

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

Pt. Fortin

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Point Fortin East Secondary School Hall



Rapporteurs' Full Report

Submitted by
FKJackie Consultancy
Tel: 719-5094

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1.0 OPENING

The Consultation began with the playing of the National Anthem; followed by an opening prayer by Minister Kim Daly. The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Wesley Gibbings, then proceeded by welcoming all present to the Point Fortin East Secondary School for the eleventh of the islandwide series of consultations on Local Government Reform and thanked the audience for attending. He went on to make all aware that the consultation will be broadcasted live on Radio 91.1 Talk City as well as on the internet.

Mr. Giddens then introduced the key personnel for the consultation amongst who were: the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Ms. Desdra Bascombe Chairman Technical Committee, and Mr. Anthony Roberts Deputy Chairman Technical Committee. This was followed by the welcome remarks which were delivered by Mayor Clyde Paul of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation who welcomed everyone on behalf of the Ministry to the 11th Local Government Reform Consultation in the Point Fortin East Secondary School at Point Fortin.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Ms. Desdra Bascombe – Permanent Secretary/Chairman Technical Committee, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Mr. Anthony Roberts - Deputy Chairman Technical Committee

2.0 MAYOR'S WELCOME REMARKS Mayor Clyde Paul



Thank you Mr. Gibbings Moderator, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister National Security and Member of Parliament Major General Retired Honourable Edmund Dillon, Chairman of the Regional Cooperation and Chairman of TALGA, Vice Chairman of the Transformation Committee, Permanent Secretary Ms Bascombe, my very good friend and perhaps the leading local government Practitioner in this country, may I have a loud applause. Members of Point Fortin

Borough Council, CO of the Point Fortin Cooperation, Members of the Ministry of Local Government, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen and of course the Media,

It is a pleasure to welcome the honourable minister here to Point Fortin, Minister of local government that is because we always have our Minister of national security with us. I thought that he should be here just around this time because on Friday we will be launching out now internationally famous Borough Day celebrations and I'm sure he's going to bring us good wishes and perhaps if he can help it some funding to go along with it, that would be nice.

But our people look forward to this discussion because I think they have a lot to add to what has been going on in the Borough of Point Fortin, 36 years ago just around this time when we became a borough. What you see happening in the borough of Point Fortin is a vision that the founding fathers put together. We have been following that ever since. For 36 years there has been a consistency in policy, the decisions and in operations. And that is simply because we have come from that one vein way back in 1956. The endeavour of the Father of the nation way back in 1974 to bring Trinidad and Tobago oil companies under one head that brought forth the Borough of Point Fortin and we've never looked back. The Founding Fathers of the Borough of Point Fortin Chin Kit, Achong among others, they had this consistency of purpose. I have had the opportunity to advise five mayors in this Borough of Point Fortin. I know the architecture quite well and I have been entrusted by our present Prime Minister to look after that architecture and make sure the foundation is laid for the future. We have in fact encountered in the last five years some indiscipline in the way local government is conducted there is no foresight and in fact we have encountered a lot of hindrances coming from the very top and I am sure that by the end of this consultation the honourable minister of local government will point out to you the direction in which we should go. We have followed that Honourable Minister, I took note of that political leader way back in 2007 since he became political leader and in fact we think that most of our ideas were incorporated in the 2013 local manifesto. And

indeed what is now local government policy we have contributed significantly to that and I am very grateful that Point Fortin has been upfront and we expect to benefit from this rejuvenated government that came into power September the 7th 2015. We deserve that. We took care of this country for so many years. We'll know more about that in a book that is going to be published soon and it's going to be distributed sometime next week and it's done by Mr. Ellis Lewis and it talks about from 1947 to present. It tells the story of the presence of Shell up to the time of Atlantic. And I hope all of you look forward to sharing that. There is too much to say about what we have been doing in Point Fortin. We are leading the way and it is not by accident our motto this year is "Transforming to sustainability pointing the Way". We've been doing that ever since we became a borough but today it's more poignant as we continue the drive for the kind of autonomy that we require to take us where we want to go, the kind of autonomy that our leaders in the past Chin Kit and Blake saw. The vision that Mayor Blake, and Ms Williams and Mr. Hagley, Goule and Melville and Hackshaw had. We were once part of the St. Patrick country council. There were two counties then Blake and Hackshaw.

You want to clean a pit privy you have to leave Point Fortin, go to Siparia and then sometimes coming back from Siparia go to Fyzabad Get to Oropouche Junction get a car to come to Point Fortin. So they decided that the centre of decision making would be in Point Fortin. So we wouldn't have to travel even to Port of Spain Mr. Minister, for the number of things that we have to do here. So we are hoping that everything that is required or almost everything within reason will be deposited right here in Point Fortin and if people could see the benefit of all. I want to thank you in advance for putting the Immigration Office and other decentralized central government offices in Point Fortin, we want to thank you for that. But then we want to have the kind of autonomy that is promised to any city that wants to grow.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

I want to welcome you all to this 11th Consultation Local Government reform in Trinidad here at the Point Fortin East Secondary School. I want to thank in particular Mia Clyde Paul for hosting these consultations. I want to warmly welcome even though he should be welcoming me, The Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, Major General Retired Edmund Dillon. I also want to say that Point Fortin is almost like home to me, I worked most of my career in Santa Flora in the exploration and production department at which time we were in charge of all of Point Fortin as it relates to exploration and production. I was one of the major geologists. I see Mr. Eanus Thomas here, he developed the McKenzie field. I spent some time in Trinmack also for a short while. So Point Fortin is home territory to a large extent. The Mayor spoke about the rich energy history of Point Fortin, which is well documented. I'm not sure if he's right by saying Point Fortin mind the rest of the country but they did go a long way in so doing. Since the 1980s most of the mining came from Mayaro off the East coast but having said that ladies and gentlemen, Point Fortin has a tremendously rich history in terms of energy, culture, football and they are what I call the proudest Borough in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I start I just want to show a video clip.

Ladies and Gentlemen the video you have just seen illustrates a system and the dynamics of which are not unfamiliar to a lot of you. Whether it is a river that needs clearing, a blown streetlight, a crack in the road, a pothole, an empty lot that needs clearing, whether it's a blown street light, whether it is school repairs, whether it's a bus shed that is dilapidated, and the list goes on. Under the current system of governance we have in Trinidad, when a community needs to get something done it has; takes place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries that run through the Centralized heart of Government and that is basically the government's structure that has crippled service delivery in Trinidad and Tobago since independence till now. At its most fundamental level that is the issue and that is the problem.

And it is because that Prime Minister Rowley recognizes that, and I don't want to sound too political tonight but if you'd trace your mind back to the election campaign, the then political leader and now Prime Minister spoke about two major areas that this administration would embark on. One was local government reform and the second was the creation of a brand new ministry called the Ministry of Rural Development. And all thought Point Fortin is a borough it sits in the rural district of St. Patrick so the Ministry of Rural Development will have significant impact on you not only as the Borough but in particular Minister Dillon because the Point Fortin constituency is not the Borough of Point Fortin. The Point Fortin constituency is a more expansive area. So while I will speak on local government reform I just want to spend three or four minutes on rural development.

Cause ladies and gentlemen, to tell you the extent of the policy shift of the Peoples National movement under Dr. Minister Rowley. UNC had 33 ministers and we dropped it to

23 and yet the Prime Minister saw it fit to have a Ministry dedicated entirely to rural development. And it is fundamental because over the years everybody used to say that PNM is an East-West Corridor party. And all the development in the country took place in Port of Spain and its environs and along the east-west corridor. The jury is out on that because they still developed Chaguanas and Couva and what have you but at its most fundamental level politically this creation of the Ministry of Rural Development exemplifies a major paradigm shift in the thinking of this political party. I want to go publicly on record of congratulating this Prime Minister for the vision that has now to bring more spatial balance to the development of Trinidad and Tobago with a Ministry entirely dedicated to rural development.

But today is not about rural development, today is about local government reform. The issue of local government reform has its genesis in what has happened in terms of local government from independence to now. From independence we had what we call the county council system. For those of you who don't know your history, the counties were made by Woodford who Woodford square is named after. He divided Trinidad into Counties and Wards, The County of St. Patrick, the Ward of Point Fortin, the Ward of Siparia and what have you. The local government reform took a quantum leap when the NAR introduced the Municipal Corporation

act where 14 new Corporations were created and the whole system of Counties was disbanded. But here is a point to show how change is so hard to take place in society. The County Council system does not exist in law anymore, there is nothing called County St. Patrick. But you know the Ministry of Education still have a St. Patrick office, The Ministry of Works still have St. Patrick, Victoria East and Victoria West. To show that we have a society of inertia and change doesn't flow very well. Having said that, the fundamental weakness of the local government system of the municipalities was that while the boundaries changed and regional corporations were formed, the schedule of responsibility didn't change. So under the old County Council system you're in charge of cemetery, minor roads, recreation grounds, some aspect of health, minor courses. It was the same responsibilities you were in charge of with the regional cooperation. So you had no more empowerment than in the old county council system, it was just a name change. So what we are trying to do this time around ladies and gentlemen is for the first time, not decentralizing local government but devolving power and authority and autonomy.

And the genesis of that came with the Tobago House of Assembly. Because let's face it, when you go to Tobago there is something about Tobago that tells you that it is run better than Trinidad. Let's be honest, the roads are better kept, the green spaces are better maintained, the service delivery, the schools, the health services give or take a few incidences. The whole service delivery function, the local tourism, every aspect of Tobago's governance is superior to Trinidad. When a Tobagonian goes to a THA office, they get service. They don't get a run around. Okay so what we plan to do is to incorporate the Tobago House of Assembly model, and I will deal with that in some more detail shortly, into the Trinidad Governance structure because service delivery is what is most important in terms of the governance structure. Ladies and Gentlemen over the past, local government has not functioned well, they lack resources, they lack capacity and they have not been able to provide the level of service to their burgesses as the burgesses expect. Part of it is their fault but a significant part of it is outside their control. I will outline three areas that we think suffered major impediments with local government reform.

Political interference and I make no apology for it. When the PNM is in power, the UNC controlled corporations feel they are victimized and vice versa when the UNC is in power, the PNM controlled corporations feel starved of funds okay. I haven't done empirical research to say whether that is true or not true but that is the perception.

