

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, November 11, 2022*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]



**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I received communication from the hon. Penelope Beckles, MP, Member for Arima, who has requested leave of absence for the period November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 and from the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, MP, Member for Siparia, and the hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP, Member for St. Ann’s East, who have requested leave of absence from today’s sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES**

**(APPOINTMENT OF)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, correspondence has been received from the President of the Senate dated November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 which states as follows:

“November 10, 2022

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP  
Deputy Speaker of the House  
The Red House  
Parliamentary Complex  
Abercromby Street  
PORT OF SPAIN  
Dear Deputy Speaker,

**Re: Establishment and Appointment of Members to Joint Select**

**Committees**

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Reference is made to the subject at caption.

At a sitting held on Tuesday November 08, 2022, the Senate agreed to the following resolutions:

(i) “That the Fisheries Management (No. 2) Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established to consider and report on the Bill;

That this Committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the Second Session (2021/2022) and report by March 31, 2023; and

That subject to the concurrence of the House of Representatives on the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on the Fisheries Management (No. 2) Bill, 2020, that the following six (6) Senators be appointed to serve with an equal number from the House of Representatives:

Mr. Nigel de Freitas;

Mr. Avinash Singh;

Dr. Muhammad Yunus Ibrahim;

Mr. Anil Roberts;

Dr. Varma Deyalsingh; and

Dr. Maria Dillon-Remy.”

(ii) “That the Shipping Bill, 2020 be referred to a Joint Select Committee established to consider and report on the Bill;

That this Committee be mandated to adopt the work of the Joint Select Committee appointed in the Second Session (2021/2022) and report by March 31, 2023; and

That subject to the concurrence of the House of Representatives on the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on the Shipping Bill, 2020, that the following six (6) Senators be appointed to serve with an equal number from the House of Representatives:

Mr. Randall Mitchell;  
Ms. Paula Gopee-Scoon;  
Mr. Rohan Sinanan;  
Ms. Jearlean John;  
Mr. Deeroop Teemal; and  
Ms. Charrise Seepersad.”

(iii) “That the Senate concur with the House of Representatives in the establishment of a Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2020, and that the following six (6) Senators be appointed to serve on this Committee:

Dr. Amery Browne;  
Ms. Paula Gopee-Scoon;  
Mr. Randall Mitchell;  
Mr. Wade Mark;  
Dr. Maria Dillon-Remy; and  
Mr. Deeroop Teemal.”

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the House of Representatives be informed of these decisions at the earliest convenience please.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Senator the Hon. Christine Kangaloo

President of the Senate”

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## PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2021. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to the Progress of the Proposals to Restructure CLICO, BAT and CIB for the quarter ended June 30, 2022. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

## JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

(Presentation)

### Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

**The Minister of Sport and Community Development (Hon. Shamfa Cudjoe):**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present the:

Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on an inquiry into the discrimination faced by persons with mental illness and the ability to access quality mental health, Third Session (2022/2023), Twelfth Parliament.

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

(Presentation)

**Dr. Lackram Bodoë (Fyzabad):** Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present the following reports:

### Public Health Institutions

Sixth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination into the internal controls expenditure and the accessibility

**UNREVISED**

and availability of diagnostic imaging services at Public Health Institutions with specific reference to the Tobago Regional Health Authority.

**Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)**

Seventh Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination into the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) for fiscal year 2021.

**Recurrent Expenditure and the Development Programme - Consolidated Fund and Infrastructure Development Fund**

Eighth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an examination into the Statements of Expenditure for the First, Second and Third Quarters of the financial year 2022, with respect to Recurrent Expenditure and the Development Programme - Consolidated Fund and Infrastructure Development Fund.

**PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS**

**Nomination of Mr. Ramnarine Samaroo**

**(Debate and Determination of Presidential Notification)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Question one to the Prime Minister. Diego Martin North/East, you are responding? Given the national crisis emerging from unparalleled criminality, the historic high murder rate, gang activity and gun violence, will the Prime Minister indicate when this House will debate and determine the Notification of Her Excellency, the President, in respect of the nomination of Mr. Ramnarine Samaroo for appointment to act in the Office of Deputy Commissioner of Police?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)**: Madam Speaker, the Member is not assisting us here because the Member must know that when this matter came to the Parliament that it reflected a request for Mr. Ramnarine to act for a specific

period of time. That period has since gone, as far as I am aware, Madam Speaker. However, what happened is that the matter came to Parliament on June 29<sup>th</sup> and the Parliament went on recess on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July. The 29<sup>th</sup> of—yeah came to Parliament on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, Parliament went on recess on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July and of course there was no opportunity to debate the matter and because the matter was a request for a specific number of days when the Commissioner was on leave, this issue no longer arises and the Member is simply just being mischievous because the Member must know that if we were not able to debate it during the recess period when the Parliament was dead, because the request was for a specific limited time, it cannot be now be dealt with. And, however, Madam Speaker, all Members of Parliament and the national community know that we have a commissioner—a Police Service Commission in place which is working assiduously towards filling these positions and therefore I do not know that there is any issue here which should detain us.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much and just to correct because the Prime Minister is not with us physically now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I address you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the Prime Minister aware that on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in a media release, the Police Service Commission indicated, it is in my hands, the nomination of Mr. Samaroo was for the purpose of making an acting appointment as Deputy Commissioner of Police as a result of the absence of Mr. Williams—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will need to get the question, Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—while on vacation and thereafter in the vacant seat, consequent on the acting of appointment of Mr.—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, I will need to get the question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I was leading—here comes the question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No, listen, one second, all right. Hold on, hold on,

Member, we have a procedure. We have a decorum that we entertain here. So I am just asking for the question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question is: Is the Prime Minister aware that the notification sent to the President and relayed to the Parliament was for Mr. Samaroo to act for Mr. Williams and thereafter for Mr. Jacob who was elevated to act as Commissioner of Police? Are you aware?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, that intervention by the Member does not change what I have just said.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, thank you. Prime Minister, are you aware that the notification by the Police Service Commission was for Mr. Samaroo to act in the vacancy created by Mr. Jacob acting as Commissioner of Police? Are you aware of this or not?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Member, the question was answered. Supplemental? Proceed.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Prime Minister, are you disputing the media release of the Police Service Commission dated October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to draw to your attention as to my answer that this matter never came on the Order Paper and I do not take my timing from the media with respect to matters in the Parliament.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Prime Minister, are you aware on the Order Paper of July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the notification of Her Excellency on the appointment of Mr. Samaroo was tabled on that Order Paper?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just told you that the Parliament went on recess on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July and that matter which is for a specific period of

acting could not have taken place because it never came on the Order Paper and the Parliament went on recess so the matter was never dealt with. However, a new notification is expected in the Parliament to deal with the appointment of a new Deputy Commissioner of the Police.

### **Monkey Pox Virus in Trinidad and Tobago**

#### **(Confirmed case of)**

**Dr. Lackram Bodoë** (*Fyzabad*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I take the opportunity to wish the Prime Minister an uneventful recovery and speedy return to the Parliament. Will the Prime Minister indicate whether there is any confirmed case of monkey pox virus in Trinidad and Tobago?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)**: Thank you very much for your good wishes, colleague. No, I am not aware of anything other than what the Minister of Health has said and I, like everybody else in the country, rely on the Minister of Health to tell the country what are the facts with respect to the health system. So if the doctors and Minister of Health inform us that they have had no confirmation as has been done, I have no other source of information to make a contrary statement.

**Dr. Bodoë**: Thank you, Prime Minister. Can you indicate where the Government is in terms of procuring the vaccine for the monkey pox virus?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley**: The Minister of Health has spoken on that matter that the Government is in fact out in the international domain where some vaccines may or may not be available but efforts are being made but I would like to ask my colleague to put that question to the Minister of Health with notice and we will give him an appropriate answer in addition to what I have just said.

### **Flood-affected Residents and Citizens**

#### **(Measures taken to help)**



**Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*): Given the level of flooding experienced by citizens across Trinidad over the last seventy-two (72) hours, what measures have been taken to help affected residents and citizens?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)**: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 14 municipal corporations have been activated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development as well as through the disaster management units of all these corporations and the instruction of the Prime Minister, a coordinating unit through Ministry of Works and Transport, Public Utilities National Security, Housing and Agriculture as well as ODPM, WASA, T&TEC, the Defence Force, the municipal police, National Quarries Company and SWMCOL have been made available to provide relevant and requisite relief to affected persons. Advisories on the state of water courses in communities have been made available and disseminated basically on an hourly basis and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services continues to work collaboratively with Members of Parliament and councillors to provide temporary food relief to those who lost food supply as a result of the flooding.

The Ministry is also working with the Ministries mentioned to make disaster assistance grants available where citizens qualify for such grants.

**Mr. Indarsingh**: Thank you very much. Prime Minister, given the information that you have just provided, could you tell this House how many homes and how many citizens have been impacted based on you being the head of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley**: I might be the head of the Government but I am not the sole fount of all information. If you need that level of specificity, I would advise you to put that question to the relevant Minister who might be able to assist you with that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Prime Minister, given again the brief that you would have received, could you inform this House how many bridges and roadways have collapsed and what your Government plans to do in terms of immediate restoration of these collapsed roads and bridges?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** The answer to that question is absorbed in what I just said that you would have noticed that the Minister of Works and Transport and the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development are involved and any road or bridge which would have collapsed would have formed part of the assignment of immediate attention once the water has subsided. So that is as much as I can tell you now and again, if you need that level of specificity on matters dealing with what will happen when the water subsides, the Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Works and Transport who are out there as frontline Ministers will be able to assist you further when the time comes to report on that.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Given the fact that the Government received a total of US \$5.84 million or \$39.42 million from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility for rainfall that recently impacted upon Trinidad and Tobago, could you inform this House whether the Government will set aside a portion of this money to provide immediate financial relief to the hundreds of thousands of persons who have been impacted by the flooding?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member must know when Government receives money like that, it falls into the fungibility of the Consolidated Fund. The money is not targeted to give to individuals because the Government spends money whether or not it comes from this insurance source and

therefore the insurance money will come back into the Consolidated Fund as the Government continues to spend without limit to this fund, to this in-flow to Consolidated Fund. So whatever relief is to be provided to citizens will be provided from the Consolidated Fund through the various Ministries and this insurance is simply a matter of the Government getting back some money for what it would have spent in this instance.

So it is quite misleading for the Member to come here and try to give the impression that this fund is for distribution to persons who are affected with the fund being directly used and identified for that purpose to those individuals.

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

### **Power Failures**

#### **(Causes of)**

**Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the Prime Minister inform this House of the root causes of last Monday night's and Tuesday morning's power failures which knocked out power supply in areas from east to west as well as the southwestern part of Trinidad?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Mr Deputy Speaker, at 22.05 on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> of November, the TGU Unit suffered simultaneous trips on steam turbine number 20 and gas turbines number 22 and 23. Consequently, there was a loss of generation of 230 megawatts which resulted in an under-frequency load-shedding event. A total of 3912 kV feeders, which is approximately 16 per cent of T&TEC's customer base were shed throughout Trinidad from stage A and stage D of T&TEC customers.

Restoration of supply to customers commenced at 22.09. At 22.36 supply was restored to more than half of all affected customers and at 22.40, the supply to all affected customers was normalized. At 200 hours on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November,

the TGU plant suffered a trip and steam turbine 10. Consequently, there was a loss of generation of 135 megawatts which resulted in an under-frequency load-shedding event. A total of 23 kV feeders, approximately 10 per cent of T&TEC customer base was affected throughout Trinidad and there was shedding on stage 3 and stage 4 of T&TEC's under-frequency load shedding scheme. Restoration supplied to customers commenced at 208 hours. Trinity Power number 3 was synchronized, the system at 224 hours and all customers were back on supply at 226 hours.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Prime Minister. As the Head of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, could you inform this House what mechanisms or what measures are being pursued by the Government which you lead to ensure that this recurrence of power outages does not continue to inconvenience the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago?

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** The Government has worked very closely with TGU to bring to TGU's assistance external technical support. That is actively on the way and TGU is improving its reliability, as I speak. We anticipate that this kind of occurrence will be reduced, ameliorated, and hopefully made whole as we go forward because TGU is having some issues and they have taken the correct steps of getting external technical help and we have already seen some improvements in their performance.

### **Malicious Prosecution against Members of the Public**

#### **(Laws for errant police officers to pay)**

**Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** One second. Could you kindly come back and collect the document please? Kindly go ahead and come back and collect the document. Proceed.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the Prime Minister inform this House if the Government has taken a decision to review the laws to make errant police officers pay for malicious prosecution against members of the public?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government has taken no such decision and has done no such thing. What has been said is that in a meeting of a group that does review of legislation, this matter came up in conversation en passant so that is where the matter lives.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Based on the Prime Minister's revelation that this came out en passant, could the Prime Minister definitively indicate to the association which represents the First Division police officers and also the Police Social and Welfare Association that indeed if such a decision is being pursued by the Government, they would be engaged in consultation before any concrete decision is made?

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** I just want to reiterate that I said that it is not Government's policy at this time, it is not being contemplated and certainly if it ever comes up to be contemplated, we expect that the Government will consult with the relevant stakeholder and the main stakeholder in this will be the police and their representatives.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the Prime Minister indicate whether it was an en passant discussion that Ministers of Government will

be held personally liable for the Miami scandal, the collapsed prosecution of Ramlogan and Ramdeen, the “Nelsongate” scandal—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Question.

**Mr. Hosein:**—and the judgment involving Rohonie Ramkissoo in the BIR?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I would not entertain that question at this time. Member for Couva North.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Barataria/San Juan clearly has nothing to do you know.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize Couva North.

### **Escalation in the Price of Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages**

#### **(Government measures to halt)**

**Mr. Ravi Ratiram** (*Couva North*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In light of the latest CSO data reflecting the significant increase in the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages, will the Prime Minister inform the House as to the measures his Government has taken to halt any further escalation in the price of food and non-alcoholic beverage items in Trinidad and Tobago?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** The Government has continued to provide targeted support to the most vulnerable and affected segments of our society during these challenging times and to do what is possible given our economic circumstances.

