

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

San Fernando

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San Fernando City Hall



Rapporteurs' Full Report



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1.0 OPENING

The Consultation began with the playing of the National Anthem; followed by an opening prayer by Imam Maulana Mustaq Ahamad Sulaimani. The Master of Ceremonies, Nisa Pierre, then proceeded by welcoming all present to the San Fernando City Hall for the first of the island wide series of consultations on Local Government Reform and thanked them for their presence. She went on to make all aware that the consultation will be broadcasted live on national television, over the radio as well as on the internet.

Ms. Pierre proceeded to introduce the key personnel for the consultation amongst whom were: the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young and Attorney General and the Honourable Faris Al Rawi.

This was followed by the welcome remarks which were delivered by the Mayor of the city of San Fernando, His Worship Kazim Hosein who welcomed everyone on behalf of the Ministry to the 1st Local Government Reform Consultation in the San Fernando City Hall.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley,
Minister the Honourable Stuart Young

2.0 MAYOR'S WELCOME REMARKS

His Worship the Mayor Alderman Haji Kazim Hosein

Good afternoon I will be very short. I must say that I gave personal invitation to each household in San Fernando. I invited every community, the business people, taxi drivers' association, the scouting association, the residence association, the market vendors, I invited toute bagai. So nobody has an excuse and it is shown here. The Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development, testimony is here that San Fernando is in full support of this local government reform.

In his absence the Honourable Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad; the Honourable Faris Al-Rawi Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and member of parliament for San Fernando West, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development and also my boss; the Honourable Randall Mitchell Minister of Public Administration and member of parliament for San Fernando East; Senator Sherry Ann Crichlow (is not here as yet); Senator the Honourable Stuart Young Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (welcome to San Fernando I know that you are no stranger here); the Honourable Maxie Cuffie Minister of Communications welcome to San Fernando. I want to welcome Maulana Mushtaq Ahamad Sulaimani from the Muslim faith; Mayors – Mayor of Port of Spain Mr. Raymond Tim Kee; Mayor of Arima Mr. George Hadeed, chairman of the Tunapuna Regional Corporation, Mayor Mr. Anthony Roberts San Juan/Laventille, Mayor of Pt. Fortin Mr. Clyde Paul, chairman of the Toco Sangre Grande Regional Corporation Mr. Terry Rondon.

I want to acknowledge my friend Senator Daniel Dookie. We have to recognize Ms. Joan Yuille-Williams former ambassador and no stranger to San Fernando; chairman of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation Ms. Katty Christopher (welcome to San Fernando), the CEO of the San Fernando City Corporation Mr. Indarjit Singh. All distinguished ladies and gentlemen, sorry if I cannot remember everybody.

A special welcome to Mr. Andrew Gabriel, we have seen devolution here in this auditorium, many of you all have come here before and you have never seen anything like this. So I want you to give the team a special round of applause for transforming and this is what we call transformation. This is what the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Local Government is doing to us and giving to us.

Permanent Secretaries Ms. Destra Bascombe and Mr. Isaac James; Deputy Permanent Secretaries; all Mayors; Chairmen; my Councillors and Aldermen of the San Fernando City Corporation; citizens of this wonderful city of San Fernando, members of the media.

Good afternoon it is with great pleasure that I warmly welcome you here to the first consultation on Local Government Reform. I am pleased that the city of San Fernando has been chosen as a starting point for this consultation and as your first servant of this wonderful city since 2013, I have definitely seen the value of Local Government Reform.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, well-wishers, devolution is the statutory granting of powers from central government to government at sub-national level, such as regional, local or state level, it is decentralization. Devolved territories have the power to make legislation relevant to their area. I am sure that this will work for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and certainly we will see it working for our city in San Fernando.

We believe that devolution will ensure that there is a greater development in the city of San Fernando. The proposed reform takes away the decision making from central authority, that is removed from our situation and it is over to us the people, to make these decisions. So as we take it from central government it will be in our city, you the people will have the decision making, similar to the THA (Tobago House of Assembly) model. It means that the people who are involved in situations can provide solutions for problems that arise, that means, all of us working for one another the way normal 'San Fernandians' do.

It means that we are moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach in local government, to an understanding that we know our problems in this city that we the people of San Fernando will be responsible and accountable for finding solutions. Can you imagine what great developments would take place in our city, if our local contractors, entrepreneurs and business large and small got the first shock at participating in the improvement of the city of San Fernando? Can you imagine how our city would flourish? We work together, we play together, we pray together, some of us went to school together, some of us marry into families that we know, some of us live in the same places. If we were responsible for the development of San Fernando can you imagine how many job opportunities would open up within our city, and more importantly, our citizens would have a very real say in the local development of this city.

The things that we can dream of for San Fernando no one can dream for us and what is more important is that we the citizens of this wonderful city of San Fernando have the energy, skills and will put in the hand to work to make our dreams a reality. We all know that help from within a community invigorates a community and a country. Think of your family, families in which help comes from within are strong families. Let us work together to invigorate our communities to make San Fernando strong. If San Fernando is not strong, Trinidad and Tobago cannot be strong, so we need to have the strength so we will have a strong Trinidad and Tobago.

Ladies and gentlemen devolution leads to development and expands the democratic process we would see greater participation from all. You the people will have a better say and a stronger say in how your city is run. The participation process would be a richer experience, because we would be participating in the development of our destiny. This reminds me of the

words of our National Anthem 'with boundless faith in our destiny', with faith you can do so much, faith even makes the word 'impossible' obsolete.

My dear friends it is a formula for prosperity, devolution leads to greater development and improves in the democratic process, there is a win-win for everyone, because everyone wins when the process of determining their future is put in the hands of the people.

Ladies and gentlemen as I close I want to recognize the wife of the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Hazel Manning who has laid a foundation among others who have passed for this Local Government Reform. I remember I was a councillor in 2003 to 2008 and Mrs. Manning brought out embracing all and we had the white paper and the green paper and I was very excited about it, I made my own paper then and gave it to all my constituents at that time, because I like to walk, I like to meet the people and I like to report back to them and I took the opportunity, Mrs. Manning you would remember, and I had your picture in my book and I was proud to have it then.

So I want to thank you for coming to share with us and I would like to thank all of you for being here. We do not have any room outside; the chairs are all taken up. So this is what San Fernando is about, San Fernando is about participation.

In closing I would like to thank you again and we welcome your participation in helping the transition of Local Government Reform in the hands of the people. I want to assure you Minister Franklin Khan that the San Fernando City Corporation will give you the full support, to ensure that before the next Local Government Elections we will have this in place.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, addressed all present and welcomed them to San Fernando's City Hall for the consultation. He delivered his address with the aid of a video presentation which was displayed at the beginning and end of his address.

The Minister gave a brief explanation of the video presentation which was shown to the audience. It was as follows, "The video you just saw illustrates a system and the dynamics that are not unfamiliar to any of us. Whether it's a river, a crack in a drain, an empty lot next door, delivering a social service to someone in need; crime and security, a blown streetlight, medical care, school repairs, a local heritage site, unemployment, waste management, a bus shelter etc. Under the current system when a community needs to get something done, it has to take a place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries that run to the centralised heart of government."

After having explained the video to the audience, Minister Khan proceeded with his address. He began, “These consultations are unique, in the sense that it is one of the few occasions that public consultations in Trinidad & Tobago will look solely at Trinidad. The reason being, Tobago’s local government’s machinery and service delivery systems have progressed well beyond that of Trinidad’s. This is directly due to reforms in their Local Government status, and the social contract between the THA and the people of Tobago.

Looking at the Tobago experience we see that there is more that separates us than water. We are separated by a whole different system of service delivery – so it’s not the sea but whole bureaucracies that differentiate our local government landscapes. Like many communities across Trinidad, Tobago used to have to come to the central Government for just about everything. With legislation passed in ‘96 the THA was given legal and local authority and autonomy to change that. Today, Tobagonians no longer have to come to Port of Spain for a passport. Why should we? Tobagonians no longer have to rely on central government to maintain their cemeteries or any other public space. Why should we? Tobagonians no longer have to come here for driver’s permits or liquor licences. Why should we? As a corporation, Tobago doesn’t have to come to town to protect, preserve and promote their own heritage sites and tourism. Because of the THA Act #40 of 1996, Tobago has the authority and autonomy to inform, manage and dictate and influence almost every aspect of its own affairs and development. As a result, we see advancements and initiatives like: The Tobago Emergency Management Authority, Medical Alert devices in (3 years 520 persons), Social service delivery (example of young person suffering abuse). These are just a few of the many examples that illustrate the differences in our bureaucracies. Tobagonians have the power to treat with their own community, their own unique cultures and ways of life... why shouldn’t we? this is really what we will be exploring here this evening and in this island-wide series of consultations.

Since in 1962 successive administrations have researched, tracked, discussed and consulted with the public on the benefits of a decentralisation of government through the mechanisms of the local government. The high point Trinidad’s evolution in this regard came with the Municipal Corporation Act #21 of 1990. But essentially, successive administrations have kicked the can down the road. Now, the ball is in our court.