Inadequate funding it is always inadequate funding that cripples and cramps the style. There is so much to do, you know how to do it, you have the infrastructure to do it but you don't have the funds to do it. And let me deal with the funding because people ask me with this new local government reform process where will the funds come from? Let me make the point very clear ladies and gentlemen, this country has enough money to run an efficient country if you have

efficient systems. I draw your attention to the last Patrick Manning budget, the 2009/2010 budget was 45 billion dollars. Over the last administration from 2010 to 2015 that was ramped up to 60 – 63 billion dollars a year in expenditure. Did you get any more service delivery from 45 to 63? That additional fifteen million dollars slipped through the cracks. And it is my thesis, and I make no apologies for it, that a country of 1.3 million people could easily live on 50 billion dollars once the money is well spent, once the money is well delivered to the services that it needs to be.

The inadequacy of supporting legislature is an area which I will deal with in a little while because nothing happens in a democracy without legislations. You cannot do what the law does not allow you to do. Okay so if you change the legislation and make it more facilitating then things can happen.

And last but not least, a sluggish administrative structure within the corporation and I will deal with that a little later on too because the structure of the corporation is no different to the structure of the county council because the same administration structure exists, the same public service structure exists, it's the same CEO, the same PRO, and all these skills, a lot of these skills are no longer relevant to service delivery. Most of the corporations don't have engineers, they don't have asset managers, they don't have planners, they don't have card experts to deal with approving plans and some of these things. So we have to incorporate a brand new administrative structure to give you the human resource capacity to deliver the services. So local government has been burdened by bureaucracy, lack of funding and really and truly it is time that that has to stop. This administration makes the commitment that we are going to transform local government. And to prove that, when this process is completed, these consultations and the legislation is changed and when we rule out the administrative structure and the reform which will take about three years, we will retire. I don't want to say abandon or disband, we will retire the Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry of Local Government will be no more because the Ministry of Local Government, let me say it clearly, it's not Local Government is Central Government, Local Government resides at the level of the Corporations. And the reason why Local Government Reform never took place.

When I went into the Ministry it had a pile of reports high of so of Local Government Reform. Mrs. Manning is the minister that did the most work on Local Government Reform as you can all remember. And Suruj Rambachan in 2013 he had a green paper, wax paper, what have you, everything there. But ladies and gentlemen, at its most fundamental level, the transformation never took place. And I want to propose a theory for that, people do not willingly give up power. Nobody puts a system in place to take away power and authority from themselves. The only person ever did that in the world was a guy called Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. And that is why the devolution of authority and power could never take place unless it has the direct buy-in of the leader. So when I speak here, I speak on behalf of the Prime Minister because this process is being driven by him and it is he who is saying that we have to devolve

the power to the regional corporations. And ladies and gentlemen we can assure you that this time, this developmental process is going to happen.

So what I promise you and propose to you is a fully operationalized and local government system. I think that it is imperative in terms of people centre development and I think it will really accomplish a national vision that is next to none in Trinidad and Tobago. Let me go down to the specifics now, for those of you who study the PNM manifesto. The PNM Manifesto did, in fact, articulate a vision for local government where we said we will remove the red tape and local bureaucracy that prevents the local government bodies from being efficient.

To evolutionize and to bring a system in line with recurrent recommendations and these recommendations were put in place by a series of teams in the past is the reports that I've told you about and this time around we are having this last rounds of consultation before we actually start to implement the process. As you all know also the PNM manifesto is now official government policy so everything that was in the Manifesto now has a quote of arms on it and it is official government policy.

I will now go through the six or seven key items in which I will say where we want to go and obviously that will form the basis for the consultations later on where you'll be required to take the floor, ask questions, make suggestions, criticisms and what have you.

First and foremost we are saying, secure funding. You cannot be at the mercy of central government all the time. So it is our intention to change the financial regulations, the Checker and Audit Act to allow Municipal corporations and Boroughs to collect and maintain land and property taxes. It makes sense because all over the world, Municipal taxes are collected by Municipal corporations.

The State of New York collects its taxes, The State of Atlanta collects its taxes - why shouldn't the Borough of Point Fortin collect and maintain its taxes. And apart from giving you a cash flow, one of the problems if you listen to the Minister of Finance is the lack of compliance in the payment of taxes. So here you have a centralized authority collecting taxes, so you have a revenue officer who living in Port of Spain and he's in charge of collecting taxes in Point Fortin. The tax means nothing to him. If you have your Point Fortin Borough Corporation collecting taxes, knowing that they can keep that money and spend it back into Point Fortin, the onus will be on them to collect it because you are collecting it for yourself to be spent in your community. So the level of compliance will obviously increase. So now when March comes and the penalty starts, you will send your team out there saying that you have to pay the taxes because interest is accruing and we know you and we will publish your name in the papers and after a while your asset could be seized by the state. So there will be a greater level of incentive for people to collect these Taxes and retain them.

The next area that we will want to address is **Executive Authority**. For those of you who work in the corporations, you always know this thing about the administration and the council. As we

speak, the Councillors have absolutely no Executive Authority. You can only act as a unit called a council. You can identify projects that want to be done but you are not in charge of doing. You are not in charge of tenders, the selection process. You are not in charge of anything. You are just in charge as a council to say that I represent this electoral district and this is what we need. You approve projects based on the budget and beyond that you have very little authority and that is why your pay is so small. Because the salaries new commission states that a councillor is a part time job but that was in the 1960s. It is not so anymore because their burgesses demand more of you. So here you are in a dilemma. They give you an office, they make it worse because everyone is coming to see you in your office and they want things, and they demand things of you and you cannot tell the people I am not in charge of that. First to begin it is a cop out and secondly they will believe you're lying because they expect you to deliver the services to them. So that has to be sorted out, it has to be fixed. Our proposal is that, subject to consultation, that councillors have to be full time and councillors will have some kind of executive authority similar to the Tobago House of Assembly. The Tobago House of Assembly has secretaries so you have a Secretary for Infrastructure, A Secretary for Housing, a Secretary for Health what have you, we'll have a secretary Portfolio. And I don't know whether we will call it secretaries because we're still consulting on that but they will have executive authority similar to what the Tobago House of Assembly has. It will be full time and you'll have executive authority and that is the only way that you will now become accountable for the expenditure and to your burgesses.

Another point we will be proposing, again subject to consultation, but it is part of the reform process. I hope I don't offend Mayor Paul, but we don't want any Alderman Mayor anymore. You'll have to vote for your Mayor because the office is so important that you cannot go into a local government election and not know who your Mayor will be because you don't know who the Aldermen will be. And if you don't know who the Aldermen will be, you vote for your six councillors and then they just give you a Mayor, that can't be right. And I speak now as Chairman of the PNM. It cannot be right. You have to know, you have to elect a Mayor. We may even contemplate in the legislation because if you're voting for six councillors then the six councillors with the Party Directive may choose who the Mayor is. So you have six councillors, you win the six seats which I hope you will win again this year and the six councillors now will wait on the party directive as to who the mayor will be. But suppose the people of Point Fortin don't like whom the Party has chosen, that is a very distinct possibility. So we could say, I'm not saying that we are going to say but it is a possibility, you have to say upfront who the Mayor is. It should have a separate election for the Mayor. But these are just ideas that we are playing with but on the face of it, the Mayor very likely will not come from the Aldermen. Because it's like telling the Chief Secretary of Tobago, it's not an elected person and that is madness in terms of a democracy. Because the national constitution states that a senator cannot be the prime minister because if we adopt this same system then a Senator could have been the Prime

Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The constitution clearly states that the Prime Minister must be elected and commands the majority in the house. So, if we speak about empowerment, devolution of power, we must talk about deepening the democracy. And you cannot get away from it because that is what representative politics is all about.

The Third Point is **Accountability**. We're giving you executive authority, we're giving you the authority to collect and maintain your taxes, and promising within reason that you'll be adequately funded. Ladies and gentlemen with all those authority and power, you have to be accountable. It is not your money you are going to spend. And people over the last five years, in particular, have been loose with the public's money. You cannot run a system where public officers and elected officers are loose with state funds. They have to be accountable to somebody or some entity. And stand to face the consequences if they misappropriate the funds. So it is our intention that the corporations will report directly to the Minister of Finance for its financial allocation just as the THA does. And how you spend the money, you will be accountable to the Auditor General. So when the Auditor General audits you, and he says Hey guys you see that I don't know where that half a million went. And when they do the paper trail, you have to account for it. The only shortcoming in that is the Auditor General is post facto auditing, so he audits your books after the year has been completed. But foolishness could happen during the year so we're looking at a sort of online auditing unit either based in the Ministry of Finance or based somewhere else who can have an online auditing function during the fiscal year so that if complaints come into that unit they can go in and audit the regional corporation. Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the reasons why as a country we could spend 63 billion and not receive even 50 billion worth of work is because there is leakage, haemorrhaging and very likely there is corruption. So it is something that you have to guard against. It is something that you have to know, that when you hold public office you hold it in the trust of people. You don't hold public office for the aggrandizement of yourself and for your ego. You hold public office in trust for the burgesses. That is what public office, that's how democracy evolved, other than that its totalitarian government, other than that it's a feudal system, other than that is monarchy. Democracy is about holding power in trust on behalf of the citizens.

Another area, which probably the most fundamental shift, is we're adding **new responsibilities** to local government. As I speak, you are in charge of cemeteries, recreation grounds, minor roads, minor water courses, some aspects of public health and some aspects of building approval, beyond that you aren't in charge of anything. How many other services the people of Point Fortin need? So here are some of the things we'll do, school maintenance, as we speak one company in Trinidad and Tobago is in charge of 600 and something primary schools, and over 200 secondary schools it's called the Educational Facilities Company Limited. Wouldn't it be better if the Point Fortin Borough could be in charge of the two secondary schools and the ten or twelve primary schools that are within your area? Because if you are responsible for the maintenance you will make sure the school is repaired in time for when the school is reopened

in September because it's your children going to the school. You have a vested responsibility in the school system and the contracts will be managed from your area. Ladies and Gentlemen, it will obviously be more efficient because you are seeking your own interests you are seeking your community's interest.