With respect to cost reduction, there has been a VAT removal in 2021 to minimize the impact of rising food prices. In November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, you will recall that the Government expanded the list of basic food items that are exempt from VAT. This measure resulted in zero-rating of thousands of stock and on basic food items. There has also been a suspension of the common external tariff, the CET, and the Government has pursued this matter on a list of over 20 basic food items. These items were approved at the level of Caricom in accordance with Article

83(3)(b) of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and implemented at the national level for a period January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. These items included salted fish, canned fish, cheddar cheese, canned corn beef, frozen French fries, milk and cream, refined sugar, preparations for infant use, soybean and other types of oil for cooking.

With respect to the availability of foreign exchange, the Government has ensured that the EximBank is well-funded to provide adequate and timely funding of US\$1.2 billion available to manufacturers and importers of essential goods through the EximBank foreign exchange window to facilitate financing of food, to ensure that importers of food, basic food items which have to be imported, do not have excessive cost because of unavailability of foreign exchange. And, of course, we have taken steps to increase local fresh food production and encourage the consumption of such local fresh foods.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Prime Minister, in light of your response, can you advise this House if your government is willing to remove VAT on all 7,000 food items that were removed when hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** No, the Government does not intend to do that because in that 7,000 was a large number of what is considered unessential luxury items, which were benefitting from a reduction in VAT; and we see no benefit in the country reducing of VAT to increase the import of luxury non-essential items. That is the action of a populist, irresponsible government and that government is

not in office today.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Couva North?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Prime Minister, with respect to this question, in light of the poor maintenance of the watercourses, this week floods have caused widespread devastation to farmers' crops, which will affect the supply and price of such food items in the coming week. Can the Prime Minister advise what measures are going to be put in place to soften the increase in the price of crops and vegetables that the country may see in the coming weeks, as a result of the Government's failure to maintain its watercourse?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, the preface of the question is wrong, and therefore I do not expect that the answer would be useful. It is not the absence of the maintenance of the watercourses that cause flooding across the country. While there may be some instances of a few courses or a few drains, the excessive water that comes from the rainfall, which is excessively heavy, overcoming the constructed pathways and, of course, the maintained watercourses, they contribute to the flooding as well. And what we anticipate is that we will take every step possible to restart the agricultural production after.

And we expect that those who have not been flooded out, will not take the opportunity to price gouge as the shortage occurs in the situations where some farmers have lost their crops. So, we will expect that the market would be reasonable and that the buyers would be aware of what is happening in the marketplace. But production would be encouraged, especially where, in the case of vegetables and so on.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Hon. Prime Minister, can you say whether the Government will



seek to swiftly pay farmers their flood compensation, so that these persons who are responsible for our nation's food security can receive some immediate relief to reinvest into the cultivation of their crops.

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

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** [*Inaudible*]*—*to determine who is in line to be assisted and who legitimately qualifies for assistance, and that assistance would be made available as quickly as possible to ensure that the farmers get back on their feet, as is necessary, to ensure that their output for the country is available.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Couva North, next question.

### **Rose Hill RC School**

#### **(Details of)**

**Mr. Ravi Ratiram** (*Couva North*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the hon. Prime Minister: With reference to recent reports that parents and teachers are fearful for their safety with the reopening of the Rose Hill RC School, what assurances will the Prime Minister, as the Head of the National Security Council, provide to bring a sense of relief to these persons?

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** The matter has been addressed by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Minister of National Security, and there has been increase in the number of police patrols and the presence of law enforcement police and defence force personnel in the neighborhood providing comfort and security to the persons there, while seeking to suppress the behaviour of miscreants and lawlessness, with respect to the use of illegal firearms in the general neighborhood.

I want to remind the Member that it is the police service that has the legal responsibility to do this, and the Commissioner of Police has spoken at length on what the police are doing and we know and can confirm that the police are doing

what they say they will do.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Can the Prime Minister advise if consideration is being given to the establishment of a mobile police post in closer proximity to the school?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** That is a matter for the Commissioner of Police. And the Commissioner of Police did speak publicly on this matter indicating that given the way that the area is being patrolled and being secured that it is not the intention of the police service to establish a static police service on the site but the increase in the patrols and the heightened awareness of the neighborhood activity is how the police intend to respond.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Couva North, next question.

### **Community Centres**

#### **(Use of)**

**Mr. Ravi Ratiram** (*Couva North*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the hon. Prime Minister: Will the Prime Minister advise whether it is the policy of this Government to impose a fee/charge on religious institutions for the use of community centres to conduct religious services?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** There is no encouragement of the use of community centres for conducting religious services. The community centres are available for general community activities and if a religious body wants to conduct an activity in the community centre, they will access it in the normal way of other activities. But to open community centres for every Tom, Dick and Harry to come and conduct church services, is going to run counter to the letter and

spirit of the use of the community centre and would create discord in the community.

So, this thing about paying to have the centres used as religious, whatever it is, church, mandir, mosque, whatever, that is not being encouraged, but activities other than the religious services would be encouraged by all community activities that are legal, and that is normal and there is a normal arrangement in place with the peppercorn charge that is available for any use of the community centre. And we do not want to encourage or give the impression that the community centres, as comfortable as they are now and quite attractive as they are being built, that they are to be used in lieu of churches and other religious bodies.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the time allocated for Prime Minister's question has now expired.

### **URGENT QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Princes Town.

#### **T&TEC Generators**

##### **(Details of)**

**Mr. Barry Padarath** (*Princes Town*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Question No. 1 to the Minister of Public Utilities. In light of the two recent power outages that occurred earlier this week across several communities throughout the country, will the Minister indicate whether the generators at T&TEC are currently functional?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, T&TEC has one generating plant located in Cove in Tobago and it is very much functional.

T&TEC receives generation power to the grid from three independent power producers: PowerGen, Contour Global Trinity Power, and TGU and, with the

exception of the power purchase agreement, has limited control with the operational issues at these independent power producers.

The generators at all three power stations are functional, except we have had, in recent times, more frequent trips at the TGU plant, which they are currently working on to avoid. The TGU plant has experienced from February 2022 to date, 36 machine trips. The commission's chairman has had several discussions with its counterpart at TGU regarding these frequent trips. T&TEC has met directly with TGU, has written to them on several occasions, and has met with the senior level at TGU concerning this particular matter. And I feel very confident and the Government feels very confident that, with these discussions and interventions, the level of interruptions that we have been having at the TGU plant will be minimized.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Minister, in light of the public utterances made by the General Manager of T&TEC, with respect to the availability of fuel for power generation, can you indicate whether or not T&TEC has made any representation to the Ministry of Public Utilities with respect to the relationship between NGC and T&TEC for fuel to be provided?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Public Utilities.

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** I am not too sure if I understand the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had taken note of the responses provided to the population by the General Manager of T&TEC which, in my view, is very truthful. I cannot say it is not the availability of gas is the problem. It is the fact that, because T&TEC is minimizing the cost of spinning reserves on the commission, the commission has taken appropriate action to minimize the amount of spinning reserves to reduce the cost on the commission.

Now, we have to understand that with increased spinning reserves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is costing the commission significant amount. The level of disruption that we are experiencing from the independent power producers which, of course, is outside of T&TEC's control, and the lowering of the spinning reserves, it is causing the level of disruption that we are having in recent times on the distribution grid.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Princes Town. Proceed.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again Minister, in light of the utterances made by the General Manager of T&TEC, as it relates to TGU in particular having their own challenges, Government's dependence on TGU to provide that support to T&TEC at this time in light of the default lines that occur from time to time, can the Minister indicate whether or not he is satisfied that the dependence on TGU would bear fruit and that there are no alternative areas that Government is exploring, in terms of other avenues that will be able to ensure that there is a proper supply at all times without interruption?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Public Utilities.

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, TGU is one of the most efficient plants that is producing more electricity and power, when compared to the other independent power producers. As I have indicated, the discussions between TGU, the Ministry of Public Utilities, as well as the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, to reduce the level of interruptions that we are having from the TGU plant and the additional support that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is giving to TGU. I feel very confident, the Government feels very confident, that the outcome of the recent interventions that we are making will reduce the level of interruptions emanating from the independent power producers and that customers, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will see, and hopefully will see a reduction in

the level of interruptions that we are having on the distribution grid.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

### **Red House Infrastructure Disrepair**

#### **(Details of)**

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the Hon. Prime Minister: Given that UDeCOTT falls under the Office of the Prime Minister, will the Prime Minister state the exact nature of the cause of distress and disrepair of infrastructure at the Red House that has caused the dislocation of sittings of the House of Representatives from today?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister. Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to this question—sorry.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All right. Okay. Are we ready, Members? Proceed, Leader of the House.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the information that we have is that UDeCOTT is at present dealing with this issue, in conjunction with the Office of the Prime Minister. Additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the exact nature of the disrepair is being examined, and we will give the information when it comes to hand. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, supplemental.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, regrettably the Prime Minister left us. But to the Hon. Minister that responded, I would like to ask a further question that I would have asked the Prime Minister. Member, do you

think this is acceptable, given the bill of \$441 million paid to refurbish and repair the Red House, and the fanfare undertaken to open this facility just two short years ago? Do you think this is acceptable today, that we had to move from one venue to the other to facilitate sittings of the House of Representatives?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will not entertain that question, hon. Member. Supplemental? Proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Now my first supplemental. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Member. Member, do you have, at this time, any time frame within which the required work can be undertaken and completed so that Members of the House of Representatives would no longer be asked to squat in the Senate Chamber?

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the fact that for 10 years we were squatting in Tower D, because of the fact—

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—that for five of those years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent by those on the other side—

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—initially, to fix a roof that they gave a contractor who was not a roofing contractor, to try and fix that roof.

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the fact that we were under tarpaulin in this Red House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those on the other side should be grateful that we were able to repair the Red House in a short space of time—

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—to the extent that we now have two Chambers and we

can use this Chamber while the other Chamber is being repaired. And given the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that for many, many years a contractor was paid to fix the roof—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** We must be grateful for shoddy work?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—and nothing was done during that period. I think those on the other side should be grateful that we have two Chambers and we can now use this Chamber.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member. Member. Supplemental.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, bearing in mind that the Member could not answer the first question as to the time frame, let me ask the next question now. Are you aware that for seven years your administration has undertaken to fix and complete this facility, boasted of \$441 million and today even in the Chamber we are sitting in, we see mould at the top there and we may have to go to a community centre, where they may charge a fee, according to Couva North, in the short-term? Are you aware of that?

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question is, and I ask again: When will the work begin and when will it end? That is all we want to know. We do not want know about the last seven, 10, 20 years.

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the fact that we have hundreds of community centres that are now able to be used, and if we have to go to a community centre, we will be able to do that, because we are not paying contractors to do work that they are not doing. Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will—

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



**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members! Members! A question—Member for Couva South—a question was asked. So, let us hear the answer.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, those on the other side will not tell me how to answer a question.

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** I will answer the question in the manner that I deem fit. And Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Hon. Members:** [*Continuous desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members! Members! Leader of the House, you have completed your answer? We move on? Right. We move on. We move on. No more supplemental. No more supplemental there, Member. Oropouche East, next question. You have a next question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have a next question? Let me compose myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The question to the Minister, the Member for “Arouca/Bal”—Maloney is still disturbing me.

**Mr. Padarath:** You were right the first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will protect you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** To the Minister of Works and Transport. Let us proceed. Let us proceed. Let us proceed.

### **Emergency Works (Nationwide Flooding)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): To the Minister of Works and Transport: Minister, with respect to the nationwide flooding over the last 48 hours that has devastated several communities, will the Minister outline what emergency works have been undertaken to bring relief to affected communities across the nation?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Works and Transport.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):**

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this building looks so beautiful.

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

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the country has been experiencing unprecedented—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:**—rainfall for the last six months, which has placed a major strain on the nation's infrastructure. The Ministry of Works and Transport has taken measures from the beginning of the year, to ensure that desilting works, as well as pumps and gates are in place to manage, as far as possible, capacity and flow of water. In many cases, the Ministry of Works and Transport has to wait until water has receded to address affected areas.

As it relates to flooding over the past 48 hours, the Ministry's team have been assigned to impacted areas and watercourses. In this regard, the emergency work has started and is already carded for areas in the east and central Trinidad as follows: Central District, in Carli Bay, Couva, the cleaning of debris; Trantrill Road, Tacarigua; the Guayamare River; Roopsingh Road, Carapichaima. In the east district: Quarry River in Valencia; Matura River in Toco; Oropouche River, Fishing Pond; and bridge cleaning at the Guaico River on the Eastern Main Road. In the south district: mobilization of the water master by the Mechanical Services Division, to repair embankment on the new cut Oropouche River, debris removal on the Bagmire River, Ciperio River and the Guaracara River.

In addition, the Ministry of Works and Transport is working with the regional corporations to reinstate infrastructure where required. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Oropouche East, next question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, it is a supplemental from Oropouche West—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No one identified. You had up your hand, Sir? All right. I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you very much. Supplemental to the Minister. Minister, we have had this same promise of work to fix the embankments in Woodland for several years now. Can the Minister give a specific commitment of a date and time when commencement of works to fix or to install banks at the various rivers in Oropouche West will be done? We want a specific date, Sir, and time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Member of Parliament for the area, if he is on the ground in the area, he will see that banks have been repaired on that river, not only by the Ministry of Works and Transport, but also by Heritage, who have been doing work in that river. So, there is ongoing work and this work will continue until the problem has been finally solved. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All right. Hon. Members, the time allocated for urgent questions has now expired.

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, by letter dated November 11, 2022, and in accordance with Standing Order 29(14), the Member for Caroni East has requested that House of Representatives Question No.22, listed on today's Order Paper be withdrawn.

### **Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable**

#### **(Rehabilitation Works)**

**22. Dr. Rishad Seecheran** (*Caroni East*) asked the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government:

Will the Minister state when will the repair and rehabilitation works to the bridge located at Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable commence?

*Question, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are therefore 17 questions for oral answer. We will be answering 16. We are asking for a deferral of question 15 for two weeks. 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):*

#### **Couva Community Pool**

#### **(Reopening of)**

- 15.** Given that the Couva Community Pool has been closed since September 2018, will the Hon. Minister Sport and Community Development inform this House when will the pool be reopened for use by members of the public?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Caroni East.

#### **Longdenville Presbyterian School**

#### **(Permanent Location for)**

- 18. Dr. Rishad Seecheran (Caroni East):** Will the hon. Minister of Education provide the status of the proposed plan to move the Longdenville Presbyterian School from the Jerningham Community Centre to a permanent location?

