

SENATE*Tuesday, October 13, 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. Anthony Vieira SC, who is out of the country.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received correspondence from Her Excellency the President Christine Carla Kangaloo, O.R.T.T., advising of the following temporary appointment 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 Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MS. ZOLA PHILLIPS

WHEREAS Senator Anthony Vieira, S.C., is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

UNREVISED

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)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ZOLA PHILLIPS, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 13th October, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Anthony Vieira, S.C., 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 12th day of October, 2026."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Zola Phillips took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2026

Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04 to establish the City of Chaguanas, and the Boroughs of Barataria, Couva, St. Augustine, and Sangre Grande; to make consequential amendments to the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01, the Interpretation Act, Chap. 3:01, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50, and the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations, Chap. 48:50; and for other related matters, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken on later in the proceedings.
[*Hon. K. Ameen*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPERS LAID

1. Audited Financial Statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2023. [*The Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Kennedy Swaratsingh)*]
2. Audited Financial Statements of Development Finance Limited for the year ended December 31, 2025. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh*]
3. Audited Financial Statements of the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2025. [*Sen. The Hon. Dr. K. Swaratsingh*]
4. Annual Administrative Report of the Fair Trading Commission for the financial year ended September 30, 2019. [*The Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Satyakama Maharaj)*]
5. Annual Administrative Report of the Fair Trading Commission for the financial year ended September 30, 2023. [*Sen. The Hon. S. Maharaj*]

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Mr. President, as regards to Question No. 15, the hon. Minister of Homeland Security is in Tobago, as we speak, for the opening of the ANR Robinson International Airport.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar: The hon. Attorney General will answer the question on his behalf.

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**Management and Disposal of Derelict TTPS Vehicles****(Details of)**

15. Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs asked the Minister of Homeland Security: As regards the management and disposal of derelict Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) vehicles, could the Minister advise as to the following:

- (i) what is the State's policy governing the disposal of these vehicles;
- (ii) what is the established process for the disposal of these vehicles, including the agencies responsible for authorising and conducting such disposals; and
- (iii) what criteria are used to determine when a police vehicle should be classified as unserviceable or derelict and designated for disposal?

Mr. President: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie SC): Mr. President, the question is in three parts. Parts (i) and (ii), with respect to those parts, the Ministry of Homeland Security is in the process of seeking guidance as to the way forward with respect to the relevant guidelines now in place, which have been fixed by reference to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act of 2015. That Act was amended by this Parliament, and the Ministry is seeking guidance with respect to those matters from the Office of the Attorney General.

With respect to part (iii), the Commissioner of Police has advised that the principal considerations that he uses to determine whether a TTPS vehicle is unserviceable and should be designated for disposal, those considerations are, one, the economic feasibility of continuing to repair and maintain the vehicle; two, the age of the vehicle; and three, any relevant safety considerations, including whether vehicle has been involved in a road traffic accident and the extent of that.

Mr. President: Sen. Attzs, do you have any supplemental?

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: Thank you, Mr. President. Supplemental: Could the Attorney General advise whether the Environmental Management Authority is involved in the process of the disposal of these vehicles, given that on some occasions, they will have hazardous materials, including things like batteries, et cetera?

Mr. President: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question. I see some merit in the EMA having oversight in those circumstances, but I do not know what takes place now.

Mr. President: Any further supplemental?

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: Mr. President, respectfully, would we be able to get some guidance in writing?

Mr. President: The hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie SC: The undertaking that I can give is that I would ask the Minister to do so. That is the only undertaking that I can give.

Sen. Dr. M. Attzs: Thank you very much, appreciated, hon. Attorney General. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: Thank you.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL, 2026

Mr. President: The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Hon. Khadijah Ameen): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I beg to move:

That a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, Chap. 25:04 to establish the City of Chaguanas, and the Boroughs of Barataria, Couva, St. Augustine, and Sangre Grande; to make consequential amendments to the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01, the Interpretation Act, Chap. 3:01, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, Chap. 25:50, and the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations, Chap. 48:50; and for other related matters, be now read a second time.

Mr. President, the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2026, amends the Acts that I listed in the opening. What it does is establishes the city of Chaguanas out of a centralized, built-up, urban, commercialized area, and the boroughs of Barataria, Couva, St. Augustine and Sangre Grande. It also adjusts the boundaries of the City of Port of Spain, the City of San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin, Diego Martin and Siparia Boroughs, as well as the San Juan/Laventille region.

1.45 p.m.

It also renames Tunapuna/Piarco and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporations as Tunapuna and Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporations, respectively. It also fixes the number of electoral districts for every city and borough. Mr. President, this Bill follows a well-established legal process in

which the Parliament determines the boundaries of all municipalities and sets out the number of electoral districts in every city and borough, and the Elections and Boundaries Commission applies an approved formula to determine the number of electoral districts in a region. This Bill, Mr. President, also permits a political party to revise the list of aldermen. It relieves independent candidates of the requirement to file such a list, and it provides a rule for breaking tied votes in the election of a Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairman, or Deputy Chairman.

Interestingly, Mr. President, it also makes resignation or expulsion, from or by a political party, of a councillor or an alderman as grounds for that post to become vacant. The consequential amendment made in the Representation of the People Act, the Interpretation Act, and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government and Tobago House of Assembly) Act, as well as the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations, I will now share with this House. Mr. President, this Bill has 15 clauses and a Schedule. This Bill requires a simple majority, but this Bill brings equity and logic to the boundaries of municipal corporations.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, in the public domain, there has been a lot of talk about the inequality in terms of the size of the region, the population, the geographic span of some of these regions. Tunapuna/Piarco, where I was Chairman, the northern boundary is the Blanchisseuse north coast, and it comes all the way down to Monroe Road as the southern boundary, from Mount Hope all the way to the Valencia River.

If you think of the expanse of that land, it includes communities that are

very rural, but there are also communities that are very built up, like, for instance, the centralized Tunapuna town centre; now Trincity and Arouca. Trincity has mushroomed. When you think about St. Augustine, where there is a university, and in many countries, a university town is a development focus, and therefore, the revision incorporated persons with expertise in urban development, in planning, so that they would be guided by data to determine where those growth poles have been over the last few years, where you have increased population based on data; not just how we feel about it. Because the truth is, everybody would love their town, their community to be a borough, have city status, but it is guided by data.

Mr. President, the Cabinet established a committee for the review of municipal corporation boundaries. This was announced in a post-Cabinet briefing, and it was widespread in terms of public knowledge. It was well established in the public domain. The committee, for the information of Members, was established by Cabinet Minute 737 on the 28th of August, 2025, and they received their Instruments of Appointments on the 28th of November, 2025, as well. They have been working since then. When they produced their final report, which was in April of 2026, this year, they recorded consultations with stakeholder groups within municipalities, such as technical and administrative staff of all regional corporations, all municipalities, whether they were cities, boroughs, or regions.

They had consultations with councils. Council members, elected officials, have different sentiments from administrative or technical staff. Government Ministries and agencies who collaborate with local government, as well as the business community, on their record, they consulted with 18

Ministries and agencies. That was up to February, 2026. If you consider agencies such as the Highways Division, Drainage Division, and consider the work they do, and how that collaboration with local government is important, they had consultations with the Town and Country Planning, the utilities, housing, health, agriculture, Surveys and Mapping, Homeland Security, social development, community development, tourism, and, very importantly, the Central Statistical Office.

They consulted with the Confederation of Regional Business Chambers in February of 2026. It was not one consultation; they had more than one. As well as the mayors and chairmen of each of our cities and boroughs and regions, and they did that in March. At that consultation, 12 of the 14 corporations were represented. The report compiles the stakeholder recommendations, several of which included the expansion of Arima, for instance, the alignment of surrounding communities with the Point Fortin Borough, and those are reflected in the Bill. There was extensive consultation with stakeholders.

Mr. President, the present boundaries for the 14 municipalities we have today were settled in 1992. That was 34 years ago. Mr. President, I am old; I wrote Common Entrance, and I did not even write Common Entrance yet, 1992. So that gives you an idea of how long we are dealing with—in terms of how outdated those boundaries were. The case for change rests on the uneven growth in population based on data from the CSO, based on electoral numbers from the Elections and Boundaries Commission over the last 34 years. Mr. President, data from the EBC shows that between 1992 and 2023, when you had the last local government elections, the electorate of

Tunapuna/Piarco, for instance, grew from 113,000 to 180,000.

The Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo region grew from 97,000 to 153,000 electors. In Chaguanas, they grew from 37,000 electors to 70,000 electors. It also showed that the number of electors in the City of Port of Spain declined from 41,000 to 37,000. Arima and Point Fortin remained relatively small, with Arima currently at about 30,000, and Point Fortin at 17,000 electors. We must appreciate that the number of electors is smaller than the number of persons living there, because you will have people who have to be serviced by the regional corporation that may not be registered electors in that region, and therefore the CSO data on the population reflects even higher than the number of electors.

There is no doubt that the result of the growth in these regions, the growth in the population, led to some corporations serving almost double the number of electors today than they were intended to 34 years ago. And more so, some of these regions have been forced to manage two and three times the electorate of others, because they are far more expansive in terms of the geography, and they do so with comparable resources. So, this Bill seeks to have a fairer distribution of representation, of service delivery. This Bill, Mr. President, is about service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: The provisions respond to practical problems that have arisen since the 2013 reforms, and in 2013, for the information of those listening, is when the UNC Government, then, introduced proportional representation for aldermen to sit in council, based on the number of votes received by political parties.

Difficulties with lists on nomination day and after the election, Mr. President, the burden is placed on independent candidates, because the requirement is that every party, including an independent candidate, has to submit a list of persons to be aldermen, nominate that list. When you have situations like that, the independent candidate is not fielding candidates for all the electoral districts, but he has to put a list of electors equivalent to the number of seats, the number of electoral districts in that region. This Bill now exempts independent candidates from having to submit that list of aldermen.

It makes it easier for independent candidates to contest the election, which, in my view, is healthy for democracy.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, you will also recall the difficulties when you had ties in the votes for mayor, in Chaguanas in 2013. There was a tie. There were three political parties with, I think, four seats each, and they were in deadlock for days. In Sangre Grande in 2016, or 2019, there was a deadlock, and because the current law is silent on how to break a deadlock, the sitting Chairman took the chair, conducted the election, and gave himself a casting vote and voted for himself.

There was no law for the court to determine if that was right or wrong, but, certainly, now this Bill allows the majority, the voice of the people, to be heard, again, in favour of democracy.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Deflection provisions, Mr. President. You know in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, if a Member is elected on a political party ticket and he or she deflects to another party, they will declare that seat vacant,

and we go back to the polls for the people to determine if they want that same person. On a next political party's ticket, they get that opportunity. This Bill now introduces that for local government, again, in keeping with the spirit of democracy.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I will go clause by clause on what this Bill brings in terms of the legal representation and what it means.

I want to also make it very clear that this Bill does not postpone the local government election. It does not affect the current local government councillors and aldermen. This Act comes into operation on a date fixed by the President for proclamation. This allows the Commission, the EBC, delimitation of electoral district to take place, the vesting of property, and the administrative arrangements for the new corporations to be put in place before the new map, so to speak, takes legal effect. The clause contemplates a single commencement date for the whole Act. That is what clause 2 does.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. President, clause 3 is really an interpretation in that where you see the words "the Act" in this Bill, it refers to the Municipal Corporations Act, which is the standard Act that governs local government, Act 21 of 1990, which was later amended in 1992.

Mr. President, I move now to clause 4. Section 12A is amended; the provision that deals with the revision of aldermen. This Bill creates greater clarity around the list of aldermen. Political parties will now get to revise the list of aldermen they submitted initially. As I explained, a political party submits a list of aldermen equivalent to the number of electoral districts in the

region. They are required to pull from that list. If a person who is appointed an alderman demits office or dies and you have to replace them, you take from that list. This clause allows a political party to revise that list. They write to EBC, they notify them, and EBC makes the change. It does not remove the EBC's power. The EBC remains responsible for receiving those lists and declaring the persons appointed as aldermen. So, the objective now is a very clear, clean legal process.

Mr. President, clause 5 is where section 12B was amended. That deals with independent candidates. Section 12B, presently, provides for the purpose of a list of aldermen. For the word "party", which includes an independent, currently, the EBC considers that when you say a party contested, even if it is an independent, it is considered. So that, as I explained before, an independent has to put in that list. Clause 5 now changes "party". It will not include an independent candidate. So, an independent candidate does not have to go out there, for instance, in a region where you have 17 electoral districts. That one independent candidate has to find 17 persons willing to be nominated on his list of aldermen. Sen. Phillip Alexander might have something to say about, you know.

Hon. Senators: *[Laughter]*

Hon. K. Ameen: But in cases where you have independent candidates, it is a discouragement. It means that sometimes they cannot get enough people to do that. It makes it challenging. It makes it difficult. It is discouraging for them to participate in the electoral process. In local government, you want to encourage democracy and encourage the voices of the people to be heard.

Hon. Senators: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. K. Ameen: It also, of course, makes it a little easier, administratively, for the EBC and their recruiting officers. So, it makes it easier for independents to contest.

Mr. President, I now move to clause 6. Clause 6 amends section 13, where you have the declaration of the aldermen from the revised list. Clause 6 makes the changes to section 13, which follow from clause 4 that I mentioned before. It allows for the filling of the vacancy of the office of alderman and is amended so that the substitute is drawn from the list or any revised list. A political party can now revise their list at any time. If they are required to, they could draw from that revised list.

Clause 7 amends 13B. This is simply a terminology change. Currently, aldermen are described as being elected, but really they are appointed by the political party based on proportional representation. So, this clause 7 just changes the terminology from appointed to elected. That is straightforward and logical. Mr. President, clause 8—

Hon. Senators: It is the other way around.

Hon. K. Ameen: Sorry. It is the other way around. It changes it from being elected to being appointed. Because, in essence, they are not elected. They are appointed. Thank you very much. They are appointed. So, it just changes the terminology, so that aldermen are referred to as being appointed and no longer as being elected.

Clause 8 amends section 14. This, Mr. President, deals with where you have a tie for the election of a mayor and deputy mayor. The same applies for chairman and deputy chairman. Mr. President, when members of council are elected in a local government election, and aldermen are appointed—well

elected, now appointed—that is the council. The members of the council are the ones who vote to select the chairman and deputy chairman. But what happens if there is a deadlock? What happens if you have equal numbers on either side?

Mr. President, legal luminaries in this country would recall when you had the 2019 debacle in Sangre Grande. There was a deadlock. It reached as far as the court. The court could not find a provision in the law to determine who is to sit in the chair to become chairman of the regional corporation. So, while people, the members of the public and legal minds were weighing in on their opinion, really, in my humble view, it should be the voice of the people that guides this decision.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: So, this Bill now provides a lawful mechanism for resolving a deadlock in the selection of a presiding officer to conduct that election of a mayor and deputy mayor, or a chairman and deputy chairman. So, where the council is tied, in the spirit of democracy, the votes cast by the electorate—the entire electorate of that region—will be taken into consideration and the will of the people will prevail. That is democracy.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, the provision is adapted from section 51(5) of Jamaica's Local Governance Act, 2016, with the adjustment that both the mayor and the deputy mayor go to the party that won the popular vote within that region, since in Trinidad and Tobago that vote also determines the composition of the council through the aldermen. Because of proportional representation, out of four aldermen in each region, a party may get one

alderman if they get 25 per cent or more. They may get two if they get close to 50 per cent, and so on. So, it seeks now, in addition to proportional representation, to allow the will of the entire electorate in that municipality to determine who will be mayor and deputy mayor, chairman and deputy chairman in the case of a deadlock. That, Mr. President, is something that is very agreeable because it is in the spirit of democracy.

