

SENATE*Tuesday, September 22, 2026*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The hon. Dominic Smith and Sen. The hon. Anil Roberts, both of whom are out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency the President Christine Carla Kangaloo, O.R.T.T., advising of the following temporary appointments in accordance with section 44 of the Constitution:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA
KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Kangaloo

President.

TO: MR. DANIEL RASHEED

WHEREAS Senator the Honourable Anil Roberts is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago; NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section

UNREVISED

44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, DANIEL RASHEED to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 22nd September, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator the Honourable Anil Roberts from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 21st day of September, 2026.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA
KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MR. ASHWORTH JACK

WHEREAS Senator the Honourable Dominic Smith, is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44 (4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, ASHWORTH JACK, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from

22nd September, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator the Honourable Dominic Smith from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 21st day of September, 2026.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA
KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Ashworth Jack took and subscribed to the Affirmation of Allegiance as required by law.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Daniel Rasheed took and subscribed to the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES

(APPOINTMENT OF)

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, in accordance with Standing Order 79(2), I have appointed the following Members to serve on the Sessional Select Committees of the Senate for the Second Session, 2026/2027, Thirteenth Republican Parliament.

UNREVISED

Standing Orders Committee

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Mr. Darrell Allahar	Member
Ms. Kenya Charles	Member
Dr. Amery Browne	Member
Dr. Desirée Murray	Member

House Committee

Mr. Darrell Allahar	Chairman
Ms. Kenya Charles	Member
Mr. Eli Zakour	Member
Dr. Amery Browne	Member
Dr. Desirée Murray	Member

Committee of Privileges

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Mr. John Jeremie SC	Member
Mr. Darrell Allahar	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi SC	Member
Mr. Michael de la Bastide SC	Member

Statutory Instruments Committee

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
Mr. Brian Baig	Member
Mr. Ravi Ratiram	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi SC	Member
Mrs. Candice Jones-Simmons	Member

Business Committee

Mr. Wade Mark	Chairman
---------------	----------

Mr. Darrell Allahar	Member
Mr. Anil Roberts	Member
Dr. Amery Browne	Member
Mr. Anthony Viera SC	Member

SPECIAL OPERATIONS BILL, 2026

Bill to provide for the establishment of policing districts, the conduct of special operations to combat criminality in those districts and related matters, brought from the House of the Representatives [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken on Wednesday September 23rd, 2026. [*Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*The Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Kennedy Swaratsingh)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee for the financial year ended September 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh*]

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Thank you, Mr. President. The Government is quite happy to answer questions Nos. 11 and 13 as they appear on the Order Paper. As it relates to question No. 12, we would ask that the answer to that question be deferred for two weeks under Standing Order 27(14).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. President: Hon. Members, question No. 12 has been deferred for two weeks.

Foreign Franchise Policy Framework.

(Details of)

12. Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs asked the hon. Minister of Finance: With respect to the Government's policy for facilitating foreign franchise investment in Trinidad and Tobago, and its implications for the country's foreign exchange position, can the Minister state:

- (i) whether the Government has established a policy framework for assessing the foreign exchange implications of approving or facilitating the establishment or expansion of foreign franchise operations;
- (ii) if the answer to (i) is in the affirmative, whether such framework evaluates the anticipated foreign exchange outflows associated with franchise fees, royalties, imported goods and services, and profit repatriation; and
- (iii) whether such framework includes an assessment of the net economic benefits, including employment creation, tax revenues, local procurement, technology transfer and foreign direct investment?

Question, by leave, deferred.

Mr. President: I now call on Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs.

Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President.

Foreign Franchise Forex Demand.

(Status of)

11. Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Can the Minister advise whether the Government has undertaken any assessment of the cumulative annual foreign exchange demand arising from foreign franchise operations in Trinidad and Tobago and what were the findings of such an assessment?

Mr. President: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Kennedy Swaratsingh): Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, hon. Members. Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to respond to this question.

The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago routinely receives and monitors foreign exchange sales by authorized dealers to the public. However, an assessment of foreign exchange demand specifically attributable to foreign franchise operations has not been undertaken. Mr. President, multiple franchise operations are often owned by a single holding company through which various foreign exchange transactions are processed, not just the franchise payments. As a result, isolating foreign exchange demand arising from individual franchise operations may not be feasible using currently available data. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: Sen. Marlene Attzs. Sen. Attzs.

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President. No supplemental.

Mr. President: Okay. Thank you. Sen. Marlene Attzs, next question.

**National Policy on Social Displacement
(Details of)**

13. Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs asked the Minister of Finance:

Having regard to reported increases in socially displaced persons, can the Minister indicate what is the most updated national policy or strategy to address social displacement in Trinidad and Tobago and its the key elements and action items?

1.45 p.m.

Mr. President: Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services—Parliamentary Secretary.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services (Sen. Dr. Natalie Chaitan-Maharaj): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to rise to answer this question regarding socially displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago and my Ministry's policy towards them. Mr. President, at present the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, through its Social Displacement Unit, leads the national response to social displacement through the Continuum of Care Framework. The Social Displacement Unit is responsible for coordinating point-in-time street counts and engagement exercises, assessments, referrals, rehabilitation and reintegration interventions, all in collaboration with central government agencies, municipal corporations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and other key stakeholders.

The Continuum of Care Framework provides a structured, needs-based pathway from initial engagement through to rehabilitation, and where feasible, reintegration into independent living. Its key elements are outreach and voluntary

engagement, assessment and temporary care, including emergency accommodation, stabilization, counselling and development of an individual care plan, primary care, including specialized health care and mental health services, substance use treatment, rehabilitation and life skills support, advanced care through transitional housing, supported long-term care or independent living arrangements, and monitoring and follow-up.

Where integration into independent living is not feasible, appropriate long-term care arrangements are pursued based on the individual's assessed needs. The Ministry is also advancing key action items to further strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's response to social displacement. These include the establishment of measurable medium to long-term national targets, clear priorities, implementation arrangements and measurable outcomes. This work will be aligned with Pillar 5 of the Government's National Strategic Development Plan of 2026-2030, Protecting the People through Social Investment and Safety Nets.

To advance these actions, Mr. President, the Ministry has established an internal technical committee to review the existing legislative policy and institutional framework governing the national response to social displacement, and to identify areas requiring strengthening or modernization. The review includes the adequacy and operational status of current legislative provisions, definitions, institutional responsibilities, service delivery arrangements and referral mechanisms. The committee is also advancing work towards an integrated national framework for social displacement, covering the full continuum of care from prevention, identification and outreach, through assessment, emergency accommodation, treatment and rehabilitation, transitional support, reintegration, monitoring and follow-up.

The proposed framework is intended to support a more coordinated,

decentralized and community-based model, with clearer rules for central and local government, non-governmental and community-based organizations, service providers and affected communities, thereby strengthening access, referrals and case management, and reducing fragmentation and providing socially displaced persons with a clearer pathway towards recovery, independent living and sustained reintegration. As the Ministry advances these measures, the public will be kept abreast of developments through the relevant communication channels. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs.

Sen. Dr. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Sen. Chaitan-Maharaj, for that very comprehensive response. Can you indicate the most recent estimate of the number of socially displaced persons?

Mr. President: Senator, Parliamentary Secretary?

Sen. Dr. Chaitan-Maharaj: Thank you, Mr. President. At this point, I would not be able to give a definitive number, but the unit in charge does continue monitoring, and we can provide a number for you.

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs.

Sen. Dr. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President. Just to be clear, you will be able to provide it on a subsequent occasion?

Sen. Dr. Chaitan-Maharaj: Yes.

Sen. Dr. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: Leader of Government and Business

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP)**

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Mr. President, I beg to move that Mr. Darrell Allahar be appointed to serve as a member of the Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs in lieu of Mr. Satyakama Maharaj.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Leader of Government and Business

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Mr. President, I beg to move that Mr. Anil Roberts be appointed to serve as a member of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Affairs in lieu of Mr. Satyakama Maharaj.

Question put and agreed to.