**The Minister in the Ministry of Education (Hon. Lisa Morris-Juilan):** Mr.

Deputy Speaker, in 2017 the Ministry of Education executed improvement works to the Jerningham Community Centre totalling \$643,678.67 to ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment for the staff and students of Longdenville Presbyterian Primary School. The Ministry of Education recognizes the need to restore the students to a dedicated building and will make every effort to do so as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to indicate that the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara is the acting Minister of Education.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** My apologies. And just for the records, acting Minister of Education. Kindly proceed, Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, will the Government consider paying for the transportation to and from school for these students, as it is quite a distance from where the original school was and where the community centre is currently located?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Acting Minister of Education.

**Hon. L. Morris-Julian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not be able to answer that question at this time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Further supplemental, Caroni East?

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the Ministry allow the school to use the second floor to allow classrooms to be of a reasonable size?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Education, acting.

**Hon. L. Morris-Julian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am unsure regarding the reasonable size. So, I cannot answer that question as yet, but I will. I cannot answer it as yet. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Will the Ministry build a sickbay for the school to allow ill

students to be quarantined away from the student population?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister. A sickbay? Ask the question again.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Yes. The school does not have a sickbay, the community centre. Will the Government build a sickbay for the school, to allow students to be quarantined away from the student population?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. L. Morris-Julian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking for the question to be posed on notice in the normal manner so it could be answered.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Caroni East, next question.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Could I ask another supplemental?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You have another?

**Dr. Seecheran:** Yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** All right. This would be the last one. Go ahead.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Will the Ministry arrange for a sporting field to be assigned to the school, to allow students to participate in sporting and recreational activities?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. L. Morris-Julian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same answer as before. I am just asking for it to be posed on notice in the usual manner, and it will be answered.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Caroni East, next question.

**Mr. Hinds:** “Dotish” question.

**Dr. Seecheran:** So, I have to—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Next question.

**Mr. Hinds:** “Dotish” question.

**Mr. Tancoo:** You have to wait in the rain, Minister.

**Dr. Seecheran:** All right. Cool.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are allowing questions and I am hearing “dotish”, and language from Members on the other side. You are the Presiding Officer in this House, in this Chamber.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Members, listen. Members, if all Members of the Chamber will ensure that the decorum is maintained, at least any question posed to the Chair, you will receive an answer. Member for Caroni East, next question.

**Laloo Trace, Cunupia**  
**(Construction of Bridge)**

**19. Dr. Rishad Seecheran (Caroni East):** Will the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries provide an update on the status of the proposed plan to construct a bridge at Laloo Trace, Cunupia?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members! Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

**The Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Avinash Singh):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reconstruction of the bridge at Laloo Trace, Cunupia was placed under Phase Two of the Agricultural Access Roads and Bridges Programme which is funded under the stimulus package of the fiscal incentive programme for farmers.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries sought tenders for the reconstruction of the bridge, and this contract was already awarded. The actual commencement of the work started in May. However, there have been delays due to the presence of a WASA pipeline which had to be relocated, and of course, the inclement weather.

Presently, construction of the northern abutment wall of the bridge has been

completed and works on the southern abutment wall is underway. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bridge is expect to be completed by the end of the year once favourable weather conditions permit.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** What is the total cost of this project?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this contract was awarded at a value of \$679,140.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecharan:** Who are the contractors retained by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to build this bridge?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not in a position to answer that. However, if the Member poses the right question, we will be sure to answer.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental.

**Dr. Seecharan:** Why are there no warning signs or lighting at night to warn motorists that the Lalloo Trace road goes directly into a 10-foot drop into the river below it?

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not aware that was an instance but, of course, I will be sure to have that information passed on to the Engineering Division of the Ministry.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental.

**Dr. Seecharan:** Are there any cost overruns currently on this project?

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Not at this time, everything is above board unlike when



you were in office.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Chaguanas East. Chaguanas East.

**Tuta Absoluta (Leafminer)**

**(Strategies to Combat)**

**23. Ms. Vandana Mohit** (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

Will the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries advise what actions or strategies have been instituted to combat the Tuta absoluta (leafminer) pest?

**The Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Avinash Singh):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Member for this very pertinent question. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Tuta absoluta was first identified in Trinidad and Tobago in December 2021, in the counties St. George East and St. George West. While the population is still relatively low, it is easily spread by the movement of wind, infected fruits, planting material and packaging material.

Plants and fruits affected by this pest are deemed unmarketable and can result in an 80 to 100 per cent yield loss to farmers. This poses a great threat to our nation's food production levels. In this regard, the Ministry has embarked on an aggressive outreach programme to sensitize and to inform the general population of this pest, the Tuta absoluta. The campaign is focused on introducing the Ministry's integrated pest management strategies for the control and management of the Tuta absoluta in Trinidad.

The following avenues were used to disseminate information both internally and externally. We had awareness sessions; these were conducted for all frontline

Ministry personnel and stakeholders. Media platforms, such as Facebook live, radio, television interviews, the Ministry's web page and printed publications in the daily newspapers were also utilized.

On September 06, 2022, the Ministry introduced an integrated pest management approach for the control and management of *Tuta absoluta* in Trinidad and this was done via radio interview, again, on September 13<sup>th</sup>, September 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

The integrated pest management control programme, which was developed for implementation, includes strategies focused on cultural practices, mass trapping activities, field activities and chemical application. The Ministry's ongoing activities for the management and control of this pest include advising of stakeholders, monitoring infested farm fields, and collaborating with international agencies for technical cooperation and funding.

For the plan of action directed to infested fields, 800 units of pheromone supplies have been procured to aid in the surveillance, monitoring and mass trapping activities, and this costed \$35,000. The Ministry is presently awaiting the arrival of the shipment to implement that programme.

Further activities will involve conducting surveys, surveillance and monitoring activities in the fields—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time has expired. Supplemental, Chaguanas East.

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

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the Minister responding: Given the destruction in which this pest can cause, and based on your explanation, can you state whether the Ministry has conducted any assessment on the potential impact of this pest on the prices of food crops, given the existing factors already

contributing to high food prices?

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

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, as part of the Integrated Pest Management Programme, it also involves extension officers going out to all farmers, because this pest tends to affect mainly pimentos and hot peppers. And, of course, all Members would know that commodity is highly traded on the international markets and, of course, it is an economic loss if this pest gets out there. So we are doing everything in our power to ensure that it does not spread and hopefully, with the implementation of this integrated pest management programme, it reduces the impact to the farmers. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the hon. Minister. Minister, farmers who spot the pest in their field and are required to destroy their plants, can you indicate if it is that the Ministry has any compensation plans in place for these farmers who will lose their entire produce as a result of having to destroy for the presence of this pest?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, destroying the entire field is the last resort for farmers because of the nature of this pest and hence in my initial response, the integrated pest management approach is being pursued by the Ministry. So, at this time, no compensation is being considered.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker, and it is really sad that no compensation is being put in place. They have abandoned the farmers once again. However, with respect to the 800 traps that are to be received, can the Minister advise when these sticky traps are going to be made available for the farmers to

utilize in their field?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. A. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I have said in my response, it is procured and it is on the way. It is being shipped, and I cannot say exactly when, but it is on the way. So this is something we expect to receive in due course.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

### **Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard Incident**

#### **(Status of Investigation)**

**26. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Will the hon. Minister of National Security provide an update on the status of the investigation into the incident at sea involving the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and a Venezuelan vessel that resulted in the death of a Venezuelan baby on February 6, 2022?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, based on information received from the Commissioner of Police, the investigation into the incident at sea involving the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and a Venezuelan vessel on Sunday, February 06, 2022, which resulted in the death of a child, remains ongoing. In this regard, while the firearms and the projectile involved in the incident have since been seized and analyzed by the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre.

Further, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has completed its investigation into the incident and is in the process of seeking the advice of the

DPP. I thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Given that the accident occurred on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June *Loop* news indicated that the Minister said the investigations are ongoing; 25<sup>th</sup> May, ongoing, could the Minister explain the sloth and incompetence of the Ministry with respect to such an important incident with international implications?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am to be guided by the facts as made available to me by the Commissioner of Police and not any news. I have indicated that the matter has been investigated and the police are now interfacing with the DPP for further advice in the matter.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. To the very distinguished Minister of National Security: Could the Minister indicate to his knowledge at this time whether any of the coast guard patrol vessels are operational at this time?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will not entertain that question at this time.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Could the Minister indicate, based on the information available to him, whether the Government has taken interim action to prevent such a reoccurrence of such an unfortunate incident?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and all other agencies of national security are populated with trained, skilled, experienced professionals. The Government continues to make opportunities for training available to all our officers, all of the divisions of national security, locally, regionally and internationally. The Government's effort is to ensure that they have the resources that they need to perform optimally and professionally, and that is as far as the Government can go, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Is the Minister aware that no vessels are operational at this time? And he boasts—the Minister boasts about the training and whatnot, are you satisfied with one, the maintenance and the operation of the expensive vessels that we give to the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled on that question. Naparima, next question.

### **Switzerland Visit**

#### **(Details of)**

**28. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Will the hon. Prime Minister state the names and positions of all the technical officers in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and/or other Ministries who accompanied him on his recent official visit to Switzerland?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development: (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no technical officers from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, or other

Ministries, accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent official visit to Switzerland. However, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who was briefed by officials of his Ministry accompanied the Prime Minister. And as the Constitution allows, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ministers give specific and general direction for Ministries.

**Mr. Charles:** The Minister who spoke for the Prime Minister, do you not think it disgraceful and shameful that you go to negotiate with technical people from international agencies and you do not have technical staff in order to give you current information as information is presented to you in these meetings?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** And the question is?

**Mr. Charles:** Sir, the question is, do you not think it—it is not with best practice, managerial practice, not to have technical expertise readily available to you so while you are discussing with technical experts from multinational companies?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** There will be no official records of this meeting.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I did not recognize you. Leader of the House.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Oh sorry, no.

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister not agree that we are in for another debacle as occurred when the prices to the upstreamers and downstreamers were negotiated in Houston, which led to the collapse of the energy industry in Trinidad and Tobago?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Question, Member.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, the question: Are we in for another debacle as occurred in Houston when we negotiated without technical expertise and that led to the

collapse of the energy sector Trinidad and Tobago?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Will not entertain question. Member for Mayaro.

### **Digital Society Programme**

#### **(Details of)**

**29. Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Digital Transformation:

With regard to the budgetary allocation of \$15 Million for the Implementation of the Digital Society Programme in the financial year 2022, will the hon. Minister of Digital Transformation state:

- a) the status of this Programme;
- b) the number of sectors fully digitalized to date; and
- c) how the number of fully digitalized sectors impact the achievement of the objectives of the programme?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Digital Transformation.

**The Minister of Digital Transformation (Sen. The Hon. Hassel Bacchus):**

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A digital society is one to of the three pillars of digital transformation that have been identified by the Government. And the other two being, of course, digital economy and digital government. A digital society seeks to ensure that everyone in Trinidad and Tobago benefits from digital technology and that no one is left behind. There are some key elements of and this includes access to affordable broadband, and that is broadband Internet as a public good, similar to other essential services. And the ITU in its *Global Connectivity Report 2022* defined “meaningful connectivity” as:

“...safe, satisfying, enriching, productive and affordable online experience...”—for everyone.



So, during fiscal 2022, work was ongoing on several initiatives to deliver broadband as a public good, and these included the launch of the first major universal service project in August of this year, which is to provide broadband Internet to underserved communities of Parlatuvier, Bloody Bay, L'Anse Fourmi in the St. Johns Parish of Tobago. This involves providing Internet through fiber optic cables and is the first of many initiatives that we funded through the Universal Service Fund. And this is, of course, administered by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

They also have been involved with the persons with disabilities initiative championed, again, by them, which rarely subsidizes the acquisition of mobile devices to members of the differently abled community in order to facilitate access to mobile Internet and a growing number of apps, of course, that they can use.

The continued expansion of the national TTWiFi initiative that provides Internet access to citizens in public spaces, and as of 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2022, TTWiFi is available in a total of 99 locations. That will be 23 public libraries, 12 transport hubs, they are some primary schools still without direct connectivity. So we have 48 of them connected and 16 health centres. The Wi-Fi roll-out will continue with the remaining 114 institutions hopefully by the end of calendar 2023.

There is a community ICT access centre programme, which I spoke about in a previous incarnation in a different place, and it speaks to the expansion and upgrade of the community ICT programme during 2022. It refurbished six of the existing ICT centres, six additional ones were opened and those are in places spread out across the country. And we have approvals for 32 more in this fiscal.

As far as digital literacy is concerned, a national ICT programme to increase the digital IQ of citizens, there was a pilot of a programme, we partnered with the YTEPP, and this was to improve the digital literacy of all citizens in Trinidad and

Tobago so that they can become more comfortable with the technology that we are rolling out.

The first pilot included 1,100 participants and they ranged in ages from 18 to 70 years old. The programme was well received. It was fully subscribed within hours of being advertised, but it is important to note the demographics. Twenty five per cent of the applicants were between ages 18 and 25; just 30 per cent were between 31 and 40; and the largest number of applicants coming from an area was in south Trinidad, and that was 30 per cent. The successive phases of this we will roll out depending on the learnings from this initial pilot.

As far as impact on digital sectors, the digital society is not really about empowering sectors but instead about empowering citizens to have widespread access to technology and equip them to leverage technology in a manner consistent within their particular and specific needs. The digital readiness assessment that was conducted in 2021 identified three opportunities for growth in human capital. They are improved access to digital infrastructure, hence the access Wi-Fi programme; access to end-user devices, which is being handled in a number of places, but including the fact that you could go to these ICT centres without any device or any knowledge and people would be there to help you; and training and education, which we doing through the pilot project which I just described. The Government is targeting each of these areas as an independent component.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the digital society programme comprises a series of ongoing activities that are designed to contribute to the outcome of a completely connected Trinidad and Tobago, and a national community that is fully equipped, capable and eager to make the best use of the many opportunities offered by digital technology. This is an ongoing process. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, based on one of your earlier commentary that you expect the digitization process to roll way into 2025 or beyond, what are some of the challenges that you are currently facing as Minister in your Ministry that would create that issue beyond 2025 going forward?

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:** Thank you. I thank you for the question. The challenges are not really specific to the Ministry. Any type of transformation in particular, in this case digital transformation, revolves around four main pillars and they include, people, process, plant and machinery, or the technology and the legislation. You would understand that all of those represent their own challenges. Changing people and the culture, and the way in which we have to interact with the solutions represents a training, it represents communication and it also represents trying to find ways to build trust. The process side of it is to move to get people to understand that they have to transition from analog and older types of processes to new digital processes that are aligned with digital technology.