The pitfalls of centralised governance have been uncovered, discussed, debated and documented over and over again for decades and consistently, all endeavours have pointed to stronger local governance – a broadening of our democracy. What this history and wealth of information presents us with is a pool of thinking – a collection of information that allows us to now strike with surgical precision and real-world relevance.

Beyond garbage collection, retaining walls and waterways, traffic and transport, community centres, empty lots, mosquitoes and the more tangible and physical matters; almost every decision made by central government inevitably has an effect our software. our hearts and minds: our sense of well-being, autonomy, creativity, security, identity and belonging, and our

sense of community. Our sense of being able to make a difference, and our basic capacity to dream and to passionately pursue those dreams are gradually absorbed away from us. Above all, the centralisation of decision-making affects our need and ability to unite and to build stronger communities. So, in a very real sense, and particularly at the pace of the modern world, centralised Government is more likely to be the problem, more than the solution.

The major impediments preventing existing local government structures from being efficient, consistent, relevant or sensitive, cost-effective timely or sustainable are: Political interference, manipulation and expediency, Inadequate funding, Inadequacy of supporting legislation, The sluggish administrative structure that only facilitates unnecessary bureaucracy and an overall lack of transparency and equity.

Local government has become ineffective and burdened with bureaucracy because control, funding and authority are centralised in the Ministry of Local Government and Corporations are currently treated as departments of the Ministry.

How many ministers know your communities like you do? Can they all know the lady down the road who can barely walk anymore? And that she has to go to Port of Spain every year she survives, to the Ministry, to prove to them that she is indeed alive. Otherwise, her pension will be cut off.

Can any single Minister know every community, every street and every house? Far less for every old lady; or every need in every community.

Our vision is a fully operationalised and networked local government system. This is imperative to people-centred development and to the accomplishment of any national vision. We envision quantum leaps in Health & well Being; Family and community life and security, development of public spaces and the environment; local culture, Identity and creativity; entrepreneurship, Local Industry the Economy and Commerce, Dynamic Social and political Interaction, Communication & Media, and Information and Technology. Your ability to fix or plan your own roads, build a retaining wall in the community, or to launch a festival, all have direct impact on the quality of life in your community, And local government reform puts that power in your hands.

Our proposal, as we stated in our 2015 Manifesto, the PNM's vision for Local Government seeks to remove all of the red tape and bureaucracies that prevent local government bodies from doing their work in an effective and efficient manner. This document has now been advanced into the official policy debate. To revolutionise and bring the system in line with the recurrent recommendations of the many teams, committees, and different administrations that have engaged this process over the years, we propose the following reforms:

Secure Funding – Collecting Your Own Taxes –

Local Government bodies will be allowed to keep certain taxes and other revenues collected within their boundaries.

Executive Authority – Local Government bodies will be given a level of autonomy and executive authority similar to that of Tobago House of Assembly

New Responsibilities – Local Government bodies will be responsible for school maintenance, social welfare services, sporting programmes, agricultural and local tourism. As we've seen recently, the more schools we build the harder it is for central government to keep them all open and running.

Local Contractors – Local Government bodies will be responsible for developing the competencies, expertise and facilities that will create opportunities for local work to be done by local suppliers of goods and services.

More Effective Municipal Policing – Broader responsibilities and staff will be given to the Municipal Police closing the gap between the community and officers of the law.

Development Control – Control of Development will be under the authority of Local Government bodies, the ability to fully participate in the planning and development of communities will be expanded beyond approval of plans and construction dwelling houses and simple buildings.

Infrastructure Works – The system of implementation of local infrastructure projects will be completely restructured and decentralized to allow for efficient and timely implementation by Local Government bodies.

Disaster Management – Local Government bodies will be reformed to facilitate direct collaboration with Central Government agencies to plan for and become effective first responders in Natural Disasters.

Involvement of Civil Society – The Public and Civil Society will become more involved in the Decision making process and in so doing lead to the growth of a more sensitive, caring and responsive society.

Regional Development Planning – Detailed Regional Development plans have been done for the fourteen (14) Municipal Corporations. These will serve as a guide for future Development.

Under these reforms how will the boundaries and size of corporations be determined?"

Minister Khan then gave insight into the way in which the system functions in its current state.

"Organization and structure in the new Local Government eco-system local Councils will operate using a committee system. In this regard, the possibilities allow for exploration of the amazing potentials of each community. Imagine council committees set up to deal specifically with: A Public Health, A Human Resources & Employment, Finance and Planning, Social Welfare, Security & policing, Infrastructure, Disaster Preparedness & Management, Sports, Recreation & Public Spaces, Building Inspection & Approval, Committees for Festivals, Cultural Heritage, Arts and Tourism, Education and Research, Media & Communication and Science & Technology.

To ultimately reduce the rivers of red tape, supporting and inhibiting legislations will need amendment. Further amendment to the Municipal Corporation Act to give Corporations the

level of autonomy and executive authority similar to that currently enjoyed by the Tobago House of Authority. Amendment to the relevant taxation laws to allow local government bodies to retain certain taxes collected within their boundaries. Amendment of Section 69 of the Act to reflect the new Standing Committees to give greater oversight, accountability and transparency to all Council matters.

It is also very important that all Corporations and relevant organisations in communities be supported and collaborated with to ensure that the new system of Local Government is implemented and executed to bring about the most effective, ethical and legal operations; smooth transitioning and amazing results – a quantum improvement in our quality of life.”

Minister Khan concluded his address with stating, “These are our thoughts. Tonight we invite your thoughts, ideas, questions and suggestions in contributing towards constructing a -more effective system of service delivery, a deepening democracy and our national advancement.”

4.0 PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS

THE HONOURABLE DR. KEITH ROWLEY

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, The Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley, extended salutations and then welcomed all present and stated that the consultation was a special night to which he had to attend in order to show his full support for the effort being made and to convince those whom are sceptical that this community development in Trinidad and Tobago is real. He stated to the people of San Fernando that it is good to lead the local government reform in Trinidad.

He recalled that Tobago, under many years of reform finally got some change 25 years ago which had been serving the people of Tobago really well. He proceeded in his recollection as a young member of PNM watching the members at the top clashing. He stated that Dr. Williams had said something at the time which caught his attention which was heard over the radio saying that when PNM had conceded, that Tobago had to be shackled and Tobagonians are given the authority to manage the affairs on their own island. That which Dr. Williams had said has worked very well in the Prime Minister's opinion. He stated that there had been hesitation on the behalf of the People's National Movement to give such authority to Tobago.

He went on, "The legislation of 1980 was later revised to give Tobago more authority. Now, while remaining in the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, Tobago should be given the ability to control their own affairs and I support that. In Tobago there is being an election held to elect the leader of the People's National Movement in Tobago. In Tobago there is a leader of People's National Movement who would automatically hold a position at the nation level as a deputy leader of the People's National Movement. That person would be a leader of the party and a Member of Parliament. The party now knows that there must be an election in Tobago to select someone to be a leader of the People's National Movement in Tobago. I tell you this because that is what is expected to take place in Trinidad. What we expect is that you the people would see the benefits of this. There are a lot of upsides to this. When you go to Tobago today you will see that Tobago is better managed than Trinidad in that the place is cleaner, the facilities are better maintained and the children are better looked after. On the contrary, what is happening in Trinidad is a repeated cycle of constant complaining that we do not have enough resources of the abilities. For example, Minister Stuart Young's responsibility is to look after the functioning of the local government. What is happening now is that the minister is the driving force of the local government. The minister is to be in total control and if the minister is not a believer in local autonomy then there will be problems. The THA election has its accountability as the Tobagonians know who was in charge of each aspect. In Trinidad there are public servants who are in charge of each aspect."

He declared that, "The bottom line is that there are complaints reaching Parliament ten years late and that had happened ten years ago. What is needed is greater clarity to say who is

responsible, which places a greater responsibility on the people. If you the people do not show interest, then this will fail. The whole idea is to strengthen you at the local level. This is to grant you approval of the local operations. If it has to be done and made into a law then it will come from you the people. That is how you keep control of the situation. That is how you empower the people.”

The Prime Minister accounted a recent situation to the audience, “In Lopinot, I saw this dilapidated community and I was sad to see this. I am sure that if the responsibility for that community centre had come to the corporation for that area then I am sure they would have responded as the Tobagonians respond. The attitudes must change for development of this in Trinidad. People are not doing a full day’s work for a full day’s pay in Trinidad. When that attitude changes we will get a greater value for our money.”

“The opportunity for a community to develop by a way of fair treatment, all of us will benefit but if you the purchasers do not hold things accountable then you are being at a disadvantage when election day comes. I have a confidence in you the people that if we put things in place then we will see change.”

“If we say to you that we will see the responsibility in San Fernando to take account for all the finances and you know that someone is corrupt, then who is to blame? There will be school boards under the control of the city corporation. You will be given the power to serve on the school board. This is good public service to help mould children from early and we will break the cycle of children just passing through the schools. Now more than ever you are required to make sure that every dollar gives you 100% value. If the minister does not make it happen, then I will make it happen.”

