effect but when one looks at what happened in terms of the effect of COVID-19 on the energy sector in 2020, there was a decline in demand for oil and gas of almost 10 per cent. Madam Speaker, that is significant. You are talking about millions of barrels of oil. You had a fall in coal and electricity demand. You had a complete evaporation of demand for aviation fuel. That is one of the products of the petrochemical sector because aircraft, planes are simply not flying because borders are closed, the tourism market has disappeared. So that what COVID did to the energy sector, it shut down platforms, it stopped the production of new equipment.

We, in Trinidad and Tobago, have been affected by the fact that BP is doing platform fabrication in Mexico and it is under lockdown. So some of the facilities that are due for Trinidad and Tobago to improve our production of gas in particular are stuck in Mexico. But one would think listening to the Members opposite that there is no such thing as a COVID-19 pandemic. It does not exist. It does not exist. It has not affected every country in the world. It has not caused multiple lockdowns, curfews, stay-at-home orders all over the world which continue to the present day. Every day, Madam Speaker, when you see what is happening if you turn on the world news, you would see some new country is engaging in locking down industry and no industry has been more affected by the global pandemic than our energy sector.

5.50 p.m.

But we in Trinidad and Tobago, our Government operates as a team. They do not understand. They will never understand that because they are a fragmented group on that side, Madam Speaker, a disorganized, disturbed, incohesive group. But we on this side, we are a team, [*Desk thumping*] we support each other. And that is why from time to time, you will see groups of Ministers coming together to assist—

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 44(10). The Minister is reading profusely and incessantly. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Minister. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: That is an insult.

Madam Speaker: Minister, it appeared that you were glued to your screen. It appeared, it appeared. [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, in all seriousness, I do not need a computer screen to point out that the Members opposite are a fragmented group, that they are

an incohesive group, that they are a disturbed group, that they are disorganized, they are indisciplined.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker—

Hon. C. Imbert: I do not need a computer screen for that.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), the relevance of this Motion. This Motion is about the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, not the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: I believe, while I was not sitting here the whole time, I understand the context, and I am sure all of us who engage in the legislative process know that we do not take one word or one line and pin everything on that. We have to look at the contribution as a whole. Proceed.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I must say, I was quite insulted by that comment from Naparima that I am reading. Be serious. Madam Speaker, I think I can say without fear of contradiction I could stand on my feet and talk for three hours without a single piece of paper in front of me. But let us not bother with that.

The whole point is that we on this side, we are a cohesive team. So every one of us has our strengths, every one of us has our skill set and therefore, you will see when we are dealing with multinational oil and gas companies, you would have support from different members of the Cabinet, different teams coming together to provide the necessary support for the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. And that is why all of these developments that I have spoken about, the discovery in the Ruby field, the BHP discovery, the discoveries by BP in terms of new gas discoveries, and all of the events and all of the measures and all of the decisions that have taken place in the energy sector, are a team effort. They are a result of team work by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. And that is why this Motion needs to be rejected because there is no way you could point a finger at the

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and say, “He is responsible for the collapse of gas prices.” You cannot do that. It is irrational, Madam Speaker, it is entirely irrational, totally irrational.

But I want to compliment the Minister, I want to compliment him. He does not have an easy job. He has inherited chaos, and comess, and disorder in the energy sector from the other side. Comess, chaos, and disorder is what the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries inherited. He inherited a situation where the long-term gas contracts were due to expire or had expired, Madam Speaker. He inherited a situation where there was no confidence in the energy sector because the former administration could not make decisions. They just left the energy sector hanging. He inherited a situation where when we came into Government, we were visited by BP and we were told that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, would not get any tax revenue from BP until the year 2024, Madam Speaker. That is what we inherited.