**NATIONAL WORKFORCE AND MANPOWER
(STRATEGIC PLAN)**

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs: Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas section 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 1:01, affirms the principle of social justice including equality of opportunity and access to decent work;

And whereas the economic transformation and sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago require coordinated and forward-looking national workforce planning;

And whereas persistent labour market mismatches, including skills gaps,

youth unemployment, underemployment and misalignment between education and national economic priorities, continue to constrain productivity and economic participation;

And whereas international best practice among advanced economies demonstrates the value of integrated workforce development frameworks grounded in labour market intelligence and strong collaboration among government, industry, education and training institutions;

And whereas a National Workforce and Manpower Strategic Plan for Trinidad and Tobago should provide for coordinated labour market forecasting; alignment of education and technical and vocational training systems with national development priorities; strengthened industry-education partnerships and work-integrated learning opportunities; development of digital, critical-thinking, green economy and entrepreneurial skills; measures to address youth unemployment and participation disparities; and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, including periodic reporting to Parliament;

Be it resolved that this Senate calls upon the Government to prepare and table in Parliament, within twelve (12) months, a comprehensive National Workforce and Manpower Strategic Plan for Trinidad and Tobago, inclusive of a legislative and institutional framework.

Mr. President, in 1776, a Scottish economist, Adam Smith, not Dominic, in his seminal work titled *The Wealth of Nations*, made an observation that remains relevant to this debate more than two centuries later. In discussing the sources of a nation's wealth, Adam Smith included among its capital, the skills and abilities acquired by people through education, study, or entrepreneurship. Smith regarded

those acquired abilities as a form of capital embodied in the individual, valuable not only to the person, but to the society in which he or she is a part.

In modern economic language, we would recognize much of what Adam Smith was describing as what we call “human capital”. Mr. President, 250 years after Smith’s seminal piece, when we speak about the future of Trinidad and Tobago’s economy, when we speak about diversification, about productivity, about investment, about digital transformation, about innovation, and about sustainable development, what we really are ultimately speaking of, is about people and their capabilities.

In that context, Mr. President, I wish to begin this Motion with one simple question: Are we preparing the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the type of economy that we say we want to build? Who are the technicians, who are the engineers, the nurses, the teachers, the cybersecurity specialists, the artisans, the entrepreneurs, the data analysts, the managers, the researchers, and the creative professionals upon whom the transformation of our economy will depend? It is possible for us to identify priority sectors. We can announce incentives; we can build infrastructure, and we can even attract investment, but none of those things by themselves creates the capability to transform our economy.

A new industry requires people who can operate it. New technology requires people who can understand, adapt, and apply it. Investment requires people with the skills to convert capital into productivity and productive activity. And diversification, Mr. President, I suggest, requires people capable of producing what we presently do not produce, and doing what we presently do not do, and competing in markets in which we do not presently compete.

So, permit me, Mr. President, to state the central proposition of this Motion

from the outset. It is my view that we cannot diversify our economy without diversifying its capabilities, and capabilities reside in people. This is why, Mr. President, I regard a national workforce and manpower strategic plan not principally as a labour market document, but as an economic development strategy. Every major national objective that we routinely discuss in this honourable Chamber, whether it be productivity growth, whether it be foreign investment, whether it be export competitiveness, whether it be public sector modernization, whether it be technology transformation, or sustainable development, any one of these objectives depends ultimately on the availability of people with the appropriate skills and capabilities.

Investors do not invest in countries per se, they invest in ecosystems. They invest in institutions and talent pools. Industries do not grow simply because incentives exist. They grow when the capabilities necessary to support production, innovation, and expansion are available. And in that regard, Mr. President, human capital is the bridge between economic ambition and economic execution and transformation.

Workforce planning, Mr. President, is not simply about counting workers or filling existing vacancies. Modern workforce planning asks a different set of questions, such as what capabilities will the economy require five, 10, 20 years from now? Which competencies are already in short supply? Which occupations are emerging? Which skills are being transformed or even becoming obsolete? Where are demographic changes likely to create shortages? How will artificial intelligence, automation, and digitalization change existing occupations? What skills will be required if we are serious about developing our green, blue, and

orange economies? And, critically, Mr. President, are our education and training systems preparing our people for those realities?

2.00 p.m.

A successful workforce strategy, therefore, connects recruitment, education, technical and vocational training, career development, lifelong learning and succession planning. It brings all of these together and marries them with national development priorities. It allows us to anticipate rather than react. In the absence of adequate workforce planning, a country can find itself confronting a very peculiar paradox: Employers reporting that they cannot find workers with the skills they require, while citizens simultaneously report that they cannot find suitable employment.

We can produce graduates, Mr. President, for opportunities that are limited, while simultaneously importing skills for occupations we failed to anticipate. We can invest heavily in education without being able to say, with sufficient confidence, whether those investments in human capital are translating into employment, higher productivity, greater competitiveness and economic growth.

At a time when Trinidad and Tobago faces significant fiscal and financial constraints, we simply cannot afford those types of inefficiencies. We spend a lot of time planning for roads, airports, buildings and other types of infrastructure, yet, perhaps, our most important national asset resides in our people. For a small state, such as Trinidad and Tobago, these realities make workforce planning even more important. We must ensure that our investments in education and training are deliberately and purposefully connected to the capabilities required for productivity, for economic diversification and sustainable economic growth. Workforce planning, therefore, is not a luxury, but it should be seen as an essential

infrastructure taking us towards national development.

Mr. President, at the heart of this debate lies productivity. Productivity influences sustainable wage growth, export competitiveness, fiscal sustainability, and ultimately, the standard of living that an economy can support. A diversified economy therefore requires not simply a larger workforce, but a capable, adaptable and increasingly productive workforce, otherwise, diversification remains an aspiration rather than an executable strategy. As technology, demographics and the global economy change, maintaining productivity will increasingly depend upon our ability to anticipate change in skills requirements and continuously develop the capabilities of our people.

Mr. President, let us consider one of our major continuing investments in human capital: The Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme, familiarly known as GATE. The scale of that investment is significant. In fiscal 2024, approximately \$338million was actually paid through GATE. In fiscal 2025, the actual payments were approximately \$333million. And for fiscal 2026, the approved allocation was in the range of \$450million. These are substantial sums, and they represent a significant and continuing national investment in tertiary education and in building the capabilities of our people.

But alongside the expenditure question must sit an equally important question: Do we have a sense of the return on that investment? And I wish to be very clear. My argument is not against GATE or against public investment in tertiary education. To the contrary, Mr. President, precisely because our education is such an important investment, and because hundreds of millions of dollars of public resources are committed to it, we should want to know whether the investment is producing the opportunities and development outcomes that justify

the expenditure in the first place.

Having made the investment in GATE, should we not know where our GATE beneficiaries are employed? Should we not know in which occupations and sectors? Should we not know the extent to which their qualifications are being utilized in the labour market? We ought to be able to track their employment and earning trajectories. We ought to be able to understand patterns of migration and understand and identify areas in which significant skill shortages persist, despite our significant investment in education and training.

Perhaps, critically, Mr. President, we should also be able to assess whether these investments in human capital are contributing to higher productivity, greater competitiveness and to the overarching goal of diversifying the economy. We know what we have spent, but the question remains: Do we know what return that investment has produced? Without systematic graduate tracer studies, occupational tracking and consistent monitoring of labour market outcomes over time, we cannot answer those questions with sufficient confidence. And given the fiscal constraints we face, that is not simply an information gap. It is tantamount to an accountability issue.

Mr. President, this takes me to one of the central problems that a national workforce and manpower strategic plan should confront: The labour market mismatch. As I mentioned earlier, employers increasingly require combinations of technical, digital, managerial and interpersonal skills. At the same time, we have citizens with qualifications who struggle to find employment commensurate with their training. This is the paradox that we must confront. We should be deeply concerned when employers say they cannot find workers, while workers say they cannot find jobs. Somewhere between those two statements lies a failure of

information alignment, training incentives, or some combination of all of the above.

That mismatch could be very costly. It can reduce the return on education. It can reduce the return on that investment that we have made of hundreds of millions of dollars. It can also constrain business expansion. It can weaken productivity. And it can undermine diversification efforts. In a small economy, that kind of inefficiency carries a particularly high opportunity cost.

The problem is not simply workers seeking jobs, it is also employers seeking workers. Small and medium-sized businesses can find themselves unable to expand because they cannot readily obtain particular technical, digital or managerial capabilities. Public institutions face similar challenges: Experienced officers retire, vacancies remain unfilled and institutional knowledge can disappear. That introduces another dimension of workforce planning to which I will return a bit later; the whole issue of succession planning.