“One thing I can tell you without fear of retribution is that there is a government in office sure that we will bring on significant local government reform. At least by the end of 2016 we will come to you at the end of these consultations in some way and certainly there will be a document put out to you and at the end of the day we will decide what we are going to do and we will do it because we are sure that we can do much to improve the development of this nation and we believe that through this we can become an enemy to a large section of the world by the end of 2016.”

Prime Minister Rowley concluded his address by stating, “If you have fears, express those fears, we want to know. We will be influenced by what you have to say to us. We are here to hear from you and at the end of the day we have the responsibility for fashioning and shaping what you have to say to us. Thank you very much and I am interested in hearing what you all have to say to us.”

5.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Elderly Male Participant (African decent)

Good evening, a question that persists for years is the participation of citizens in the governing process. I think that since we are reviewing the whole question of local government, I want to suggest that the local government council convene quarterly meetings and invite to those meetings the citizens that they represent. And to those meetings also invite the parliamentary representatives. In that way we would be passing on power and authority on a continuing web to the development of the citizens.

One of the things that Mr. Khan did not address really is what kind of relationship we would have between the parliamentary representatives and the local government authority. That is a critical thing and I would suggest that at these meetings with the citizens that we have the full council there but we also invite the parliamentary representatives to sit in on meetings.

I want to suggest that the Mayor's office and when I say the Mayor's office I am talking about Mayor and Chairman, they are full time employed and as such must be given the same kind of political arrangements and the same type of remuneration and so on, that the Member of Parliament has.

As a matter of fact the status of the Mayor's office must equal a Member of Parliament, respective protocol, remuneration and other conditions of employment. You must develop the culture that the Mayor or the Chairman will be the big man in town, if you fail to do that, things will not work as well.

Deputy Mayor's, Vice Chairmen, Councillors and Alderman must receive the same monthly common sense remuneration package, which will at least enable them to acquire a car. Further I would advise that there should be no difference, all Mayors, Chairmen, Deputy Mayors, Vice Chairmen, Councillors and Aldermen must be entitled to same terms and conditions of employment associated with the respective offices. In other words there should be no difference between the terms and conditions of employment of the Mayor of Port of Spain and the Chairman of the Debe/Penal Regional Corporation, it must be one thing across the board.

There should be a budget day, the idea of a budget day, the council must organize a budget day, when estimates for the council's next financial year would be publically debated

utilizing the state media. The question of the usage of state media in my opinion would form a very important part in promoting getting this whole thing off the ground on a continuing basis. I suggest that when we have those meetings of the citizens, getting involved in town meetings, statutory town meetings as such, that the state media be there, whether live or relayed and delayed.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

Once the roles and responsibilities are defined the remuneration packages would be commensurate to your responsibility level. So that will be dealt with at a very clinical level. The point of Members of Parliament and what will be the role of the Members of Parliament. Ladies and gentlemen I was a Member of Parliament once; the role of a Member of Parliament's primary responsibility is a legislator. He has to go to the Parliament to make laws for Trinidad and Tobago; his prime responsibility is not to fix your drain, to fix your pot holes and to get a job for your child.

However, it is because there was no local government infrastructure that responsibly was attached to him by the fault. So if this local government situation evolves in the way we want it to evolve, the local government councillor will have that responsibility for local infrastructure and local amenities and the Member of Parliament will assume is prime responsibility as a legislator. That happens in Tobago as we speak, because there is nothing for the Tobago Members of Parliament to do, as Mr. London and the THA (Tobago House of Assembly) are handling all of that. So the Tobago Members of Parliament are largely legislators and or Cabinet Ministers and if the Local Government Reform process gets the traction that is supposed to get, I envisage the same thing to happen.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**

I agree completely with Minister Khan, I think the point is you need to understand when we talk of devolution, it is empowering those who are charged with local government responsibility to get done in the communities what needs to get done, that literally affects the lives, the daily lives of those in the community. So as Minister Khan used the examples of clearing the drains and ensuring that pot holes are fixed, those are really the responsibilities of the local government councillors.

What we also envisage is that the Councillors, the Aldermen and the Mayors et cetera it will be full time jobs not part time jobs. So of course the remuneration will be commensurate. It will be similar to systems that exist for example in the United Kingdom and in Canada where you have the local government, literally running the constituencies, the local government constituencies and the Members of Parliament as Minister Khan said, agreeing

to parliament to make laws but also to represent what they need to be represented at that level; the parliamentary level of their constituencies. But it is really empowering the local councillors and the people, the men and women on the ground to get their jobs done. So do not panic about the remuneration side it will be commensurate now with full time positions.

With respect to the other point about town hall meetings and inviting the Members of Parliament that is a necessity. In fact I think you will start to see that happening now even before there is local government legislation. I know some of my fellow parliamentarians we have already planned that in our constituencies where we are going to have town hall meetings. I am kicking mine off in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West in January, where I will invite the councillors and I will be there participating and have town hall meetings where the citizenry can come and voice their concerns and we work together to find solutions.

With respect to the budgetary side yes there will be a transparent process. We would expect similar to the THA (Tobago House of Assembly) that budgets are presented publically by the local government councils to the citizenry and we will work towards (we have the Minister of Communications here) having proper television coverage of these events because we do agree that introduces a higher and a greater level of transparency, as we see taking place with parliamentary proceedings being broadcast live now.

But yes because of the added responsibilities that you would be given and that you are now in charge of your budgets, obviously a higher level of transparency and accountability will be demanded of you as to how you are spending money, how money is being allocated and at the end of the day, every municipality and council must come forward to the citizenry and report.

❖ **Steve Rabhatali – San Fernando West (Mature mixed gentleman)**

I listened to you all very, very carefully for the last probably 3 quarts of an hour and one of the things that I am very much concerned about is; with devolution you must have education. You cannot devolve power without educating the people and I did not hear that emphasised in all that was said tonight. And when I speak about education I am speaking about going to the village and what you need to do is to organize the village into communities, to identify the needs of those communities. At the same time you have to educate the villagers as to what Local Government Reform is all about. Because what is going to happen is that even though we have a lofty and lovely vision if it is not reaching the people, just like the primary health care in health. You have to empower the people at the base, down up right and they have to be really, really 'okayra' with the vision, they must share the vision, they must be emotionally moved to say well this is a very important thing.

Right and then from there well we can organize all the structures and all the various things and get it moving.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

Your point is well taken; the education would be a continuous process. A good example is that I was advised initially that I should have 4 consultations, divide Trinidad in four and we said no we are going with 14 consultations because there are 14 regional corporations. So as we go down and as we drill deeper down, post some form of reform will continue the education process at the level of the village because what you want is community engagement and this whole model caters for that.

❖ **Tracey Caesar - Marabella East/Point-a-Pierre/Cocoyea/Tarouba (African gentleman, fifties)**

You get the picture already, my problem or the thing that I think that you all should be addressing most. I live in Marabella East/Cocoyea Tarouba/Pointe-a-Pierre in the city of San Fernando. The picture that I am creating here is that the part of Marabella, the district in Marabella I live is local government Cocoyea Tarouba that is part of Gopaul Lands. It is in the city of San Fernando but I vote general elections for Pointe-a-Pierre seat and when I have a local government problem and I happen to see or get my local government representative to hear me and he does not deliver I go to my Member of Parliament Pointe-a-Pierre, who wears a yellow shirt and he tells me 'well boy what you will do boy, you cannot get a meeting with the mayor because them PNM boys'. That is what people face because of boundaries that do not make us encased where our local government and our central government representative is within the same area.

So when you live Marabella, let us take Marabella market, it serves Marabella East, West, North, South and Pointe-a-Pierre, but when you have a problem you do not know who to go to. I am saying that the local government should ensure that people who live in a district of the regional corporation is also represented by a Member of Parliament who governs that area.

I will give you a classic example. I have been running the Marabella football league for over 30 years, I need the ground fixed, the city says 'well boy you know the boys in yellow not passing any money, they pressuring Sando PNM'. That goes well for all the sports men that live in Marabella. Now that the PNM is in, you know we have another problem, hold on sometime.

What I am saying here, is that the people of Marabella are suffering for more than 8 years for a recreation facility that 3 government administrations cannot deliver. We cannot go to

the local government because they say that they are not getting funding, because that ground project comes under the Ministry of Sport and the Sports Company. So there is also a need to devolve the Sports Companies and put the Sports Company and decentralize that responsibility to the local government with more funding (*crowd applauded*).

I should not have to hear that Marabella ground cannot be fixed because Sando city does not have money and that it is a Sports Company project and I have to go Henry Street to complain and the Minister of Sport does not know where Marabella is much less the ground.

The other thing is crime. I have been doing my part with other people to keep crime down but the Marabella football league because we do not have a facility, moved from 34 teams to 6 teams because we do not have a facility. And I am saying, crime could be, I heard the Prime Minister saying in the budget or Minister Imbert that they want to do something about crime you got to promote sport, to solve this crime problem.

