

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, December 17, 2021*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, MP, Member for Siparia, Dr. Lackram Bodoie, MP, Member for Fyzabad and Mr. Dinesh Rambally, MP, Member for Chaguanas West, who have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES  
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, pursuant to Standing Order 89(2), I have appointed the following Members to serve on the Sessional Select Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session, Twelfth Parliament.

**Standing Orders Committee**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Dinesh Rambally	Member
Dr. Rishad Seecheran	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly	Member
Mr. Keith Scotland	Member

**House Committee**

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Chairman
Mr. Barry Padarath	Member
Mr. David Lee	Member

**UNREVISED**

Mr. Colm Imbert	Member
Mr. Brian Manning	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member

### **Committee of Privileges**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	Member
Dr. Roodal Moonilal	Member
Mr. Saddam Hosein	Member

### **Statutory Instruments Committee**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Keith Scotland	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	Member
Mr. Kennedy Richards	Member
Mr. Dinesh Rambally	Member
Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh	Member

### **Business Committee**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman.
Mr. Colm Imbert	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Member
Mr. Stephen Mc Clashie	Member
Dr. Rai Ragbir	Member
Mr. Ravi Ratiram	Member

**PAPERS LAID**

**UNREVISED**

1. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob, for appointment to act in the Office of Commissioner of Police. [*The Deputy Speaker* (Mr. Esmond Forde)]
2. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Mrs. Earla Christopher, for appointment to act in the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police. [*Mr. E. Forde*]
3. Notification of Her Excellency, the President in respect of the nomination of Mr. Wendell Williams, for appointment to act in the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police. [*Mr. E. Forde*]

### URGENT QUESTIONS

#### COVID-19 Omicron Positive Patient (Status of Investigation)

**Dr. Rishad Seecheran** (*Caroni East*): To the Minister of National Security: Will the Minister update the House on the status of the critical investigation into the circumstances that allowed a COVID-19 Omicron positive patient to board and arrive on a flight to Trinidad and Tobago on or about December 09, 2021?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Madam Speaker, as it is now widely reported, on that day a female passenger, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, embarked upon a flight from JFK to Panama and Panama to Port of Spain Trinidad using Copa Airlines. Madam Speaker, it is well known that we have a travel pass system that provides advanced passenger information for the benefit of assisting us in managing the COVID virus and its variants. This travel pass requires that the person who is making the application for it must do so in truthfulness, with dignity and with honour.

Madam Speaker, it appears from the information available to me that the

passenger made a false declaration, and on that basis, the travel pass was issued to her. But in the way we do the business, upon arrival in Trinidad and Tobago, the information uploaded would be verified. And I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Health—the port health officials actually, who were able, by virtue of their work at the airport, to identify that the passenger was in fact—had uploaded a PCR that was positive as opposed to negative. They identified the problem, isolated it in the protection of all of us. The passenger is now within the safe confines of one of our step-down facilities.

The other passengers who may have travelled in proximity to her have also been isolated in the protection of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the matter is under police investigation. We passed regulations here to make it a very severe offence with severe penalties in such circumstances and I am assured that the police are making haste with an investigation. And quite frankly, I am looking forward to the full range of the law being applied and the sanctions to go with it in the circumstances.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Minister, are you suggesting that in this case, it was possible to breach the travel pass system with a passenger outside of Trinidad and Tobago coming in way before arrival of the aircraft? How can the travel pass be breached given that they need to—

**Madam Speaker:** Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—upload their data?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I detect that there are two questions—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Madam Speaker:** So, as you know, you are allowed one.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could you indicate how the travel pass system was allowed to breach in this dreadful way in this situation?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member for Oropouche East would hardly know because he happens to be among those who entered without their—without—the only person entered Trinidad and Tobago without getting a travel pass in these circumstances—

**Hon. Members:** Wow!

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—in breach. But in any event, for the benefit of the public, as I indicated—and the Member would hardly understand what I meant by honour. It is an honour system.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The applicant is expected to speak truthfully and in honour. And there are at least five occasions in that application where honour is demanded to determine the status—the physical or health status of the individual, the COVID status. Upon arrival, it is only then that the information would be verified. It was verified, the system worked—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—the person has been isolated and the police will do what they have to do.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, in light of your statement that the travel pass is so easy to breach, could you indicate whether steps have been taken to upgrade the travel pass given all the problems associated with this pass from day one that allowed persons to come in this country—

**Madam Speaker:** Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—without completing a travel pass?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, may I ask you to ask the question because that long preamble does not qualify as a supplemental question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question, Madam Speaker, to the Minister is: Could you indicate whether or not the travel pass will be upgraded and strengthened so that this issue will never arise again.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, permit me a quick metaphor, a very determined thief or burglar will get through any system—

**Hon. Members:** [*Laughter*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—as they would know. But, Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, Member, just withdraw that, please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I want to give—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Standing Order 48(4).

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I have asked you to withdraw—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw that metaphor, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Well, not so much the metaphor but the statement that followed the metaphor.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw the statement that followed the metaphor, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you very much. Yes.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But, Madam Speaker, the system for the travel pass is constantly under review for obvious reasons. We take into account international best practices. We take into account the recommendations of the Ministry of Health. As a result, the system is constantly under review and this situation and many others will cause us to continue that review, all with a view of making it better and

stronger in the protection of the people of Trinidad and Tobago against COVID-19 and its variants. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Recorded COVID-19 Deaths  
(Government's Plans to Counteract)**

**Mr. Arnold Ram** (*Caroni Central*): To the Minister of Health: In light of the massive number of deaths recorded in this country during the past few days as a result of the COVID-19 virus, will the Minister inform the nation on the Government's immediate plans to counteract this extremely troubling trend?

**Madam Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon to all. Madam Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago's case fatality ratio is 2.9 per cent. The global range is from 0.1 per cent to 19.5. The global average is two to three. So we are at 2.9. But that is little comfort to anyone who has died and to their families and to us. These fatalities are unacceptable.

Since August '21, in preparation for the Delta variant, we alerted the country to its increased virulence and severity in both adults and children. We stressed the basic three "Ws"; we started our vaccination programme in earnest; and in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 98 September, we also ramped up those with private sector involvement. We engaged in legislative measures to prevent deaths; state of emergency, May 15<sup>th</sup>; public health regulations. At the level of the Ministry of Health, we focused on prevention, three "Ws", increase in process and treatment with therapeutics.

In an effort to reduce deaths, we also increased our A&E capacity to treat higher acuity patients in October 2021, and that continues. We ramped up our ICU capability from two beds to 106. I personally gave the order in July to increase by 100 per cent. We revised our treatment protocols using WHO recommendations for

corticosteroids and interleukin-6 blockers, tocilizumab. We improved our ambulance response by using the advanced life support ambulances and we ramped up our internal RHA ambulance response. Recently, we have converted many of our step-down beds by 178 to ward-level beds because as the disease, progresses the clinical manifestation changes.

In Tobago, at the Scarborough General Hospital, we have 18 high-acuity ward-level beds. We have increased the ICU capacity at Tobago from five to nine—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, your time is up.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central.

**Mr. Ram:** Thank you. To the Minister: Can the Minister indicate what is being done to assist junior house officers in the resurrection—resuscitating, sorry, of COVID-19 patients—resuscitating, Madam Speaker, of COVID—

**Madam Speaker:** Member I ruled that question out of order pursuant to Standing Order 29(7). Do you have another question? Member for Caroni Central.

**Mr. Ram:** Madam Speaker, to the Minister: Can the Minister indicate whether the Ministry is procuring additional oxygen saturation monitors as there has been a report of two monitors for every 60 COVID-19 patients?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you very much. So the RHAs—I met with the RHAs this morning, I had my usual meeting with all CEOs, directors of health, GMs of nursing and doctors. And they have been directed, even before today, to make sure that all necessary monitoring equipment is there, including exactly what you have asked of.

Madam Speaker, in addition to what my colleague has indicated and I have



given the answer, in Tobago, we also increased the ICU capacity, a trek from six beds to six beds and we have activated the Lowlands step-down facility to accommodate now ward-level patients with 27 beds. But, Madam Speaker, the message still has to be to get vaccinated.

In meeting this morning—and this is directly concerning the supplemental question—the feedstock for this current wave is the unvaccinated. At Sangre Grande this morning, we have 50 persons in the A&E, 97 per cent unvaccinated; south-west, 92 per cent in the A&E unvaccinated; Tobago, 90 per cent in the A&E unvaccinated; north-central 90 per cent unvaccinated; and north-west A&E 95 per cent unvaccinated. It is truly the pandemic of the unvaccinated and I urge all members of the public, if you are unvaccinated, get vaccinated and if you are due for your booster, get boosted. Thank you very much, Member, for raising the issue.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, given that 345 COVID-19 deaths have occurred in December 2021, could you provide this House with a breakdown of the number of deaths which have occurred in the COVID-19 containment tents at the Port of Spain, San Fernando and Mount Hope Hospital?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I rule that question out of order pursuant to Standing Order 29(7). Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister of Health, will the Ministry of Health be procuring additional mobile oxygen tanks for the management of critically ill COVID-19 patients?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. So under the disaster preparedness unit and the Emergency Operations Centre, which I now chair, the individual in that unit, Patti-Ann Williams, has been charged to do exactly that. And we have been

working with that—for that over the past month with our major oxygen suppliers including Massy Gas, to not only provide more oxygen but more capacity to deliver the oxygen to the patient by producing the manifolds required to do just that. We are also purchasing and it should arrive in the country very soon, high-volume cannulas, more again to provide that. We have sent out to the five RHAs in the recent past, over the past month, 115 oxygen concentrators. So we are doing everything possible to make sure that our patients have oxygen. But, however, we need more people to be vaccinated. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am to advise that Question No. 26 has been withdrawn by the Member for Couva South in accordance with the Standing Orders. Leader of the House.

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

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are now seven questions for oral answer. We will be answering all of seven and there are no questions for written response.

### **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South):*

#### **Laying of Report (Granting of Firearm Users' Licences)**

**26.** Could the hon. Minister of National Security state:

With respect to the investigation into the granting of Firearm Users' Licences by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, will the Minister indicate when will the report be laid in this House?

*Question, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South

**Termination of TTPS Contracted Employees  
(Financial Costs Incurred)**

**27. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

In light of the termination of 19 contracted employees from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, will the Minister state the financial costs incurred by the Government thus far?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you yet again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has advised that as at November 30, 2021, it had incurred a financial cost of \$337,780 consequent upon the termination of 19 contracted employees.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, are you in a position to inform this House how many of the 19 contracted positions have been filled at this point in time?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am unable to provide an answer to that but I must say that I know at least that some of them were positions, one would say, personal to their appointee and therefore, may not necessarily require further attention.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And based on what you have said, Minister, to this House, going forward, will the positions that will be filled—in relation to the Office of the Commissioner of the Police, will these positions be filled by serving police officers or from persons outside of the police service?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That I would venture to say would be a matter for the human resource director and administration within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

**Robberies and Murders in St. Augustine Community  
(Protection Against)**

**28. Ms. Khadijah Ameen** (*St. Augustine*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Given the series of robberies and murders within the St. Augustine community, will the Minister state what has been done to protect this community within the last six months?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very warmly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, statistics from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service indicate that there has been no increase in robberies in the St. Augustine community within the last six months as suggested in the question. However, the data indicates that there has been an increase in violent crimes which include murders. Some of the strategies that have been implemented by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service within the last six months, in the St. Augustine in particular include: one, addressing crime and the fear of crime: an increase in the joint army patrols and foot patrols in the hills of St. Augustine and neighbouring areas, with special emphasis on St. Michael Road and environs which has born itself out as one of the hottest spots in that zone.

Seizure of illegal firearms: an increased task force presence, that is police task force presence from the Northern Division in relation to strategic strikes targeting persons of interests within the area, in addition to raids conducted on several known drug blocks and known drug offenders since drugs are at the epicenter of a lot of the gang activity and criminal activity generally.

Item number three, augmented manpower within the area on specified days

and at times when criminal activities are recognized as being prevalent, those concepts being derived from the statistics and the analysis of them and therefore, manpower is augmented in terms.

Additional patrols from the DUI Speed Team, human resource branch and other Inter-Agency Task Force in order to manage the roadways and disrupt the ease by which criminals travel.

Five, increased collaboration between the Northern Division, the special intelligence unit and the homicide department in order to target organized crime groups within the area, bringing closure to impending homicide investigations.

And finally, Madam Speaker, in this regard, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is in the process of revitalizing the community policing approach within the area in order to empower the people of the community and make it more resilient to crime.