And what did we do? We put our collective heads together. The Prime Minister led teams to Houston and London and Holland, Madam Speaker. We put everything together. We looked at the energy taxation regime and as a result, we have had a tremendous recovery in our oil and gas sector, Madam Speaker. I congratulate the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and I totally reject this Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to next Friday, the 5th day of March, 2021, at 1.30 p.m. On that day, Madam Speaker,

it is the Government's intention to do Bill No. 1, a Bill entitled an Act to amend the Special Reserve Police Act, Chap. 15:03 and the Police Complaints Authority Act, Chap. 15:05, to strengthen the operations of the Police Complaints Authority and its relationship with its Special Reserve Police and matters related thereto.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries
(Lack of Confidence in)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that this debate on the loss of confidence—the expressed loss of confidence in the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries be now adjourned.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in agreement with the Chief Whip and informing yourself, we are prepared to do two Motions on the Adjournment. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: So, hon. Members, there are three matters that qualify to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House and as advised, we would be proceeding on two which will be Motion No. 2 and Motion No. 3. I therefore now call on the Member for Barataria/San Juan. [*Desk thumping*]

El Socorro South Dilapidated Pump and Perennial Flooding
(Need for Government to Address)

Mr. Saddam Hosein (Barataria/San Juan): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to raise this important matter in this honourable House regarding an issue in my constituency of Barataria/San Juan, which has been plaguing the constituents of that particular area in El Socorro South

for some years, and there is the need for the Government to replace the dilapidated pump and address the perennial issue of flooding in the El Socorro South area.

Now, Madam Speaker, flooding is a perennial issue throughout Trinidad and Tobago and, in particular, the El Socorro South area I am going to address today, in that, Madam Speaker, there have been several issues regarding drainage, the maintenance of the drainage and a proper programme for the maintenance of those rivers and drainage.

Madam Speaker, we have had neglect from the Ministry of Works and Transport for several years and also the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Madam Speaker, I am being disturbed by the Member for Port of Spain North/Ann's West.

Hon. Member: Focus, focus, focus. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: All right. Okay, so Members, I would ask you all to please comply with Standing Order 53. Member for Barataria/San Juan, please direct your attention here and we all have to remember too that we cannot allow ourselves to be easily derailed. All right? So—[*Crosstalk*] Who is speaking while I am on my legs? [*Crosstalk*] Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Mr. S. Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this particular issue regarding flooding and the maintenance of drainage and also floodgates and pumps have been raised in this Parliament before via a joint select committee. And there is a joint select committee that was set up, the Land and Physical Infrastructure (including Land, Agriculture, Marine Resources, Public Utilities, Transport and Works) that dealt with, “An inquiry into Flood Alleviation and Control Measures for Major River Basins and Drainage Catchments in Trinidad and Tobago subjected to Major Flooding over the Past Years”, Tenth Report of the Fifth Session 2019/2020 of the Eleventh Parliament.

And in that report, Madam Speaker, it went on to have a comprehensive discussion and examination of various areas in Trinidad and Tobago that are prone to flooding. And among those areas, El Socorro South has been earmarked as one of those areas because currently there are two flood—pump houses there that house five particular flooding pumps. And of those five pumps, Madam Speaker, you would be surprised to learn that only one of the pumps is working, and that one pump is working at 50 per cent capacity—50 per cent capacity, which is unacceptable.

Now, I plead on behalf of the constituents of Barataria/San Juan, Madam Speaker to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, that those pumps, according to this report, those pumps are obsolete. Those pumps can no longer be maintained and they need to be replaced on a whole. So the Minister can come and answer and say that they are going to maintain these pumps but according to this particular report of the Joint Select Committee that received submissions from the Ministry of Works and Transport, indicated that these pumps have to be replaced. So the crux of this particular matter, Madam Speaker, is that we need to get these pumps properly replaced before the wet season because we are going to expect rain and we are sure that if these pumps are not properly replaced, then the constituents of that particular area will suffer severe flooding which will result in economic loss and also inconvenience.

Madam Speaker, according to the report only 5 per cent, 5 per cent of the work has been done on that particular pump area. And according to the report, if I can quote, it says that:

“Adequate funding be allocated under the PSIP for upgrade of existing drainage pumps and gates, particularly those that are located in the highly vulnerable flood prone areas. Budget cuts should not be made from this

priority item.”

And I went back to the DP project, Madam Speaker, to see what was really estimated for fiscal 2020. So fiscal 2020, \$18 million was allocated for the replacement and the pump programme. Do you know how much money they spent, Madam Speaker? Seven hundred and fifteen thousand dollars. Unacceptable, unacceptable. A JSC where Members of the Government, Members of the Opposition, the Independent Bench, technocrats were sitting saying, “Do not cut the budget for these priority items,” and you barely spent \$1 million to repair these pumps. And you have five areas that you have to repair.