Mr. President, as I continue this Motion, there is another dimension of workforce planning that deserves particular attention, and that is the dimension of young people who are neither in education, employment, nor training, the group commonly referred to as persons who are NEET, not in employment, education or training. The Caribbean Development Bank's Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2035 reports that in 2024 approximately 24 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 across the Caribbean were not in education, employment or training.

The International Labour Organization has similarly drawn attention to the challenge of youth employment and the disengagement across our region. Just to be clear, that is a regional figure, Mr. President, but it provides some context for Trinidad and Tobago. And while I think it is important for us to appreciate the

acronym NEET—youth not in employment, education or training—I want us to focus on what that actually represents. Because every young person who is outside of education, employment and training represents human capabilities that are not being fully developed or utilized. It represents potential productivity that is being lost today and a potentially weakened economic opportunity tomorrow.

A workforce cannot be strategic if a significant share of its future labour supply is disconnected from the system entirely. And this is where public policy coherence becomes particularly important. Mr. President, we cannot discuss youth unemployment in one policy silo, education in another, crime prevention somewhere else, entrepreneurship in another silo, and workforce development in yet another Ministry as though these issues exist independently. They intersect in the lives of the same young people.

A young person who leaves school without marketable skills cannot access further training, they cannot find employment and sometimes they see no credible pathway into productive economic activity, and that is not simply a labour market statistic. That is an education issue. It is a social development issue. It is an economic issue. And where prolonged disengagement increases vulnerability to social exclusion and other risks, it can also become a national security issue. But fundamentally, Mr. President, it is a development issue, because it represents human potential that we have failed to fully develop and bring into productive, economic and social life.

A national workforce and manpower strategic plan must therefore measure and monitor youth disengagement and create credible pathways back into education, back into training, back into entrepreneurship and back into productive employment. Because workforce planning is not simply about producing workers,

it is about expanding people's capability to participate productively and meaningfully in economic life. Job numbers alone are insufficient. Job quality matters and opportunities for progression also matter.

Mr. President, the recent public hearings of Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration make the case for a national framework even more compelling. In April of this year, the Ministry of Labour advised the Committee—the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration—that a labour market information system was still being developed to support evidence-based policy and that there was, at that time, in April, no national employment policy, although discussions were on the way with the International Labour Organization. That same hearing recorded different age definitions of “youth” across the United Nations, across the International Labour Organization, and across Trinidad and Tobago's Youth Policy. If institutions are measuring different populations, then coherent planning becomes even more difficult.

2.15 p.m.

The June hearing of that Joint Select Committee, the same Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, also exposed the territorial dimension of the data gap. In their report, it is noted that the Tobago House of Assembly reported that they did not have youth-specific labour market data readily available and had to make special requests for disaggregated information. It also acknowledged gaps in research capacity and the need to strengthen baseline information and the measurement of programme outcomes. Those are not criticisms of individual institutions, but they are evidence of a fragmented system in which important work is happening, but information,

definitions and outcome tracking are not yet sufficiently integrated.

A national workforce plan provides the opportunity and an overarching framework for such integration. Security and sustainability of employment matters, workforce mobility matters, and if we successfully train citizens but fail to create pathways into productive employment, then we have solved only half of our problem.

Mr. President, I have said a lot about the benefits of workforce planning, but let us also consider the cost of not planning. The absence of effective workforce planning is not neutral. When labour demand is not adequately anticipated, and education, training and investment policies are poorly aligned, skills mismatches become entrenched. Employers struggle to find the competencies they require, while qualified citizens struggle to find suitable employment.

Public expenditure on education and training becomes less effective if we cannot determine whether graduates are entering priority sectors, whether they are filling occupational gaps, or whether they are actually contributing to national productivity. But there is another cost of inadequate workforce planning that is closer to the public purse. There is the fiscal cost, Mr. President. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service provides a useful illustration. The issue of manpower within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the TTPS, is not new. Parliament has previously examined the findings of a dedicated police manpower audit, and concerns have been raised over time about vacancies, recruitment capacity, succession planning and the management of human resources within the service. And that issue remains relevant today.

As recently as May 2026, the Minister of Homeland Security acknowledged in the other place, that staffing pressures within the TTPS had contributed to what

he described as, and I quote:

“...excessive overtime and operational fatigue.”

In outlining a phased five-year recruitment programme, the hon. Minister further indicated that addressing the staffing deficit was expected to reduce dependence on excessive overtime and improve the long-term operational sustainability of the service. The significance of that point is that the Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure show that overtime payments to monthly-paid TTPS officers amounted to approximately \$418.6 million in 2024. The provision for fiscal 2026 is \$400 million. That is not small change, Mr. President.

I am not suggesting, in any shape or form, that police overtime is avoidable. The nature of that job is that policing will always require overtime in responding to emergencies, major events and operational demands. The economic question, Mr. President, is whether some portion of that recurring expenditure reflects workforce shortages and capacity constraints that better long-term manpower planning might be able to reduce.

But there is another point. When a foreseeable workforce shortage becomes chronic, an institution may find itself paying repeatedly for the consequences of not having had sufficient capacity in the first place. Vacancies can translate into higher overtime expenditure, while delayed recruitments can increase the workload and operational burden carried by existing staff. Inadequate succession planning can result in prolonged acting arrangements and the loss of institutional knowledge, while insufficient training capacity can constrain the rate at which critical vacancies are filled. And this is not unique to the police service. The same principle can be found in other places: Health care, education and the wider public service, and other institutions in which adequate staffing and specialized skills are

essential to effective service delivery.

Mr. President, I acknowledge that better planning will not eliminate every vacancy, every overtime payment or every skill shortage. No forecast or no amount of planning will ever be perfect, but better labour market intelligence, recruitment planning, succession management and skills development can perhaps reduce the extent to which institutions are forced to respond repeatedly, and often expensively, to workforce problems that were reasonably foreseeable. And that leads to a simple economic proposition, Mr. President. Deliberate workforce planning may cost money, but chronic under-planning can cost considerably more.

Mr. President, I suggest that there is another reason this Motion is timely. The economy for which we educated people yesterday is not necessarily the same economy in which they will work tomorrow. Artificial intelligence, digitalization and automation are transforming occupations. Demographic change is altering the demand for health and care services. The energy transition is changing skills requirements. Climate change and climate adaptation are creating new technical needs, and digital transformation is reshaping both private enterprise and public administration. The scale of some of these changes is significant.

In its study:

“Education and health: the sectors of the future?”—part of the Inter-American Development Bank’s—“...future of work in Latin America and the Caribbean”

—series, the IDB projected that by 2040, Latin America and the Caribbean would require approximately 12 million teachers, three million doctors, and eight million nurses, and some 23 million education and health professionals across the region. The IDB’s point was not simply that more workers will be required. It was also

that many of the people who will fill those positions have not even entered the labour market. So that makes the point that making the quality and relevance of the skills and training they receive today is critically important for the future workforce. And that is precisely the kind of forward-looking information that should inform national workforce planning.

Mr. President, the labour market is changing, and Trinidad and Tobago must be capable of changing with it. And this is especially important as we consider opportunities associated with the green, blue and orange economies. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, environmental management, marine industries, sustainable tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, cultural industries, digital media and the wider creative sector all require particular skills, certification and capabilities. These opportunities are particularly relevant to small island developing states, such as ours, because many build upon assets that we already possess: Our maritime space, our natural environment, our culture, our creativity and our entrepreneurial talent.

But, Mr. President, sectors do not emerge simply because we name them in a development strategy. People must possess the capabilities required to make those sectors economically viable, sustainable and internationally competitive. And those capabilities cannot be produced overnight. They require deliberate decisions about education, about training, about certification, and about investment that may need to be taken years before the demand for those capabilities and skills actually materializes. So, I return to the central question of this Motion: Are we preparing our people for the economy we say we want to build, or will we find ourselves importing the skills while exporting our talent?