Local government is about delivering service to the people, people want service and I am saying that the Local Government Consultation and the whole project with Mr. Young should involve people, service is supply chain business, get some supply chain people in that whole project.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

The gentleman that just spoke, he raised for me 2 very important points that I want to address. Point number 1:

The situation of the overlap of the local government and central government it is not feasible to set about to establish boundaries that will co-exist completely local government and central government. This brings to a head and it should and must bring to a head hopefully the understanding that they are 2 separate functions. The boundaries for local government are for the authority for which local government will be held responsible and you elect people to serve at local government. The people who are elected to serve in the parliament is a different job. You elect people to go to parliament.

One of the problems we have and we are having is that the average person in this country makes no distinction between the local government representatives and the Members of Parliament. In fact they will hold the Members of Parliament for the jobs of the local government. In fact some people will come to a Member of Parliament's office with a matter which lies wholly within the corporation and will sit there for 4 hours waiting to see the Member of Parliament to make a report about something that is really the responsibility of the local government representative and that local government representative is in the office right there but the person will not talk to them, because they want to talk to the Member of Parliament on a matter which is not in the parliamentarian's jurisdiction.

Hopefully when we make the changes that we are going to make, it will become clearer as I said earlier on, who is responsible for what and this question of the boundaries will fade away. The way parliamentary seats are determined it is not feasible that those boundaries will mesh with local government boundaries.

The problem that you outlined with the ground in Marabella, if the area lies geographically outside of a boundary then it will fall under the jurisdiction of the boundary of which it falls. So even though you would like the Marabella issue to be dealt with inside of San Fernando, if the Marabella community as you described is not within the boundary of the city of San Fernando, then you should not be looking to the city corporation. On the other hand, if it does you look to the corporation for the management of those grounds and not the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre and you hit the nail on the head when you said that you have a football ground in Marabella, football ground in Marabella and you have to wait for somebody in Abercromby Street to come and look after it. You have made the case, you have made the case for some serious review for the Sports Company responsibilities and you have made the case for local responsibility in Marabella or in the city of San Fernando. I rest my case. (*crowd applauded*)

❖ **Govia Gopie – Pleasantville (30 something year old African gentleman)**

My problem is the IBIS programme, which you guys implemented not too long ago for local contractors, the Incubator programme basically. I went to NEDCO to find out more about it, when I realized that you guys do not have anybody to facilitate anybody in San Fernando region for that. It is a programme that everybody is talking about business and local contractors and this and that, it is one of the government's incubator programmes that should be widely spread to everybody. It is a very good thing you all are doing here and I would just like to know what you guys will be doing within the ministry for these problems.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

The IBIS programme is a NEDCO programme which is really to help build young entrepreneurs small businesses. What has been lacking in the system is the synchronisation of all these programmes so certain ministries and certain organizations and institutions have programmes to help people but it is not NEDCO. If NEDCO has an assistance programme for small business, if NEDCO is not integrated with local government, with the Ministry of Works or other state agencies it just falls flat.

So what we are trying to do is synchronize all these programmes so that at the end of the day it brings the benefit that is required.

❖ **Wayne Demming – (50 something year old African gentleman)**

My name is Wayne Demming and my parliamentary elections I vote in San Fernando West and for local government elections I vote in Penal/Debe Regional corporation and I know for a fact the Member of Parliament the Honourable Faris Al-Rawi Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago is my member of parliament and council Hall is my councillor for Penal/Debe regional corporation. I am going to be very brief because there is a long line outside, a traffic jam.

The Honourable Franklin Khan in your dissertation you quoted Vermont and the people in Vermont whether or not what they want they seem to subscribe to. Now in Trinidad and Tobago where we have, as they say politics is everything, it is like salt - it is in everything and we know for a fact that in Trinidad and Tobago that is one of the factors that shape our political landscape is the patronage or the clientele-patron relationship.

Looking at it right now as you say with all those sort of autonomy and independence that we intend to give communities to what extent do you think that that action or that proposal or that plan will lead to Garrison communities in Trinidad and Tobago, in Trinidad in fact?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

What I said is that this whole devolution of power will be 'A' political so in other words it matters not to us at the level of the transformation whether as I said, the city of San Fernando is PNM controlled, the corporation of Penal/Debe is UNC controlled. If we are giving devolution of power to the mayor of San Fernando, for heaven's sake we have to give that same level of devolution of power to the chairman of the Penal/Debe regional corporation. We in central government will not apply a big stick centralized policy over the various corporations because of their political affiliation, because we would be destroying the same principles that we are articulating now.

Okay so the Penal/Debe if they are UNC controlled they will have the same authority to plan their own business, you may not like it, but that will be the power that will be entrusted in them, just as the power would be entrusted in the mayor of San Fernando.

❖ **Shursha Ali – Former Local Government Representative, the last borough councillor in this council and the first city councillor (Aged gentleman East Indian gentleman)**

So we got started 27 years ago to move powers to the local government, this council and you know there is a saying in Trinidad whatever San Fernando does first the rest of the country follows. I want to welcome the Prime Minister and Members of Cabinet and our

own representative member for San Fernando West who is a San Fernando boy, also Mr. Franklin Khan who is from the south originally.

The reason that I am here for I do not have to write them down you know if you were married and you do not have communication, is separation and after separation is divorce. So the most important thing in the new revolution is communication and I want to congratulate Mr. Khan for telling people that you know Members of Parliament are policy makers, which the country does not seem to understand and local government are people who have to look after cleaning the drains, fixing the lights, making sure that the pot holes are fixed and not to think that they are small tin gods.

Throughout this country we have too many local government representatives who do not know what they are supposed to do. Hence the reason we have the kind of problems we are having. As we talk about moving along, right here where we stand the former CEO of this corporation found money to build this hall and to build the administrative complex second to none in the country. The rest of the country, the rest of the local government bodies could come to San Fernando and start learning and I am very happy to hear, the Mayor told me that there are certain members of council, most of them who are able to do things, by him giving them the authority, which is the start of decentralization.

We must understand that development comes with a price, people do not like changes but we must ensure that we communicate within the districts that we live and to have consultations for anything to be done within the city and when that is done you will not have people grumbling. Get people involved; invite them to a forum once a month with the councils throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Ensure that the councillors know what their duties are.

I sit at home and I see the mayor of Port of Spain saying the burgesses, when you are a city you are a citizen you are not a burgess. Also in San Fernando you are a citizen in the city of San Fernando, in the regional corporation you might be burgesses and minor little things that can assist in a long way.

People do not appreciate and you have to understand that nothing happens without the community and we must get together, try and work for the benefit of our nation and for the younger ones because we have some brilliant young people, like the minister said, who are walking around with Masters Degrees in their pocket, not being able to get a job. But you know if we do not give them the chance to be trained somewhere, because whenever they go for an interview, they are asked what is or how long have you been on the job and they have had no experience.

So I want to congratulate the Prime Minister on this initiative and I want to employ upon all the people here, no matter where you are from to ensure that we get this thing going and to ensure that we insist in whatever way possible would make it a success.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

Thank you very much and I must say that I have learned something today also, because I use the word burgesses very loosely so I stand guided by your wisdom.

❖ **Johnny Chow – (Chinese gentleman in forties)**

Honourable Prime Minister and other Honourable Ministers, my name is Johnny Chow I am here on behalf of China Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce we have come to make a statement. We humbly suggest that with the Local Government Reform it has happened in China as a developing country as well, and we have shown very success in its way how we run the city and the different province.

I think this initiative it would create a success in Trinidad in terms of running in this 14 constituencies or cities or the local government. What we also want to suggest that perhaps we look at more public and private partnership in approaching of these cities with the mayor and all these agencies to approach. Which means that in China Chamber of Commerce we lend our best ability to see what sort of local and foreign assistance in terms of many sectors like agriculture?

Another important factor would be to diversify away from the energy sources. Basically I have not come to ask any questions but we have come to make suggestions. Hopefully these suggestions would be responded to someday.

❖ **John Kisson – citizen of San Fernando (30 something year old gentleman mixed)**

My Member of Parliament is the Honourable Faris Al-Rawi. My question for the panel this evening in accordance to what was said in the parliament during the Budget Debate, with regards to the formation of an independent body consisting of statisticians, policy researchers and marketing, will a similar body be instituted for all local government bodies and what might be the time line for the roll out of this?

Also I would like to know what level can we expect from the Member of Parliament and local government and what will be the consequences of not maintaining a mutual relationship? What existing body will provide oversight to ensure that the relationship is maintained?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

Basically we cannot purport an administrative structure if we have not firstly defined what new roles and responsibilities will be given to local government. We have some embryonic thoughts, but as we build what I call the schedule 5 for Trinidad and Tobago, as we see what responsibilities we will be assigning to local government, then we can contemplate what type of implementation structure that we need.

But what I would say as I said in my presentation we expect a lot of new skills to be harnessed in that situation and where we would be looking at employing young new graduates from the universities, with new skill sets, to suit the modern business environment of Trinidad and Tobago.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

Let me just add something to that. Whatever we come up with, it will have institutional arrangements. You have to put institutions in place to be able to have the functions that you want. So what it will be called, what it will look like, it is a little early.