And I would like to add, Madam Speaker, that the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine should make it a point to support the efforts of the police and support the efforts of the community in dealing with the crime problem in the neighbourhood. I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you. I thank the Minister for his extensive response. However, given that the areas mentioned in the response from the Minister actually falls in the Tunapuna constituency, I want to take this opportunity to ask the Minister if he would consider with the TTPS looking at—well, let us call it St. Augustine south where this increase is, if you would be willing to facilitate meetings with the TTPS with our stakeholders such as—

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Ms. Ameen:**—business owners and—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, remember—

**Ms. Ameen:** Yeah, the question—sorry.

**Madam Speaker:** No preambles. You have 15 seconds to ask a question. So please ask the question.

**Ms. Ameen:** So the question is: If the Minister will be willing to facilitate meetings with the police and the business owners and stakeholders in—I will call it St. Augustine South? It might be easier rather than the area you mentioned.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, as far as I am aware, the police service in its outreach manifestation has always made itself available for these community or town meetings, with business communities, with residents and other NGOs in the neighbourhood. I see no reason why that should not continue.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Hon. Member:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you and a follow-up for information of all. Can you indicate what measures are in place now for these police meetings given the COVID situations and the restrictions of COVID? Do you have any virtual meetings or—

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Just like this Parliament, just like all sensible operations where the COVID-19 experience debars us from having face-to-face meetings, of course, meetings can be arranged virtually.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Repairs to Dry River Trace Bridge  
(Orange Grove Road, St. Augustine South)**

**29. Ms. Khadijah Ameen** (*St. Augustine*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister state when the Dry River Trace Bridge on Orange Grove Road, St. Augustine South will be repaired?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Works and Transport.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Dry River Bridge on Orange Grove Road, St. Augustine falls under the purview of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and not the Ministry of Works and Transport. However, in response to correspondence received by the Ministry of Works and Transport on the matter, the Bridges Branch of the Highways Division conducted a site visit, together with the representatives from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, in an effort to provide technical assistance. The Ministry of Works and Transport continues to provide technical assistance as required. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, I know the Minister would have also received correspondence from me. So I want to ask the Minister if you can have these officers liaise with the representatives when the site visits are being done?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Again, Madam Speaker, as I indicated, this bridge does not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Works and Transport. However, a request was made by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We cannot invite somebody to their site visits. What the Member can do is to write to the Tunapuna Corporation and clarify that.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for St. Augustine.

### **Repairs to Bassie Street Bridge**

**(Blackman Ravine in Spring Village)**

**30. Ms. Khadijah Ameen** (*St. Augustine*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister state when the Bassie Street Bridge over the Blackman Ravine in Spring Village will be repaired?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, again, the Bassie Street Bridge falls under the purview of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and not the Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry of Works and Transport has not to date received correspondence from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government about this bridge, but stands ready to provide technical assistance that may be required. I thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, through you, to the Minister: Given that the Tunapuna/Regional Corporation does not receive allocations to facilitate this size of project, would the Ministry be willing to consider partnering with the corporation to have this bridge constructed?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, again, the Ministry has always worked with all the regional corporations in Trinidad and Tobago and if a request is made, the Ministry will always consult with the Ministry of Finance. Once funds are available, the Ministry normally will partner with people but it is based on a request from the corporations. Thank you.

**Gas Supplied to Train 1  
(Details of)**

**31. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister:



Will the Minister state:

- a. the amount of gas that has been supplied to Train 1 from NGC for the period January 01, 2021 to December 01 2021; and
- b. the amount of liquefied natural gas that has been produced by Train 1 for the period January 01, 2021 to December 01, 2021?

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as it has been stated time and time again and will be repeated here today, following the completion of the Train 1 turnaround in February 2021, NGC was prevented from supplying gas to Train 1 due to a process safety incident and the COVID-19 restrictions.

**2.00 p.m.**

Thereafter, no gas was supplied to Train 1 by NGC as all available gas was sold to the domestic market. That is to the methanol and ammonia producers, the petchem producers, who NGC has take-or-pay contracts with. Given the unexpected sharp increase in the petchem commodity prices, post-April 2021, all of these petchem plants took the allocated gas they had contracted with NGC for, and therefore, NGC had no gas availability for Train 1.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, part (b) of the question to the Minister, I did not—

**Hon. S. Young:** Well having regard to the answer that I have just given, Madam Speaker, no liquefied natural gas was produced by Train 1 during the period January to December 2021 due to those circumstances outlined in the response.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Shared Cost to Operate - Train 1  
(Details of)**

**UNREVISED**

**32. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister:

- a. Will the Minister confirm the accuracy of the newspaper report of November 11, 2021 that BP, Shell and Summer Soca, all investors of Train 1 have indicated that they will not be funding the shared cost to operate Train 1 for the rest of the year?
- b. If the report is accurate, will NGC be funding the entire shared cost for the remainder of 2021?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Energy and Energy Industries

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this question is premised on a newspaper report of November 11, 2021 that BP, Shell and Summer Soca which is CIC, the Chinese sovereign wealth fund that has a 10 per cent shareholding in Train 1, all investors and shareholders in Train 1 indicated that they will not be funding the shared cost to operate Train 1 for the rest of the year. This is in fact not so. The funding of Train 1 is a shareholder issue, and therefore, the shareholders' position on funding is best sought from them, the shareholders themselves. Suffice to say, Government through NGC, has honoured and will continue to honour all of its contractual obligations relative to Train 1 and expects that all other shareholders shall continue to do likewise.

The NGC/LNG funding agreement was terminated by Atlantic effective August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and as such Atlantic Train 1 funding requirements will continue to be in accordance with the Train 1 agreements, and in our discussions with the other shareholders none of them have indicated that they will not be honouring their commitments to the relative funding of Train 1.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a follow-up to the Minister: Minister based on what you just indicated, it has been in the media that \$240 million or thereabout had been invested by NGC in Train 1 and they have a 10 per cent stake in Train 1. Is it then the \$240 million—is it going to be shared or recovered by the other shareholders, the \$240 million?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this is something that we have addressed. I have addressed it in the other place, but I will address here again. I appreciate the opportunity. NGC expended a sum of money, roughly \$230 million for the requisite turnarounds and maintenance work to be done to Train 1 earlier this year. That work was necessary to keep Train 1 in a state that it could be utilized. At the end of day that is a cost. We continue to be in discussions with the shareholders, the other shareholders of Atlantic LNG including with respect to Train 1, and I am happy to say as will come out shortly over the weekend, despite this and this cost being written off by NGC, NGC made after tax profits for the first nine months of this year of \$1.085 billion even after this write off.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. S. Young:** It is expected, Madam Speaker, that this sum of money that was expended will come up and will be dealt with in the continuing talks and negotiations we are having with the shareholders.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

### **Shareholders Declaration of Closure (Atlantic Train 1)**

**33. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister:

**UNREVISED**

Will the Minister confirm the accuracy of the statement contained in the newspaper report of November 11, 2021, that all other shareholders with the exception of NGC have voted to declare Atlantic Train 1 closed and that blinds have been installed on the plant?

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

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Again, Madam Speaker, this question is premised on a newspaper report dated the 11 of November, 2021, that all other shareholders with the exception of NGC have voted to declare Atlantic Train 1 closed and blinds have been installed on the plant. From an engineering perspective it is important to put blinds on the plant. That is nothing unusual. The Minister is not a party to the Train 1 shareholder agreements and is not able to comment on BP, Shell and Summer Soca Train 1 shareholder positions at this time. However, I can confirm that Train 1 has been non-operational in 2021 apart from the maintenance work and the turnaround, and the Train remains depressured, isolated, and blinds installed to ensure the safety of the train within the Atlantic LNG complex.

As has been stated here previously, Atlantic Train 1 being the first train from an engineering point of view, Trains 2, 3 and 4 are also appendages and constructed based on some of the common features of Atlantic Train 1. So whilst no decision has been taken with respect to the future and how this will be dealt with from an engineering point of view, and the works are being done, and the costing is being done, it is not unusual for blinds to have been installed on the plant in these circumstances.

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

**Madam Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the limited time available to me— [*Interruption*] In the 11 minutes available to me with—

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes, Madam Speaker?

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [November 24, 2021]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Madam Speaker:** I now call upon the Minister of Finance who has 11 minutes of speaking time on his response.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I way saying, in the limited time available with the reduced times as a result of the COVID restrictions, I will try my best to sum up the salient issues as we move towards the final stage of this very, very important piece of legislation. When I looked at the comments from Members opposite, some of the comments are a rehash of what has been said before over and over. For example, there is a repeated theme from Members opposite, including the Member for Siparia, the Member for Chaguanas West, the Member for Caroni Central, et cetera. A repeated theme which Members opposite know is essentially impractical—I wanted to use another word—that why do we not try and improve the existing Board of Inland Revenue and the Customs and Excise Division to make them more efficient.

And Members opposite know that that is nonsense, that successive Governments have tried for many, many, many, many years including their governments in the '95 to 2001 period, and the 2010—2015 period to grapple with this precise issue.

But because of the way our 1976 Constitution was drafted and also our 1962 Constitution, with the establishment of service commissions Governments simply do not have the authority to appoint persons within positions in the public service no matter how important they are. And the Customs and the Inland Revenue Division have suffered from a shortage of staff for the entire period that I have been in public life, which is 30 years. Since I came into this Parliament in 1991 I have been hearing about these issues and successive governments have failed to be able to get the service commissions to fill the positions, and also to deal with all sorts of issues with respect to human resources, industrial relations, and so on, within the Inland Revenue Division, and the Customs and Excise Division.

As Einstein has said, “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result”. So that when hon. Members say why do we not just improve the existing systems, they know very well that that is a nonsense. The other theme that comes through from hon. Members opposite is a bit of mischief where they tried to pretend that the enforcement division of the proposed Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority, which will be a public department, staffed by public officers appointed by the Public Service Commission, insulated from Ministers, insulated from politically appointed boards will somehow be under the influence of the political directorate. That is just another nonsense.

The way we have established or the way we have drafted and will create the TTRA in this formulation that we are about to ask for approval of the House today, is that there will be a particular individual who will be the Deputy Director General of Enforcement, will be the head of the enforcement division, and a public officer. It is not the best solution. But because the hon. Members opposite have refused point blank to provide the necessary three-fifths majority to create a standalone revenue authority with full authority and power, we have been compelled to create this

hybrid solution where the enforcement arms of the Customs and Excise Division and the Inland Revenue Division will be staffed by public officers who will be under the supervision or under the purview—that is a better word—of the Public Service Commission, and the clauses of the Bill make that crystal clear.

Clause 13(1) establishes the position of Deputy Director General - Enforcement and makes it clear that that person is a public officer. Clause 13(4) excludes the Deputy Director General - Enforcement from the limitation of holding office for more than five years at any given time. Clause 13(5) establishes the office under the purview of the Salaries Review Commission for the purpose of determining salary and allowances. Clause 14(1)(b) reaffirms the role of the Director General with respect to the enforcement of the revenue laws, and the substantive Director General will only have authority to enforce revenue laws by means of civil proceedings. And this is important because it delineates the roles of traditional revenue collection reserved for the Director General who will be appointed by the board, through Parliament, with the more intrusive functions especially those currently being exercised by Customs and Excise and found under the various revenue laws which are reserved for the Deputy Director General.

So I want to make to crystal clear that enforcement of the Customs laws and enforcement of the revenue laws will be reserved for the Deputy Director General - Enforcement who is a public officer. And even though there are clauses in the Bill that speak to staffing throughout the Revenue Authority including staffing in the Enforcement Division, the only staff that the board will be able to recruit and appoint within the Enforcement Division would be what is called the manipulative staff, secretarial staff, drivers, cleaners, clerical staff, things of that nature. But the enforcement officers within the Enforcement Division cannot be recruited or appointed or disciplined by the board of the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue

Authority.

I want to stress, Madam Speaker—and how much time do I have left?

**Madam Speaker:** Your time expires at 2.18.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Thank you. I want to stress that this legislation is long overdue. I want to make the point that this has gone through Joint Select Committees ad infinitum. This matter has been before the Parliament for 11 years. Numerous Bills have been submitted to the Parliament with respect to the establishment of a Revenue Authority. Numerous committee meetings have been held. Numerous consultations have been held with every possible stakeholder including the divisions within the public service themselves, Central Bank, Financial Intelligence Unit, Customs clerks, chartered accountants, trade unions, National Union of Government and Federated Workers, service commissions, AMCHAM, various chambers of commerce like Couva/Point Lisas, the Public Services Association, the Joint the Trade Union Movement, the Tobago House of Assembly. We have had comprehensive, extensive consultation with everybody involved in this matter. I am satisfied, Madam Speaker, and this Government is satisfied, that the administrative reforms that will come with the Revenue Authority in terms of modernization, in terms of the ability to recruit technically qualified staff in order to compensate them in a manner befitting their functions and their status in terms of being able to take revenue collection into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I am satisfied that even though this is a hybrid model that this is a quantum leap for Trinidad and Tobago and will go a long way to allowing the Government to close the gap between the available tax collection in terms of persons who avoid tax, persons who evade tax, persons who are outside of the tax net although they earn large sums of money thereby placing a very unfair burden on conscientious taxpayers, many of whom have no choice but to pay tax because it is deducted at source in



their place of employment.

I believe this will be a quantum leap and that as we establish the Revenue Authority, as the board starts to do its work, as the organizational structure is fleshed out, we will be very soon into a situation where we can recover billions of dollars that are currently not collected because of the inefficiencies in the system. I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

**Madam Speaker:** This Bill has 43 clauses and one Schedule.

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 43 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to:* That the Bill be reported to the House.

*House resumed.*

**Madam Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, I wish to report that the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority Bill, 2021, was considered in committee of the whole and approved without amendments. I now beg to move that the House agree with this report from the committee.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Division, Madam Speaker. I have said division.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, a division has been called. As we are well familiar with, the procedure is that we wait three minutes for Members who are not

in the Chamber to make their way to the Chamber. An announcement will be made. At the end of the three minutes the count will begin. If a Member's turn is passed during the count, once the Member returns in the Chamber before the vote is announced that Member will be allowed to vote. The three minutes begin now.

[*Pause*] Minister of Finance

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Question put:* That the Bill be now read a third time.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Division.