For fiscal 2021, we have now seen an allocation of \$15 million but we are yet—I hope the Minister can report and say how much of that has been released by the Ministry of Finance for it to be spent in El Socorro South because the constituents there, they are crying and they are asking for assistance from this Government so that they do not put their property and their lives at risk because of flooding.

Madam Speaker, you would know that in 2018, when we had one of the most unprecedented floods in Trinidad and Tobago, persons had to leave their homes with boats—with boats. I do not, as the Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan, do not have to go to persons’ homes with boats to rescue themselves and their children, Madam Speaker. We are calling on the Minister of Works and Transport to replace these pumps so that you can bring some relief to the people of El Socorro South, and I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Minister of Works and Transport. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Motion before us which seeks to address the need for the Government to

replace the dilapidated water pumps and address the perennial issue of flooding in the El Socorro South area. And, Madam Speaker, if it is one time I have full respect for the PNM system, it is today. Because under the PNM screening committee, you need to know the constituency that you are representing, [*Desk thumping*] and you also need to visit your constituency [*Desk thumping*] to understand the work that is taking place in your constituency. [*Crosstalk*]

And, Madam Speaker, just to give you a little history on the El Socorro South area—

Madam Speaker: Just now. Member for Barataria/San Juan, you want to make an interruption?

Mr. Hosein: No please, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan: Thank you. Just to give an idea of the El Socorro South area, Madam Speaker. The El Socorro South area forms part of the Caroni wetlands. In the past, the area was converted for agriculture and farming purposes, and the floodplains were then protected by the Caroni River north bank embankment, storm water pumps and floodgates. Over the years, many property owners have either sold or filled their land for commercial development. With the continuous development and the reduction in the permeable and storage area, flooding has become more common and prolonged.

There are two pump sites with a total of six pumps in the El Socorro South area—not five, six. The pumps are estimated to be over 20 years old. The sites are as follows: the Sadhu Trace pump site, with a total of three pumps, two of which are operational; the William Street pump site, with a total of three pumps, two of which are operational.

Madam Speaker, one of the strategic initiatives of the Government, as stated

in the National Development Strategy 2016/2030, better known as *Vision 2030*, is the upgrade of the drainage system. In that regard, the Drainage Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport under the Development Programme embarked on a programme entitled, “The Upgrade to Existing Pumps and Gate Inventory”. The programme involved the upgrade of pump stations and the replacement and/or rehabilitation of sluice gates and flap gates across Trinidad, including the El Socorro South area.

Madam Speaker, in fiscal 2019/2020—and I do not know where that figure of the Ministry only spending \$1 million came from—the Drainage Division undertook the following works in the El Socorro South area: upgrade of pump house. Work commenced on the upgrade of the Sadhu Trace pump house in January 2020. The scope of work included the installation of one new hydraulic pump and an upgrade of the pump house. Works are ongoing. The project was delayed due to the COVID-19 but is expected to be completed in this fiscal year.

Desilting of the William Street pump was carried out. Installation of flap gates under the Caroni River rehabilitation and improvement works project, which commenced in June 2019. Two new three-bore gate structures were constructed—this is El Socorro South; major construction. Three new flap gates have been installed at the location at the Chootoo drain outfall into the Caroni River. This project is completed.

Work commenced in July 2020 on the installation of three new flap gates at the location of drain 5 outfall into the Caroni River. This exercise is 100 per cent completed. The construction of the flap gates structure will control the backwater effects in the channel and also allow greater capacity flow during low tide.

Madam Speaker, the embankment along the Caroni River was raised for a distance of one kilometre, a significant improvement in the Caroni River between

the William Street pump location and the Sadhu Trace pump house. This will prevent overtopping of the Caroni River during high tide. Madam Speaker, all roads to the pump house, which were inaccessible in the past, have been upgraded to allow access even in times of flooding; major work in that end of the constituency.

Madam Speaker, also in fiscal to 2019/2020, under the Drainage Division Desilting Programme the following water courses were cleaned: the collector drain on William Street; the Chootoo drain on William Street; collector drain, Aranguez South; the Muller Canal West, Aranguez south; Aranguez Road east and west; Aranguez South; Muller Canal east, Aranguez South; collector drain between William Street and Sadhu Trace; drain 5, Sadhu Trace; drain 10, Sadhu Trace; drain 11, El Socorro South; drain 12, El Socorro South.