However you asked what is going to be the relationship between the Member of Parliament and the local government, well any member of parliament who wishes to have a successful term and a possible other term, will know that you have to work hand in glove with local government in your area, if you are to be seen to be worthy of representing the district in the parliament. And that is the advice that I would give to any member of parliament in any area in the country, that you cannot stand away from local government and expect to be successful it is the other way around.

So as I mentioned institutions take for example unemployment. The government has a series of programmes geared towards treating this question of employment creation or unemployment and its ravages and a lot of public resources are directed into to these programmes. But I can tell you I have been around for decades, you never really know who you are dealing with. But I went on a trip once to Jersey in Europe, the Channel Islands small island, population is like Tobago and I asked a question which stayed with me, what is your unemployment level on the island. Expecting that somebody would tell me x percent, 5 percent, 3 percent. And when I asked that question in a gathering almost like this, one of the politicians who was at the head table, says 'we have 167 unemployed people', they knew them by name, by location and I presume by skills or absence of skills. That puts that agency in a position to properly target any response to them. If they have skills then you know what kind of skills you can absorb. If they have no skills you know maybe there is a need for a skills training programme and if they are male or female you would know that they have different types of consideration, if they are young or old you have considerations. So you are actually having your hand on the wheel and I was so impressed with that and I always wanted to see that kind of thing in Trinidad and Tobago because one of the good things about being small, is that it allows you to operate on that level. So we will expect

that in these corporations, in these cities, in these boroughs, that you as part of your institutional arrangement would operate a labour exchange, a labour bureau and unemployed persons could go and get registered and you would know what skills they have and you would know who they are. When you put money into a programme you do not end up with millionaires getting contracts, understand.

Those who need the help will get it and the same thing with the social services. You give the corporation; you give the city corporation the responsibility for dispensing social services. The social service workers working for the corporation, they must know who are the children who are orphans, they must know who the elderly people are unattended, they must know which programmes that are geared to helping those people and those people and those people alone should be accessing those programmes. So you should not have politicians with food cards in their pocket to give out from their car trunks, understand.

❖ **John Kisson** - May I just add Dr. Rowley, prior to the election campaign I ran a survey in San Fernando West and the reason why the crowd here is so large, from the survey with a minus or plus 8 percent spread, we have a 90 percent population San Fernando West, that is willing to participate in changes for local government. (*crowd applauded*)

❖ **Albert Marshall - (Late 40 year old gentleman mixed)**

Minister Khan during your presentation you spoke about Vermont and the citizens of the state being able to prevent Walmart and McDonald's from setting up business in Vermont right. What I wanted to know and I will give you some examples, for instance the Teaching hospital was supposed to be where all the Ministries were supposed to be. For instance you would have the birth paper office which is right now on Leoteaud Street; the passport office is on Potter Street. So you see what I am saying. So they are scattered all over San Fernando and they were supposed to be centralized into 1 place.

For instance McDonald's and Massy stores were built on a green area that we used to play cricket and stuff there. NAPA South which I love do not get me wrong is built on an area where we used to do BMX riding there. So the number of green areas in San Fernando has been significantly reduced. So what I want to know is how will citizens of San Fernando be empowered to prevent certain changes being made?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

That is a very critical question from the discourse that we are having. Now Chancery Lane is a different issue, the Chancery Lane was built as an administrative complex for San Fernando, there was a change of government, there was a different policy position, that is a

government's right and we are now back in office, and obviously one of the dying needs of San Fernando is a similar Chancery Lane complex to hold the administrative functions of the city and central government. (*crowd applauded*)

Regarding SAPA and where McDonald's and Massy stores are by Bamboo Junction, obviously if your corporation was empowered, in terms of the regional planning process that could have never have happened. That was a Town and Country Planning decision that probably did not take any cognisance to the views of the people of San Fernando. This is what we are trying to correct now.

❖ **Albert Marshall** - Because right now in San Fernando as compared to Port of Spain there is only 1 major green area which is Skinner Park.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

And I understand that, I was appalled when Massy stores and McDonald's were build there, because that was a playground, okay, granted a playground in the heart of a booming commercial district. So there are pros and cons of it, but the point we are making is that you would be decentralizing the developmental and the approval process coming out of Town and Country Planning and then the burgesses or the citizens of San Fernando, through their corporation, will now be empowered to determine what type of development they would need in their space.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**

We will deal with it legislatively. There is a process that now exists under the Municipal Corporation Act, but it is somewhat disjointed, because while the Municipal Corporation has to grant certain approvals, it waits on and relies upon the first process starting from Town and Country. So what we would be looking to do in the various corporations is to grant them more autonomy over the approval process and we will build into that approval process obviously a consultation process.

So when someone puts in an application there must be a period for publication, where the public would be made aware and as the Prime Minister said the responsibility is now on all of the citizens or the burgesses, to be paying attention because when that is published, you would now have a period of time within which to come forward and lodge objections et cetera.

And maybe, because we are at the embryonic stage, build into that, that there will be a quarterly process for a town hall meeting that takes place in some of the other jurisdictions around the world, where people can come forward and you know on this specific day you

are going to be dealing with 10 applications and burgesses or citizens can come forward, say what they have to say about the process and then at the same time a decision will be made. But it will come down to legislation, we are going to decentralize it away from Town and Country Planning and give more autonomy to the various corporations.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

Let me just go down a little deeper. The question you are really asked which I thought I heard was how will it work? You see what is going to happen is that representation would become more frontal. The people at the council who direct the process of accepting or rejecting, they will be representing you, they are representatives. You would have seeded to them an authority to act on your behalf to represent you, but when you come in person to take responsibility for your business you will then be saying to them, I do not agree or I agree, they now will have to take that into account.

When the position is taken to agree to do it, you must know and you will know who would have voted for it and when it is time to deal with the person who voted for it, the voting record and the behaviour of the person representing you that is where your power lies. So your representatives would be cognisant of this representation and not being your master and not being the owner of your business.

So when you come to the town hall like you have come tonight and you say this is something that I object to or we are seeing so and so, or we are seeing an application for so and so and they respond to you, they would have to take into account how you feel about it. But of course we agree to be governed by the position of the majority. So even if you object to it and the majority wants it, well you know. But on the other hand, we also agree to take cognisance of the views of the minority, because sometimes the minority has to point out to the majority that we are going the wrong way, but it is done in the open. And it is that doing of it in the open that will lift us from where we are to where we want to go.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Development**

While we are devolving power it is not our intention to create 14 independent republics in Trinidad and Tobago because there is still something called national development, that is the responsibility of the central government and we will always have a national developmental agenda at that level. So both worlds have to live in unison

❖ **Madan Singh - (Elderly gentleman Indian)**

Well I disagree with the gentleman that went before me. Where I live in San Fernando the western end, Hilo is most convenient to me; I do not have to come San Fernando with the traffic.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

So right away we see that one man's poison is another man's drink. So this is where the community should not end up fighting and cutting one another's throat, but civilly we determine how it benefits, who it benefits and we are calling for civil conduct.

❖ **Madan Singh** - After listening to Minister Khan I heard we have been speaking about patterning the reform process similar to Tobago. Tobago has 1 hospital, Tobago deals with its own passports. In San Fernando the people from Debe/Penal, the people from Princess Town they come to San Fernando for passports, see about their license. Would they be given their own licencing office? Would they be given their own hospital? What happens? How would you share the costing of the hospital and so on? Because I am living in San Fernando and if I go to the hospital I have to wait half day and a fella from Penal/Debe come and get in and we are the ones who... now I maybe have it wrong, but these are things that I think we should consider and think about.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

And that is where the national developmental perspective will have to exist. We are not here holding out to you that we are going to have 14 hospitals, 1 in every area, but the national government would look at the distribution of hospitals in the country and determine whether this hospital in San Fernando with its catchment area from somewhere in the south west to the south east, whether in fact it is providing the services and whether in fact there is need for another hospital maybe in Penal, maybe in Debe or somewhere and that is to be looked at, at a national perspective.

Understand as great as San Fernando is, your lens is that big, there is another group looking at it from the national perspective and in many instances what might serve the local need may not serve the national need. Let me give you an example, I went to Tobago once, the same Tobago that I was holding out to you as some template. I went to Tobago once and I discovered that there was move in Tobago to have some international business import garbage in Tobago to generate fuel and raw materials and I said not in my country and I am living Diego Martin. I am not supporting anybody bringing any barge load of garbage to Tobago for any kind of business and I was prepared to fight it from Diego Martin.

So there are times when what somebody might see as a local perspective and good for us here but from the national stand point. One calamity we had there was aluminium smelter.

The people of La Brea voted for it but the national community was mobilized against it and it did not happen, for better or for worse.

So we are here talking about how our interests would be defended and how we will pattern ourselves to get the best of both worlds, national and local.

❖ **Madan Singh** - Because there is chaos at the licensing office and the immigration office in San Fernando. So I think that there is need for maybe more than 1 within this area.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley**

And there might be a case for that.