**Madam Speaker:** So might I ask that all—Whip, are all your Members in?

**Mr. Lee:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** All right. So hon. Members, I wish to advise that leave was granted to the Member for San Fernando East to participate virtually in accordance with our procedure.

*The House divided:*    Ayes 21        Noes 15

AYES

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

Scotland, K.

Monroe, R.

NOES

Lee, Mr. D.

Ameen, Ms. K.

Charles, R.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Paray, R.

Indarsingh, R.

Hosein, S.

Padarath, B.

Tancoo, D.

Mohit, Ms. V.

Benjamin, Ms. M.

Ragbir, Dr. R.

Ram, A.

Seecheran, Dr. R.

Ratiram, R.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**2.30 p.m.**

**COMMISSIONER OF POLICE  
(NOMINATION OF MR. MC DONALD JACOB)**

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the House has not granted leave for a debate on any motion to do with the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police.

**Madam Speaker:** Well, Member for Oropouche East, there is no leave to be granted—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Exactly.

**Madam Speaker:** On this Motion.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You got notice.

**Madam Speaker:** The Motion is properly on the Order Paper.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Exactly. What leave?

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

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**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, [*Inaudible*] there is a motion before this House to annul the legal orders and this is a breach of protocol of convention of practice to debate the Orders—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Moonilal:**—when the Motion before the House to annul the orders that gave rise to this matter. Madam Speaker, what is your ruling?

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, so if we could have a little silence so that I can address the concern. Okay, so hon. Member for Oropouche East, I know of no motion on the Order Paper before this House as you have so described. What I know is that yesterday a motion was filed to annul. That was yesterday afternoon. According to our Standing Order 80(3), that Motion would be debated as soon as practicable but within the prescribed time. Members will be aware that the Orders are subject to a negative resolution and also Members will be quite aware that orders such as these are statutory instruments and they are required by section 75(7) of the Interpretation Act only to be annulled within the prescribed time. The prescribed time as Members know is 40 days. According to Standing Order 80 of the House of Representatives, it prescribes that the period shall be 40 days from the date on which the statutory instrument is published.

Pursuant to section 12(1)(a) of the Statutes Act Chap. 3:02, these orders were made on November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 respectively and these were the dates on which those Orders were published in the *Gazette*. Therefore, the prescribed period of 40 days for the Orders commenced from November 25<sup>th</sup> and November 26<sup>th</sup> respectively.

Now, hon. Member for Oropouche East and all Members, we know that while

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Parliament is in recess, it does not affect the making of these orders or the commencement days of the prescribed periods, it does not affect the computation of time prescribed for the prescribed period. As I have indicated, this Motion was received yesterday and Members will also know in accordance with Standing Order 80(3), the general rule is that all motions require notice before they can be moved but this is subject to the Standing Orders or practice of the House to the contrary. Notice is required for many reasons, including to allow the administrative processes of the review to ensure that it accords with the Standing Orders, approval and subsequent circulation to Members. Further, notice is also required to allow Members the opportunity to consider the motion and conduct research on its merits prior to the debate in Parliament.

Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Procedures And Usage of Parliament, the 25th Edition at paragraph 20.6 highlights:

Motions for which notice is not required. These include—

And we have a particular Standing Order.

These include motions to proceed with the next stage of a Bill at an earlier date or forthwith under Standing Order 64(1)(b) and motions to proceed with Senate amendments under Standing Order 74 and other motions which dispense with notice include motions to extend sitting hours under Standing Order 12(3), motions to close debates under Standing Order 52.

Apart from those examples, it is the almost invariable practice of the House that notice should be given for substantive motions to be debated.

As far as private motions, which is the motion that you allude to is, this usually requires 12 days' notice under Standing Order 36 of the House of Representatives. However, given the nature of statutory instruments subject to the negative resolution which are in effect from the date of publication, Standing Order

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80(3) prescribes that the motion be debated as soon as practicable and in any event before the expiration of the period prescribed in paragraph two of that Standing Order. It is only natural and ordinary in meaning that as soon as practicable does not mean immediately or forthwith or at the next available sitting. The administrative processes outlined above will still need to be completed prior to debating the Motion.

Further, this is a substantive motion which would require Members to have sufficient time to consider the motion prior to the debate. While the 12 days' notice may be dispensed with, the motion cannot be debated on the same day it was presented to the Clerk. As I indicated, there are still days left before the prescribed period and the motion would be debated within the prescribed time. There is no motion before this House except the ones upon which we are about to embark and I so rule.

**Dr. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** And I have explained, the motion has been received, it has not reached the Order Paper. It was received yesterday afternoon. Prime Minister.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Dr. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I have ruled. As a very senior Member here, you understand the procedure. We shall proceed. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** We have a certain balance here, I would ask the Leader of the

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House and the Whip to ensure that the balance in the numbers is being maintained. Leader of the House, could you check your numbers please? Prime Minister, you may proceed. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have been standing here so long, I have to gather my thoughts before I forget what I came here to do. But just if I ask your assistance, Madam Speaker, could you indicate how much time do I have?

**Madam Speaker:** Your speaking time, Prime Minister, is 30 minutes without any extension.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* section 123(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (“the Constitution”) provides that the Police Service Commission shall have the power to appoint persons to hold or act in the office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* section 123(3) of the Constitution provides that the Police Service Commission shall submit to the President a list of the names of the persons nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* section 123(4) of the Constitution provides that the President shall issue a Notification in respect of each person nominated under subsection (3) and the Notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;



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*And whereas* the Police Service Commission has submitted to the President the name Mr. Mc Donald Jacob as the person nominated to act in the office of Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* the President has on the 15th day of December, 2021 issued a Notification in respect of the nomination;

*And whereas* it is expedient to approve the Notification:

*Be It Resolved* that the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob to act in the office of Commissioner of Police be approved.

Madam Speaker, the name Mc Donald Jacob is not unfamiliar to proceedings in this House because as you may know, Madam Speaker, Mr. Jacob currently is the most senior officer in post in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service today and it was with the approval of this House that he was so placed in that position. But even before that, Madam Speaker, the name Mc Donald Jacob which got the approval of this House to act in the position of Commissioner of Police recently and for whom that status was changed on the basis of the rectification ruling of a court of law which indicated to the Parliament and to the country that there was a standing error of arrangement which we have since acknowledged and taken steps to rectify. We today once again are called upon to assess, adjudicate and agree, if we so minded, to accept the recommendation of the Police Service Commission by the way of the hand of the President to have Mr. Jacob with the approval of this Parliament act as Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, it will serve us well, and the public, to refresh our memory as to the suitability and the qualification of this individual to act and hold office as

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Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, we would know that Mr. Jacob has been a product of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service having had many, many years of practice in law enforcement in Trinidad and Tobago as an officer of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

With respect to his education, Madam Speaker, may I remind this House and the nation that Mr. Jacob is very well educated in matters pertinent to the job that he is about to embark upon and that he has been doing for quite some time. Mr. Jacob is the holder of a Certificate in Criminology from the University of the West Indies, School of Continuing Studies and he obtained that certification in 1994. He is also the holder of a Bachelor of Law Degree from the University of London which he obtained in 2001. He holds a post-graduate Diploma in Mediation Studies obtained from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, obtained in the 2004. He also holds a Master of Philosophy in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of the West Indies, 2014 and more recently, he was certified in project management from the University's Open Campus in 2015. Quite an impressive package of education.

But with respect to his training and appropriate short courses, Madam Speaker, we will observe that as far back as 2007, part of his training and preparation to hold office and to carry out the duties of a senior police officer, Madam Speaker, you will observe that as far back as 2007, officer Jacob would have received training from Penn State University in High Impact Supervision, Course 2. In 2008, he was trained in Crime and Intelligence Analysis from George Mason University, Washington DC. In 2009, he had core leadership training in Chaguaramas Cambridge University and with respect to media relations, Madam Speaker, officer Jacob had some training from Penn State University.

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In 2011, officer Jacob was trained in Jamaica in intelligence gathering and analysis. In 2012, he received under the United Nations umbrella with respect to the policing of crime with respect to drugs, organized crime, he had crime and intelligence analysis training for managers in 2012. In 2014, from the Arthur Lok Jack School, he studied crime problem-solving and analytical thinking. And also in 2014, Madam Speaker, from the same entity, he did strategic decision-making and in 2016, he had training in office of protection from Crestcom International and in 2017, he received a certificate from the William Perry Centre with respect to other defence studies.

So officer Jacob has been continually upgrading his skills and his preparation to discharge the duties of Commissioner of Police which he eventually has been selected for and is today being selected for again while he holds the position of a Deputy Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Madam Speaker, with respect to his work as a police officer, you would know that he was a dedicated police officer to the point of retirement and whereupon he had been hired as a contract officer approved by this Parliament to serve in role of Deputy Commissioner and the House is now being asked to provide the appropriate authority for officer Mc Donald Jacob to act as Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to debate the nomination of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob pursuant to the Motion before us. Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that we did not know exactly which Minister had proposed the Motion because on the

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Supplemental Order Paper before us dated—I am looking for the date now—December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, these Motions were presented, Madam Speaker, without a name of the Minister or Prime Minister on the Supplemental Order Paper presented. So having said that, I will respond to the Prime Minister who proposed these Motions and I assume would propose the other Motions later. It would also be, I believe, the pattern to speak briefly on various items before us regarding these nominations.

Madam Speaker, the Motion speaks, of course, rooted in the Constitution, section 123(1)(a) of the Constitution that provides that the Police Service Commission shall have the power to appoint persons to hold or act in the office of Commissioner or deputy Commissioner of Police. It goes on section 123(3) of the Constitution provides that the Commission shall submit to the President a list of names of the persons nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner or deputy Commissioner of Police, including those to act in the office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, it goes on that section 123(4) of the Constitution provides that the President shall issue a notification in respect of each person nominated under subsection (3) and the notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives.

The Police Service Commission has indeed submitted to the President, the name Mr. Mc Donald Jacob as a person nominated to act in this instance in the office of Commissioner of Police. And this has been done on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December 2021, the notification has been issued and it is therefore before us. It is the wish of the Mover of this Motion that the notification of the President of the nomination of the Police Service Commission of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob to act in the office of

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Commissioner of Police be now approved.

Madam Speaker, as the Mover indicated, there is a genesis to this matter that involved actually Mr. Mc Donald Jacob as well since Mr. Jacob, as the country is well aware, was at some time purported to be acting in the position of Commissioner of Police. That term ended in a sordid affair when the High Court on October 14<sup>th</sup> ruled that pursuant to the process, Mr. Jacob was not properly in office on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Since October 14<sup>th</sup> to now, Mr. Jacob has been in his substantive position of Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We are also aware that the Minister of Finance pursuant to the law also appointed Mr. Jacob as the accounting officer of the TTPS.

Mr. Jacob's resumé is before us. The first thing that would stand out, of course, is that he is also from south, Trinidad, Princes Town. Mr. Jacob has had a long and very lustrous career in law enforcement and there is very few critical remarks one can make about his resumé. He has served the police service and indeed the country with some distinction and continue to do so in the substantive position of Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Madam Speaker, it is just in passing reference that the Prime Minister indicated the enormity of the academic training and experience of Mr. McDonald and I imagine this will happen for other nominees as we go along. But sometimes when these things happen over the years, I ask myself when persons are in the Police Service and have had so many qualifications and diplomas and training, when did they find them to study? Given that they were doing policing work. Or when did they find time to do policing work given that they spend so much long hours and days and months and years studying. But yet we market, of course, the fact that the persons are qualified academically, technically and also have, of course, experience in

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various aspects of policing. But indeed, Mr. Mc Donald come to us with a Bachelor of Law Degree from the university—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, you mean Mr. Jacob.

**3.00 p.m.**

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Jacob, sorry, comes before us with a Bachelor of Laws Degree, the University of London, 2021; a Master of Philosophy in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the UWI, St. Augustine. And I imagine, on the basis of his familiarity with the UWI and that department of criminology, we also had, I believe, in the public space, a recommendation from Prof. Ramesh Deosaran who also gave a recommendation to Mr. Jacob in the public space and there is little you can say about that.

Madam Speaker, I took note that the mover of the Motion spent a moment or two to point out that Mr. Jacob had the substantive experience in the TTPS and by virtue—the mover was indicating that by virtue of that experience, Mr. Jacob would have rose in the ranks and would have been at least in office during an earlier period as Acting Commissioner of Police, albeit, it fell apart at the court. Madam Speaker, it is instructive that the mover of the Motion was dwelling on seniority, when the Legal Notice No. 278, the Legal Notice sought to remove seniority as a consideration.

I want to put on record again, Madam Speaker, that we are debating these matters without prejudice to the fact that a Motion has been filed to annul both legal orders that gave the legal framework for the arrival of this notification in the Parliament. That is now a matter of fact and we are debating this. This matter may, like Orders before, well find itself in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago, where the court may have to rule on the legality, yet again, of these Orders. In fact, the case study of

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Orders by this administration, in attempting to find their way around appointing a Commissioner of Police, is something that is worthy of a good spy and thriller novel. I think they have come across six or eight Orders already.

Madam Speaker, one of the issues here is really the process that gave rise to Mr. Jacob's arrival today before this House. You see, Madam Speaker, a list has been compiled by the Police Service Commission but a merit list was also compiled for an acting appointment in August. The first question we would like to place on the record is: Where is that list? Where is that list?