Mr. President, permit me to turn to what I think a national workforce plan

should contain. I am not at all suggesting that the Government should dictate what individuals study, and I am not suggesting that we can predict labour market demand with perfect accuracy. People must retain choice. The responsibility of the Government is to ensure that those choices and our substantial public investments in human capital are informed by credible labour market intelligence. Labour markets are dynamic, technology changes, industries emerge, and we must have the flexibility to allow persons to adapt to those changes. I wish to suggest, therefore, Mr. President, at least six components of a national workforce plan.

The first component is a national labour market intelligence system providing us with regular occupational forecasting and labour market intelligence to identify where employment demand is likely to grow, where shortages are emerging and where particular skills may be declining in relevance. We should be asking: How will demographic change affect our future labour supply? How will automation and artificial intelligence reshape existing occupations? Which new occupations and competences are likely to emerge? And critically, what capabilities will be required under the different development pathways that Trinidad and Tobago may pursue?

In an ideal space, I would like to see occupational outlooks extended to 2030, 2040 and beyond. But I recognize that no forecast will predict the future with certainty because of the dynamic nature of the labour market. The purpose of the forecasting, however, is not to predict with precision, but to give policymakers, educational institutions, employers and citizens a better evidence base upon which to prepare for it.

The second component of the national workforce and manpower strategic plan that I would suggest is that the labour market intelligence must inform the

decisions we make about education and training. It should help guide programme capacity, curriculum development, TVET provisions—that is, technical/vocational education and training provisions—teacher and instructor requirements, apprenticeships, internships, industry attachments and forms of work-integrated learning. And importantly, it should also inform career guidance because workforce planning should begin long before a young person enters university or the labour market.

Consider, Mr. President, a Form 3 student choosing subjects today. That young person may enter the labour market in the 2030s and remain economically active for several decades thereafter. Yet, some of the decisions being made today will influence the educational and occupational pathways available to that student years from now. So how does that young person, or the young person's parents, know where future opportunities will emerge? How do they assess possible pathways in health care, cybersecurity, logistics, renewable energy, environmental services or the creative sector?

Mr. President, this is not merely a hypothetical concern. In my own experience, at my full-time job, I have encountered many students who begin a degree because their friend is doing it, or because their parents tell them to do it, or because the university seems like a cool place to go, and it is the natural step after secondary school. Oftentimes, what is missing is a clear understanding of what the labour market requires today, much less what it will require three or four years later when that student graduates.

2.30 p.m.

I have also encountered the other side of the conversation as well. Parents who become quite discombobulated when their children tell them they want to be a

creative or they want to be a soca artiste. For some families, that just does not sound like a career. But perhaps that very reaction by the parent itself tells us something about the information gap we need to close. When we think of many of our creatives, Mr. President, some of them do not have the foreign exchange challenge that the rest of us have, because they are travelling globally and earning foreign exchange because of their creative craft.

What opportunities are emerging in the creative and digital economies? Those are some of the questions. What skills and qualifications will those opportunities require? What are the potential career pathways? A national workforce and manpower strategic plan is not about telling young people what they must or must not become. It should be about ensuring that when they make those choices, they are not choosing in the dark.

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Attzs, you have seven more minutes.

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President. Without credible and accessible labour market intelligence, we are asking young people and their families to make potentially life-altering decisions with incomplete information. This is why students, parents, schools and career advisors should have access to understandable and regularly updated information about occupational demand, skills requirements, career pathways and emerging areas of economic opportunity. Again, I stress the objective is not for the Government to dictate what a young person should or should not study, but it is simply providing information that makes for better and more informed choices.

The third component of the national manpower plan, Mr. President, is graduate and training outcome tracking. If we are serious about evaluating our human capital policy, we must follow outcomes rather than merely count enrolment and

graduation. We need to know where our graduates go. How long does it take them to make the transition from education and training into employment? And to what extent are the qualifications and skills in which we invest in actually being utilized? Again, I remind us of the hundreds of millions spent on the GATE programme.

We should also be able to track employment and earnings over time, identify programmes that are producing stronger labour market outcomes and determine where persistent mismatches remain between the skills being produced and the skills actually required by employers. And that information, once we gather that information, should feed back into decisions about programme design, capacity, career guidance, training priorities and the allocation of public resources.

The fourth aspect of the manpower plan, I suggest, Mr. President, is a specific focus on youth and the NEET strategy. NEET again, youth not in employment, education or training. We need to formally measure and monitor young persons who are considered NEET, not in education, employment or training. The purpose of that measurement is to create an intervention to allow us to identify disengagement early and create credible pathways back into education or back into training or back into productive economic activity. Depending on the circumstances of the young person, those pathways may include alternative education programmes, TVET, apprenticeships, digital and technical skills training or structured work experience, particularly for those at greatest risk of becoming persistently detached from the labour market.

Mr. President, the fifth aspect of the workforce plan, I would suggest, recognizes that Government itself is the largest employer. A national workforce strategy, therefore, cannot focus exclusively on the private sector. We should

ensure that we have systematic workforce planning across the public sector, including retirement projections, critical skills assessment, succession planning, leadership development and deliberate mechanisms for transferring institutional knowledge. Because when an experienced public officer retires, we do not simply lose a person from the establishment; in some cases we lose decades of specialized knowledge, institutional memory and technical capability. We should therefore be preparing people and transferring knowledge before, not after, the expertise disappears, because the continuity of our public services, institutional resilience and successful public sector modernization all depend ultimately upon having the right capabilities in place where they are needed.

The sixth component of the manpower plan, Mr. President, I suggest, may be one of the most important elements of the proposed plan. A national workforce performance dashboard, updated regularly with key indicators reported to the Parliament. We should be able to answer some basic questions about the state of our human capital. Are our people finding productive employment? Where are the shortages? Where are the surpluses? Which occupations are growing and which are declining? Are our people successfully making the transition from education and training into employment? The dashboard should therefore bring together a focused set of indicators, looking, among other things, at labour market participation and employment, the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training, skills demand and mismatch, education to employment outcomes, productivity and earnings and future workforce readiness, including anticipated retirements in critical occupations. This is how the plan remains dynamic as opposed to staying static.

Mr. President, I began this presentation with a simple question: Are we

preparing the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the economy we say we want to build? Ultimately, every national development strategy depends upon people. Infrastructure matters, investment matters, technology matters, but it is people—

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs, your 45 minutes are up but I will give you a minute to wrap up because you have to beg to move. Okay?

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: I thank you kindly, Mr. President. Mr. President, we need to look at more than expenditure on education and training. We need to anticipate, align, measure and adapt.

With those few words, I commend this Motion to the honourable Senate and respectfully invite Members to support the call upon the Government to prepare and table a comprehensive national workforce and manpower plan. I beg to move, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, this Motion requires a seconder.

Sen. Mc Nish: Mr. President, I beg to second the Motion and reserve my right to speak at a later stage.

Mr. President: The Motion has been seconded by Sen. Courtney Mc Nish.

Question proposed.

Mr. President: I recognize Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul.

Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul: Thank you, Mr. President, and as usual, good to see you again. Thank you for the opportunity to join the debate, or as to use Sen. Dr. Attzs' favourite words, to join the conversation. Mr. President, I would like to begin by giving credit to Sen. Dr. Attzs. Sen. Dr. Attzs did the Senate a great service by placing the question of national workforce planning squarely before us.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. V. Dhanpaul: The connection she draws to section 4 of our Constitution, to equality of opportunity and access to decent work, is very relevant. It is the correct starting point, because how a nation prepares its people, especially its young people for work, is, in the end, a question of social justice.

Let me also say plainly, so there is no ambiguity, about where this side of the Senate stands. The Opposition does not oppose the idea of a national workforce and manpower strategic plan. We do not oppose co-ordinated labour market forecasting. We do not oppose the alignment of technical and vocational education and training, and tertiary education, with national priorities. We do not oppose the goal of closing skills gaps or addressing youth unemployment. On the substance of what a modern workforce strategy should contain, there is very little in this Motion that any sensible legislator could vote against in principle.

2.45 p.m.

But Mr. President, this is where the problem starts. The Senate has a long and frankly discouraging history of passing Motions and resolutions that sound impressive on the Order Paper and then disappear quietly into the filing cabinets of whichever Ministry is meant to act on them. Unfortunately, Mr. President, I have lived through that. My objective this afternoon is not to convince the nation of the value of workforce planning—that case has already been well made—but to test this Motion against a harder question: Will it actually produce a plan, or will it produce another well-intentioned resolution with an expiry date and no teeth? I intend to show that, as presently worded, it is far closer to the latter, and I will propose in the spirit of constructive opposition, the amendments that will be needed to change that.

