

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

Rio Claro

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Rio Claro 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 Councillor Kyron James. The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Wesley Gibbings, then proceeded by welcoming all present to the Rio Claro East Secondary School for the thirteenth 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. Gibbings then introduced the key personnel for the consultation amongst who were: the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan and Ms. Desdra Bascombe Chairman Technical Committee. This was followed by the welcome remarks which were delivered by Chairman Councillor Hazarie Ramdeen of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation who welcomed everyone on behalf of the Ministry to the 13th Local Government Reform Consultation in the Rio Claro East Secondary School at Rio Claro.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Ms. Desdra Bascombe - Chairman Technical Committee

2.0 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME REMARKS

Mr. Hazarie Ramdeen



Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. We have here with us all other Ministers; we have the Minister of Agriculture, Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat; award Member of Parliament here Mr. Rushton Paray; mayors, chairman's, Councillors, members of the media, members of the protective services, ladies and gentlemen; good evening. I welcome you to this meeting as we discuss local government reform. I am pleased to bring greetings from the Mayaro/ Rio Claro Regional Corporation. In an attempt to transform local

government we are aware that our responsibilities will increase as local government corporations will be granted more executive authority. Our corporation has a history of effective and efficient management and delivery of municipal services. Utilising limited resources, we serve approximately thirty-six (36) thousand citizens in the three (3) administrative districts- Pool, Mayaro, and Biche.

The region of Mayaro is the second largest landmass in Trinidad, with a land area of 852.81 kilometres square. Mayaro/Rio Claro is mostly rural with fifty percent (50%) forested area. Its geographical location cause it to be prone to massive land movement, high winds, rainfall and flooding due to low line areas and vulnerable communities. Our corporation structure comprises of the council and the administration. The council consist of ten (10) members, six (6) selected Councillors and four (4) aldermen. The administration is headed by the chief executive officer and consists of approximately six-three (63) monthly paid staff of which fifty percent (50%) accounts for clerical staffing. We have 579 daily rated workers; 115 of which are casual employees. The corporation fulfils its duties with limited staffing and the absence of a corporation secretary. We also don't have some of our RO3 (road officer 3) and WS3, the chief officers; and that also presents a challenge for us. Our road inventory includes a total length of 3003,515 metres of road. We have 138 bridges, 21 recreation grounds, 12 cemeteries, 1 cremation site (the best in Trinidad), 2 markets and 12 buildings. We also have 17 miles of beach front within our purview.

The 2015/2016 budgetary allocation for the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, under the development program, is 11 million, 7 hundred and 50 thousand dollars; and the recurrent, the allocation is 101 million, 285 thousand, 1 hundred, of which 7% was cut; that is 7 million, 89 thousand, 9 hundred and 57 dollars; thereby reducing allocation to 94 million, 195 thousand,

143 dollars. Therefore, we are no performing our duties, considering an increased population and aging workforce and a limited human resource, adverse environmental and climatic conditions, with less financial resources. Ladies and gentlemen, in 2014/2015 our revised allocation was 17 million, 900 thousand of which 12 million, 448 thousand, 294 dollars was released in total, on the development program. This year 2015/2016, has an allocation of 11 million, 758 dollars of which 8 million 283 thousand, 299 dollars have been released as of March 2016. In 2014/2015 under the recurrent expenditure our revised allocation was 109 million, 613 thousand, 224 dollars of which 102 million, 245 thousand, 443 dollars was released. This year 2015/2016 has an allocation of 101 million, 785 thousand 100 dollars of which again to we have a 7% cut, budgetary cut; that is 7 million and 89 thousand, 957 dollars. This has been recommended thereby reducing the allocation to 94 million, 695 thousand, 143 dollars; total revenue and releases as of March 2016 is 55 million, 628 thousand, 395. We have to manage; one thing I learn in this corporation is to manage my mind and lead by heart. There is only so much you could do and you must set your priorities right. You see I want to make some very clear; 90% of you success lies within the implementation and the execution of your projects and that has to be done by the administrative staff. And when you have a shortfall; what happens? It leaves you in the red. Despite the numerous challenges faced by this corporation, we remain committed to providing a high quality of life for all citizens while promoting sustainable development of the region. I thank you again; enjoy the rest of your evening once again.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, addressed all present and welcomed them to Rio Claro East Secondary School for the consultation. He then proceeded to deliver his address with the aid of a video presentation which was displayed at the beginning and end of his address.