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I rise on Standing Order 48(1). What we are debating is here—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Madam Speaker:**—the Notification of Her Excellency.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yeah.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yeah.

**Madam Speaker:** Please move on.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sure. Madam Speaker, I just want to query because, again, I do not want to run afoul of your ruling. The notification is here pursuant to a legal process that brought it here. Am I free to raise issues concerning the process that brought it here? As—can I raise—

**Madam Speaker:** This notification?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** This notification?

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**Dr. R. Moonilal:** This exact notification, yes. So the first question I will raise is: What exactly is the process that brought this here? It is Legal Notice 277 and 278. It must be. Because the Legal Notices before were deemed illegal and invalid, null and void. And in this process, Madam Speaker, we are concerned that the process that brought Mr. Jacob here had nothing do with seniority. It was removed in the legal order dated 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 2021.

Madam Speaker, another matter that arose with these new legal notices for the position of acting had to do, with not just seniority, but it also had to do with the fact that persons who are going to act in these positions would also be persons who are not contracted to the police service or has never been contracted. Madam Speaker, we have no difficulty with Mr. Jacob and his qualifications, and so on. The issue is really the process that was followed that we are not aware of. We are not aware of the process that the Police Service Commission used in selecting these persons on a merit list through the process as outlined here, Legal Notice 277 and 278, to arrive, to bring Mr. Jacob to the House. Because if he is not, for example—if seniority is not being considered, what is being considered? And who else was on this merit list? Who else was nominated or suggested or recommended to be on the merit list to act as Commissioner of Police at this time? The Members of Parliament and the House will not have access to that information. And this is critical, Madam Speaker, to determine whether or not Mr. Jacob has indeed been the best person selected or not.

Now, the seniority issue I want to get back to. It is clear that Mr. Jacob has seniority, has experience in the TTPS. But, Madam Speaker, he may well be the most experienced person. And indeed, when we look at his CV, it is very hard to imagine that there would be other officers who would have experience and



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international exposure through, for example, if I could just quote one or two issues, the United Nations—participating in the United Nations agencies for law enforcement, the international citizens security programme on law enforcement, training seminars, crime analysis in Canada, criminology conferences, and so on. What I was a bit startled at, Madam Speaker, when I myself studied this CV, is that Mr. Jacob has some significant experience and/or training, to read from his CV exactly, in crisis management as a trainer and in mediation and negotiation, and so on. It is very instructive. He has been a former lecturer at the Cipriani College of Labour. There are no dates given for this. I am not sure if he was a former lecturer at the labour college during the tenure as a police service because he has an unbroken tenure as a police officer. So it would have been—he would have been a lecturer at the Cipriani College of Labour while presumably being a member of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. There are no dates here, so one is not sure.

Now, in the context, Madam Speaker, where the Attorney General is extremely eager and anxious to clarify if people can have two jobs and whether they can hold one executive office and be functioning in another office, the Attorney General may also want to cast his eyes on the CV of Mr. Jacob to see if he was a lecturer at the Cipriani Collage of Labour while at the same time, a member of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service or indeed, maybe Mr. Jacob proceeded on some type of leave or some type of secondment. One is never sure when one looks at that.

But the point I was making before I got there is that I took note of Mr. Jacob's training in crisis management, in the context of Mr. Jacob revealing in the public domain quite recently that he felt stressed out when he was acting, I believe, as Commissioner of Police. Now, it would not be a good thing if a man with so much experience in crisis management and training persons as negotiators, and so on, in

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difficult situations, would himself declare that he is stressed and stressed out.

Mr. Jacob will come to the table, Madam Speaker, assuming this is approved, to deal with Trinidad and Tobago at this time that is in the grip of crime. In fact, between COVID and crime, those are really the twin evils that—well, the COVID, crime and the PNM. But crime is now a major, major front burner issue, Madam Speaker, given the murder rate, given the level of anxiety in the national community. We are in the Christmas season, of course. We expect that some type of criminal activity would intensify during this holiday season.

The Minister of National Security himself is not one that has brought any sort of comfort to the situation. So Mr. Jacob will come to the table as Acting Commissioner of Police with quite a full plate. And one would want Mr. Jacob to be really rooted in his training and his education and his experiences, and so on, to confront that reality.

The other question that begs itself now is that it is, Madam Speaker, between October 14<sup>th</sup> to this day, December 17<sup>th</sup>; October 14<sup>th</sup> to December 17<sup>th</sup>, we have been without a Police Commissioner and it means several pieces of law, including the anti-terrorism legislation, the Interception of Communications Act, several other matters have been left on the table without a substantive Commissioner or Acting Commissioner to deal with those matters.

I was reading a report in the *Express* today, Madam Speaker, an international report on terrorism, and it speaks, of course, to incidence of terrorism changing its face during the COVID crisis where, in a nutshell, terrorists may not have been able to travel but given the lax state of a lot of policing and law enforcement concentrating on COVID, terrorist activities may have been intensified in the last year or so. This has happened when this country was without a Commissioner of

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Police who could not take certain actions to deal with terrorism, to deal with money laundering, to deal with blocking bank accounts, and so on, dealing with production orders and other types of measures to deal with the financing of terrorism.

Madam Speaker, a critical matter that Mr. Jacob will now face is the fact that, to our information, the Police Complaints Authority has recommended the suspension of 10 or more officers on the basis of their investigations between October 14<sup>th</sup> to today. Those officers have not been suspended because there was no Commissioner of Police in place to so do. Mr. Mc Donald Jacob will have to confront that as of tomorrow, assuming this is passed today.

These are the problems that arose because of the Government's deliberate, wilful objective of removing Gary Griffith from office and ensuring that Gary Griffith was never returned to the office.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please and Standing Order 48(4).

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member for Oropouche East, I uphold the objection. I ask you to withdraw that and please continue on just not matter of relevance, I also find that you are imputing improper motive.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, I withdraw that and I would go back to the task that Mr. Jacob faces now which is to deal, of course, with all the loose ends that were created during this period without a Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, so it is the matter of terrorism. It is the matter of the suspension of officers. It is the matter of the Interception of Communications Act. It is also the matter of protecting citizens.

The task that faces Mr. Jacob and others—but as the head of this organization

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acting and when you act in this, the law provides that an Acting Commissioner of Police can undertake several duties of the substantive office holder, unlike a Deputy Commissioner of Police in those circumstances. So that the task before us is indeed a task that Mr. Jacob may well find himself having to dig deep down into his experiences, his training and his capacity. Madam Speaker, the related matter to this, related to this seniority is always training, experience, qualifications. On those matters, as I said before, there can be no fault of the gentleman, in terms of his qualifications and his record.

But in closing, Madam Speaker, because these matters will not detain me for much longer, I would like to just indicate that while, in principle, we have no grave objection to Mr. Mc Donald Jacob, we do have very grave objections to the process that brought this notification here.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And this Legal Notice 77 and 78, we believe to be flawed. We believe that these notices, they will be discussed in the Parliament at some time and they would—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). We are not discussing the Legal Notices.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I do uphold the objection. And Member, this is also amounting to anticipation. All right? So I rule also on that. And I ask you, again, in the few minutes you have left, to keep within the confines of this debate.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sure. Madam Speaker, let me get back to Mc Donald Jacob. And I am going to take the opportunity to indicate to Mr. Jacob that it is our wish of those on the Opposition that in the event that this nomination and notification is

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passed, is approved, that Mr. Jacob will indeed bring his considerable experience and training to bear on the job that is before him. I would tell Mr. Jacob, if he was listening now, that I hope and I pray that a court will not overrule the notice and then he will leave a job for the second time.

*[Madam Speaker rises]*

**Madam Speaker:** *[Inaudible]*

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** It is just my wish for the gentleman. And then, Madam Speaker, the Opposition remains committed to working with all stakeholders in law enforcement to ensure that we meet and treat with the crisis of crime, to ensure that we meet and treat with getting solutions and working with law enforcement.

In fact, today it was very instructive that the Member of Parliament of St. Augustine actually spoke about working with the police and increasing and intensifying our relationship with the police over projects to protect citizens and constituents. And that is what we are about. We are certainly not about obstructing the work of the police. We are here to ensure that the police is properly resourced, to ensure that the police is properly managed and to ensure that there is leadership in place. And that is why we are concentrating here and we are working here to give some measure of credence to this, notwithstanding, Madam Speaker, that—I will put it in this way, that Mr. Jacob is here. We are dealing with him but we believe that the vehicle that brought him here is defective—

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—broken down. Madam Speaker, I thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, I thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

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**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we are here to debate this very critical Motion and very much in the public interest. It is, as has been said earlier by the mover of the Motion, to approve the nomination of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob to the position of Acting Commissioner of Police. In my view and in support of the Motion, Mr. Mc Donald Jacob is adequately qualified, adequately experienced and certainly well suited to the business of leading the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

From my observation of his résumé, Mr. Jacob is of significant intellectual bent. He comes from a platform of statistical analysis. He would have been the one, from information available to me, that established or played a key role in establishing the Crime and Problem Analysis unit, CAPA, of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, which is at the heart of the COMPSTAT meetings, that the leadership of the police service will engage in on probably a weekly basis as they try to determine how to deploy the relatively scarce resources. And I say relatively scarce, Madam Speaker, because we have a population of 1.4 million people. There are about 7,000 officers on the establishment, not all would be on duty at the same time and in this COVID-stricken circumstance many are afflicted by that challenge. And therefore, it is always about deploying resources on the basis of the analysis and the statistics and to determine, as I indicated earlier today to a question from St. Augustine, where to deploy these resources. Mr. Mc Donald Jacob has been at the heart of that.

And insofar as my experience, having come to this desk about eight months or so ago, it has been my experience that Mc Donald Jacob is a rather forthright man. He

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is not a timorous soul. He is a strong man and he is a man possessed of team-spiritedness. I have seen him work with the executive of the police service. I have seen him work in collaborative effort with other elements of national security, as they put heads and minds together to dealing with the issues facing the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Intelligence-gathering and the use of intelligence to drive the activities in the fight against crime is really the hallmark of Mr. Jacob's platform, posture, capability. He is a man of ideas. And all of this I would have gleaned from my own direct dealing with him on a regular and more than daily basis.

In my view, on the basis of my own personal observations, Mr. Jacob has truly earned the respect of the leadership of the police service. I have seen them rally around him and he in with them, as they work together to supporting law enforcement efforts in Trinidad and Tobago. Certainly, at the policy formulating team of the National Security Council where Mr. Jacob would be invited to attend from time to time, as the council dispenses the Government's policy in particular areas, I have found Mr. Jacob to be rather receptive, responsive and understanding of the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and his responsibility as a Deputy Commissioner of Police and when we, hopefully pass, support and approve this nomination as Acting Commissioner of Police and I have seen him function quite adequately in those regards.

I want to take the opportunity rather quickly though, Madam Speaker, if I may, to thank and congratulate the Police Service Commission for bringing forward this nomination in favour of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob. That Commission was recently appointed and I admire the fact that it appeared to have responded to the need, the call of the people of Trinidad and Tobago—good governance actually—and have brought this nomination here today for our consideration along, of course, with

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others.

Let me say, as I approach the end of my short contribution in support of this nomination, Madam Speaker, that yes, indeed, certain duties of the Commissioner of Police are stipulated in law and no one else. The situation that we found ourselves in was not planned. It was not choreographed by anyone in particular. But a vacancy existed and the Police Service Commission had Mr. Jacob, in his capacity as Deputy Commissioner of Police, to lead the police service. But of course, he was not substantively Commissioner nor indeed acting and some of the responsibility of the Commissioner could not be executed. For example, certain elements, certain actions, certain legal stipulations in the Firearms Act, only the Commissioner of Police can do that. Certain elements or certain issues around promotion of other officers—because, as you know, it is the Commissioner or the Acting Commissioner, Madam Speaker, who would appoint and promote other ranks in the police service, the Police Service Commission responsible for the appointment of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners of Police, as well some elements of discipline, suspension, and so on, as has been alluded to.

And because of the collaboration—and I want to make it clear, mention was made of the Interception of Communications Act, as is well known to us parliamentarians and particularly those on this side, the Interception of Communications Act, IOCA, as we call it, that has some mandates for the Police Commissioner. But because we understood the nature of this business when that law was passed, it is not only the Police Commissioner who will carry out those particular functions. The Chief of Defence Staff and the Director of the Strategic Services Agency also host those powers. So I give this Parliament, Madam Speaker, and I give this country, notwithstanding some of the observations and



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utterances, misleading commentaries that you might hear, those functions were always carried out by the other two office holders, having consulted with the Deputy Commissioner of Police. So there has been no issue around the application of the Interception of Communications Act because of the absence of a substantive Commissioner or indeed an Acting Commissioner.

So, Madam Speaker, I give this Parliament and the country the assurance that all of the preventative work, all of the intelligence work that had been done when we had a commissioner five years ago, since we passed the Anti-terrorism Act and as we speak today, all of that work continued, Madam Speaker, apace and there was no hiatus because of the absence of a Commissioner of Police, which this country did not contrive or plot or plan, but it happened on the basis of developments that the Police Service Commission would know better about.

