

*Leave of Absence*

*Thursday, October 09, 2008*

**SENATE**

*Thursday, October 09, 2008*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, I have granted leave to Sen. Helen Drayton from today's sitting.

**LEX CARIBBEAN LIMITED  
(RESPONSE OF)**

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, I have received correspondence dated October 07, 2008 from Mr. Stephen Singh, Country Manager/Partner of the law firm Lex Caribbean, in which he sought to clarify statements made by Sen. Wade Mark at a sitting of the Senate on Monday, October 06, 2008 during the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2009.

In his letter Mr. Singh claims that the statements made by Sen. Mark which had been published in the daily press and aired on certain television and radio stations have caused great embarrassment to his firm. He further claims that if the matter is not appropriately clarified, it could result in irreparable damage to the reputation of Lex Caribbean, a law firm with offices in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica.

I have reviewed the relevant extract of the verbatim report which reveals that Sen. Mark said that he had:

“...been reliably informed”—and he had the evidence—“that under the stewardship of the current Minister of Public Administration...a donation of \$40,000 was made by his ministry to a prominent Port of Spain-based trade union. It was not done through the normal process...but...through a law firm known as Lex Caribbean Limited...This represents a gross violation of the principles of accountability in the public service.”

Sen. Mark proceeded to ask the following questions:

- “1. On what basis can a law firm—Lex Caribbean—make a donation on behalf of any ministry of the Government?
2. How will Lex Caribbean...be reimbursed?

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3. How many other ministries have been engaged in similar activities through Lex Caribbean...?
4. Is Lex Caribbean...being used as a slush fund to pursue other illegal and corrupt activities?"

Finally, Sen. Mark said that:

“In view of the gravity of this development, I intend to write the Chairman of the Integrity Commission, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the head of the Fraud Squad seeking an investigation into this matter”—and ended by calling—“on the president of the law association to investigate this law firm”—Lex Caribbean—“to determine whether it is in breach of the legal code of conduct as well as the Legal Profession Act.”

Hon. Senators, in accordance with the guidelines recommended by the joint select committee on broadcasting which were adopted by both Houses when that committee presented its report to Parliament and pursuant to the rules on the right of response as enunciated by the hon. President of the Senate on September 25, 2007, I am of the view that the remarks of Sen. Mark could adversely affect the reputation of Lex Caribbean and have granted approval for their response to be read in the parliamentary record. Accordingly, I now call upon the Clerk to read the response.

**The Clerk:** Lex Caribbean humbly prays that the Senate would permit the following response to be included in its records in regard to a statement made in the Senate by Senator Wade Mark on Monday October 06, 2008, which could result in irreparable damage to the reputation of Lex Caribbean.

Senator Mark alleged that Lex Caribbean was involved in an illegal transaction whereby Lex Caribbean made a donation of its own funds at the request and by the direction of the Minister of Public Administration to a trade union. We wish to state that there is absolutely no truth in Senator Mark’s statement which, if made, outside the cover of Parliamentary privilege would have resulted in the filing of a lawsuit in defamation against Senator Mark.

In fact, the publication of this allegation in the daily press and its broadcast on certain radio and television stations has already caused great embarrassment to our firm.

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The following are the facts:-

The Minister of Public Administration requested an attorney of Lex Caribbean who is a long standing friend of his, to assist in raising funds for the Public Service Association for its 2008 Queen Beauty Pageant. The attorney acting on his own and in his personal and private capacity received a donation from a third party which he dispatched to the Association. The donation took the form of the third party's cheque made in favour of the Association and was inadvertently forwarded to the Association under cover of the firm's letterhead instead of on the attorney's personal stationery.

Yours faithfully

LEX CARIBBEAN

**PAPER LAID**

Annual audited financial statements of Government Information Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne)*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**(BUDGET)**

[Fourth Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [October 06, 2008]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Vice-President:** A list of those who spoke on Monday, October 06, 2008: Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne, Minister in the Ministry of Finance; Sen. Wade Mark, Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Emily Dick-Forde, Sen. Cindy Devika Sharma, Sen. Dana Seetahal SC, Sen. The Hon. Arnold Piggott, Sen. Helen Drayton and Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill.

On Tuesday, October 07, 2008: Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning, Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, Sen. The Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, Sen. Mohammed Faisal Rahman, Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight, Sen. The Hon. Jerry Narace, Sen. Dr. Carson Charles, Sen. Annette Nicholson-Alfred and Sen. Laurel Lezama.

On Wednesday, October 08, 2008: Sen. The Hon. Tina Gronlund-Nunez, Sen. Gail Merhair, Sen. Linus Rogers, Sen. Basharat Ali, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, Sen. Dr. Jennifer Kernahan, Sen. Michael Annisette and Sen. June Melville.

**The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Health (Sen. Wesley George):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. As I deliver my inaugural parliamentary budget debate speech, I wish to congratulate all new Members on this side, both at the Lower and Upper House for their dynamic, energetic and visionary contribution towards the Appropriation Bill for 2009. I also wish to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for her sterling and excellent budget presentation on Monday, September 22, 2008.

Hon. Senators, over the past six years this Government has been actively pursuing a strategy to enhance the well-being of all our citizens, especially the most vulnerable ones. Let me say from the onset, thank God this is PNM country. [*Desk thumping*] Never in the history of Trinidad and Tobago have citizens enjoyed so many educational, health, social, housing incentives, cultural and sporting opportunities. Under this PNM Government there exists various educational opportunities and a concept of seamless education at all levels from kindergarten to tertiary level is currently being realized. We have built numerous early childhood centres and our primary and secondary students continue to benefit from free transport, text books and nourishing meals from our school feeding programme on a daily basis.

This country understands the importance of providing an opportunity to all citizens to access, disseminate and experience quality education and it is constantly working on achieving this objective. An example is the expansion of the curriculum to include Spanish, Information Technology and Physical Education subjects. Furthermore, a young person leaving secondary school has the option of pursuing A levels or going straight into tertiary education via a diploma programme made possible by GATE. They also have the option of going straight into the world of work via the On-the-Job Training Programme. In the case of persons not acquiring a full certificate at the CXC level they also have the option of enrolling in MuST, YAPA, HYPE, YTEPP to receive additional training and continue their training.

Indeed, this Government has also developed and expanded its technical and vocational training programmes to address the shortage of skilled workers needed to enhance this country's human resource pool. For instance the Multi-Sector skills Training Programme (MuST) and a retraining programme are two examples of opportunities to expand competencies of young persons in Trinidad and Tobago. Students can even move from level II in MuST to a degree programme in UTT. Our On-the-Job Training Programme (OJT) provides new students from all levels of academic qualifications with a real world job experience which can prove invaluable experience in its highly competitive job market.

I wish also to take this opportunity to tell the youths of this nation that this PNM Government could only make the rain fall but whether you choose to use a bottle cap or a barrel to collect water is entirely your choice. [*Desk thumping*] But be self assured that while the PNM is in power, our hand is extended to guide and help you along the path to success and to help you realize your dream.

**1.45 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, under the previous administration, students often started their careers right after CXC level. Not only were there limited options for A levels and diplomas, but most importantly, parents had to take huge loans to pay for their children's education. The financial burden was exorbitant. What was the Government solution at the time? It opted to introduce the Dollar for Dollar Programme which benefited 2,500 students.

Mr. Vice-President, for the sake of comparison, let me share with you the number of students who have benefited through the GATE programme—95,000 students. [*Desk thumping*] Ninety-five thousand citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have enjoyed and are presently enjoying tertiary education benefits through this programme.

This PNM government will also continue to provide all of the opportunities to advance the educational life of those who retired under the UNC government due to lack of opportunities. Elderly persons can improve their qualifications through the adult literacy programme and even pursue tertiary education, thereafter, via the GATE programme. In fact, there are currently two students ages 45 and 54 who are successfully in these programmes and have been enrolled in degree programmes at the University of the West Indies.

These educational programmes are accessible to all individuals of all ages, who wish to strengthen their academic background and enhance their professional skills. We are mobilizing and developing the people of our nation by improving the numerous training programmes and thus providing an opportunity for every citizen. Moreover, the Government has developed various non-academic programmes, such as the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture, and the academy for the Performing Arts Centre.

Mr. Vice-President, the benefits of such projects and programmes will enable our citizens to be exposed to different cultures, languages and academic and non-academic pursuits which will develop and strengthen their values, morals and principles of life. Clearly, this PNM government, as my esteemed colleague, the

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hon. Minister of Health indicated during the last sitting, has developed a vision since December 12, 1987, for our citizens and will continue to improve the conditions under which people live in our country.

Mr. Vice-President, our Government has also provided an opportunity for an elderly population to love and enjoy the benefits of their hard work. To this end, this PNM government has undertaken the following initiatives:

- the introduction of the SHARE and then Smart Card Programme where the average person gets about \$700 assistance in goods each month;
- the increase in the maximum Senior Citizens Grant from \$720 in 2002, to \$1,950 per month as in this new fiscal year;
- the re-introduction of bus passes and the introduction of a free ferry pass for travel between Trinidad and Tobago;
- the introduction of the Home Improvement Grant and the increased ability to own a house under the HDC even after retirement;
- the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP) introduced to assist citizens in 2003 which have benefited approximately 416,000 patients; and
- the new Catherization Lab for heart patients, the new adult surgical ward and Ultrasound Unit at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has extended its hand in improving the sporting facilities and has even introduced a sporting policy, to reorganize and improve the development of sports in Trinidad and Tobago. Since sports play an important role in the life of an individual, the community, the nation, the region and the world, this Government has sought to build the necessary structures and policy framework to govern sports operations. Never in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has such a policy been formulated. The policy will address significant issues which are central to the development of sports and the various institutional and organizational mechanisms for its success.

Most importantly, the theme of "total participation, high performance sport" is critical for all sectors of the society, including children, youths, adults, senior citizens and especially the challenged persons. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion, all will be encouraged to be actively involved in sports. This is expected to bring about long term benefits, including the reduction of heart disease and diabetes cases in our society. Also, our Government has introduced educational programmes in sports, such as a degree programme in Sports Management to improve the status and the quality of athletes in our country.

Mr. Vice-President, let me address at this point, the idea of pure and total privatization of the health care sector in this country, which was introduced into this Parliament yesterday. Sen. Gail Merhair, my colleague, suggested that the Ministry of Health should be abolished and our health system should be privatized. I am aware that this is her first budget presentation [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] and apparently not a thoroughly researched one. I am prepared to assist her, my good friend and colleague. Hon. Members, you know that our Government's vision, this nation's vision, is to gain developed country status by the year 2020. To achieve that, we will be adopting international best practices, while at the same time avoiding the mistakes that other economies in the world have already made.

In the health sector there are abundant world paradigms [*Laughter*] and respective experiences that encourage us to move away from the privatization of our health system. A number of developed countries attempted to privatize their health care systems in the 1950s and the 1960s and they failed miserably. The primary example of such an experience comes from Europe and namely France, where the privatization of the health system has left the country with huge debts, now reaching \$9 billion. Currently, France has switched its model to a social health insurance one.

In fact, most developed and developing countries, including France, Holland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have moved away from the notion of privatizing health care to a new model, combining the provision of health care by both public and private institutions, funded by either a tax-based system or by pro-employer contributions. These new models ensure a more equitable and affordable health care system.

Mr. Vice-President, worldwide we have come to accept and practise the principle of solidarity, which nourishes a national health insurance system that provides universal coverage to all citizens. This is exactly the basis of a Trinidad and Tobago model. Further, the 58th World Health Assembly in its 2005 resolution on sustainable health financing, universal coverage and social health insurance, urged us to ensure that our health financing system includes prepayment and risk sharing mechanisms, to avoid catastrophic health care expenditure, and to work towards universal coverage.

We have come to understand and recognize that universal coverage refers to access to key promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health interventions for all at an affordable cost, what we call equity in access. We try to achieve this by applying the principle of financial-risk protection, which ensures

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that the cost of care does not cause financial distress to our citizens. If you want to talk about the privatization of health care, look at the United States' example. Right now, 40 per cent of Americans do not have access to health care because of the escalating costs in their privatized health system and their inability to cover them. Do we really want our citizens to be uninsured and unable to access health care? Is that what my good colleague is suggesting?

The shortcomings and negative ramifications of health care privatization are extremely serious and should be given serious thought before one likely proposes such a scenario:

- all the research suggests that contracting a private firm or firms to administer the system will drive transaction costs up, since competition will require extensive marketing and possibly price competition;
- access and equity may become issues, if specific firms choose not to meet the needs of indigent or other clients;
- private firms administering the system have no incentive to contain costs, since an administrative fee is paid regardless of the number of procedures done, fees charged, et cetera. Since the firm is not bearing the risk, there is also no incentive to reduce fraud;
- the system may be negatively impacted by insolvency of the company;
- risks of the National Health Insurance must still be borne by the Government; and
- given the magnitude of the population to be covered, and the fact that only 15 per cent of the population currently access private health insurance, private companies in Trinidad and Tobago may not have the capacity to administer a system seeking to cover 1.3 million persons.

Mr. Vice-President, again, permit me to correct my colleague, the hon. Senator, who also suggested that the Blood Transfusion Unit is deficient with no intervention by the Ministry of Health. The National Blood Transfusion Unit continues to improve and upgrade its operations. The unit has improved its blood collection drive by 30 per cent and there has been a significant reduction in waiting time during the period from 2007 to present.

In addition, there has been a health promotion drive to increase the number of voluntary blood donors. Mr. Vice-President, I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the public to increase their blood donations. Voluntary donations are



currently at 10 per cent and we aim for 100 per cent, if we are to have a safe blood bank at all times. We are optimistic that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will help us achieve this goal.

Furthermore, the Unit has increased its complement of staff from two to five nurses and an additional 14 have already been trained this year. In the long term, the Ministry is drafting a Blood Transfusion Act to provide the regulatory and policy framework for the operations of the National Blood Transfusion Unit and respective initiative.

Mr. Vice-President, our society today enjoys various health care services that improve their overall quality of life. These opportunities include:

- the use of the toll free 811 number to access national emergency and ambulance services;
- free surgeries to the indigent population at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex via the adult cardiac programme, the knee and hip replacement programme and the kidney transplant programme;
- the implementation of the surgical waiting list initiative to reduce the burden of persons awaiting life saving surgical procedures;
- free CDAP drugs and free blood glucose meters and testing strips;
- greater access to our medical aid programme in the Ministry of Health which has been quite beneficial in removing the financial burden from our citizens requiring urgent health care; and
- our health wellness centres, a service that is available in most of our health institutions.

Indeed, Mr. Vice-President, this Government cares about the well-being of our citizens and will continue to improve in order to consistently and responsibly provide more health services to bring relief to our citizens.