The Minister gave a brief explanation of the video presentation which was shown to the audience. It was as follows “Ladies and gentlemen, the video you just saw illustrates a system and the dynamics of which are not unfamiliar to most of you. Whether it’s a river clogged, pothole, an empty lot next door, school repairs, waste management, a bus shelter, the list goes on and on. Under the current system of governance in Trinidad, service delivery, when a community needs something, to get something done, it has to take place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries that run through the centralized heart of government. And ladies and gentlemen, at its most fundamental level, that is the problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

We do not have a service delivery system that delivers the service in an equitable, efficient and transparent manner to communities. So we spend money and we do not get value for money because money alone cannot solve your problem; I will deal with that in some detail later on. It is not my intention to get political here today but I just have to retract for a short while. During the election campaign of 2015, the People’s National Movement and in particular our political leader Dr. Keith Rowley articulated that once we form the government, we will have two (2) major policy shifts in Trinidad and Tobago; major and fundamental policy shifts. The first was the creation of a brand new ministry called the Ministry of Rural Development and the second was significant and fundamental local government reform; either by chance or by design by

both responsibilities now fall with me. Let me deal, the basis of this presentation here, which will last around thirty-five minutes, is larger than local government reform; but let me spend a couple minutes on rural development.

The cabinet was reduced from thirty-three (33) to twenty-three (23); in fact, we were making government smaller, and yet in a reduced cabinet, the Prime Minister still saw it fit to have a ministry entirely dedicated to rural development, and there is just cause for that, and again, the politics have a role to play in that. It has always been said and there is some truth to it, that the PNM has always been an urban-centric party; focusing on Port of Spain and the East/West corridor. And while the historical empirical data may say that there is some truth to that, the fact of the matter is, if a PNM administration under a leader could now see it fit to have a ministry entirely dedicated to rural development, I think he should be highly complimented for that move. Because let us face it, there's something called economic analysis; if you have to justify a project, the project has to show a rate of return, it has to show a pay-out and it has to show where your market size comes from.

So if you do that analysis, urban areas, because of their population size and because of their density of population, will always attract the developmental capital when compared to rural areas. So for rural development to take place it must have direct government policy intervention. The example I like to draw, well Mayaro already have a KFC; Rio Claro has one. But I cannot ask KFC to go and open a branch in Moruga because they will tell me the market research states that the outlet cannot make money because the market size is not there; the people do not have the disposable income to buy that. Based on those types of principles rural communities will never get access to goods and services that urban centres are privy to. So that is the basis in which we form the Ministry Rural Development. And rural development, the principle that we want to adopt is that we have to sow an economic seed for sustainability and secondly we have to establish connectivity; connectivity meaning both physical connectivity and digital connectivity.

I'd quote the two prime examples which will be the first on the rural agenda and as we roll out the program in the coming years. Toco/Sangre Grande, it is our intention to plant an economic seed in Toco which will be the ferry service to run from Toco to Scarborough. The connectivity will be provided by a brand new first class arterial road from Valencia to Toco. So you provide the connectivity, you provide the economic seed and then things will start to happen in North/East Trinidad. By the same token Moruga, we plan to build a major fishing port in Moruga at a cost of 200 million dollars; that has already been approved by Cabinet. Tender should be coming out next month, the design has been completed and the connectivity now will be provided by a totally refurbished and revamped Moruga road. NEDCO has already gone out to tender for a consultant to design the road, to do a root alignment to change it and more importantly to solve the slope stability problem which are land slips for want of a better word to the area. So we have connectivity, so we have the economic seed in Moruga; same thing in Toco/Sangre Grande.

But by definition, rural development has to have a close association with agriculture because rural people are largely farmers. And while we will have some economic activity outside of farming, at its core and fundamental level, we have to revamp agriculture, revamp the farming community, so in that context, my ministry and myself, Senator Clarence Rambharat will have a

very close working relationship as we unfold this rural development agenda. On the local government side now we, for those of you who have been involved in local government over the years, you know local government has been saddled with many constraints; first and foremost the political interference. What happens in this system of governance that we have is that when the PNM is in power the councils and corporations that are run by UNC, feel they are alienated, ostracized, pressurized and what have you. By the same token, when the UNC is in power the PNM corporations feel they are being starved of funds; they are being sidelined and nothing happens in their community. So you always have that challenge of facing political interference and I will deal with that a little later on.