The other aspect we plan to hand over to local government and this is very fundamental, is **social welfare services**. Ladies and Gentlemen, who better knows the old lady who getting the run-around to get a pension than your Councillor? Who better knows the families who are at risk whether it is extreme poverty, child abuse, domestic violence, incest? All these things exist in your community. Who better knows the family that needs psychiatric and social services help? It has to be you, it cannot be a welfare officer who's from San Fernando. The poverty, let me just share some information, as we speak, there is a report in the Cabinet. For the last decade, two successive administrations, Patrick Manning Administration and Kamla Persad Bissessar administration, every administration spent between 2 billion and 2.5 billion dollars per year in social services. Because everybody knows that you must have a social safety net for the vulnerable. Ten by 2.5 that's 25 billion dollars has been spent in the last decade. And do you know, our poverty figures are no different to 2005? What that means, is that as a country, after spending 25 billion dollars, Trinidad and Tobago has the same amount of poor people as we did in 2005. Where did the 25 billion dollars go? It goes in an inefficient system, where the money doesn't reach the people who it is targeting. So at the level of the budget, when you have the budget debate, the Ministry of Social Development could boast and say that they've put so much money but at the end of the day it isn't reaching you because it is in a complex system that does not have accountability, doesn't have a database that is reliable to deliver the service to you. Plus it is corrupt also because there are certain favoured families who double dipping, triple dipping, and quadruple dipping because they know the system. I know that there are families who get housing grants from HDC and when they receive it, HDC database doesn't talk to Self – Help permission database because they in Silos so it is not a shared platform. The smart ones get their 50 thousand in HDC and then go to Self-Help crying, and they also get Self-Help. Then, there are various grants in Social Service, food card, disability, poor relief now called social welfare, so many things but the smart families who are well connected they benefiting from all and the person who really deserves it doesn't have access to it. What we think is that if we stop that inefficiency and we bring the facilities and the money nearer to the people we think it will operate more fundamentally because I don't think anyone in Point knows who the Social Welfare officer in charge of Point is. But if you know that it is your councillor, and in your electoral district you know that there are four ladies who haven't yet received their pension, you could go to your councillor and say what about Ms. Mabel. Why hasn't she gotten her pension? The system becomes more accountable. Ladies and Gentlemen, it will be more efficient. Agriculture, local tourism all these aspects of service could be yours because if Point Fortin has something that it wants to develop as a tourist attraction, it can't

wait on the Ministry of Tourism to do that you know? Because all that the Ministry of Tourism, hope the press not here but they're here, studying is Maracas Bay. Because Maracas Bay is the highlight of Trinidad tourism but there may be local tourism potential that resides in Point Fortin and its environs or in Cedros or in Icacos or wherever and you should be able to develop these things on your own accord. Employment exchange, in the Borough of Point Fortin, you should be able to have a database for unemployed people by name, age, skill sets, CVs, waiting to match it up to available job opportunities that will be on the horizon. That is a fundamental part of local government all over the world in terms of employment exchange. We also want to introduce a system probably more administratively than legislatively, of local contractors getting local jobs. Because, if you have a box drain to drill in Point, and the contract was awarded to a contractor from Chaguanas, just for example I don't mean this in any way, and you see a van coming down with workers from Chaguanas and a Chaguanas contractor coming to do a simple box drain in Point Fortin? While legally there is nothing wrong with that because the contractor is a Trinidadian but something about it doesn't feel right to me. Because that contract could better be administered in the ambits of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation by a Point Fortin contractor with Point Fortin workers who would be spending their money in Point Fortin shops and drinking in Point Fortin bars when the Friday comes. There will be what they call the multiplier effect here in the local economy. So these are some of the areas where the drain of your resources, so sometimes money is spent in your community and you do not get the multiplier effect off of it. Sometimes money is spent in your community and you do not get the multiplier effect of it because you get the physical box drain but there is much in a two million physical box drain contract than the box drain itself. The box drain itself is only half of the deliverable but the multiplier effect of the two million dollars spending in your community with local resources and local labour and local multiplier effect; with your shops and your groceries and your businesses, that is where the value is. This is really empowerment of the local community.

Development Control: in that area we would be looking at, we would be evolving the authority of the Town and Country Planning Division is a new Act called Planning and Facilitation of the Development Act which we plan to implement. Where the Borough will now be in charge of approving plans for simple structures within the Corporation. If Atlantic has to put down a train five obviously the Borough can't deal with that; that has to go to Town and Country for big approvals. If you want to build a home why should you have to go to Town and Country? When all these things can be handled by the Corporation.

Infrastructure Works: we would be looking at how we plan infrastructure works in a big way.

Disaster Management: is one area of Local Government I think is working quite well, you all are now first respondents in the disaster management scenario, that has been working extremely well. Last week Friday we were in Tobago where we had a tour of THEMA facilities. I hope we can get there one day because THEMA which is the Tobago Emergency Management Agency is

an extremely well-run organization. THEMA showed us software that they have that they track everything online. THEMA's database let's say Charlotteville, for example, they have a database that sees all the houses in Charlotteville. If a category one hurricane should strike a red colour flashes on the houses that would be destroyed by a category one hurricane. So if they are two hundred houses, thirty-five of them will be destroyed by a category one hurricane, red lights come on. So if a category one hurricane is on the horizon you know these are the thirty-five houses that are vulnerable, you know who lives in those houses so you know they have to be evacuated. You will not evacuate the whole town, you only evacuate for a category one hurricane those thirty-five homes that are at risk. That is the level of the database that we want, they have who would need wheelchair access and it pops up on the screen. The system is there the software is there you just have to have an administration who can work it and the commitment to do it because ladies and gentlemen disaster management is nothing to laugh about. It is one of the most growing fields in the world, not natural disaster; you know what you all have there? It's a time bomb called Atlantic LNG, I mean their safety record is impeccable but at any moment in time Point Fortin is vulnerable to a man-made disaster. A gas line could burst, an oil line could burst, and a fire can take place in a tank farm. There can be a major oil spill offshore and it has happened in La Brea and Guapo in particular but Point Fortin is very vulnerable not so much to natural disasters but to man-made disasters. It is an area that will fall under the armpit of the Regional Corporation.

Lastly, **Involvement of Civil Society:** Ladies and gentlemen this whole exercise is geared towards deepened the democracy and let us never forget that. People complain and rightfully so say that the only time they have a say is on Election Day. For Election Day whether is every three years or every five years they vote for who they want to vote for and after that they have absolutely no say in the decision-making process. There is some merit to that statement and it is partially true because the system does not allow for your participation besides when you stain your finger. So what we are proposing we may include it in the legislation and before the Council; now listen to this carefully, before the Council can make certain decisions we may define the decisions in a schedule or whatever. That they have to come back to Town Hall meetings like these and consult their burgesses. That will be a major improvement in the democratic process. At the end of the day, the people have to feel like they are part of the decision-making process outside of the one in every three years. It happens in the United States of America they have something call Town Hall meetings and the Town Councils must have Town Hall meetings before certain decisions are taken. An example is Walmart, Walmart can say they want to open a big store in your town if the town council say no, no Walmart. Mr. Sam Walton can know Obama, America is a funny place. I make no apology for this America is the most democratic country the world has ever seen, they really understand what is democracy. Even to choose a president candidate you see how many things they have to go through, the party cannot just ups and say Mr. Dillion is your candidate or Franklin Khan is your candidate,

no. they have to go through primaries and they have to vote and they have delegates and it's a two-year process just to choose a candidate, they ain't choose their President as yet. All the rigmarole you are seeing on CNN and on Fox, it's not a presidential election as yet. It is just choosing a candidate to represent the respective party. That is the level of Democracy that exist in the United States of America. We could have something resembling that because really and truly certain decisions you need to consult, you cannot sit down as a council and just make the decisions. I know some of you all have kept council meetings in public sometimes so all of that is along the right track and finally ladies and gentlemen the:

Organization Structure: we are giving you additional resources, we are giving you additional responsibilities, and we are giving you additional schedule of responsibilities. You must have a human resource capacity to deliver if not it makes no sense. If I as Minister of Local Government and as a Member of the Cabinet say we passing over all these responsibilities to you, we passing over this additional budgetary requirement to you and leave your staffing the same way it makes no sense the whole system will collapse. You will still be as inefficient as you are now we have to have a new organization, a modern organization that has the skill sets that can deliver the service. I say very loosely we need engineers, we need contract managers' procurement experts, supply chain managers, asset managers, auditors, and we need all sorts of skills. The technical committee that is in place they have a lot of human resource capacity from the Ministry of Public Admin. As we speak we have all the Unions on board on the committee also so we will come up with an organization structure and skill sets that will really be compatible with the new responsibilities that you have. Let me just make the point I make it at all consultations this county invests six hundred million dollars a year on GATE for the last ten years. That is six hundred million by ten, that is six billion dollars educating our young people and don't matter how bad we think they are there are a lot of brilliant young minds out there. Our children, how do you feel sending your child to university UWI for example, gets a Bachelor's degree in engineering, gets a Master degree in project management, then goes to Arthur Lok Jack and do an MBA and when they come out they get an OJT. When they go to the OJT they tell them go and photocopy this for me or file this file for me. It hurts and I make the point and I make it at every consultation underemployment to those people is worse than unemployment. We have to make space for this next generation ladies and gentlemen, forget the little bandits and them that helter skelter all over the place that misbehaving. That is the responsibility of the Minister of National Security. Outside there exist a cadre of young professionals that is second to none in Trinidad and Tobago. They IT savvy they known everything in the world, they could go and when you tell them research a project for you, I am surprised that in two days' time they come back with a report and they have all kinds of statistics, graphs and graphics to help you out. We have to make space for them and I am making the point today without fear of contradiction that a lot of the staffing of this new Regional Corporation administrative infrastructure start by young bright professionals coming

out of our youths. They are your children and I've heard certain people in consultations say well you know they need experience, they need experience and we will have experience. For heaven's sake the learning curve that took us and I say us because I'm over 55, the learning curve that we had is not the learning curve of the youth. The slope of that curve is much steeper and do not underestimate how fast these young people learn. What you felt you could have only accomplished by the age of forty-five by thirty-five they are doing what you could have done by forty-five. There is something ladies and gentlemen now called software and software has the world now busy and once you know how to manipulate software half of your work finish. You need less people but you need more skills and for me the greatest joy I feel in doing this transformation exercise is when I see the opportunities for young professionals in Trinidad and Tobago and I feel that I have done my job.