Mr. President, I move now to clause 9. Clause 9 is what I like to call “the crossing of the Floor clause”. Because this, Mr. President, currently, section 27(1) sets out the circumstances in which an office of councillor or alderman could become vacant. So, you have things like failure to make a declaration of office. If you are elected, and you do not show up to take up the Oath, they declare your seat vacant. If you are absent:

“...from Trinidad and Tobago for...”—more than—“...thirty consecutive days without...leave...”

—there is a process to apply for leave. Your seat can be declared vacant if you are:

“...absent from three consecutive statutory meetings of...Council without leave...”—failure—“...to return...within...”—the—“...three months...”—after an—“...election..”—if you die, of course, and loss of qualification.

So, the Representation of the People Act, there are qualifications to become a councillor or alderman. So, if you lose those. That is what currently stands. Change in political allegiance is not among them. For Members of the Lower House, Members of the House of Representatives, it is. Therefore, this clause 9 will add a new ground labelled “(g)” where a councillor who is

elected as a candidate under section 11 or an alderman who is placed on the party's list and appointed under section 13(11) vacates office on all the previous conditions but now adds upon resigning from or being expelled from that party. His political party. So, new subsections 1(A) and 1(E) will apply that machinery.

The Member is deemed to have resigned or been expelled when:

- “(a) a written notice of resignation, signed by the...”—member—
“...is delivered to the political party; or
- (b) a written notice of expulsion...”—is—“...issued by the
party...”—and—“...is served...”—to—“...the...”—member.

In either case, a certified copy is sent by the political party and:

“...delivered to the Chief Executive Officer.”—of the municipality.

The CEO then forwards the notice at once to the mayor or chairman, who must, within seven days, convene a special meeting at which that notice is laid, and council declares the office vacant with effect from that date of declaration. So, it gives a very clear procedure. If, however, that meeting is not held within the seven days, what happens? Mr. President, if the meeting is not held within seven days, the office is deemed vacant on the expiry of that period. End of story. Straight to the point. Democracy wins.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: So, Mr. President, there are no spaces for people to do “wah dey want”. You have to respect the will of the people who vote. People vote for a person on a political party's ticket. If that person wishes to go on another ticket, it is only fair that the electorate has the opportunity to say yay or nay. That is an agreeable principle.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, what happens after? A vacancy in the office of a councillor. We have had situations where councillors die. A vacancy in the office of a councillor is then filled by a by-election under the current section 29. A vacancy, in terms of aldermen, is filled by the party's list, which is, I mentioned, in section 13. So, you have the list of aldermen. They will just take another alderman and fill them in. Or you can have a revised list of aldermen, and they take from that list and fill them in. Mr. President, of course, an independent councillor is not affected on these grounds—“because he did not go up in any political party ticket so he ha' nowhere to jump”—since the ground is applied only to a member who is elected or appointed as a political candidate. It does not apply to the independent.

The rationale, Mr. President, is very clear. The burgess, the residence, the electors of a municipality, vote for a person on a party ticket and that alderman was allocated based on party votes and proportional representation. So, if that Member changes sides after the election, it alters the balance in council without reference to the electorate. That is not in keeping with the spirit of democracy. So, the will of the people will prevail. This clause gives the party's own notice conclusive effect. So, once the party sends out that notice, the council's role in declaring that vacancy is formal. The amendment binds an elected person to the will of the people.

Mr. President, I now move to clause 10—sorry—clause 11, clause 12. Clause 10 deals with the First Schedule, which is amended, that gives the boundaries for the City of Port of Spain, the City of San Fernando, the Borough of Arima and the Borough of Point Fortin. These descriptions are

taken from the Election and Boundaries' descriptions of boundaries. Clause 11 deals with the Second Schedule, which amends the Chaguanas, Diego Martin, Siparia and new boroughs and regional corporations. The Second Schedule has two Parts. The first describes the cities and boroughs that were created since 1990. The second one is the regions. So, cities and boroughs were in a different Schedule from the regions. So, in the first Part, item one is replaced so that the Borough of Chaguanas becomes the City of Chaguanas. Mr. President, I will not go through in detail all of the boundaries. That is circulated in writing in the Bill.

Clause 12, the Third Schedule, fixes the number of electoral districts, and therefore, the number of councillors in cities and boroughs. Currently, in fact, since 1990, the number of seats in a city or borough is determined by an Act of Parliament. So, clause 12 lists for all of the cities, including the new City of Chaguanas and all of the boroughs, including the new Borough of Sangre Grande, the number of electoral districts that will be in that region. That is required by law for the Parliament to determine.

Mr. President, clause 13 deals with the Schedule and some consequential amendments. So, clause 13(1) provides that any reference or any written law to the Borough of Chaguanas or the Chaguanas Borough Corporation is read as the City of Chaguanas and the Chaguanas City Corporation. That is just consequential. The same would apply, for instance, where we have Tunapuna/Piarco in any law; it will now read Tunapuna region. Same for Sangre Grande. Sangre Grande region will now read Sangre Grande Borough, and so on.

Mr. President, the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01 is

amended by replacing the definition of municipality in section 2 and the list of registration areas in the First Schedule with the 17 municipalities and by adjusting the names in the Schedule. These are pretty straightforward. They are more or less administrative and consequential.

Mr. President, very important, when these corporations change, their boundaries change. In the instance of San Juan/Laventille, you have the Borough of Baratara and the region of San Juan/Laventille. Currently, every municipality is its own legal entity. It can sue and be sued. It can enter into contracts. It has its own legal personality. Clause 14 provides that every corporation whose boundaries are altered in clause 10 or clause 11 continues as the same body. It means that all powers, authorities, all interests, all their rights and privileges, all their real and personal property, remain vested in it. Its liabilities, its obligations, its debts, its contracts, its duties existing immediately before commencement, continue to be attached to it. We have already put GIS mapping for all the corporation properties so that when you draw the new boundaries on the map, you will see very clearly on the map which properties fall into which region. The same will be done for all of these.

Mr. President, one of the most critical assets of any municipality, of any local government system, is the people. Clause 15 protects the employees of the three regional corporations where their territory will be divided by this Bill.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: I want to make it very clear, upon commencement, any collective agreement affecting workers employed at the San Juan/Laventille, the Tabaquite/Talparo and the new Tunapuna region continues with effect and

binds any successor corporation, by which those workers are employed. A trade union which represented those workers continues to represent them in their industrial relations as the successor. This clause, Mr. President, is confined to those three corporations; its extension to every affected and successor corporation, so that no worker loses their job. No worker loses the terms and conditions of their employment, and no worker loses representation by their union because of this Bill.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I know that Senator, our comrade, Leroy Baptiste, would be very happy to hear that the workers are being protected. The Prime Minister was very specific that we include and we ensure that no worker must lose their job and their representation. Mr. President, that really is the gist of it, you know.

I want to also tell you that as communities evolve, I am sure you will have—as you may know—growth, you have development shifts, you have growth poles expanding. No doubt, local government boundaries will evolve again. But the fact that this country currently looks at a map of Trinidad and sees three-quarters of it yellow and one-quarter of it red, and is told that that is 7-7, and that is an equal number of corporations, is illogical. It is unfair.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. Speaker, that is a slap in the face of democracy. We have an opportunity to correct it in this Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2026. These boundaries were recommended based on solid data, on population growth, on electoral data, which I provided to this House. The growth and decline of certain commercial hubs, growth poles and other

planning and development indicators, Mr. President. It brings consistency to the size of our three categories of local government bodies. Cities, which are the smallest and most concentrated urban centres, like the capital City of Port of Spain, the southern city of San Fernando and now the new city of Chaguanas, which is geographically smaller than the former Borough of Chaguanas.

We did not just take the whole Borough of Chaguanas and rename it the city of Chaguanas. We have focused on a concentrated area based on a development focus. You have the boroughs, which is the next layer, where you have larger cities. They have their own unique development characteristics, and of course you have the regions. Three layers, three different categories, so to speak, of municipalities. The regions tend to be geographically larger with lower population densities. They often include our rural communities, which is a focus of this Government, and it keeps with international standards. So, Mr. President, this Bill is fair, it is proportionate, and it is equitable. It is long overdue, 34 years. It returns a degree of equality, rationale and logic. I want to commend the Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar for the inclusion of local government on this Government's legislative agenda.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I look forward to the implementation. I give this commitment to Trinidad and Tobago that the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government stands ready to ensure that the administrative and other measures to build these three new municipalities will be put in place. I personally have a deep appreciation for the reach and impact

municipal services have on communities. I look forward to the contribution of Members in this House. Mr. President, I beg to move.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. President: Sen. Faris Al-Rawi SC.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi SC: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I rise to join in this debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2026. Mr. President, we were told by the hon. Minister that this Bill is based upon recommendations and upon solid data. Mr. President, we were referred to a Cabinet Minute, a date on which it was provided. Mr. President, we were told that EBC data existed. Mr. President, the Cabinet Minute No. 737, August 28, 2025. We were told that a committee was appointed, and that a report was generated based upon consultation. Mr. President, I am prepared to give way to the hon. Minister. Minister, can you please provide this information to us today? Is it possible that you can provide us with those written reports? The Cabinet Minute and the reports that you have referred to.

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, those can be provided.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Thank you. Mr. President, in so far as those can be provided, and we are here debating it, are we now in a situation with the cart before the horse?

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Because none of us has the information referred to by the hon. Member. The hon. Member purports this to be a fairly simple Bill, that it is for naming of certain entities, municipal corporations as cities, others

as boroughs, for the creation of new entities based upon an equitable formula, Mr. President. In fact, the hon. Minister said that logic demanded that when you look at the map of Trinidad and Tobago, and you see three-quarters of the map in yellow and a quarter in red, and you hear seven-seven in terms of corporation divisions and reflections, that that alone demands the purpose of this Bill. But, Mr. President, how on reasonable reflection are we to believe that? When, Mr. President, the City of Port of Spain, by way of example, which the hon. Minister reflected upon, in terms of data, saying that the City of Port of Spain noted a drop in the number of electors from 41,000 to 37,000. Mr. President, it does not reflect, number one, the urban footprint of a city. Number two, the fact that there is, every single day, a migration of persons into a built environment.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: So that, whereas with urbanization you would expect a fall in living persons resident in a constituency and electoral district. The 110,000 people that travel to Port of Spain every single day still occupy it between the hours of 5.00a.m. and 6.00p.m. on average Mr. President, thereby requiring an allocation of resources and commitment—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk-thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—that defies the logic that the hon. Minister has put forward on this table. To say that Port of Spain has only 37,000 people living here, without saying that the migration into Port of Spain every day involves 100,000 people, Mr. President, is to completely miss the boat on the truth and the facts behind user occupation and responsibility, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: So, I cannot accept what the Minister says. The City of San Fernando has the same phenomenon. No doubt the City of Chaguanas will have the same phenomenon, Mr. President, except that Chaguanas, in terms of a built area, has an interesting aspect, much like Arima, which is where there are many people who live in the two districts, Mr. President, that defy the City of San Fernando and the Capital City of Port of Spain. So, Mr. President, we are asking for the data.

2.30 p.m.

The hon. Minister spoke to consultations; the Cabinet announced a committee to discuss municipal corporation boundaries. Mr. President, I heard the call for municipal corporation boundaries, and I was quite pleased to hear that call, because I know, as a matter of fact, that the Schedule attached to the Municipal Corporations Act has last been updated in 1992, Mr. President, 34 years ago. I know that when I had the privilege of acting in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, Mr. President, that we commissioned an exercise to do vesting orders for all of the 14 corporations. There was one regional corporation that was outstanding, that was the Borough of Diego Martin, but all of them had been produced and I assumed today, wrongly, that we were going to have the vesting order done.

Now, Mr. President, this brings me to a deep concern in respect of what we are doing today. You see, Mr. President, when you go to the Bill, the Bill, in fact, is amending the Schedules to the Municipal Corporations Act and when you look at what the Schedules are in the context of the law, which is the Municipal Corporations Act, Mr. President, you have to be concerned. Because clause 10:

“...The First Schedule to the Act is amended”

We are now saying that:

“...the boundaries of the city of Port of Spain”—shall be and we describe that in 10(a), we then go 10(b) to San Fernando, we go to 10(c), Mr. President, to Arima, we go to 10(d) in the Bill, clause 10(d) to the Borough of Point Fortin. But, Mr. President, when you go to the Municipal Corporations Act, and you go to sections 4, 5, and 6 and you look to what the responsibilities of a corporation are, they are to manage all of the properties described in the Schedule. But, Mr. President, we know that private or property which is not maintained by the public purse, referred to as “orphaned lands” or “orphaned roads,” Mr. President, does not fall within that. So when we heard the call to look at municipal corporations and their boundaries, Mr. President, the natural conclusion is that you are looking at what is vested in the corporation to ensure that there is actual delivery of those things. But, Mr. President, when the hon. Minister says that there was consultation, Mr. President, it certainly is not reflective of the kind of consultation that local government reform has involved over many, many, many years, Mr. President.

If you go way back to when municipal corporations first featured in this country which is 1768, Mr. President, the Royal Cabildo establishment, you pass through the Municipality Ordinance of 1840 which created the town council of Port of Spain; you go to the Town Board legislation in 1907; you go to the Port of Spain Corporation Ordinance, 1914; you go to the Moyne Commission, the Moyne report, passing through 1930s to 1938 with the Moyne Report in 1945; Mr. President, when you get to 1962, in local government, you get to the Wooding Commission in 1974, you get to the first

version of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1980; you get to 1990 with the Municipal Corporations Act; and then 1992, when we look to the amendments to the originally proposed NAR version of the Municipal Corporations Act, Mr. President, and you get to 2022, you will realise that the period of consultation for local government reform has always involved detailed consultation and report.

Now, Mr. President, municipal corporations, local government actually is not entrenched in our Constitution at all. Very recently, in the Privy Council decision of Ravi Balgobin Maharaj, Mr. President, it was interesting to note the Privy Council's view, as to whether there is constitutional protection, that is, 2023 UKPC 17, *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj v the Cabinet*. That particular judgment, Mr. President, gave us the first look into recent views of whether local government is protected by the Constitution, and the Privy Council stopped short of actually admitting that it was, effectively leaving that for another day. Before that, Mr. President, local government was due to be entirely the aspect of the legislature of Trinidad and Tobago. After all, the Municipal Corporations Act is an Act of Parliament.