The second aspect is inadequate funding. Mr. Ramdeen just outlined to you 21 recreation grounds, 3003 meters of road, which is about 30 kilometres or rural roads, thirty-something bridges and their capital budget is just about 12 or 15 million dollars; now obviously, that is insufficient. The challenge of funding is that because we funded local government based on an old paradigm, okay and I'll give you a classic example. The Ministry of Works has a program called PURE; PURE spends approximately 1 billion dollars a year on road paving and associated works, drainage and infrastructure. But you'll know that virtually half (½) to forty percent (40%) of the roads that PURE paves are minor roads; because minor roads are like capillaries and the arteries are the main roads. If you budget properly, half of that billion dollars, 5 hundred million dollars actually should reside in the corporations to maintain their own roads. But the problem of, historically there has not been good service delivery. Within the regional corporation, they don't have the infrastructure and engineering and project managing and capability; that is why all that assignment has gone to PURE.

Another example is recreation grounds; I think there are 4 million dollars for recreation grounds, 21 recreations grounds some, Couva/Tabaquite have something like forty-something recreation grounds (1 million, okay) obviously that is insufficient funds but hear what happens in our systems of governance. Up comes a company called the Sports of Company Trinidad and Tobago and they come into your space and you see they just start to up lights and they start to build a pavilion with no consultation with the Councillors, who under the Municipal Corporation Act by law, that asset falls within the ambit of the corporation. Nobody knows who advised the sports company and it's taken, the decision is taken at the central government level. So if we restructure the governance process, and it happens under the THA, the THA, I told the sports company I want you to take a plane, go on it to Tobago and tell Mr. Orville London you come to fix a recreation ground, and he will tell you where to get off, because you cannot go to Tobago under the THA Act, as the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago and say you coming to fix Bethel recreation ground. So if we draft the legislation properly, all these responsibilities will not fall in the municipal corporation. And lastly, the sluggish administrative structure that was never transformed in local government.

The first job I ever had after O'Levels was, that is 1974 so you will know my age, was a checker in county and the salary was twenty-ten a day, twenty dollars and ten cents (\$20.10) a day; that was plenty money. Nothing has changed from 1974 to now you know. You still have a checker reporting to a road officer 1, reporting to a road officer 3, road officer 3 reporting to the county superintendent, the county superintendent reporting to the CEO. The organization has not transformed with the time. So when service delivery became more complex, you were

handcuffed. Nothing could have happened so that is why instead of fixing local government successive administration saw the reason to sidestep local government to look for other delivery agencies to perform the service and I'll tell you how fundamental it is.

We were in a consultation I think in Penal, and a lady got up and said Mr. Khan I so glad, on my street this week the regional corporation came and cut the grass; so she was very, very happy. She said low and behold next week CEPEP came and cut the grass and the following week URP came and cut the grass. So here you have triplication of efforts on her street and two (2) streets down the road nobody cuts the grass; because we cannot fix a problem by sidestepping the problem. And this is a, we taking the bull by the horn this time with the local government reform process and that is why we are saying it has to happen this time around.

Because of that local government has become ineffective and burdened by bureaucracy because control, funding, and authority are centralized in the ministry of local government. I am the local government minister but the minister of local government is not local government.

The ministry of local government is central government; local government resides with the corporation. That is why the Prime Minister is very adamant that when this reform process is completed we will disband the ministry of local government because you cannot have somebody with a big stick over you back; that is not empowerment. I spend half my day approving things I should not be approving, that really a mayor, a chairman, a CEO in a corporation should be handling; simple, simple matters, small amount of money. Transferring people, I mean routine and mundane matters; ties up a minister's time in terms of administration. So we are saying that local government reform will take place; it has to take place to transform the governance structure of Trinidad in particular because Tobago has already gone its way in terms of the local government reform process, through the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

Now let me deal with a comment that has come from a lot of corporations that we hear this already and plenty talk has happened in the past but nothing has fundamentally happen. The person, the minister who probably did the most work on local government reform is Minister Hazel Manning. When I went into the ministry office there was a pile of reports this high on local government reform. Suresh Rambachan in 2013, he did a lot of work and ladies and gentlemen a lot those reports are very valid and solid research you know, but what never happened is the political will to make the transformation; and the reason for that is simple, no human being likes to give up power and authority. Nobody at present controls tower voluntarily hands it over to what they perceive as a subordinate. So for the local government reform process to take place, you know what has to happen? It must have the direct buy-in from the Prime Minister; it is the only way it will happen. And ladies and gentlemen it is with pleasure that I inform this government, that the local government process while it is being championed by myself, it is the work, the idea and commitment of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago that this is going to happen, so happen it must.