Madam Speaker, in 2020/2021, the following works are being carried out by the Drainage Division in the Ministry: the work which commenced on the Sadhu Trace pump house in 2019/2020 will continue. Tenders are to be invited for the upgrade of the William Street pump house. The scope of works include the installation of two new hydraulic pumps and an upgrade to the pump house.

Madam Speaker, the installation of three new pumps, installation of new gates and raising of the embankment will bring much needed relief for severe flooding in the El Socorro South area and the environs. Madam Speaker, in spite of the challenges encountered with the issues such as the unplanned settlement of land, illegal encroachment on the river reserves, littering, antiquated drainage system and the wilful arson attack on our pump house by those opposed to the Government's good work, which is being done by the Ministry of Works and Transport, we will continue to bring relief to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who reside in flood prone areas. And I take this opportunity to invite the Member

of Parliament to go to the area. I will visit with him and show him the amount of work that is taking place in that end of his constituency. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Landslips in Tabaquite

(Ministry of Works and Transport Failure to Address)

Madam Speaker: Member for Tabaquite. [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Anita Haynes (*Tabaquite*): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise this afternoon to raise the failure of the Ministry of Works and Transport to address with urgency the issue of landslips in the constituency of Tabaquite.

The Minister of Works and Transport during his contribution in the Standing Finance Committee, his opening statement was that the Ministry is responsible for the physical infrastructure, required for the social and economic development of this country. During that day—on that day, Madam Speaker, I raised the fact that in the—during the Standing Finance Committee that we are examining the accounts of this country, that the Landslip Repair Programme which is housed under the Ministry of Works and Transport, similar to the Road Rehabilitation Programme, received an allocation in the previous year and moneys were not spent. At that time, we were talking about an estimated \$25 million for the programme in fiscal 2021.

On that day, that is October 19, 2020, I raised here, via crosstalk, and then subsequently wrote to the Minister about a very severe landslip in the Caratal area, in my constituency. Madam Speaker, following that, that is October 2020, to date no repairs on that landslip. Following that, there was also a very urgent and critical landslip in the Gran Couva area which I visited along with officials from the Ministry of Works and Transport, my colleague in Caroni Central, because one side of the road is Caroni Central and one side is Tabaquite. We were told on that

day, Madam Speaker, that while the Ministry is aware of the situation and the urgency because the land is moving, there was just no money to do the works or to start to undertake the works that is necessary for the people residing in this area.

It brings me no pleasure, Madam Speaker, to stand here, to speak on behalf of my constituents who day by day have to pass on roadways that are quite frankly unsafe for people to pass on a daily basis. That Caratal landslip, Madam Speaker, it is around a corner, so that it is physically dangerous for persons to pass there. We would have written to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Now, while I am not unaware of the fiscal challenges, there is a responsibility by this Ministry. There is a responsibility, there is an allocation, moneys would have been allocated by the Ministry of Finance. You cannot now come to citizens of this country and say you will not spend the money that has been allocated to fix the problems that we are facing. That is a dereliction of duty. [*Desk thumping*] When I stand here today to discuss the urgency of the landslip issue, I really am not prepared, Madam Speaker, to hear the Minister go through what may have been done before and what may—but I am asking him to address, with timelines, when we can see redress for the fact that the land is moving and that these landslips fall directly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Transport, [*Desk thumping*] that they have a direct responsibility to use the allocations given by the Ministry of Finance to fix the problems faced by citizens of this country.

Now, while I know you have to prioritize across a nation, it is my responsibility as a representative to advocate on behalf of the constituents of Tabaquite and I am doing so today. Madam Speaker, it is very important, very important to note that while we have massive infrastructural problems across the constituency, what I am raising with the Minister here today are the landslips that

are currently urgent that have been raised with his Ministry, that the technocrats from his Ministry have already visited, that they would have already put on your work programme. And what we are seeking today is a date for the start of work on these very critical landslips in the constituency of Tabaquite, and I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Minister of Works and Transport.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Motion before us which seeks to address the failure of the Ministry of Works and Transport to address with urgency the issue of landslips in the constituency of Tabaquite. And, Madam Speaker, through you, I wish to give the assurance that whatever money is allocated to the Ministry of Works and Transport, it is spent and it is spent getting value for money. We cannot get enough money for the amount of work that has to be done.