So, Mr. President, today we are looking at a law which has no constitutional reflection in the main part, but may have, if you listen to the judicial committee, the only real form of local government management that has some degree of constitutional reflection is the Tobago House of Assembly in section 141. Now, why do I raise this, Mr. President? I raise this insofar as there are consequential amendments to the Representation of the People Act. I raise this in so far as the Minister has said, that when you look at the map 7/7 “doh” makes sense when three-quarters of the population is looking

at a map that says that three-quarters of the map is yellow. But, Mr. President, what this Bill actually represents, Mr. President, is, in our estimation, as we have said in the House of Representatives and we repeat today, this is an attempt to engage in legislative amendment to create three new municipal corporations/entities, Mr. President, simply to change the colour of the politics and political representation—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—otherwise referred to as gerrymandering. Mr. President, I say that because when the Minister was speaking to the consultation and the final report and the hon. Minister listed out technical input from Government agencies, Mr. President, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, et cetera, going right down the line. The one entity that the hon. Minister did not name was the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Studiously avoided, Mr. President.

Ms. Ameen: They were not.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Was the EBC consulted?

Ms. Ameen: No, they are independent, they were not.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Right. So the hon. Minister says across the Floor, and I am prepared to give way if the Minister wishes, the hon. Minister says that as a matter of fact, the EBC was not consulted.

Now, Mr. President, we are told by the hon. Minister, that these amendments will not affect the upcoming local government election. But, Mr. President, we are in a very anomalous situation for this debate. We have just received online at the Ministry of Finance; there are online documents, Mr.

President, which I had a look at, Mr. President, that include the extrapolated funds for Trinidad and Tobago at present, it is in the public domain. And, Mr. President, the hon. Minister says that the logic behind this Bill is equity and fairness, Mr. President, that the creation of a city of Chaguanas is to be reflected by its parity, no doubt to the city of Port of Spain, or the city of San Fernando, Mr. President. But, Mr. President, when I went to the Ministry of Finance in preparation for this debate and I note that the *Development Programme* funding associated with this law in the creation of a city, Mr. President, for example the City of Chaguanas, and I see \$37.9 million.

Mr. President: Standing Order 49 makes it very clear, a Bill in the other place has not been passed, so we cannot anticipate. When that Bill is passed, we can engage. So I am saying do not go there; this is not a budget debate.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: So be guided. You are out of order, do not go there. Deal with boundaries and you are fine, but to anticipate a Bill that is properly before the other place, that is yet to be concluded, is totally out of order. So please be guided.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I am referring to

the boundaries and I will proceed now, Mr. President, with the Minister's presentation. The Minister's presentation is that the election that is going to come to us in local government will not be affected by this law. Mr. President, I will demonstrate that that is not true, Mr. President. The second thing that I will demonstrate, Mr. President, keeping to your guidance, Mr. President—in fact, Mr. President, you are not really 100 per cent correct, but perhaps I can

be blamed because it is very anomalous to be here debating a law after the reading of the budget.

Hon. Senator: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: In my 17 years in Parliament, I have never seen that done ever before, it is why I objected on the last occasion to the Sitting today, Mr. President, so that we could avoid these things, but I am guided. Mr. President, as we come to—

Sen. Allahar: Mr. President, 46(1), Mr. President, 46(1). This Senate agreed on the—

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—clause—Mr. President—

Sen. Allahar:—on a division on the last occasion to bring this debate here. This Senate agreed—

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Standing Order—[*Inaudible*]. Mr. President, there is no estimation or speech on the part of the Minister permitted.

Mr. President: Okay. Yeah. Okay, let us not get into that zone. I think that I am guiding this debate and let us not get carried away. Continue, please.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Thank you, Mr. President. So, Mr. President, when we are looking at the operationalization of this law in the context of this Bill, Mr. President, I dare say that I have deep concern that we will soon find out at the appropriate time and discuss it, that this is an entire charade, Mr. President, because I dare say that I hold the view that there will not be the adequate resource allocation, Mr. President, in terms of treating with manpower issues, in terms of treating with the funding for the EBC, in treating with the administrative concerns of the local government. In the creation of these new entities, Mr. President, it will demand that there is parity amongst the

entities—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—that comprise the UNC, or comprise the PNM, Mr. President. For instance, Mr. President, if you look to the urban phenomenon of Port of Spain and San Fernando, two entities which are affected by clause 10 of this Bill, the enlarging of the city of San Fernando by bringing in from Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation, Mr. President, electoral districts into the city of San Fernando. Mr. President, my own view is that that is caused simply to ensure that the corporation goes to the United National Congress.

In terms of the argument that there is an equity in terms of voters and count per head, Mr. President, I would like to I mark the spot today, that if the Minister is to be believed at all, then we hope that whenever we get to look at the package that is going to come at us, we will see development funding that is equal, we will see, Mr. President, recurrent expenditure that is equal and we will have to see, Mr. President, if the Minister is to be believed at all, Mr. President, that there is an equal standard per citizen, Mr. President, per elector, per burgess, Mr. President, that does not exist.

Mr. President, when we get to the provisions of the latter end of the Bill which the Minister referred to just really in passing, Mr. President, the truth is this, I personally cannot see any objection to the crossing of the floor provisions, Mr. President, it exists in the Constitution for our House of Representatives. Mr. President, it is something that perhaps was just awaiting its time to happen, not a problem there for me personally, Mr. President. I would have thought that there ought to have been some consultation on it, that has been absent.

So, Mr. President, when we are looking at clause 6 and the amendments to section 13, I really cannot find too much fault with that. But, Mr. President, when you get to the other clauses of the Bill and let us go to clauses 14, 15 and 16 of the Bill, Mr. President. When we get to the amendments that deal with savings, Mr. President and we deal, Mr. President, with vesting. Let us go, Mr. President, to clause 14. Clause 14 says:

“All powers, authorities, interests, rights and privileges vested in a Municipal Corporation referred to in sections 10 and 11(a), (b), and (c) and all real or personal property belonging to that Corporation shall continue to be vested in that Corporation.”

2.45 p.m.

So, all powers, authorities, rights and privileges vested in Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima and Point Fortin, and all of those interests, authorities, powers, et cetera vested in Chaguanas, Diego Martin and Siparia shall continue.

Now, Mr. President, if you are in fact seeing a migration across the other corporations—in the East-West Corridor, Mr. President, this Bill affects San Juan/Laventille, it affects Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, it affects Arima. If you are going further, it also affects Grande. So, let us work our way from east to west: Sangre Grande, Arima. You get to Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, you get to San Juan/Laventille. You carve out St. Augustine, Barataria, et cetera, and you create them into that pack. You come to Port of Spain, you come to Diego Martin. The entire East-West Corridor is now affected.

But, Mr. President, when we get to liabilities and obligations in clause

14(2), again, for the cities that I have mentioned, Port of Spain, San Fernando, now Arima and Point Fortin as boroughs, Chaguanas, Diego Martin and Siparia, all claims against its property rights and assets are unimpaired. Mr. President, the question in law arises that when you leave the claims with the corporations who had the liability, and will continue to hold the liability, and they are put into a freshly created corporation, we would hope to expect, when the Minister comes to address us on funding, that you would have the underwriting to those corporations. Because the Minister said that these corporations are legal entities and legal persons. They can be sued, they can sue for themselves, they are legal personalities.

But, Mr. President, putting the Minister on notice, we expect to see the adequacy of funding to maintain the liabilities that are going to be managed. This Bill does none of that, and it must be associated, Mr. President, therefore, with whether it is lawful to saddle a corporation with liability when it no longer has the benefit, because it is open to have a transitional clause, a grandfathering arrangement instead, to have the new corporation take on the liabilities because any new corporation would receive funding, because this Bill must be underwritten by funding.

Now, Mr. President, again, the point has to be made. When we are getting to the operationalization of these new entities, St. Augustine, Barataria, Mr. President, you are leaving the liabilities in the other corporations from which they come. These are fresh corporations, Mr. President. But, Mr. President, where is the funding to maintain the corporations coming from when in fact Part V of the Municipal Corporations Act was completely repealed? Part V, Mr. President, you will recall, is the

provision of property tax, which a corporation was allowed to levy, maintain, spend.

So, Mr. President, how, in creating Barataria, St. Augustine, and in leaving the other corporations, are we going to have the liabilities of the corporations maintained? And we will hold the Minister and the Government responsible when we get to another date to see whether it is underwritten by funding, Mr. President. So, I am marking the spot on that again because, Mr. President, if it is not underwritten by funding, then we have a problem because there will be an inequality of treatment and there will be a prejudice that is going to be visited upon each and every burgess or citizen in those corporations under clause—

Sen. Allahar: 53(1)(b) tedious repetition, Mr. President.

Mr. President: I think you have made that point. So, I want to uphold a Standing Order and you can move on.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Thank you so much, Mr. President. Mr. President, I am turning to the point now of the burgesses. Mr. President, perhaps I should make it clear. The spots that I am marking right now—when I say, “I mark the spot and will ask the Minister to be held accountable,” it is the same terminology in respect of 10 different points that I am going to make. So, I would invite the Leader of Government Business to take notes because whilst he may hear those words, it is on 10 different points, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: So, I am marking another spot right now, Mr. President, so that he can pay sharp attention. Mr. President, I am dealing here now with clause 15. And again, there is another spot to be marked. Clause 15 says:

“Upon the commencement of the Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Act, 2026, in the Municipal Corporations of San Juan-Laventille, Tabaquite/Talparo, and Tunapuna (referred to...

(a) any collective agreement that immediately prior...affected...”

It says:

“(b) a trade union which immediately prior thereto represented workers employed in the Municipal Corporations shall continue to represent such workers...”

So, Mr. President, we know we have the NUGFW. We know we have the amalgamated trade union. We know that we have the contractors union, Mr. President. We have three trade unions. But, Mr. President, the Minister has not told us if there are any applications for registration as a recognized majority trade union in any of the other corporations. We do not know, Mr. President, if we are infringing upon the trade union's status, standing or location. The Minister has not told us what the consultation looks like in respect of that, Mr. President. I will ask the Minister to provide that information to us, Mr. President. We will, of course, propose and put before the House a suitable question, asking the Minister to deliver that information. But, Mr. President, we mark the spot again. The funding in relation to the trade union and the workers, Mr. President, has to be marked to ensure—

Sen. Smith: Mr. President, I rise on Standing Order 46(1). He is marking a lot, but he is not being relevant.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: I think he is referring to a particular clause.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Mr. President, thank you so much. We certainly consider the trade unions to be very relevant—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—particularly when they want to march, particularly when they want more than 40-60 split, particularly when they are disappointed in today's climate, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: The Minister may want to run away from that, but we will not allow him to run away from that because this is what democracy involves, Mr. President. There is a clause in the Bill, clause 15, that treats with the trade union environment, and we are obliged to look at it, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: The Minister may be uncomfortable about it, but that is his hard luck. It is just too bad and hard luck. So, Mr. President, when you deal with the continuation of collective agreements and union representation, we have a problem as to where that marker goes.

Now, Mr. President, when we get to the further consideration of the logistics, I have a question to ask the hon. Minister. A case has been made for the creation of the city of Chaguanas. We are happy for that, Mr. President. A case has been made for the splitting of certain regions, some of which have large expanse of rural areas and some of which have some urbanization. The East-West Corridor is certainly very urbanized—along the East-West Corridor, but the further north that you get and you are going to the north

coast, Mr. President, it becomes extremely rural, which is why the map will look big. Let me put it simply to the Minister. “De map go look big because there are vast mountainous terrain and areas of rural occupation”—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:—“dat will make de map look big because yuh not going to be living on de top of El Cerro del Aripo, which will occupy a large geographical footprint.” So, Mr. President, if it is good enough to create a city of Chaguanas in the manner that we do, why is it that we are not splitting the Borough of Diego Martin into three? Why? The data exists. The Borough of Diego Martin occupies at least 120,000 people, Mr. President. Mr. President, the simple reason could only be that you would get too many red corporations.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: And the very simple point for the UNC, Mr. President, for the Government would be that in the next local government election, that it will no longer be 7-7, it will be 10-something because you have created more UNC corporations. That is fine and well and good, Mr. President, but let me tell you what my suspicion is in relation to that and why I am marking the spot here now on an extrapolation.

Mr. President, do you know that section 73 of the Constitution is not entrenched? Section 73 of the republican Constitution is not entrenched. What is Section 73? It is the first-past-the-post system. There is no constitutional entrenchment. I see the AG smiling.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Correct.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: I heard him say, “Correct.” I know Hamid Ghany has

been employed by the Government and works for the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. I know that. And, Mr. President, I am sure that the population has to be concerned that this is a blueprint for proportional representation to come from local government by way of a reflection, perhaps, into the Senate or otherwise, so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will move away from a pure first-past-the-post system.

I am marking this spot, Mr. President, because I believe that this Bill is the genesis of what is to come. “I doh not take de AG lightly at all. When I see dat smile opposite me, I take de AG seriously”. He told me, “We passing special operations,” and he was right, Mr. President. I take him at his word; an experienced Attorney General, certainly someone who has been around the block, Mr. President. I am marking his spot today. I genuinely believe this to be the genesis of a move away from first-past-the-post, Mr. President.

So, Mr. President, we will wait and see. We will wait and see. So, Mr. President, our simple submission in relation to this law, the Minister says that there was consultation but has produced none. The Minister says that the local government election will not be affected, Mr. President, but I want to mark a spot coming from the Privy Council.

Mr. President, the Privy Council reflected in the *Ravi Balgobin Maraj* case—the Privy Council, in looking at the partial proclamation of that law—now, the Minister said something spectacularly wrong in law a little while ago. The Minister said that there is a commencement clause which will involve a single date for the operationalization of this law. Mr. President, perhaps the Minister is not aware that partial proclamation is possible under the laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, but I am cautioning now in

light of the Privy Council's judgment in *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj v The Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and another (Respondent) (Trinidad and Tobago)*, Mr. President, 2023 UKPC 17.

If this law is turned on in a full proclamation, Mr. President, and then the terms and conditions of local government councillors are affected by them being elected first, but the rest of the Act proclaimed after, in particular the executive council and the municipal council—because, Mr. President, you know what was incredibly noticeable for me, having drafted the municipal corporations amendments in 2022, having drafted the validation Act in 2023, having drafted the boroughs and piloted the legislation involving the creation of boroughs and councils in the manner that we did for Siparia and for Diego Martin? The Minister had absolutely nothing to say about the operationalization of the law as it stands amended, Mr. President, but not proclaimed.

I can tell you, Mr. President, an entire proclamation Schedule has been prepared. The vesting orders which affect the Schedules, which this Bill treats with, Mr. President, were prepared. So, what happens, in light of the *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj* case, if you turn on the law to create executive or municipal councils after there is an election, you are going to affect terms and conditions, Mr. President, in the same line and fashion that the Privy Council held, that terms and conditions were affected when the tenure went from three years to four years. They held that that partial proclamation was something that had to be attended to because they said that councillors who were elected for three years were expected to be there for three years. So, I am putting it simply, councillors who are elected for four years, which is the law right now, and

who find themselves in the position of executive or municipal councils will not be able, Mr. President, to have the assurance that their terms and conditions are not affected. So, I am marking that spot as well.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. President—

Mr. President: You have six more minutes.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Thank you so much.