Our vision is for a fully operationalize and network local government system; we think this is imperative for people centre government and for the accomplishment of any national vision. Now, I will now deal specifically with the proposals that we plan to implement in this local government reform process. The PNM manifesto of 2015, we articulated a vision for local government that seeks to remove all the red tape and the bureaucracies that prevent local

government bodies from doing their work. That manifesto is now official government policy; so all we did with the manifesto is we change the cover, move out the balisier and put the coat of arms. Every single word remains PNM policy and it is now government policy.

So it is now our intention to revolutionize and bring this system in line with all the recommendations that were made in the past, we are not reinventing the wheel, but we have gone through this last round of consultation to get some final feedback from you, and I must say, ladies and gentlemen, the feedback has been quite positive. This is the penultimate consultation and nobody has objected fundamentally to the process of local government reform; local government empowerment. Now specifically I will now deal with about six (6) or seven (7) specific areas. I am dealing with these areas because I want your comments as to how you think it could work and if you have any new ideas bring it forward to us.

First and foremost is secure funding. The problem with local government is that they do not have a secure stream of funds coming in. What we are saying is that we will make amendments to the finance and audit act to empower local government bodies to collect, retain and spend land and building and property taxes within their jurisdiction so that will bring an immediate cash flow to you. And why this is important; because it happens all over the world. The city of London collects its taxes in its municipalities and it is spent in your community. As we speak, if you heard the Minister of Finance, he laments the fact that one of the challenges we face and every single administration has faced in the past is tax compliance. And the best way to deal with tax compliance is to have people who are dedicated to collect the tax because they have an incentive to collect the tax. So if the regional corporation collects the tax, keeps the tax and spend it in the community it was collected, obviously, the incentive has to be stronger. Because you know is not an officer from Port of Spain who works in the Ministry of Finance Inland Revenue Division, is in charge of taxation in Rio Claro.

The taxation will be managed by the regional corporations and you will have an incentive to go and collect the tax; you will have the roll and you will have every specific house and by March 31st you know who haven't paid taxes, and then you will send out your officers and say; hear guy, you know interest start to accrue and you should pay your taxes and I am sure finance will virtually double in a system like that. What we have to do is work out how we will found what we call the top-up aspect of it. Because certain corporations will collect more taxes than others. A classic example is Point Fortin. If Point Fortin is allowed to collect Atlantic LNG taxes they budget gone through the roof you know and Point Fortin is the smallest borough in terms of population and in terms of geographic size. So we have to develop a formula; the people who will be most disadvantaged will be people like Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, Mayaro and some of these rural communities whose tax base, in terms of land and building taxes is not exorbitant, as Mr. Hazarie Ramdeen say, fifty I think is more than fifty percent (50%) of the geographical space in Mayaro/Rio Claro is forest and if you add the Nariva Swamp, and you call that forest, is probably seventy percent (70%). So, but we still working out the matrix as to how we will collect and implement the taxes but as a general principle, the legislation will be amended so that the corporations will be allowed to collect and maintain their taxes.

And let me tell you how fundamental this is, Ms. Ida Eversley who is the Deputy Chief Parliamentary council is here and she is on the committee; they draft the laws. As we speak since 1962 to now the government only has one account you know; is called the consolidated

account. Every single cent the government collects has to be deposited into that account. So this is fundamental legislative changes you know, where we will be empowering fourteen (14) corporations to open accounts on behalf of the state. Collect state funds and spend it to the benefit of the community; that is a very fundamental shift. Secondly executive authority, for those of you who work in Regional Corporation you know is always a challenge between the administration and the council. The way the legislation is written, I must regretfully tell the Councillors, you have absolutely no power. You only have authority as a council to make policy decisions and to approve projects but the implementation of those decisions rest solely in the hands of the public servants; you have absolutely no executive authority.