As far as the technology itself, the implementation of that and the convincing of the ICT community in Trinidad and Tobago to move to things like cloud, understanding that blockchain and things, are things that we have to use now, and that communal data is something that is—that transition also is going to take some time.

And lastly, the legislative, which we work through here all the time. You would understand that some of these changes would require constitutional or special majorities which we seem—

**Mr. Hinds:** Teach them, teach them.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:**—to be unable to convince the Opposition to support

us.

**Mr. Hinds:** Teach them.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, in your response, you mentioned people. With the fact that based on the Standing Finance Committee reports that you were short of 42 contract positions in your Ministry, is that part of the challenge? And what are you planning to encourage your Government to do about that? Thank you.

**Mr. Hinds:** Teach them.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:** One of the key components of digital government is that it is one, highly efficient, but also it represents one of the least expensive ways to operate a government. The number of contract places that we have not been able to fill is not necessarily representative of a challenge that we cannot overcome, because there are other ways do that. But if you want to have a sustainable and continued approach to doing this, some of those positions would have to be filled. But there are other ways around that, and we can incorporate different types of models of utilization of resource to get to that point.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Mayaro. Supplemental, Couva North. Proceed.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Can the hon. Minister advise when the Ministry is going to establish its web page?

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

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:** I shudder to want to answer that simply because this web page has been operational for a significant—

**Mr. Hinds:** Oooooh. Oh my God.

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:**—period of time.

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

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:** I will further add that it was built by in-house, by people within the Ministry not utilizing templates or otherwise but purely local people. It was certified, and its certificates are secure, and it has operational and has not failed since its inception and building. The question was not when, the question is if one exists. And I can assure you that it does. If you use—

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

**Sen. The Hon. H. Bacchus:** If you use your devices, I am absolutely sure if you go to MDT, you will find it there. Search and find it for—[*Inaudible*]

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

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members. Members.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Mayaro.

### **Micro and Small Enterprises**

#### **(Policy to Aid)**

**30. Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry:

In light of the continued closure of a number of small businesses as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, will the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry identify whether any policy was formulated over the past year to aid Micro and Small Enterprises?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry (Sen. The Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon):**

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, the Government continues to be an advocate for the growth and development of micro and small enterprises and recognizes their significant contribution to the economy. The Government implemented a series of measures to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and in this regard, some of the measures implemented by the Government include: “vaccinate to operate” drive and safe zone initiative. Then with regard to financial support measures, the Entrepreneurial Relief Grant, the Small and Medium Enterprises Stimulus Loan Programme, the long-term loan guarantee scheme for SMEs, listing on the Junior Stock Exchange, expansion of the Grant Fund Facility, the grant facility for micro and small enterprises in the yachting industry, and credit union liquidity support loan programme. Other business support measures include the ScaleUp Trinidad and Tobago Business Accelerator Programme, the Export Booster Initiative, and the International Certification Fund.

As a result of these and other measures, there has already been an improvement in the country’s economic performance. This was outlined in the Central Bank’s Monetary Policy announcement on 30 September 2022. And according to the announcement for the first quarter of 2022, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago has reported that the non-energy sector rebounded by 2.2 per cent in real growth year on year. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Mayaro. Member.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Minister, taking note of the importance of SMEs, has your Ministry made any effort to locate and assist many of the businesses that may have been closed during that period of the pandemic?

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Indeed we have, and it is through these several

financial support measures which were instituted. We have been in direct contact with businesses. We have also been advertising on social media, we are in the public domain, and we are engaging with the SMEs to the extent that the all of these programmes that I have outlined have been implemented.

I can tell you, the Entrepreneurial Relief Grant, implemented with great success; the SME Stimulus Loan Programme, implemented successfully; the long-term loan guarantee scheme for SMEs, already launched; the listing on the Junior Stock Exchange, already launched; the expansion of the Grant Fund Facility, ongoing and invaluable; the grant facility for micro and small enterprises in the yachting industry, ongoing and very successful; the credit union Liquidity Support Programme, implemented; the ScaleUp Trinidad and Tobago Business Accelerator Programme, already implemented; the Export Booster Initiative, that is implemented and ongoing; and the International Certification Fund, ongoing and a huge success. So the engagement is there with the SME society, Member for Mayaro.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Mayaro, Member.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, after that response can you tell us exactly how many businesses would have benefited from that suite of items that is you have explained to us?

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

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** So, with regard to the Entrepreneurial Relief Grant, 3,468 applicants were successful to the extent of the tune \$30.4 million issued in grants.

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

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** With regard to the Small and Medium

Enterprises Stimulus Loan Programme, as of September 30 2022, a total of 904 loans were accessed under the programme at a total of \$168.98 million. The long-term loan guarantee scheme has now been launched. The listing on the Stock Exchange, now launched. The expansion of the Grant Fund Facility, to date, 25 SMEs have been approved with a disbursement of \$5,255,409.

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

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** And that facility has since been expanded to include the alternatives to wheat flour. So we are hoping that many SMEs will have access to that. With regard to the grant fund facility for micro and small enterprises in the yachting industry, to date, 50 applications have been approved, totalling \$1.44 million.

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

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** With regard to the credit union liquidity support loan programme, as of 30<sup>th</sup> of September, loans were accessed by 75 credit union members at an accumulated cost of \$670,817. With regard to ScaleUp—the ScaleUp Business Accelerator Programme, 14 companies have signed on. With regard to the Export Booster Initiative, countless companies have benefited from this programme. With regard to the International Certification Fund, 12 members of the SME sector have benefited. So that there are a number of SMEs benefiting from all of the programmes in under the Ministries under this Government. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Mayaro.

### **Bitumen Shortage**

**(Plans to End)**

**UNREVISED**



**31. Mr. Rushton Paray** (*Mayaro*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state what specific plans with measureable outcomes are being taken to bring an end to the current shortage of bitumen?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Works and Transport.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, funding has been made available to Lake Asphalt by the Government to purchase bitumen for the local market, so that local contractors would have the opportunity to purchase directly from Lake Asphalt without having to acquire foreign exchange. However, they will still have option to import directly from foreign suppliers to suit their unique needs. Since adopting this approach, we have seen an increase in the supply of bitumen on the market. The Ministry of Works and Transport is developing a policy to utilize TLA in most of our paving works. This initiative has the potential to reduce by about the 25 per cent the amount of bitumen that needs to be imported. The Ministry is also working closely with Lake Asphalt to ensure that the operation of the blend of TLA can meet the demand for the local market. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minister, is it a normal and approved practice to patch potholes without the use of bitumen which seems to be happening on a regular basis?

**Sen The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know that to be a regular practice by the Ministry of Works and Transport. That definitely is not a practice by the Ministry of Works and Transport, and that is not a practice.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Oropouche East, Member.

**3.00 p.m.**

**Body Cameras for Trinidad and Tobago Police Service**

**(Update on Status of Provision and Utilization of)**

**4. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security.

Will the Minister update the House as to the status of the provision and utilization of body cameras to officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very warmly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to information received from the Commissioner of Police, as at November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 1,200 body worn cameras have been acquired by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Of this amount 1,137 such cameras have been operationalized and are currently being used by officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department, the Divisional Task Forces of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Gang and Intelligence units, the Special Investigations unit, the Warrants Section, the Traffic and Crime Detection unit and the city patrol units. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I use the concept of operationalized by that I mean, the officers have been trained how to properly use them in compliance with the Police Regulations and Standing Orders with a view of maintaining the legal principles of accountability. I thank you very warmly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, could the Minister state what systems are in place to ensure that they are actually used? Because a Sunday *Guardian* July 10<sup>th</sup> 2022, report says that 1,160 body cameras were purchased and are not being put to proper use.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker I told Member for Naparima earlier I, as Minister of National Security, cannot rely on the newspapers and I must tell you very quickly why. Very recently, I read in a newspaper that he was a bright, beautiful and intelligent man and I know that not entirely to be so, and therefore, I cannot rely, I cannot rely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on newspaper reports. I simply record the information I received from the Police Commissioner and have indicated that they are operationalized, meaning every one of them are in use. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** I recently read that you are non-performing Minister. [*Laughs*]

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

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

**Mr. Charles:** And I do really believe that.

**Hon. Members:** [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Mr. Charles:** I answered a question and I asked the question again—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Charles:**—but the Minister has said that he is not responsible for the safety of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—

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

**Mr. Charles:**—what operationalize—

**Hon. Members:** [*Sustained desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Sit down, sit down.

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

**Mr. Charles:**—what systems are in place to ensure that they are actually being used and not sitting somewhere on an office chair?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I would give the Minister the opportunity, proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You see why I cannot believe the newspaper?

**Hon. Member:** Exactly.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** One again, recently said he was a bright man. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me repeat—let me repeat for the benefit of the apparently difficult to understand to—

**Hon. Member:** Confused.

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—yes confused Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Member:** Confused.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** These systems, the 1,200 of them, are in use by every single person in the police service to whom they have been issued.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, I do really believe when I read the US report that is, Trinidad is not a safe place.

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

**Mr. Charles:** I asked you the question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, again, direct it to the Chair.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yes, I asked through you, I asked him the question again. Why is his leadership not producing the results such as we would expect—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:**—from the use of body cameras by officers of the TTPS?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister of National Security, you have an answer?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Absolutely not. I am tired and bored of the Member for Naparima at this juncture—

**Ms. Ameen:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—I have answered the question for the benefit of the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, thank you Members.

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

### **EXPIRATION OF QUESTION TIME**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the time allocated for questions on notice has now expired and in accordance with Standing Order 29 (10) the Chief Whip has indicated that the unanswered question be postponed to a later sitting.

*Question time having expired, the following questions (20, 21, 22, 32, 33, 34, 35) were not dealt with:*

#### **Landslips at Fletcher's Road**

##### **(Commencement of Repair and Rehabilitation Works)**

- 20.** With regard to the 3 landslips located at Fletcher's Road, will the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state when will repair and rehabilitation works commence? [*Dr. R. Seecheran*]

#### **Kelly Recreational Ground Lights**

##### **(Repairs and Commissioning)**

21. Will the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state when will the lights located at Kelly Recreational Ground be repaired and commissioned for you? [*Dr. R. Seecheran*]

**Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable Bridge**

**(Commencement of Repair and Rehabilitation Works)**

32. Will the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government state when will the repair and rehabilitation works to the bridge located at Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable commence? [*Dr. R. Seecheran*]

**Mayaro to Guayaguayare linking road**

**(Commencement of Remedial Works)**

33. Will the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state when will remedial works commence along the road that links Mayaro to Guayaguayare? [*Mr. R. Paray*]

**Vacation Revision Programme 2022**

**(Estimated Financial Cost)**

34. Will the hon. Minister of Education state the estimated final cost of the Vacation Revision Programme 2022? [*Ms. A. Haynes*]

**Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination Results**

**(Plans for Improving 2022-2023 Results)**

35. Will the hon. Minister of Education state of the 46,770 students who never accessed online learning, how many have returned to the physical school system. [*Mrs. A. Haynes*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**(APPOINTMENT OF)**

**Fisheries Management No. 2 Bill, 2020**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having regard to the correspondence received from the President of the Senate, in relation to the establishment of the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Fisheries Management, No. 2 Bill, 2020, by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023, I beg to move:

That the House concur with the Senate in the establishment of the Committee and that the following six Members be appointed to serve on that Committee.

Mr. Stephen Mc Clashie

Mr. Kennedy Richards

Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe

Mr. Brian Manning

Mr. Ravi Ratiram

Mr. Rushton Paray

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Leader of the House.

### **Shipping Bill, 2020**

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having regard to the correspondence received from the President of the Senate, in relation to the establishment of the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Shipping Bill, 2020 by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023, I beg to move:

That the House concur with the Senate in the establishment of the Committee, and that the following six Members be appointed to serve on the Committee.

Mrs. Penelope Beckles-Robinson

Mr. Marvin Gonzales

Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian

Mr. Keith Scotland

Mr. Davendrath Tancoo

Mr. Dinesh Rambally

Thank you very much Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**CIVIL AVIATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2022**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I call upon the Attorney General.

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

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed Attorney General.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:** Thank you very much. With your leave Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I indicate that I am before this hon. House to move with respect to the Bill, the Civil Aviation Amendment Bill, 2022 at the request of the responsible Minister of Works and Transport who asked me to assist given his commitment to other pressing business of the State. I beg to move:

That a Bill entitled an Act to amend the Civil Aviation Act Chap. 49:03 be now read a second time.

The Bill, before this House Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a very short Bill and the intent of that Bill is to provide for the continuation and continued availability of a competent board of suitably qualified experienced persons. The Bill by clause 3 seeks to delete subclause 2 of clause 2 of the First Schedule to the Act, thereby



removing the limit of two consecutive terms for Members of the Board. Clause 2, subsection 2 of the First Schedule of the Act currently states:

“No member of the Board, other than the Director General, shall hold office for more than two consecutive terms”

And the aim of that clause 3 is to delete that subclause of clause 2, with a view to enabling the Board to continue in office beyond the term of the expiry of two terms. As is known, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority is a body corporate, established under the Act and charged with the responsibility for regulating all civil aviation activities within Trinidad and Tobago. Pursuant to section 11(1) of the Act, the business of the Authority is managed by a board of directors comprising eight persons appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of the First Schedule of the Act. And it is important to appreciate by that First Schedule that the Members of that Board are appointed from among others:

“...six suitably qualified persons with proven experience in the fields of civil aviation, law, financial management, economics or human resource management.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the civilian aviation industry is a highly technical and specialized field and among the responsibilities which the Board is charged with is the preparation of a corporate plan with respect to corporate management, and goals of the Authority to include, among other things:

“...analysis of risk factors likely to affect aviation safety in the aviation industry...”

—and to keep the Minister apprised throughout with respect to the realization of that plan. It is therefore important in that respect, therefore, to have Members of the Board constituted from among persons with suitable qualifications and proven

experience as specified in the schedule. The governance of the industry requires a keen appreciation and understanding of international responsibilities and obligations, and the Board must therefore be competent continuously in areas that touch and concern aviation, including aviation risk management, in order to effectively discharge its governance and its functions. The cadre of persons who are available in the population of Trinidad and Tobago is one that is not necessarily large, particularly in the area of the suitable specialized and technical qualifications of aviation. It is in this context, therefore, that it is recommended that the limit of two terms be deleted to allow the Board to continue to draw on and to benefit from the experience and competence of serving members specialized and experienced in the field of aviation in particular.