So, Madam Speaker, I would like to, having studied the résumé of Mr. Jacob and having as well had the benefit of personal, professional interaction with him, in all kinds of matters pertaining to national security, I would like to join the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, the mover of this Motion in supporting wholeheartedly the nomination—the approval of the nomination of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob, doing so, Madam Speaker, confident that by his record he has served with distinction over all of his years as a police officer. He has served with supreme distinction in the leadership of the police service over the past few months and for which this society owes him a congratulatory tone and gratitude. So, Madam Speaker, I support this nomination and commend it to all of the Members of this honourable House. I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

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**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for—is there another Member on this side? Prime Minister.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I really do not have much to add to what I said at the opening. And notwithstanding anything else in the intervening period, I think Mr. Jacob remains unassailed. However, Madam Speaker, I would comment on the observation of my colleague from Oropouche West who—I take it that he supports the nomination of Mr. Jacob.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Oropouche East, thank you, Madam Speaker. But I tried to follow what he was saying and he spoke about the Government's way around. I just want to make it abundantly clear that the matter before this House has nothing to do with any way around anything and the record will show that this is a decision of the properly installed Police Service Commission who, observing that there is a vacancy for Commissioner of Police, which falls under their jurisdiction and their jurisdiction alone, would have done their statutory duty, their constitutional duty and would have come to the conclusion that the way that vacancy is to be filled and the person to fill it is Mr. Mc Donald Jacob who is at this time serving as Deputy Commissioner of Police.

So, Madam Speaker, I do not know what was the purpose of trying to give the impression—maybe I should not say I do not know. I think I know. It is just unfortunate that in this House, the Member who represented our colleagues on the other side introduced this whole concept of way around, implying that something

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wrong is happening and there is the threat of going to court.

I simply want to give the public the assurance that if there is a matter to go to the court that the matter will not proceed without full and vigorous representation by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—

**3.30 p.m.**

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Because it is all well and good to speak from both sides of one's mouth except that, Madam Speaker, the point would not be clearly made. It would be muffled, as it was this evening. Because in one breath, you would have heard from my colleague from Oropouche West—Oropouche East, how important it is to have all these duties of the commissioner be discharged without providing a shred of evidence or supporting argument, he came to the point of telling us that terrorists were on the loose because there was no Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago. But yet, the action by way of the legal Motion to put a commissioner in place came up against this rigorous objection which delayed the proceedings for some considerable time. I was standing here waiting to see what was going to happen today, as my colleagues on the other side vigorously tried to annul the Motion, the purpose of which is before this House to appoint a Commissioner of Police.

So what is it? Do you want a Commissioner of Police appointed or do you not? We all know the job of the Commissioner of Police. We all know the function of the Police Service Commission. We all know the function of the President, and we all know the procedure once a suitable officer has been identified by the appropriate authority. And that authority, Madam Speaker, is the Police Service Commission.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

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**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Let it not be a matter of any ambiguity or any doubt that there is a Police Service Commission in Trinidad and Tobago. And in so far as attempting to point fingers at the actions of the Government, it was the Government through statements made by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, when a vacancy arose for a person holding the office, acting or otherwise, of Commissioner of Police that it was said to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that as soon as the President is able to make a notification to the Parliament, the Government will move with despatch to have the matter dealt with, so that there can be by the only process available, the process to be utilize, the one that we are using now, that there can be an officer in the position of Commissioner of Police.

And therefore, that was in recognition of the fact that there were items of duty to be carried out by the Commissioner of Police, which under law could only have been carried out by the Commissioner of Police, but we also knew that it was temporary, and that temporary status was not fatal, Madam Speaker because I am sure we got along well without an additional firearms license being awarded because that can only be done by a commissioner of police. We got along well enough without a promotion being made in the intervening period. But of course, Madam Speaker, in this rectification if there are promotions to be made it would be made. And of course, Madam Speaker, if there were 10 officers to be disciplined the intervening period when they were not disciplined, rest assured that if in fact there are to be disciplined, as soon as we rectify this, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day that process would properly take place.

So I do not know that we should behave as though the country was falling down and that terrorist was taking over our operations and so on and so on. That is just

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the alarum of the wishes of our colleagues on the other side who somehow have a penchant to want to wish ill upon the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, 48(6) please. Imputing of improper motives on Members of this House.

**Madam Speaker:** Member.

**Mr. Hosein:** 48(6), Madam Speaker, imputing improper motives on Members of this House.

**Madam Speaker:** Please continue, Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** 48(6), that must be 486 times we have seen them misrepresenting our circumstance.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** But, Madam Speaker, all of this is out in the open in full public view. So the citizens know exactly where we are at. They know exactly who is doing what, and they know exactly who will stick to the facts, and rectify problems as they arise. And, Madam Speaker, this matter procedurally is clear, is transparent, it is effective. For with the support of my colleagues of this House, today, now, there will be the appointment to fill a vacancy for the post of Commissioner of Police.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** And that being so, Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put.*

**Hon. Member:** Division.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, a division has been called for. As you know, we

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wait for three minutes to allow Members who are not in the Chamber to enter the Chamber to vote. Again, any Member who is not in the Chamber when their turn reaches to vote will be allowed to vote once they enter the Chamber before the vote is announced. I again remind that I have granted approval for one Member, the Member for San Fernando East, to participate virtually. [*Pause*] The three minutes begin now.

*The House divided: Ayes 22*

AYES

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

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Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

Scotland, K.

Monroe, R.

*The following Members abstained:* Mr. D. Lee, Ms. K. Ameen, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mr. R. Paray, Mr. R. Indarsingh, Mr. S. Hosein, Mr. B. Padarath,, Mr. D. Tancoo, Ms.V. Mohit, Ms. M. Benjamin, Dr. R. Ragbir, Mr. A. Ram, Dr. R. Seecheran, Mr. R. Ratiram.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members on a division with 22 Members voting for and 15 Members voting against, and no abstention, the Motion is carried.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Might I ask Members who have joined us to kindly withdraw from the Chamber until you are required to return.

[*Members exit Chamber*]

**Madam Speaker:** So hon. Members, to correct the record the vote was incorrectly announced. So it is 22 Members voted for, no Members voted against and there were 15 abstentions. The result does not change. The Motion is carried.

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the notification of the President of the nomination of the Police Service Commission of Mr. Mc Donald Jacob to act in the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police be approved.

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

Deputy Commissioner of Police  
(Nomination of Mrs. Earla Christopher)  
Hon. Dr. K. Rowley

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**DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE  
(NOMINATION OF MRS. EARLA CHRISTOPHER)**

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you, Madam Speaker.  
Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* section 123(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (“the Constitution”) provides that the Police Service Commission shall have the power to appoint persons to hold or act in the office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And Whereas* section 123(3) of the Constitution provides that the Police Service Commission shall submit to the President a list of the names of the persons nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And Whereas* section 123(4) of the Constitution provides that the President shall issue a Notification in respect of each person nominated under subsection (3) and the Notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;

*And Whereas* the Police Service Commission has submitted to the President the name Mrs. Earla Christopher as the person nominated to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And Whereas* the President has on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2021 issued a Notification in respect of the nomination;

*And Whereas* it is expedient to approve the Notification:

*Be It Resolved* that the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mrs. Earla Christopher to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police be approved.

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Deputy Commissioner of Police  
(Nomination of Mrs. Earla Christopher)  
Hon. Dr. K. Rowley (cont'd)

Madam Speaker, once again this House is being called upon to act so that the leadership of the police service would be in place in its totality, and that we would acknowledge that the documentation coming to us would have come from the correct place under the correct hand of the authority of the officer holding the office of President. And this House having received the notification is required under law as the only avenue for appointing deputy commissioners of police to on this occasion, review and if we so agree, approve the appointment of the named officer, in this case officer Earla Christopher to act as Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, Mrs. Earla Christopher, very much like the previous nominee that we have just dispensed with is a product of years of service in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. With respect to her foundation, her educational background, Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that Officer Christopher, who currently is in the position of Assistant Commissioner of Police in the period 1985 to 1987 obtained a diploma as an accounting technician from the San Fernando Technical Institute.

During the period of 1993 to 1995, she studied and obtained a Certificate in Public Administration from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. In 2002, she graduated from the College of Science and Technology and Applied Arts with an Associate Degree in Information Technology.

In 2009, Madam Speaker, she obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Sector Management from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. In 2016, officer Earla Christopher obtained her Master's Degree in Applied Criminology in Police Management from the University of Cambridge. In 2019 to 2021 she remained a candidate for the Master's Degree in Strategic Leadership and

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Hon. Dr. K. Rowley (cont'd)

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Management from the University of the West Indies.

Madam Speaker, alongside this very impressive educational background officer Christopher held a number of positions within the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, if I begin not at the very beginning but close to the beginning, she was a Corporal in Central Division for the period 1991 to 1998, worked as a Sergeant in the Court and Process Branch 1998 to 2003. She wore the uniform of an Inspector and worked in the Human Resource Branch in 2003 to 2006. 2006 to 2007 she was the Adjutant of the Special Reserve Police. She became an Assistant Superintendent of Police and served in that category, that rank during the period 2008-2009, she worked in the Human Resource Branch carrying that rank. Remaining in the Human Resource Branch she became a Superintendent of Police working in administration.

By 2010, Madam Speaker, she was assigned the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police and continued, Madam Speaker, in administration up to the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police. And between 2013 and 2016, January of that year 2016, she was Assistant Commissioner of Police with responsibility, Madam Speaker, at Special Branch.

And Madam Speaker, she continued as an Assistant Commissioner of Police for area south. She worked in administration in 2016, again 2017 Assistant Commissioner of Police for community relations, and became Deputy Commissioner of Police for the period 2017—019, once again in administration.

Madam Speaker, during 2021, March to the present, Officer Christopher holds the position of Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police Operations. During her period in the police service, Madam Speaker, this officer has been prepared for responsibility having been trained at home and abroad; been trained in Jamaica,

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Washington, India, and elsewhere.

Now, Madam Speaker, she worked in Panama under the FBI Investigation Retailers Programme, and in 2019 she participated in the International Law Enforcement Academy at Roswell preparatory work. And therefore, Madam Speaker, we see here at the time when the Police Service Commission was looking for an officer who was qualified and available to fill the position of Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago, that Officer Christopher has been selected and her name was advanced on the list, and it is before us today having been brought to us from the President's Office as required by law.

Madam Speaker, I offer this qualified officer to my colleague in this House, we confirm that the process is working, and working very smoothly and that we should accept the recommendation of the Commission and approve this officer to act as requested. I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As you indicated and as the Prime Minister has pointed out, we are here to discuss, approve, the appointment of Mrs. Earla Christopher to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has indicated and we agree with the eminent qualifications of Mrs. Harewood-Christopher. We note that she is a woman and we hold the view, being led by a woman, the Member for Siparia, that there is a significant role for women in the leadership roles in the police service in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean. And we see it with Mia Mottley in Barbados, and we see it in the performance of our—eminent,

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excellent performance of our Prime Minister during the period 2010-2015.

We note that globally the share of women in senior management roles, globally, is increasing. It is now 29 per cent and it is the highest ever recorded. And all indications are by the management experts is that this figure should increase significantly for us to get the best balance of management competencies and materials as we move forward. We note that Mrs. Earla Harewood-Christopher has a Master's Degree in Strategic Leadership and Management from the University of the West Indies, and also a Master's Degree in Applied Criminology and Police Management, and that was in 2016 from the University of Cambridge. And the University of Cambridge was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the world in 2021 by Times Higher Education, which is the gold standard for ranking universities globally. She had a Bachelor of Science from the University of the West Indies, Public Sector Management, and in 2002 an Associate Degree in Information Technology from COSTAATT, an institution which is, in my view, the hidden story about quality tertiary education Trinidad and Tobago.

**4.00 p.m.**

I served as a senior policy advisor for four years at that institution. We have produced a number of PhDs and persons who have gone on to excel in their fields—their professional fields. We note also that Mrs. Harewood-Christopher is from Cunupia, and for those of us who come from South, it is always—and Central—it is always heart-warming to know that we are not taken for granted. Given the fact that we are not part of the Port of Spain elite, validating elite sector, that she comes from Central Trinidad, and it speaks to her desire for excellence to come from what we call rural Trinidad and excel at that high level in the police service.

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Mr. Charles (cont'd)

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Our concern would be that she is 58 years and it is unfortunate that in countries like ours, persons of excellence and competence have to wait so long, so long to get to a position where they can contribute effectively and efficiently to the wealth and well-being of Trinidad and Tobago. It means that when this appointment is approved, Mrs. Harewood-Christopher would have only two years to make a significant impact on the functioning of the police service. And herein lies our little concern that the challenges facing the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service today require hands on competence, requires people who are there for a significant period to make a continuous and sustained impact on dealing with the level of criminality that is existent in Trinidad and Tobago. And I say this in the context of the fact that just today in the papers we are mindful of the crime and we wish her well, we wish that she will make an impact, but we are mindful of the challenge which she will face.

In yesterday's *Guardian* for example, there was an article by Rhondor Dowlat-Rostant. Headline: "Southern Division Police see increase in crimes".

"This was confirmed by Acting Senior Superintendent Lucia Winchester"—at yesterday's media police briefing.

"Winchester noted that the division is still, however, challenged by murders, shootings and woundings, burglaries and break-ins, larceny in general and larceny"—in—"motor vehicles".

These are the challenges that Mrs. Harewood-Christopher will face as she gets down to the task of providing for the safety and security of all citizens in Trinidad and Tobago, including those of us on this side. We note some concerns in terms of the problems. Let us see what has existed in the recent past and what we will be confronting this imminently and highly qualified lady.