**2.00 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, as much as we strive to provide the best possible health care services at our institutions, we firmly believe that our citizens must be conscious of and responsible for their own health. To this end, I wish to inform this honourable Senate that the ultimate vision of our Ministry is to engage citizens in practising healthier lifestyles via our health wellness promotion and preventative programmes. This is critical in addressing health risk factors such as unhealthy food, smoking, tobacco use, excessive alcohol consumption, physical

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inactivity and psychological problems. Our programmes aim to cultivate healthier lifestyles, to educate and empower the population to acquire the necessary information and skills to improve their health status and change their attitudes toward their own health.

Further, there are various programmes that are spearheaded by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and the Ministry of Social Development, that focus on the development of youths, single parents and even persons over the age of 65. I wish to take a few minutes to talk about these programmes.

Quality health care in the 21st Century—this Government is about delivering quality health care at our institutions. We recognize that our health care delivery systems must become more customer-centred and should be equipped with the appropriate structures, standards and protocols towards that end. To assist in this regard, the Government introduced an accreditation standard manual for the health sector in 2002 and prepared a draft policy White Paper on the accreditation of health services to be submitted to the Cabinet. The Health Accreditation Bill will also be introduced soon, to establish the Health Services Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

The main goals of this Council will be to operationalize the framework for accountability in the health sector; to create a platform for the National Health Service; to improve and promote quality health care; to become a centre of excellence, and to achieve international recognition. Again, I must reiterate that we on this side firmly believe that quality health care could only be improved by issuing the necessary health care protocols and putting in place all the systems required to ensure compliance to protocols, standards and due accountability. Such a move will serve to ensure that health quality standards are measurable and identifiable in this country's health institutions.

In addition, our patient-centred care approach will be developed by our health care professionals from within the system. Indeed, the innovative nature of our staff at our health institutions has enabled the implementation of numerous programmes to improve the quality and delivery of health care. In particular, several programmes towards health prevention and promotion were introduced in our primary health care system.

These innovative projects and programmes include the following: the assessment and reduction of the instance of breast and cervical cancer in the Rio Claro area; 200 females have benefited so far from this programme, while many more have indicated an interest in receiving more information; the initiation of a

facility to conduct chest pain evaluation and the evaluation of exercise practices in the community; the Asthma Project and the project for improving glycemic control in diabetic patients, which received an award at the Prime Minister's Award Function this year, was nominated for a Commonwealth award; and the introduction of the Poison Care Centre at Sangre Grande, which also received an award at the Prime Minister's Award Function this year.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me to thank all our health care professionals at all levels for their hard work, self-determination, commitment, loyalty, innovativeness, perseverance and timely delivery of health care to our patients. These projects will continue to increase the standards of our health care delivery.

Towards this end, the Ministry of Health has been facilitating this innovative process for the last four years and is holding its fifth health care quality awards later this month, continuing to celebrate innovation and excellence in public health care delivery by individuals, hospitals and other departments.

The Ministry of Health is currently finalizing the introduction of a National Patient Safety Policy in its health institutions. This policy will help mitigate the risks involved in the patient care environment from both a clinical and physical aspect. Indeed, it is expected that these measures will enhance the safety of patients, which is of paramount importance to this Government. Furthermore, as we all know, the basic tenet of any patient care oriented strategy must focus on the assessment of its programmes and projects. The Ministry has introduced customer satisfaction surveys at the primary and secondary care levels, and time and motion studies to inform strategies to reduce wait times in several areas. Moreover, the Ministry has established a Voluntary Separation of Employment (VSEP) transfer transition team to manage the change process and provide the necessary information and support to employees before, during and after the process, and to simultaneously ensure that the quality of health care services remain at optimum levels.

In relation to our National Community Care Programme, the aim is to provide quality community care options for citizens with mental or physical disabilities. Between October 2006 and April 2008, a total of 130 patients were moved into community residences. Having completed the pilot phase, the National Community Health Care Unit, as of January 2008, began the national roll out of the Community Care Programme. The activities include expanding the programme to

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the North, the North Central and South Western Regional Health Authorities, as well as implementing home care and community-based rehabilitation, along with other models of care. A review of the Community Care Programme was also completed in 2008, laying out the strategic platform for the programme.

Mr. Vice-President, our coverage of antigens has improved over the last decade. For instance, the vaccine coverage of the antigens Polio and Pentavalent for the period January—December 2007, in the age group under one-year-old, was 88 per cent; yellow fever and MMR in the one-year-old population segment is 90.97 per cent.

In fiscal year 2007—2008, the influenza or flu vaccine was introduced and, in the first phase, health care providers and immuno-compromised individuals were targeted. This is expected to result in further reduction in the incidence of influenza, which was reduced by 30 per cent between 2002 and 2005. Over the next fiscal year, the EPI Unit will be restructured to facilitate greater efficiency and ensure the continued improvement of the immunization programme. Vaccines that are on the international market will also be introduced into the national immunization schedule.

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management and other key stakeholders have developed a comprehensive pandemic influenza plan to treat with this threat. To date, sensitization meetings have been conducted with all county medical officers of health in Trinidad, the chief executive officers of Regional Health Authorities in Trinidad, as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association and several stakeholders in Tobago. As a result, there is enhanced surveillance and port health activities across the country.

Materials required for the administrating of certain aspects of the pandemic influenza plan have been procured and distributed to various health delivery centres; in addition, hospitals have been audited for emergency preparedness, adequacy of isolation areas, personal protective equipment and intensive care capacity. Training will be conducted separately and hospital audits will continue in order to ensure that the proper procedures are implemented.

School Health Programme—the Ministry of Health recognizes that in terms of health promotion, interventions must be made at an early stage in order to promote healthier lifestyles. Towards this end, the School Health Programme was developed in 2006 with the aim of screening all primary school entrants in Trinidad and Tobago and identifying children with hearing and vision impairments.

For the period October 2005—July 2008, a total of 68,619 primary school students received hearing screening, and of these 61,949 were successful. After follow up evaluations, a total of 22 hearing aids were distributed to the hearing impaired students. In the case of vision screening, a total of 29,666 primary school students were screened for the period October 2006—November 2007, and of these 126 were fitted with glasses.

Tissue transplant—the Organ Transplant Unit was established in January 2006. The role of the unit is to allow for the transplant of organs and tissues to patients suffering from organ failure. Donors can either be living or deceased. The unit is located temporarily at Building 8, Ground Floor, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. Regulations to effect the Tissue Transplant Act, which legalizes harvesting, storage and transplanting of tissues from cadavers and life donors, have been completed. At the start of the programme a policy decision was made on the primary focus of kidneys and cornea transplants, taking into account both the needs of the population and the fact that those procedures had already been performed in Trinidad and Tobago. The Tissue Transplant Unit is now in operation and tissue transplants using life donors have commenced.

Work on the establishment of an eye bank is in progress. The identification of a location, staff and the procurement of instruments are completed. Fifteen transplants were performed at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex since the start of the programme in January 2006.

Improvements in the health care delivery service—the country's five main hospitals: Port of Spain General Hospital, San Fernando General Hospital, Sangre Grande County Hospital, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex and the Scarborough Regional Hospital have received state-of-the-art equipment such as mammography, magnetic resonance imaging or MRIs, digital fluoroscopy and general X-ray machines. Gamma cameras imaging internal organs using isotopes to pinpoint the damaged areas have been installed at the EWMSC, as well as the re-equipping of its Sterilization Unit. Two litho—[*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] two machines that scatter kidney stones—[*Laughter*] Two machines that shatter kidney stones have been installed at the San Fernando General Hospital, while a neuro navigator, which helps direct the surgeon during operations, was installed at the Port of Spain General Hospital.

Sterilization equipment for Port of Spain General Hospital and a picture archiving communication system, or PACS, which allows images to be sent to any hospital globally, for the Sangre Grande Hospital and the Eric Williams Medical

Sciences Complex and the San Fernando General Hospital has been received and awaits installation. For the very first time in its history, the Port of Spain General Hospital has commissioned a fifth operating theatre, enabling the commencement of laparoscopic procedures and cardiac surgeries in its premises.

**2.15 p.m.**

At present, cardiovascular complications are the leading causes of death in Trinidad and Tobago. In an attempt to reverse this trend, the Ministry of Health, together with the North Central Regional Authority, has invested in two new state-of-the-art catheterization laboratories. The successful completion of this initiative will result in patients with cardiac complications benefiting from having corrective procedures done, allowing them to live normal healthy lives.

Patients with cardiac complications, such as tight valves and hole-in-heart, can now benefit from procedures such as angioplasty, cardiac interventions and the installation of pacemakers which will remove the need for surgery while having their relatives with them to provide needed comfort and support. This laboratory began its operation in May 2007 and has completed 92 procedures to date. This figure is expected to double as more staff is acquired and much needed consumables.

Mobile/clinic initiative: This initiative is only one of the Ministry's efforts to make primary health care affordable, available and accessible to the citizens of the country. On April 30, 2007, the Ministry of Health introduced 10 mobile clinics. These will visit communities around the country, taking to citizens the services that they most require. The South West Regional Health Authority and the Eastern Regional Health Authority have been given three vehicles each for service in their communities, while two have been assigned to the North West Regional Health Authority and the other two have been assigned to the North Central Regional Health Authority.

The Ministry soon aims to double the fleet of mobile clinics so as to develop a network of mobile screening clinics which will enhance and complement the existing service. Mobile units will assist in early detection of symptoms which could lead to chronic diseases, debility and death. Each mobile unit will be facilitating glucose testing for diabetic patients, screening for hypertension, obesity, vision screening, cholesterol and dietary disorders. Patients diagnosed with complications can be referred to health centres and/or hospitals to access the necessary care and treatment. Mobile units will also act as support in the event of disasters and epidemics. They will also provide immunization and emergency treatment.

**Violence and Injury:** Road traffic accidents and interpersonal violence are among the leading causes of death and disability globally. In Trinidad and Tobago the picture is quite similar; the data showing that on average, 11,643 cases of injury were discharged from hospitals per year. These trends of increasing incidents of violence and injury pose a large burden on the health care system and to the society. In order to address the situation, the Ministry of Health has established an inter-sectoral committee on violence and injury prevention and control. This committee will be mandated to develop national policies and strategic plans and programmes as well as provide oversight in the implementation of priority projects and activities.

**Tele-health initiative:** The Government of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the Faculty of Medical Sciences, the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and a Hospital for Sick Children, the University of Toronto, Canada, established the UWI Tele-health Programme in 2004. The aims and objectives of the tele-health linkage initiative are as follows:

- To enable needy persons to access management and care of their health problems through consultations by local health care professionals with specialists at the Hospital for Sick Children and other sites in Canada;
- To strengthen undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education; and
- To promote and support relevant collaborative research between investigators in Trinidad and Tobago and Canada.

The tele-health initiative is a system that is operated where consultants can be conducted via a broadband link from Canada at the Hospital for Sick Children to patients residing at a remote local site, such as the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the San Fernando General Hospital and the Sangre Grande Hospital.

During the period 2005—2008, over 117 indigent families in need of sub-specialty care who previously had limited or no access to health facilities in Trinidad and Tobago, benefited from this service. In addition, the UWI Tele-health report for the period 2007—2008 further indicated that a total of 235 participants were trained during the period 2006—2008 and the programme received an overall rating of “very good”: 67 per cent strongly agreed and 27 per cent agreed during its evaluation. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has received a cost savings of TT \$3,559,082 during the period 2004—2008 from this tele-health initiative.

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Managing Alliances and Relationships: Another strategy recommended to further develop organizational capacity of the Ministry to lead and govern the health sector is to develop alliances and relationships with key stakeholders in the health sector to widen its resource base. The Ministry recognizes the important role the NGOs play in providing much needed services, especially in geographically under-served areas where there are gaps in service delivery and an excess demand for service. In this regard, the Ministry has developed a more robust policy mechanism in keeping with international best practice. This policy shall govern the relationship between the Ministry and NGOs, ensuring that the use of public funds is executed within a framework of accountability and transparency and also ensuring that these funds are expended to the maximum benefit for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This present Government is about change and creating a modern health sector that can be globally top-ranked by empowering our citizens to improve their well-being and quality of life. An important element towards the realization of these goals is ensuring the most timely, efficient and effective health care delivery. I am confident that Trinidad and Tobago is now in the process of creating a health care system that will accommodate the needs of every single citizen. Indeed, our institutions, programmes and initiatives in the health care sector, will provide for our population's wellness and our nation's overall socio-economic development.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I rise to make a contribution on the Appropriation Bill 2009. Before I get into the meat of my contribution, I have a few things to rebut. I will start with Lex Caribbean. A law firm of long standing is now admitting that what Sen. Mark revealed in his contribution was factual. I refer to their own statement and I quote—on the response; last paragraph:

“The donation took the form of the third party's cheque made in favour of the Association and was inadvertently forwarded to the Association under cover of the firm's letterhead instead of on the attorney's personal stationery.”

Nowhere did they indicate the sum of money involved.

Let me refer to two documents that I will lay on the Table and I will ask the Clerk to have them printed and circulated to all Members:

“The Public Services Association of Trinidad and Tobago, Minutes of the General Council meeting held at the PSA Headquarters, 89 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain, on August 21, 2008.”



On page 7, item 1.17:

“Ministry of Public Administration through Lex Caribbean, \$40,000.”

And I will lay this document on the Table. The other document I will quote from that I am willing to lay on the Table also is the Public Services Association income statement from 01/01/08 to 31/8/08. On page 7, under “Other Miscellaneous Income:

“Donation towards PSA Queen Pageant from Ministry of Public Administration - \$40,000.”

And on page 9: “Receipts, Donations”:

“Lex Caribbean for the Ministry of Public Administration - \$40,000.”

Mr. Vice-President, a law firm of 30 years experience, tables in this Parliament such utter piffle that nobody can believe. The firm's letterhead—what conclusion can the ordinary observer come to? This requires an independent enquiry to get to the bottom of this matter. The implications are too serious to be left by a letter of response. Hence the reason Sen. Mark, in his contribution said that next week he will send the relevant documentation to the DPP, the head of the Fraud Squad, the President of the Trinidad and Tobago Law Association and the Chairman of the Integrity Commission.

On the matter of T&TEC, I want to table the following spreadsheets: One, giving details of money received by Kamus Muffler Works from T&TEC for street lighting Luminaire Arm, SLLA, for the period from 15/09/2008, totalling, \$54,104,434.89, over \$54 million; another spreadsheet along the same lines for hundreds of items, not only bolts and nuts. We saw in terms of face basin, shower mixer, shower enclosure, face basin mixer, toilet paper holder, soap dish; elements for a household. Payments made to Roopnarine Hardware Limited, totalling over \$13.4 million; a spreadsheet providing information on the amount of money paid by T&TEC to Kamus Muffler Works Limited for rental of office space for the street lighting implementation unit, of over \$83,000 a month; and also invoices and purchase orders—street lighting implementation unit, 0001682, 1680, 1681 and 1081.

As I continue, with respect to the matter of the travelling allowance and the letter that was presented by Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning in this debate from the Airports Authority, I also have documents that I am going to place on the Table for circulation.