What the THA Act has done and shown us the way that if we adopt a model, similar to the Tobago House of Assembly where we can give execute authority to elected officers just as how a minister has executive authority through the cabinet and on his own right, we want to empower the local government Councillors in a similar mode like that, ladies and gentlemen, this is fundamental change. As a matter of fact, the best comment I heard about these consultations, what we plan for local government, must be made by somebody who when I call his name will surprise you - Subhas Panday. Subhas Panday got up in Princess Town and said every time I heard local government reform in the past, you spoke about decentralization, this is the first time you are talking devolution, and to me, that captures the whole essence of this whole executive authority. Now there will be challenges and let me explain something. First and foremost we have small corporations and large corporations. So Tunapuna/Piarco which has fifteen (15) Councillors and four (4) aldermen which are a slate of nineteen (19) to choose from, will effectively run an executive council. Mayaro Rio/Claro have six (6), closely contested, is now four (4) two (2) in one way I hope it will come four (4) two (2) the next way in the next elections so; I will take a clap for that.

But let us assume the elections ends up three (3) three (3) as it did the last time in 2002 or 2003. You draw your straw and whosoever gets the luck of the draw forms the corporation. Here you have a corporation that you have to establish an execute council with three (3) members; obviously you have to find a new method because you cannot make legislation for specific parts of the island. Legislation has to be national in scope. So if you making legislation you can't make it for Tunapuna and don't make it for Mayaro. So how can we solve a problem like that? There is a lot of recommendation that came from the floor in various consultations; that we suppose to have independent aldermen. So you have four (4) aldermen to be split-up based on proportional representation, to be chosen by the political party. But then, why don't you have a system to appoint four (4) independent aldermen to help beef-up the council?

Because it is the viewing of a lot of burgesses all through Trinidad and Tobago that really and truly at the local level, we should keep away as far as possible from party politics because local government should not be about party politics. It's a pity; it has happened over the years when a significant amount of Councillors were independent Councillors you know. So we are trapped in a party politics system but what I'm saying, I'm just throwing out some of these ideas to tell you these are some of the ideas that you are putting forward and if you want to change and if you want to transform, because at the level of the community, politics have its place but there are certain times when politics doesn't have its place, and especially at local government level. Let me make an interjection here, I've been saying throughout these consultations it ain't

political because the same power we give to the mayor of San Fernando, or to the chairman of the Diego Martin corporation which has nine PNM and four (4) PNM aldermen; there's is absolutely no opposition in Diego Martin. But, when you go to Penal/Debe is the same thing; there isn't a PNM face in the Penal/Debe Corporation. But the same powers that Diego Marin will get, Penal/Debe has to get, because it is a citizen's right to vote who they want to and who they want to vote for; we cannot as a democracy deny them that. So if a particular piece of Trinidad and Tobago, through a regional corporation, wants to vote for Party X and the other one was to vote for Party Y, it is a reality that we have to face. It is a reality that we have to face we cannot impose our political will on the people. Here is another issue, how do we protect minority interest? Because now, I would take Mayaro as an example you have four and you have two; I am the line Minister I get complaints from the two that they are not getting nothing. Because the four taking everything for themselves at the level of the Council because they can vote you out. Of a two million dollar budget Mayaro get one hundred thousand dollars and Biche get eight hundred thousand dollars something can't be right with that. However that is a specific matter the issue is at the level of the Governance. How do you protect minority interest? Because at least under the present system the minority Councillors still have a Minister they can complain to, to try to make it right. Under the new system where there will be no Minister to complain to and when you are totally autonomous getting your allocation from the Ministry of Finance what checks and balances will be in place to that. We know in a political scenario there is victimization and at the end of the day we have to protect the citizens of our burgesses and find a way to protect minority interest. We haven't come up with the solution as yet but I am just throwing it out to you to come up with a system. We may have to make a matrix in the budget and say, while you can't divide everything by nine and say if the capital budget is ten million and you have ten Councillors; you divide it by ten and you have one million per Council. That is not really the best way to do it but I challenge you all to come up with some form or fashion as to how we can protect minority interest.