The suggested amendment that is brought before this House by this Bill, is to operate with the required expertise while paving the way for new talent to be sourced through a mixture of both old and newer Members. This allows the transfer of knowledge without limiting the Board unduly. The amendment therefore allows the business of the Board to continue while new Members are being sourced, reviewed and mentored and allowing for the seamless transition of members for continuity purposes.

Subclause 1 of the Second Schedule of the Act stipulates that the Board:

“...shall, not less than once every two months, convene such meetings of the Board, as are necessary for the”—effective—“conduct of its functions...”

The term of the last Board of the Aviation Authority expired in September of this year, introducing a degree of urgency to allow the Board to continue to draw upon the pool of specialized, technically competent persons available from within the small cadre which provides that expertise. It is therefore against that background Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we move that subsection 2 of—section 2 of the First

Schedule be deleted so that at the expiry of two terms, those Members of that Board will continue to be available to serve the aviation industry. And there is ample precedent in a number of other pieces of legislation for boards being able to continue to be eligible for reappointment of the expiry of the term. In the circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

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

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, you have the same allotted time as the Attorney General.

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Thank you very much Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had to navigate myself for the very first time to these facilities to speak. Mr. Deputy Speaker indeed the Attorney General did not occupy the crease for any particular length of time so, I was a bit caught there to get my papers together to respond on this matter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, apart from the brevity with which the Attorney General dispatched the responsibility before him, there is another matter of some interest, in that as I speak now, our very distinguished Minister of Works and Transport continues to occupy his presence in the Chamber and he is of course with us all evening.

The Attorney General indicated that he was doing the bidding at the request of the Minister of Works and Transport, the Minister in charge of this matter, because the Minister had to be somewhere undertaking other responsibilities when indeed he was in the Chamber, and I believe fully able to undertake this—he is still in the Chamber, unable to undertake the duties. Maybe he will respond to me as Minister of Works. But the Attorney General was very kind to alleviate the burden

that the Minister of Works would carry on a matter that ought not to be controversial, ought not to be engaging us for too long a time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General, of course, spoke so briefly on the matter before us, and indeed if I am to get the requisite amendment in my hands now, I will get it now. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amendment before us, yes, it is all of effectively one clause, clause 3 of an Act to Amend the Civil Aviation Act Chap. 49:03.

“The Act is amended in clause 2 of the First Schedule, by deleting subclause 2.”

It is effectively a one clause Bill. But Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a one clause Bill, but it is not a one clause issue.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And I suspect that the Minister of Works and Transport may have been bothered by his conscience that prevented him from piloting this Bill this afternoon. And notwithstanding, colleagues believe that even the conscience might be missing, he would be in a quandary to explain the inexplicable before us and the Minister of Works and Transport, who is still on the compound and refuses to pilot a Bill under his Ministry, which is another matter. We are receiving from Ministers in the last two three days some very serious indictment, in terms of their conduct and so on. But—that the Minister of Works refused, while being on the compound, to pilot a Bill on an entity that falls squarely, gazetted, under his Ministry, and would ask a visitor, a guest in the person of the Attorney General to do that and therefore, you would invite a guest to the House to receive the critical remarks at best and the blows at worst for piloting such a measure.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to take us back as the Attorney General did briefly to the Civil Aviation Authority legislation and let me say that it is an

extremely bulky piece of legislation because of course, it is highly technical and the subsidiary legislation as well, is extremely voluminous. But we are not dealing with that today, we are not dealing with the technical part of civil aviation. And our friend from Point Fortin south, Point, not—Point Fortin—our friend from Point Fortin. I wanted to use him, without his permission, of course, but I wanted to use our friend from Point Fortin as an example of something and by the broad smile, you know, in front of me from Point Fortin, and I will assume that he will consent to me to use him as an example.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government is attempting to amend the Bill and the first schedule of the Bill, which says that appointment of a board—and I will just read it to the benefit of the record:

“The President shall appoint the members of the Board other than the Director General, as follows:

- (a) six suitably qualified persons with proven experience in the fields of civil aviation, law, financial management, economics of human resource management”
- (b) a nominee of the Tobago House of Assembly
- (c) a nominee of the Environmental Management Authority...”

“...The President may appoint any two members, excluding the *ex officio* member to be Chairman...Deputy Chairman...”

—et cetera but is at two, clause 2 of the full schedule that we will locate our business this afternoon.

“...A member of the Board other than the Director General shall hold office for a term not exceeding three years, as shall be specified in the instrument of appointment, and shall be eligible for reappointment”

But:

“...No”—Board Member Mr. Deputy Speaker—“shall hold office...”—  
“other than the Director General...for”—a term of—“more than  
two...terms.”

And it is here that I come now to the Explanatory Note of the amendment Bill before us. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will read this explanatory note before us and one paragraph—the troubling paragraph. Currently, and I quote:

“Currently”—out—“of the existent composition of the Board, six (6) members have served one (1) previous term of office and were therefore not eligible for reappointment upon expiration of their respective terms of office in September 2022...”

The Attorney General indicated such:

“This Bill is required, in the context of the exploration of the tenure of existing Board, and the role that the Board plays in managing the affairs of the Trinidad and Tobago Aviation Authority, for...” suitably qualified  
“...candidates of the Board to be identified”

Now, what is the Attorney General telling us today? You are telling—Mr. Attorney General, you are telling us today that we cannot find six suitably qualified persons with proven experience in the fields of civil aviation where one is present in the House today and sitting in the seat of the Member for Point Fortin.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We cannot find persons qualified in the field of law. But, you could look to the UNC. There are brilliant lawyers all around the UNC, they are winning every case these days. You cannot find anyone qualified in financial management. Well, Diego Martin North/East, notwithstanding him, there are many persons in the national community qualified in financial management. You cannot find anyone qualified in the field of economics—now, that is a difficult

proposition. We cannot find anyone qualified in the field of human resource management—is this a credible argument? Is this credible to come to the Parliament and say we want to amend the Civil Aviation Authority Act 49:03 to ensure—to give the opportunity for members of the Board who are there now to continue in office because we cannot find suitably qualified persons to do that job. Something is wrong and you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who on the board now—they are in public office so we should go now.

Mr. Thomas E. Lawrence. I do not know the gentleman, I cannot say anything bad about this gentleman, I do not know him. He is from the Civil Aviation Training Institute and so on. He was working with Caribbean Airlines and BWIA before. Ms. Nadra Nathai-Gyan, a graduate of York University Master of Arts in Change, a degree in zoology and a post in environmental biology. A former candidate of the People's National Movement, well, a former defeated candidate and I think this person is a nominee of the EMA. Mr. Ravi Nanga, an advocate attorney, is now, I believe, the Chairman of the Water and Sewerage Authority. He is an attorney at law. I am sure of that one. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am calling these names—those persons are in public service. So we appreciate their service and so on—to tell you that in the pool and Trinidad and Tobago we have also one Mr. Nigel Pantin, Mr. Sheldon Baptiste, Mr. Nigel Wilson, I think from Tobago, THA, Mr. Keith Beckles, I believe this is also a lawyer. Mr. Andre Joseph, Ms. C—somebody named C. Ramcharan—no Acting Permanent Secretary C. Ramcharan, Ministry of Works and so on.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making to the Attorney General is please indicate to us what group of people we do not have adequate supply of, in a professional sense, so that you can keep the law as it is so that persons do not serve more than two terms. Surely, it is not law; surely, it is not

financial management; surely, it is not human resource management, and surely, it is not economics. Aha, the Attorney General pointed us in the direction of persons who are with experience in civil aviation. But you see Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point is as of this time, I am informed reliably informed that we may have over 50 persons who have served in the airline industry, the aviation industry and are suitably qualified to fill one position on the Board of the Civil Aviation Authority and we can find—so, we cannot buy—we cannot understand the argument that we cannot find persons. Are there not engineers, are there not air traffic controllers, are there not pilots like our friend from Point Fortin? Are there not retired pilots, air traffic controllers, engineers? We are told that the pool may be about 50 persons at this time.

So, the policy objective of getting fresh blood and new people and so on, is defeated by keeping the same persons in the job for more than two terms. Because the troubling area we are told is civil aviation and we are told that pilots, air traffic controllers, engineers are there. You can find persons with experience in those areas and that is just one area. The other area of law, economics, financial management, human resource management, we have ample in supply, ample. There are many qualified experienced pilots, a lot of them with aviation MBAs from UWI, who qualify to serve on this board.

So Mr. Lawrence, who we believe is a BWIA/CAL pilot and Mr. Baptiste who worked in BWIA maintenance for some time have aviation experience. They may be known to the Member for Point Fortin. However, the First Schedule of the Civil Aviation Act prescribed requirements for all the Board members including the other areas. So aviation is not the only criteria, which makes nonsense of the second and third paragraph of the Bill's Explanatory Note. And we cannot give the impression that all members need aviation experience. No, you need one member



with aviation experience, not all. The person Gyan is an EMA nominee and Wilson, the THA nominee.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to invite the Attorney General to level with us. I appeal to you, tell us the truth. Tell us what is the purpose behind this amendment? Who is it on the Board that you wish to carry on but you cannot carry him alone you need to take everybody? So, you need to carry everybody in the maxi because really one passenger you are interested in. Who is it? Who is it, that the Government would like to continue in office, the law prevents this and you come to the Parliament today to change the law?

**3.30 p.m.**

This is just a statutory movement akin to the local government matter, where you extend local government corporations without even statute. But, today, you come to say we want somebody to continue in office, let us change the law, because the law does not permit it, and there is a reason for this. I have been doing some research, as the hon. Attorney General, I am sure, would have had his team—well, assuming he had prior knowledge that he was helping out the Minister today—examine the Bill, examine the debate on this piece of legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a reason for this.

You see, I have been researching as well air traffic management authority globally. The CANSO, as we are also informed, the International Civil Aviation Organization—the Member for Point Fortin is nodding. He is well aware—he is nodding approvingly—of these organizations and their rules and regulations and our international commitment. He is well aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He is smiling. Yes, he is well aware of the International Civil Aviation Organization's work and their conventions to which we are a part of. He is well aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of our FAA Category 1 status, and the history of that, when we

lost that status to Category 2 and it was retrieved, I believe, in an around 2005, and then confirmed in 2012, when the Partnership administration was in office. In fact, the Member for Point Fortin is well aware that the only time the Civil Aviation Authority got a beautiful spanking headquarters building, was built by the People's Partnership.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General—and I am almost going to say that he is a guest in the House, but today we may be his guest, because this is not our House. This is the very first time that I have come to this Chamber. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our career, we often believe sometimes that it may be our political fate from the Lower House to end up in the other place. I did not know my time would have come so quickly that I came back to the place where I started. I did start my political career, the legislative part of my career, in the Senate, many years ago, and I was in mortal fear that I may end up there again, but it is a good place. But, this is the very first time I am on the compound here, given the problems we are facing with the roof and the ceiling in the Red House.

But, Mr. Attorney General, there is a reason why. In the literature you would read and you would acknowledge that there is a particular philosophy, a particular set of principles, corporate and legal, that determine matters like these, and it is felt that there are some regulatory authorities to which we must be careful of what is called regulatory capture, meaning, and I will explain this:

“Regulatory capture refers to the phenomenon of government agencies, created initially to serve the public interest, serving instead the interests of the companies and industries they regulate, as a result of deliberate efforts on the part of those companies and regulators to co-opt the agencies.”

They give a nice example:

“For example, taxi regulations...aimed at protecting the riding public, but serve mainly to raise barriers to entry into the taxi market...”

And, therefore, a regulatory agency could be captured by a stakeholder. That is what is called regulatory capture. This occurs for many reasons, because it can occur through conflict of interest, it occurs through corruption, plain and simple. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it also occurs when regulators stay in their office beyond a particular time. They can be captured by stakeholders in the industry who can therefore manipulate, dominate their policy positions and their decisions on their boards and so on.

And the motivation for a particular stakeholder to capture a regulatory agency is mainly economic, and the aviation industry, as we all know, is a multi-billion dollar industry. This is big. This is big. It involves everything—the purchase of aircrafts, advice on purchase, advice on maintenance, advice on almost everything conceivable. And a company—a regulatory agency operating—may seek to capture the regulatory agency in order to gain a competitive advantage over its rivals. An industry may seek to capture the agencies in order to entrench incumbent companies in the industry and raise barriers to entry by upstart competitors.

Quite recently, you know, Loganair in the United Kingdom, I believe, Loganair has just received slots, well, what is now a prized possession, a slot at the Heathrow Airport. Loganair just got that as a domestic UK carrier, because of the fallout with the Russian airline. So the Russian airline out of Heathrow, and Loganair which is a British domestic airline, which was I believe, almost in bankruptcy, they just got the slots at Heathrow. This is the kind of business that you operate, and a slot at Heathrow is a major, major, find for you. We lost two to BWIA. I believe it was a PNM government that “sell out” that too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so regulatory agencies are thought to be susceptible to capture by stakeholders around. Those stakeholders can meet and treat with officers, agents and board members of a regulatory agency when they stay there too long and that is the reason, one of the important reasons, the drafters of this particular mammoth piece of legislation held the view that you can appoint persons as directors. But they ought not to serve more than two consecutive terms, because then they become part of the sector, and they can be easily captured by stakeholders in this multi-billion dollar sector.

And this is why when we were putting together the Parliament, a previous Parliament in which I was also a Member, and putting together this legislation and amending—we had some amendments over the years and regulations—we were very careful that we ought not, unlike what obtains. The Attorney General did point out there are other regulatory agencies in our jurisdiction that allow for this continuity of directors and so on. I believe Central Bank, Security Exchange Commission and the Environmental Management Authority, I believe, but there are others. But in this business, a multi-billion dollar business involving transnational corporations and so on, we thought that we should put a full stop after two consecutive terms, and that is why we did that. When I say “we”, the Parliament. It was a former Manning administration involved in this matter as well.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, surely, the Attorney General is not telling us that we do not have ample human resource capacity in civil aviation, in law, in economics, in financial management in economics. Come with a next story. Maybe you want to argue later that they are doing some important work that continuity is required. Well, you did not say that, so I imagine we cannot go there now. But we should, as a Parliament, we should at all times resist this type of

change. We should resist this, where you allow persons to stay in these offices for what could be 10, 15, 20 years, or forever. This is not healthy for the corporate body. It is not healthy for the purpose that the Attorney General read, section 11 of the Civil Aviation Authority Act. The Attorney General read that. But doing this is not healthy towards that section. It is not healthy.