**2.30 p.m.**

I will start with the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago's payment vouchers:

- March 27, 1996: cheque No. 484 in the amount of \$9,466.66, paid to Hazel Manning, Account No. 02-002-010, for travelling allowance for the period November 1995 to March 1996—prepared by Winston Ironside; signatories to cheque—Winston Ironside and Auditor III;
- March 06, 1997: paid to Hazel Manning, cheque No. 940 in the amount of \$9,466.66, replacing cheque No. 484 of March 1996 being travelling for the period November 1995 to March 1996—prepared by Winston Ironside; signatories to cheque Winston Ironside and the Auditor III.

I also place on record a Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited cheque No. 000940, dated March 06, 1997, paid to the order of Hazel Manning in the sum of \$9,466.66 from the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Caroni North Bank Road, Piarco, replacing cheque No. 484, cashed on March 21, 1997.

**Hon. Senator:** What is the relevance?

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** The relevance, Mr. Vice-President, is with respect to a letter produced by Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning, which was tabled in Parliament.

I also lay on the Table the transfer form for PAX 7878, from Patrick Manning to Hazel Manning. The licence sticker will also be laid and a letter dated March 21, 1996 as follows:

“Mrs. Hazel Manning

Business Development Manager

Planning and Development Division

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Dear Ms. Manning.

APPLICATION FOR DRIVER'S ALLOWANCE

We refer to your letter Ref AATT:A2/12/96...dated 1996 March 14, on the subject at caption...

- You shall be entitled to a car loan of one hundred thousand Dollars (\$100,000) at 6% per annum repayable over a period of six (6) years
- You shall be entitled to a Travelling Allowance of (\$2,000) per month”

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We are now advising that the terms and conditions of your employment contract have been amended to include the following—which means that that was not included in the contract in the first place.

“THE AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

M E M O R A N D U M

Ref: 594/96(MHR)

TO: MANAGER, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

FROM: MANAGER, HUMAN RESOURCES.

DATE: 1996 March 21

SUBJECT: TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE

The terms and conditions of employment of Ms. Hazel Manning, Business Development Manager, Planning and Development Division, now need to be altered. Whereas initially she was not eligible for a Travelling Allowance, she now is.

In the circumstances, the Human Resource Management Division is advising that she be included among the recipients of a Commuted Travelling Allowance monthly, commencing 1996, November 2007.

I have appended the relevant documents for your attention.

Calvin Bess”

“1992 July 07

Ms. Hazel Manning

#4-5 Union Park East Road

Gopaul Lands

MARABELLA

Dear Ms. Manning.

RE: OFFER OF CONTRACT FOR SERVICE

We are pleased to offer you a contract for service as a Community Relocation Manager/Estate Development Manager with the Project PRIDE Division—Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, hereinafter called "The Authority", on the following terms and conditions:

1. The Contract for Service shall take effect from 1992 September 01 and will continue for a period of three (3) years in the first instance, unless sooner determined as provided herein.

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2. The service which you are required to provide shall be performed on a full-time basis during such hours and at such places as may be required by the nature of the services.
3. We agree to pay you monthly for the service provided under this Agreement, a basic fee of Six Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty two Dollars (\$6,742.00). This fee will be subject to tax.
  - (a) You shall be entitled to an Entertainment Allowance of Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$250) per month.
4. (a) You shall be entitled to thirty-five (35) working days Vacation Leave annually, for which you will become eligible after completing one (1) year's service;
  - (b) Such Vacation Leave entitlement—"*Interruption*"

The relevance is that the contract will show that you are not entitled to a travelling allowance.

- “...for the three (3) years of your Contract period may, by mutual agreement, be taken annually or towards the end of the Contract period or you may, at the end of the period, be paid the cash equivalent in lieu of any such leave outstanding.
5. During the period of this Contract, you shall be eligible for Sick Leave and Bereavement Leave in accordance with the terms and conditions as applicable to other employees of the Authority.
  6. During the period of this Contract, you shall be eligible for a loan for the specific purpose of purchasing a personal computer system compatible with such systems installed by the Authority.
  7. Either party may terminate this Contract for service by giving to the other not less than three (3) months notice in writing at any time provided that should such notice be given by either party whilst you are on leave or before you go on leave, so that the time between the giving of such notice and the end of your leave is less than three (3) months, then the contract will be deemed to terminate at the end of your leave, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in your notice of this agreement.
  8. Provided that the service described above has been carried out to the satisfaction of the Authority, over the aforesaid period of three (3) years, you shall be entitled to a Service of Gratuity of twenty percent (20%) of

the annual fee of service upon termination of this Contract. However, if either party terminates this Contract before the end of three (3) years and provided your performance during the period is satisfactory, the gratuity shall be payable on a pro-rata basis.

In the event of death at any time during the existence of this Contract, the Gratuity shall also be payable on a pro-rata basis to your estate. On the other hand, if the Authority terminates this Contract for cause before expiration of the said period of three (3) years, no gratuity shall be payable. The Gratuity may be subject to taxation in accordance with any applicable law which may be in force at the time.” [*Interruption*]

The relevance of this particular document will show that there was no entitlement for a travelling allowance. In putting forward these documentation before the Senate today—I am not casting any aspersions on the Sen. The Hon. Sen. Hazel Manning or my colleague, Sen. Wade Mark—but the point here is that there was no receipt of travelling allowance for the period November 1995 to March 1996 and we have tabled evidence in the form of the documentation and a cheque which was cashed.

It is surprising that parliamentarians who should be standing firm in defence of democracy are spewing such utter piffle when dealing with the matter of privilege. It is the unfettered right of the Opposition to expose the wrongdoing of the Government. I quote section 55(1), (2), (3) and (4) of the Constitution. To alter this privilege needs 32 votes, which you will never have. We stand for democracy and so Sen. Prof. Deosaran, I am sure, there will be no need for my colleague, Sen. Mark, to apologize to the Senate. The evidence is clear that the hon. Senator did receive the travelling allowance.

As I get to the meat of my contribution, I looked through the documents and it was no surprise to find that there were allocations in the 2008 estimates for almost 20 primary schools and for the year 2008 there was no utilization of this allocation.

In terms of a track record, we have had that already with respect to the building of primary schools. It takes approximately three months to go from conceptual design to final design. If you start in January, somewhere between March/April, you may be getting your final design. By the time you go out for tender with the contract documents, you will see, in terms of the start-up time for the construction of a primary school, that the finished product would take at least two years, factoring in the dry season in January.

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For the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment to put on the estimates a \$5 million allocation for all the primary schools is really just padding the estimates. We have seen, in terms of their performance, that none of the schools reached a point where construction could begin. The only area—that might be an error too—Palo Seco Government Primary School's construction has begun.

The document is saying that the designs for the Palo Seco Government Primary School are now completed and gone to tender. So construction will begin next year. That is in respect of the failure of the Government in terms of their construction programme for primary schools.

I want the hon. Sen. Laurel Lezama to know that I was totally shocked to hear coming from her with respect to stating that the former Prime Minister, hon. Basdeo Panday instructed his Minister of Education to let the John Donaldson and the San Fernando Technical Institutes deteriorate.

**Sen. Lezama:** On a matter of clarification, I never said any such thing. I never made any such statement.

**2.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Senators:** Apologize!

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** I took notes. Probably I am wrong, but I understood that she said the enrolment figures dropped and it was because of—[*Interruption*] If the enrolment figures—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Senator, I was here. I never heard the Senator say that the former Prime Minister instructed his Minister of Education to neglect the John Donaldson Technical Institute and San Fernando Technical Institute.

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** If I made a mistake, in terms of the accusation—I would continue. [*Interruption*]

**Sen. Mark:** If you did not say it the record would show that you did not say it.

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** It has been said in the other place that the UNC administration deliberately left John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes undone. How could you say something like that? That really affects me, Sen. Dr. Saith, because when I was the Minister of Education I ensured—as we go into this debate you will see.

We heard a lot of the Government Ministers talking about Vision 2020. There was a vision of the UNC administration to create an intelligent nation. It is because of this vision by former Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday, that everything

revolved around creating an intelligent nation. For Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith to say that is factual, in terms of running down those two institutions, is totally unheard of, when all the estimates of expenditure would show, that throughout the years, money was allocated to the San Fernando and John Donaldson Technical Institutes and allocations were utilized. What we are comparing really is oil at US \$9, as compared to the higher figure that is now available to the Government. I want to warn the Government—[*Continuous interruption and crosstalk*]

**Sen. Lezama:** On a point of order. I would like to refer you to Standing Order 39(b) and (c). I am trying to hear Sen. Dr. Nanan and Sen. Rahman is only interrupting me.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Rahman, do not disturb the Senate. You are on your feet to respond? The Senator is speaking.

**Sen. Rahman:** He should not talk.

**Mr. Vice-President:** If you and any other Senator wishes to speak, you can go outside and speak.

**Sen. Rahman:** Let us go, please.

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** I was making the point that we are seeing the price of oil at probably US \$80 or US \$85 per barrel and going down, and there is a view, which I want the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to consider, that the price of oil will decline to US \$50 per barrel. The international business monitor is saying that. I am not an alarmist. There will have to be a strategy A, B, or C with respect to this particular area. You also have to consider, if that price goes to US \$50, that there will be no money going into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and if you continue to spend at the level you have been projecting, you would have to utilize the money in the fund to do so.

As I am on that area, I also want to deal with inflation and the Minister of Trade and Industry, with respect to his contribution in this Senate. With respect to the APA, you said we have to become competitive and we have a certain time frame to do so, but with the inflationary trends and labour contracts that have to be negotiated with the ever-increasing inflation rate, what we will see is that the manufacturing sector will become less competitive because there will be shrinkage in the labour market. People would be sent home because the manufacturing sector, with its higher labour costs, will not be productive. That is a situation that must be factored, in terms of the manufacturing sector and their competitiveness. We may have—not only here—a shrinking manufacturing sector. It is something the Government, again has to look at, in terms of the situation, one of the fallouts of this particular decrease in the price of oil.

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I also want to make reference to Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight, because it was very dear to my heart, the Chaguaramas Golf Course. I ensured, as the Minister of Tourism, that we had a new clubhouse there. The former Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, constructed a new clubhouse at the Chaguaramas Golf Course. At that time it was projected for 18 holes. It is a nine-hole for an upgrade to 18 holes. This was in 2000, when I was Minister of Tourism. Eight years later—*[Interruption]* it is not a matter of me playing golf or not, but we cannot get an expansion to an 18-hole golf course.

There was also, if I remember correctly a provision of 32-hole internationally-rated golf course in Tucker Valley. It also leads from that area in Tucker Valley, as I am dealing with that, into the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Tucker Valley is a unique area; an isolated area in terms of the environment. I heard the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources expound and give numbers, in terms of production levels of different vegetables and fruits. You would recall that I asked him point-blank if pawpaw was one of the fruits that were going to be introduced in the diet or continues to be in large quantities.

The Chaguaramas Development Authority refused to extend the lease to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It is a very important unit, the Seeds Propagation Unit. It was based at Chaguaramas. We are using imported hybrid seeds. God forbid that there is an embargo, we will starve because these hybrid seeds can only be used once, in terms of the product. They are very expensive. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources talks about the large quantities but there are others, not only pawpaw. You need to prevent cross-breeding, especially with the pawpaw plant. That is why Chaguaramas is such an important environment. It is my understanding that they are going to El Carmen, which is a much more open area and there is a lot of possibilities for cross-breeding.

I also want to make a plug for the Seed Propagation Unit staff, because they are moving them from Chaguaramas and have them go to El Carmen and shuttle back and forth. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources needs to have a proper perspective, in terms of where we are going. My friend, Sen. Dr. Carson Charles, talked about going down the road and only seeing coconut trees. The Seed Propagation Unit is very important, especially for our local farmers for the price of seeds to go down. If that is not a critical part of this Ministry, then I do not know what production level the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would come to the House with in one year's time in order to say what they have achieved in that particular environment of Tucker Valley.



I will not leave Chaguaramas yet, but I am dealing with another issue. Another situation that is very close to my heart is the Institute of Marine Affairs. Many would recall that there were seven acres of land leased by the CDA and the Cabinet took a decision that they would pay a small percentage. I am sure Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith is aware that they would be granting the seven acres of land. Based on that agreement, they were going to construct a new administration building at international standards for that facility at Chaguaramas. That was 2000, when I was Minister of Tourism.

In 2000, when I was Minister of the Environment, that particular matter came up. There is a Cabinet decision. I do not know if the Government—I know that they are following on because what I saw is a three-phase project, but Phase 1 has not been completed. I call upon the Government—there is an allocation that has not been utilized. There is that particular bugbear. It is a very important institute, because it deals, not only within our local waters. They are also assisting in the Caribbean. I urge the Government; the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, to see what can be done to speed up that particular process to have that institute up and running, because they require the international lab facilities in Chaguaramas.

As I leave Chaguaramas, I go to the Ministry of Health, because we heard in this debate that the UNC administration did very little for Health. I want to remind Senators of the situation from 1991 to 1995—babies on brown paper bag. A particular area of interest is the long line at health centres. Probably you have forgotten, but there used to be long lines at our health centres. Because of the structure and the administration programme introduced by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday, these are no longer so. The structure got rid of the long lines. In terms of surgeries such as cataract and other surgeries, there was a long waiting list. That was also reduced, not as much as we wanted at that time because the price of oil was not what it was today. We have also put 30 ambulances on the road. There was the upgrade of the Port of Spain and San Fernando General Hospitals. We built the Moruga Health Facility, Princes Town District Health Facility and Couva District Health Facility. In terms of the statements made, with respect to the Ministry of Health and the UNC administration, I want to touch on those areas and put it in some kind of perspective. There were other programmes such as the nursing programme. We trained so many nurses and a myriad of programmes was introduced at that time. That is within the Ministry of Health.

In terms of the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, we heard in this Senate, the number of houses that were constructed. In the other place, the figure given for houses constructed was 32,000. Last week the Prime Minister

made two statements: one was that the total number of houses constructed was 26,000. We have 32,000 and 26,000. We have a missing 6,000.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, when called to account, it was said that once you turn the sod for a housing project, it is believed to have been constructed. To quote a former Minister of Housing, that is ridiculous. That is all I have to say with respect to the housing matter.

As I am on the Ministry of Housing, Planning and the Environment, we heard in this debate about the Montreal Protocol, but the Minister did not make reference to the 1996 programme. In 1996, the staff of the ministry put a programme in place to deal with chlorofluorocarbons, and the target was 2010. The Minister said that we are advanced with this particular protocol, but I also want to ask the Minister, with respect to the persistent organic pesticides, have we signed the treaty with respect to DDT and other pesticides? There has to be a national plan before we can sign that particular treaty. We need to find out, in terms of a national plan to get rid of these pesticides, if we have signed. We cannot sign unless we have a national plan. What are the strategies to be employed in this particular area?