Mr. President, Sen. Dr. Attzs' Motion indicates correctly that international

best practice among advanced economies demonstrates the value of integrated workforce development frameworks. What the Motion does not point out, and what this side of the Senate must, is that Trinidad and Tobago has never lacked for strategies. What we have lacked is implementation. We have had a human resource development strategy. We have had successive iterations of a national development strategy stretching out to 2030 with pillars devoted explicitly to being a diversified, skilled economy. We have a National Training Agency, a Ministry's responsibility for labour, a Ministry's responsibility for youth development, a Ministry's responsibility for public administration, a board for industrial training, and a University of Trinidad and Tobago created in part to close the very technical skills gap this Motion describes.

On paper, Mr. President, this country has been planning its workforce for the better part of two decades. What it has not done is, by any government, including this one, to deliver funds and report on a single coherent plan with the force of law behind it. So when this Motion asks the Senate to call upon the Government to prepare, and table in Parliament within 12 months, a comprehensive national workforce and manpower strategic plan, I ask Members opposite to consider what a call of that kind has actually achieved in the past. This Parliament has passed resolutions before, asking governments to table reports. Table policies, table white papers within stated periods—some came, many did not, or came so diluted, so far past their deadline, and so devoid of costing and consultation, that they achieve little beyond satisfying the letter of the resolution.

A Motion phrased as a request, however, well supported by constitutional and empirical reasoning, creates a political obligation, not a legal one. There is no penalty, no mechanisms, and no consequence if month 13 arrives and there is no

plan. I repeat, there is no penalty, no mechanism, and no consequence if month 13 arrives and there is no plan. I say this because the people who are watching this debate—the unemployed graduate, the underemployed tradesman, the young person who has never had a first job—have heard promises of a workforce strategy before from governments of every stripe, including from this one.

Mr. President, I want to dwell for a moment on the human reality behind the phrase “Youth unemployment and participation disparities”. Because it is easy for this kind of language to float above the actual lives it describes. Every year, thousands of our young people leave secondary school and a significant number leave without the certification, the digital fluency, or the technical/vocational grounding that today’s labour market demands. Many more graduate from tertiary institutions into fields where there are simply not enough jobs, while sectors are crying out for technicians, trades people, and digitally-skilled workers, and cannot find qualified candidates. And as Dr. Attzs correctly said, that mismatch is not a new discovery; it has been documented in report after report, and commission after commission for years.

Young women in particular continue to face disproportionate barriers to entering and remaining in the workforce, compounded by inadequate childcare infrastructure and occupational segregation that no Motion, however well drafted, will fix by itself. Mr. President, the urgency of this Motion is underscored by the very real contradiction between the Government-stated commitment to coordinated workforce planning and its recent record of youth development. Even as this Senate is asked to endorse a national workforce and manpower strategic plan, grounded in measures to address youth unemployment and participation disparities, the Government has suspended flagship youth initiatives such as the Military-Led

Academic Training, MiLAT, and the Military-Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training, MiPART programmes, leaving hundreds of enrolled cadets and trainees without a clear path forward, while the Civilian Conservation Corps cycle never commenced despite roughly 1,100 assessed trainees awaiting placement. In addition, the On-the-Job Training Programme has seen its allocation cut by \$45 million for 2026.

These are not peripheral matters. They represent precisely the kind of ad hoc, uncoordinated approach to youth workforce entry that a genuine national workforce and manpower strategic plan is meant to replace. And they make their case for statutory institutionalized planning rather than discretionary programme-by-programme decisions, all the more compelling. What frustrates people outside these walls, Mr. President, is not the absence of diagnosis. Diagnoses have been made repeatedly, including by past holders of the very seat Sen. Dr. Attzs now occupies as an independent voice on these matters. What is missing is the discipline of delivery. A plan that survives an election cycle that is costed and legislated rather than merely announced, and that treats a young person's employability as a national infrastructure project deserving the same seriousness we would give to a highway, a port, or even the preparation of the national budget. If this Government is genuine about addressing youth unemployment, it should have no difficulty in accepting amendments that convert this Motion's aspirations into obligations with dates, budgets, and named accountable officers attached. If it resists those amendments, the country will be entitled to ask why. Mr. President, rather than simply catalog objections, I want to place on record the amendments this side will move in a spirit of strengthening rather than defeating the Motion. Firstly, make it a costed plan, not just a plan.

Hon. Senator: Make it a what?

Sen. V. Dhanpaul: A costed plan. That the resolve clause be amended to require that the national workforce and manpower strategic plan be accompanied at the time of tabling by a costed multi-year implementation budget and an identified funding mechanism. Not a one-year budget, but looking forward over the medium term. Two, a named accountable authority that the Government designates within three months, the lead Ministry, and a single accountable Minister for delivery with a mandate to rationalize—not merely add to—the existing network of workforce-related agencies and councils. Three, a binding reporting circle, that periodic reporting to Parliament be replaced with a requirement for an annual progress report to be laid before both Houses and reviewed by a joint select committee, with implementation data made publicly available.

Four, mandatory tripartite consultation—and I have not heard about what is called the national tripartite organization—I cannot remember the name—for a long time, Minister. That the plan's preparation includes structured, documented consultation with the labour movement, the private sector, technical vocational education and training, tertiary institutions, and civil society organizations serving unemployed and at-risk youths prior to tabling. Fifth, a sunset and review clause that the plan be subject to mandatory review and re-tabling every five years so that it remains a living framework rather than a document that ages quietly out of relevance while still being cited as evidence that something was done. None of these amendments, Mr. President, water-down the goal of what Sen. Dr. Attzs has proposed. If anything, they harden it. They are the difference between a Senate resolution that generates a headline and a piece of public policy that generates jobs.

Mr. President, I will close where I began: The Opposition does not doubt the

sincerity behind this Motion, and we do not doubt that the country needs precisely the kind of coordinated workforce planning it describes. Our quarrel is not with the diagnosis; it is with whether a resolution phrased as a request, unaccompanied by financing ownership, binding reporting, and genuine consultation, is capable of surviving contact with the machinery of government. The same machinery that will produce strategy after strategy without producing a plan our young people actually need—the famous public service deep, dark hole. We will support this Motion moving forward on the clear understanding that the amendments I have outlined are given serious consideration, and on the further understanding that this side of the Senate and the country beyond it will be watching its calendar—12 months, Dr. Attzs. A year is not a long time to prepare a comprehensive national plan, but it is more than enough time to prepare an excuse. I trust the Government will choose the former. Thank you, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Before calling on the Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development to speak, Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul, may I advise that in accordance with our Standing Orders, any amendments to any Motion or any Bill must be submitted in writing to the Clerk. Nothing is before us in writing, and therefore there is nothing before this House except for what you have said. I recognize Sen. The hon. Dr. Swaratsingh, Minister of Planning.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Kennedy Swaratsingh): Mr. President, thank you for allowing me to participate in this debate. And from the outset, let me commend Sen. Dr. Attzs for her Motion. We support the general

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

intent of the Motion, and as she would have indicated, this Motion is very timely and applicable both to where we are as a society and in terms of the aspirations of where we would like to go and how we intend to get there. Let me also—before I get into this substantive response, Mr. President, allow me just to suggest to Sen. Dhanpaul that while he has cast a lot of doubt in terms of the Government's intent to respond positively to this Motion, I just want to share with the House—obviously, I just received it—that the Ministry received in August of 2026, a national manpower plan.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: And just to say, therefore, together with it, to his second point in terms of the Government's intent as well as in terms of implementing a plan, we also received a national manpower implementation plan. Obviously—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: So one of the first things when we came into Government, the Prime Minister asked both the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, and myself, in terms of as we go about planning—and we were talking about a number of areas and issues.

3.00 p.m.