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In October, we had 50 murders, the highest number of murders for any October over the last six years, 50 murders. In November, that is just a couple of weeks ago, we had 77 murders, the deadliest month, November the deadliest month ever in our history, even though part of that month was under a state of emergency. This is not a time for not putting the best foot forward or the best candidate. We are hopeful; we wish her well in her job as Deputy Commissioner of Police. We know that we are heading down a dangerous road if it continues like this. With 425 murders to date and 14 more days to go it appears as if Ms. Christopher will be working in a situation to change this negative thing of the bad old days of unacceptably large number of annual murders given that last year we only had 396. Last year we had 396, already we have 425.

We know—one of the concerns we have, Madam Speaker, is that we get a CV and we are asked to make a judgement based on a CV, on a curriculum vitae. Madam Speaker, in management, and this is for the past 15/20 years, we are told about the limitations of a CV in terms of making a judgement on the competence of somebody to actually perform on the job. And I would have preferred to see not masters—and that is good to see masters here—in Cambridge Master's in the University of the West Indies, associate degree et cetera, I would have preferred—What were the achievements, given the lustrous career that Prime Minister pointed out, which started—which the Prime Minister noted in 1991 to 1998 she was a Corporal in the Central Division. What were the achievements? What were the measurable indices to give us comfort? And I think we are not doing, we are not doing justice to Mrs. Harewood-Christopher. I am sure that one if looked in her career one could have seen for example, a 20 per cent decline in the murder rate, a

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15 per cent decline in larceny of motor vehicles during her tenure in central Trinidad. That is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Singaporean assessment.

So to come here, and I note, and I am limited to the CV and the CV says qualifications, qualifications, qualifications. I would recommend and we on this side would recommend that we are 21<sup>st</sup> Century country—do it like Singapore does it. Say, these are the performance that Mrs. Harewood-Christopher has achieved over her illustrious career and based on this, these are the kinds of targets that we expect. I expect in the two years that Mrs. Harewood-Christopher is there, I will be looking forward to a decline 10 per cent in murder, 15 per cent in burglaries, 10 per cent in kidnappings reductions, 20 per cent in—and we could list the—we could give a matrix of the areas in which we could get performance so we could come here two years from now and say Ms. Christopher has performed. To come here and give us a CV and tell us because of this CV that you went to here, in 2015 Administrative Staff College of India.

This programme delivered training in general management for senior executives in the pursuit of...

This is not giving a 21<sup>st</sup> century indicator of performance of a person's competence, of a person's calibre, of person's ability to perform. So our—today we will abstain, and our abstain is—abstinence, the fact that we will abstain is not based on the fact that the person is underqualified or the person cannot perform. If we abstain, if that is the position we have taken, if that is the position, it is based on the fact that we have some discomfort with the process. We have some discomfort with lack of information on how we got to this stage. What were the criteria? Who were the nominees? And how did this thing come about?

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We note, Madam Speaker, that Ms. Christopher-Harewood, according to the job description, or the job summary before me:

A Deputy Commissioner of Police assists the Commissioner of Police in charting the strategic direction of Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

In any serious country, in any serious debate one would have gotten an indication of how did Mrs. Carla Harewood-Christopher would have—

**Madam Speaker:** Earla Harewood-Christopher Okay.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Earla Harewood-Christopher, how she would have performed as Deputy Commissioner in assisting, in charting a strategic direction of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. What is the strategic direction? What is the areas in which her competence will be brought to bear on the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service? We do not know. So, we are making a third world judgement with third world data and a third world level of analysis, endless repetition and recital of qualifications and no indication whatsoever of what the strategic inputs that the person will make, and therefore, we cannot come afterwards and make an informed assessment. So we are hoping, I hope, all of us hope as citizens because all of us live in Trinidad and Tobago, for better or for worse.

The CV says:

Work is performed under the general direction of the Commissioner of Police and the employee exercises initiative.

Where do we see this? Or, we have to assume that the Police Service Commission did the analysis, although we are not told what the analysis was, we have to presume and that is part of the problem when we get to debate and analyse— So she is



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To perform under the general direction of the Commissioner of Police and the employee exercises initiative, innovativeness, discretion and independent judgement in accordance with existing principles, policies and legislation.

So we have to presume, I trust— The Lord says you must have faith and we have faith that although not based on the information given to us today, or given to us at all, we have to have faith that our police service will perform, Mrs. Earla—let me get it right—Harewood-Christopher will perform and deal with the plethora of issues which bedevil the police service in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the US Department of Justice titled, “The President’s Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing” gives us some indicators of how we should assess individuals in senior management positions. And again, not here, we are seeing criteria like:

“...fair and impartial policing...”

Technology based policing, technology based. Ms. Harewood-Christopher has a, let me just see in anything in IT technology, accounting technician, certificate in public administration, FBI, defence—oh, yes, yes, oh, yeah. Somewhere in this, somewhere in this, although I am not seeing it on the list, we would hope given that we going into 21<sup>st</sup> Century policing, and given the fact that the policing would be tied to technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and how do you use metadata and other forms of IT information to assist in developing planning and strategic planning for the police service?

So Madam Speaker, without further ado, we wish Ms. Earla Harewood-Christopher well. We think and we support the view, that we do—that what has been presented today is a disservice to her obvious competence and ability and we stand by our view that Legal Notices 277 and 278—

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**Madam Speaker:** [*Inaudible*] in this Chamber from the beginning. You have heard my ruling. Okay. So please abide by it.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Without further ado, I take my leave.

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have never seen any of my colleagues struggle to say what little they had to say as the honourable gentleman from Naparima who felt that he had to occupy the slot. Madam Speaker, as he started, he has ended. I kept my notepad to make notes on his presentation because I too was curious as to what he was going to say. I knew what he was going to do, but I did not know what he was going to say.

So let me respond to his logic. As far as he is concerned, he said we waited too long to allow this officer who is today 58 years old and now only has two years to contribute to the police service. Madam Speaker, what in effect that statement is saying as he tried to expand towards the end, repetitively of course, is that notwithstanding the qualification of the officer, she has contributed nothing for all years she was in the police service. That is what he was saying and describing Madam Speaker, because how could you say that it is only when you reach the point to act as Deputy Commissioner that you can contribute to the police service? Well, I want my friend from Naparima to know that constables contribute, corporals contribute, sergeants contribute, superintendents contribute and they all at every rank wherever they are, whenever they are there, they contribute to what we accept is the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

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 Hon. Dr. K. Rowley (cont'd)

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** So to come here today and say that an officer who has given decades of service at very various levels throughout her life in the police service could only contribute, and somebody is at fault because at age 58 she is only now going to be allowed to contribute is close to a word that is unparliamentary. Madam Speaker, if the Member did not have anything useful to say like other colleagues he could have kept his seat. But do not get up and in one second talk about the glowing qualifications and then the following second, give—state that the qualifications are not Singaporean in the presentation.

Madam Speaker, I always observe people in this country like to talk about Singapore, they like to talk about Singapore but they do not really want Singapore operations and governance in Trinidad and Tobago. To come here and talk about Singaporean would have required that you have to put a measurement before you could enter upon the post. What measurement have the people of Naparima put on that Member for Naparima, when he is coming here? They voted blindly and sent him here. Where is the measurement? What is this spurious accuracy you want and proof that this will work according— Numerically this and numerically that?

Madam Speaker, that approach was simply to make a speech that had absolutely nothing to do with the issue in front of us, which is the appointment—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—appointment of a highly qualified and experienced officer who at this stage in her career, having travelled up the ranks in a service where you progress from constable to corporal—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(6) The only person voted blindly was those who supported him—

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

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**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Ratiram:** —that is—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I am on my legs, Member, you raised the Standing Order and I rule,, okay. Overruled.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** —so Madam Speaker, to say that one cannot evaluate, to say that one cannot evaluate the worth of the officer based on the qualification. Nobody is saying that qualification guarantees a successful outcome, but it gives you an indication of the person's ability to treat with the assignment that is put before them. And to ask the Parliament to do the work of the Police Service Commission is to give the impression that the Police Service Commission is simply a post office that passes a letter from one side to the other side of the country. The Police Service Commission is the agency that would look at the various officers, their experience, their suitability, their attitude, their intention, and determine which one of the many of those officers they will recommend to the Parliament by way of the President. That is the structure that we have for good reason.

So to pretend that this is not in place, and to come in and say well, because the Police Service Commission is not in this House to tell us that officer Christopher established the Special Branch Counterterrorism Unit, we do not know of her worth or what she can do. That she procured training and equipment to enhance the intelligence gathering and surveillance techniques of the Special Branch as a high point of her career in Special Branch. The Police Service Commission would have satisfied itself that the record this officer in the police service is worthy of their commendation.

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Madam Speaker, we expect that the Commission would have taken on board the fact that among the things that she would have done, the very many things, is to establish the protocols to improve joint operations with external agencies. These are the kinds of things that an officer of this calibre, with assignments over the years, can point to if you want specifics. But I do not know Madam Speaker, that that should allow Members to dismiss her qualification, as though all that you are putting before the House is paper qualification without any prospect of successful performance in the office. Madam Speaker, that was just talking because you had the opportunity to say, and what was said in no way enhances the assignment of this House.

It would be useful Madam Speaker—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** —it would be useful if our colleagues on the other side get familiar with the concept of encouragement. Encourage this country to do better, encourage this country to do well, wish the country well, encourage people, officers like officer Christopher, encourage them to do well. But do not come and put on *Hansard* with one side of your mouth, “Oh brilliant qualifications,” and in the other side, “It doh not mean nothing because she has nothing to show”. Madam Speaker, I am sure if the officer was assessed on that basis, she will continue to come out as an officer worthy of the positions she held throughout the decades, and worthy now of being selected by the Police Service Commission to act in the capacity of Deputy Commissioner of Police. And, Madam Speaker, that having been said, the divisiveness of talking about the officer, and he is happy to identify the officer of coming from Cunupia, because it proves that the validating elites “doh” have to validate the officer having come from Cunupia. What is that about?

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Madam Speaker, anybody who knows anything about the police service and its leadership in this country would know that commissioners have come from all over Tobago, from the deep south, from the east, from central, from Port of Spain. If there is one thing in the police service, its leadership in Trinidad Tobago has come from all over Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** So I do not know what that is about. But I guess when you are predisposed to not being able to say anything good and anything useful, you end up there. Madam Speaker, we in this House today have no reason, no good reason, to dismiss the quality of this officer put before us by the agency whose job it is to assess and analyse and make this recommendation, and that body is the Police Service Commission. And they have made this recommendation, and in the absence of any reasonable objection, I ask my colleagues of this House to support the recommendation and approve the request. Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put.*

**Hon. Member:** Division.

**Madam Speaker:** Honourable Members, a division has been called. We are going to wait three minutes for Members who are not in the Chamber to make their way to the Chamber. Members would recall that if a Member's name is called, and they are not at the desk, they will be allowed to register their vote once they are in the Chamber before the vote is announced. Again, I remind I have granted leave for one Member, that is the Member for San Fernando East, to participate virtually.

[*Pause*]

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Honourable Members, the Division will now commence. Whip your Members are here, yes?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** The division will now commence.

*The House divided: Ayes*      22

AYES

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Cummings, Hon. F.

Richards, K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

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Scotland, K.

Monroe, R.

*The following Members abstained:* Mr. D. Lee, Ms. K. Ameen, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mr. R. Paray, Mr. R. Indarsingh, Mr. S. Hosein, Mr. B. Padarath, Mr. D. Tancoo, Ms. V. Mohit, Ms. M. Benjamin, Dr. R. Ragbir, Mr. A. Ram, Dr. R. Seecheran, Mr. R. Ratiram.

*Question agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the notification of the President of the nomination of the Police Service Commission of Mrs. Earla Christopher to act in the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police be approved.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**4.30 p.m.**

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister. And could the Members who have joined us kindly leave the Chamber until they are required again. Thank you. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Deputy Commissioner of Police  
(Nomination of Mr. Wendell Williams)**

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as per the notifications to the House, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* section 123(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (“the Constitution”) provides that the Police Service Commission shall have the power to appoint persons to hold or act in the office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* section 123(3) of the Constitution provides that the Police



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Service Commission shall submit to the President a list of the names of the persons nominated for appointment to the office of Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* section 123(4) of the Constitution provides that the President shall issue a Notification in respect of each person nominated under subsection (3) and the Notification shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;

*And whereas* the Police Service Commission has submitted to the President the name Mr. Wendell Williams as the person nominated to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police;

*And whereas* the President has on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2021 issued a Notification in respect of the nomination;

*And whereas* it is expedient to approve the Notification:

*Be it resolved* that the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Wendell Williams to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police be approved.

Madam Speaker, we received this notification alongside two others which we have just dispensed with where the Police Service Commission, an arm of the Constitution, by law being the authority, having been cleared up by the court as to how we proceed to appoint Deputy Commissioners of Police, we are today with great confidence making these appointments knowing that we had examined what was being utilized. We have rectified what shortcomings there might have existed for however long and now we are in a position to accept from the authorized body, the Police Service Commission, accept their nomination after they would have done their work. And of course, Her Excellency the President would have sent

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their nominations to this House and we are required to satisfy ourselves that the person who is identified by this process, this legal and constitutional process, is a fit and proper person to hold the position of Deputy Commissioner, Acting, as requested by the Police Service Commission.