Mr. President, doing this debate today where we stand in Trinidad and Tobago having had zero consultation, having had no data, having the Minister effectively saying, “Listen, trust meh. We spoke to people. I ain’t showing it to yuh.” Mr. President, I just think it is an absolute danger and disaster. There is nobody paying attention to the debate right now. The positions are for again the record so that we can reflect upon it when the time is right.

Imagine we are standing here today debating this, and the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation is here in Trinidad and Tobago—

Sen. Dr. Browne: Imagine that.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: —in Trinidad, while Tobago Airport is being opened.

Sen. Smith: Mr. President, 46(1) I rise on Standing Order 46(1). 46(1).

Hon. Senators: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President: Yes, okay, okay, alright. I think he is coming to an end; continue.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: Mr. President, thank you so much. Unlike my colleague opposite, the Minister of Public Admin and Artificial Intelligence, I think that the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation is very relevant. I think that he is a guy that ought to be accorded a little respect. He is the Minister of

Transport and Civil Aviation, not there on opening of an airport, but I move on.

Sen. Dr. Browne: It is not too late for him to go.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC: [*Laughter*] He could perhaps still go.

Mr. President, quite simply put, this is a charade. It is nonsensical. It cannot be supported. Call it what it is, “nah.” It is just an attempt to feed proportionate representation, which is on the deck and will come to affect us. We will mark the spot and deal with it in the political arena. We cannot support this law, Mr. President. I thank you.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Hon. Saddam Hosein): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, it is always a pleasure to join my colleagues on this side of the House to bring some level of decency, sense, and a proper understanding of law to this honourable Chamber.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: My friend Sen. Al-Rawi SC would have thrown a quip to my colleague, the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, that he should have been in Tobago. I would have loved to be in Tobago right now to see our hon. Prime Minister open the ANR Airport in Tobago—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: —and then will turn the sod for a very beautiful hotel at Rocky Point, and then open three of the police posts that were commissioned

by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence. That is performance.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: So, I would have loved to be in Tobago to witness all that, but I am here to correct certain misinformation that was placed in the record by the previous speaker. Mr. President, sometimes in this country there are persons with no shame. I do not want to accuse my colleague opposite, who just spoke, that he has no shame. But for him to stand in this Parliament and quote the Ravi Balgobin decision and then refer to the Validation Act of 2023, a person like that can in fact be described as having no shame.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Because when you hear about the Ravi Balgobin decision in the Privy Council, that particular decision, the facts of it are instrumental, which I see that the previous speaker completely avoided. The facts of it were that there was an omnibus piece of legislation which dealt with the local government reform PNM-style. We have to make a distinction between UNC-style local government reform and PNM-style.

In that particular legislation, the then Government agreed that they would extend the terms of the councillors and aldermen from three years to four years. That Bill or that Act has many pages, Mr. President. But the previous Government, of all of the clauses in that particular piece of legislation, went to the Cabinet and said, you know what? President, proclaim one section. One section. Right before the local government election was due. So then announce to the nation, "Listen, we have proclaimed this one section. You are no longer serving for three years. You will now be serving

for four years.”

Well, Mr. Balgobin Maharaj, he said, well, let us challenge this. The matter reached all the way to the Privy Council for the Privy Council to send the previous PNM Government packing back to Trinidad and tell them to call the election.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: The Privy Council was very clear in its judgments, which said that you cannot extend the terms of office of persons like that. It should only apply to the new council that is elected, not the old one. But you see, “dey smell de rat”. They know that if they had called the local government election, then “dey woulda get licks” just like what they got last year in April.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: “Same licks, but dey just delay it”.

And then you know what, Mr. President? The Member then spoke of the Validation Act. You know why they had to pass a Validation Act? Because the Privy Council said that their terms of office would have ceased on the 3rd anniversary of their election. And therefore, holding out into office further, that the three years meant that they would not be properly constituted. Therefore, the Government had to bring a Validation Act to validate the terms of these councillors and aldermen.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: And then the Member—I would have feel shame to even quote that Act. Then the Member beat his chest and said, “Well, you know what? I drafted that.”

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Hosein: I would have been hiding under this desk, Mr. President. I would have been hiding under there. Because you know why? That is probably the most embarrassing thing as a Minister to bring to this House, which is a Validation Act, because you have admitted that you have done something unlawful and you now have to ask the Parliament to validate an illegality.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: This comes from the Member who was the former, former, former Attorney General. Two formers, I do not know, and then his own Prime Minister had no confidence in him and told him, “Aye, go and spend some time in local government.” So, Mr. President, you understand the context of this now, in terms of when my friend quoted all of these things. I am listening to him on the Parliament channel, and he talks about trade unions and how 60/40 and so on. Why did he not remember when his Minister of Finance laughed at all of the trade unions and said, “Zero, zero, zero.”

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Zero, zero, zero. Zero, zero, zero.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]—Petrotrin.

Hon. S. Hosein: Yeah.

Then Mr. President, he spoke of the city of Chaguanas and why not split Diego Martin into three corporations. I will deal with those things with numbers, because I came here with some statistics. You see, they have an obsession that anything beyond the Lighthouse does not deserve government services. In fact, if they had their way, they have made the whole district after the Lighthouse one municipal corporation, if they had their way. Because

what is it, they have against the people of the Chaguanas?

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: What do you have against the people of Barataria? What do you have against the people of Couva? That they do not deserve to have borough status? That they do not deserve to be a city? I am proud to be a part of this Government led by the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein:—to come to this House today and engage in a particular debate that will make Chaguanas, the city of Chaguanas. I am proud to say that.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: The pride and the joy that the people of Barataria have to say that we now belong to the Borough of Barataria. I am happy about that.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You know the former Minister of Finance, former Minister Imbert, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Sen. Roberts: Former, former.

Hon. S. Hosein: Former, former. Yes, I believe Mr. Dhanpaul was the former Minister of Finance.

Sen. Roberts: “Corbeau sweat.”

Hon. S. Hosein: You know, he stood up in a press conference, and he said, “But what so special about the people of St. Augustine? What so special about Barataria?” Imagine that. Simply because we are improving the lives and the services of the people of Barataria, St. Augustine, Couva, and all over Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: All over Trinidad and Tobago. But they have an obsession with that. They have an obsession with us helping people. Why not split Chaguanas into 10? We could have done that because of the population size, and I will go to that. Why not split what? Diego Martin into three? That was his argument. Why not split it into three? We will go into that. Because this piece of law that is before us was a carefully, carefully deliberated on piece of legislation, and I must commend the hon. Prime Minister for leadership, her direction on this particular matter.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Because if you go back to the *Hansard* records of 2003, the Prime Minister, as she then was as the Member for Siparia, would have always advocated for equality when it comes to government services for all of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not something that we thought up and say, well, we want to do this. It is something that is consistent from 2003 all the way up to 2026.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: But you see, my colleagues opposite, we have to remind them of history. We must remind them of history. Because they would have forgotten that when the NAR was in power in 1990, the first Municipal Corporation Act was passed in terms of moving from what? County Councils into the municipal corporations. You all remember that?

Mr. President, under a NAR government, there are several policy papers, and I would have done my research as I usually do, and I would have seen a report coming out of the Cabinet all the way back then where they

spoke of decentralization with respect to government services. Looking at various parts of Trinidad that they determined to be regional townships and regions in which government services can be spread. Because long ago everybody had to come to the Red House to get a deed and a birth certificate and so on. Under the Ministry of Land and Legal Affairs, they could get it online, you know.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: And my friend smiling. You could be on your bedside delivering your baby, and as soon as the baby is born, you will have an officer from the Registrar General's Office come by the bedside—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein:—and say, “Madam, can you tell me what the name of this baby is”? Because we are launching bedside registration. We did it for New Year's Day in San Fernando. We are going to Sangre Grande tomorrow.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: We are going to the Borough of Sangre Grande tomorrow.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: We are going to the Borough of Sangre Grande.

Back to what was happening in 1990. The then government said, “Let us look at various regional administration centres.” We have Diego Martin. We have Laventille. We have San Juan. We have Tunapuna. We have Piarcó. We have Sangre Grande. We have Couva. We have Talparo/Tabaquite. You see, they are separate, eh. We have Rio Claro. We have Siparia. We have Penal/Debe, Princes Town, Mayaro. All separate.

Because then people understood the difficulty it was from leaving rural

parts of Trinidad to get into the main cities in order to conduct government services and government business.

Sen. Nakhid: Tedious.

Hon. S. Hosein: It is very difficult. You have to take a day off sometimes just to get something done.

Mr. President, what the NAR Government then did, they said, “Listen, let us have various municipal corporations established”: Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin, Chaguanas, San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/Piarco, Couva Tabaquite/Talparo, Siparia/Penal/Debe and so on. I will get to the separate ones. Because what we have to understand is what the then PNM Government did and what we were left with.

Hon. Senator: PNM-style.

Hon. S. Hosein: PNM-style.

So, we had the NAR passing the Act 21 of 1990, which dealt with the Port of Spain being separated. San Fernando; Arima; Point Fortin; Chaguanas; Diego Martin; Laventille; San Juan is separate; Tunapuna, Piarco is separate from Tunapuna; Sangre Grande; Mayaro, Rio Claro is separate from Mayaro; Princes Town; Tabaquite/Talparo is separate; Couva; we had Penal/Debe, and you had Siparia.

Then comes the PNM Government. In 1992, they established something called the Sarjeant Committee. The Sarjeant Committee was headed by Stevenson Sarjeant, who happened to be, I think, at that time a former major of Port of Spain.

3.15 p.m.

I have a copy of the Report in my possession, Mr. President, and I want

to quote from the Executive Summary, because this is the committee that they set up. I am quoting here, Mr. President. I do not want to surprise you. I know recently you have had persons at the edge of their seats, and I do not want to have you there. But the report is saying this. It says, and I quote:

The provisions of the Act were discussed within the framework of the People's National Movement philosophy and the general views of the People's National Movement Government on the Act.

This is, in fact, the date in which "Jerry" and "Manda" were born.

They were gerrymandering in 1992, Mr. President, and the evidence is clear. This committee was set up at the end of January of that year, and they had to report by the end of February that year. What consultation? What consultation, Mr. President? If you see this Report, Mr. President, the Sarjeant Report, you will be shocked that they are determining the boundaries of municipal corporations based on what? PNM philosophy. And today they have the gall to stand up and tell us about gerrymandering and so on. Mr. President, I reject that argument outright.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: I reject it. I reject it. Because you know what the report goes on to say, Mr. President? It goes on to say this, with no statistical information whatsoever, they said:

Let us look at what is existing and we will do this instead.

So, I think they sat down with a map of Trinidad and a pen and they say, listen, let us do this. This is what they did, Mr. President. They said that they are now going to merge regions. They merged San Juan with Laventille; they merged Tunapuna with Piarcó; they merged Río Claro with Mayaro.

What they thought that was going to be?—a UNC “ent”. They thought so. Couva with Tabaquite/Talparo. What do you think about that? They merged Siparia with Penal/Debe. What they thought that was going to be, Mr. President?

Mr. President, so they did all of this merging under PNM, what?—philosophy. PNM philosophy. So they decided to now truncate the 18 corporations into 14 corporations, no data, no statistics, no consultation and say, let us have an election.

Hon. Senator: PNM style.

Hon. S. Hosein: PNM style. That is PNM philosophy. We did not do that, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: We have data, we have statistics, we have the numbers, and if you look at how the boundaries are designed, they were cutting on natural water courses as what the law says that you have to do. Because we have to be very clear.

Any Parliament—this Parliament is in fact responsible or has the power in order to determine what the municipal corporation looks like. That is the entire region, be it a city, a borough or a regional corporation. But what this Parliament has no power to do is to determine how the seats are divided within there. We cannot determine that. The EBC could cut a seat in a circle, they could cut it in a square, a triangle, we cannot determine that. That has to be determined by the independent Elections and Boundaries Commission. We should not be telling the EBC what to do. We could only do what we are allowed to do within the four corners of the wall.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: That is why none of them in the other place, Mr. President, raised a single argument of this Bill being unconstitutional or illegal. They cannot do it, because you are acting within the four corners of the law which is exceedingly clear. The EBC has the power, to cut up what?—the electoral districts or what we call the seats within the municipal corporation. That is their right. And Sen. Swaratsingh is right when he said that the EBC has 90 days in which to do this. When they did that in Tobago in 2021, they got 6-6. They say, all right, we need 15 seats. Why you all did not say nine. They say 15 seats. They gave the EBC 90 days in order to redraw those boundaries. But what is even more alarming about what happened in 1992, Mr. President, is this, that they said in the Sarjeant Report:

That in light of the need to restore representation to the people that they are going to do an election with these merged corporations pending a detailed study thereafter of the boundaries.

So, what does that means, Mr. President? It means, they say, let us rush to the polls with these new 14 corporations after they reduced it from 18, right? They say let us rush to the polls with these 14, let us merge these corporations, right, but we will come back—

Sen. Nakhid: With a study.

Hon. S. Hosein:—with a study to determine if to leave it, eh.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. President, we are in 2026 and they are still studying.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Nakhid: “Studying ain’t reach yet. Studying ain’t reach yet.”

Hon. S. Hosein: They are still studying. How come the 2023 legislation that my friend boasted that he drafted, how it is, right, you did not study that?

Sen. Nakhid: “Like Faris in law school still studying.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Yeah. I know that my friend spent some time at the law school still studying, right?

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: But you are very unkind Sen. Nakhid. But they say that they are studying this thing and they will come back to the country and then they say we will look at whether or not this works or it does not work. It takes a UNC Government, Mr. President, to come and fix it.

Sen. Nakhid: All the time, all the time.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: It takes a UNC Government to come and fix it. It takes a UNC Government under the leadership of Mrs. Persad-Bissessar.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: And what was strange, right, Mr. President, I thought, you know, maybe at that time, I was born in 1991, so I was not around for the 1990 passage of the legislation. But I looked at records, and in 1990—I will give you the date, “eh”, because this is very important. The EBC, when the NAR passed the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990, setting up the 18 corporations, the EBC said, let us get to work. They submitted on the 15th of August, 1991, outlining all of the 1990 regional corporations. So, they had no excuse. The EBC was ready for this election. But you know who was not ready for the election? The PNM. The PNM was not. And let me tell you some of the seats that they had in some of these corporations, because the EBC

report is very clear. This is actually the first EBC report in terms of local government.

In the area of Laventille, you had the separate electoral districts in there, of Beetham/Picton; Mon Repo; Movant North; Morvant South; St. Ann's; Cascade; St. Babbs; Chinapoo; Trou Macaque. In the region of San Juan, you had the electoral district of Barataria; Bejucal; Aranguez; Caledonia; El Socorro; Febeau; Bourg Mulatresse; Maracas; Santa Cruz; Mt. D'or; Mt. Lambert; San Juan East; San Juan West; Malick, all being in two separate regional corporations. Two separate corporations.