Legislation: we will be amending the Municipal Corporation Act, we will amend the taxation laws, we amending what we call section 69 of the Act to add these new responsibilities and we will put it in law. Because here what would happen Point Fortin have a Ground to fix, the Corporation have no money so Mr. Paul say he have no money. All of a sudden something call the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago land on you and they start to put up lights on the Ground. You don't know who call them, who sent them, who Councillor they spoke to nothing. The resources exist there I does tell the Sports Company go to Tobago take a plane and go and tell Orville London you come to put up lights on a Ground in Tobago and see what he will tell you, take the next flight back out. We have to understand role clarity and if we put Governance structure in place where people are responsible for certain activities and you give them resources to do it that is the only way the country can be efficient. I will give you another example, at a consultation I think was, I am not sure where it was but one of the previous consultation. This lady went to the microphone and she said Mr. Khan I living on a street and she said this week the Corporation come and cut it so I was really happy. She say next week URP came and cut it, she said and to my surprise the third week CEPEP came and cut it so here we have three agencies of the State tumbling over each other's back in an inefficient system doing the same thing. There is where the sixty-five million dollars going you know and you are not seeing value for your money. At somehow or the other three of them have this street on their schedule but you know the street next door nobody didn't cut it. That epitomizes inefficiency and incompetence. One street three agencies of the state goes to cut and further down the road for whatever reason the bush probably high still. Our problem ladies and gentlemen is the Governance it is not money, it is not anything else but Governance. That is why the Prime Minister has put such a high priority on transforming the Governance of Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing as significant as what we are talking about here has happened since Independence this is as important as that. Let us support the program we want to hear your views okay but in essence I think it is a well thought out program I hope we nothing biting more that we could chew but we really ground go on this thing we have a technical team that is

working. Normally with me it would have been Minister Stuart Young who is the Minister in the Attorney General Office. He is in charge of the legislation and he would have been joining me on the stage but I think he is leaving the country Friday morning and he has a lot of things to finish so unfortunately he couldn't be in Point Fortin and he sends his apology. Joining on the stage with me will be Ms. Bascome the PS and Alderman Roberts who is the Vice Chairman of the Technical Committee. Timetable, this is the eleventh Consultation next week we will be having the final week of Consultations there will be three Consultations. One on Monday Tunapuna Piarco, one on Wednesday in Mayaro and the final Consultation which would be bringing down the curtain so to speak would be the Diego Martin Regional Corporation. That Consultation will be attended by the Prime Minister he will be making some closing remarks as to the way forward. It is our intention that by September we would have what we call and omnibus suit of legislation in the Parliament very likely the Joint Select Committee. September/October bearing in mind October 21st 2016 is when Local Government Election is due. The Act gave us a three months period in which we can hold the election so the backing date for Local Government Election is January 21st 2017. Without telling you when is election day if we not going January because January is the THA Elections so I don't want to read and spell but sometime Novemberish early December that is the kind of time we're looking at. Let me just say categorically to the people of Point Fortin Local Government Election will not be postponed so gear up you have an election to fight and that is for a different time and place. I just want to give you the assurance on behalf of the Government there would be no postponing of Local Government Election. We plan to have the Legislation in place, let's say this is how we will run the Local Government system in the coming three years and we have a three year now transition period to move into the system. On the face of it come 2018 around that time Trinidad and Tobago, Point Fortin and all of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad in particular. Will have a brand new system with Local Government Reform where the focus will be on capacity and service delivery to the people who really require it. Governance will be better, life will be better and I think this is a fundamental change to the Governance structure of Trinidad and Tobago. With that I just want to say thank you very much for listening to me and let's hope that we have a productive Consultation.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Anita Jones (Female African 70s)

Good evening, all protocols observed. I'm Anita Jones from New Village Point Fortin. Local Government, I am in agreement with some of the things that were said giving local government the autonomy to control things in the community or the area which they represent. But I have some points that I jotted down there and I want to say for this to happen Councillors must be in their office at least three times for the week where you can see them. I had some problems in New Village and I had to call all the radio stations to get it solved. Right now, three weeks I haven't had water and I had to call the radio station up to this morning. I want to say the councillors, not only your secretary must be in office, you must make a day or two days to meet your burgesses. If you are going through something and you are not getting through, call an assembly in a community centre, it doesn't have to come in my house. Let the burgesses know that this is what I am doing and I am getting problems. I am in agreement with that.

Another thing, I am looking at the boundaries of Point Fortin, from La Brea come back. This must be changed. One side in Cochrane is Siparia, one side is Point. One side in Cap de Ville is Siparia and one side is Point. So if you're talking about change then you have to change this. From La Brea come back must be under the aspect of Point so we looking at the change. To you, Mr. Chairmen of the evening, I believe that in local government reform, they already have everything in plan so what we're saying mightn't make much difference but I'm going to talk anyhow. The hours of work, or the work week for the Borough Corporation must change and the work aspect and the attitude of the workers of the Borough Corporation must change. The Borough Corporation is doing some work in my village, months men are sitting there with no material, they come 7 o'clock and leave 11 ' clock, with no material. That cannot work, if you want to give Borough Corporation or local government a bigger autonomy. It makes no sense. So, I want to say, that this attitude has to change. I don't know how we'll do it because right now I believe that the work attitude is comatose, it's dying. Another thing, anything that is about to be done in the village or community, the Councillor must come and let you know. Right now, there is a project in my area, and we have been clamouring for it all the time. It's a wash place or bathroom. I had to walk to the savannah in order to know where that is near to me when my councillor's office is 50 or 100 feet from me. Come in the centre; call an assembly saying that this is what we're going to do. We normally have New Village Spotlight. I had to hear on the radio that we didn't have anything. I'm really upset so I want to say I wish that the whole attitude must change. For you to give all this autonomy to Councillors, they have to do better, they have to go through training, know how to meet people, have a different attitude and they need to conduct themselves better. I have some real issues and I believe that although Mr. Khan has said what they plan to do and what they have to do and it's good, but it isn't good enough for me. So I want to thank you.

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

We have been getting similar comments in virtually all the consultations. First and foremost, I don't want to be too defensive of the councillors but as I mentioned earlier, the salaries we commissioned to them are as part-time officers. A lot of them will have their full-time jobs so in the new system, when they become full-time councillors they can accede to the requests of being in their office three times a week or two times a week or five days a week, it doesn't matter. The other aspect of it, regarding the boundaries and the issue of productivity, I didn't deal with it. I normally deal with it in a lot of the other meetings but you are right. The productivity level has to increase. I said in a lot of the consultations that probably, local government is the most inefficient aspect of government because you don't see the workers. When you pass at 10 o'clock looking for any gang, you can't see any. Okay, in some corporations, I know that Point Fortin is one, you go to the office at 10 o'clock or half-past 11 o'clock to see some office to make a complaint or to seek services in some area and there are none. So I agree with you. But having said that, inefficiency exists throughout Trinidad and Tobago, so the same things that you say about local government, in another consultation about the Ministry of Works, you could have made the same point. The other aspect of it is that as a people, we are unproductive. As a people, we do not understand that you have to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. That has been bred by years of affluence and God knows what he did when he dropped the price of oil. Trinidadians have to wake up, smell the coffee, and see that as a people, we cannot depend on the bounty of God forever to survive. You have to become resilient and this low oil price scenario is a lesson to Trinidadian people that it is up to us to survive as a people and we have to be more efficient and more productive. But having said that, that doesn't take away from the fact that we need local government reform, rather that is another issue which we will deal with at a National level.

I could probably say something about the boundaries. You have to understand, this isn't two Corporations that defining boundaries. A Borough means something. A Borough is not a regional corporation. A regional corporation is a distinct piece of geography that has a cultural value, similar topographic features and historically has evolved as an entity for some reason or the other. A Borough is largely an urban or semi-urban centre where you have a town that wants to get Borough status. The borough of Point Fortin cannot include La Brea. If La Brea says that they want to have their own regional corporation then we could consider that but you cannot spread the boundaries of the Borough of Point Fortin to as far as La Brea. It makes no sense because it will take away from the meaning of what a Borough is. Well yes, Cap de Ville, we could look at that. The community is looking at the Boroughs and the boundaries and you can make specific recommendations as to where you want to see the boundaries. We will have to make proposals to the election and boundaries commission.

Moderator:

One minute sir because the lady raised quite a number of points and there's an interesting one that had to do with on-going contact with burgesses to let them know the progress

with respect to works that have already started and so and I would like to go to Mr. Roberts as a practitioner yourself, how do you see the lady's point about institutionalising this level of contact.

➤ **Mr. Anthony Roberts - Deputy Chairman Technical Committee for the transitioning of the Ministry of Local Government**

Well, I think that the lady is very correct. It is one of the changes that we intend to make. I think the Minister spoke to it in his presentation when he talked about civil society organisation. We cannot want to represent people and be separate and apart from the people so that the members of the regional corporation of the Boroughs or cities will now have to become more interactive with their burgesses.

❖ **Eric Danglade (Male, African, 40s)**

Pleasant goodnight, my name is Eric Danglade. I live at Cap de Ville main road, Point Fortin. The last speaker mentioned some points that I would agree with her very much and I love the idea of the change that the government is attempting to do where local government is concerned. Because I have been experiencing some real bad, I don't know what to call it, with the local government in Point Fortin. I had to cut a road in order to access the property where I built my house and that road is about 300 to 325 yards long. I was able to put the material on the road but I could only stop there. For the past eight years, I've been going to the council and asking them for assistance just to cover the road because of the rain coming and destroying the road. Right now the road doesn't have a drain, it's like a river. All I get is a run-around, they don't come and look for you. You have to always go and look for them. You have to always call them. But thanks to the Minister who mentioned tonight that I now know that they don't have any power. They can only listen to you but they don't have the power to do anything. So thank you, Mr. Minister. Now that I know that they don't have any power, I am not going to waste my time anymore going to them. They should have told me that. In terms of paying our taxes, it's a very good idea that we should pay our taxes because without tax no country can develop and it cannot run. But I have a concern and I've been trying to work this out for the longest while. My concern is that I am self-employed. I am a joiner carpenter. I don't pay taxes. I don't pay my NIS. It seems as if the government doesn't mind at all. I had to find another way, another means to secure my future so that when I can't work again, I can get by. You go to the NIS and they're telling you that they don't have any provision for people who are self-employed. So what is my position? I have an NIS number. I am registered with NIS. And they're telling me that because I am self-employed I can't continue the contributions because I was working elsewhere.