One of the things that we would have recognized is that—and this started, Sen. Dhanpaul, in 2024 under you. But—

Hon. Senators: [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Oh, sorry, you were in England? No, no, the visas were still flowing in those days. But no, I say this not to be facetious, but it started—and I will go through a little bit. I do not have all the details but there was

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

about a 19-month delay. So, when this administration assumed government, we reactivated the process and we were able to have the consultants furnish a report that was due since 2025, I think before the elections. But we were able to get the report after significant delay. I do not want to use the words of Sen. Alexander, but this is a government who “doh just talk de talk, Sen. Attzs, we walk de walk”.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: So, as I would have indicated, in theory we support, and not only do we support the Motion, we are actively taking steps in order to be able to minimize or to eradicate the gaps that exist. In fact, while the report still has to go through a stakeholder consultation and be submitted to Cabinet, where I will then be directed and guided, I just want to highlight a few things that the implementation plan would speak to.

One of them, of course—and it goes right to some of the things that Sen. Attzs would have spoken to:

- Institutional strengthening and data-driven governance;
- Improving education and training systems;
- Addressing youth and vulnerable group employment;
- Fostering economic diversification, security and justice reform, green and blue economy transition, tourism and creative industries, gender equality and social inclusion, and among other things.

But I share this with you to say, therefore, that I do not want Sen. Dhanpaul's words to be lost on the listening public. We, on this side of the aisle, are very serious about national development. So, even though this is one of the projects I would have inherited, I have made sure, under the guidance of the Prime Minister and with the consent of my Cabinet colleagues, to complete the project. We did

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

not just simply discard it. What we have sought to do is make sure and keep it relevant in terms of all the additional changes that the economy is going through at this time.

Now, a couple of things, Sen. Attzs, you would have also talked about in your six points, one of them I want to specifically deal with before, as I said, I get into my contribution. One is the systemic workforce planning across the public sector. Now, I think one of the things that we have to be very clear about is that there has been, for a long time, not the kind of development needed across the bureaucratic systems of the public service.

One of the creatures of the Constitution is the Public Service Commission. So, when we talk about planning, especially—and I know I am speaking to the converted—I would have been the third Minister of Public Administration, after some very venerable colleagues who would have been there before, including the President of the Senate, Gordon Draper, Dr. Lenny Saith. In those days, when we talked about public administration—in fact, the scholarships division fell under me as Minister of Public Administration and Information. In fact, it was under the Manning administration where GATE was expanded. Under the Partnership, GATE was further expanded—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—but under those opposite, it was constricted and reduced. In fact, as your numbers would have showed, Sen. Attzs, GATE, in 2026, would have gone up to 450 million from where it was before—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—demonstrating this Government's commitment to education. But let me go back to the Public Service Commission.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Now, the current President of the Public Service Commission, in fact, was my former Permanent Secretary—

Hon. Senator: Chairman.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—Chairman—when I was Minister of Public Administration. I say the Public Service Commission because even now across the public service, seniority still governs and a lot of—when it comes to—and Sen. Dhanpaul knows this as a Permanent Secretary. As a Permanent Secretary, discipline, and so on, fell under the remit of the—so, HR's functions, though somewhat delegated to these Permanent Secretaries, still largely remain the creature of the Service Commissions.

So, when it talks about workforce planning, about skills development and updating a public service workforce plan, the Service Commissions are still a critical component of all of that. In fact, there have been several attempts to create an updated—what you call it—the job descriptions across the public service to try to reduce those jobs that are no longer relevant and bring about a new mandate across the public service.

I remember, in my time, we were doing one between 2007 and 2010, when Jennifer Baptiste-Primus was President of the Public Service Association; job evaluation exercises. So, not everything you would have spoken about lies within the remit of the Government and therefore, I would want to couch some of this in that perspective as well.

I also want to, from the outset, indicate my thanks and appreciation to my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, who has worked very closely—and again, I mean this with complete respect, he is one Minister of Labour whose name we know, because he is working—

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Well, I do not think anybody knew the last one, but I digress.

So, when I saw your Motion, Senator, I asked for an update as to why it took so long. So, there are two things that as Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development I would have inherited. One, of course, is this manpower plan, and we have embraced it and we are now in the process of having it completed and taken to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.

Let me also say that in terms of the timelines, we just received, in August of last year—and the reason why I have not made it available is because it has to go through the stakeholder engagement review of the findings of the first draft of the report. After the stakeholder findings, it will then go back to the consultants. Once they produce a final report, that final report, I will then seek the Ministry's support in taking it to the Cabinet for the Cabinet's decision. That is the process that I would suggest we follow, and that is the process that is available to me as Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development.

The stakeholder consultation would also include, by definition, my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, and the steering committee, as we engage with all the stakeholders.

Now, I just want to point out some of the persons who would have been involved: The Accreditation Council, the Board of Industrial Training, Bureau of Labour Statistics, Caribbean Advanced Proficiency, the Caribbean Community, Free Trade Association, the Central Statistical Office, and the list goes on. So, it is

a substantive list of persons who would have been involved in compiling this, together with the consultants.

But as I said, let me just talk a little bit about—the project's aim is to produce a national manpower plan which addresses the structure of the labour market system, as well as issues that affect labour demand and supply within Trinidad and Tobago. The project, as it was then comprised in 2024, had three main components:

1. A consultancy for the development of a national manpower plan which aims to produce a national manpower plan that will serve as a policy guide and contains an action plan for implementation of the recommendations made.
2. Execution of a feasibility study which targets economic sectors to determine their viability, potential to contribute to sustainable economic development, such as export and generation of foreign direct investment. No feasibility study has been conducted thus far.
3. Execution of labour skills assessments for the targeted growth sectors deemed feasible for business development. In 2022, two labour skills assessments were completed, in the energy engineering services and information technology platform and services.

The current focus, Mr. President, of the project is to complete its sole active component: The consultancy for the development of the national manpower plan within fiscal 2025 to 2026, or as soon as possible, whichever comes first.

In producing a national manpower plan, which will serve as a policy guide with an action plan for implementing the recommendations, the consultant is to assess the national manpower planning ecosystem, and identify institutional, educational, legislative, data and labour market gaps that negatively impact

matching labour supply with labour demand, and propose solutions towards resolving the said gaps.

The consultancy commenced in January 2024. Its original duration was 10 months. However, for reasons which are not very clear to me, and what I inherited, the consultancy suffered significant slippage. As of December 2025, when I took it over, there was approximately 19 months of delay—and not all within the Ministry; some were with the consultants as well. So, I do not want to cast blame because I am not entirely sure of all the causes for the delay. But the original scheduled end for this consultancy was October 2024, and the consultancy is now anticipated to be completed likely within the last quarter of this year. But from what I have seen in the report and based on the stakeholder consultation, it would probably be completed in the first quarter of 2027.

I am informed by the technocrats in my Ministry that the consultant was expected to deliver the first draft in the first week of December 2025. We got it in August 2026. The consultants further updated me to suggest that, however, due to the delays in their own shop, and as a result of a large number of adjusted requirements, the updated first draft has now been delivered to the Ministry. But that is just by way of update as to when it was started, what are some of the things that took place, where we are today and why we are now in receipt of the documents that I would have alluded to earlier.

I want to be very clear as to the next stage of the process. It will require stakeholder engagement and consultation before a final report is done and given to the Ministry for onward transmission to the Cabinet of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. But I want to commend the technocrats of the Ministry who, under the guidance of this administration, have finally brought a report to the Table.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: That is one of two things. And again, I want hon. Senators to hold in both sides of the equation, not just the remit of what falls within the administration and in the Government, but also what falls under the purview of the Public Service Commission. It is a creature of the Constitution that the Government has no direct control over its remit.

3.15 p.m.

So, from the outset, Mr. President, let me make it clear that the Government supports the general intent of this Motion, and the call for a comprehensive and forward-looking national workforce and manpower plan is both timely and, as I would have indicated, extremely necessary. However, Mr. President, the question before the Senate goes beyond intent and execution to implementation, and that is how such a plan is to be properly developed, sequenced and implemented to ensure that it delivers tangible, measurable and sustainable outcomes to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

While I am on that, Mr. President—and as you can see, the Government has a very clear intent to, with or without the Motion, take manpower planning as a deliverable. Let me also say that part of what we are trying to do, based on the contributions of Sen. Dhanpaul and Sen. Dr. Attzs, is that this plan is not for one, two or five years. It is actually a 10-year plan to 2034. In fact, what I would like to do is to revise it from '26 to '35, primarily because when we finish the plan, part of what I will talk about later in my contribution as well, is there is another part of this, which is the national census. Now, I have said before, and I will reiterate again, the last time that the country embarked on a national population census was

in—it started in 2010. It was completed in 2011, again under the Partnership administration, and that was the last time there was a national population census.