Because you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, civil aviation is an amazing area. You know, it is an amazing area, because an ordinary passenger boarding an airplane goes on the plane, he thinks that the pilot is there, the co-pilot, we have flight attendants and so on, we have ground staff, we have everything, but your life, every time you board this aircraft, your life is in your hand. It is in your hand, because of several, several areas, several things happening, and civil aviation is a critical fundamental part of the travel airline industry that determines life and death. It determines life and death. And to remind you of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just recall, it was just, I believe, a few weeks ago, we had a story:

“Piarco’s radar system was down during near collision.

The Air Traffic Control Radar system at the Piarco International Airport was inoperative when the pilot of a JetBlue...aircraft was forced to take evasive action to prevent a possible collision with a Caribbean Airlines aircraft on Sunday.”—a few weeks ago.

And:

“This was confirmed by the Director General of the T&T Civil Aviation Authority, Francis Regis...”

So, the Civil Aviation Authority plays a critical role, life and death. A radar system was down, two aircrafts could have collided in mid-air, and they were saved—just for the record, I do not want to leave it there—you know, this was saved because as:

“Aviation expert Ramesh Lutchmedial explained to Guardian...”—newspaper story that—“...what transpires in the case of a radar being non-functional. ‘They resort to Procedural Air Traffic Control. With this method, the pilots report their GPS position, heading and altitude via two-way radio to the controller who records it on a strip...

With radar, the controller can see where each aircraft is with the heading and altitude, also the radar software has a conflict resolution feature that red flags whenever two aircraft breach the vertical or horizontal separation minima,’...”

The Member for Point Fortin understands that well. So:

“...what saved the day...was...the on board Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems...”—and so on.

I do not want to get into that too much. It is a technical area.

But the point I make is these things are managed by civil aviation. Civil aviation is managed by a board, so it is life and death. And if the board expired, according to the Minister, September 2022, those of us on this side cannot understand why the Government, the Cabinet—all Cabinet Members are here, including, you know, Members of the Government and so on—could not have found six persons of which two are already nominees of EMA and THA, could not have found four persons qualified in law, financial management, economics and civil aviation and say, let us put our board together, a new board. Because unless I am mistaken, I do not believe the expert in civil aviation needs to be the chairman, necessarily. So you can put together a board. Surely you have that.

But you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is that someone here is a sacred cow, someone here is a friend of someone on high and will require to continue, wants to continue, and high government officials want them to continue, then the law

prohibits that and you come to the Parliament to say let us change the law because “Mr. This” has to continue. He is the friend of God and he has to continue in office and, therefore, we have to change the law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not proper, effective and good governance of a critical sector. The authority has a primary function; paramount consideration is the safety of aviation, and we have a history in this country with problems in civil aviation and problems and so on. I do not want to go too far back, but one would recall, Essential Services Division, Case No. 30/32 of 1990 at the Industrial Court—the Attorney General may be familiar with that matter—involving matters to do with a BWIA aircraft and an incident on that aircraft returning to Piarco from Jamaica, in which they had 10 extra passengers on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 1989. The then chairman of the board of BWIA, I believe it was Mr. Carl Hudson Phillips, deceased, who was the chairman of the board, and called for an enquiry into that incident at which fingers were pointed to civil aviation as well, as well as the conduct of employees. And the 10 persons who should not be on that flight compromised the operations of the flight. And it may well have been that there were also persons compromised in terms of the officials, agencies and personnel of civil aviation that permitted and allowed such a serious occurrence. I do not want to go further. There is an Industrial Court judgment on that if anyone wants to go and look at it.

But that is one critical matter that arose around 1989, 1990, and it spoke to several issues involving training, re-training, rules, regulations, the conduct of BWIA and the conduct of civil aviation and that led, among other things—I am not saying only—it led to us looking to rebuild the legal architecture for civil aviation, and it took a long time, because this is not a simple area.

This reminded me of doing the bankruptcy legislation in Parliament. I think

it took seven or 10 years to do that. Civil aviation took years, and years, and years, to come with the proper legislation to have to deal with the industry, and this is why, for example, the regulations we see in those books—in fact, almost an entire red book might be civil aviation regulations. This is why it is so detailed and comprehensive. In fact, this part of law, when you read those regulations, is almost like reading a mathematics book, textbook at university level. So it is a complex issue.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to remind us, as I move forward, that we also had a problem with the Boeing 737 Max, the two crashes that took place. Quite recently, actually, it was raised in this Parliament as well, because Caribbean Airlines purchased those aircrafts, light aircrafts, Boeing Max 737. And, again, there was a huge investigation by, I think the United States Congress into this matter, and produced a voluminous report again speaking to civil aviation—the role of civil aviation and how they may have undermined certain requirements in law and allowed certain things to happen. I do not want to get into that either, because that is not before us.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last board was first appointed in August 2016 or thereabout, I assume, and it is now expired. Now, the Minister indicated that the board has expired September this year, 2022. You will just correct us if we are wrong, because there is some other information on that, but a board was reappointed in 2019. So, by 2022, I believe it would come to an end, but I am not sure September, but it may be September, but it comes to an end. Now is the time to go to the Cabinet, pull persons with the requisite experience, requisite skills for this matter and put a new board in place to manage civil aviation and thank those persons who have served over the last six years for their service. Surely, they can serve in some other area of government, if you have a preference for those persons.



If you believe they are so highly valuable, skilled and qualified, they can serve elsewhere. In fact, they can serve at the airport. There is an Airports Authority board, there is a Caribbean Airlines board and there are boards dealing with the aviation sector and so on. So they can serve in other areas. Why change the law for one man? Why change the law when you can easily get persons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, qualified in this area. Why change it?

I would like to ask the Attorney General—and this is a question I had for the Minister of Works and Transport but, regrettably, he is not with us. He was with us earlier, when we started the debate, but I think he would have left by now. Did the Ministry of Works and Transport receive advice from the officials and the professional staff at the Ministry of Works and Transport? Did you receive advice? Well, the Ministry of Works and Transport received advice, not the Attorney General, that suggested that the Government ought not to take this course of action in the context of regulatory capture in the context of having persons there too long in such a very serious multi-billion sector. Did the Ministry of Works and Transport receive legal advice against doing this? Because it is not the same as the Central Bank and the environmental management and other things that the Minister has written. I mean, some of those boards, yes, they preside over big business and mega business and so on, but not all the time they involve life and death that way. They may involve economic life and death, but not human beings in the way that civil aviation deals with it.

So, Mr. Minister, those are some of the issues that we wish to raise on this side. I know that the Attorney General is not the Minister of Works and Transport, and being relatively new to the compound as well, may not have had some interfacing with civil aviation with the business of that entity, may not even be known to the members of the current board. So it would really be ill advised to ask

the Attorney General to, you know, respond in any detail to some of these matters, but we place it on the record nevertheless. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I thank you for the opportunity.

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

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to make this very brief intervention on a very simple Bill that is before this House. An amendment, a proposed amendment to the Civil Aviation Authority Act of Trinidad and Tobago, specifically, with reference to the Schedule, clause 2(2), which places certain terms limit on members of the board appointed to govern the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. But before I do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just take a couple of minutes to respond to the previous speaker, obviously, trying to create the impression that there is some kind of conspiracy, there is some kind of hidden agenda on the part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in moving this very simple amendment to the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member pointed to some colleagues on this side being qualified in civil aviation and being qualified to be appointed on the board of the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. He also pointed to some colleagues on his side being experienced in law, finance and whatever, as being qualified, and saying that Trinidad and Tobago is not short of any resource or qualified personnel to be appointed to the board of the authority. But I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Member was not being forthright in his usual self and truthful in coming to the Parliament and giving the impression that whilst, yes, we may have a number of qualified people and citizens being qualified to be appointed to boards of state agencies, not many people in this country are

willing to come forward to offer their services and to offer themselves for public services.

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that oftentimes when we form ourselves into joint select committees and where we invite members of the board of state agencies to be examined by joint select committees, the way some members of boards are treated, specifically, by the Opposition, I can tell you many citizens do not wish to participate in the public affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, because of the way they are treated by members of the Opposition.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** On numerous occasions, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and by extension, the country—I want to tell the country that despite the conduct of the UNC members in badgering people who would have come forward to offer their services and their professionalism—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on 48(6). The Member is going in a direction where Members of the Opposition fulfil their responsibilities on joint select committees, which is a division of the Parliament, and we do not badger. We fulfil our responsibilities on these committees.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Member, could you rephrase?

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making is that too often on joint select committees of Parliament, the way that parliamentarians conduct themselves and the way in which they embark upon the course of badgering witnesses, Members of Parliament, that it is not encouraging too often for members of the public, qualified members of the public, to come forward.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I refer you to that particular

Standing Order 48(6). The Member is having great difficulty in rephrasing or either retracting the statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Yeah. That word, please, I need you to find another way to put it across.

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** I so retract, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago, yes, we have a number of qualified people who are willing to come forward and offer their services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in the public space, to be appointed on boards, but oftentimes, the way in which we conduct ourselves in this Parliament, it is not encouraging to so many of our citizens who may be desirable of coming forward and offering their services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, is an authority in which we can all be proud of as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The Civil Aviation Authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been in receipt of a number of regional and international commendations for its work and its level of professionalism, not only to Trinidad and Tobago, but at the Piarco Flight Information Region serving several communities and several countries in the region. It is an authority that we can all be proud about, and I was hoping that the Member would have taken the opportunity, during his contribution, to recognize the good work of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority, because it is a beacon of regional integration. It is a beacon of regional professionalism in that sphere, and I wish put on record, at this point in time, the great work being done by this board as well as previous boards, and people who would have come forward to add their value, to add their professionalism to advance the work of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have served in the Ministry of Works and Transport on several occasions, and I can tell you and I can tell this country that oftentimes the Ministry would have found itself in grave difficulty in getting suitable persons who are willing to come forward and serve on the authority. And that is the very critical point that we make and we have to understand. Yes, we do have people who are trained in law. We do have a lot of our citizens who are trained in accounts and finance and other fields of endeavour, but very few people are willing to come forward, because of the various challenges that they have to face in offering their services in the public space.

And oftentimes, the Civil Aviation Authority throughout the last 20 years, I can tell you, would have gone on for several periods without a board, not because we have the absence of citizens who are qualified, but citizens who are willing to come forward and offer their services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is what this clause is seeking to do. Where you have a board, a functioning board, guiding and providing good management and good leadership to the authority, there is absolutely nothing wrong, no allegation of corruption, no allegation of mismanagement of public funds and no allegation of mismanagement of its responsibilities under the Act, and with a willingness to continue to serve, but yet still clause 2(2) of the Schedule, preventing the Government from ensuring that you have a board in place to continue good governance. This simple piece of legislation will ensure that you have continuity in the management of the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can take, for example, a similar provision in the Saint Christopher and Nevis Civil Aviation authority Act. And

what we are doing here is nothing different from what obtains in other Caribbean jurisdictions. Nothing is out of the ordinary. Perhaps, at the point in time when we passed the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago Act we believed, as a Parliament, that it was necessary, at that point in time, to put that restriction on term limit. But we would have passed that piece of legislation over 20 years. We would have had now the benefit of time to look back and examine ways in which we can enhance the governing legislation, removing restrictions where those restrictions may not be and may not augur well for the good functioning and management of the Civil Aviation Authority.

But sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and oftentimes in the drafting of legislation, we look towards precedence and we look towards other Caribbean and international jurisdictions in the crafting of some of these legislative provisions. And I can tell you that what we are seeking to do here today in this Parliament, is not out of the ordinary. And I wish to put on record and wish to read in the record, the provision of the Saint Christopher and Nevis legislation governing the appointment of board of directors of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and it stipulates, Article 10(4):

“The Board of Directors shall comprise of—

- (a) one Director appointed by each of the Participating States for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment at the expiration of such term;”

**4.00 p.m.**

Very much in alignment with what we are seeking here to do in this Parliament:

“(a) one Director appointed by each of the Participating States for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment at the expiration of such term;”

**UNREVISED**

Let me also look at the Jamaican legislation, again, very much similar. First Schedule of the Civil Aviation Authority of Jamaica, and it says at clause 2(1):

“Subject to the provisions of this Schedule, an appointed member shall hold office for such period not exceeding three years as may be specified in the instrument appointing him to that office, and shall be eligible for reappointment.”

So what we are seeking to do here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is very much in alignment with what obtains in the Caribbean as well as our international partners. Nothing is different. So when the Member comes here and tries to create the impression that the Government has some sinister plan, some hidden agenda in making this simple recommendation or amendment to this Act, I wish to put it on record that what we are doing here today is very much in alignment with what other Caribbean countries would have put into their legislation, obviously recognizing that this is an industry where you can have serious challenges in getting persons who are suitably qualified and willing to serve their respective countries, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I knew that the Member would have taken the opportunity to refer to recent issues and matters in the public space with respect to the functioning of our Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. And I can tell you that despite some challenges that may occur from time to time, the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the people of the region must have absolutely nothing to fear with respect to the operation and with respect to the high level of competence and the high degree of professionalism by our Civil Aviation Authority. And I wish to put on record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the good work being done by Mr. Francis Regis, the staff, the professional staff and the board of the Civil Aviation Authority, not only now but in recent times.