➤ **Moderator:**

Mr. Danglade. Give it a local government perspective if you can.

Eric Danglade:

Okay, so the taxes are the problem. Now, we want to know that if we are going this way of paying the taxes, what mechanism you are going to put in place for people who are self-employed like me. Another thing is that I am not hearing anything about the churches in the community. What role are the churches going to have? Are they going to have some kind of important role to play in the community itself? Also, one of the things I would like to talk about is the roads. Now we have to get away from this ancient way in which we do roads in this country. There will be a road with a little spot to repair, and councillors will be passing there every day and it would take them days, weeks, and months before they start to repair that road. And when they do repair it, it's with a big hump. So it makes no sense they repair the road. What kind of engineers are we having in our country? So we need to work on that. We need to resolve that kind of situation. Get away from this old time method of how they do things and get real with the business. Last but not least, I saw on the video the lady going to the clinic, or the health centre. Is every corporation now going to have their own hospital as the case may be? Or is it that we're going to have a health facility where you'll be able to get first class or standard health care as to what we are getting right now. Thank you very much.

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

The NIS thing is outside of our remit but it's about the third time that this came up at the consultation so I will talk to the Minister of Finance and see what the issues are. You want to pay NIS but you don't want to pay tax. If you're paying tax you need to form a company and then you'd become taxable and then you could take on NIS for yourself. But to just say that you're self-employed and pay NIS that's not enough. However, you pay taxes because you pay VAT and you pay other forms of taxation so you're not outside of the net in particular.

➤ **Mr. Anthony Roberts - Deputy Chairman Technical Committee for the transitioning of the Ministry of Local Government**

The issue that the gentleman raised with respect to the road, from his presentation I gathered, might have been on private property. It is not the responsibility of the corporation to develop private property. Your Councillor could make representation on your behalf to the self-help or the commission of self-help to assist you. So maybe you can try talking or making representation to that commission for some assistance.

❖ **Cuthbert Sandy (Male, African, 50s)**

The name is Cuthbert Sandy from New Village. I was very pleased with Minister Khan's presentation because quite a lot that was heard there were parts of my concerns. So I am satisfied that the process has started with the proper planning. From what you have said, transforming the system of local government is to ensure that the council gets the strength and capacity to deliver the infrastructure and services in a high-quality way. But while you have answered quite a lot of my concerns I still have a few points to raise. I think that this

transformation process, quite a lot of factors are to be borne in mind. From what Ms. George said, quite a lot of what I will say in a different way. I think local leadership needs to be strengthened in a big way ensuring that elected leaders and selected ones have some level of education first of all. It must be at least a minimum tertiary level. Elected leaders need to be supported to acquire leadership skills. We will need to provide clear guidelines on how councillors and aldermen conduct themselves in council meetings and in their interaction with the community. Ms. George made a good point where that was concerned. Would you imagine that I see councillors who behaving with a greater than life attitude? I have heard a councillor say very boastfully, "I am a politician." Yes, that Councillor might be a politician but I would have rather heard, "I'm a strong representative of the people." For a simple health matter in my village, after writing the council many times, I have to ask the Minister of local government for intervention. Could you imagine that? And now you are saying that you are going to be giving them greater responsibility. I am glad for that but we have to know what we are doing. We have to institute tough measures for local leaders, who don't do the right thing. This includes suspension or exclusion from office for council members who repeatedly engage in misconduct. You talked about accountability Minister and I was very pleased. I suspect that there are inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of the current local government system. We are saying now that we are going to be giving them greater responsibility. It is, therefore, imperative to improve accountability. We need to implement a system of council reporting so that the community can be fully informed about their council's performance; something like annual Your Council Report. There's a need for a well-established performance measurement framework. There's a need for governance and performance guidelines, you alluded to that Minister. There must be clear guidelines for community engagement. There must be a role for village councils. I wouldn't stay very much longer. I have plenty but I need to give other people a chance. So we need to see the seriousness in that devolution of power in local government. Since 1965 that was on the table, I was twelve years old. From what you have said, I see there is some bit of seriousness but when I say seriousness I mean improved business processes which you alluded to. By seriousness, I mean building of local government from the community level. Restructuring of local government, really as I said, has been here for a long time. If we are really serious, I would be a happy man.

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

I just want to make a comment on the first point you made. We are giving autonomy, empowerment, and greater responsibility and obviously, full-time councillors. We obviously will need to re-profile the representatives. That is now under the system of governance that we operate under. That will now be the function of the political party to offer you the right type of candidate. So any responsible party in their screening exercise will have to look for the quality of candidates to represent you at that level. Then obviously you would have a choice in terms of the candidate. Let me just caution you about this tertiary level education thing. This is a democracy and anybody once you are a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago over the age of eighteen, without a police record, is entitled to seek public office. You cannot put barriers on that. You cannot say a councillor must have tertiary education. That is a

nonstarter to start with. Anybody, eighteen years, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, without a police record, can seek public office and ladies and gentlemen, some of the best representatives that this country has ever seen have been people without tertiary level education. Two pioneers of local government that are still a shining light today are Kamaluddin Mohammed and Jared Narine. Both of them came from the local government system and established themselves and distinguished themselves in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. Jared Narine was supposed to be on the technical committee, the cabinet had approved his name, but unfortunately he is not well and he declined the offer. Kamaluddin Mohammed started as a Councillor in San Juan. He was elevated to the highest level, he acted as Prime Minister on several occasions under the Williams Government. So good people can come out of local government not necessarily having a tertiary education. Having said that, your issue of training I think is well received and certain programs could be put in place to train the councillors when they are elected but we cannot put that as a precondition for election.

➤ **Moderator:**

What about systems of accountability to keep the representatives on their toes?

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

Well, the accountability aspect in my view is really financial accountability in terms of how you spend the state money. On the political side, you ask your burgesses to vote for you, they voted for you, we can't legislate how you will account back to your burgesses. Any councillor worth their salt would develop systems in which they report back to their burgesses whether it is a quarterly town meeting to say what they have done for the last three months or a biannual meeting or something like that. That is an aspect that it would be difficult to legislate.

❖ **Andrew Abraham (Male, African, 60s)**

Goodnight Mr. Minister, members of the head table, Goodnight sir. I stand here a bit concerned about some of the remarks, the first thing I'm dealing with is the Point Fortin Corporation. My name is Andrew Abraham. I live at Clifton Hill Point Fortin. I'm a burgess of Point Fortin. And firstly I must say that Point Fortin Council has made many firsts in local government in Trinidad and Tobago and we are proud of that. We have the youngest council in Trinidad and Tobago with the most experienced mayor in Trinidad and Tobago with thirty years of local government under his belt and we have to realise that Borough Day is coming soon and the whole of Trinidad will be coming to Point Fortin Borough Day. Do you know that people are travelling from abroad to come to Borough Day? We have situations that I would call spot situations. I operate in an Oil company and don't believe material will be on time no matter how efficient you are. Don't believe that you will get efficiency in any system. So as a burgess of Point Fortin I personally want to congratulate

the Mayor of Point Fortin and the young council, we have the youngest councillors. Stand up so that the people can see you all. We are proud of them. You understand? We are proud of them and they are delivering. I am proud of them. I have a sister living in Tunapuna and I go to the market in Tunapuna, I have a brother living in Marabella and I go in the market in Marabella and Point Fortin is the cleanest Borough in Trinidad and Tobago. No, maybe or perhaps about that. That's just the first thing.

Mr. Minister, you made a statement a while ago, pertaining to charting a new way forward. I have heard over and over, for over twenty years now, people coming and repeating and repeating, using big words like transformation and we have not executed anything since 1986 like you said. I hope in God's name that we execute in this situation. I said again that I live right here in Point and the issue of security is dear to my heart. I listened carefully when you said that the little two or three situations but the corporations need to have some influence in the police station that it is located in. Everybody knows in the different areas who sells what and who sells what. I have three people who broke in by me, and the police took two hours to respond on two occasions. Therefore, I want you to consider security as a very serious issue, a burning issue because after those break-ins I wasn't able to sleep properly. Security according to Maslow's philosophy, after you gain everything you want to sleep peacefully. Security is a must and I want that local government has an input in that. You cannot have a police station where the Mayor doesn't know who is in charge of the station. That has to fall under the ambit of local government if we are to be an effective society.

The other thing that I want to talk about, in this age that we are living in, artificial intelligence is speeding. You can put things in place and have predictabilities. I don't have to leave Point to go to San Fernando to get a birth certificate. I must be able to get that here. We can network that. We must network that.

And the last thing that I want to deal with is the issue of what you yourself said when you made a statement there about the hydrocarbon that Point Fortin is a time bomb but more so we are not recognising that the council, real governance starts from the bottom. Those councillors have a hard job to do, a very difficult job. Sometimes with the little pittance that they are getting their workload is 18 hours. What I would like you to know, the proof in the pudding is allocated adequate resources to the councillors. You cannot want them to produce and they're not beefed up to perform. If you do so and you want a horse to win a race you have to have a program. So you have to have a program for excellence, not a structural program you know? There are two different programs. There's structural program and then there's the functional intelligence program. And last of all, pertaining to Point, you see where we have this hydrocarbon here? Medical surveillance has to fall under local government. It is a point that has been missed all over. Medical surveillance means that your burgess if you are living in a hydrocarbon environment, must be able to get free medical examination every six months to know where their health is going because we are breathing in the atmosphere. Down here with this LNG all over there is pollution in the atmosphere. Pollution all over Trinidad is a very serious issue and the energy index for Trinidad has not been done. Local government must get an input into that. Thank you.