Mr. Wendell Williams is a citizen who enlisted in the police service in 1982. His substantive rank today is that of Assistant Commissioner of Police and the Commission is asking us to have him act as Deputy Commissioner of Police, a rank above Assistant Commissioner. His present position is that of head of the Special Branch and, Madam Speaker, he has had a number of roles in the police service and it is very impressive. But what he tells us is that he, like the previous officers coming through the rank of the police service, has had the opportunity to serve in so very many areas.

Officer Williams served in the Guard and Emergency in his junior years in the police service. He served in the honour guard in the Western Division and he served in administration and finance, and he was trained at Interpol, a constable to inspector. He worked in the CID. He worked in Western Division and the Fraud Squad as an Assistant Superintendent. He worked in Central Division and Northern Division, as well as the Special Branch as a superintendent. He worked in the CID as far back as 2017, as a Senior Superintendent. He acted in that position.

Then as a substantive superintendent, he had the Special Branch under his control and then two years or so ago, Madam Speaker, he performed his duty as a Senior Superintendent. And in 2019, acting in south-western—in north-western region, he acted as Assistant Commissioner.

And, Madam Speaker, this officer, like many others who were prepared during their term of office, had a number of opportunities for in-service training and his

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education—his basic education is also very impressive. He has a Diploma in Police Administration from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, where he obtained that qualification in 2012.

In the period 2014 to 2016, he partook in the Master's Studies for Police Executive Programme, Applied Criminology at the University of Cambridge in England. And, Madam Speaker, in 2017, he obtained the first year in diploma in Theology of all things, Madam Speaker. He has some training in an area which is not particularly common in policing but I am sure it is extremely useful given what is required of policing in today's world. And he has training from programmes in terrorism and security from the George Marshall European Centre. And, Madam Speaker, I am told that with respect to the exams that these officers have to do from time to time to move along and upwards in the rank that this officer, Wendell Williams, on more than one occasion topped the class of all those officers who took part in the ACP exams. And that should tell us something, Madam Speaker, that he is an officer of the highest quality.

And today, if the Police Service Commission would have done what we expect that they would have done, which is to reach out and examine all who were available at this time and willing to serve and have chosen this officer to act as Deputy Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker, we should welcome him to continue his outstanding service in the police service department of Trinidad and Tobago.

And as such, Madam Speaker, being by thought, I commend this officer to this House and to all my colleagues and ask us to continue to support his effort knowing that he has been prepared; he has demonstrated a willingness, demonstrated his proficiency in the work job of policing and we should support

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him for this position as recommended. And, Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity yet again to contribute on this day on the related matter, an appointment to the office to act as Deputy Commissioner of Police. Madam Speaker, we have heard yet again on the candidate before us and the candidate before us, Mr. Wendell Sylvester Williams, is before us to act as a Deputy Commissioner of Police pursuant to a process that brought this here and pursuant to a Motion filed by the Prime Minister to approve the notification of Her Excellency the President. Madam Speaker, it is not necessary, I believe, to read yet again the Motion for this appointment but to speak very briefly on the candidate and the circumstances that arise.

Madam Speaker, yet again, I wanted to start by saying that Mr. Williams, of course, is qualified and has, what appears from his CV, to be extensive training, short training in various areas. And of course, Mr. Williams also has commendation and awards and so on that he would have received over a period of time. There is also an area in the CV called “Significant Activities and Achievement” and Mr. Williams has been quite a busybody in the TTPS, working in multidisciplinary areas, of course; coordinator and liaison with the Judiciary to implement the virtual courts and so on; introduced a roadblock regime in Port of Spain that resulted in some level of achievement; and has been working on national holidays, special task force and so on, and the list goes on. So, again, the difficulty

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here really not with Mr. Wendell Williams per se. There are other career highlights as well I took note of, Madam Speaker, to suggest that Mr. Williams has been experienced in international law from early in the police service and has, you know, the requisite qualifications certainly, Madam Speaker, for where he is now, I believe, as an Assistant Commissioner of Police as he must be for consideration.

Madam Speaker, the candidate before us is the head of Special Branch at this time and while, of course, that in no way disqualifies the candidate from this position, the Special Branch, of course, carries a very specific responsibility with intelligence gathering and management. And this, of course—the Special Branch also liaises closely with the political directorate of the day, I should say, not just the political directorate of today but of the day and is in possession of certain intelligence that would be advantageous for this type of position. Madam Speaker, just to reflect on the legal process that we are looking at, according to our notice the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Acting, is selected from a pool of Assistant Commissioners of Police. It is our information, Madam Speaker, that there are 11 Assistant Commissioners of Police.

Now, the problem here, of course, is that the Members of Parliament are in the dark because while we have Mr. Wendell Sylvester Williams' CV before us, we do not have the CV of other persons who may have been considered. We do not have the résumés of competitors, so the CV we have is what we deal with. The Police Service Commission has sent the name and we are debating the name but we do not know, you know, anybody else that they would have considered of the 11. Madam Speaker, what was also instructive is that the law provides for three Deputy Commissioners of Police but today we have nominations for two, so there is still one outstanding. Because the law today—that law that can and will be

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challenged elsewhere—removes this criterion of seniority, we are not sure whether Mr. Wendell Sylvester Williams is indeed the most senior person among Assistant Commissioners of Police to act in the position of Deputy Commissioner of Police, and I think that is a point that I want to make.

The Prime Minister in his introduction, in moving Motions here today, and in this one as well, speaks of experience and seniority but I would like to ask whether we are satisfied that Mr. Williams is indeed the most senior of that lot of people, Assistant Commissioners of Police, to assume this position. Because we are reliably informed that Assistant Commissioner of Police, I think it is Joanne Archie, I believe, is much more senior to Mr. Williams and—

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—would have qualified on seniority.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, we are debating a notification before us. Okay? Please.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Okay. So without referring to nobody else, the question really arises: What is the level of experience of Mr. Williams in relation to others? I can move on easily.

Madam Speaker, this debate today is a historic debate in the sense that it is the first time in my memory that we are debating an acting appointment and acting appointments. Now, given the way the law is crafted, I can ask the Government to comment on whether if it is that Mr. Williams is approved today, as he might well be, and Monday morning Mr. Williams needs to attend a conference in Grenada, do we meet to approve another acting appointment? Mr. Williams may have to go to Grenada for one day to attend a meeting of Deputy Commissioners of Police, we have to meet Sunday night to approve another Acting Commissioner of Police.

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Dr. Moonilal (cont'd)

Now, that is a serious matter that I believe needs a legal fix and a policy fix.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Because it cannot be that if a Deputy—Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police or Commissioner of Police leaves for half day to attend a commissioner meeting in Jamaica, the Parliament meets the night before to approve an acting appointment, and I think this is something that has not been thought out. It is really, really an issue that the Government ought to—

**Madam Speaker:** So I have given you some leeway, please get back to the matter at hand. We are not debating the matter that you would love to debate today.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That I would?

**Madam Speaker:** You would like to debate today, we are not debating that.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, the—so I have raised that already. The CV before us, of course, gives some detail and the detail is there, I think Members would know of it. But what we do not have is the detail of the process. We do not have the detail of the process that brought Mr. Williams here and it is a matter that we are still eager to find out because, as I say, we have some concerns there.

The other matter, Madam Speaker—and I want to just reflect on Mr. Williams himself. I get no joy in making an observation and I make, for me, a humble and innocent observation. We live in a society where there are always rumors, there is always talk, there are always, you know, issues raised in the public domain about the independence of these institutions such as the TTPS and I am hoping that Mr. Williams and others who went before us today would resist the temptation for political control, political domination and political influence.

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**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** But, Madam Speaker, I want to bring to your attention—and again, I stand to be corrected if I am wrong in fact—around April 21<sup>st</sup> this year—I think it was April 21, 2021, at a press conference—and, Madam Speaker, I watch religiously the TTPS press conferences. I look at it because I want to be informed of, you know, developments there. And at a press conference on April 21, 2021, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Wendell Sylvester Williams appeared at this press conference in the company of then, I think, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mc Donald Jacob and then Commissioner of Police, Gary Griffith. And Mr. Williams is on record—and, I mean, I say this with a heavy heart but I say it, Mr. Williams responding to a question by a police officer who pointed out that a new Minister of National Security was appointed and the Member for Laventille West, I believe, was appointed in or around the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021. And I took note that Mr. Williams made it his business in a press conference of the TTPS to congratulate the Government on the appointment of the Member for Laventille West and indicated—he went on further to state that he was very happy and the police will be very happy and their morale will be lifted that a former police officer was appointed Minister of National Security and so on. I took note.

Madam Speaker, it is the right of every citizen and any citizen to congratulate any Government on any appointment. I am not sure that type of remark should be given at a press conference of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service called for the purpose of updating the nation on crime. I am not sure.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And I took note of it because I felt—and I am sure if the Member for Laventille West comes today to talk, he will congratulate Mr.



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Williams too, so that they will congratulate each other. But I am not sure that that is the right approach for Mr. Williams and all I do is I raise the issue. I have no interest again in that. As I said, it is their—a business of any citizen to give congratulatory message or not to anybody, it is not your business. But I am not sure police officers ought to use independent institutions and platforms to speak this way, as I was not sure—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—as I was not sure the Minister of National Security ought to sit between two police or law enforcement officers and say, “We is de PNM.”

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, this is not about the Member—the Minister of National Security or the Member for Laventille West. Please, continue.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, in closing, really—I want to close by—again, at this stage, it appears that these persons will be approved, to wish them the best although we have very, very serious concerns which I will not raise here because this is not the time to raise those concerns. This is not the forum to detail our issues of concern with the process. But in the circumstances, everything that they do that can redound to the benefit of the country, that can redound to reducing crime, reducing criminal activity, we support. And the Prime Minister—I just want to respond to him that, yes, we have a role to encourage and we must encourage everyone. We must encourage people and we must build moral in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service but when another officer who has seniority and has even acted as Commissioner of Police before is rejected, in these circumstances, the morale of the TTPS is reduced.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

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**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Because I took note of the Prime Minister's call for encouragement but what is the call for encouragement if you do things that reduce the morale? You stick a pin in the balloon, you know, you demotivate people by certain approaches in Government and that is something that the Prime Minister could reflect on as we all try to encourage everybody to do what is best in the circumstances, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, for this Deputy Commissioner of Police, the workload, of course, will be awesome. It will be a tremendous challenge. We cannot pre-empt where and in which area Mr. Williams will serve. From his CV, it is clear Mr. Williams has significant experience in certain areas. I think among them include firearm and so on—firearm administration and so on. I am sure that the firearms unit, now that it is still under investigation, that may clear up and some normalcy will return to that. The firearms unit also gives blasting permits so it could be “blasting permits galore” and firearm licences by courier, but we hope that Mr. Williams will resist. I think he will resist. I think he is an intelligent man. I think he will resist the temptation to bow at the feet of the political oppressors. Madam Speaker, I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Madam Speaker, as I rejoin this debate, I do so to make it abundantly clear to the national population that the Government, outside of this activity today, had absolutely nothing to do with the notification and the recommendations in front of us. I want to repeat that, Madam Speaker, because the Member for Oropouche East went out of his way to raise and

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to cultivate a point for the benefit of national misinformation that the Government bypassed some people and the Government selected these people and therefore, they are open to political manipulation. It is rather unfortunate that the Member for Oropouche East would have done that today, Madam Speaker. As we seek to fill these important positions at the top of the police service, our colleagues who cannot find the backbone to vote “yes” or “no” and prefer to abstain—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Right?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, 48(4), that is an insulting—who “doh” have backbone. You have backbone—[*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Dr. Moonilal:**—to say no, to say yes—[*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Overruled. Prime Minister, continue.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, we have seen votes and decisions are required to be made. And let me say it very clearly, unlike the rest of our colleagues in this House, we in the Government, we do not have the luxury of not making a decision.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** We have to look at the situation, perfect or in its imperfection and make a decision and we have been doing that. And people who fail or cannot bring themselves to make a decision—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—but instead seek to tarnish the possibility of a smooth operation, to come here today and to name the officer and to identify officer Williams as having made a comment in a press conference and to caution and to

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warn him about political manipulation. I want to ask my colleague from Oropouche East, when he was in the house of a Commissioner of Police partying—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, 48(6), he is imputing improper motives to a Member.

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** And 48(8).

**Dr. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]—house.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Dr. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I am standing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I am standing. I quite understand that, you know, we might all be a bit tired but I want us to sort of, you know, take all our wherewithal today and abide by the Standing Orders. Okay? So I overrule on the Standing Order. Member, you wanted to raise a Standing Order? Member for Naparima?

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. No, 48(4), implying he does it over and over.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** 48(4) does not have to do with imputing improper motive.

**5.00 p.m.**

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I will not be distracted.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** The Member had an opportunity to enter a debate. He entered

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the debate and he made specific positions with respect to this matter of political interference.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker, 48(4), that was not relevance. That is offensive and insulting.

**Hon. Member:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Charles:** No. I am asking for a clarification.

**Hon. Member:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Charles:** It is offensive and insulting language when he told my colleague—

**Hon. Member:** Who is “he”?

**Mr. Charles:** That he—when the Prime Minister told my colleague that he was in a situation that is offensive.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, you said “imputing”. I never said anything about I irrelevance. I am sure the mikes work here. I told you 48(4) has nothing to do with imputing improper motives. When you quote me, quote me correctly.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes. Madam.