❖ **Peter Cudjoe – San Fernando East (Mature gentleman of African descent)**

I live in San Fernando East and I listened to your manifesto on the hostiles for political office and the local government idea was put out then. I looked at it basically from what I heard on the platform and what was being proposed.

I have two questions. One, for the last five years Trinidad & Tobago has seen a great wealth in the country and we don't know where that went. What checks and balances would be put in place under this new idea of local government being disseminated among the citizens to make sure that we get value for money?

Two, is there an idea in that whole local government package that we can solicit the view and energies of the young, bright citizens in the different municipalities that we can look at things from a different perspective in the case of health, national security, education, all those ministries that we spend billions of dollars in every year that we need to look at that from a different perspective, whereby we can have different ideas on the table that we can treat with and use as a catalyst for development for the whole of Trinidad. The idea might come out at one local government forum or institution, but then we can tap into that one idea and spread it throughout the country. What are we going to put in place so that we can really harness the energies of these communities and the checks and balances that would make sure that we do not squander the wealth?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

As I said before, the consultation would not end at the end of this year we will continue to drill deeper down into the communities and engage young people in these villages in these communities so that is an ongoing exercise. This is not just an exercise to draft legislation. This consultation will become part of the PNM's journey in government. With regards to accountability, we hope to have a unit in the Ministry of Finance that will monitor the

finances and expenditure and the accounting system that is in place. The regional corporation will still be under the general's review and the auditor general's audit. We also plan to open in the Parliament what we call an accounting office which will monitor on an online basis the expenditure coming from central government and from local government. At the end of the day, there will be tighter fiscal control under this new system and what the Ministry of Local Government currently provides because the Ministry of Local Government does not provide fiscal control. It provides administrative and project control and that is where there can still be leakages in the system. The new accounting system through the Ministry of Finance, the auditor general and through the accounting office of Parliament, I think we will have tighter fiscal control and get better value for money and stop the wasting and everything that took place over the last five years.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**

This point about bringing the young people out; I'd like to throw out there that there is a responsibility on the young people to come and engage. It is not the government's responsibility to engage them. We can't go into people's homes and bring them out. We are advertising it. This is the start of the process. We are going to the fourteen different municipalities. Encourage the young people and everyone to come out. Encourage them to come out and make their contributions.

❖ **David Mowlobatch – Vistabella (Elderly Indian Gentleman)**

At present, Trinidad and Tobago has the second highest carbon footprint per capita. We have Pointe-a-Pierre refinery in the North, Marabella just immediate to that, with serious traffic congestion. We have been lobbying a group with myself, we have been lobbying for quite some time now to have the Southern side of the Union Bar Facility developed as an eco-park to redress the difficulty of quality of life issues that the Prime Minister has been raising. We think that that is an easy project, we see no reason why that would take such a long time to do. There are lots of retired people in the area, there are a lot of kids, people can assemble, participate, it is consistent with the policy directive and the environment to bring people closer to and interact with nature. We really think that this is an immediate project that can be actualized in weeks and we really look forward to the government acting on this issue.

➤ **Response from the Prime Minister the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley**

With regards to an eco-park and how we see this working, already I am seeing the connections. I can say tonight that at the national level, the Ministry of Agriculture is taking

steps to create at least two large nurseries to prepare the planting material so that corporations like yourself can have the planting material to do what you say should be done because if I say tonight, 'Go and plant,' they will ask, 'go and plant what?' so we are as part of the programme of preparing to have local government discharge this kind of responsibility, we start with the nurseries and putting in place the planting material and that is underway.

❖ **James Bacchus – San Fernando West (elderly African gentleman)**

I am emboldened by the attorney general. We are speaking of the code of conduct. The sign for the community centre that I live near to, has been thrown down multiple times. This corporation has been a corrupt corporation for the longest while.

➤ **Response from Prime Minister the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley**

Sir, there is a time and place for everything. We are talking tonight about the form and restructure of the local government. How do we change what exists as local government now and what would you like to see it become?

❖ **Ms. Crystal Ramoutar – San Fernando/Mon Repos (Young female, Indian descent)**

I just want to say the topics you want to discuss is really crime, housing, schools, the economy, HDC housing, Carnival, what would cause a snap election, Brian Lara stadium, banning Crime Watch, we would like to round up the youths, pension, and why is it taking so long to clean up the video places that have crime, blue movies and child porn and we have to run a survey on crime hotspots and drop in oil and gas prices is in trouble. (*This participant was asked to submit her issues via the email address provided*)

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

For the record, this is not a consultation about everything. It is a consultation on local government reform.

❖ **Stephen Brathwaite – Oropuche East (elderly African gentleman)**

I live at Union Hall and I am in the constituency of Oropuche East which is the corporation which is Penal Regional Corporation and they are UNC. So the problem with me is that Union Hall, since the last local government election, we have not seen the councillor or

anything. If we designate the corporation to see about the people in the area, that means that the councillor is the first step to see about. In our area we have no representation because the councillor doesn't even come to Union Hall because they say it is a PNM area. My suggestion is that in areas like those, I would like to see that the government. What I am trying to get at is to get representation in our area it is kind of difficult seeing the state of the situation so when they designate the power of the local government to the regional corporation then we as the constituents would have to go and state our problems but if we are not getting the representation then we will not be able to do that. We have a next problem, when we from Union Hall go to Penal Regional Corporation for anything in our area, they say that they are not responsible for our area and say that we are under San Fernando. What they saying is that the HDC has not handed over responsibility to them as yet.

➤ **Response from the Prime Minister the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley**

If that councillor comes to your district, how you receive him? Would you respect him? If yes then therefore it shouldn't matter after election day, if the councillor is PNM or UNC, it is the councillor for your district and that is the problem cannot be solved by identifying the councillor's political affiliation and determine that that circumscribes what will happen to you. That is what we are trying to put an end to. Let me tell you how it is not going to change. If you are in the Penal/Debe Corporation wherever the boundary is drawn, this reform we are giving you here does not give you the right to say you would come to San Fernando for service because you do not like who is in charge of Penal you know. You live in the Penal/Debe Corporation and what you do down there is you will go to the Penal meeting like how you come here and talk to the councillor there because that is your corporation. You see, I get the impression that you do not think that is your corporation. Accept it as your corporation and go and respectfully speak to them about servicing your area. These are the changes that are going to come. Don't take that personal and political. The HDC is where you should be looking. Unless you can hold people accountable, then we will develop all kinds of nuances and suspicions and eventually become our own worst enemies in describing our own lives.

❖ **Orville Wolsey – San Fernando (mixed middle aged gentleman)**

The local government issue still in education. I am talking about health issues. We have Mon Repos, Vistabella, different health centres like Roy Joseph. If you live in Mon Repos, you can't get proper health care. When we come to the local area, how do we handle it with the RHAs and that teaching hospital? How do we deal with that as a local government issue? The people in Mon Repos at Roy Joseph Health Centre said we couldn't visit him. In the

same district, Marabella is a different thing. How are we going to deal with all of these divisions in the health care in this one area in San Fernando?

➤ **Response from the Prime Minister the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley**

The Ministry of Health will still be responsible for dispensing health. Health care delivery to all citizens will still remain the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. How it is discharged in context of the existence of other structures beneath the ministry entails details that I cannot answer you tonight but there will be a Ministry of Health, there will be health centres, there will be hospitals, and there will be a requirement for the local corporation to determine whether or not you are getting proper health care. These are themselves the new structures that are put in place but the responsibilities will still be defined as Ministry of Health but what they do for you through your corporation is what we are aiming to streamline here.

❖ **Arlene Nisus – Registered Nurse at San Fernando General Hospital (middle aged African woman)**

I just want to suggest that we have a project where we teach families how to do CPR, first aid and to recognize stroke you know these kinds of incidents so that when they come to nurses, there is a greater opportunity for survival and that when they come to the accident and ER they would not have to wait as long for an ambulance. Give them the power.

❖ **Jennifer Marishow – San Fernando West (Woman of African descent in her forties)**

I have one question which is what will be the role and function of the administration after the local government reform? I ask this due to past experience that most of the time, you find that the administration is more political than the councillors, that is why we never used to get anything done really because of political affiliation they will not do certain things to make you look good in your area. Secondly, my suggestion is that while Dr. Rowley spoke about MPs having a relationship with the councillors, I agree with that Mr. Prime Minister. I would like to state that maybe sometimes in legislative meetings, councillors can have proper dialogue and should be in direct contact with MPs or ministers so that councillors could be the ones on the ground who have a first hand at everything that happens in their community so probably we could look at councillors having direct contact with the ministers so that they can ask for certain privileges to assist one of their constituents in that way things can speed up rather than people having to go to the hospital and having problems staying long you know you could call your Minister of Health and consider who live in your area.