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

Very briefly I know that you covered a lot of points so I'll just handle them very quickly. I didn't spend much time on policing but part of the transformation is the way staffing each corporation with 100 municipal officers, myself and the Minister of National Security is working in tandem with that and that is one of the areas of the transformation that will be implemented well before the legislative agenda. In terms of national security Point Fortin should consider themselves fortunate that the Minister of National Security is your member of Parliament so you should be free to speak to him on those matters. With regards to health, health, as we speak, would not form part of the local government reform process. Health still falls with the Ministry of Health and in particular the Regional Health Authorities. But let me just make a statement on the Regional Health Authorities. Do you know, when the Regional Health Authority was formed by Mr. John Eckstein he was the then Minister of Health, it was the intention that the RHA would be a devolution of power from the Ministry of Health? The Ministry of Health was just supposed to remain as a policy ministry. It never happened. That is why we're saying that we disbanding the ministry of local government you know? But once you keep the Ministry of Local government, the ministry of local government will find a way to take back the power from the regional corporations and that is what happened with the RHAs. The RHAs were supposed to be a devolved system with the five or six RHAs that would have been handling in an autonomous way the health functions of the region. It never happened.

And finally, let me just share this; I shared it at another consultation. Because I still get this undercurrent at all the consultations that we here better horse than that bray and what have you and it wouldn't happen. Because a lot of times we spoke about it from since, a gentleman said here, from since 1968 to now we talking about local government reform. The Point I made when I was making my presentation, there must be buy-in at the top. Let me just share a little experience with you all, I said it at a recent consultation. We aborted this rapid rail mass transit system. But when we got the presentation from the IDB they had looked at a lot of Latin American countries as to where this system operated first. But the IDB people told us that the country that has installed a subway system in the fastest possible time of four years from conceptualization to the first train leaving the station was Panama. Four years you know? London, New York, Houston, Paris nobody ever broke that record. Four years the Panamanians implemented a subway system. You know why? He said because it had the personal endorsement of the President. He said the project manager for the subway in Panama City, after the four years when they cut the ribbon for the first train to flow, told the audience that in four years' time every time he called the President; there wasn't one instance when the President didn't answer the phone. And he said that he called him regularly. To tell you that the best way to have a project implemented is to have buy-in from the leader. Ladies and Gentlemen local government reform has the total buy-in of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

❖ **Francis Bertrand (Male, African, 50s)**

Good Evening I am Francis Bertrand, all the members of the head table. I just want to start briefly on the business of security. I want to commend the Minister for this initiative and to say that we have been through several of these so I will describe myself as a sceptical optimist. You know I hope it happens but I think that this time around I'm getting a different feeling. On the issue of security, one of the things we mentioned in local government was to empower the Corporation with 100 municipal police and then there was also an issue of the municipal police and the reporting structure to the commissioner of police. Now while that sounds good, my experience in local government is that, because the municipal police to some extent was accountable to the Council, we had certainly greater accountabilities because if we looked at the performance of the police now with their less than 5% detection rate and put 1400 municipal police within that structure I am not too sure that the people themselves would get the kind of satisfaction we want. The municipal police like in the US, the mayor is the CEO, he has financial and administrative authority. We know when municipal activity takes place that we can go to the Mayor to deal with that and he or she is accountable. I think that is something that needs to be looked at. To make this system work I think that administrative parity has to be developed. In terms of while in Point Fortin, I think we're fortunate that we have a hardworking CEO and administration team be we speaking generally in terms of the role of the CEO in this whole thing. Who is the CEO accountable to? What is the administrative and financial responsibility of the mayor? Because many of us from private enterprise know that if you have a corporation where the chairman of the board is here but the CEO is not accountable to the chairman of the board that system definitely is not going to work. And that is a fundamental issue that has not been addressed in all these consultations. We talk all around it but the council who is elected we have to fix it that the CEO, the administration is accountable to the council and the people would be the one to be the final arbiters in that scenario. In terms of representation, we cannot legislate that. That is an innate thing and we have had experience in Point Fortin where we had excellent councillors, Alexis, Colley, Melville, Hagley, these guys came from the ground and they really worked with the people. But what is important, though, when we're talking about the young professionals to come in the system, we should have a mechanism of empowering them in terms of letting them understand the system they are coming into. We used to have a diploma in local government at some point through the association of local government and I think while it is a formal thing, it's a prerequisite but people coming into local government must understand you take an accountant from the private sector and as good as he or she may be and put them in local government you have problems. So that human resource capacity development is something which we need to pay attention to in order to achieve all these goals that we subscribe. But all in all, I think that we've done well in Point Fortin there is room to do better. But I think that administrative link in the overall structure is something that we kind of talk around and it must happen.

Finally on the issue of the boundaries, that is something in Point Fortin that is near and dear to us. I cannot understand how Maura which is right across the road is part of Siparia Corporation. The people of Mora come to Point Fortin for their market and they come to

Point Fortin for everything. When the garbage truck passes on one side of the road the move the garbage here to get it collected because the Borough provides a better service. And Maura is a bastard community in Point Fortin so it has to be part of the Point Fortin Borough Council and the demographic mustn't be based on just electoral numbers it's the community where you gravitate. Use a simple rule: Which market do you go to? Where do you go to do your business? If you go to Point Fortin then you know that's where your services should be provided from. So I think with those issues being addressed the administrative one in particular, and I think we're well on our way because we're going to hold you to the pledges that you made here, the presentation and everything and I would want to get a specific role for the association of local government. I think they should be leading in this process and I see the Chairman is up there at this point, but we could have buy-in from all these community levels, but the association as a body has to be an important part of the implementation. So I want to commend the Minister for the presentation and we're hoping that certainly in Point Fortin we would work with you. A lot of these things you're talking about are already here you know? The question of law, the mayor is the chief magistrate and under the current Act, whoever is in charge of the police has to report to Mayor on a quarterly basis on crime. We don't do it but we used to do it at one time. He or she has to report to the mayor on crime. A lot of the areas you mention are already in the Act but haven't been implemented. So I think that we could make a difference now and let's just do this. Let's do this.

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

Mr. Bertrand, most of what you said, you're pushing against an open door here. It was very well received but just a point of clarity on the municipal police. As to their reporting to the CEO, we're still looking at that, both the Minister of National Security and myself. But I just want to make the point that you cannot have police officers, with licenses to carry firearms, to uphold the constitution and the law. There's also the potential of misbehaviour, they have to come under the jurisdiction of the Police Service Commission and in particular the Police Complaints Authority. Because the system is in place for national officers so Police Complaints Authority has a file so high investigating police officers. If a municipal police misbehave there is no administrative structure in place to deal with him you know? The potential for misbehaviour is also very high there so when we bring in fourteen hundred new officers you have to have a command chain and on the face of it I'm no security expert but in my humble view, and I know the Minister of National Security shares that view that the command chain must end at the commissioner of police.

❖ **Susan Sinanan Gunness (Female, Indian, 60s)**

A special good evening to everyone present here. My name is Susan Sinanan Gunness. I have taught at this Point Fortin Secondary School for the last twenty-five years. I am a retired teacher since 2009 but I am also working with three NGO's. I am an ambassador for

world peace in the Universal Peace Federation, Family Federation for World Peace and The Inter-Religious, International Family Federation for World Peace. Now my mission is not as vociferous as in the community but I am here as a voice for the youths and I am very proud to say that I have lived in this Borough for the past thirty-five years. I am a proud burgess of Clifton Hill. I was very happy to hear the word transformation. As the Minister said Transformation is the most difficult thing, change is the most difficult thing for us as adults, far less for the youths. It's hard to come by but I love what you said about the Ministry of Rural Development where we will get into all the rural communities as far down as Icacos and Fullerton and Granville and Chatham and so on. When that paradigm shift is made, I hope that it will be a cultural shift throughout this country for a change of attitudes in we as adults also. The former speaker, Councillor Abraham complimented the councillors and so on, I want to say very vociferously now that working for twenty-five years here and working with the past maybe three or four mayors and corporations and the CEOs and I have had no trouble. Every single project that we did at this school whether it was a rally, whether it was public speaking, whether it was workshops, whatever, the mayors, the past mayors, the present mayor, the present CEO have assisted us. Even for this Borough Day coming up the present CEO has extended her arm to Siparia Senior Sec, Palo Seco Senior Sec, Penal Holy Name Convent, we have gone on with cultural programs for all the youths in the five secondary schools from Point Fortin way down to Cedros. Also, the fourteen secondary schools.

My take this afternoon is to let my voice be heard as an ambassador for world peace in communities. The program is really developing communities as the Minister said. Now, this does not really concern local government but as you say I am just quoting that you said that the Borough is vested with the responsibility for the transformation process in schools and what I am saying is that if the Borough will be responsible I feel certain that for the fourteen primary schools, and we have about twenty early childhood care, and the five secondary schools, the Ministry of National Security is looking after in a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Education for resolving youth conflict and violence in the nation's schools and I would like to say that process to be vested in the Point Fortin Borough for these schools, I volunteer my services because over the last five years the program that we have been doing in one hundred twenty schools it was abandoned and that program was resolving youth violence in the 21st century. When I did a research paper on Morvant Laventille and presented when we had CHOGUM and then United Nations sent me to South Korea in 2010 and 2012. One hundred and fifty-three world leaders with communities are running with the program and I came back and over the five years, we have been working in Grenada, Antigua, and the Caribbean Islands. Have you heard of any bullying and violence and guns and so on? Over the last five years, successful programs we have done in one hundred twenty schools, successful programs are not sustained. So I am saying today, Madame CEO and I don't know how long again the Mayor has but for us to have peace because you're talking about local government and communities, for us to have peaceful communities we need peaceful schools. Peaceful schools will impact on peaceful communities and then we will impact on a peaceful nation. It's the only way I know it because it's working in the Caribbean. Thank you.

❖ **Jean K. Alexander (Female, Mixed, 80s)**

Good afternoon everyone, especially Minister Khan, it's nice seeing you in Point Fortin. My name is Jean K. Alexander, my voice tonight is for the poor and the needy of Point Fortin. A lot have been said about all the nice things that we are going to do and look forward to but I have heard nothing about housing. Housing is a major problem in Point Fortin, housing is linked to bullying children in school, and housing is linked to crime. When you have children who are not properly housed, there are houses in Point Fortin, five children and a father and a mother living in a one bedroom apartment and all these problems affect our children. The manner in which they show their displeasure is reflected in schools by bullying and from bullying it's continued on to crime. We are supposed to look at the Tobago example, when you look at the Tobago example you see the HDC going into Tobago and doing housing. Right now in Point Fortin there are a few houses to be given out by the HDC but when you go into our MP's office you will find he has their applications; maybe about three, four hundred applications for housing. What then is to happen to Point Fortin? We cannot hope to have a very effective transformation with all the nice things that you are talking about and housing is left out completely. Housing must be part of it for the poor and the needy. At one school where Mr. Trotman here is the principal, he has five hundred children at his school, EC School over five hundred I am talking about primary schools, not secondary schools. At the intermediate school, I am sure they have maybe about two to three hundred there. Now, what is to happen to housing in Point Fortin? Something must happen if it doesn't happen in housing no other plan is going to work successfully.