**Madam Speaker:** Overruled. Continue, Prime Minister.

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I will not be distracted.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** The Member for Oropouche East—the Member for Oropouche East in his contribution was at pains to indicate that this officer who we are being asked to support for the position of Deputy Commissioner of Police is a questionable appointment since he was seen to have made a congratulatory remark about an incoming Minister. And as far as my colleague from Oropouche East is concerned, for a police officer to have been happy that another police officer is today the Minister and that makes him malleable to political manipulation, all I am

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saying, if that is the basis for introducing political manipulation and tarnishing the record of this officer coming forward for this position, I am saying, here is a politician making that arguing in the Parliament but that politician was quite happy to accept an invitation, one that I turned down because I too was invited to the party. I did not go. He went to the party in the home of the Commissioner of Police so therefore he went to influence him.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I am simply raising this so that the population could understand the hypocrisy that passes for those who want to influence the national debate.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Charles:** Beat yuh [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** And could tell you more, you know, Madam Speaker. You have time? I could tell you more. I could tell you about a police operation—a police operation that was stopped dead in its tracks and was followed immediately by the Member for Oropouche East sitting in a restaurant with Commissioner of Police.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, 48(8), Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, 48(8).

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Hosein:** 48(8) [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker, this abuse cannot—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, now we have had an opportunity to vent, can we all proceed? Prime Minister.

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, can we have a ruling on 48(8) please? He is raising the conduct—the Prime Minister is raising the conduct of a Member of this House.

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[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I am still on the subject of political influence on the part of an officer, a senior officer, in the police service. I did not raise it. It was raised by the Member for Oropouche East. And all I am saying, Madam Speaker, that if the Member is so concerned about a comment of congratulation, I would want to know whether he is similarly concerned about a Member of Parliament—

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker, 48—

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Right?—in the way I have just described.

**Mr. Charles:** This is irrelevant to the names—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Charles:**—the four names here.

**Hon. K. Rowley:** It might be irrelevant to you. It might be irrelevant to you.

**Madam Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. K. Rowley:** I am simply saying, Madam Speaker, and let me end on this note for those who understand it. The healthy interest of some of us in the police service is not healthy for this country, eh. Understand that.

And secondly, as they said in Tobago parlance, that goat that calling for “de” water and bawling for “de” water, not he who wants it, eh. Watch. Watch. Watch.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, when the Member comes here and tries to imply in his contribution that something improper is happening, I simply want to remind him that what is happening here has its origin, its authority in section 123 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. And I want to ask the Member since

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he alluded to the fact that change is required there, whether in the sea of abstention whether he is prepared to tell this House that if we want to change section 123 to do what he says should be done, which is not to have to come here every time to make an appointment to a temporary position and acting position, whether they will vote in support of the changing of section 123.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** But I guarantee you, Madam Speaker, I guarantee you if we bring that to this House and ask for their support to make that change to the Constitution so we do not have to come and do what a month ago, one month ago they were jumping up and down all over the country saying that it must come before the Parliament to get an appointment to an acting position. But today he suddenly finds that the constitutional authority to do that and there is no other authority to do it, he finds that that is not acceptable. I defy any one of them to get up now and make a comment in support of the fact that a three-fifths majority would be had to change section 123 so we do not have to do this.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** You sit down. [*Crosstalk*] You have no authority. You cannot speak for anybody in this House. [*Interruption*] You have no authority. You have no office.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima, there is a way to make an interjection. There is a way to do it.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker—

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, to sell—Madam Speaker, to sell the misinformation, my colleague from Oropouche East made the point that there are



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11 other officers and he wants to know why this one is before us. Madam Speaker, that is the function of the Police Service Commission.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Whether there is 11 or “eleventeen”, it is the Police Service Commission that looks at the crop and picks and sends it to the President to come to this House. And all we are required to do is to approve or disapprove. And if we do not approve, then the commission will send another name, and another name, and another name. That is the process, Madam Speaker. Why is a Member of Parliament coming here to give the impression that the Government handpicks somebody for political manipulation? Why? To confuse the population. To create to disquiet. To create doubt. That is what our colleagues in this House specialize in.

Madam Speaker, I simply want, before I end, to set the record straight because they going to the courthouse because they believe that they have some special arrangement in the courthouse. I do not know about that. I made no position about seniority. I do not know what the Police Service Commission took into account to select these officers. What I did say is that from their record in front of us, they are educated, qualified and experienced. That is what I said.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** I took no position about seniority, Madam Speaker. And I heard Oropouche East hammering it into *Hansard* because they intend to take the *Hansard* to the courthouse to go and say, the Prime Minister say it was done by virtue of seniority. The same thing they did here with the EBC matter—come to the Parliament and create a straw man and then go to the court. But thankfully the court is independent and they were chased out of court with it.

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 (Nomination of Mr. Wendell Williams)  
 Hon. Dr. K. Rowley (cont'd)

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** I saw him doing that there today, putting words in my mouth, putting it on *Hansard* and then when they run to court, to go and say, the Prime Minister say that these people were selected on seniority. I want to make it abundantly clear, I chose my word very carefully. I discharge my responsibility with great humility and correction—

**Hon. Member:** [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—and I do not want any assistance from my colleague in Oropouche East in saying what I said on *Hansard*.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Because I do not know, I do not know of the seniority of these officers and the Government took no part in the process and I want to end on that note. The Government's only role in here is to either agree or disagree with what is put in front of us by the President having come from the independent Police Service Commission.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Hon. K. Rowley:** And you all are always talking from the back of your necks and coming here and confusing the House and confusing the country. [*Interruption*]  
 Right? Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Are you going to allow this bully to speak in such language?

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I overrule.

**Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members—

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

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**Madam Speaker:** Member for Laventille West.

*Question put.*

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Division.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, a division has been called for. As you know we will wait three minutes for Members who are not in the Chamber to make their way to the Chamber and then the vote will commence. Any Member who has not come to the Chamber when his turn has been called, will be allowed to vote once he arrives—he or she arrives in Chamber before the vote is announced. The three minutes commences now. [*Pause*]

So, hon. Members, the vote shall commence. I am again to remind that my approval was given to one Member, the Member for San Fernando East to participate virtually. Clerk.

The House divided:       Ayes 22

AYES

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Beckles-Robinson, Hon. P.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Forde, E.

Webster-Roy, Hon. A.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.

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Gonzales, Hon. M.

Mc Clashie, Hon. S.

Cummings, Hon. F.

**Madam Speaker:** Does somebody have on a device? Okay. All right. Please continue.

*[Division continued]*

Richards, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. B.

Leonce, Hon. A.

Morris-Julian, Hon. L.

de Nobriga, Hon. S.

Scotland, Hon. K.

Monroe, Hon. R.

*The following Senators abstained:* Mr. D. Lee, Ms. K. Ameen, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mr. R. Paray, Mr. R. Indarsingh, Dr. R. Seecharan, Mr. S. Hosein, Mr. B. Padarath, Ms. V. Mohit, Mr. D. Tancoo, Ms. M. Benjamin, Dr. R. Ragbir, Mr. A. Ram, and Mr. R. Ratiram,

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the Notification of the President of the nomination by the Police Service Commission of Mr. Wendell Williams to act in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police be approved.

**Hon. Members:** *[Desk thumping]*

**Madam Speaker:** So again I invite all Members who have joined us to kindly leave the Chamber.

**Christmas Greetings**

**UNREVISED**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, as we all know we are in the midst of the Christmas season and therefore before I call upon the Leader of the House to move the adjournment of the House, I now invite Members one from each side to bring Christmas greetings. I believe the Member for Member for Diego Martin Central shall bring greetings on behalf of the Government. Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Communications and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Symon de Nobriga):** Thank you. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago I wish to extend best wishes to you, Members of this honourable House, and indeed the entire citizenry of our beloved twin-island Republic for a happy, holy and peaceful Christmas 2021.

Madam Speaker, over the years it has become very easy to drown out the true meaning of this most sacred time for Christians around the world which is the birth of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. And as we enter into these last few days before Christmas perhaps it is a good time for us all to reflect on the mystery that is the incarnation, that God took on human flesh, not as a member of royalty or some powerful group or family but as a small powerless child born away from home in the most humble of settings, not to live a life of opulence but rather a life of hardship and sacrifice. And perhaps, Madam Speaker, it is also a good time for us to reflect on the gospel of John chap. three, verse 16 which reads:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Madam Speaker, both the life of sacrifice that Jesus led and the words of John 3:16 point us all to the greatest gift we can give at this time, the gift of putting others

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before our own petty desires. Madam Speaker, what better gift can we give each other now than the gift of life through personal responsibility for our own behaviour and protection through vaccination?

Today, even as we mourn the loss of family members and loved ones, let us commit to better appreciate those who are present with us and do everything in our power to protect them, even as we battle with the limitations of our movements that our personal responsibility must impose. Let us also commit to spending more quality time with our own families in our homes. And even as we still struggle with a virus that we cannot see, let us commit to the spreading of love and care that those most in need will see.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of all of us on this side, I say to my fellow citizens wherever you are today, no matter what your Christmas looks like, may Jesus Christ come and find his manger near you. Merry Christmas Trinidad and Tobago and may God's riches blessings for a more productive, peaceful and prosperous 2022 descend upon us all. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. David Lee:** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Opposition to offer Christmas greetings to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Very often we hear the term "the new normal" being used to describe the state of affairs surrounding us as a nation. But what we have experienced in the last year has been anything but normal. This Christmas many families will be broken having lost loved ones to COVID-19. This Christmas many families will still be burdened by economic hardship. This Christmas our nation is still trying to rekindle its heart and soul having been placed under a state of emergency mere months ago.

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Today, we in the Opposition do not just offer the mere customary seasonal greetings. But we offer our hearts and prayers to a nation truly yearning for a better tomorrow in this blessed Christmas season. While the usual message of Christmas is about joy and miracles, given the birth of our saviour Jesus, it is also about finding hope. Today, many families in our nation are not asking for luxuries or riches. Given the turmoil they are faced, all they want to know is, how do we go forward with our lives again?

But in the story of the nativity we are told that all the inns in Bethlehem were filled as there was no room for Mary and Joseph. But what did they do? They kept hope by moving forward until they found a place to rest. Today many citizens, just as Mary and Joseph, search for an inn. Many are searching for hope, for opportunity, for peace and prosperity. This Christmas let us do like Mary and Joseph by keeping faith in God and moving forward.

At Jesus' birth, the wise men presented him with gifts after they made a long journey following the star. Today so many of our citizens are in the dark with only a glimmer of light searching for hope as did the wise men when they traversed to find Jesus. This Christmas let us remember that God always guides us on life's journey. Let us find that hope to go forward again.

Madam Speaker, thousands of our fellow citizens have been taken away by COVID-19. To those families we offer our kindest condolences. Thousands of our citizens are battling the virus, hundreds more in quarantine. To those individuals, we keep you in our prayers. Let us not just offer a kind word of a helping hand this Christmas but rather a kind heart and genuine action. Let us actually give meaning to the term we throw around each year, "our brother's keeper", by actually protecting each other. Let us not only—let us not become lost in the joy of the season to the point where we endanger the lives of loved ones. Let us continue to

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uphold the COVID protocols. Let us do all in our power to get vaccinated. Let the Christmas we put in Christmas be Christ, cheer and camaraderie. Let it not be COVID.

On behalf of the Opposition I would like to wish all of our citizens, our supporters, our colleagues and you, Madam Speaker, a merry Christmas and Happy New Year. To our parliamentary staff I would like to thank you for a year of dedication, commitment and wish you a joyous season. May God bless our nation, our citizens and ours will be the fight for a better tomorrow. I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I join with hon. Members who spoke before me in extending greetings to the Christian community and to the entire nation on the occasion of Christmas 2021.

Christmas is a sentimental season full of hope, charity and good cheer. In Trinidad and Tobago Christmas brings families and friends together over good food, sorrel and parang. It is also a time of year when we strive to be a little more generous, more selfless and more joyous, characteristics that would surely benefit our society greatly if those were practiced generously daily rather than seasonally.

As we all know this is the second year that our Trinbagonian traditions are being impacted by the pandemic. And admittedly many citizens are frustrated and fed up of the restraint which efforts at this containment demands. Additionally, many citizens have, unfortunately, suffered the loss of loved ones. And as opined by one of our reputed medical professionals in a recent television interview, every citizen by now knows at least one person who has died from the virus.

Yes, it may well be a source of great difficulty for many citizens to acquire the spirit to experience the merry Christmas that Trinidad and Tobago knows. But the Christian tradition of Christmas supervenes in all circumstances. In fact, the original Christmas stories are founded in Joseph and Mary being uprooted from the



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comfort of their home at the time of the imminent birth of baby Jesus. Their story rests on uncertainty and upheaval. But as in many situations in life, the story of Joseph, Mary and the birth of Jesus demonstrates the paradoxes of life, as it is also a story of hope, resilience, faith, goodwill and love.

This year as we continue to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic let the message of Christmas be a reminder that the greatest gifts are not tangible or time bound. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness are gifts that are applicable at all times and in all circumstances. They are not and should not be limited to a particular season. Last Christmas we were socially responsible. We limited our movements and worshiped and “paranged” with the aid of technology. This year let us continue to be responsible so together we can stem the spread of COVID-19.

Hon. Members, I take this opportunity to wish you and your families, the very committed staff of the Office of the Parliament and all of Trinidad and Tobago a joyful Christmas and a new year of supportive encouragement propelled by the hope, care and empathy manifested by each of us. On behalf of my own family, I wish you all a happy Christmas.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.29 p.m.*

**UNREVISED**