➤ **Response from the Prime Minister the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley**

As we embark upon this exercise, we have to be careful that to do these great things, that we don't give life to the creation of the camel that is designed by the committee to make a horse. We have to be careful that we don't create something that does not have the opportunity to at least give us a good chance to realize our objectives. If we begin to cross pollinate too much we will certainly end up there. What we want to do is to give local government that stature, recognition, the resources, responsibility and the opportunity to demonstrate that people in local government can take part and discharge public administration to benefit the public. We don't want here to be talking about merging MPs and local government because at the end of the day, whether it is local or central government, good government administration through public servants is what will make it work. You can't bypass the public service so whatever we design coming up here we don't know yet. What we do know is that what exists now will be enhanced. We are working on it but when we do decide what we are going to do, it is predicated on the proper public service arrangement and the comment that the lady made about the public servants who are more political than the politicians, that ought not to be tolerated and in the new structure, in the light of transparency and openness is what is going to deal with that and that is why I said earlier on that you the citizens of San Fernando will have to see to and be involved in what goes on in your area. You can't have public servants being political and more political than the politicians because then you have problems. People have responsibilities. Public servants are public servants and they are protected by law but they have responsibilities. Politicians have certain arms within which they operate and defy them for who they are and keep them separate and apart. We have a habit in Trinidad and Tobago of wanting the best of all worlds and not getting it. A good reason in many instances is that we do not like to subject ourselves to rules and regulations. Whether it is the traffic or building laws, as a nation we have culturally developed as a lawless society. These aspirations are not going to succeed unless the laws and regulations are made to apply and applied firmly and we need to see to this enforcement and I tell you this.

Let me give you an example, I was Minister of Planning and Development and a neighbour was complaining about another neighbour who had built a house right up to the boundary line, the roof of one house had reached the boundary line of another property against all regulations, but this person had done it and the complaining family came to Town & Country and made a formal complaint and the Town & Country department had demanded that the offending property be dealt with so that people would get relief, and they refused to comply. The matter was taken to the court because the person who built the building felt that they were being harassed. The argument in the court was, 'well, all other people violate Town & Country acts so why are you attacking me?' The question is, when and

where do you start to enforce the regulations? If I am not mistaken, I think that they won the case. I tell you this so that you can understand the challenges that we are going to face. You know if those two people, especially the one that built the house, landed in Florida, they would know exactly how to behave, and exactly what laws would be applied. In fact, they wouldn't do it at all. So as we move towards creating an environment for improvement of the quality of life, we have also to look at this whole question of an agreement to comply with the rules and regulations and to have the appropriate enforcement, especially at local government. Local government enforcement is too relaxed. People do what they want and even when you have legislation to protect others from the behaviour of some people, there is no enforcement and it may have to do with the court system where you go to court and of course your grandson may see the end of the case or it may cost you an arm and a leg. We need to make those things simpler so that where complaints are, they can be dealt with appropriately and quickly and that will be better for all of us. These are the challenges we have to face as we go forward but I'm still excited about the prospect.

❖ **Alana Rodney – (Woman of African descent in her thirties)**

I am one of fifty persons who received a scholarship from the Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with COSTAATT. Now, it was a two year programme and we ended in August, we graduated in November. To date, we have not received word as to how exactly we would be incorporated in the different regional and city corporations and my question goes out to you Minister Franklin Khan. In what way does local government reform impact on us and can you shed some light as to when would we be employed as public health inspectors?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

What we are saying is that the Ministry of Local Government will be retired which means that it will be morphed into a Ministry of Rural Development which will be mandated to take charge of the rural development infrastructure and planning in Trinidad and Tobago. All the responsibilities, rather a significant part of the responsibilities are now carried out by the Ministry of Local Government will be devolved to the regional corporation so when that process is completed, you all will be fitted. There will be so much more vacancies for employment in those fourteen restructured regional corporations. It is the only area of growth as I speak that I see in the governmental process in the next two years and significant growth at that. You will be well taken care of as specific as to where you will be assigned, obviously I cannot say at this time.

❖ **Leslie Lynch – (middle aged African gentleman)**

I am in full support of the local government reform. I have been involved in the local government and from 1976, I have documents of Cuthbert Joseph, when Mr. Cuthbert Joseph, the Honourable Cuthbert Joseph was Minister in the Ministry at that time. Coming right up, I have been involved in the processes of local government at that time. I am asking, I know that you can and did a presentation, the thing about it is that it had so much of information that we were not in a position to absorb all of that information at one time, so I am asking, when can we or would we be able to get maybe a flash drive or something or that presentation? Secondly, regarding the boundaries and the legal aspects. I am of the opinion that we need to look at the boundaries and we also need to look at the legislation as it pertained to the boundaries and even the implementation of the whole programme.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

Minister Young will deal with some of the aspects of the boundary changes but we have a website for this local government process and everything that is being said by me in particular will be posted there for your viewing. With the boundaries, that is a very sensitive matter. A lot of work has been done on boundary reconfiguration. We are in the consultation process that will guide us at the end of the day as to whether we will keep it as fourteen or change it to twelve or change it to ten or to sixteen and that will be so drafted. However, I want to make the point that since the municipal corporation act was passed in 1990, it disbanded the county council system. The Ministry of Education as we speak still has St. Patrick division and Victoria division and St. George. Even the Ministry of Works has St. George East in Arima and St. George West in San Juan. They still have Caroni and others. The whole country doesn't move in unison and in sync when we make these legislation changes so that is where the cross-wiring of the system takes place. We speak about municipal corporations but in law, the county council no longer exists. Yet, there are agencies of government such as: the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Education in particular that still have their administrative structure that we lined around the whole country council system. So, there are issues we will have to face, but my main concern in the transformation process is that we want to have coherent entities that will be in charge of governance. For example, we have to deal with a matrix of population density with regards to geographic peace. The two largest corporations in Trinidad geographically are Sangre Grande and Mayaro/Rio Claro. They are the most sparsely populated. If you use population density in the government, I would say to move Sangre Grande and Mayaro which are almost one third of the island space of Trinidad so obviously that is impossible. Arima is four square miles. Even with regards to the allocation of the boundaries, how can

you give Arima, with four square miles of largely urban scale, the same allocation for roads and bridges as Sangre Grande Regional Corporation? Which comes from Matelot to Valencia and deep into the Coconuts of Mayaro. These are some of the issues that we face because there will be a cry for equity because everybody will come saying that they want equal treatment and we have to support whatever that means. We are aware some of the challenges that we will face in this reform process and we are cognisant to it and we will build the matrix that will be transparent to the national population as to upon what basis we will take our decisions.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.**

This goes out to the wider population and all those following, every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, anybody who has anything to say about this process, you can write to us or contact us by other means, we will take it all into consideration that is the meaning of these consultations. Ultimately, we will have to make policy decisions, take and implement these decisions. If there are legislative amendments that you would like to suggest, please feel free to get it to us.

❖ **Junior Rigello – (aged Indian gentleman)**

In terms of the Tobago model that has applied to San Fernando, how do we address the demographics and geographical issues in San Fernando? Would it be a “one cut fit all” policy like in 1991? Or would it be from municipal corporation to corporation? The second point is that we are no longer the energy city nor the industrial capital. We have to look for new areas for new development and growth. I would like to suggest that we look at some institutions like the Brian Lara Stadium, South NAPA, and Skinner’s Park as examples for development. To do that, we would need to be assisted now and push on better to that point. Skinner’s Park has tremendous potential. As a matter of fact, back in 2004, a study was done and a design was drafted to refurbish the city corporation which generated revenue. Before you go to step two, I think that step one should allow us to grow and be to the betterment of the infrastructure issues. My last point has to do with Carnival. As you may know by now, people have been gravitating to San Fernando Savannah as it has tremendous potential. Port-of-Spain is bursting at its seams. We are the next best place to enjoy Carnival in Trinidad. Will we be at the mercy of anises’ with the allocation? Will we be given sufficient funding for Carnival? I understand that right now we are owing and cannot afford to pay stakeholders for Carnival for the year 2015. I’ll suggest that when we get to that stage that places like South NAPA and those institutions would be controlled by the corporation as opposed to the ministry.

❖ **Fabrice Ellis – Marabella (gentleman of African descent in his forties)**

With regards to alternative sources of energy, is that being considered as part of our back up plan for our economy in terms of employment and in terms of additional income? Also, can and will the corporations or the local government be incorporated into such planning? Another question I have is in terms of the employment or reengaging that our country is facing currently and significantly growing, would schools and colleges be consulted in terms of supplying the demand that is needed right now for qualified and experienced personnel?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

With regards to your first question about renewable policies, one of the problems that we face as a carbon energy state is that we have an abundance of gas and that abundance transposes itself into cheap electricity and gasoline for power and that puts us in a bind where, based on that price structure for traditional energy sources, we are sort of handicapped on pursuing alternative energy, because alternative energy comes at a cost. For example, conversion to CNG is slow. The reason for this is because CNG would never convert to CNG once Diesel remains at \$1.50 per litre. What we are saying now is that we are committed to 10% renewable energy by 2017 and that is a step in the right direction. Trinidad now has to take a conscious effort to move to sustainable energy sources.