Do you know what? Every year in the estimates we see an allocation for the wildlife authority that it is not being utilized. Every time this question comes up it is always a problem. Is the Government going with the authority or not? Is it just a line budgeting item with an allocation in that particular area? It is important. If an authority is to be set up, you have to be careful if you are going to transfer staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to this authority. Are you going to increase their salaries? Who are you going to put? There are so many authorities that are going to be set up, and we hope that there will be accountability and regulations governing them. We have seen that there is little accountability by state companies like UDeCott, RuDeCoTT and Education Facilities Company. They are spending millions of dollars with no accountability. So, you have to be very careful when you are setting up this authority. That is with respect to wildlife and national parks.

We have seen the Environmental Management Authority's (EMA) performance, and I was surprised to see that the EMA did not provide a certificate of environmental clearance for the fishing port in Moruga, and that is why the \$20 million allocation was not utilized. According to the document, a contract has been awarded for the Galeota Port for \$500 million, and there has been a

certificate of clearance for the Alutrint smelter. Is the EMA trying to say now that they are independent? We heard from Sen. Dr. Kernahan the dangers of the smelter and toxic elements. There is an agreement to build the smelter, and now we have a situation at the Moruga Fishing Port for an environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Vice-President, this leads me to Maracas. At Maracas, there is a situation where you have sand being eroded from the beach. There is a proposal to put barriers to prevent the sand from being removed from the beach by the wind. I saw in the estimate the sum of \$5 million for the Maracas upliftment project. Sen. Rahman spoke about the situation where recently there were high waves coming from the river and flooding the car park. Now, there was an allocation for the upgrading of the huts, and that was done, but there is the situation with water coming up from the river and flooding the car park. There was a \$5 million allocation to take care of not only the sand barriers, but that particular problem. There is also the situation at Maracas where vendors are at the mercy of high waters. So, we have to ask questions in terms of that allocation. When I went through the documents I saw all these allocations.

Yes, we have a lot of money and revenue coming into the country and ministries are making demands, but we need to examine these projects very carefully. I intend to show that there is approximately \$4 billion in cost overruns in the energy sector. If my figure is correct, it is over \$3.9 billion. So, in terms of the Maracas project where \$5 million was allocated, it shows that a little project like that cannot get off the ground, and this means so much to the people of Maracas, where they can have some kind of security in terms of the tourism potential. Many people go to Maracas for bake and shark, because that is really the attraction there.

When I heard Sen. Nicholson Alfred talk about the Charlotteville experience, it really affected me. In fact, I was clamouring for that particular area of Charlotteville to be regulated just as Scarborough. The reason I called for that kind of regulation to be implemented there—compulsory pilotage in that particular area like Scarborough—was because there were a number of large yachts coming into that area, and God forbid if one of those yachts comes aground. When I heard Sen. Annisette talk about the seamen who are being trained, I also want to make reference to our local pilots who man these ships. Once these crew liners get into port, a certain distance away from the—

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. W. Mark*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Vice-President, I thank all Senators for extending my time. I want to make the point that compulsory piloting should be for Charlotteville. We need to have one of our local pilots bringing in those cruise ships that are going there especially if they are large. We cannot take the risk where a captain is not aware of the situation there.

Let me now turn to the energy sector. The Supplementary Public Sector Investment Programme points to a 66 kilometre pipeline at Beachfield—66 kilometre offshore and three kilometres onshore—and a 36-inch pipeline from bpTT's Cassia Platform to Abyssinia with a capacity to transport 6,000 mmcfd as well as the construction of a new state-of-the-art sludge catcher facility at Beachfield, Abyssinia. I want to point out that the original cost for that project was \$863.4 million, and the project is now revised to \$1.423.8 million, a difference of \$560.4 million. With respect to time frame, we heard that what may cost you \$250,000 today, if you delay it might cost you three times as much, and these are large projects.

With respect to the Phoenix Park valve station upgrade, there is the construction of a new 3,000 barrel sludge catcher and liquid handling facility. This will bring cleaner fluid and provide a more reliable gas supply. The project started in 2006 at \$197.4 million and the project is now costing \$386.8 million, an increase of \$189.4 million. Why is that project costing so much?

With respect to the Gasoline Optimization Programme, that programme was estimated to cost \$192.5 million and it is now costing \$427.9 million, a difference of \$235.4 million. Bechtel International is the project administration. There is an increase of \$235.4 million to Bechtel International, and Petrotrin has already issued a US \$600 million bond to finance that project.

The other project I want to deal with is the Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit which would produce a better quality of gasoline with improved octane ratings; reduce carbon monoxide and particle emissions. The figure estimated was \$905.5 million and the new cost is over \$2 billion, an increase of \$1.286 billion. You are replacing two existing ageing catalytic reform units with a continuous catalytic

regeneration unit to maintain the ability to produce high octane rating. This project started in 2004 and it is estimated to be completed in 2009. The project started with an initial figure of \$1343.9 million, and is now going to cost \$1592.4 million, an increase of \$248.5 million.

The new Alkylation Unit/Sulphuric Acid Regeneration Unit, the estimated cost of that unit was \$1313.1 million and it is now revised to \$1631.8 million, an increase of \$318.7 million. The project started in 2004 and it is estimated to be completed in 2009.

Two new broilers were to be installed at \$809 million and it is now costing \$1725.1 million, an increase of \$916.1 million.

With respect to diesel and ultra low sulphur, what you have is low aromatic diesel and improved octane index. That project was costing \$945.5 million—

**Sen. Browne:** On a point of order. Could the Senator identify the source of information, please? Is it the SPSIP?

**3.15 p.m.**

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** I thought you would have known your own document. It is the *Supplementary Public Sector Investment Programme 2009*, page 19. I guess I would get injury time, Mr. Vice-President. [Laughter] Here we go. You see when I prepare for a debate, I prepare properly.

"Accordingly two (2) new boilers and associated infrastructure are being installed to meet the projected increase in steam demand. The estimated cost of this project is \$809.0 million but has been revised to \$1,725.1 million. This project commenced in 2004 and is scheduled for completion in 2009."

This was the reference, and let me go on quickly before I run out of time. I think that was your intention, but I will go on. [Laughter] It is \$1,725.1 million. So when you read the document you would check up on your technocrats, probably that was wrong information supplied. I will go on, because I need to deal with the diesel plant to process natural gas and produce 1,800 barrels of diesel per day for use in blending for the local market. The estimated cost of \$634 million is now \$850 million. The project started in 2007, it is now finishing in 2010.

You know what is even more surprising? Simple things; like a refinery laboratory which has gone from \$55 million as the estimated cost to \$100 million, an increase of \$45 million. A new tug launch landing stage for the marine operations went from \$20 million to \$76.8 million, a total of \$56.8 million

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increase. The new Casuarina electrical substation is now going, in terms of electrical power, from \$20 million to \$28 million, and what I calculated is an increase of \$391.78 billion in these projects. So, I just draw that to the attention of the Government with respect to the energy sector in that particular area.

I want to deal with the situation with the tourism sector. Yes, we are building large scale—I agree with Sen. Nicholson-Alfred in terms of a five-star hotel for Tobago—but I want Members to understand the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago, because yes, Sen. Melville spoke about Mason Hall Secondary School and it was constructed by the PNM administration, but I want Sen. Melville to know that it was the United National Congress administration that negotiated that loan for the secondary school construction period.

It is no fault of the United National Congress government that that school was not constructed. In fact, I can recall now in terms of seeing the plan—and what a beautiful plan it was—and architectural design for Mason Hall Secondary School at the time, but there was just that particular memorandum of understanding that we could not get to agree on, that is why that school was not constructed. So, it is not that we did not construct it because it was on that particular programme; many other schools were on that programme.

**Sen. Browne:** That school you are talking about was built.

**Sen. Dr. A. Nanan:** Yes, I know, but it was not built by us. I did not say it was not built. [*Crosstalk*] You go to the website, and you would see that loan was signed in 1999. I heard in this Chamber that it comes to an end this year; it was a seven-year period.

If you look at the PNM's track record and the time lines set, you know what really affects me, every time somebody is contributing on education on that side they talk about the programmes that they have put forward like it is something new; it is a new innovation that is coming from the PNM administration with respect to education. Everything that they have put forward in terms of what they are doing, that platform has been laid by the United National Congress government.

As I go back, because I spoke about an intelligent nation, and I have to quote from the UNC Manifesto of 2000. We heard in terms of an inextricable link throughout the Government's debate. Let me put on the record, on page 56 of the UNC Manifesto of 2000:

"Our vision is clear.

All boats must rise on an ever increasing tide of prosperity, as we increase our efforts to bridge the equity gaps.

Our strategy is also clear. Education, training, retraining and reskilling are necessary for every man woman and child through a range of institutions and through distance education to empower citizens and give them the capacity to earn through a job or through a business.

That is the basis of our objective of the plan to transform Trinidad and Tobago into an Intelligent nation.

The second part of our strategy is that the private business sector shall lead through a wave of investment driving the sustainable growth and carrying the economy and our people forward on a wave of prosperity.

The third part of our strategy involves increasing support for the poor and vulnerable and equipping them to help themselves.

We will work in partnership with business, labour and all elements of civil society to build a prosperous and progressive society with our people living in peace and harmony and working productively to secure their future and the future of many generations of Trinidadians and Tobagonians to come.”

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon):** Mr. Vice-President, I rise in this honourable Senate to make my contribution to the 2009 budget. Before doing so, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, Karen Nunez-Tesheira on her budget, and of course to Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne for his budget presentation as well. I will speak a bit to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago’s foreign policy, to our work programme in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the last financial year, and also our plans for the next financial year as well.

The theme of the 2008 budget was “Determined to Reach Our Goal” and that guided the foreign agenda of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for last year. In accordance with that budget, the Government allocated \$386 million under its recurrent expenditure to advance its foreign policy work and another \$19.5 million under the development programme.

These moneys were utilized to reach our goals and to effectively address a number of issues that included activities that led to the development of the economic sectors of this country through the promotion of trade and investment initiatives.

Trinidad and Tobago manages the revenues from its oil and gas and related downstream industries and its manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors to

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secure significant, economic, educational, social and cultural gains for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago is an extension of the domestic policy of the Government.

The vision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to be service driven; to be a results oriented organization through effective engagement at home and representation abroad will act as a central channel by which the national interest and national development of Trinidad and Tobago are achieved. What we do is, we collaborate with ministries, government agencies and other stakeholders, with the result being the achievement of the country's development objectives as articulated in the Vision 2020 statement.

We closely monitor political and economical developments in other countries, engage with counterpart governments and agencies in those countries, secure technical cooperation and training opportunities for the development of human resources, and we conclude agreements in various spheres. These are just some of what we do. Why we travel and why we advance all of these things is, as I said before, to attain development goals, to protect our interest as a small developing state, and to participate in the international decision-making processes through which this country subscribes.

We seek also to have the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago elected to positions in international organizations; to raise, among other things, this country's profile. The question arises as to how Trinidad and Tobago wants to be seen by the rest of the world, and indeed the members of the international community. That is a model for small developing states for having good governance; for exercising transparent management of our economic and social resources; for being a principal member of the global community; an effective regional leader having respect for the rule of law; observing the sovereign equality of states; observing the non-use of force and having respect for the dignity and fundamental human rights of all people; and undertaking humanitarian responsibilities of the regional and global community.

To speak directly to the 2007/2008 work programme in pursuing the foreign policy, perhaps I should just articulate what the Government does in purposing this foreign policy, and that is to promote and stimulate trade and investment; the promotion of energy diplomacy; the promotion of agricultural diplomacy; tourism diplomacy; to promote our country's cultural exports; to provide immigration and consular services to Trinidad and Tobago and foreign nationals; to manage government-to-government relationships, and also intergovernmental organizations.



More than that, part of foreign agenda is development diplomacy and this again, in line with Government's 2020 vision, promoting this country to developed country status by 2020. Moreover our policies are people centered and directly related to the socio-economic needs of the clientele both nationally and abroad.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to speak of our goal of regional integration. From the inception of the Caribbean Community with the signature of the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973 to the official launch of the Caricom Single Market in 2006, Trinidad and Tobago has remained steadfastly convinced that regional integration provides the vehicle whereby the community can position itself to meaningfully address the existing and emerging challenges in the international system.

We have a particular interest in ensuring that the single market functions efficiently and effectively. And to that end we have ensured that the basic framework for the success of the Caricom Single Market has been in place since 2005, and to this date it runs efficiently and effectively.

### **3.30 p.m.**

This CSME forms the nucleus of the trade thrust of the Caribbean region. It provides for:

- Free movement of goods and services;
- The right of establishment of Caricom owned businesses in any member State without restrictions;
- A common external tariff applied to products imported from a country which is not a member of the market;
- Free circulation of goods imported from extra regional sources;
- Free movement of capital;
- A common trade policy; and
- Free movement of labour.

At a time when Trinidad and Tobago is indeed near full employment of our labour force, it is necessary to have all procedures in place to ensure that there is free movement of skilled labour within the Caricom region. As such during the

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2007/2008 period we have worked assiduously along with all the other members States to expand the categories of skilled persons who can move freely under this regime. This list of persons will include the movement of artistes, musicians, media workers, sports persons and university graduates.

In June of this year these categories were extended to include teachers, nurses, artisans, holders of associate degrees and persons with technical and vocational qualifications. Additionally, we have completed streamlined procedures to allow free movement of Caricom nationals who are service providers. Also, to date, under the right of establishment for Caricom owned businesses, 38 such businesses now have a commercial presence in Trinidad and Tobago. Recently—and this was just in August 2008—a preliminary report from an audit conducted by the Caricom Secretariat revealed that Trinidad and Tobago's implementation of the single market arrangements was an unqualified success, and perhaps we may congratulate Sen. The Hon. Jerry Narace in his position as Ambassador. [*Desk thumping*]

We continue on that score to the public education campaign which is aimed at increasing the awareness of the importance, the benefits and the opportunities that the Caricom Single Market and Economy has provided and will continue to provide.

I speak now to the Caricom Development Fund which was launched in July 2008 in keeping with Chapter 7 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. During the course of the most recent Caricom Heads of Government Meeting in 2008, Trinidad and Tobago, along with Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, became signatories of the fund. This fund is to assist member States that may be disadvantaged by the implementation of the CSME.

To date an Escrow Account has been established with the signature of the Secretary-General of Caricom and the President of the CDB. Trinidad and Tobago has contributed an amount of US \$38 million of which \$20 million was from the Petroleum Fund. We have undertaken to put an additional US \$9 million from the Petroleum Fund to expedite the start-up of this development fund. Once implemented, the fund will stand at about US \$250 million of which US \$120 million will represent gross contributions from member States while the remainder will come from donor agencies.

It is to be noted that Trinidad and Tobago currently holds the position of chairman of the board of directors of the Caricom Development Fund. I must mention that Trinidad and Tobago's profile in Caricom was further heightened

very recently with the election of Mr. Henry Gill who is a national of Trinidad and Tobago, to the post of Director General of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery and he is now Ambassador Henry Gill. You know of his involvement of course in the recently concluded EPA trade negotiations. Whilst on the point of our relations with our Caricom countries I must speak a bit about the Caribbean Court of Justice which is a favoured subject on the other side. The court has an original and exclusive jurisdiction to interpret and apply the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. This deals with disputes arising between and among member States that concern the provisions of the Revised Treaty.