Again, in theory, a census should have been conducted in 2020, because censuses are normally conducted every 10 years, but in 2020—the events of 2020, leading into COVID and so on, it was not done then. The last administration started the framework for it, but, again, nothing was done—sorry, it was not actioned, I should say. Not that nothing was done, it was not actioned. This administration has signalled its intent to action the census, and the pilot project will start late—hopefully, before the end of 2026. Next year we will conduct a full national census. But I will go further than that, I will also do a labour force survey as part of the census, and we will also do a survey in the agri sector, as well as in the business sector. So, by the end of 2027, we should have aggregated data for the various sectors, including a national population census that will now have to be analyzed.

Now, let me be very clear, while the census and the accumulation of data will take place during calendar year 2027, analyzing that data will take much longer. So, I do not expect to have the full analysis of all that data, Mr. President, until sometime in 2028. The enumerators will therefore be in the field probably for about nine months. The first six months will be on the population census, but on the subsequent three months, we are looking at different sectors: Agriculture, business, labour, and so on. I am going through this painstakingly because I want to be very, very clear as to what are some of the challenges we face, but also some of the actions that we are taking as a Ministry, as a Government, to update our entire data pool, identifying not just gaps, but looking to see—because that will

then inform my colleague in Tertiary Education and Skills Training; that will inform my colleague, the Minister of Education.

So, as I said, you have the Service Commissions on one side; on the education side, there are also concerns. Part of why I feel very strongly about this as well is because when you look in terms of the modern education system, as an HR practitioner—and I know Sen. Mc Nish may share some of what I feel—very many graduates I have had to interview as an HR Director, one of the things that we oftentimes do not do in our educational institutions is give people the correct—sorry, to give them a nexus between what they study and the practical experiences of how they can gain actual workplace experience so that they can add greater value to institutions and organizations.

In fact, it is one of the things I remember when I visited Kellogg University in Chicago. One of the things that Kellogg University, as a postgraduate university, typically does is to bring in executives for weekly seminars, and bring existing CEOs, industry captains, and so on, to be able to share some of the experiences so that that experiential learning will give people hands-on experience, as they then want, and prepare to move into leadership and managerial gaps in various organizations. So, there is something that our education institutions have to do as well in order to bridge that gap that Sen. Dr. Attzs so eloquently spoke to.

This administration also shares the concern in terms of the widening skill gap, but also in terms of the succession planning and our ability to retain knowledge in the public sector. Now, you would have seen in the last budget, the Minister of Finance would have spoken about the retirement age, moving from 60, over the next 10 years, to 65. All of those things are with a specific aim in trying

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

to ensure that we retain some of the skills and experience needed to manage, especially in the public sector.

But let me continue, Mr. President. The national manpower plan is important because it provides structure and evidence to answer fundamental development questions, what skills and occupation expertise that our people will need over the next five to 10 years, and how do we prepare our population to fill those opportunities. So, answering this question, as actively posed to us by Sen. Dr. Attzs, is part of this Government's mandate for the development of our human capital.

In fact, in our manifesto, which became government's policy, in 2025, it highlights the Ministry of Education as a key leader, and the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, in formulating Trinidad and Tobago's strategic national development plan. This involves the Education Ministry's mandate of incorporating a fully integrated approach to prepare our children for the future and the types of skills needed as we continue to evolve as a society. That is one of the reasons why this Prime Minister, our Prime Minister, was committed to giving Form 1 students laptops.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: You know, I will never understand how it is that we cannot see that these devices are not luxury devices. They are critical devices essential to people or to our children learning. That is one of the things—and I really want to commend the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence for developing the e-books that we are now putting onto those laptops.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: The enhancement of curriculum delivery, technical-vocational opportunities, my colleague from Tertiary Education and Skills Training, the improvements to physical plant and equipment of our nation's schools—so all of these are aimed, Mr. President, to ensure that we create the type of skills and the human capital needed. I mean, I am amazed, many, I do not know—not many, but I know some of us would have grown up and been educated in the age before computers.

In fact, when I was in school in the '70s, I remember when pagers came out. Pagers were a big thing, you know.

Hon. Senator: Lisa pager.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Lisa pager, “625-Lisa”.

Hon. Senator: Fax machine.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: A fax machine. In those days, we spent an inordinate amount of time reading, writing, taking notes, you know. I remember when we had to type up papers on a typewriter, you know. Now, recently, in fact, just about a couple of days ago, Apple updated to iOS 27, where you have Siri with AI. You know, you no longer need to type, you just have to talk and say, “Siri, find this,” or “find that”. “Stop using Siri to type, eh”.

Sen. Maharaj: “Siri recognize we accent too. We Trini accent, dey recognize.”

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: You see what I mean, Mr. President? She is back.

Hon. Senator: “She’s baaack.”

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: But the point I am making, Mr. President, is that the world we are living in is a far different one than the one we grew up in, and therefore, it is changing at an even faster pace.

So, keeping up with manpower planning is not just a requirement, it is an essential requirement. Updating it periodically is critical to the future aspirations of our country, both from an economic perspective, as well as from a human capital perspective. Now, one of the things investors continue to say about Trinidad and Tobago, and the reason why people are keen to invest in Trinidad and Tobago is that, notwithstanding our limitations, our human capital pool is still significant, well placed, well-recognized and well-poised to assist in our national development. I want to thank all those involved in education and in preparation. Our people of Trinidad and Tobago are second to none when it comes to the ability to contribute to world class—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: So there has been no hesitancy from investors based on the talent pool available to them. I think where we sometimes let ourselves down, oftentimes lies in the systems we have created that have not allowed our talent to always flourish. Some of these systems are in urgent need of updating, whether it be in the public or private sector, and in our educational institutions.

Our manifesto promised to rebuild the broken foundation of youth development, involves an investment in programmes and policies, and pathways to equip our youth with skills, training, qualifications and values that will fuel their hope of opportunities currently existing and for the future. That is why the

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, they are not just doing training programmes, they are doing training programmes linked to TTMA—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—and opportunities to build, and to get effective workplace placement.

In YETI, we are developing young people who are able to understand, not just what is available in the agricultural sector, but also to create young entrepreneurs who can go out and start to participate meaningfully in the agricultural sector. I said it before and I will say it again, our Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is working assiduously, and will go down as a very consequential Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Because one of the other areas that Sen. Dr. Attzs alluded to, but we need to flesh out a little bit more, is the contribution of the SME sector, because it is not just about creating the skills needed. One of the skills that I think we have to develop in our population is entrepreneurial skills, because what I think we have before us is an opportunity for people to participate as young entrepreneurs, whether it be in the agri sector, agri-processing sector, and the value added. So, part of what we would have inherited—and I know the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries would have said it before, but it may have been lost. We inherited agri-processing equipment that stood idle—for how many years?

Sen. Ratiram: Ten years.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—for 10 years.

3.30 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

So, we inherited a promise for a manpower plan that we are now completing, a promise for a census that we are now completing, and a promise for agri-processing that we are now completing. “Ah feel after all de promises that we have to inherit and fulfil, you know I—doh talk about de promises to Tobago”, but my colleague will deal with that.

So, Mr. President, I may not get a chance to go through everything that I have here, so I will leave some of that on productivity and so on to my colleague, the Minister of Labour and I would not talk about Tobago; I will leave that for my colleague from Tobago. But I want to just say, Mr. President, that this Government’s investment in a national manpower plan will help us as policymakers confront the root cause of youth disenfranchisement and deliver a framework to uplift young people in this country no matter their background. That is why I am always very pleased to welcome my colleague Sen. Rasheed—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—not just as a youth voice, but as someone who is working to help youth come to the fore and experience opportunities placed before them by this administration and in the Ministry of—

Sen. Alexander: Sport.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh:—Sport and Youth Affairs.

So, Mr. President, our National Development Policy has, at its core pillars, five strategic objectives that are important for national manpower and national development.