I can tell you, in 2019, Trinidad and Tobago was awarded the Council President Certificate by the International Civil Aviation Organization. Trinidad and Tobago was awarded the Council President Certificate in Aviation Security by the International Civil Aviation Organization during a special ceremony of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the ICAO Assembly in Montreal, Canada on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2019, recognizing the great work being done by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. So there is nothing to be concerned—and this whole conspiracy theory that things may not be going right, that something is going wrong, and radars are going down and people's lives are placed in jeopardy. This is, you know, talk that is very much synonymous with the United National Congress where issues are being played with and talk always being, you know, put into the public space to create fear in the minds of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But in this particular industry, we have to be very careful what we do and what we say, especially with very important organizations like the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. Because not only are the citizens of this country listening to us but the people of the region are also listening to us, the people in the international spaces are listening to us and when we stand here and we make very, very wild statements and allegations, we are damaging the good work of the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** We are damaging the competencies and the professionalism of the men and the women who continue to work hard and to fly the flag of Trinidad and Tobago in the civil aviation industry space, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I wish, as a Member of Parliament, a PNM Member of Parliament, to put on record the fact that the work being done by the civil aviation industry in Trinidad and Tobago is not only recognized regionally, but it is also recognized



internationally. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I talk about work and commendation and recognition of the work being done by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, I can say that Mr. Francis Regis, who is the current Director General of the Authority, in June 2022, received an award by the ICAO, North American, Central American and for the Caribbean space, recognizing his continuing leadership, his efforts, his cooperation and support of the ICAO, North American, Central American and Caribbean regional office, and to the aviation of the region and in your state, Trinidad and Tobago, which you have so successfully represented.

In 2019, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a letter from Mr. Francis Regis, the Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, and it was copied to the then Minister of Works and Transport, the hon. Fitzgerald Hinds, where again the International Civil Aviation Organization, recognizing the good work being done by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority in terms of its compliance with its international obligations—and I wish to quote from this very simple piece of correspondence, and it goes on to say that:

From the high-level meetings held during the A41, the strong commitment and support of the Trinidad and Tobago NCACC and its role as the SAP, the champion state to other Caribbean states, was greatly appreciated. The ICAO is pleased that all the different activities through the implementation packages and the technical assistance provided to Trinidad and Tobago have been used to support the aviation recovery in the region and the enhancement of the compliance with the ICAO standards and recommended practice. ICAO thanks Trinidad and Tobago for their leadership and support to the Eastern Caribbean states, the successful management of the Piarco flight information region and the different air navigation services provided

to the Eastern Caribbean sub-region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, good work being done by the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; good work being recognized by the regional and international partners where civil aviation is concerned. And as a Parliament and as elected Members of the Parliament, we must take the opportunity, whilst we may be prone to always see things from a negative standpoint, as the UNC always does, that good work is being done by the people of Trinidad and Tobago; good work is being done by our professionals that are being recognized regionally and internationally, and we take this opportunity to thank them for their good service, not only to us in the region but to their international partners who are also recognizing their good work.

And therefore, as we come again to this very simple piece of amendment, all we are asking the Parliament is to allow a board to remain in place, a board that would have done good work, to ensure that we maintain our leadership in the region where these matters are concerned, to allow the board to continue. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not mean that the Minister or the Government will no longer have the right or the authority to make changes on the board as the situation requires. It simply means that if you have a good board in place and a good leadership team in place that that should not be discontinued simply by a provision which stipulates that you cannot go beyond two terms. What we are seeking to do is to allow continuity in the civil aviation—in the management of the Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. And as the Government continues to provide its oversight responsibility under the Minister of Finance as corporation sole, from time to time changes can and will happen if it so requires, but it cannot just be constrained by a simple piece of legislation or a provision that prevents the continuation beyond two terms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a number of other pieces of legislation appointing boards of directors: the public transport services association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, the Water and Sewerage Authority commission, the Environmental Management Authority. All of these are authorities that are governed by pieces of legislation with provisions in those legislation appointing boards of directors. And if we were to accept the position being put forward by the Member for Oropouche East, then we should ask ourselves, “Why not bring all these pieces of legislation to the Parliament and insert in them similar provisions, like clause 2(2), preventing their reappointment beyond two years?” He came here and he made a song and dance, creating this impression that the Government has some sinister agenda to protect someone on the board. Then if his argument holds then perhaps we should do the same thing for other boards that are managed and that are incorporated by an Act of Parliament. It simply does not make sense.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** It simply does not make sense. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to give my fulsome support to this very simple piece of legislation, an amendment, and whilst I do that, to continue to congratulate and to recognize the leadership and the good work being done by the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority and to recognize their contribution to national development and flying the flag of Trinidad and Tobago very high, not only in the region but internationally. I thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

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

**Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing

me to join this debate. I do not intend to be very long but I just want to add a few things to what my colleague for Oropouche East would have said when he debated earlier on. I just want to start off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by after listening to the last speaker, the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, I thought when he got up to speak, I thought he was going to tell us that WASA is now giving the people of Trinidad and Tobago water—

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

**Mr. D. Lee:**—to clean up after the floods over the last few days. So I really thought he would have been saying that in his speech. And I want to first start off by saying that, like myself and the Member for Oropouche East and the Opposition Members, we agree that the Civil Aviation Authority, they do good work for the country of Trinidad and Tobago. They keep us safe, our flying public safe in the air. So there is no question about it when the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West talks about, you know, that if we do not appreciate the work of the Civil Aviation Authority—and I want to put it on record, we do appreciate the hard work—

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

**Mr. D. Lee:**—of the Civil Aviation Authority and the employees of the Civil Aviation Authority. And listening to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West and the Attorney General, they keep using the word, this is a “simple” amendment, and like my colleague for Oropouche East, we do not feel it is a simple amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And after also listening to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, there is something I would say, when you try to oversell something, you start to wonder what was the reason for the oversell by the Member Lopinot/Bon Air West. And so maybe my colleague for Oropouche East is correct, there is something else in this amendment that the Attorney General has piloted here this afternoon on behalf of his colleague, the Minister of Works and Transport, who

this authority falls under, and he is not here this afternoon to debate his own “simple” amendment, as they put it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this evening is about that amendment of changing the board tenure, the limits, from serving more than six years; two terms of three years each and they now want to do away with that—the Government that is—do away with that amendment so there is unlimited time that the board members can serve, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at the website of the Civil Aviation Authority, and I am reading from the website:

“The primary functions of the Authority...”—which is the Civil Aviation Authority— “are:

“• To maintain the standard of safety and efficiency in the Civil Aviation system that is at least equal to the standard of safety prescribed by the Chicago Convention...”

And I know my colleague for Point Fortin would know what I am talking about:

“...the Chicago Convention and any other Aviation convention, agreement or understanding to which Trinidad and Tobago is a party;”

And it goes further, and this is from their website:

“• To regulate, in accordance with the Act or other written law: –

1. Civil Aviation operations in Trinidad and Tobago
2. The operation of Trinidad and Tobago aircraft
3. The operation of maintenance organizations in respect of aircraft on the Trinidad and Tobago register”

And I would not go into other details that is on the website. And when you look at the message from the Director, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is critical for what we are debating here today, the importance of this civil aviation and having a board in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Authority is governed by a board of directors comprising eight members—I think the Attorney General had mentioned that in his opening remarks—appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to manage the business of the Authority. It goes on to say—and I want to put this on record because when I listened to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, and the Member mentioned that the region is listening to us here today—and I agree with him, they are listening and that is why we have to be critical in what we do with the civil aviation industry or that Authority for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the region, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the website it goes on to say:

“...the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has responsibility for the provision of Air Navigation Services within the airspace above its territory. In addition, Trinidad and Tobago is responsible for the provision of Air Navigation Services within an airspace, known as, the Piarco Flight Information Region (FIR), of some seven hundred and fifty thousand (750,000) square miles that includes the airspace over the entire group of Eastern Caribbean islands from north of Antigua to south of Trinidad and stretching eastward to halfway across the Atlantic.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it goes on:

“The volume of aircraft movements within the Piarco...averages in excess of”—over—four hundred (400) movements...”

—which is airplane flights:

“...per day during”—a—“busy...”—period.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the area that we are talking about, it is not only Piarco or the Trinidad and Tobago airspace our Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for. It is responsible for, as I just read out from their website, over 750,000 square

miles, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is also responsible for the safety of individuals while they are in an airplane travelling within that airspace. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a very important amendment that we are considering here this afternoon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you also look at the Act, the Act says the responsibilities of the board, and it is very important to understand the responsibilities of the board, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I am reading from the Act:

**“THE BOARD**

There shall be a Board to manage the business of the Authority comprising eight persons...”

—I will not repeat that:

“The Board shall conduct its proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Second Schedule.

The Board shall appoint a suitably qualified person to perform the functions of secretary...”—et cetera.

“The Authority...”—which is the Civil Aviation—“from time to time appoint, with the approval of the Minister, a suitably qualified and experienced person to be the chief executive officer, who shall be known as the Director-General of Civil Aviation...”

And I think the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West referred to the present Deputy General, Mr. Regis, I think his name is, and he is doing a good job, Mr. Deputy Speaker; no doubt about that. I think the last one we had was Mr. Lutchmedial, and I think he did a tremendous job when he was Director General in the Civil Aviation before Mr. Regis, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our concern, as the Member for Oropouche East had mentioned, given the sensitivity and the importance of the Civil Aviation Authority, when the framers of this Act, back in 2001, put on limits, two-term

limits of three years each, there was a purpose for that. And it had to do with, you know, ensuring that given the volume of airspace that this Civil Aviation Authority is in charge of, to ensure that the board of directors who are put in place for no more than six years, two terms of three years each, do the job and do not become complacent. And, you know, sometimes complacency could lead to nepotism, it can lead to familiarization, it can lead to favouritism, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think that is one of the reasons that they had put these two-term limits on this particular board, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I agree, we agree, that it should remain. I think the Member for Oropouche East has maintained that. And we would have thought that if you want to have a continuity from board after the six-year term limit, they might have brought an amendment—the Government would have brought an amendment today just seeking to extend that board limit of no more than six months while they get a new board in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So these are the things that we thought that the Government would have come here today, instead of just doing away with the term limits of board of directors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at schedule two that this amendment talks about—the Second Schedule, sorry. The Second Schedule talks about the “Meeting of Board”:

“The Chairman...”—for where there is—“any reason the Chairman is unable to act, the Deputy...”—Speaker holds on, and so forth.

It talks about “Convening of meeting”, it talks about “Quorum”, it talks about “Procedure at meetings”, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the First Schedule, “Appointment of Board”, when you look at it, it talks about the “Tenure of office”. In 2(1) of the First Schedule:



“A member of the Board, other than the Director-General, shall hold office for such a term not exceeding three years, as shall be specified in the instrument of appointment and shall be eligible for reappointment.”

—to a second term.

“(2) No member of the Board, other than the Director-General, shall hold office for more than two consecutive terms.”

And I think that is the amendment that the Government is bringing here today, to do away with tenure, two consecutive terms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask a question here today when I listened to the Attorney General, and maybe in his wind up he can tell us. This present board has expired, I think, 16<sup>th</sup> of September, thereabout, this year. They have served two terms, so they have served their six years. Is it fair to say, Attorney General, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is no board in place as we meet here in Parliament today, that there is no longer a board for the Civil Aviation Authority? And if that is so, I would say that is a dereliction of duty by this present Government and the Minister of Works and Transport—

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

**Mr. D. Lee:**—especially for a critical board like the Civil Aviation Authority that handles over 700,000 square feet of airspace for the region, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I would like to ask, if there is no board in place because of the Act then something is wrong that this Government is a dereliction of duty that they should have put a board in place before the tenure of this board expired, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or on the existence or the exit of this last board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also would like to ask the Attorney General in his winding up—is the Attorney General, in his piloting of the Bill on the amendment, is the Attorney General saying to the country that the last board, eight members,

are going to be the new board if this Bill is passed here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or does this Government have in place a new eight members to sit on this board? Because you have a new THA administration in place, and I am asking, this Government should give the THA to at least pick their own representative as a board member on the Civil Aviation Authority, because the Act calls for a member from the THA, appointed by the THA to sit on the civil aviation board. So I am asking if it is going to be *carte blanche* that the last eight members are going to be the new eight members if this Bill is passed here this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, both Members who spoke referred to an incident that happened on October the 11<sup>th</sup>. It is a Trinidad *Guardian* media release:

“Piarco’s radar system was down during near collision”.

I would not rehash everything because my colleague for Oropouche East went through that area. But I want to ask, when this incident happened, did we have a board in place? And if we did not have a board in place, it tells me the dereliction of duty by this Government for the Civil Aviation Authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is critical. Luckily for the country, a disaster was avoided by the technology on the planes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the Civil Aviation Authority and the board, what they also do as part of their responsibilities and duties, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to investigate situations related to airplanes, et cetera, flight transport, air transport. And when you read this media release, this media report, in the report it says, and I just want to quote one area, and this is from Mr. Regis who is the Director General:

“The TTCAA confirms that there was a traffic incident which is being investigated by the TTCAA,’ Regis stated.”

—and I quote.

So that Mr. Regis is saying that TTCAA, which is responsible for

investigating air transport situations/problems, you know, coalitions, et cetera, Mr. Regis is saying, they are investigating themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Something is wrong with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I go further:

“We further confirm that the radar system was out of service at the time of the incident,’ he stated.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the radar is manned by the Civil Aviation Authority so they are responsible for the radar and now a near coalition was avoided and they are investigating themselves. And to date, we are asking—the Opposition is asking because the country, the region is watching us, and we are asking that they should have—

**Mr. Gonzales:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, please—

**Mr. D. Lee:**—had some sort of independent—

**Mr. Gonzales:** Point of order—

**Mr. D. Lee:**—independent enquiry—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** One second, Member.

**Mr. Gonzales:** Point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), relevance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Mr. D. Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just responding to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West because he also raised this media release. Thank you. So the Opposition is calling, based on this incident, to have an independent investigation by independent individuals into this near coalition that was avoided, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. D. Lee:** And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you read this article, the last board that was in place, if they were doing their job as a board, the parts or the issues with the radar should have never happened under their tenureship.

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

**Mr. D. Lee:** So if this Government is going to bring them back as the new board, the Opposition has a problem with those individuals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are saying the Civil Aviation should have a competent board; we agree on that, but we feel, like the Member Oropouche East, there is a cadre of professionals in Trinidad and Tobago that the Government can draw on, not necessarily political individuals who are friendly to them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, under our tenureship, the PP Partnership, under Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar as Prime Minister, we had a member as the Deputy Vice-Chairman. His name was Neil Mohammed. I do not think he is a UNC Member. I think he went up against me in Pointe-a-Pierre. He is a very good individual. A very, very good man. And I think his only downfall was that he tried to go up against me in Pointe-a-Pierre and the record showed that.