However, the CCJ also has an appellate jurisdiction for those States that intend to replace the judicial committee of the Privy Council. You will know that only Barbados and Guyana have accepted the appellate jurisdiction of the court and we all know why. It is a fact that the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has not accepted the appellate jurisdiction. This, we can lay squarely at the feet of the UNC. In fact they know that when the UNC was in Government they supported the court and now that they are on the other side they are completely opposed to it. It is because of that that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to remain enslaved, in shackles and subject to the Privy Council and this is all because of the UNC.

I need now to address our bilateral relations with member States of Caricom and the OECS, and I speak now of bilateral relations. We are all too aware of the wave of political change which took place in 2008 and this followed change in a number of governments in the Caribbean, but of course we know that in Trinidad and Tobago the PNM stood strong and was victorious. [*Desk thumping*]

In 2008, the hon. David Thompson, Prime Minister of Barbados was invited to pay his first official visit to Trinidad and Tobago and a joint communiqué was issued reaffirming the commitment of both governments to the CSME, to a regional air and maritime transport, energy and security. The Prime Minister was also host last year to the hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. During that visit a bilateral memorandum of understanding relating to cooperation in health was signed giving access to health care at Mount Hope Hospital and other health care institutions owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to nationals of St. Vincent with proper arrangements in place in terms of cost.

The Government also hosted the newly elected Prime Minister of Grenada, the hon. Tillman Thomas and two agreements were signed, the memorandum of understanding for cooperation in education and also, a similar memorandum, as we did with St. Vincent, a memorandum of understanding on health.

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As we speak about bilateral relations I must inform this honourable Senate of the ongoing matters relating to the maritime boundary between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. As you are aware, the Government successfully prosecuted Trinidad and Tobago's case before the Arbitral Tribunal constituted to determine the maritime boundary between Barbados and ourselves in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. What has been settled is the exclusive economic zone with Barbados and we are now in a position to exercise our maritime jurisdiction up to 200 nautical miles of the EEZ under the UNCLOS, which is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Trinidad and Tobago is under an obligation however to adopt proper conservation and management measures so as to ensure that the maintenance of the living resources of the EEZ is not endangered or over-exploited. We have to determine the allowable catch and our own capacity to harvest and thereafter we are required to give other States access to any surpluses. In fact, negotiations resumed in 2007 with the Barbadians regarding the Barbadian fisherfolk having access to the flying fish resources of Trinidad and Tobago. That was resumed in 2007.

What has taken place since then is that a fish stock assessment of the Eastern Caribbean flying fish was conducted by the sub-regional office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with the approval of both Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. The assessment included that of the fish stock of the neighbouring coastal states. A full assessment report is being prepared for publication and after this report is studied by its relevant authorities in Trinidad and Tobago, we will in fact resume negotiations.

Currently, the Government is determining a claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) and this is with a view to extending our continental shelf limit, that is beyond the 200 EEZ seaward to 350 nautical miles. When the submission has been made by all the coastal states in the region the Commission will limit the extended continental shelf and determine where national jurisdiction ends and the jurisdiction of the International Seabed Authority as custodian of the common heritage of mankind begins.

The maritime space east of Trinidad and Tobago is an area of some complexity and there will be overlapping claims I am sure by Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname.

As in the case of the bilateral fisheries issue, the matter of the delimitation of the extended continental shelf will take place between countries once the matter of the delineation has been settled by the Commission on the Limits of the

Continental Shelf. What we have done in the Government is that we have established a Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and we have drawn on the expertise and the services of other ministries and governmental bodies, including the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, Petrotrin and the Institute of Marine Affairs, and we have also established an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is to oversee the preparation of Trinidad and Tobago's submission.

We have also engaged the services of a Canadian consultant, Dr. Alain Murphy of GeoLIMITS consultant services and he has been in Trinidad and he is of the opinion that the seismic data provides a sound geological justification that Trinidad and Tobago's claim to the extended continental shelf is in fact a very valid claim.

Perhaps I can touch a bit and not go into much detail because this is going to be the subject of discussion in Parliament later on, and this is on the joint declaration on collaboration towards the achievement of the single economy and political integration. It is a fact that in 2008 the hon. Patrick Manning was joined by the Prime Ministers of Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia to have discussions on the whole question of the achievement of the single economy and political integration. What emerged from that meeting at which other representatives from Guyana and Barbados were also in attendance was the signature of a joint declaration on collaboration towards the achievement of the single economy and political integration.

I know it is a subject of much contention but what I just want to emphasize is that the focus is on management of a single space to deal with agreed areas of concern between these countries which are like minded and these are probably areas of energy, the economy, social issues and a range of any other matters which all of the countries which wish to join will entertain. Our team headed by Prof. Vaughn Lewis and Dr. Cuthbert Joseph, is working on the modalities, the route and the form which the arrangement should take and a report should be submitted by the end of 2008.

What I can say so far despite all of the negatives cited before, indeed it was reflected in a newspaper report—I believe it was September 15—an article in the *Guardian* by Richard Lord and I believe it would have said OECS supports Manning, and therefore, it serves to say that the Heads of Government of the OECS have welcomed the initiative and indeed on October 23, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago will meet with them for continued discussions.

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I want to say as I close this little topic that it takes a mature and responsible government and a mature and responsible leader to put the topic of integration back on the table again.

**3.45 p.m.**

I would like to speak a bit about Caricom's security and the Prime Minister's security agenda without getting into what I am sure was the contribution made by Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, but only to say that in the capacity of hon. Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, having lead responsibility for security under the Quasi-Cabinet arrangements in Caricom, that building on the legacy of 2007 Cricket World Cup, Caricom has engaged in a number of areas in cooperation to enhance regional security on the basis of mutual assistance and self-help. In this regard, several agreements have been signed, including the Caricom Maritime and Airspace Security Agreement and the Caricom Arrest Warrants Treaty. I will not speak at any length about those.

As I close, I want to emphasize our relationship with Caricom and Caribbean countries, the commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and to say that we, along with member States of Caricom are resolute to our commitment to democracy, and in fulfilment of the principle of democracy. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago is very proactive. I speak about Government coordinating the arrangements for the 27<sup>th</sup> Member Caricom Electoral Observer Mission to the general elections in Trinidad and Tobago on November 05, 2007. Also to say that the Deputy Chief Elections Officer, Elections and Boundaries Commission served as the Chief of Mission of the Caricom Electoral Observer Mission to Grenada, to observe the general election there on July 08, 2008.

Mindful of the impact of natural disasters and international crises on island States of the region, it is a fact that any effect on the member States of the region does impact significantly on Trinidad and Tobago. I want to say this, in justification of the financial assistance which we gave this year—within the last few months in particular—to the Governments of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos Islands following the devastation wrought by recent hurricanes.

Trinidad and Tobago is also a member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). In fact, Trinidad and Tobago currently serves as Vice-Chair of the ACS special committee on budget and administration, and Vice-Chairman of the special committee on natural disasters through the Ministry of National Security. I also want to address our relationship with Cuba. As another member of Caricom, the Government is establishing several large farms in Tucker Valley—and I am

sure the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources spoke of this—and it is with the assistance of the Cuban government. I must also say at this point that in 2007, the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy in Havana, Cuba was opened, and this year our resident Ambassador, Efebo Wilkinson began his assignment in Cuba, and undoubtedly this will provide a fillip to the relationship between our two countries.

With regard to our relationship with Latin America and Trinidad and Tobago, we are seeking to expand our relationship with that of South and Central America, to expand our market access, and to position Trinidad and Tobago as a transportation and financial hub of the region.

Our bilateral relationship with our Latin neighbours is indeed vibrant and dynamic, and this dynamism is reflected in new and old concerns. There is a focus on energy and energy resources, global security concerns, trade and economic integration, good governance, human rights and the rule of law, information technology, sustainable development, and with all that, an acknowledgement of the differing and competing political ideologies within Latin America. Our bilateral relationship with Latin America is therefore systemically enhanced in order to confront all the common issues that must be addressed during this 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Mr. Vice-President, our policy objectives may prove a little more challenging than we thought in terms of political developments on the continent, economic integration movements, the existence of trading blocs, challenges to democracy as well, and of course, the competition among other countries for supremacy in the region. Our foreign policy, however, is based on a current relationship, and it is therefore aimed at enhancement of an already proactive and well-informed relationship with all the countries in Latin America.

Indeed, we also have the support of the 34 member States of the OAS and diplomatic relations with 17 countries in South and Central America. Of course, there are nine Diplomatic Missions in Port of Spain from the Latin American region, and the most recent being El Salvador established in 2006. Several measures were taken during the last financial year with a view to strengthening the bilateral relations between Trinidad and Tobago and all Latin American neighbours.

In 2008, a Trade and Investment Mission spearheaded by the Government and Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce visited El Salvador, Panama and Costa Rica. The results were the establishment of potential business linkages between the Governments and private sectors of Trinidad and Tobago and these countries.

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With regard to Panama, there was an expansion of air linkages with the inaugural flight of COPA airlines in March 2008 from Port of Spain to Panama, and we could look forward possibly to the presence of another Latin American airline servicing Port of Spain from Latin America, and I speak to TACA airlines.

With regard to Chile, only in April of this year, His Excellency, Carlos Applegren, the Director for North American, Central American and the Caribbean, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chile, visited Trinidad and Tobago for a technical meeting. In May, we had the visit of the Chilean Naval Toll ship, "The Esmeralda". In November 2007, two members of the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and two members of the Immigration Division travelled to Chile to receive training in Spanish and that was made possible through the Chilean International Cooperation Agency, and it goes on and on.

With regard to Venezuela, we have proposed the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding for a cooperation of the development of the energy sectors in Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. What it proposes, is cooperation in the monetization of the reserves of natural gas in the cross border fields occurring to us and to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as well as the cooperation in the development of the refining industry. This memorandum proposes the establishment of a joint technical team to conduct the necessary feasibility studies and we await the comments of the Venezuelan authorities on the Trinidad and Tobago draft.

With regard to Brazil, it is only in July of this year that the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago paid an official visit to Brazil on the invitation of President Lula da Silva, and discussions focused on energy, trade and general cooperation. Several agreements were signed, including a Bilateral Air Services Agreement, a Technical Cooperation Agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding on energy and a Double Taxation Agreement.

Mr. Vice-President, in August of this year, I also paid an official visit on the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to El Salvador, and of course, this has marked the beginning of a relationship which will be very fruitful to us. I could probably mention that a SIR meeting which is Summit Implementation Review meeting will be held in El Salvador and this is to deal with the completion of the technical report, which Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to have ready for the Summit of the Americas meeting in April next year. Two agreements are also on the table for study and they were put forward by the Government of El Salvador. This is an agreement on labour which we are looking at and also a bilateral air services agreement.



With regard to Costa Rica, we continue to expand our services in the region and to develop the dynamic relationship, which also exists with Costa Rica, and to explore the economic and commercial opportunities that are available between Costa Rica and the broader Central American region. In this regard, our Embassy in Costa Rica will be up and running within another month under the leadership of Ambassador Sandra Honoré. Our relationship with the United States of America continues to strengthen. I must mention that in 2007, Trinidad and Tobago exported in excess of 4 million tonnes of ammonia to the United States and almost half a million tonnes of urea. At least 60 per cent of the energy needs of the US are also being met by Trinidad and Tobago, and several other initiatives continue.

Only in 2008, members of the Dekalb County Government of Georgia paid a friendly visit to Trinidad and Tobago, with a view to developing investment and trade opportunities between that county and Trinidad and Tobago. In March 2008, we also accepted an offer from the Government of the United States of America for the United States Army South to undertake various community-related and humanitarian projects in partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. Several projects were undertaken which included:

- the construction and renovation of the Princes Elizabeth Home, the St. Mary's Children's Home and the Sangre Grande Extended Care Hospital;
- the Regiment Barracks for the First Battalion of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment;
- the Youth Training Academy in Mausica; and
- they also conducted three medical readiness training exercises.

In January 2008, the State Department of the US also cooperated with this Government to monitor and to identify measures to combat trafficking persons. Mr. Vice-President, there are a number of areas of involvement, which at this stage remains confidential and cooperation at this time will continue, but it is in the best interest of both countries that they remain confidential at this time.

With regard to our relationship with Canada, this relationship is indeed close and long-standing and the Canadian involvement in Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector has been increasing in the last few years. In January 2008, Canadian Superior Energy Incorporated, an exploration and production company discovered natural gas offshore Tobago. Of significance as well in 2008, was when the Royal Bank of Canada invested US \$2 billion to buy out RBTT Financial Limited, which

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is based in Port of Spain. I am very, very pleased to say that the regional headquarters for RBC in the Caribbean was moved to Port of Spain from Barbados at the end of the formalities of the buyout.

Indeed, the whole Canadian Government system is a model for a number of public sector institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the last year or so, there have been several initiatives which have been strengthened in the area of security, cultural exchanges, trade, technical and economic assistance. For instance, in February 2008, the hon. Richard Hurlburt, Minister of Energy of Nova Scotia led a delegation to Trinidad and Tobago. There has also been a joint venture with Trinidad and Tobago between the Illuminat, which is a subsidiary of the Neal & Massy Group of Companies. An agreement was signed with AG Research, a Canadian company to provide IT services for a lucrative e-government contract in Halifax, Canada.

In May 2008, Cabinet also agreed to establish Government to Government arrangements for the reengineering of the Licensing Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

In June 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between Trinidad and Tobago and Nova Scotia on Waste Management Systems.

#### **4.00 p.m.**

Mr. Vice-President, in March 2008 a Canadian logistical support team visited Trinidad and Tobago to conduct preliminary needs assessment to provide technical assistance to the Government in the area of logistics and protocol in the hosting of the Fifth Summit of the Americas and the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings next year.

As to the relationship with Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific—Trinidad and Tobago has, indeed, developed strong linkages with these countries; and there has been consistent growth. China and India, perhaps the two most populous countries in the world, together with Japan and the Republic of Korea, have added enormous energy and considerable economic strength and influence in that region.

Our bilateral relationship with the People's Republic of China began many years ago; indeed, it continues in very deep and informal diplomatic relations. The relationship is quite close; it is predicated on the steadfast adherence of Trinidad and Tobago to the One China policy with China and the avoidance of diplomatic contact and relations with Taiwan.

Several agreements were signed during the official visit of His Excellency Guoquiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. At that time several agreements were signed between both countries: Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing the Joint Committee for Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation; Memorandum of Understanding with the Export-Import Bank of China; a Buyer's Credit Loan Agreement on the aluminium smelter project (the Alutrint project), and another interest-free loan of RMB 20 million.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to have close relationships with the Republic of India; this, of course is strengthened by the already existing strong cultural, religious and historical links. The Indian conglomerate, Essar Steel, will be building an integrated iron and steel complex at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. This represents an investment of US \$1.2 billion, which would include several downstream steel plants. Some 7,000 jobs are expected to be generated in this construction phase, and another 1,500 jobs will be created in the manufacturing phase.