- “(i) Restoring Confidence and Fiscal Stability;
- (ii) Unlocking Productive Investment and Jobs;
- (iii) Commercialising and Optimising Public Assets;

- (iv) Modernising Infrastructure, Transport and Digital Services; and
- (v) Protecting the People through Social Investment and Safety Nets.”

While unlocking productive investments in jobs may seem like the most likely connection to a national manpower plan, we developed all these pillars with people in mind. Manpower planning will complement the development of jobs and specialised skills to help realize the objectives of these pillars as individual elements and as part of a whole.

Mr. President: Five more minutes.

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Thank you, Mr. President. So national workforce and manpower planning are therefore inherent in the overall strategic national objective of this administration and that is why we will not allow this initiative to go by the wayside. Our intent was always to complete it; to get it to the Cabinet and for Cabinet’s direction and it is part of the mandate that the Minister of Labour and myself received from our hon. Prime Minister. So, manpower planning, Mr. President, and development they are not disparate ideals for this administration; we are identifying the sectors that drive economic transformation, while assessing the human capital that these sectors will require in the immediate and long-term national development process.

Now, the question—and let me address one of the things that Sen. Dr. Attz alluded to, but let me put it more completely. I am not satisfied that we are poised, from an institutional perspective, to collect the data we need to collect on a timely basis and I think these initiatives will take us closer in that direction. But we also have to deal with what will become of the CSO and so a paper is being prepared to be taken to Cabinet and for the review of the Cabinet, our Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the hon. Attorney General in terms of how we can strengthen our

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

institutions to be much more complete in its collection of data and how we use that data for decision-making and for planning purposes.

Sen. Dhanpaul: *[Inaudible]*

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh: Well, that is a recommendation. But it has to go through the approval process of the Cabinet and so on. So all of these findings, Mr. President, will support workforce planning, education, training programmes, and employment policy.

I think one of the things that the Prime Minister recently pointed out to us is that when we came into Government, at least when I left Government in 2010, we had an active scholarships division. When we came into Government, we inherited a bursary system and I am not so sure that the bursary is fulfilling the same mandate. So, one of the things that I think the Prime Minister has asked us to look at is that system again. But again, these findings will inform training programmes, employment, policy, career guidance, identification, occupational skills, but it will contribute to the continued development of its institutionalization of the national labour market information system and the National Manpower Plan.

So, the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development is working collaboratively with the Ministry of Labour through the production of data, with the CSO analysing the data, looking at the market statistics and these initiatives are intended to address this important gap and also labour market information, existing employment and unemployment statistics, provide valuable information and so on, Mr. President.

So, to further add to the robustness of this process, we will be engaging, as I said, in the census, and we will be updating data throughout the year 2027, with the analysis carded for 2028 that will give us and international agencies a more holistic

Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh (cont'd)

view of all that is happening within Trinidad and Tobago and as we seek to bring our institutions and our data updated.

So, Mr. President, I really would like to thank Sen. Dr. Attzs for bringing this Motion and giving us an opportunity to talk about some of what the Government is doing and I will leave my colleagues to expand on other aspects of it. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Courtney Mc Nish.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Courtney Mc Nish: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I understand I will be the last speaker for the evening.

Hon. Senator: You wish.

Sen. C. Mc Nish: You know, I have been a human resource management professional and an independent planning consultant in the field of human resource management for well over 40 years and I have been engaged in the development and implementation of manpower plans and succession plans for corporate clients, both locally and regionally and to sit and understand that Sen. Dr. Attzs had to bring this Motion and then to be very pleasantly surprised by Minister Swaratsingh's declaration that they have a plan.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. C. Mc Nish: It makes my contribution almost moot.

Hon. Senator: Useless.

Sen. C. Mc Nish: Not useless, absolutely not useless.

Hon. Senator: Prophetic.

Sen. C. Mc Nish: Yes. I have a concern still and I will be addressing the

Minister. Why did the consultants take so many years? The projected plan was 10 months; it was delivered 19 months late, and I suppose they were paid their full fee. But why would a consultant take so long to produce a working framework for a Minister's attention when we already have in this country systems for gathering information on manpower and workers on the demand side and we also have systems for gathering information on the supply side? We have the ability to gather information; the Ministry of Labour still operates the Labour Market Information Unit, and I am aware of that. For example, the Ministry of Labour's Information Unit gathers detailed information. Detailed information on employment, unemployment, vacancies, labour migration and I know that dovetails and integrates with what is happening in the CARICOM labour market.

So once, in my view, there were, in fact, institutions gathering information, why would the consultants take 19 months, almost going on to two years, to provide something that would allow whichever Ministry is responsible to say okay, now, I have a document, I can go out and engage stakeholders, et cetera. I can then go to the Cabinet to get this approval, I find it very, very strange. This system of gathering information has been in place for years; I see no reason why.

I want to also address two other issues. In 2022, the Minister spoke about the labour skills assessment report that came out particularly for the ICT sector. What he did not say was that part of that report indicated that the national manpower system for Trinidad and Tobago was unable to accurately identify current or future skills needs in any of the priority sectors. Two issues arise here: What are those priority sectors and why has the system been unable to accurately identify current or future skills needs? It is critical that any manpower report, whether it is a preliminary report, whether it is a finalised document, should have

broad sets of information that identify, in my role we call it “K jobs”, but in the wider sector they call it “priority industries”. So we identify what the priority industries are and what are the current and future skill needs are. If, in 2022, the labour assessments report could not identify that four years after, we are in 2026 going on to 2027, can I assume that those deficiencies that allowed that state to exist have been corrected in this report?

My second and final—I had more, but the Minister addressed them—issue that I think we need to address, Mr. President, is: What are the institutional frameworks that this report, in the hands of the Minister, what institutional framework, what foundations would— Let me see how to properly phrase this, eh: What institutional framework amendments to, changes to, changes in the methodologies in those institutional frameworks that would allow us, every four or five years, to effectively update and address our manpower plan?

3.45 p.m.

Because if we have institutions that up until 2022, that could not effectively bring about an accurate assessment, and we now have in our hands a preliminary manpower plan, then I beg, I beg, to find out whether that document suggests corrections or amendments to those institutions that gather the information that allow a 2022 situation to exist.

Mr. President, I will wrap up because I was very, very impressed that at least a report was in the hands of the Government. I saw the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, smiling all the way to the bank when Minister Swaratsingh dropped the report and said, “Here we have a report, I got it in August”. But that report in August will not and cannot be implemented at least for another year and a half, at least for another year and a half. So, we are looking at,

as the Minister indicated, 2028. I wish to suggest that timeline be shortened, Minister.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. C. Mc Nish: I cannot accept a 2028 second quarter.

Sen. Dr. Swaratsingh: Mr. President, just a point of clarification. So, what I have indicated is that the census has to go through a process and therefore the census will take place in 2027, and based on that data collection, the data will be analysed. The data can only be analysed once it has been collected, and so the data analysis will take a little bit of time. Sorry, thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. C. Mc Nish: I understand—and I understood that and I understand that there will be a whole lot of people outside in the field gathering the information and then there is a whole different set of people that will sit down and examine it, analyse it, and come up with the findings. But we are still talking 2028. We are still talking 2028, and I feel that somehow, somehow something should be done that at least if we can push this to the end of 2027, I think it will be—

Sen. Nakhid: Senator, given your experience, what suggestion would you make to shorten that period?

Sen. C. Mc Nish: Welcome back, Sir. Hire more people. Hire more people, bring in more consultants.

Sen. Nakhid: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. C. Mc Nish: Yeah, if you want to bring the timeline down from 2028 and there are series of activities to be done, then the best way, as I am on my feet talking, hire more people to get it done quicker. That is the strategy.

Sen. Ratiram: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. C. Mc Nish: No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no, no, but hire more people. Mr. President, I am very happy as I close, to recognize that at least there is a framework before the Government. I am very happy. I am very, very impressed with the Minister's contribution with respect to going back out into the field, dovetailing the manpower plan with the wider population census. I think that makes sense. One has to feed into the next. And we cannot wait 10, 12 years to be doing this. My suggestion is that every five years, a manpower plan needs to be redone completely or upgraded and retested to ensure relevance. Mr. President, I thank you.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at 10.30 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.50 p.m.