But, Madam Speaker, as you are aware, roads are the most important transportation medium in the country and are used by almost everyone on a daily basis. The roads promote economic growth, connectivity and access to places of work, hospitals, educational institutes, market and leisure activities. Roads generally contribute significantly to the living standards of the population and benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Works and Transport is perceived in the public's mind as being responsible for all roads and road management in Trinidad and Tobago. In reality, the Ministry is responsible only for 2,114 kilometres of the 9,592 kilometres of roads in the country.

Madam Speaker, every year our roads experience the occurrence of new landslips and the worsening of existing landslips that have not been stabilized due to the funding challenges to keep up with the amount of road maintenance

required. Madam Speaker, there are five factors that give rise to the occurrence of landslips. One, location of the road; roads located on ridge are more prone to landslips. Two, the construction type; most of our roads evolve with time and were not constructed with any standard. Three, the soil type. Four, sloping ground, and five, water from the rainfall.

Other extended factors include leaks from the Water and Sewerage Authority pipeline and poor drainage from domestic water from privately-owned properties. With particular reference to the third factor, the soil type, expansive soils are quite prone to slippage. Expansive soils display a volume change or shrink and swell behaviour. This behaviour is associated with the environmental or man-made changes that contributes to the damage to our civil infrastructure.

In Trinidad, expansive clay has been found mainly in the central and southern regions. The challenge the Ministry faces is that most of our roads have evolved with time and most of the slopes are not stable. Roads in the central region are generally along ridges which slopes between one to three, to one to five. In the central regions, slope of one to 10 are required for stability.

Trinidad's bi-seasonal trait is the environmental change that facilitates the behaviour of our expansive clay. Year after year, the change in climate from the dry season, January to June, to the wet season, July to December, result in a change of moisture content in the clay and this changes the volume. This contributes to the creation of landslips. When a landslide occurs along one of our roads, it not only affects private property but the Ministry's assets and our ability to maintain connectivity. As such, steps are taken in keeping with our mandate to restore connectivity by stabilizing the failed slopes, landslips and repairing our assets, such as roadways, bridges and drainage infrastructure.

6.20p.m.

Over the years the Ministry of Works and Transport has been addressing landslips throughout the country via the Landslip Repair Programme. Because of challenges with the funding, the implementation of projects has been slow resulting in a decision being taken to extend the implementation period on more than one occasion. In June 2020, the Ministry undertook comprehensive assessment of existing and new landslips in the country, which resulted in approximately 184 remaining landslips in need of urgent repairs. Of that number, 18 projects were identified to be addressed under the Landslip Repair Programme in the Tabaquite constituency.

In July 2020, Cabinet agreed to the extension of the implementation period for the project for a further six years, from fiscal 2021 to fiscal 2026. Currently, in this fiscal year the following projects are being undertaken in the Tabaquite constituency: The Bridge Landslip and Traffic Management Unit, the BLT Unit is currently undertaking designs for two landslips in the constituency of Tabaquite, namely L13 Solomon Hochoy Highway, 25.4 kilometres and; (2) L14 Brasso Caparo Valley Road, 13.5 kilometres. The PURE Unit is currently undertaking designs for one slope stabilization project, namely LP67 Mayo Road. The Highways Division is scheduled to commence one project piling and shoring of the roadway on the Morne Roche Quarry Road, 4 kilometre to 4.5 kilometre mark, Williamsville.

Madam Speaker, in spite of the challenges encountered with the issues such as a large percentage of our main and secondary roads were not properly constructed but evolved with time and constructed on ridges, unplanned developments along the roads, antiquated drainage system, environmental behaviour and slope type, the Ministry of Works and Transport through the

Matters on The Adjournment
Hon. R. Sinanan (cont'd)

2021.02.26

Highways Division, BLT Unit and PURE Unit, continues to work tirelessly to address the problems experienced by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who reside in landslip prone areas, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.22 p.m.