The Bank of Baroda of India opened its offices in Port of Spain in October 2007. Only in June 2008, the Government of India approved the investment proposals of the Indian company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)—Videsh Limited (OVL), in the exploratory blocks North Coast Marine Area 2, in the amount of US \$155 million, in the first exploration phase. Indeed, OVL offices have been opened in Port of Spain.

Several other technical training courses are also offered by the Government of India, but I cannot go on about this. Several of our citizens are enrolled in tertiary level educational institutions in India, as well as Indian nationals are studying at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Only in June of this year, the High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago in New Delhi led a trade and investment mission to Trinidad and Tobago, including delegates from Bangladesh, India and Singapore. In 2007, the Nada Sangam Steel Orchestra visited cities in India on the invitation of the High Commissioner.

With regard to Japan, several programmes are in place: Grant Aid for Fisheries Development; the Grassroots Assistance Programme; Project Type Technical Corporation—and I could go on. Under the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme in 2007, 10 Trinidad and Tobago nationals participated.

With regard to the Republic of Korea, training has been offered in several areas, including agriculture, electronics, export promotion and intellectual property rights. Petrotrin had signed an agreement in 2006 with Samsung Engineering

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regarding the Petrotrin refinery. Samsung is constructing one of the four refinery plants; that is the isomerisation plant, which is part of Petrotrin's gasoline optimization programme.

With regard to Malaysia, several synergies exist and there is a natural affinity between both countries as we are both oil and gas producers. We have participated in workshops through technical cooperation programmes for developing countries; and I could go on.

With regard to Africa, only in 2008 there was a high level ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) delegation visit to Trinidad and Tobago, which was led by Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, comprising, of course, the Minister of Energy of Ghana and ministers from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire as well. Coming out of it is further cooperation between Africa and ourselves in terms of energy; indeed, Cabinet has just agreed that Trinidad and Tobago will, in fact, have observer status in ECOWAS. Our High Commissioner out in Abuja will, in fact, be our representative. Regarding the Republic of South Africa, only in August of this year a delegation from their Ministry of Energy visited Trinidad and Tobago.

With regard to the Republic of Ghana, the Government facilitated the official visit of His Excellency John Kufuor, President of Ghana. He did enjoy Emancipation Day celebrations with us. This is so important for the people of our country. We also hosted the Ndere dancers in 2008.

Turning to the Pacific countries, our relationship with Australia continues to be enhanced, and in December 2007 the honourable Alexander Downer, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia opened the Australian High Commission in Port of Spain.

With regard to Europe, Mr. Vice-President, we have had a long relationship with the United Kingdom (UK), with several scholarships offered to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago in the UK, and, of course, under the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Plan. Trade relations continue and have been conducted under the 30-year Lomé Convention and, currently, the Cotonou Agreement. There are several commercial relations as well that are very active with a number of UK companies in our energy sector, for example, Atlantic LNG, British Gas and British Petroleum.

With regard to tourism, Tobago is, in fact, a popular destination for UK tourists. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Mr. Vice-President, I will quicken my contribution to say that in the area of judicial reform there have been several initiatives between the UK and Trinidad and Tobago. Only in April 2008, an invitation was extended by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of the UK, and a Trinidad and Tobago delegation did meet with some of the major drivers of the criminal justice sector reform in the UK. They were exposed to all areas of the system of judicial reform.

I also attended the UK/Caribbean forum in 2008, where several matters common to Caricom were discussed, and some of the areas in terms of judicial reform were immigration security, immigration legislation, et cetera.

With regard to our multilateral relations, I will spend very little time on it, but to say that we are engaged with the key multilateral organizations and institutions. I speak of the UN, the Commonwealth, the Nonaligned Movement and the Group of 77.

We continue to enhance our profile within the international arena through the placing of nationals in positions of strategic importance in international organizations and on key committees with international organizations, and I speak of the appointment of Justice Lionel Jones, retired judge of the Appeal Court, as one of the eight members of the Commonwealth Arbitral Tribunal. In August 2008, we had the re-election of Trinidad and Tobago to the Council of Administration and to the post of Vice-Chair of the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal. At this time we are seeking to garner support for Trinidad and Tobago's candidatures to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), at the elections which will be held in 2011.

I will now address, before I close, the number of treaties and international agreements signed by us during the last year. A number of them were ratified and acceded to: the International Convention against Doping in Sport; the Convention concerning labour administration; the Convention concerning labour inspection in industry and commerce; accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxic Weapons and their Destruction; the Agreement establishing the Latin America Energy

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Organization; the Revised ACP-EC Partnership Agreement; the World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Performances and Phonograms Treaty as well.

A number of agreements were signed; one with EL Salvador in 2007 on culture and the exemption of visa requirements and a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Tourism and the National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China, which was signed in 2007. Another agreement was signed between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of India in late 2007 for the promotion and protection of investments, as well as the Framework Treaty regarding the unitization of hydrocarbon reserves that extend across the delimitation line between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago; the Caricom Arrest Warrant Treaty; the Caricom Maritime and Airspace Treaty; the Agreement between the Government and the Caribbean Court of Justice Trust Fund. There are several other agreements, I would say, at least, another 10 or 12.

Within the last year, the only piece of legislation which we enacted, unfortunately, was the Caribbean Court of Justice Headquarters Act, 2008. Several missions were established both here and abroad: In Uganda in November 2007, His Excellency Patrick Edwards was appointed to the mission in Ghana; that mission was opened in November; as I mentioned before, in Havana, Cuba, His Excellency Efebo Wilkinson; in Costa Rica, the soon to be opened mission there headed by Sandra Honoré. Several Heads of Mission were also appointed during this time: Her Excellency, Monica Clement, in Brazil; Her Excellency Camille Robinson-Regis, High Commissioner to Ottawa; Her Excellency Victoria Mendes-Charles, High Commissioner to Abuja, Nigeria, and only recently, His Excellency Dr. Winston Mahabir to Pretoria in South Africa and Her Excellency Glenda Morean to Washington; Her Excellency Marina Valere, permanent representative to the United Nations and, more recently, His Excellency John Jeremie SC, High Commissioner to the UK.

I cannot close without mentioning the two meetings to be hosted next year, the large conferences undertaken by our Government: The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in November and also the Fifth Summit of the Americas in April, with the theme of the first being "Securing our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability". The Concept Paper will address human development, crime and poverty reduction, economic growth and competitiveness, energy security and sustainable development, democracy, good governance and the promotion of human rights.

**4.15 p.m.**

Within the Ministry as well, we have rationalized our staff requirements and it is important to note that an additional 12 persons are being posted to missions abroad. So we are, indeed, increasing our complement of staff in all the missions abroad to better serve the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and our residents abroad. We are, indeed, recruiting additional foreign service officers in international relations for Trinidad and Tobago so our complement should be improved by about 40 persons. We are, in fact, adding a new wing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Knowsley is being renovated as well; a new residence is being constructed for the Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner in Jamaica and we have acquired only recently, permanent location for the Consulate General's office in New York.

We project in the next fiscal year to continue building along with Government on the five development pillars of Vision 2020. We will continue to work with all the relevant stakeholders to facilitate trade and investment missions to and from Trinidad and Tobago and therefore contribute to enabling competitive business. We will continue to facilitate the entry of goods and services into new markets; to attract increased foreign direct investment and to develop innovative people through the use of technology. We will continue our role in negotiating in bilateral fora; in advocating in regional hemispheric and international fora; sharing of experiences; promoting effective government and also in campaigning for the candidates presented by Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I close on this note. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne):** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, I would like to thank all the Members of this honourable Senate for their contributions to the debate and for their very positive comments and suggestions which have not gone unnoticed. I would like to thank the Independents for the quality of the contributions and for their incisiveness, if only it was to point out a couple of mistakes on our part, and I should speak to those. I would like also to thank those Senators who took the time to stand in the shoes—or attempt to stand in the shoes—of the Minister of Finance and understand the competing demands which are made on what, of course, is a very stringent fiscal regime: How do we spend the money? I appreciate the effort and I must thank you. For it is said: “Unless you stand in my moccasins, you do not know how this Indian walks.”

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I would like to thank the Opposition Senators for their contributions; some of the points of direction; some of the points of emphasis, but clearly we cannot speak to ideological differences which are couched in terminologies on which we cannot discuss. They clearly will mean that we are different. At one time when we were talking about bourgeois I thought we were referring to the frame of glasses that I saw this morning, which is also called bourgeois; a new style of glasses. I thank my colleagues for laying out the Government's position, its plans and what it intends to do and defending our record as progressively and prospectively, in terms of what we wish to do.

In winding up, I think I must start with reference to the financial markets. It is clear from all concerned and from all who have spoken, that the events that are taking place in the world are of concern to us. I did, in fact, start my presentation by saying that we live in turbulent times and I could perhaps do no better than quote the World Economic Outlook which is published by the IMF in advance of its meetings, where it says:

“The world economy is entering a major downturn in the face of the most dangerous financial shock in mature financial markets since the 1930s,...which now expects world growth to slow to 3.0 per cent in 2009—(down 90 basis points to a) 0.9 percentage points lower than forecast in...July...”

I quote again:

“‘In advanced countries, the crisis is now being driven by a downward spiral of loss of confidence and trust,’ Blanchard said.

However, despite the emerging economies' cooling momentum, they are still expected to provide a source of resilience, benefiting from strong productivity growth and improved policy frameworks.”

I think that is very important. Despite the fact that the economies in emerging markets are cooling—and this would, of course, refer to the BRICs—Brazil, Russia, India, China, who have not been immune to some of the changes in the financial meltdown—they are still expected to provide a source of resilience benefiting from strong productivity growth and improved policy frameworks. It also goes on to say:

“In terms of inflation, the combination of rising economic slack and stabilizing commodity prices is expected to contain the pace of price increases in advanced economies. But in many emerging and developing economies,



inflation is projected to remain elevated through the end of 2008 as recent commodity price increases continue to feed through to consumers, before easing somewhat by the end of 2009.”

Prospects for a turnaround:

“The advanced economies grew at a collective annualized rate of only 1 per cent from the fourth quarter of 2007 through the second quarter of 2008. The US economy suffered the most from the financial crisis that originated in its subprime mortgage market, which has tightened credit conditions and amplified the housing correction that has been under way since 2006.

Emerging and developing economies have not decoupled from this downturn. The WEO notes that growth has also eased for this group of countries as a whole. Growth has been most resilient in the commodity-exporting countries, while the countries with strong trade links to the United States and Europe are slowing markedly.

The baseline projections show the global economy undergoing a major downturn, with growth falling to its lowest pace since the 2001-02 recession. Although a gradual recovery is envisaged in late 2009, global growth is not expected to return to trend until 2010.”

So, ladies and gentlemen, whilst we look at the television and we look at the difficulties being experienced in the metropolitan financial markets, there is a slowing outlook, but there is still the prospect of positive economic growth.

What has brought this difficulty? We must first understand what is taking place in financial markets differs from what is taking place in the real production sector and we must take that into account. One of the fundamental issues that underlie any economy is about stability, and stability is not only economic stability; it is also political and social stability and that is underlined by one very significant point. It is called confidence. And the difficulty that we face in this financial crisis is that the crisis which largely is affecting the financial sector has the capacity to affect the real sector.

It is for this reason that the economic paradigm, known as the Washington consensus, clearly has changed, where world central banks have taken, not only individual action, but coordinated and massive action by interventions in the marketplace, by reducing interest rates and providing economic support to all the

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financial institutions. What is also noteworthy and is to be found in the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday morning in the address to the House of Commons, was the note that these terms and conditions are being provided on a commercial basis.

In other words, it is not a free-for-all; it is not a giveaway; it is an understanding that the cost of not acting will have a severe effect and hurt all of the economies; therefore it is important to lend support to the financial institutions at this stage at commercial prices. In other words, the central banks have become investors. Investors in the short term is what they expect, but they have become investors nonetheless, and it represents and shows and demonstrates the fact that capitalism has the capacity to evolve and to adapt to changing circumstances, whether we like the model or not. It is still the most successful model and the model that we need to look to—or China certainly has looked to in terms of changing its approach to the business of development.

I want to thank many of the commentators for pointing us and reminding us that we are not immune, and clearly we are not. But history, so far, has been on our side. Clearly the fall in the oil prices from \$147 to just under \$100 in a short time frame, has said that something was wrong with the prices, and perhaps the fall in the oil price as well as the fall in many commodity prices, is related to the decline of the financial markets. Why? Because those commodity prices became an object of speculation and forward buy and the decline in prices has reverted them to more normal and natural levels. They are not a sign of economic collapse.

I think I need to make that point, and I need to make that point in considering the prices on which our budget is based. I make that point because notwithstanding the sharp and rapid fall in the oil price, it has also, in recent times, gone up. So we are not level at any stage in the game and the trend is not conclusively downwards all the way, that we are going to have a free-for-all in prices. That is not so. So the basis on which we must provide and which we must project has to do with a rational basis and we can only project rationally on the basis of what reasonable expectations are. No pun intended; hindsight is 2020 vision.

The commentators have also made several points. I think Sen. Drayton, Sen. Ramkhelawan, Sen. Mark, Sen. Merhair, have all pointed to Government's expenditure and in point of fact, indicated that the economy has a certain capacity and if we continue with the same rate of expenditure we are going to overheat the economy. Words of caution have been issued that we should listen to the voice of the Governor of the Central Bank and we should, in fact, reduce the rate of expenditure.

I want to examine that proposition in detail and I want to make some very important points, because at a macro level, that sounds intuitively correct, but I need to make the point that a number of our figures—or included in the budget—are, in fact, hardcoded. For that matter, the repayments of Government debt; the Government service; wages and salaries; pensions, those are things which are contractually determined for which we cannot move down.

So where are the areas of discretion? The point has been made that the pace of construction expenditure is too expensive or has been too fast and that, in a sense, has overheated the economy. But a closer examination of the budget and a closer examination of the figures will reveal the following: That approximately 40 per cent of the budgets for the last four to five years have been spent on subsidies and transfers. Now that is a big number, 40 per cent; significant number, and that number, when we examine the subsidies and transfers—if we were to take into consideration what we consider to be actual expenditure—the actual expenditure under subsidies and transfers contain two large numbers. They contain the transfers to the IDF, which is treated as an expenditure item and the transfers to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

If you take those numbers out, the figure changes dramatically. Subsidies and transfers are transfers which are going to the social assistance grant; they are going to health; they are going to education; they are going to pensions, and all the social services which have been undertaken as part of the expenditure for social equity and justice. I think that is a very important point to note. The substantial rate of growth in Government expenditure profile is under the heading of subsidies and transfers.

I make that point and I make another one to go with it. The concentration, in terms of a focus, has been on the absolute number relative to GDP. There are two points which need to be made and these two are very important points and I would have expected economic commentators to have done so.