The second point was on consulting schools and with regards to jobs. Obviously, as we speak, we are looking at the GATE programme in its entirety. What GATE has done is just turn out graduate after graduate. People just go and study anything regardless of if there is a job market for it. There is a proliferation of tertiary education institutions that have degraded because of that. It is about what the economy wants and what the state wants so obviously we will have to rationalize that and the Minister of Education is currently working on it.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**

It is now government policy to add to it and we intend to incorporate the renewable energy so corporations will have that to make as their own decisions moving forward.

❖ **Kathyann Rivierre – Gran Couva (middle-aged African woman)**

We have taken our regional corporation to lengths with respect to the infrastructure in our area which is sorely lacking. From 2012 we have approached the councillor in the area, the

Member of Parliament, and even the local government minister of the previous administration and have basically received no redress. I am wondering what citizens would be able to do to address situations where we are not getting any sort of feedback from the regional corporation. Especially now that they are going to leave out the powers. Secondly, you sort of addressed the fact that with respect to the regional corporations in the equity of subdividing the resources, in our regional corporation, which is geographically large, the number of persons may not be that amount but we do have a lot of problems especially with land slips and roads. Therefore, that could be a consideration. Lastly, I have been to a number of local government consultations and what you find is that many a time there is a lot of documentation. As a matter of fact, in 2010, there was documentation done on local government reform and it is available. To me, I hope it is not that you are reinventing the wheel and use some of that documentation because it is very good and looked at a lot of detail with respect to each regional corporation.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

We have to tap deep into the base for the previous reports at which the committee is doing extensively. In Gran Couva there is another part of this ministry after the Ministry of Local Government closes. It is our intention to build the Ministry of Rural Development into one of the more prominent ministries in Trinidad and Tobago because there is an infrastructural deficit for the rural communities which we plan to address in a significant way.

❖ **Nicholai Edwards – (young African gentleman in early twenties)**

My contribution is with regards to the youth. I do believe that in Trinidad and Tobago, we do not treat young people in the best of ways in this country. We had a perception of young people that they are heavily involved in criminal activity and that they are more or less good for nothing. I do believe that at the local government level we have the opportunity to put people in positions where they can be the change agents that are required in this country.

What I would like to contribute here is in terms of another opportunity that young people can play in terms of local government, more or less on par with what is already being presented. We have more or less a need for young people to receive employment. In terms of actually running for councillors and actually being a part of the staffing. Also, I want us to consider internships that are not necessarily requiring for you to leave university with a degree but for people having internships in the local government sector because persons are studying governance and other mechanisms. We need to as well do more research at the local government level. We cannot wait just for a citizen to conduct surveys. We need to be able at the local government level to go into communities, find out what are their needs,

transcribe it and make it readily available. The website for the Ministry of Local Government isn't as user friendly as is necessary. Young people need to understand what local government is and how we can benefit from it. Also how they can aid in it but not necessarily wait for someone to do something but for them to be able to rise up to the occasion.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs**

In the last local government election there was a vast majority of elected councillors who are young people so for local government reform that has already been implemented. We have a massive amount of youth participating, you are seeing it as well in the general election concept so I don't think it is fair to say that the youth aren't being properly represented. That was a policy decision by Dr. Rowley that has been implemented at the local government level.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

If you look at my video presentation, I said that most of the new staffing at the level of the regional corporation will come from young skilled sets and new degrees that are being put forward now by UTT and UWI.

❖ **Phyllis Brooks – San Fernando West (aged African lady)**

Concerning area, the environment is always clean. They are always tidying it and I want to say thank you to the workers. Mr. Khan, you said that one of the responsibilities will be maintenance of schools. Would that maintenance include security? Will you have enough revenue to do all that you want to do in local government and if you do not have enough, what will you do in order to get more revenue? Secondly, the mayor said all of us working for one another and I feel that with this local government, if somebody is put in different areas to look at some of the things that need addressing, like simple leaks and holes and light poles, especially right now on a street near to me, there is a light pole that seems as though it will fall. Simple things like those. Let them make sure that when things like these are observed, that they would report it. There are a lot of leaks all over the place. When I observe a leak, I will call and tell them the pole number. If you put somebody responsible, some of these things can be addressed.

❖ **Salim Mool – San Fernando (middle aged Indian gentleman)**

I heard the mayor say that he had specially invited people from the scout house and he did not invite the fishing company. If this government has intentions of doing any development with San Fernando, they will need the organizations like Mr. Khan had said that we had our organization and I think that we should be invited just like all other organizations. We had attempted to develop the King's Court within the past twenty years by four different governments and it experienced failure due to the same system. I would like whether you want to develop or not, I want to remind you of this organization.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

The mayor had not invited you all but I know that he had tried to engage everyone as best as he could.

❖ **Barbara Springer – San Fernando (member of the disabled community – elderly lady)**

I live in Cocoyea village and have been trying for the last ten years or more to get Cocoyea village cleaned up. I live in a rat infested area of my neighbour's water basin. It is my house and it is now cracking and I cannot get any kind of relief and I am asking the question, why do citizens of this country who have worked hard, I have helped develop Arima and now in front of my house is infested old iron dump and I can't even get my house in Arima sold and now I have to come in and the drain in the back of my house is infested with rats and the water cannot run, I have been going to the town hall for over eight years.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Franklin Khan of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government**

That is a specific issue and I would like to know who the councillor is for that area is and if they are here today. I want you to take a personal interest in the lady's contribution and even suggest that tomorrow take aside some time and see if you can bring some relief to her please.

❖ **Eugene Bass – San Fernando East (elderly African Gentleman)**

Since the names have been changed from community centres to regional complex, it is very complex to get to one place officially designed for the small regional businesses and because the youths are unable to use it and because a lot of youths are unable to get there to do anything, it has augmented a spiralling of criminal activity in some of the areas. Secondly, the Prime Minister mentioned about policing in the municipalities. We need to have something in our community other than having to go to Port-of-Spain to the PCA and

one suggestion I would like to ask Mr. Young, whenever people are reproaching into the protective services, we see the advertisement where they are asking for anonymous information which will be too often we see people climb the ladder and be skipping over all their indiscretions and I am saying whenever a staff report is to be made out for promotion, they should also have basic laws for people to give the information so that these people will not be able to climb over what they are doing that is some of the results that the gentlemen was speaking about. The young people who we bash are a reflection of our behaviour.

❖ **Anthony Elias – San Fernando (middle aged Syrian gentleman)**

My concern is the response of the people who are here tonight. I am not convinced that you should be able to accomplish this all in just fourteen meetings in fourteen different areas because one of the things that I think is most important is to come back and educate. Whether it is yourself or through other parties, so people can understand what the changes are going to be after everything is said and done so I'd like to suggest that you look at that and if time permits, you may have to come back again into San Fernando and other areas. I was a little concerned when Minister Khan pointed out about the city would be responsible for the Health Centres. We have the RHAs and the Ministry of Health and other things in this city. There are those of us in San Fernando who have mixed feelings about the teaching hospital and you know, I would like to throw a suggestion that that teaching hospital should be named after a San Fernandian who has really achieved like Dr. Teo Pee King. I think we need to recognize somebody like that in this country and not wait until the man dies. I just want to reiterate that we need you to come back again in some form or fashion.

6.0 CLOSING

To conclude the proceedings of the local government consultation at the City Hall in San Fernando, Minister Khan thanked the Prime Minister for his presence and stated that this incarnation of local government reform came straight from the top from the office of the Prime Minister and stated that Dr. Rowley is heavily involved in it. He expressed that San Fernando has set the stage and standard for this reform. He thanked all the Ministers who constituted the panel and all members of the audience who were present and provided their feedback.



SAN FERNANDO CONSULTATION

7.0 ANALYSIS

7.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 500 participants in attendance. Participants were generally receptive to the presentations of the Prime Minister and the Ministers and they were very eager to give their input to local government reform as was evident by the queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 300 (60%) male participants and 200 (40%) female participants. The majority (80%) of participants represented the age range 30 – 70 years. There was less than 8% representation of participants under the age of 30 and approximately 60 (12%) participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (90%) appeared to be middle class income earners with a few from low income and some high income class. There was 70% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 30% being a majority of Indo-Trinidadian and some mixed-race participants. There were a few participants representing the Chinese and Syrian community.

7.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 27 respondents from the plenary. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	15	40 – 70 (14), under 40 (1)
Indian	6	40 – 70 (5), under 40 (1)
Chinese	1	40 - 50
Mixed	4	40 - 50
Syrian	1	40 - 50

7.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

The following topics were raised during the course of the consultation.

Topic	Frequency
Local government council should involve citizens more often	2
Status of the Mayor's office must equal a Member of Parliament	1
Education on Reform	2
Boundaries	3
Crime	3
Synchronizing IBIS programme with Ministries	1
Politics affecting autonomy	3
Educate Councillors on their roles and responsibilities	2
Public/private partnerships in reform process	1
Independent body for Local Government	1
Empowerment of citizens in decision making and development	2
Decentralization of services	4
Financial accountability in Local Government	1
Youth Involvement	3
Pollution and development of eco-parks	1
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, parks etc	3
San Fernando used as a Carnival alternative	1
Alternative energy sources	1
Use previous documentation on Reform	1
Need for follow up consultations	1