You know what they did? They are so afraid of the population, they say, let us lump all those into one, thereby reducing the voter ratio in terms of voter ratio to representation. But you know what they do down in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo?—they have over 100,000 people down there to about 10 voters—I will get into the numbers. But in areas like Point Fortin and so on, they had no issue. They said, why cut up or reduce the size of Chaguanas? Why reduce the size of Chaguanas, I will tell you. Because in Chaguanas, Mr. President, this is what happened.

In Chaguanas, there was, in terms of the number of seats or the number of the population size, there are two cities, the Port of Spain City Corporation and we have the San Fernando City Corporation. The Port of Spain City Corporation, Mr. President, has 12 seats in it, representing a total number of 37,000 persons. Yeah? I want you all to follow this, eh. Twelve seats representing, how much?—37,000 persons. In San Fernando you have 11 seats representing, what?—50,000 persons; in Chaguanas, which is now going to be a city, you have eight persons representing 71,000 persons. How could

that ever be fair? How could that be fair? How could you come today and complain that—why we are creating this city of Chaguanas?

We have now, based on this particular legislation, reduced the population size within what is the city of Chaguanas and made it comparable to Port of Spain and San Fernando. What is wrong with that? What is the argument? That is fairness, that is fairness. Look, I want to go into 1992 and so on, to show what is happening, because two things are being done here with respect to the Corporations. You have now San Juan/Laventille becoming the borough of Barataria and you have the region of San Juan/Laventille; you have the Tunapuna/Piarco being separated into what we call the borough of St. Augustine and then you have the Tunapuna Regional Corporation; then you have the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation becoming, what?—the borough of Couva and the region of Tabaquite/Talparo and you have a bigger Point Fortin. Let us look at the numbers, Mr. President.

Mr. President, the Arima Borough Corporation has a population size of—in 1992, I am going to give you the two figures. In 1992, Arima Borough Corporation had 20,000 people in it. In 2023, it went up to 29,000, very small increase, right? Chaguanas Borough Corporation, in 1992 had 37,000 persons, in 2023, it went up to 70,000 persons—

Sen. Nakhid: Exponential.

Hon. S. Hosein: Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, in 1992 had 97,000 persons, by 2023 it went up to 153,000 persons; in Diego Martin you had 66,000 persons in 1992, which went up to 89,000 in 2023; Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, 1992 had 21,000 persons, by 2023 it went up to 30,000, very small increase; Penal/Debe 54,000 in 1992, in 2023 it went up to 78,000; in

the Point Fortin Borough, from 12,000 persons in 1992, it only went up to 17,000 in 2023. That is about 5,000 within that period. Princes Town, 61,000 in 1992, by 2023, it went up to 84,000 persons; San Fernando City Corporation, 1992, 43,000 persons, 2023, 50,000. Just about by 7,000 votes. Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, in 1992 had 36,000 persons, by 2023, it went up to 60,000; San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, in 1992 had 109,000 persons, by 2023, 136,000; Siparia Borough Corporation, in 1992 had 56,000 persons, by 2023 had 72,000 persons; and in Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, in 1992 had 113,000 persons, by 2023 it went up to 183,000.

So let us look at the exercise that we are doing based on the numbers, because my friends opposite, they only know how to deal with boundaries using PNM philosophy. We are using the math, we are using population, we are using natural water courses and boundaries and so on, that the law allows you to use, Mr. President, and all of the population—if you read the Sarjeant Report it has no mention of population size, you know. All it has is PNM philosophy. I kid you not.

So let us look at what happened in Tunapuna/Piarco. There, the population went up by about 69,000 persons. What did we decide to do with that? We decided to split it into two. In Couva/Tabaquite it went up by about 55,000. What is happening with Couva/Tabaquite? It is cut into two. Chaguanas Borough Corporation went up by 32,000. What we did was reduce the population. San Juan/Laventille Corporation, that went up by over 30,000. What did we do? It went into two separate corporations. Penal/Debe, very slight increase, about 20,000, that remained the same. Grande, not very much

of an increase, about 20,000, that remained the same. Diego Martin Regional Corporation went up by 23,000. That, in fact, would increase—sorry, decrease the population size there because Port of Spain City Corporation had a very low population, so therefore those areas went into the Diego Martin Corporation. The Siparia Corporation was about, close to 20,000, 16,000 or so. What happened there is that the Point Fortin Borough Corporation—I told you the size there was about 17,000 now, what you did is that you increased the population size of Point Fortin.

What is wrong with that? This is what the maths tell us. This is what the population data tells us; this is what the numbers say; this is why we are in this House and the other House to try to make government services available to every citizen in an equal and affordable manner.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Nakhid: Social equity. Social equity.

Hon. S. Hosein: Social equity. But you see my friends opposite do not know about social equity.

Sen. Nakhid: No, no.

Hon. S. Hosein: We know about 100 per cent of the people. We do not know about 99 and we do not know about 1 per cent. We know about 100 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Hon. S. Hosein: We know about that. Because these numbers are very telling, Mr. President, in terms of how we move forward with respect to this particular piece of legislation and I lend my full support to this particular Bill.

3.30 p.m.

So, I spent a lot of time dealing with these particular geographic boundaries, and so on, Mr. President, and I want to get into some of the other clauses of the Bill that deal with the terms and tenure of councillors and aldermen.

Now, when we look at the clause that deals with respect to the ties and so on, Mr. President, the reason why this was introduced is because it did not pull that out of a hat. There are historical events that show that sometimes these regional corporations, after an election, end up in a tie. It happened in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, it happened in the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. And what happens is that it leaves a level of uncertainty with respect to the electorate of how the corporations are going to be run and managed.

So, to prevent that chaos from happening, we said look, whoever wins the popular vote, all of these clauses, what it just says, is that whoever wins the popular vote has, in fact, the casting vote for the appointment of the Presiding Officer, who shall preside over the election of the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor, and Mayor in the Bill is defined as being a Chairman or a Mayor. And therefore, Mr. President, all it does is direct the Presiding Officer to cast his vote in favor of the party that won the popular vote. What is wrong with that? You see, historically, why my friends are upset about that, is that if you look at electoral data, they never really win the popular vote. So, they are upset about that.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: They had to use Stevenson Sarjeant to merge corporations for them to win an election. And you know, “after they do all that merger”, Mr. President—I forgot this point, and I just remembered

it. They would have had delayed local government election for years.

Sen. Nakhid: For several times.

Hon. S. Hosein: For years. They came to the Parliament on several occasions and said, you know what, we are doing local government reform. It started from—I think 2001—all the way up to 2010, when a UNC Government came into power, when Mrs. Persad-Bissessar was elected for Prime Minister the first time, in about two months after the general election, said—

Hon. Ameen: 2006.

Hon. S. Hosein: Said, call—2010—2006—call the local government election in 2010. Had it not been for a UNC government, we would still have some of those councillors existing from 2006, you know. That is their legacy, you know. This is not me making up something, you know. This is the parliamentary record with respect to their performance when it comes to local government.

“They had white paper, they had green paper, they had blue paper, dey use a red pen, dey use all kinda thing, Mr. President.” They consult, they consult, and you know what? They still did not do it. We are here after 18 months into government, and we are doing it.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: I think Sen. Alexander said he will fix it? Well, we are fixing it, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: We are fixing it. Mr. President, we go on to the other clauses of the Bill that deals with respect to persons who cross the floor. And that is very important. In this Parliament, if a Member of the House says—who

belongs to party A and was elected using the vehicle of party A, says, I no longer support party A, and I resign from party A, he resigns or he misbehaves in such a way that the party says, “you know what, you cannot represent us anymore, we are expelling you”. He won under the ticket of party A. The Constitution provides for that, that if he no longer belongs to the party that he was elected to, he will cease to become a Member of the House, the seat will become declared vacant.

So, if that happens in the Parliament and in the Constitution, why not a similar treatment be given to those in local government who are elected Members also? Why? Is there an issue with that? There can be no issue with that. So, if a Member decides to cross the Floor, he will now be caught under this particular piece of legislation. So, let us give an example. If, for example, the United National Congress says, let us host a Christmas dinner—

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Hosein: And then you sit at the dinner, enjoying the lovely ambience and so on, and next to you, a mayor from the PNM sits next to you at the UNC Christmas dinner. That PNM party must be courageous enough to discipline that mayor.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Not be weak and say, well, let me give you a slap on the wrist and you can go ahead and perform your duties, yeah. So, this piece of legislation, Mr. President, will capture that mayor. It will capture that councillor, it will capture that alderman, that if you decide to cross the Floor, you would be caught here, and then what happens? There is a process. The party then informs the CEO of the corporation and so on with respect to the

Member ceasing to be a Member of the political party. But then, who calls the meeting? If you look at (1C) of clause 9, it says that:

“The Mayor shall, within seven days of receiving the notice under subsection (1B), convene a special meeting of the Council for the purpose of laying the notice and, at that meeting, the Council shall declare the corporate office of the Councillor or Alderman, as the case maybe, to be vacant, and the vacancy shall take effect from the date of the declaration.”

What if it is the mayor? You think he is going to have a meeting? He is not going to call any meeting to declare his seat vacant, sorry. So, what a progressive government did was think of things like that. Because, I mean, we are worried for our friends opposite also, in the event that this happens to them.

Hon. Senator: They and all worried.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: (1D) goes further to say this:

“If the special meeting referred to in subsection (1C) is not held within the specified seven days, the corporate office of the Councillor or Alderman as the case maybe, is deemed to be vacant upon the expiration of that period, and the vacancy shall take effect from that date.”

So, therefore, even if the meeting is not held within seven days of the council and the corporation receiving that notice, that seat is—what? Deemed to be vacant. So, therefore, we capture something that may or may not happen, but sometimes the law has to be progressive in terms of how we draft. I mean,

we cannot draft for every eventuality, we cannot contemplate every single eventuality, but what we are doing, Mr. President, is certainly aligning our laws with respect to the modern-day governance of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. President, I am told I only have about three minutes left.

Sen. Roberts: Four.

Hon. S. Hosein: Four minutes left. Mr. President, this piece of legislation is a progressive piece of legislation. We have indicated that “talk done” by colleagues opposite, they are a talk shop, they talk and talk about local government reform. They spent about \$2 million giving one of their financiers the contract to put up a couch and a screen for them to talk about local government reform. We did not spend that kind of money, Mr. President. We, in fact, would have gone to the Cabinet, Committees would have set up, experts would have looked at this particular piece of legislation and the Bills and so on, and the reports. We have a very competent team at the Office of the Attorney General, and today I want to commend the technical officers—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein:—at the Attorney General’s Office, in particular, the Chairman of the Law Reform Commission, Mr. Samraj Harripaul of Senior Counsel, Mr. President. And I want to say, Mr. President, that this piece of law will be a game changer in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: It is long overdue. The time is now. The “talk done”, we are fixing it. Promise made, promise kept, more to come, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Foster Cummings.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Foster Cummings: Thank you, Mr. President. I am pleased to join this debate on the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, 2026. Mr. President, we have the former speaker, the Minister of Land and Legal Affairs, referenced a report, I think he said a 1991 report by a Stevenson Sarjeant at the time. We are still awaiting the report from the committee that the UNC appointed in preparation of this particular piece of legislation.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: I would have liked today, in my contribution, respond to the Minister, to refer to the report that the committee, which included a lot of UNC functionaries, including the campaign manager of the UNC, who is the Chairman of the HDC, and many other UNC functionaries who put that report together, just as the Minister is able to share with us the Stevenson Sarjeant Report, which he says was done before he was born or around the time he was born. In the same way, we as a Parliament would have liked to refer to the recommendations of that report.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Of the report of the UNC Committee. And we are unable to do so because, while we are told that the Cabinet put that committee in place, while we read in the newspaper of some of the Members of that committee, there is no report before us today, Mr. President.

And notwithstanding the reference to the Sarjeant Report, and what would have flowed from 1992 in terms of local government, and all the injustices that the speakers on the other side would have spoken about in terms

of after the lighthouse, and three-quarter of the map being yellow, et cetera, et cetera, notwithstanding that over time, over time, local government elections in this country have shifted in terms of either a tie, either the UNC wins, either the PNM wins, but the practice of utilizing the current boundaries did not particularly favour one side or the other.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: But let us talk about what is a clear attempt at geographical discrimination by the Government of the UNC. The Minister said that the PNM Government considers that everything west of the lighthouse is the only area that amenities or resources should be provided for, and that if the PNM had a chance, everything east of the lighthouse, there will be one regional corporation for everything. I suspect he is speaking about everything east, central and south.

But let us look at the conduct of the PNM in a scenario where the PNM held seven regional corporations, and the UNC held seven regional corporations, and how the PNM dealt with resource allocation in these various regional corporations, held by the PNM and held by the UNC. I would start with the UNC corporations first.

The PNM Government, in terms of allocating resources for development work in 2025, I am not speaking about the current allocation because we have already been given guidance by the President in terms of that, I am going back to 2025.

In Chaguanas, the allocation in 2025 was \$17.25 million. In Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, controlled by the UNC, the PNM allocated for development work, \$17.15 million. In Mayaro/Rio Claro, not held by the

PNM, held by the UNC, \$17.25 million. In Penal/Debe, another UNC-controlled corporation allocation, \$17.15 million. In Princes Town, another UNC corporation, the PNM Government allocated for development work, \$17.35 million. In Sangre Grande, also controlled by the UNC, the PNM Government allocated for development work, \$17.75 million. In Siparia, also controlled by the UNC, the PNM Government allocated \$17.35 million. And then came the change in government. They are very much about changing systems so that they can benefit, and so that they want to entrench a permanent state of UNC dominance in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

3.45 p.m.

Sen. F. Cummings: And I will get to that in a short while.

Then came the election and the UNC Government took office. In Chaguanas, they increased the allocation by over \$20 million, moving it from \$17 million to \$37.96 million. In Couva, it increased by \$2 million, moving from \$17 million to \$19 million. In Mayaro, they increased it by \$1 million-plus, moving from \$17.25 million to \$18.85 million. In Penal/Debe, it more than doubled, from \$17.15 million to \$38.1 million. In Princes Town, another “Doubles and Coffee”—

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—moving from \$17.35 million to \$37.4 million, Mr. President. In Sangre Grande, slight pepper, from \$17 million to \$18 million. And Siparia, it moved from \$17 million to \$21 million. It increased in every corporation held by the UNC.

Let us see what the fair, unbiased UNC Government—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—who is concerned about serving all the citizens in Trinidad and Tobago; who, when UNC wins, everybody wins, right—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—who, promise made, promise delivered—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—et us examine, Mr. President, what the conduct of the UNC has been in relation to UNC-to-PNM held areas, lighthouse or no lighthouse. In Arima, where the PNM, in 2025, allocated \$18.25 million, the UNC allocation for Arima when they got into office moved from \$18 million to \$5.6 million, Trinidad and Tobago.

In Diego Martin, where the PNM allocated, in 2025, \$17.45 million, the UNC's gift to Diego Martin was a reduction to \$11 million.

Hon. Senators: Wow!