#### **4.30 p.m.**

As we seek to assess the impact of Government spending on the economy, we must be careful not to confuse nominal spending with real spending. Real spending means adjusting the level of government expenditure for the rate of inflation. We need to be aware of what is at stake when we call for a reduction in government expenditure.

When we apply the deflators which are used to demonstrate, as was pointed out in the Review of the Economy, the adjustment from what we call GDP at money prices to GDP at constant prices, the real rate of growth in expenditure for

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the period 2009 over 2008, and this is the projected allocation, is 1.4 per cent. In other words, the real rate of growth is much slower than the nominal rate. If we compare it only on the basis of the nominal rate, then there is an argument. In point of fact, between the 2007 and 2008 budget year, the adjusted inflation rate growth was 2.9 per cent, and for the year 2008/2009, 1.4 per cent. In addition to which, one takes that into consideration.

Consider also that the expansion in government expenditure has been at the level of social services. What is the effect of scaling back that? Consider it, especially Sen. Mark, who at one stage of the game said we were pauperizing the middle class and the country. He said that we should control expenditure and by the same token said that we should spend more on social services. I kind of have a little problem there.

The reality is to ensure a measure of social equity so that some of the gains that have been obtained from the changes in our energy prices are spread to our citizens and the level of social expenditure has gone up. What does that expenditure contain? Direct university services both to UWI and to UTT, pension gratuities, the shortfall in petroleum products, the Senior Citizens Grant, Social Assistance Grant, Disability Grant, support for the acquisition of housing, On-the-Job Training Programme, Food Price Support Programme, subsidies toward the Port Authority for the operation of the coastal steamers, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE), Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT)—that was 1.7 per cent by the way in terms of growth—Regional Health Authorities, Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation, the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme, National Social Development Programme and so on.

That is where the increases in expenditure have been. Therefore, while we understand and we take Sen. Drayton's and Sen. Merhair's point, which was made generally, that we need to be more effective in terms of how we spend our money, we understand that and have begun to make the necessary adjustments in that regard.

As I indicated before, I have been working in the Ministry of Local Government, in particular, to ensure that the special purpose state enterprises that work on delivering the infrastructure services to all our country areas are better served. We have been working to ensure that the methodologies and the planning mechanisms are harmonized and consolidated so that we can get better value for money.

With respect to the gas prices and the change in the fuel subsidy—it is not a tax; we have reduced the level of subsidy; we have not removed all—I invite everyone in this Senate and in the country to compare the price of a gallon of gasoline with the price of a gallon of gasoline anywhere in the world. The only places that are likely to be cheaper than us are Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela and after that you run out. If you come across any more, feel free to tell me. There are specific reasons for that as well.

There have been all different kinds of conversation. I thank Sen. Basharat Ali for the simple interjection that if you have a doubt as to what octane rating your car uses, you should go to your manual. In that regard, in as much as North Americans have been complaining about the price of gas, which is approximately US \$3.76 as we speak and which ranges, depending on the State that you are in and the level of taxation, somewhere between US \$3.76 and US \$4.25 a gallon, which is considerably more than what we are paying, there has been a lot of talk and published literature.

The Consumer Energy Centre, [www.consumerenergycenter.org](http://www.consumerenergycenter.org), which is part of the Federal Government, has a headline on September 26:

“Regular versus premium gasoline

Regular Gasoline Has As Much Merit As Premium Gasoline

‘Put a tiger in your tank,’ says a classic advertising tagline. In today’s motoring world, what kind of fuel grade will have the power to place a beast in your gas tank?

The answer, according to experts whose study fuel efficiency in detail, is both regular and premium gasoline. And it would be a waste of money to favour premium over regular, especially in these times when gasoline prices are high, according to the experts.”

There is little difference in the energy content of regular versus premium gasoline.

*“The New York Times*

Motoring

August 3, 2008

Premium required? Not necessarily

by Dexter Ford

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At today's prices, it's understandable that drivers accustomed to filling their gas tanks with premium would be looking for ways to ease the financial pain.

Some relief may be close to the next fill-up. Switching from premium-grade to regular unleaded can save several dollars on each tankful, given an average price difference about 30 cents a gallon..."

These are US numbers. I am quoting the American Petroleum Institute.

"Modern engines prevent damage from happening before it starts," said Patrick Kelly... "It wouldn't impact fuel economy. And it wouldn't impact the emissions. What it would impact is the performance."

There have been comments which have identified the loss in performance and if you go on site there are several different comments in terms of what it will do and the answer is that it is minimal, less than 2 per cent. So the talk about premium as against super is a non-starter. It does not hold up.

Further, the projections indicate that the consumption of gasoline per head of population in Trinidad and Tobago is amongst the highest in the world. That has all sorts of implications for global warming and everything else. You have to send a signal at some stage. We must send a signal and we understand that it will create some difficulty at the beginning, but choices have to be made.

We point to the fact that we have not changed the taxation structure. When we adjusted the taxation structure, we went to a flat tax, 25 per cent, among the lowest in the Caribbean. In fact, it compares very well with countries all over the world and the trend across all world jurisdictions is to move away from direct taxation to indirect taxation. The price of that has not been changed. If anything, a number of goods and services have dropped out of the basket with regard to VAT. So there has been relief.

In addition to this, the first allowance that you are allowed, that \$60,000 does give a substantial respite to a substantial portion of our population, in particular our middle class. So we have not increased the taxation structure and we have created the opportunity to allow individuals to adjust their spending patterns and their spending programmes.

Price signals send a message to the market. That is the purpose of this particular exercise and that is the purpose of this change. We would be remiss if we did not understand and take into consideration what the world is saying with regard to the use of fossil fuel and what it is doing to the environment. We must send that message. We take the point that there needs to be improvement in our

public transportation system. We cannot talk about rapid rail because we are far away from that. There is a plan in position. Infrastructure development takes time, ladies and gentlemen, but in the meantime, as you all have pointed out, while the grass is growing the horse is starving. The decisions have to be made now. We have to adjust our patterns of expenditure now as we have done every time we run into difficulty.

We do face difficulties in terms of the international economy, but understand also that while there was stagflation in the rest of the world, while there was stagflation in the decade of the 1970s, Trinidad and Tobago enjoyed a level of prosperity which was very different to what was taking place elsewhere. This is not to say that we are in any way immune to what can take place, but we need to understand that the way our economy is structured—and we are trying to change it—it does give us some breathing space.

Sen. Rahman made several points. The Cubans are moving away from megafarms and the answer to that is that they are getting a healthy dose of capitalism. They actually started to distribute land to small farmers. That is why they are moving away from megafarms—to allow capitalism to take place. That is a very important point.

I take the point that gold is a store of wealth. Trinidad and Tobago does have some gold as part of its reserves; not necessarily as high as you said. Gold, however, does have some difficulties. It has a store of value and probably you would want to have some as a portion of your holdings. However, a review of the last 27 years would indicate, as you did point out to me, that gold is waterproof. I completely agree with that; that is one of its physical properties. It is waterproof, but it is not inflation proof.

The increases in the price of gold are all related to international instability conditions. What do I mean by that? The price of gold first rose between 1971 and 1974 as a result of the oil crisis. Then it rose in 1979 as a result of the Afghan invasion. It fell when inflation fell. South Africa came out of the market, sanctions, it fell; bank sales of gold, changing the structure, price fell.

The substantial change in the price of gold in recent times has been, between 2004 and 2008, as a result of two shocks: one is Katrina and the other the credit crunch and we are likely to see the price of gold go up substantially in the short run; but only in the short run. It will do what it has done in the past. Once the period of instability passes, the price of gold will fall as well.

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So it is a store of value that investors turn to in times of instability and we understand that there are always possibilities of instability; it will happen. It goes up just like any other investment, but it does not fluctuate as much as shares and we will do a correlation to see exactly how it fares in relation to equity investment in the long run as to whether it is inflation proof or not. So far, the numbers suggest it is not. In fact, it is also subject to huge amounts of variations in terms of cyclicalities.

We also made a number of points with regard to the Fifth Summit of the Americas and its impact on us and I will speak to that a little later. That is a very important point.

With regard to our expenditure profile and a number of other matters, both Sen. Cindy Devika Sharma and Sen. Corinne Baptiste-Mc Knight made a number of points with regard to our own education system, which the Hon. Hazel Manning spoke to. One of the points I wish to reply to is the issue of the shortage of school supervisors and the Ministry doing something about it. Unfortunately, the Ministry does not appoint supervisors. This is done by the Teaching Service Commission and that is where the issue lies. There are shortages in the area which she did speak to, but that is not the purview of the Ministry of Education. The point was made and we understand.

**4.45 p.m.**

With respect to the issue of the school repair programme, which Sen. Drayton and Sen. Sharma spoke to, the school administration is involved in the review of the school repair programme. In fact, the sign-offs come from the principals. They are part of the supervisory position to ensure that the work being done in schools is well done. So, when there is a problem, it ought to be brought to the attention of the ministry that they are not comfortable and happy with the work before payment is made. Part of that payment structure is about the school principals.

**Sen. Dr. Nanan:** Mr. Vice-President, I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. I just want to clarify one thing. The Minister said that the Teaching Service Commission has to appoint school supervisors, but it was the Public Service Commission. I do not know if that has gone to the Teaching Service Commission or if it is still under the Public Service Commission because of the delinking.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** The Ministry of Education does not appoint them. That is the critical point. They do not have discretionary capacity. That is one of the issues in terms of how you run a government. We do not have discretionary capacity as to whom to appoint or who moves and who does not



move. You cannot always respond with the same degree of alacrity as the private sector. In the private sector, managers have the power to hire and fire. We do not; we do not have the power to appoint easily.

**Sen. Dr. Nanan:** I understand your point and Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning would tell you that there is an involvement between the ministry and the Teaching Service Commission. You cannot compel them, but you could at least ask them. They have done it before and they could do it again. That is not much of a defence.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** I would not spend any time on that defence. The point was also made with respect to the School Feeding Programme. We understand that there is some element of wastage, and it may not be going to everybody. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. So, even though we have spent a lot of money in that area, we are trying to ensure that our students are adequately catered for. Sometimes it does not always go to the right person, and we understand that. There is a view that we need to relook and re-examine that programme. In fact, there are plans to do so as we speak. So, whilst we are planning to expand the School Feeding Programme, there will also be an increased effort to ensure that the children who are entitled to meals get them. That is in progress, as we speak. It will involve some level of means test. In fact, in many of the other programmes, we are attempting to put in position some level of means test.

With respect to the school book programme, this programme was late this year. I take the point from Sen. Baptiste-Mc Knight that the books did not necessarily reach the schools in time, but I also want to point out that there was a substantial inventory of books from the previous year, and that is one of the reasons the programme was late this year. We were trying to ensure that we did not over order, given the fact that there were a number of books that were not used. That is the reason they were late.

Secondly, there are a number of schools which I would not identify at this stage of the game, which do not use recommended textbooks and we have a problem there. Whilst there is a book programme, the schools that do not use the recommended textbooks that we purchase, when they go outside of that, then we have a difficulty. We can provide the recommended textbooks, but when they move outside the recommended list, we have a little problem. I think the school that you were talking about has that problem. *[Interruption]* We are going to talk about that afterwards.

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Sen. Nicholson-Alfred spoke about the sensitization of environmental needs, particularly with respect to the pristine Charlotteville, and I would recommend all the Senator's comments to the Tobago House of Assembly to execute them in their programme of works.

With respect to the transfer tax on stamp duty on land, I did send you a little note. The change in the legislation was intended to incorporate—in fact, the legislation makes a difference between residential property and land. Residential property is the transfer of property with homes on it. So, I take your point and we are going to take it on board. That is a point that needs to be considered.

Sen. Basharat Ali, I thank you as always for the precision of your comments. I take responsibility for the movement in the decimal place, and the change in the number from a million to a billion. That was done at around 3 o'clock in the morning, and I was not paying as much attention as I ought to at that time. I accept responsibility for that error.

With regard to inflation, I think this is another point that we need to talk about. I have been criticized both in the editorials and in the press for making the point that economies will adjust. I took deliberate time to read the Outlook of the IMF in terms of inflation, because it is a point worth noting.

Inflation lasts for a period of time. Monetary measures take time to adjust. At the moment, we are seeing a series of concerted actions by all the central banks. They have not given the long stimulus to the market as one would have thought. We have seen changes gone up today and come down tomorrow. So, it always requires a higher level of intervention each time. We have already debated a number of measures in this honourable Senate with regard to the sterilization measures. So, sterilization is an option and it is something that will be done. The change in interest rate is something that has to happen. At the same time, a large measure of the inflation that we are faced with is important. The only change in the short term that can deal with that—even if those imports are what we would consider to be staples for a change in dietary requirement—is a change in terms of supply capacities in the agricultural sector and that will take time. We are doing it and, perhaps, we are not doing it fast enough. There are things that we need to do faster and we understand that.

I think we are well advanced in terms of the Caroni lands project and the distribution will start to accelerate. We are tackling it from the supply side. With respect to comments about the megafarms, we have to do something. Sen. Merhair, from where I sit, if you were in my shoes, what would you do? You have

to do something. You have to do both. You have to do it at the large farms and at the level of the small farms. We understand that. We cannot change the ages of farmers, but we can certainly change the environment, and that is one of the reasons why at UTT the School of Biosciences is geared toward training farmers at a certain level; giving them certain types of skills. That is important. Part of the Government's programme is to expand on the supply side. I think it is very important that we note the expansion on the supply side.

**Sen. Rahman:** I did not want to break your stride, but I would like to go back to the question of the gold issue that you have addressed. You have pointed out some of the question marks and difficulties with gold. I would like to hear from you what are the superior qualities for investing in a basket of currencies when the nations of the world whose currencies are, in fact, regarded as international currencies hold very large stocks of gold including the IMF itself? I would like to recommend this matter to you so that you could review it, not right now, but as you go along.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** This is going to cost us a lot of time and several bottles of water to fuel the discussion. [*Laughter*] Now, Sen. Rahman, as you stood there, you reminded me of the need to deal with the issue of the Summit of the Americas and, perhaps, make a public statement with regard to why it is important to host these events.

I think the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs did allude to several points along those lines, but I think it is important to note that these events have the capacity to catapult Trinidad and Tobago forward. Much of our trade diversification programme and outreach programmes have been geared toward attaching and trying to open markets in Latin America. Who are the people that are going to come to the Fifth Summit of the Americas? Who are the major constituent parties? They are all Latin American countries. It is important to understand the need to go to south corporations. That is something that has been talked about in large measure in literature, but it is not something that has been done. We need to do it. Everybody talked about the Prime Minister's travel programme, but nobody talked about the visit to Brazil. Nobody had any positive thing to say about that and nobody commented on that. Why would the Prime Minister go to Brazil?