Now I have one point to make again, I have a suggestion. Point Fortin is the home of self-help housing, Point Fortin is the home of it. Eric Williams brought self-help to Point Fortin and I am sure we would not want to wait on the HDC to come at some point in time and say well okay land is available here for a few houses. Bring us back to self-help housing in Point Fortin, when you give us back self-help housing in Point Fortin houses will be built at a rate where we would see most of those applications being fulfilled and a better life for the citizens of Point Fortin, thank you.

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

Well the lady was quite articulate on housing is just actually housing is not part of the remit of Local Government Reform. Having said that let me just make a quick statement on housing. The Government cannot provide public housing to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a survey now that is available, it's not public as yet but the poverty reports that I spoke about do you know that 83% of Tobagonians own their own houses. The HDC has very little housing stock in Tobago. HDC has very little houses stocked in Tobago and 83% of Tobagonians own their own homes that is a cultural thing. What we have to do as a people granting that the state would provide housing through the National Housing Authority. At the end of the day, your main focus in life is that when you become a professional is to acquire your own home. The state would have to provide some assistance

for needy families but it is not the responsibility of the state to provide housing to all its citizens that is the hard reality of it.

❖ **Buzz (Male, Mixed, 50s)**

Now I does get real vex and thing eh, and Mr. Minister, no disrespect but I am not saying goodnight at this time to you and your team. I have never been so ashamed in my life, Carnival gone and the Borough Council in charge of Carnival in point yuh know. I limp down the road J'ouvert morning and could have seen the next roundabout; nothing in Point nothing. The national body give Point two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and if you see what Point had and that ain't happening now yuh know. That thing happening over four or five years now and we talking about transformation and reform. I am hoping that in the transformation and the reform, we ain't put it back. I want we to transform it and transport it out of the hands of the Borough otherwise Point Fortin in real trouble culturally. Yuh ain't hear they talking and boasting about Borough Day. I love Borough day it nice and everything but then we cannot, we must separate Borough Day from Carnival. Carnival is a National Festival yet Point Fortin has none. People leaving Point in droves, in droves! To go to a little fishing village in Cedros. People leaving and going La Brea something have to be wrong with that and hear nah the Councillors ain't shame yuh know, the Mayor ain't shame yuh know. Something has to be wrong with that, oh God I like meh Carnival I like ah lil bacchanal thing but give we something, we ain't getting nothing.

➤ **Moderator**

Buzz since we focusing on recommendations here, you're making the point about festivities and so on. How would you propose that a Local Government System would promote, monetized, popularize these activities? Outside of receiving a subjection from the Government or the National Carnival Commission.

Buzz:

Well listen is more thing to do and I said it yuh know, bring it back in the hands of the people. Bring it in the hands of the people alright, we had it before it wasn't no Council running it. Mr. Rogers was the Chairman it wasn't no Borough and all kind of thing like that and we had good Carnival. We get a Borough now when the Carnival should be better and it worst. So my other point is Mr. Minister you spoke about taxes and right away in my mind accountability came into thing. I wondering now with the change, how are you all going to collect land and building taxes in Point because Point Fortin has one of the biggest squatting areas in Trinidad and Tobago yuh know. How you collecting them tax and you know to make it worst those areas are facilitated by the Borough yuh know because they does drop material to help them build their road and thing like that yuh know. So I ain't know what going on with that, even when we; I coming back again too, yuh see when we have festivals and thing and we give money; I want to agree with one of the speakers there that after, when we keep a Town meeting and let the people we put in charge give an account of how the money is spent. I don't want at the end of the year yuh know for them to cook the books alright. I want to go and ask questions, how much money was spent on

entertainment? How much drinks allyuh buy? How much food allyuh buy and why it cost so much? And a big box of KFC and all kind of stupidity and the players and the stakeholders not getting what they deserve. And let me put on my glasses because I getting old my eyes getting dim.

Alright, my partner here Mr. Trotman that is my personal friend he is the principal of Egypt school. You know that man write to the Borough to get two humps in front the school, it takes two years, a year a hump. A hump a year, a year a hump whatever; two years is only when a child nearly dead yuh know he get one, after two years he get one. The people in the Borough moving like he supposed to be glad that he get one, oh God give me a break nah man. Now I want to bring up GVC because I hear he talk about the school maintenance but I think we should carry the intervention on Local Government further than just maintenance. We must have a local body looking out for the schools in Point, the Ministry of Education not doing it. We have a school like GVC that is a prestige thing yuh know. Chin Kit the last Mayor, the President Maxwell all them fellas came from, Awong, Ken Julien all them fellas came from am GVC. Yet today that is the Government Vocational Centre, yet today that school is suffering greatly from a lack of teachers. The place is being run down and we supposed to be in an industrial area. How are we going to fill vacancies if we don't spend money and allocate it and resources to GVC? I will give other speakers a chance, I could talk whole night yuh know. At this time Mr. Minister and your team, pleasant good night.

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

Thank you very much, sir, you were very emotional which means that you have a strong belief system in what you have spoken about and I think your comments were well received.

❖ **Shawn Nicholson, Techier Village (Male, African, 40s)**

Thus far in the discussion we've been speaking about City Corporations, Regional Corporations and so on but I want to make a plugin for Village Councils. Village Councils in my view have been served for one term, as president of my Village Council, it is a very integral part of building community. We can't talk Local Government without empowering village councils. Whether it be through direct relationships because the indirect ones are not working. We can't have a village putting on an event and the Borough competing with a village that is madness. We need to as part of an, which should include legislation, look at a formal relationship between Village Councils which are the bodies that literally work on the ground; as well as with the new Local Government System that is being spoken of...

➤ **Moderator**

Very quickly how do you see that working? Is there some kind of, what will form that connection institutionally? Is there something that needs to be put in place?

Shawn Nicholson

I would say that there needs to be a formal relationship which also should include funding because currently we have too many dilapidated community centres. The Local Government doesn't have oversight and literally nobody has responsibility for other than Community Development which you write to millions of time and you don't get a response. Some form of formal and that is the reason why I said the relationship ought to be looked at in terms of legislation as well to make sure that it's clearly enshrined. In terms of how the Local Government Body would interact with Village Councils to ensure that things get done within communities. I also wanted to ask that in terms of old-aged homes and children homes be also included under that Local Government Body so that they would also have some oversight in that regard. I would leave the other comments to others.

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

His points are well taken for example every time we speak there always seem to be a credible case to add more things to Local Government. As a matter of fact every time the Prime Minister speaks he adds something new. Recently at a function, he indicated that he would like to see the maintenance and the management of community centres fall under Local Government. Your point that there has to be a direct nexus between village councils and borough councils or Municipal Corporations makes sense. What I want to guard against is that we don't want to bite more than we can chew. We have a present schedule of responsibilities for Local Government we're trying to expand the portfolio and Local Government in itself has its inherent challenges in terms of its capabilities, structure, its administration. We want to widen the circumference to the point where we think it is manageable and don't start to put everything into that basket and let the basket become unmanageable. While your point makes sense as we speak we don't want to overpopulate the schedule of the responsibilities to Local Government.

❖ **Male Participant (Male, Indian , 70s)**

Goodnight to the panel, I want to find out one thing, we speaking about Local Government in Point Fortin, the people of Point Fortin concern under the Local Government how we deal or how would the people of Point Fortin deal with the taxes from the big administration. Do the people have any say from the burgesses?

The budgeting of the Corporation what say would the people have in terms of allocating expenditure and how would tax from the big Local Government would it go to the General Government or if it would deal with Local Government level. How would it distribute back to the, would it distribute to the town clerk or whosoever or the people.

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

That's a very valid point I am sorry Minister Young is not here but he is one of the persons who have been articulating that position at these consultations. It is his thinking that part of the legislation would include that before you make your budget you have to consult. In other words, the Corporation wouldn't just make a budget and send it to the Minister of Finance. This is how the THA is entitled to consult before they present their budget for the people of Tobago. We are contemplating as part of the legislative agenda that the Corporation has to consult their burgesses with their proposal for a budget before it comes to the Minister of Finance. So it is very well laid out.

Moderator

He had the question as to where the revenues go.

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

Well, the revenue will go into the, we will amend the law so that the Corporations can have an account as we speak there is only one account to the government that's the consolidated fund. The Government is not entitled by law to have no more accounts but we will amend the laws where they will have fourteen other accounts where these monies can be collected.

❖ **Daniel George (Male, African , 30s)**

Goodnight everyone, first I must say I admire how this chairperson is making sure that all the points are being addressed and I haven't seen much of that in past times. I want to say concerning the Disaster Management Unit in Point Fortin, I would talk about any Local Government Minister who really following up Disaster Management Unit would know that Point Fortin the best, the most productive Disaster Management Unit. If it is we are not getting, we have good staff and all that for Disaster Management Unit but the staff is not enough. I went to the Disaster Management Unit in San Fernando they have a whole big upstairs for themselves and they have the staff in Point choke up in a little room by the Town Hall. My wife and my two daughters all three of them have asthma they had to leave here and probably with the fashion that the members of the Disaster Management Unit have if it had more persons that smoke could have been addressed. In spite of the fact that we have one or two fire stations that might be quite up in Siparia or Cedros. I think that better can be done In that aspect and the last thing that I want to say, I want to ask about the consultation process. Is it that we just come here tonight we complain or we suggest and then we don't have an opportunity to come back and meet with you all to go in a more fine depth to what we spoke about. So we would have an idea if our suggestion is going to be used if we and all could be considered based on recommendations. You know; so this

mode of consultation thing which most of the time doesn't be a consultation. It does just be a presentation because allyuh done have allyuh thing in allyuh mind what allyuh want to do and after that allyuh just make us come and mamaguy ourselves and other people who listening and that is it, thanks very much.