Sen. F. Cummings: In Port of Spain, the capital city, the seat of government, where the Parliament is located, where the Hall of Justice is located, where the Government sits, where the White Hall is located, the Prime Minister's residence is located, the various Ministries of Government are located, the embassies of various countries are located, where on a daily basis the Government of Trinidad and Tobago operates in terms of its central capacity, the Government's gift to Port of Spain was to reduce its allocation from \$19.75 million—you will be astonished—to \$4.1 million, Mr. President—

Hon. Senator: “No, no, dais a lot”.

Sen. F. Cummings:—a reduction of over \$15 million, and that is the UNC's fair allocation of resources in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: In Point Fortin, \$17 million by the PNM in 2025, the UNC's gift to Point Fortin was to reduce its allocation to \$5 million. In San Fernando, from \$20 million to \$18 million, and it goes on and on and on. In Tunapuna, from \$18 million to \$17 million. And, Mr. President, those are facts. I did not invent these figures. And I understand, Mr. President, without going into it because I am holding on to your guidance, that what is to come in the allocation for 2027 is absolutely worse. I am told it is absolutely worse. I am told, the citizens residing in PNM-controlled areas will have very, very—

Sen. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I hate doing this to my colleague—

Sen. F. Cummings: What is the Standing Order?

Sen. Roberts: Standing Order 49. Standing Order 49, please, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. President: Yeah. I want to uphold that Standing Order and, Sen. Foster Cummings, I know where you are going. I think you better come back. Just deal with the past, not the future at this time, okay?

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, it was one line. I take your guidance. My friend need not be so jumpy because he has quite a lot to say when he contributes. “We doh interrupt him”.

Mr. President, this Bill fundamentally alters the geographical and administrative structure of local government in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Roberts: About time.

Sen. F. Cummings: I have forms, but none for you. The Government proposes to increase the number of municipal corporations from 14 to 17, and

on the face of it, we are not here to argue that. What it appears is clear to anyone paying attention and it is that whilst the Government says that that is their objective, if you look at where they have made the changes and you tie that to the facts that I placed on the record before in terms of how the Government has taken its central government responsibility of allocating funds, we have to be very concerned about how funds will be allocated when this law comes into being. Because what it appears the Government's agenda is, is to fund—and I am not even saying excessively fund because I do not know what the demands are in relation to these areas, but what the Government is clearly doing is can be described as geographical discrimination. They are funding, significantly so, the areas to which the UNC has control and underfunding the areas that the PNM has control.

So, let us look at the change they are proposing in Barataria, where the last speaker comes from. The last speaker represents—the hon. Minister is the MP for Barataria/San Juan. They have split that corporation in two, and they have carved out a new borough called Barataria. So, on the one hand, you have San Juan/Laventille, and you are now going to have the borough of Barataria. They have taken from that corporation some of the UNC seats in the main and put it into that borough that is to be created, and they have left, by and large, the areas that the PNM would usually win in the San Juan/Laventille part of the corporation.

The Minister says that it has to do with natural geographic considerations and it has to do with population. And the population, that is the population of Trinidad and Tobago, the electorate, will have an opportunity to determine whether what the Government has said to us is in

fact true when we eventually see how resources are going to be allocated in terms of two corporations that will be sitting side by side, San Juan/Laventille and Barataria, where you have taken some seats this way, yellow, and some seats this way, red. We will have a first-hand opportunity to see whether in fact this Government intends to govern this country for UNC supporters only and everybody else is excluded.

When you go to San Fernando—because the Minister says that they are keeping communities together. In San Fernando, where there is about a 5-4 sort of margin, the Government has brought in two additional seats that are traditionally won by the UNC. They have included the area of Claxton Bay into San Fernando. Now, if anybody knows the community of Couva, Claxton Bay, San Fernando, Claxton Bay cannot fairly be considered a part of San Fernando. So, if you are keeping urban areas together, if you are carving out geographical areas—so that is why you did Barataria, which includes El Socorro, Aranguez, et cetera, a nice small cut out, what is Claxton Bay doing in San Fernando?

The only reason Claxton Bay is put in San Fernando is to put two additional UNC seats there so that the UNC could possibly win the San Fernando City Corporation. That is the only explanation, and therefore, Mr. President, they must not fool the population. But I say to the Government at this point in time, notwithstanding whatever shift in boundaries you make that you think may result in some electoral benefit to you, the population is going to judge you based on your conduct over the last 18 months. And shift in boundaries or not, whenever the election is called, this electorate will speak to the UNC about its performance over the last 18 months.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping and interruption*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, then we have the crossing of the floor. We have the crossing of the Floor consideration.

Hon. Senators: [*Continuous interruption*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Crossing of the floor. The crossing of the floor clause. Nothing is wrong with the crossing of the floor clause, except they must say what it is they are really trying to do. That is the Victor Roberts and Jason Ali clause, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Continuous interruption*]

Sen. F. Cummings: That is the Victor Roberts and Jason Ali clause. They found themselves in an embarrassing situation in Siparia where a councillor and an alderman crossed the floor from the UNC and came into the comfortable hands of the People's National Movement

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Ameen: You can keep them.

Sen. F. Cummings:—and as a result of that—

Hon. Senators: [*Continuous interruption*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—as a result of that, they have been unable to—Mr. President, I seek your protection.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: You have my protection. Continue, please.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. President. We go back to the Victor Roberts and the councillor Jason Ali clause. They found themselves in a situation where these two gentlemen, having observed the conduct of the Government over the last few months, have said, “Listen, we cannot put up

with this anymore. We want to get close to good governance.”

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: And so I was glad to sign their application forms and welcome them into the PNM.

Ms. Ameen: You could keep them.

Sen. F. Cummings: I will do the same for some of them across there but certainly not all of them, Mr. President—

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—certainly not all of them. There might be one or two we will accept—

Sen. Dhanpaul: None.

Sen. F. Cummings: But certainly not the last speaker, certainly not the mover of the Bill—

Hon. Senators: [*Continuous crosstalk and laughter*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—certainly not “Doubles and Coffee”, Mr. President, right.

Mr. President: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just, please, please, please—listen, we are descending. Yeah, we are descending. Please, please, please, please. Let us cool it. Continue, Senator.

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, people are leaving in droves. People are leaving in droves. I will stop right there because, you know—

Sen. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—people are leaving the UNC in droves and coming to Balisier House to sign up to join the PNM.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: That is what is happening, right?

Hon. Senator: “Is droves he say?”

Sen. F. Cummings: Thousands of them; thousands. Drove, I said; drove. Drove.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Cummings: The very Balisier House that they are trying to steal from the PNM, people are lining up there to sign to join the PNM. And, Mr. President, you know, I do not dispute that local government reform is necessary. We subscribe to local government reform. Our communities have evolved over the years, and there are very legitimate reasons why we need to review municipal boundaries. So, we are not fighting that. What we want to alert the population to—because there seems to be a sort of—well, I cannot even say it is creeping—a galloping behaviour of the Government, Mr. President, to rush through particular pieces of legislation to legislate themselves into a permanent state of victory. And the country needs to pay attention.

Today, it is local government reform, Trinidad and Tobago, so that the UNC will no longer be able to say, “Well, we are tied with the PNM.” They have created additional corporations so that at the end of the local government election, their hope is that they will be able to boast that the UNC has won X amount of seats in excess of what the PNM would have won.

Sen. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Cummings: And they come to the Parliament unable to do it on the election trail because of their conduct over the last 18 months. They come to the Parliament to legislate to give themselves an advantage at the local

government polls. That is what this piece of legislation is about. That is what it is about

4.00 p.m.

Sen. F. Cummings: That is what it is about. The previous speaker on our Bench alerted us to something which we must pay close attention to. Because it is possible—I am not saying—they have not said it as yet, but their behaviour suggests that. Their philosophy has always spoken to a situation of proportional representation. As a matter of fact, the element of proportional representation that exists now in the local government system was introduced during 2010 and 2015, when the UNC/Partnership Government was in office, in terms of how aldermen are put on the system now.

So, it is very possible, Trinidad and Tobago, that the UNC will, in some time to come, just as they are trying to use the Legislature to give themselves an advantage at the local government election, may very well come back to this Parliament to use this Parliament to give themselves what they may consider an advantage at the general election. Be careful, because I spoke to this matter more than a year ago, when the Minister announced this committee, and I said to Trinidad and Tobago, pay attention, the Government plans to steal the next local government election. So, we are not fighting restructuring.

Mr. President, the Minister said that they are focusing on carving out geographical districts to keep communities together; urban communities, town centres, et cetera. But when you look at what they have done in Arima, the concerns become even more significant. Mr. President, Arima, they have now added to Arima some additional three electoral districts or so, so that

Arima will now start all the way—including Blanchisseuse and all those areas, those rural districts and—

Sen. Roberts: Spell Blanchisseuse.

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, I would ask that the Members on the other side allow me to make my contribution in silence.

Mr. President: Yeah, yeah. Members, please, please. I think we are overdoing it, now. Allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, please.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. President. They have put into Arima, Carapo, all of La Horquetta, Wallerfield, Santa Rosa—that was not there before—and increased that borough in such a significant way without saying to us how this restructured borough, with these additional rural districts, that it was not originally designed to service, how are you going to make sure that the Arima Borough Corporation is able to service these additional areas, when by your conduct, between 2025 and 2026, you reduced its allocation from \$18million to \$5million? We are concerned.

We are concerned about—in these areas that you are discriminating against, what is going to happen to the Development Programme in these areas. What is going to happen in terms of drainage and irrigation? Mr. President, if you look at the figures, the total allocation for the seven municipalities controlled by the PNM is less than the allocation for one particular UNC corporation. Citizens have to be concerned. Because when you govern, you have to govern for all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, they must also account for the practical considerations in relation to administration, the geographical relationship

between communities, existing infrastructure and the financial capacity of these corporations, these boroughs, these new cities, and how they will be able to deliver public service to the people within these areas. And while—I mean, I have no quarrel, I have no real quarrel with a city of Chaguanas. I do not think any of us have a quarrel with a city of Chaguanas. But when you create a city of Chaguanas, and you move Enterprise south, and move it in Talparo, then I have to ask, what is the justification for that?

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Because anybody who knows central Trinidad knows that Enterprise is part of Chaguanas. And maybe the Minister, in her winding up, could tell us why Enterprise north remains in the city of Chaguanas, but Enterprise south, which is right next door, which has traditionally been part of Chaguanas, is now placed in the corporation of Tabaquite/Talparo. And those are reasonable questions. Those are questions that citizens will ask. And those are questions that the Government should be able to answer.

How in one town, Enterprise—on one side is left, on one side is right; Enterprise north and Enterprise south. Dass Trace and all of that are in the south, and Enterprise Street and the others are in the north. How do you split one community of Enterprise and put half in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation and half in Talparo? How do you justify that? What is required is a clear demonstration that the proposed changes by the Government will produce tangible and administrative benefits, and that those benefits justify these arrangements that the Government is putting before us today.

Mr. President, the mover of the Bill before us, in 2022, during the Minister's contribution in the other place, while she was an Opposition

Member, emphasized the importance of adequate resources, proper administrative arrangements, performance and accountability—

Sen. Roberts: What was the debate?

Sen. F. Cummings:—and I have—we are getting to that. Do not rush the brush. And I have no problem in agreeing with those principles. However, Mr. President, they assume greater significance when we examine the legislation currently before us. And we were speaking about—since the Member is asking—we were speaking about March 23, 2022, and the Miscellaneous Provisions (Local Government Reform) Bill.

Sen. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Mr. President, in answer to the Member who is mumbling, if the PNM had any intention of gerrymandering, as they are attempting to do, after the changes that were made after that debate, the results would have been in favour of the PNM. The PNM did not get involved in gerrymandering. There was a process—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping and interruption*]

Sen. F. Cummings: There was a process controlled by the Elections and Boundaries—you know, strangely enough, Mr. President, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, which people on that side have grown accustomed to saying, “Dey bias. Dey have PNM people inside there because dey don’t like how de Chief Election Officer look,” under the very EBC, they won the last election; under the very EBC. So, if the EBC is so biased to the PNM—if the EBC was so biased to the PNM, as they like to claim, they would have still been in Opposition where they really belong. And so, Mr. President, during that contribution on October the 7th, the Minister acknowledged that

matters concerning:

“...staffing...premises...accommodation...financing...”—et cetera.
—that is on October the 7th, Mr. President, on this current Bill in the other place—would not be dealt with directly in the Bill, but through:

“...separate administrative and financial measures.”

I do not accept that the Bill cannot capture everything, but what I do know, Mr. President, is that we have seen a history of under-resourcing, and it causes us significant concern. I will say no more on that at this point in time.

I also want to ask the Minister, in relation to the arrangements in three particular corporations that she mentioned, where the arrangements and the agreements with the unions will be part of this legislation—maybe the Minister will tell us what is the reason why the other corporations have not been given that same comfort—what will happen to the employees from the other districts who may face similar challenges as in the three corporations that the Minister spoke about in the other place and here?

Mr. President, as I was speaking about earlier, our concerns concerning Arima remain about the proposed expansion of that borough—I want to put that again on the record—and it raises an important question about the administrative capacity of the existing Borough of Arima, and whether it will be able to handle the additional load now being placed on it, because a larger municipal boundary does not, by itself, provide additional resources. Those resources, of course, will need to be provided by the central government. The Senate deserves an explanation on how these new corporations would be equipped to discharge its responsibilities effectively, and we will like the Minister to speak to that.

Mr. President, that brings me to the foundation upon which the Government has sought to justify these proposed arrangements. I mentioned it at the beginning of my contribution—I did not spend much time on it—but it is only reasonable that if this legislation is influenced by the work of the so-called committee appointed by the Minister and the Cabinet, that we, as a Senate, out of respect for the persons who sit and do this work, this public service, making law for the good order of Trinidad and Tobago, it is only reasonable that we be provided with a copy of the report of the committee, or else we can just assume that this is hocus-pocus and pulled out of a hat.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Because if we have the report, we can look to see what the committee considered, what they took into consideration in terms of informing this legislation. However, the Minister was very happy, the last speaker, to bring to us a 30-something-year-old report by somebody who is no longer with us and walking the earth at this time. May his soul rest in peace. Mr. President, despite this, the committee's recommendation has not been submitted to the Parliament, and this raises significant concerns about respect for this Parliament. I am not going to make my comment about the way UNC has been referring to Senators in this place, because I do not want to repeat it and put it on the record. But what I want to say is, people, citizens of this country, who give themselves for public service should be accorded some respect

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

4.15 p.m.