Perhaps one of the most significant developing multinational corporations is a state corporation called Petrobras. What does it deal with? It deals with oil and gas. What are we strong in? It is oil and gas. What do we need to do? We need to expand. Those are the things that we need to consider. When you involve yourself in the Summit of the Americas, it takes a lot out of us yes; both by way of

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manpower resources and by way of money. If you want to be a part of the regional space and you want to develop that type of linkages, there is nothing that succeeds in business like knowing the man that you are talking to on the other side. How are we going to do that? You have to find a forum to enable that sort of conversation. By being involved and being the host, we would be able to frame the discussion and the debate, not only for Trinidad and Tobago, but for Latin America, and to be part of that forum. We are part and parcel of that. In doing so, we are also opening up doors. Part of our relationship with Costa Rica is built upon that principle of opening doors.

In doing this, it is important to be able to expand those sorts of bilateral relationships to develop relationships. As the host country, we would lead the technical work and be part of the process of negotiations among countries on issues that are of concern to this country and to the region. It will create a platform for increased cooperation and we will be in a better position to exchange experiences and to develop those types of chain linkages. There is a reason for doing it.

One way or the other, if you want to spend the time to develop trade linkages, you have to find a way to do it. You could do it in several different ways. You could go on several trade missions over a number of years, but this is a way to put us in the mainstream and it gives us an opportunity. That is one of the critical reasons for holding the Fifth Summit of the Americas. It puts us on the map; it puts us in a position; and we have a story to tell that there is a way to get in touch with people. So, it is not to be underestimated.

In a sense, it also stretches us as a people. It exposes us to things that perhaps we had not been exposed to before. There may be arguments as to whether it should be and it depends on the ideological position, but at the end of the day, how do we move this country forward? How do we move along that developmental path unless we look at what the options and opportunities are? We must have dialogue with the other people who are faced with some of the same difficulties that we do, and who have some of the same challenges that we have. It is very critical to do so.

I want to turn to some of the comments made by Sen. Ramkhelawan. He asked about our plans with regard to the future because some of the projects and expenses—how are we going to finance them, because we cannot finance them on the basis of the budget and they account for a substantial portion of our revenue over a period of time. The answer to that is yes. Development is not cheap, it is not easy. It takes time to do the infrastructural projects. It takes a great deal of

time and a great deal of manpower. Some of it we do not have and some of it we have to be trained. That is one of the reasons so much money has gone into GATE and UTT. There is no gainsaying the fact that we have to develop a talented pool of resourceful people.

I take the point that we want to make certain that in terms of scholarships they do not leave, but by the same token, we also want to ensure that there is a reason for them to come back. There is no place like home. Some people will leave, and we understand that. We must create the conditions and the preconditions to ensure that they will return and make a contribution. You, like me, made a decision to return. Did you not make that decision? If I am not mistaken, you were one of the recipients of some of those scholarships and so was I. With respect to the information in terms of where we are spending our money; there are several areas and so on.

**5.00 p.m.**

Those are the areas which have been targeted for development. So, there has been more work done in some areas than in others. The areas and the amounts of money, which have been put into supporting these developments, I would say are modest at this stage of the game. In total, we are probably talking about expenditure less than \$20 million over the course of the next year, and they do involve in large measure putting together the strategic plans, the level of consultancies; in some instances they are supported by some tax incentives, but not only tax incentives. It is really about trying to encourage and get certain parts of the business sector and the private sector to move into those areas. In terms of the investment, it is not a significant number at this stage, and that would come later as the plans fill themselves out.

With regard to incentives, I think Sen. The Hon. Dr. Saith had already indicated to you that we are moving away from the level of fiscal interventions.

**Sen. Ramkhelawan:** Can you give way? Thank you for giving way, Minister. The question I was getting at with regard to sound infrastructure is whether we have a long financing plan, because our debt to GDP and so on is very good now. But as we introduce these various projects, do we have a sense that our debt to GDP would move 28 per cent to 50 per cent or to 60 per cent within manageable levels? I did not get that sense and to answer your question as to why I chose to come back, is because those who eat the cascadura will, the native legend says. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Well, I am glad to see we both had a healthy dose of cascadura. With respect to those, I was getting to that point. I suspected that is what you were going to ask, but this is the point I was going to make.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. L. Saith*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Thank you very much, Senators, for giving me the extra time, and I understand that I am not supposed to exceed 10 minutes. [*Interruption*] Sen. Mark, I shall speak to you in due course, with respect to that, and we need to project a budgeting arrangement. Many of the plans are new, and I take the point that Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan was making with regard to education. You said that the UNC were the ones responsible for negotiating the loan, but I will like to point out to him that the education plan, which was done by the education task force was started by Dr. Kella in 1993 and the plan was written in 1993. So, you were just simply carrying out some of our programmes. Thank you.

Precisely with regard to the level of infrastructural expenditure, it is expensive, yes, I made that point. How are we going to finance it? What is going to happen with our debt to GDP ratio? In my presentation, I indicated that there is a commitment to a prudent fiscal stance. By definition, we have been running balanced budgets, and we have also been managing our debt to GDP ratio, which has come down over time. Also because our income has risen, but the absolute numbers have not gone up by more than 10 per cent over a five-year frame. So, we have been very good with regard to that.

In point of fact, we have done a number of measures. Many points have been made; many points have been tried to be scored with regard to UDeCott, in terms of how it has done and how many transfers have been done to UDeCott, and the answer to that is, quite frankly, very few. Many of the projects have, in fact, been financed in the private sector under what we would call some debt financing arrangements, which are at UDeCott; some of them have been BOLT arrangements, and we are now reviewing a whole range of, if you want, longer term arrangements, which will include private sector financing. This would be infrastructure financing using the private sector, by way of build, own, transfer, boot operations, the general public, private partnership arrangements as we speak, moving forward.

There are some historical examples—water, electricity—and as we move forward certainly in terms of developing and expanding the infrastructure with regard to water and electricity, that is precisely the mechanisms that are going to be used. So, in some instances the Government will upfront, in many instances the private sector will upfront the capital, and the economic arrangements to pay over extended periods of time must take that into consideration in terms of repayment of capital with an economic rate of return, but gives the private sector what they want.

Those are the sort of tools and techniques that are going to be used down the road. There are not going to be unbalanced sheet commitments, if you will; there will be long term, if you want, lease arrangements, both for buildings as well as for all the productive enterprises: water, electricity, and so forth. There is an understanding that we need to move more in that line.

Having reached the point to talk about cost overruns and efficiency in expenditure, I made the point that we understand that we need to be more efficient. We also understand that there is a fair element of this information, and Sen. Mark who had been so silent made certain that he reminded me that he was there. Now that he has reminded me, I would attempt to deal with some of the stuff that he had said. In fact, he is guilty of operating by innuendo; that is Sen. Mark; that is his style of operation.

I did have a little crosstalk with him about two Senate meetings ago. I told him he reminded me of a character in “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*”. “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” is about a play within a play; it is about midsummer madness. He reminds me of a character that said these words: “And those things do best please me that befall preposterously”. That man was Nick Bottom. In “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*”, there is a group that is gathered in the forest to put on a play.

**Sen. Mark:** What is the relevance?

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** What is the relevance? The relevance in it is that you remind me of Bottom, and Bottom, when they were speaking to Bottom—

**Sen. Mark:** And you remind me of a monkey.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** I am sure that I do, but that is better than Bottom who actually wore the head of an ass. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Sen. Mark would say that we abolish old age pension; he said the public service had to be—what did he say about the public service?—careful that we are doing something; that we are throwing away the public service. I note in particular, even the *Newsday* spoke about you this morning, Sen. Mark.

**Sen. Mark:** Very good, that is a good thing.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** That: “Sen. Mark in particular has a long record of being more often wrong than right in his allegations.” [*Desk thumping*] This is the *Newsday*, page 10, the editorial section, “Parliamentary privilege unfettered right”.

Well, I think a number of things have to be said in that regard. Let me deal with a few things. At one stage in the game—

**Sen. Mark:** Corporate misbehaviour.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** That is another misallegation. I was not fired from Butterfield.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Mark, please. I notice at this time is the time you have all your outbursts—[*Laughter*]—but we are reaching the end of the debate, please allow the Minister to finish his contribution.

**Sen. Mark:** Tell him to show respect for me. I will not sit here and allow him to disrespect me.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Mr. Vice-President, thank you. I am saddened by the persistence of my colleagues on the Opposition Benches who continue their crusade that can result in destroying innocent people’s names and their public profile. I refer to their persistence in repeating a matter that has the potential to sully the good name of the very distinguished Minister of Local Government. Based on their contributions it is clear that they have totally misread a simple matter and sought to present it as a failure of some sort on the hon. Minister’s part.

If we gave this matter to a child to read, the simple conclusion will be this: The information read out by Sen. Dr. Nanan informs us that the hon. Minister 12 years ago worked at the Airports Authority and was not entitled to a travelling allowance based on terms and conditions at that time. From Sen. Dr. Nanan’s information, we note that the terms changed by letter dated March 14, 1996. Then Sen. Dr. Nanan says that the document showed that the changed terms stated specifically that these new terms included an amendment to the hon. Minister’s terms and conditions, hence backpay of \$9,466 for the period November 1995 to 1996.



Mr. Vice-President, the Airports Authority letter read by Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning yesterday correctly stated that the Senator was not paid travelling allowance during that period. The second letter from the Authority confirmed the payment of travelling to the hon. Minister of Local Government for the period November 1995 to March 1996 and from April 1996 to the time when her employment was terminated.

The Airports Authority has stated that Mrs. Manning, like all managers, received a commuted travelling allowance based on their research. There was no policy, which required that the hon. Minister and other managers at that time have a car. There was no provision for managers to own cars in order to access the travelling allowance. Many of us who had such jobs and terms and conditions and many of them who had such jobs and terms and conditions, where a travelling allowance was part of the terms, there was no requirement to possess a car. The rush to present this information seems to have prevented a careful consideration of the simple facts by the Opposition camp.

We must state that the headache and stress that was involved in solving this simple dilemma was seized by the Opposition Senators to create mischief. The letter from the Airports Authority reads and it is dated October 09, 2008, addressed to Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning:

“With respect to the caption matter, we can confirm that by internal memoranda dated March 21, 1996 from the then Human Resource Manager, Mr. Calvin Bess, you were advised that as a business development manager, your terms and conditions of employment had been altered, and whereas initially you were not eligible for a travelling allowance you now were. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition, you were further advised that you would now be included among the recipients of a commuted travelling allowance commencing November 07, 1995. According to the records, we can also confirm that a cheque No. 484 dated March 27, 1996, in the amount of \$9,466.66 was paid to you. This represented a backpay on the commuted travelling allowance for the period November 07, 1995 to March 21, 1996.

We can also confirm that like other managers, you received a commuted travelling allowance, based on our research there was no policy which required a manager to have a motor vehicle registered in his/her name in order to be so entitled.”

*Appropriation Bill (Budget)*  
[SEN. THE HON. M. BROWNE]

*Thursday, October 09, 2008*

Mr. Vice-President, I lay this on the table to be included in the records. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, Sen. Mark also indicated to the Senate in his contribution that Bolt Engineering is a company for which there was a shareholder who is part of the Government; that is not true, Sir.

**Sen. Mark:** I never said that.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Well, if you did not, I take it back. You implied that.

**5.15 p.m.**

Furthermore UDeCott has not awarded any contract to Bolt Engineering. Ever! On the issue of prequalification and the time frame for same we need to point out that UDeCott has been attempting to harmonize its prequalification list with that of other state enterprises. Furthermore the tender rules do not stipulate a particular time for prequalification. [*Interruption*] For your information it is not qualified.

**Sen. Mark:** How long it took?

**Sen. Dr. Saith:** Two years.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Let me repeat. Sen. Mark, in particular, has a long record of being more wrong than right. [*Desk thumping and Crosstalk*] I suggest that you read a “Midsummer Night’s Dream.” [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Mark:** I tell you that is why they fire you from— [*Inaudible*—you were guilty of “tiefing”—[*Inaudible*]

**Sen. Manning:** He start back again, he start back again.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** You know my record in that regard speaks clearly, so I do not even have to bother to answer you. I do not even have to bother to answer you in that regard. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** On the issue of project overruns, on the issue that you are doing away with the old age pension, now we have the Senior Citizens Grant. We have substituted one for the other. We have increased the rates two years consecutively. You make the point with regard to a whole number of projects, you point them out and I do not want to go through them and waste this honourable Senate's time. You made the difference between an initial estimate

and a revised estimate. [*Interruption*] When there are changes in scope then the projects will change and the project prices will change in addition to which the construction costs do not include furniture and fitting out arrangements, Sir, precisely because you do not know how you are going to fit them out at the time that you are constructing them, that will come after.

During the course of time you build the buildings, you set it out, you set out your area space, you know what you are going to do, you have the plans and then you fill them out. That is when you do the FF&E. So that you cannot put the FF&E cost as part of your construction cost and measure it to part of an original estimate. You cannot do it. That is an attempt to mislead, that is an attempt to do all sorts of things and you need, Sir, to move away from your dwelling on the erroneous, the fallacious and the salacious.

**Hon. Senator:** Yes, yes. [*Laughter and Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** [*Inaudible*]

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Ladies and gentlemen—

**Sen. Mark:** Senators, not ladies and gentlemen.

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Senators of this honourable Senate—thank you—having regard to all the circumstances, once again I want to thank all the Senators in this honourable Senate and I want to thank in particular Sen. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran for his words of wisdom in pointing out areas in which our policy needs to be improved. I also want to thank him in particular for pointing out to this honourable Senate the need for self-restraint.

Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

**Sen. The Hon. M. Browne:** Mr. Vice-President, in accordance with Standing Order 63, I beg to move that the Bill not be committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be read the third time and passed.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

*Adjournment*

*Thursday, October 09, 2008*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Industry (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith):** Mr. Vice-President, before I move the adjournment may I say to all Senators it has been a long four days and I wish to thank all Senators for the cooperation that they have exhibited in the period of the debate.

I wish now, Mr. Vice-President, that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 21, 2008 at 1.30 p.m. at which time we will debate a Bill to amend the Pensions Act, a Bill to amend the Teachers Pensions Act and a Bill to amend the Assisted Secondary Schools Teachers Pensions Act.

**Sen. Mark:** Mr. Vice-President, may I enquire of my dear colleague, Dr. Lenny Saith. Having regard to the fact that I volunteered to allow the Government to use a particular day that you had supplementary appropriation matters. I gave up my Private Members' Day in exchange for an undertaking that next week we will have Private Members' Day. If however the Senate is not meeting next week, I would imagine in the spirit of the undertaking that I got from the Leader of Government Business that the next day following our sitting today would be Private Members' Day. I hear Dr. Saith say October 21, we are going to public business, so I do not know if he would like to tell this honourable Senate if he is going to give us a special day in this month of October so that we can get along with Private Members' business. Could you indicate to us, Sir?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith:** Mr. Vice-President, I have indicated to the hon. Senator that I shall when the substantive leader comes back, raise with him and make arrangements to have that day given in the course of this month.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.23 p.m.*