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

The mamaguy thing is not on, we, as a matter of fact this is the most widespread consultation this country has ever had. There are fourteen consultations, it is not an easy thing to put in fourteen consultations like this throughout Trinidad and Tobago and it is still our attention after we finish the fourteen consultations in Diego Martin next week we will be drafting a policy paper for Local Government Reform which would be the driver to draft the legislation. When we finish the policy paper and the legislation we would hold two other consultations one in the north and one in the south. We would be specific and say this is our policy position it will be published, this is the draft legislation we need your final comments speak now or forever hold your peace. Then we will table it in parliament and we, that is the most consultation you will ever have otherwise we will start to have diminishing returns.

❖ **Tiffany George (Female, African , 30s)**

Good afternoon everyone, Self-Community Base Action Group, I just want to raise two concerns. First, I am welcoming the idea of employment exchange because I have two masters and I am unemployed and I would like to know if the process can be expedited. It's a couple months now I have been unemployed, it is very hard knowing that I studied in Trinidad and abroad and I don't have a job. Second I would like to suggest if when you all doing the different transformation process if you all can also implement youth restorative programs for all communities. When I look at the situation of crime within the country it is also good to look at youths from the young age from pre-adolescent, adolescent and into adulthood. If we can find programs which will actually facilitate them through this process.

❖ **Mr. Neptune (Male)**

Two things I wanted to say is the roads, you pave them and you dig them up after, is there some process where we can have a system in place where the piping can be on one side. The next thing is, land regulation people building houses on the land and then it falling down, would you address that?

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

It pains my heart anytime I see a young person who is so well qualified who has studied long and hard. Whose parents has invested so much cash and effort in gaining an education and then coming to a forum like this and saying that they are unemployed? As a member of the Government as a Minister of Cabinet, it is not a nice place to be in. however the Government is trying its best to revamp the economy and create space as the point I made to create space for the young people. There is such proliferation of tertiary education now it is very competitive. To give you my own experience the days when I graduated as a geologist from the University of the West Indies in Mona Jamaica. Before you graduate TEXACO, TRINTOC and TESSORO use to come to Jamaica and to beg you to come and work for them. The three companies competing against each other and offering you more salary. You actually got a job before you sat your final exams. Things have changed tremendously now, there is a downturn and what have you. Keep the faith dear and things will work out the employment exchange will come into place and the economy will start to boom once more. What are you qualified in?

Moderator (On behalf of Tiffany George)

Public Sector Management and Public Health

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

Public Health, well public health can find place in the Regional Corporations - hopefully okay, okay thanks.

➤ **Mr. Anthony Roberts - Deputy Chairman Technical Committee for the transitioning of the Ministry of Local Government**

Thank you very much, Mr. Gibbings I know that you pointed me in that direction, the Village Councils and I want to put them alongside the other civil society organizations. The Women's groups and the Youth groups and other organizations like that within the community. It is my view that there is a link to Local Governance, any serious representative must develop a relationship with these organizations. As a matter of fact, politics is about people and it would make sense for the representatives to have a relationship with persons within the community. You cannot divorce the Village Council and the other Civil Society Organizations from Local Government. There are a number of issues we have heard this evening and I want to give the assurance that we are going to consider them as we develop a policy for the transformation of Local Government. One of the issues I have been taking up at these consultations is the issue where we deal with people's performance, the issue of productivity. It is a sore point and we must accept that the kind of performance we expect from Local Government and the point was made here for the evening. It's not what it should be but I want to also say to the people who present here are this evening that you too have a responsibility to assist in making that change in the Local Government System.

The people who work in the Corporation comes from homes, they come from within the bowels of your community so that you as members of the community must be able to interact with them and to help to change the culture that we now have in Local Government. We expect that kind of collaboration from you as we develop that kind of Local Government system in Trinidad.

➤ **Desdra Bascombe – Chairman Technical Committee for the transitioning of the Ministry of Local Government**

Goodnight everyone, we had a lot of wonderful suggestion coming out of this Consultation, I would just like to touch on a few points. One of my former minister's always said institutions must be built to last that is why we will not wait until two years has elapsed and suddenly realize that we need to build capacity within the Regional Corporations. We are going to begin immediately, in fact, we were speaking with one of the professors at the University of the West Indies to conduct a program for us this July /August on ethics, transparency and corruption in the public service. Once I have the funding we propose that most of the employees in our Ministry both at Head Office and the Regional Corporation are exposed to this program. What I am suggesting is building capacity from now, not two years when Local Government Reform is up on us. We are also looking at liaising with the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications to develop a scholarship program to staff the Corporation with the required skills that Minister alluded to earlier, in that way we are planning in advance. Another topic I heard tonight which was very interesting is the relationship between the Council and the administrators. There are quick things which we can do right now, the CEO has a role to play and the Mayor has a role to play, in other Corporations the Chairman has a role to play, they each play an important role. That former Minister also spoke about role clarity the CEO is the accounting officer and the Chairman will set policies. So I am encouraging you do not wait until two years have elapsed to suddenly begin to build a relationship with the executive of the Council. You can start from now similar to the relationship that Minister and I have as PS I have a role as accounting officer and he is the policymaker and with communication and dialogue, we get the job done. This is the eleventh of the fourteen consultations and together with my high performing task force on transitioning in Local Government we will get this done and will not be a talk shop.

5.0 CLOSING

To conclude the proceedings of the Local Government Consultation at the Point Fortin East Secondary School at Point Fortin, Minister Khan told the burgesses of Point Fortin that it has been a pleasure being at the eleventh consultation in Point Fortin. He expressed that the contributions from the floor were very profound and informed all present that everything said would be pre-recorded documented transcribed and that every statement would be read. Minister Khan explained that the final product would be a distillation of all the good ideas that has come from the floor throughout the entire fourteen consultations.

In his closing speech, Minister said that he might be stepping out of his crease but he would like to go on record and say that personally he thinks that Point Fortin Borough Corporation is one of the best run Corporations in Trinidad. He expressed his views that as a Borough it has distinct advantages, geographically, culturally and that it has the most patriotic burgesses in all of Trinidad and Tobago.

He reminisced about being the MP of Mayaro and remembered telling the people of Mayaro to try to be like Point Fortin. He believes that there is no community in Trinidad and Tobago where the people who reside in the community love their community as the way the people of Point Fortin, love Point Fortin. Quoting and at the same time agreeing with a participant from the floor that Point Fortin is the cleanest borough. Using Tobago as a yardstick the Borough that resembles Tobago the most is Point Fortin, he said; Mr. Khan encouraged the burgesses to build on that.

He further encouraged the people of Point Fortin that while Port of Spain is dying, San Fernando is challenged and Chaguanas is booming Point Fortin continues to have a solid economic base. He warned them however that Point Fortin cannot be a Mono-economic base and that they cannot depend on one industry to survive. There are major price shocks that are hitting the energy sector he echoed, both in oil and gas; Point Fortin and the National economy has a challenge to diversify.

As he continued with his closing remarks he reminded the burgesses that the days of SHELL cannot come back and Point Fortin need to stop wishing the days of SHELL can come back.

Atlantic LNG, Petrotrin, and TRINMAC is here; he, however, challenged the people of Point Fortin to get into agriculture and engage it in a serious way because the energy sector can only employ a limited amount of people and it cannot be an engine for employment.

Minister Khan continued, even though the borough has its challenges they are fortunate, unlike all the other Corporations, and a lot of things are going for Point Fortin with this local government reform exercise. Point Fortin would be able to deliver the services that the people need. The highway will be coming to Point Fortin it is a major development and will make Point Fortin Accessible to the rest of Trinidad and Tobago hoping the highway is done in a year or a year and a half.

There will be a freeway, he explained that there are two components of the highway; from Golconda to Debe to Penal to Siparia onward to the Mon Desir interchange and coming into La Brea and Point Fortin that is the freeway and that is the true highway. He explained that what is happening on the South Trunk road and on Mosquito Creek is just an upgrade of the arterial

road because that road will still have traffic lights and signalisation. You will still have the gulf view and the bamboo traffic light, the traffic light in La Romaine by St Benedict's, one by Price smart and one by Paria Suites. That access will be for the San Fernandians but the freeway will allow persons to commute from Golconda to Point Fortin in 20-25 mins.

Minister Khan hearten all present at the Consultation that Infrastructure, accessibility and connectivity develops a community and Point Fortin has a very bright future, the population is resilient, educated population. He shared information on a report he had seen some years ago which stated that Point Fortin had the most University graduate per capita than any other town in Trinidad and Tobago. He said that there are a lot of sociological consequences to that, some of the finest minds in Trinidad in a lot of avenues and expertise, in particular, the energy sector are people from Point Fortin. Mr. Khan cheered the burgesses on to feel proud of Point Fortin's history and accomplishments. After sharing these words of positivity he again thanked the people of Point Fortin for hosting them and expressed that it has been a pleasure being at Point Fortin and wished them all the best.



PT. FORTIN CONSULTATION

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 150 participants in attendance. Participants were generally receptive to the presentations of the Ministers and they were eager to give their input to local government reform. There was a bit of a slow start to the contributions but eventually, participants were queuing to have their say.

There were approximately 105 (70%) male participants and 45 (30%) female participants. The majority (80%) of participants represented the age range 40 – 70 years. There was less than 5% representation of participants under the age of 40 and approximately 15% 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 65% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 35% being a majority (25%) of mixed-race and some Indo-Trinidadian participants.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 12 respondents from the plenary; 8 male, 4 female. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	8	40 – 70 (6), under 40 (2)
Indian	2	40 – 70 (2)
Mixed	2	40 – 70 (1), over 70 (1)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Councillors – more representation	1
Boundaries	2
Change management in Corporations – work hours, attitude, training	3
NIS – self-employed not covered	1

Role of church in community	1
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, parks etc	3
Accountability	2
Scepticism – is it a talk show?	3
Crime	1
Decentralization of services	1
Pollution	1
Municipal Policing	1
Violence in schools	1
Housing	1
Pt Fortin Carnival needs to be revived	1
Community partnerships with Local Government	1
Squatting	1
Village Councils - empower	1
Taxes – who does it profit	1
Disaster Management Unit – understaffed, lack of resources	1
Youth restorative programs in communities	2