Sen. F. Cummings: And it is not a crime to disagree with a policy of the

Government. The whole purpose, why we come here to debate and discuss, is that you come with a proposal to gerrymander and we say, no gerrymandering. We say follow a fair and transparent process. And that is okay. At the end of the day, you have the majority, you vote, and you move along, and Trinidad and Tobago gets an opportunity to test you when we go to vote at the polls.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: And we, we vote you out of office. Starting with wherever you may represent. I looked at Tunapuna/Piarco, a very large corporation. I am not Tunapuna/Piarco—there is justification in—

Mr. President: Senator, you have three more minutes.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. President. There is justification in making some arrangements in Tunapuna/Piarco. I have not looked at it in detail as yet to see whether the same thing that happened in Barataria is what is transpiring in St. Augustine. But that was a very large electoral district that captured a significant part of Trinidad and Tobago and had a population of over 200,000, I think. The Minister may correct me if I am wrong. And therefore, it was—over 200,000—and it is reasonable to look at that area to make some adjustments there. I suspect the Minister who is the representative for St. Augustine and Minister of Local Government, and a former chairman of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, may have been at the front of making recommendations in that regard. There is no quarrel with that. My quarrel is—

Sen. Roberts: With [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Cummings: My quarrel is that the allocation of resources to

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Sen. Cummings (cont'd)

corporations should be done in a fair and transparent manner. When you govern, you govern for all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: You do not use your parliamentary majority and the fact that you control the central government to victimize and to discriminate against persons who live in areas controlled by the PNM corporations. That is what you have been doing. And if this exercise is to further entrench that and make that the way that you will govern, then I caution the Government, Mr. President, I caution the Government that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will not put up with that.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: And when the time comes—

Sen. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Cummings: When the time comes, there will be no safe haven for the UNC. Not in St. Augustine, not in Chaguanas—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings:—not in Siparia, not in Fyzabad or Barrackpore.

Sen. Zakour: Mr. President, I rise on 53(1)(b).

Sen. F. Cummings: I have one minute to wind up.

Hon. Senators: [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Cummings: The Minister should really—

Hon. Senators: [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Cummings: The Minister should be in Tobago trying to be at the function to open the airport instead of trying to [*inaudible*].

Mrs. Ameen: Mr. President, I thought his time up?

Mr. President: Sen. Foster Cummings has one more minute to wrap up.

Sen. F. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. President. The Minister should be in Tobago trying to help open the Tobago airport.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Cummings: Not here trying to disturb me with my one minute. Not with my one minute before I have to wind up. So, Mr. President, we are looking. We are observing, we are paying close attention, so are all the citizens of this country, waiting as a referendum to treat with the conduct of this UNC Government over the last 18 months. Call the election now.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Two minutes have rolled. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Hon. Khadijah Ameen): Mr. President—

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I thought—

Hon. Senators: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I thought this was a place of decorum. I thought this was a place of truth. The Member is calling on the Government to call election now. If we call the election now, PNM get licks again. Licks.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: So, this is not a time and a place for rubber talk and all of that.

Sen. Roberts: Tobago, you should be the last one to talk, “eh”, Tobago, 15-0.

Hon. K. Ameen: “But, Mr. President, you know I sit there, and I listen to the two Members on the other side.” I am reminded by my colleague who served in an ecclesiastical capacity in this country and now is Minister of Planning, that in psychology there is a thing called projection. It is an unconscious defence mechanism where a person attributes their own very often unacceptable thoughts and thinking patterns, their motives and their traits to avoid internally facing certain things. And I listened to the accusations of gerrymandering and accusations that we are moving certain seats in Claxton Bay and Arima and so on, totally ignoring logic. And in every boundary change, the PNM seems to be viewing it through the eyes that they usually do political manoeuvring and strategizing as they did in the 20—

Hon. Senator: 1992.

Hon. K. Ameen:—1992 report, as we have evidence in the Seignoret report that went to Cabinet, as we have evidence in the Sargeant report that went to Cabinet, that the boundaries in 1992 were changed by the PNM simply to ensure that the PNM wins. That is what they did.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, I was first elected as a local government councillor in 2003. There was a local government election due in 2006. It was postponed. In 2007, they postponed it again. In 2008, they postponed it. In 2009, they postponed it. In 2010, when they could not take the pressure again because there was a snap election, Kamla Persad-Bissessar became Prime Minister in May of 2010, and in July of 2010, that was when a local government election was called.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: “And the PNM get licks”. Mr. President, I sat as a young councillor. I attended consultation after consultation, consultation ad nauseam. Mr. President, I remember 2003, thereabout 2006, we had Mr. Rennie Dumas. “Alyuh”, remember him? We used to call him “Stretch”, the fella from Tobago. He was involved in these consultations, and then Mrs. Hazel Manning took over as Minister of Local Government and continued the consultations. In 2019, the PNM had their own internal committee. Then, I believe, he had some office in the party—now MP Colm Imbert appointed a committee—an internal PNM committee.

Sen. Dr. Swaratsingh: To do consultations.

Hon. K. Ameen:—to do consultations. They met. They interviewed PNM councillors and UNC councillors, and they put together a report. And you know what happened? Mr. President, I am advised that the general counsel of the PNM—

Sen. Dr. Swaratsingh: Reject the report?

Hon. K. Ameen: Rejected the report.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Rejected the report. And they rejected their own committee’s report. And after the consultation with Mrs. Hazel Manning, they had green paper, white paper, they did all kinds of things. And nothing came out of it, nothing. So, what is the point of telling us how many? Consultations are not an achievement, you know? That “eh” making a difference to the people on the ground out there, you know. So, all your committees, you know what that committee gave? I remember we went to consultations when they switched to Minister Franklin Khan, you could write a whole book, you could

write several volumes on PNM consultation for local government, you know, Mr. President.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Franklin Khan became Minister. They started again. They are making rounds through the whole country: 14 municipalities, 14 consultations. We attended every one of them. Myself, I remember now, Member for Chaguanas East, was a councillor, she was not mayor yet, we attended all. Myself, Henry Awong, several of us. Mr. President, they had big LED screens, a nice couch, lighting—lights, camera, action.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hosein: Lights, camera, no action.

Hon. K. Ameen: Action only on the stage. A lot of talk. They promised people bank machines and things, you know.

Hon. Senators: [*Laughter*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Yeah, they had consultations and they promised people, “Listen, when we done with this consultation, you will now be able to get ATM machines in your area.” As if that was part of the Government’s mandate for local government. But you know what they did, Mr. President? You know what that consultation did? When the PNM is doing things to make the population feel they are helping out, they “does” be helping themselves, you know.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: That consultation allowed one Andrew Gabriel to get millions of dollars for infrastructure, food, drinks, and setting up of these things, the screens and so on. A lot of money goes to—who is this fella? Mr.

President, the PNM talks about consultation as if it was an achievement. When I spoke, I shared with this House the consultations done by the committee, and I owe you an apology, Mr. President. Because earlier you asked if I would provide something that a Member on the other side requested. This Report was a report by a Cabinet-appointed committee, and this was a report to Cabinet. The Members on that side are no longer in Cabinet.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: They cannot get a Cabinet report. This is a report that went to Cabinet. Cabinet would have been responsible for initiating the process to draft legislation, and so the legislation is what comes to Parliament. Parliament debates the legislation, not the report. But you know, I noticed with them, the Member who spoke last, who spoke just before me, he mentioned that, you know, in everything that he mentioned, he did not really have an opposition to it, you know? But when they could not attack the substance, they started to attack the people.

I want to tell you. The chairman of that committee was Mrs. Stara Ramlogan. She is a retired Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning. Served there for many years. A former director of Town and Country Planning. A believer in statistics and numbers. Also on that committee is Dr.—oh, before I go to the next Member. Mrs. Stara Ramlogan was appointed by Franklin Khan in 2019 to head a committee responsible for local government reform, recommendations and implementation. The PNM appointed her, you know, because the woman is good at her job. But today, they come to criticize members of the committee.

Also on that committee, Dr. Asad Ali, planner extraordinaire. Lectures

at the University of the West Indies, serves on many, many, many advisory committees in this country on planning, on local government, on urban development. They are attacking the members of the committee. Lennox Sankersingh. Mr. President, you know who Lennox Sankersingh was? That man has been a stalwart for grassroots politics and democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. People may know him because of the Sou Sou lands. Remember the Sou Sou lands and how that gave people the opportunity to own land? He was a part of the NAR. He remained committed to good governance. He served on other committees when called to, and he was eager to come back. But he has institutional knowledge of local government way, way back.

Also, on this committee—I do not know why the person who spoke before me did not call the man name, Cornelius Price. Cornelius Price is local government reform walking in an encyclopaedia. Cornelius Price served from the NAR days. He came when the PNM was there. Mrs. Hazel Manning hired him to head a reform committee because, remember, they were doing consultations. And then they hired a consultant from Jamaica, again gave somebody a big “wuk”, Mr. President, spending our money and nothing happening for it. Cornelius Price was there as the right hand of Mrs. Hazel Manning during those years of local government reform, headed an implementation committee, and at the end of it, nothing happened. They lost government, and story done.

4.30 p.m.

These are the people who were on the committee; people who have a depth of knowledge in local government. “What them have in dey big toe, them fellas doh have in dey head”, so they cannot come here to criticize the members of

the committee. Mr. President, the PNM has no moral authority.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: No—none whatsoever. Talk about consultation to criticize anybody, to ask for any report—Mr. President, I have reports going up to the ceiling. We have a high ceiling here. “Them PNM” committee reports might reach the ceiling, you know, but they want to ask for more reports. Mr. President, I want to put on record my gratitude to all members of the committee for serving, for their dedication and time.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, they attacked the committee. They started to talk about the EBC. Mr. President, the EBC made it very clear. There was a newspaper article where the EBC is saying, “We are not consulted because we are not part of the process”.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: The Member on the other side only hears the first part—“We were not consulted” and starts bringing it here as if it were a fault of the process. Mr. President, you cannot involve the EBC in affairs of Parliament. And I want to bring on record, when the PNM does not get its way, how they attack. I want to read from the *Hansard*, Mr. President, with your permission, Friday, March 23, 2001. This is the EBC Commission of Inquiry debate. I am going to tell you what was said and then I will tell you who said it:

“I am sorry, I am afraid I have absolutely no confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Himself cannot improve himself. I have no confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission to do any country-wide electoral registration unless it is done under the scrutiny

of political parties...”

Who might be asking for political parties to interfere in EBC’s business?

Sen. Roberts: Had to be a PNM first of all.

Hon. K. Ameen: Listen, Mr. President, his colleague on the *Hansard* shouted:

“Up to yesterday I phoned Cayenne...”—referring to the Chief Elections Officer—“Up to yesterday I phoned Cayenne; that old crook!”

This is on the *Hansard*.

Hon. Senator: Who said that?

Hon. K. Ameen: He went on.

Sen. Roberts: Two PNM.

Hon. K. Ameen: He said:

“We are not going to take this lying down. We are not tolerating this level of corruption, and we are going to keep pressing for an inquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission. People can shout and scream all they want. There are too many irregularities taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. There is too much resistance within the EBC. There is too much evidence of collusion.”

He started to accuse the EBC of collusion with the UNC.

Hon. Senator: Projection, projection.

Hon. K. Ameen: “So, wuh you wah do?” One solution might be to appoint a relative of a former Minister.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Who knows?

Sen. Roberts: And “de” best friend of—[*Inaudible*—]—a political leader.

Hon. K. Ameen: And those words were said by former Minister of Finance—

Sen. Roberts: Former, former.

Hon. K. Ameen:—former chairman of the PNM who headed numerous local government reform initiatives that failed—one Colm Imbert. So you understand how they treat with the EBC. And they want to treat the EBC as if it is a political tool. It is not. The EBC is independent. They are engaged—and I spoke in my opening of how they are involved in the delimitation exercise and what their role is. Mr. President, the Member who spoke right after me as an attorney of law of some repute—

Sen Roberts: Ill repute.

Hon. K. Ameen:—should know better than to make that suggestion. He also should have known that when he spoke about the Vesting Orders of the corporations—and he mentioned that he thought the Vesting Orders should have come here in this debate for this Bill. Mr. President, two “cyah” come before one; one, two, three. It has steps in this thing. So, I believe he knows that the Vesting Orders cannot come to Parliament at this stage, and he is either deliberately misleading or he is ignorant of the legal process.

Sen. Roberts: Could be either one or both.

Hon. K. Ameen: And when he spoke about the Vesting Orders, Sir, even though it may have been your good intention for the corporations to complete their Vesting Orders, they were not completed when we took office. Several corporations’ Vesting Orders were outstanding. We have been working diligently to compile them. But you know what else I have found in the Ministry? I have letters between the then Minister of Rural Development and

Local Government—the Member who spoke right after my opening, and the Minister of Finance. The permanent secretary in local government and the permanent secretary in finance asked him for guidance, and the Minister of Finance ignored them—ignored local government and totally threw them away. It was not Mr. Dhanpaul who was the Minister of Finance then. It was the former, former. So Colm Imbert, as the Minister of Finance, ignored continuous requests from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to proceed with these exercises—a frustration for all of local government, and all of the corporations. So, I find some of the issues he raised there a little misguided but I do not attribute any malice on his behalf as though he is trying to mislead the House.

Hon. Senator: He did not know how to take “de” book from Imbert.

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, he also spoke about—listen, eh, I want to deal with both of them together concerning the figures and the numbers—“they talk about population and ting”. “Dey were all over de place.” They did not seem to have collaborated, but I will deal with it all together. Mr. President, the Member spoke about the *Ravi Balgobin Maharaj v the Cabinet* judgment. My colleague, the Minister of Land and Legal Affairs, dealt with that comprehensively. Mr. President, it is, and I repeat, just as I said in the opening, that this Bill does not interfere with the current term of the councillors, and it will not interrupt their term in any way.

Mr. President, the Member referred to clauses 14, 15 and 16 as underwriting the corporation’s funding. Mr. President, first of all, this Bill has 15 clauses; there is no clause 15. Clauses 14 and 15 are saving provisions. They preserve property, rights, liability, collective agreements, and union

representation. They are not funding corporations. The provisions in this Bill are not for funding corporations. All they want to do is talk about funding for corporations; I will deal with that in a while. The Bill and that clause do not refer to funding. As you know, Mr. President, funding for corporations and all statutory bodies comes in the budget. Mr. President, when this is proclaimed, and it becomes law, it will be incorporated in the budget. “Doh jump de gun.” He asked about how corporations will be funded following the repeal of property tax, given that there are legal entities. I am not even going there. Property tax was repealed by the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: The PNM Government was voted out because the people did not want property tax. His question about how the law will be operationalized about the terms and conditions of councillors is moot; it does not arise, and I think it is because of a lack of understanding in terms of how those things work. I want to move now to this colleague. Mr. President, I explained in my opening that in this country, as in many countries, local government forms three categories—three layers if you want to call them or three tiers: Cities are smaller, focused on urbanized areas. From the references made by the last speaker about San Fernando, Arima, Tunapuna, and Chaguanas, I do not think he is familiar with what that means on the ground or with those communities. I will start in San Fernando.

For those who know San Fernando—Marabella, Claxton Bay—the city centre—if you think about what it was in 1990, when the corporation at that time, the city centre was focused on a few streets, really, that were the commercial hub of San Fernando. San Fernando has grown way past those

streets and boundaries. You have so many businesses in Marabella—ask Fens—you go all the way up further up and that is how that Claxton Bay area—because that is their city centre. So it is logical that the city has, in fact, expanded; they cannot deny that. And it is logical then for those communities to be included because they have a similar development focus. He spoke about Arima, Blanchisseuse, Carapo and Santa Rosa.

Sen. Roberts: He could not spell Blanchisseuse.