Accountability: third area of concern, ladies and gentlemen, I giving you money, I giving you power, I giving you a greater schedule of authority which I would show later on, for heaven's sake you have to be accountable. I want to warn officers that when you spend public money you have a responsibility to be accountable to the people because you spend that money in trust. When you are an officer of the State you act in the trust of the people who have voted you into office. There is something called a trust fund, a trust fund you act in trust to some sector who has put that fund in place. You are acting in trust, you have to be accountable as we see it now you're accountable to the Minister of Finance for your allocation and you're accountable to the Auditor General for how you spend it because you will be audited. One of the challenges in that is that the Auditor General is post-facto. The Auditor General doesn't come and audit your account until four years after you spend the money and four years after you spend the money you might be out of office because the election cycle is a three-year cycle. Seeing that the Auditor General is responsible for putting the checks and balances is insufficient. One of the challenges we face is to have a system of accountability and a system of what we call online audits so that you can nip issues in the bud and have investigations almost real time in where issues are faced. Let me tell you all something again as a Minister people come to me with stories and all is not well in Regional Corporations, including Mayaro/Rio Claro and most of the others that we are facing. There have been accusations of corruption both at

the level of the Council and at the level of the Administration as a matter of fact more so with the Administration because they have executive authority; to award contracts and to do a series of things. Once we empower people we need to have an accountability system so that they can account to some agency of the State as to how these funds are spent. The ultimate accountability is on your three-year cycle where you face the people and you say this is what I have done with the money over the last three years. If the burgesses are satisfied they vote you back into Office if they are not satisfied they vote you out of Office.

The fourth point is **New Responsibilities** and I will spend a little five minutes on this. Ladies and gentlemen for those of you who are again are in Local Government; the most fundamental thing that has happened in Local Government is when the Municipal Corporation Act 1990 was implemented. Prior to that was the old County Council System, here would have been Nariva/Mayaro County Council, Mr. Rondon would have been in St Andrews/St David County Council. What the Municipal Corporation Act did, it resub-divided Trinidad and Tobago. The Counties and Wards were developed by Governor Woodford that is the man who they named Woodford Square after he defined Caroni, St Patrick, Victoria and what have you. The Municipal Corporation Act redefined the boundaries and formed fourteen Corporations but the responsibility level did not change. The Counties were in charge of recreation grounds, cemeteries, minor roads and water courses, some aspect of public health and a couple other peripheral matters. The responsibilities of the Regional Corporations remained the same and more importantly the structure of the service delivery mechanism remained the same. It still had a CEO, it still have somebody in charge of accounts, still had somebody in charge of audits, somebody in charge of HR and there were no new skill sets that came into the organization to help the delivery system become more efficient. With this reform exercise, we plan to empower and increase your schedule significantly and I use the word significantly. First and foremost **School Maintenance** as we speak there is one company in Trinidad who is in-charge of all school maintenance called the Education Facilities Company Limited. I understand that they are the worst paying company in Trinidad also; six hundred and something Primary Schools and over three hundred and something Secondary Schools under the remit of one State entity. Something has to be done with that Governance if school maintenance fall under the Regional Corporations and the Prime Minister is very adamant about this one. If the Regional Corporation of Mayaro/Rio Claro is in-charge of the six or seven secondary schools here. It will be incumbent amongst you with a laser beam focus during the summer holidays that the maintenance contractor finishes on-time. So that the school would be open properly when September reaches because you know why? It is your children who are coming to the schools. It is incumbent on you because if the school is not opened and the contractor from ohioho and the management of the system is from ohioho he doesn't have a vested interest. In Rio Claro East or Mayaro Composite or Mayaro Government or Ortoire RC opening. If that responsibility is handed over to the Regional Corporation on the face of it, it has to be a more efficient system. **Social Welfare** very important ladies and gentlemen who better knows the old lady who is getting the run around to get her pension. Is it not at the level of the Council? Is it not at the level of the community? The old lady would come to the Councillor and you know what the Councillor would have to tell her. I not in charge of that you know ma'am and would she believe you? No, because she voted for you. We think Social Service delivery is a fundamental aspect that should be empowered to the Regional Corporations. Who knows the families that are at

risk? Who knows the families that are suffering from intense poverty and deprivation? Who knows the subject to domestic violence and child abuse? Who knows the family that is suffering from incest? All these things happen in your communities and the neighbours know, the Councillors know but the Social Welfare Officers who from San Fernando and Princess Town and Port of Spain don't know. The service delivery is important and let me just quote another piece of statistics as we speak there is a note in Cabinet and you know they say Cabinet works in secret so you can't know but I will take a little chance here today. It outlines the poverty situation in Trinidad, successive administrations since Mr. Manning's time and Kamla Persad-Bissessar's time spend on the average two to two point five billion dollars per year on Social Service Delivery. Ladies and gentlemen let me just tell you that the poverty level in Trinidad in 2004 is the same as the poverty level in 2014. So after spending twenty-five billion dollars on Social Service Delivery we are just as poor as we were in 2004. The reason for that is the money is not reaching to the people in need and there are smart families who are well connected that are misusing the system. They double dipping, they triple dipping, and they quadruple dipping; I know of families go to the HDC and get their housing grant but the HDC database is not talking to Self-Help database. So they quietly now go to Self-Help and say, boy, yuh know my roof falling through and they get a Self-Help Grant. They get a food card, they get public assistance and there is a million amount of social programs that I don't even know all of them. They know and they just feed off the trough and the families that are genuinely in need are not getting what they are supposed to get. Social Welfare is a fundamental part of this Local Reform Government Process, it is going to take place and the whole social service delivery mechanism will be handed over to the Regional Corporations for its execution.