**4.30 p.m.**

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

**Mr. D. Lee:** But he is a good friend of mine. He is a very good friend of mine, and he was very competent and we saw his competence. That is why the PP Government under Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar had put him as vice-chairman at the Civil Aviation Authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So there is a cadre of individuals and we feel that the Civil Aviation Authority should be, the board members should be independent individuals, not political appointees that can lend assistance not only to the country but for the entire region, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I listened to the Attorney General in piloting the Bill and the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air as being simple, a simple amendment, we have an issue with the change of the tenureship of the board from more than sitting two terms. We feel that the country has enough qualified individuals to be

on the board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have an issue with this simple amendment. With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Kennedy Richards** (*Point Fortin*): Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are debating here this afternoon a simple amendment and I will read it, some of the background, the key elements of this Bill is the amendment to the Civil Aviation Act, Chap. 49:03 and the deletion of paragraph two of the First Schedule. And this amendment removes the limitation of board members who basically are being allowed to serve only two terms and a term is a period of three years. And the third part of this Bill is basically saying that it will seek to amend a pool of eligible of candidates available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to respond to a couple of things that the Members opposite would have said. First, Member for Oropouche East. He would have asked if, continuity is one of the principles that this Government is seeking. And I say as the only aviation practicing person in this House, I will say that continuity is extremely important in aviation. [*Desk thumping*]

It seems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he would have called out a couple of names and one of which I know very well, the name Thomas E. Lawrence. And if anybody in Trinidad and Tobago could be considered an aviation expert, it is Thomas E. Lawrence.

He also went on to say aviation is not the only criteria. But I would say that, it is the most important criteria because you are dealing with the TTCARs which is the Trinidad and Tobago Civilian Aviation Regulations and as an aviation person you have to be able to lead the charge in ensuring the safety. So that is definitely the most important criteria. I understand that it is a multi-billion dollar industry

and there is possibly collusion as he would have said but not so much in Trinidad and Tobago. He also went on to say that the Piarco radar system—

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I started flying at age of 17 years old and we had no radar at that point in time, but it was a PNM Government who ensured that Trinidad and Tobago had a properly functioning radar system.

He also spoke about the GPS positions and pilots would have to report the GPS positions. But if the radar is down you cannot report a GPS position. You report a position based on the conventional system which is a VOR and you give them the distance and the air traffic control will now utilize that information that you have given them to determine your place and bearing.

One of the things that he also said is, they cannot see—right. One of the things that he also mentioned is the MAX 8 and the role of the civil aviation. And I will let him know this afternoon that even though the FAA, which is the American system, would have approved the return to service of the MAX 8 after the disaster, the Civil Aviation, the TTCARs, ensured that we had extra measures in place before returning it to service in Trinidad and Tobago. And I had the opportunity to go for one of those aircrafts, the MAX 8s, and I can ensure you that under this board nothing was held back to ensure the safety and security of any passenger on any Caribbean Airlines flight or any other MAX 8 jet that flies in this region.

The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre also said that it is not just simple. And even though it is simple, it is definitely necessary. There is no favouritism, there is no nepotism. It is just competence that this Government is dealing with.

And the last thing I want to also dispel is that the TTCAA is investigating itself. The Civil Aviation Authority has different factions and what they are investigating is the incident with the air traffic control and the both aircraft. That

is not the inner workings of the Civil Aviation Authority. So that as well is a bit of untruth.

So the mission statement of the Civil Aviation Authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is provision of a regulatory framework to facilitate safe, secure and effective aviation and air navigation services within the Piarco flight information region, FIR. So the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would have said is, it is indeed a large region to the north, we go as far 100miles from San Juan to the west, we are borderline with Maiquetia which is Venezuelan airspace. To the east it goes as far as the New York oceanic airspace and to the south we go as far as Georgetown. And there will be different points along those—along the FIR which we can enter into someone's airspace. But it is indeed important that we have the proper people managing our authority. So three areas I will look at—just looked at the purpose. The other two areas I want to look at is safety and vison and then I will tie that into why it is necessary for continuity of this board.

Most, if not all of aviation regulations are written in blood. And when I say it is “written in blood”, it basically means, an accident happens and the findings from that investigation leads to an upgrade in the regulations. So I want to take a look at the 13 infamous plane crashes that took place and actually changed the aviation industry forever and then we could have a better appreciation of why it is necessary that we continue with the experience that we have on this board.

The first one I want to take a look at, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is while we had the upgrade in the collision avoidance and a better air traffic control, that same event that took place on the 8<sup>th</sup>, I think, one of the Members mentioned that, the internal system on the aircraft is what, you know, assisted the pilots in making their manoeuvre. So in the skies above the Grand Canyon on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1956, two planes had recently taken off from Los Angeles International Airport, a

United Airlines Boeing DC 7 headed to Chicago and a Trans World Airlines Lockheed L-1049 Super Constellation on its way to Kansas City. They both collided. All passengers, all 128 passengers on board were killed. And based on that incident we had an upgrade in the air traffic control system, as well as it triggered investigations and it led to improvement. One of the improvements was a TCAS system which all aircrafts are now mandated to have.

Second one, the upgrade is cockpit team work. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1978 a United flight 173, a DC 8, approaching Portland Oregon with 181 passengers circled near the airport for an hour as the crew tried in vain to sort out a landing gear problem. Although gently warned of the rapidly diminishing fuel on board the aircraft by the flight engineer, the captain basically did not take heed. Unfortunately, they ran out of fuel and they crashed short of the airport. So that led to an upgrade in team work which is also found in the TTCARs.

Three, upgrade in the lavatory smoke—the upgrade, lavatory smoke sensors. The first sign of trouble on Air Canada 797, a DC 9 flying at 33,000 en route Dallas to Toronto on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1983 with the whiff of smoke wafting out of a rear lavatory. Soon thick black smoke started to fill the cabin and the plane began an emergency descent. Barely able to see the instrument panel because of the smoke, the pilot landed the air plane in Cincinnati. But shortly after the doors and emergency exits were open, the cabin erupted in a flash fire before everyone could get out. Out of the 46 people on board, 23 died. The FAA subsequently demanded that all aircraft lavatories be equipped with smoke detectors and automatic fire extinguishers within five years. All jetliners were retrofitted and fire-blocking layers of seat cushions on the floor lighting to lead passengers to the exit in case of dense smoke.

The fourth one. The upgrade was downdraft detection.

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Fifth, upgrade engine safety improvements.

The seventh—the point here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the primary thing in aviation is about safety and we cannot trivialize experience when it comes to safety.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me take you to the incident with the MAX 8. Let me just me sort out this document here with the MAX 8. Sorry. I will take you to the 11<sup>th</sup>. Upgrade, manual training to fix overdependence on automation. Around three hours into the journey from Rio to Paris on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, Air France flight 447 an airbus A330-200 headed into an area of severe thunderstorm activity and was never heard from again. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a scary thing. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a scary thing and what we have in place as a practicing aviation person is the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Regulations.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all these events even though catastrophic have made the advancement of aviation possible. And if we need to continue to advance here in Trinidad and Tobago and all the other eastern Caribbean islands that depend on the Trinidad and Tobago FIR, we need that sort of continuity.

Over the last six years this board has made those sorts of advancements and the experience which is the greatest teacher, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had made flying today within this FIR and within this world a safer and an effective form of transport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, next point is vision. As we continue to maintain our category one status at both our airports and Tobago is also set for major upgrades,

it shows a level of commitment from this Government and the level of commitment that they have placed in maintaining a safe and secure aviation environment.

Additionally, with the widening of the pool of candidates, it provides an opportunity to make inroads into general aviation which is also a part of civil aviation which will be able to provide greater jobs, opportunities for even graduates that are coming out of aviation school. And as a practising aviation person, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say without a doubt, once again the experience is necessary to maintain our safety and security within the aviation industry.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** I think the Opposition today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also indicated that the experience is necessary. And they also said today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without saying it, that this present board has been doing a fantastic job.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** And the one clause, simple clause, simple amendment to make today to ensure that we maintain the safety, to me, is not a big issue. You see, the last six years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been and I continue to fly within the Piarco FIR—

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

**Mr. K. Richards:**—and I could say, just yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I landed at the Miami International Airport what greeted us was a Trinidadian inspector from the Civil Aviation Authority ensuring that the pilots met the TTCARs, as well as the aircraft that we flew into Miami met the TTCARs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** And that is the level of commitment that we are getting from the

Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. And we definitely need to continue this uptick and this trend moving forward. Yes, the incident that the Opposition has spoken about on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, it did happen but that happens a lot in aviation and not just in Trinidad and Tobago and we must understand that now is not the time to give somebody a “bligh”. Now is the time for us to continue with what we know is working and continue to make those major inroads in aviation, continue to be safe, continue to make regulations that will take our aviation industry forward. Continue to follow the IKO. Continue to follow the Cantook. Continue to follow all of the other international bodies whether it is the Chicago convention or whatever convention that we need to follow and I have and I can say that the Civil Aviation Authority in Trinidad and Tobago is actually leading the way within this region.

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

**Mr. K. Richards:** So we could speak here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for five minutes, we could speak for 50 minutes but that is not going to change the fact that if we make one simple amendment and it is indeed simple, that we could continue with the trend of safety, with the trend of security right here in Trinidad and Tobago and I stand here today as the only aviation personnel in the Chamber to support this amendment and to ensure that when I take to the sky that I and my other colleagues in aviation are indeed safe. I thank you.

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

**AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

**(GREETINGS)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the Attorney General, hon. Members, please join me in welcoming and acknowledging Her Excellency Ute König Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago—

Greetings - Ambassador of the  
Federal Republic Of Germany (cont'd)

2022.11.11

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:**—and a contingent of honorary counsels of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Caribbean who are housed in the public gallery and hail from Antigua, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Guyana and St. Vincent along with their diplomatic staff. Welcome to the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

### **CIVIL AVIATION (AMDT.) BILL, 2022**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will now recognize the Attorney General.

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

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I opened with the pilot of this Bill, I acknowledged the fact that I was standing in for the Minister of Works and Transport and I emphasized that for the reason that meaning no disrespect to my colleagues on the other side, questions have been put to me to answer of an operational nature. Regrettably, my remit as Attorney General is not to advise on operational matters. Those questions can be properly addressed to the Minister of Works and Transport in due course and in the proper context.

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

**Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:** I will seek to address just a couple points that have been made by the other side. First of all, the point has been made that, and I regret that it has been made in the pejorative language that has been used, the terms such as favouritism, nepotism and complacency. The point has been made, that this Government of which I am part and proudly so, is seeking to move this amendment for reasons that are palpably—

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

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**Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:**—beneath the dignity of any Member of this House. And that fact is demonstrated by the fact that on both sides we have stood today and saluted the competence of the board which has served this country as the board of the Civil Aviation Authority and to suggest that the amendment which has been moved is being moved to provide for some sinister motive on the part of the Government to keep one or other member of that faithful, competent and exemplary board in office, is to disrespect the service that they have given.

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

**Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:** Other Members on the Government side, in most notably the last speaker who comes with a competence that is exceptional in his area of expertise, the Member for Point Fortin, has brought testimony to the language of the legislation that speaks to safety and risk avoidance. That is the language of the Act whose schedule we are seeking to amend. And we are seeking to amend the schedule to delete the limitation on the term of office of the members of the board in order to ensure continuity, competence, expertise and specialized expertise at that. And I emphasize that. I will not repeat what I have already said. That is the intent behind this amendment, safety.

The other point that has been made which I wish to rebut is in the language of the Member for Oropouche East who spoke of a concept which he misapplied. The concept of regulatory capture. The fact is that there is ample legislative precedent for a board's term of office being renewed and extended and there is nothing pejorative or sinister in the nature of regulatory capture about that. We can look and the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:08, section 3 of that Act, speaking to tenure of office, appoints a board for that authority:

“...of three years, but outgoing members are eligible for reappointment.”

We can speak to the Regional Health Authority Act, Chap, 29:05 tenure of office

section 2 subsection (1), the period of term in the first instance is not exceeding five years as the President may specify at the time of appointment and those members are eligible for reappointment.

We can speak to the Security Act, Chap. 83:2 section 12(1):

“...a Commissioner other than a temporary Commissioner, shall hold office for a period not exceeding”

—not exceeding—

“three years and shall be eligible for reappointment.”

We can speak to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission Act, Chap. 54:70, section 4 subsection (3):

“A member of this Commission shall, subject to subsection (4) and the revocation of his appointment, hold office for such period not exceeding five years, as the President may direct, but a member...is eligible for reappointment.”

We can speak to the Environmental Management Act, Chap. 35:05 section 82(4):

A—“term”—of—“not less than three years...and shall be eligible for reappointment.”

We can speak to the Town and Country Planning Act, Chap. 35:01 section 3:

“A member of the Panel shall, subject to the provisions of this Schedule hold office for a period not exceeding two years but such member shall be eligible for reappointment.”

We can speak to the Port Authority Act, Chap. 51:01 section 3 subsection (4), the:

“Appointment to the office of the Commissioner shall, subject to subsections

(6) and (7), be for such period...not less than two nor more than five years, as the President shall specify at the time of the appointment, but any Commissioner shall be eligible for reappointment.”

So our legislative precedent in this Republic provides for reappointment of the members of the board and it is no more nor less than that, that we seek today to do to ask this House to amend the Schedule section 2 subsection (2) to remove the limitation on the term of the board to allow members of that board one or more of them according to their expertise and their specialized experience and competence to provide for the safe air traffic over the skies of this country to provide for the safety by giving to the Government, the President of the Republic the opportunity to choose from among those serving members with their specialized experience to be reappointed. So there is nothing sinister about that.

**5.00 p.m.**

And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have started with brevity, I shall end with brevity. I ask that the amendment be moved, be passed, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, 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.*

*House in committee.*

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, we have no amendments, I do not know if the other side has.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you for that information, Leader of the House.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You are most welcome, Sir. So, Mr. Chairman, if you would like to take all the clauses together we would be happy to oblige.

**UNREVISED**

**Mr. Chairman:** And if I say no?

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

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You are going to say no, Sir?

**Hon. Members:** All?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** All. It is a lot.

**Mr. Chairman:** Plural or singular?

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, proceed.

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

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

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.*

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2022 at 1.30 p.m. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that day is Private Members' Day, and I would be grateful to know what we would be doing on that day, please.

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was not aware we were going to get Private Members' Day so soon, so I will have to communicate with the Leader of Government Business what we would be doing within a lot of reasonable time.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am surprised, because the Members on the opposite side have never been denied Private Members' Day, so I am surprised that you are surprised.

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am always surprised by the Leader of Government Business.



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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You all will communicate accordingly, the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.05 p.m.*