Hon. K. Ameen: Let me tell you, eh, currently, Arima is a little dot surrounded by Tunapuna/ Piarco region. Blanchisseuse is in the north of that small borough area, and Santa Rosa is in the west. You have Wallerfield, Carapo, and so on, to the south of it. But those people, their commercial town centre is Arima. If you live in Blanchisseuse, you are coming to Arima to go to the bank. Many people go to school, and they do business in Arima. Carapo, is the same thing. I live in Carapo. We take a taxi; you come over the highway, and you go to Arima. Santa Rosa is the same thing—Pinto, Santa Rosa, and those communities come down the hill, and they are in Arima. If they are not part of Arima borough, we all have to go to Arima, take a maxi or a taxi, and then go to Tunapuna to do business with the corporation. So it is more logical for Blanchisseuse communities to take one taxi and come to Arima. They have a long drive, you know.

Hon. Senator: Yeah, but they do not like—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. K. Ameen: That is a rural community. Arima is ideally suited to be their town centre.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: [*Inaudible*—the same applies for Carapo and Santa Rosa.

That is the logic, and that is how, in terms of planning and designation, Arima borough has been expanded. And I think that is a good thing for the people of Arima, because currently, a councillor in Arima represents about 4,000 electors. In Tunapuna/Piarco, one councillor represents 11,500 electors. They get the same pay, they do the same work, but it is more people to service. It is a little unfair, so this kind of deals with that disparity as well.

The Member also spoke about Chaguanas. Chaguanas is a borough currently. To be a city, it has to be a smaller and more concentrated urbanized area, so you have to examine—and that is what the committee did. They examined the area based on the development over the last few years, based on the commercial activities, based on the population density, and carved out the area that was most ideally suited to be a city centre. It meant that the Enterprise North that he refers to—there is a district called Enterprise North Longdenville. Enterprise North Longdenville goes into Longdenville and goes into a more rural area. So it had to really go that way rather than stay in the Chaguanas borough. So there was no carving out of no PNM area and no UNC area. Longdenville is a UNC area, so why do we carve it out of Chaguanas? It makes no sense.

4.45 p.m.

So that projection from the last speaker there makes no sense at all.

He talked about Tunapuna/Piarco. He was trying hard within himself to find an objection, and he could find none. Because Tunapuna/Piarco is the one region that the PNM currently holds, that I can tell you—yes, I was chairman in 2010, I was chairman of that corporation. But long before me was, for those on the other side who could remember, Mr. Jerry Narace.

Hon. Senators: Yes.

Hon. K. Ameen: Jerry Narace was a strong advocate for Tunapuna to be split and for them to have a borough of Tunapuna.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Hon. K. Ameen: I remember as well former Deputy Speaker of the House, Esmond Forde. Before he was a MP, before he lost the election and Roger Alexander won that seat, he was a councillor, you know. He was a councillor in my council when I was chairman, and he was also an advocate, before and after being a councillor, for the Tunapuna region to be separated because of how vast it is. There was also the Tunapuna Chamber, several presidents were advocating over years. So, there is no question about Tunapuna, and as the Member indicated, there is no question of the fact that Tunapuna has to change but do not try to find motive.

We have carved out, Mr. President—based on the committee’s recommendations, the description in the Bill here really is the centre of the town, the centre of the University of the West Indies, and if you call it Tunapuna or you call it St. Augustine, it is the same area. The University of the West Indies is a significant institution of that borough, a feature of that new borough of St. Augustine, which I welcome; I welcome.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, they want to talk about funding. This Bill has nothing to do with funding, “but ah know dem, so ah was ready and waiting”. Mr. President, the last speaker talked about how much money PNM gave UNC corporations. “Ah want to tell yuh what dey use to do. Dey used to give with dey right hand and take back with dey left hand”. So, they put

allocations in the budget, and then the end of the financial year comes and you have no releases—very little releases. They did not do that to the UNC corporations alone, you know, they did that to the PNM corporations as well.

Mr. President, when we went into office, there was one—and this is a PNM corporation, eh—corporation owing over \$30 million to scavenging contractors because the last Government refused to release the moneys allocated in the budget. Who was the Minister then? Who was in government then? Who was suppressing the funding then? It was not the UNC. There was another corporation, Mr. President, that has an electricity bill of \$3 million and they want me to approve money for them to throw a borough day. “Pay yuh debts before yuh throw fetes”. They ended up in this situation.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: The Mayor of Port of Spain is still writing me, emailing me, calling me, contractors from within the city of Port of Spain are calling because the PNM corporation is owing them money, because the corporation got confirmation of funds from the former Minister of Finance—the PNM Minister of Finance, who told them, proceed. You have the allocation. They wrote and they asked for confirmation of funds. You gave them the confirmation of funds. They engaged the contractor. The contractor does the work and then you never released the money to them, and so you have contractors—that is misbehaviour in public office.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, the Port of Spain City Corporation and several corporations are owing contractors millions of dollars because of PNM’s misconduct in office, and we are working with them to manage those

debts, because it was they who never released the money. I want to tell you, Mr. President—

Sen. Roberts: “All dat in one month boy?”

Hon. K. Ameen: When they talk about, well, we gave them this and we gave them that, I want to tell you what else. I have been observing trends—the last Member—because one year—he spoke about, “One year, dey give Couva \$17.5 million and whatnot and ting.”

I have been studying the trends of funding for local government for years now; years. I can tell you what it was like before 2010, 2010 to 2015, and I can show you the consistent decline in funding for corporations and local government from 2015 to 2025, when the PNM was voted out of office. I want to tell you what happens. You talked about disparity in funding. You cannot just call the corporation and say that they get less money or more money. You have to examine the number of electors they serve with that money. You have to look at the geographic space they are required to maintain. How many wooden bridges do they have? How many streets do they have to pave? How many earthen roads, earthen drains? It is different requirements based on their level of development.

I want to use some examples. This was up to the PNM funding, right? I want to use some examples. Point Fortin Borough has an electorate of 17,056 persons; 17,000. Their population is 20,000. Their land mass is 25 kilometres squared. Think about that, 25 kilometres squared. Based on the funding, they get roughly \$872 per capita, per person, per year to treat with all their services: Garbage collection, drain cleaning and so on. Per capita that is how much they get. Per kilometre, they get \$706,000 per kilometre.

“Ah taking ah next PNM corporation”: Tunapuna/Piarco. Tunapuna/Piarco is the lowest funded corporation under the PNM, you know. They have an electorate of 178,000. Their land size—their population size, sorry, their population now—the number of people actually living there, not registered to vote, is 215,000. That is close to quarter of a million people. But their land space is 510 square kilometres. “Ah tell yuh Point Fortin is 25, dem is 510”. When we consider how much they have been getting, they get \$84 per resident, per capita to treat with services. “Ah tell yuh Point Fortin get \$872 per capita”. Tunapuna/Piarco is getting \$84 per capita. How could that be fair? They are getting \$35,000 per kilometre to develop; \$35,000 and Point Fortin is getting \$706,000.

I am using two on the different ends of the spectrum to show you how unfair the thing is. It also speaks—and I spoke to earlier about the number of persons that a councillor has to represent. So, Mr. President, Arima Borough gets \$543 per capita. Port of Spain city gets \$532 per capita. They are up there in the \$500 range. On the lower end, I told you of Tunapuna/Piarco that has \$84 per capita. You have Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, another huge region, that has \$96 per capita, and then San Juan/Laventille comes next with \$109 per capita. So, you see the disparity. It is not something they could logically argue against.

As I mention now, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo will now have the concentrated area of Couva, with the industrial estate and all those commercial activities being made into the borough of Couva—“dey cah argue with dat”—and the wider Tabaquite/Talparo region remaining as a region, with focus on those rural communities. I want to acknowledge the presence of the Chairman

of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo in the public gallery, Mr. Ryan Rampersad; very hard working and diligent.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, “with all de talk dey talk”, you know, when—there is a characteristic of privilege that comes out when the PNM talks. You see, when you are so accustomed to getting more—if you are accustomed to getting \$10, and all your other siblings are getting \$1 to go to school, “de day you get \$8 and dem get \$2, you vex”. That is the PNM. That is the PNM.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: Mr. President, with all their complaints—yes, some corporations’ development fund went down, some went up, that fluctuates every single year. “So, doh come here and get on like is UNC do some wickedness”. Mr. President, do you know that with all their complaints, the PNM corporations combined got \$181 million more than the UNC corporations combined? And they are 7-7. They still got \$181 million more than the UNC corporations, and they are coming here to cry crocodile tears. “Yuh know what dey doing with de extra money? “Is fete, is—ah doh want to say party groups”.

Sen. Nakhid: “Stink + Dutty”.

Hon. K. Ameen: They want to have their mayors’ balls and mayors’ fund, and they are giving donations to steel pans and steel bands. “Dey make all kinda NGOs, you know, all kinda NGOs”. When you look at who are on these NGOs, these are known PNM figures. So, they are taking the money from the thing, claiming that they are going to have official entertainment, and creating

events and are giving people who are their friends and associates and party people all kind of favours, Mr. President. A lot of squandering is taking place.

I really thought we might have had a few, you know, contributions of substance, like where you had some real issues, but I think by the Members' own admissions, particularly the last speaker, they really have no problem with the Bill. "Dey just feel dat if ah election call, dey go loss, and dais their only grouse. Well, ah want to tell yuh, boundary or no boundary, yuh will still loss".

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Ameen: It is very clear that the Opposition has no objection in principle to the boundaries being changed. All of the proposals made, they seem to be in agreement that Barataria/San Juan/Laventille is too large and Barataria is justified as a borough. They are in agreement with Tunapuna/Piarco being too large and justification for St. Augustine as a borough. They are in agreement that Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo is way too large and that concentrated centre of Couva should be a borough. They are in agreement, in principle, but I know they want to kick up their feet and so on, and I find that atrocious because they themselves will benefit from the manageability of those corporations when they are reduced in size and in population.

Mr. President, I have circulated a list of amendments. There are three amendments—clauses 10, 11 and 12. I believe Members have already received the amendments and they will be considered at committee stage, and they are really to replace certain words, to clean up the language a bit. It does not change the substance of what is proposed and what has come before you.

For instance, in the description of a boundary, they have advised us to use a different phrase instead of the one that was used, that was lifted from EBC and so on. So, we will deliberate on those in the committee. Mr. President, with those words, I beg to move.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

5.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Senate in Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Members, we have 15 clauses in the Bill before us, and we do have some amendments to clauses 10, 11 and 12, as was indicated to us by the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. So with your leave, we can deal with the first nine clauses because we have no amendments to them, and we can then deal with clause 10, then clause 11, and then clause 12, separately, and we go on to the next three clauses.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Chair—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Sen. Jeremie SC: I heard you say that the Bill before this House has 15 clauses. It does not, it has 16 clauses. There was an additional clause which was inserted in the other place, clause 4.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I am corrected, 16 clauses in the Bill. One clause that I left out would have been inserted in the Bill in the other place, which, apparently, we are now reflecting. Okay?

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10.

Question proposed: That clause 10 stand part of the Bill.

In paragraph (c), in the proposed -

- (a) subsection (1C), delete the words “The Mayor”, and substitute the words “Notwithstanding section 62(2), the Mayor”; and
- (b) subsection (1D), delete the words “If the”, and substitute the words “Notwithstanding section 62(3), if the”.

Mr. Chairman: Can I have the AG or the hon. Minister.

Ms. Ameen: Yeah, AG.

Mr. Chairman: AG.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Yeah. Chair, I am not sure exactly what version of the Bill you are looking at, but what has been circulated in the name of the Minister would be incorrect, in the sense that where my colleague refers to clauses 10, 11 and 12. It should be clauses 9, 10 and 11.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. We will correct it, because we have the proper version based on what you have indicated. Okay? So there are 16 clauses, that is the main thing.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Correct.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So, as I said, if the hon. Minister or yourself could just give us—

Ms. Ameen: This is 9 or 10?

Mr. Chairman: No, we are dealing with—

Sen. Jeremie SC: Clause 10.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, your 10.

Sen. Jeremie SC: So, the Minister proposes an amendment in terms of the

draft that is circulated. It is a drafting requirement because there is a general principle which is established in the two preceding clauses. So that the power of the “Mayor”, his subject—well, it says:

“Notwithstanding section 62(2), the Mayor”

That is a drafting principle where you have conflicting rules. So that would explain 10(a) and (b) as circulated. It is clearing up the drafting, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Anyone would want to clarify with their—?

Question agreed to.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 11.

Question proposed: That clause 11 stand part of the Bill.

In paragraph (c), in the description of “WEST”, at lines 21 and 22, delete the words “proceeding in a generally northerly direction along the said river”.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister or the AG.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Chair, we propose an amendment in terms of the draft that has been circulated. It takes out the words which are already in the Bill. So, again, it is cleaning up the drafting.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Those words:

“proceeding in a generally northerly direction along the said river”

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Question agreed to.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12.

Question proposed: That clause 12 stand part of the Bill.

- A. In paragraph (b), in the description of “SOUTH AND WEST”,
- (a) at line 12, after the words “western corner” insert the words “of the lands of Alexis Bernard”; and
 - (b) at lines 22 and 23, delete the words “north eastern corner of” and substitute the words “northern boundary of the”.
- B. In paragraph (c), in the description of “NORTH”, at line 18, after the words “Mahadeoh;” insert the words “thence southwards along the western boundary of the said lands to the northern boundary of a proposed Forest Reserve;”.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government or the AG.

Sen. Jeremie SC: Chair, this is similar drafting errors. We are cleaning up the drafting, so we propose an amendment in terms of the circulated draft in paragraph (b), the description of “south” and “west”. That is line 12. So, after the words “western corner”, we are inserting the words, “of the lands of Alexis Bernard”, and at lines 22 and 23, we are deleting, “north eastern corner of”, and substituting the words, “northern boundary of the”. It is tidying up the drafting and not the substance.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Question agreed to.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 13 to 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the Senate.

Senate resumed.

5:15 p.m.

Bill reported, with amendments.

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

Sen. Dr. Browne: Division.

Mr. President: Division.

The Senate divided. Ayes 23 Noes 6

AYES

Allahar, Hon. D.

Jeremie SC, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Swaratsingh, Hon. Dr. K.

Maharaj, Hon. S.

Baptiste, Hon. L.

Alexander, Hon. P.

Ratiram, Hon. R.

Persad, Hon. Prof. P.

Chaitan-Maharaj, Dr. N.

Baig. B

Charles, Ms. K.

Zakour, Hon. E.

Smith, Hon. D.

Nakhid, D.

Chote SC, Ms. S.

Attzs, Dr. M.

de la Bastide SC, M.

Jones-Simmons, Ms. C.

Murray, Dr. D. Lalite-Ettienne, Mrs. A.

Mc Nish, C.

Phillips, Ms. Z.

NOES

Browne, Dr. A.

Al-Rawi SC, F.

Roberts-Radgman, Mrs. M.

Dhanpaul, V.

Cummings, F.

Rose, Dr. M.

Mr. F. Lewis abstained.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Hon. Senators: [*Desk thumping*]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar): Thank you, Mr. President. By all accounts, we have had a very productive day today. I now beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.24 p.m.