Local Contractors: we cannot legislate and say that certain contracts must go to certain people because as a citizen you have a right to tender for State jobs. We will have to find some administrative way to do it but something about it if you're building a box drain in Church Road Mayaro and you see a van pull up in the morning and you see men from Chase Village Chaguanas. Something can't be right with that so how we will do it? We're still working out the details. If a local contractor fixes a local drain with local employees there will be a local multiplier effect in the community. So the million dollars you spend on the actual concrete is three million dollars in the multiplier effect if the money stays in the hands of the community. Spends in the community and buy goods and services from the community itself so do not only check the money that is expended on the contract. There is something called in economics the multiplier effect and that is a very fundamental concept in economics so these are areas we are looking at.

Municipal Policing we are going to recruit one hundred police officers per Municipal Corporation and we are also going to make them accountable. As we speak the municipal officers are accountable to the CEO but they are officers of the law and officers of the law must come under the Police Service Commission. They must fall under a command chain that ultimately reaches the Commission of Police and more importantly they carry weapons they can misbehave and they can misbehave in public office. They can abuse their power so they obviously must fall under the Police Complaints Authority. Today if a police officer misbehaves he can be investigated by the Police Complaints Authority and the Police Complaints Authority can send a report to the DPP and say charge him. As we speak Municipal Police doesn't fall

under that because there is no system to discipline Municipal Police Officers. As I speak I am in consultation with the Minister of National Security and the Attorney General as to how we will streamline that.

Developmental Control just very briefly we want to empower the Regional Corporations to approve simple plans and simple development within your community. There will be no need for Town and Country because if you are building a normal upstairs and downstairs, two storeys or a flat house what you're going to San Fernando in Town and Country to approve? We will give you the capability and the development of small outline approvals and what have you. The larger projects obviously will still come under the Town and Country Planning equivalent. There is a piece of legislation call The Planning and Development Act that has been passed as law; it has only been partially proclaimed and we have a committee looking at it now to see what amendments we want to do.

Disaster Management I think Mr. Hazarie spoke about disaster management, ladies, and gentlemen this is one aspect of the Regional Corporation that I think is working quite well and first respondents you have the most vulnerable part of the island. In terms of disaster is really North/East Trinidad and South/East Trinidad which is really the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation and the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. As I speak I am in discussion with the PS in terms of if we can probably this year build two warehouses, one in the Sangre Grande area and one in the Mayaro area to store basic items. As a general principle, disaster management will continue to fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Security.

Civil Society finally, this whole process is deepening the democracy because democracy is about people power, people's ideas and people representation. We are strongly contemplating in the law that before certain Council decisions are taken they must have meetings like this. You cannot tell people that they are empowered because this Local Government process is not empowering the Councillors it is empowering the people. The people has to have a say and they must not only have a say once in three years where they go to stain their finger because they feel disenfranchised and disempowered. We make a schedule of approval that has to take place before you get approval for a project. We may even go as far as saying that when you prepare your budget before you present it to the Minister of Finance at the level of the Corporation you must consult with the community, with burgesses. We will define a role for NGO's, we will define a role for civil society in this whole thing because it happens in America you know. People can say what they want American is the most democratic country in the world. The example I like to draw in America is Walmart, if Walmart wants to come into a community to build a big store, Town Council meeting in his tail yuh know. If the Town Council say in consultation with the Town Hall meeting that no Walmart; Walmart can know Obama it doesn't help you know, no Walmart is coming into the Council. That is why the Town Hall concept is so fundamental to American Politics. If you follow the Presidential election going on now, every single time they have a chance is a Town Hall meeting they keeping. That is the culture of these communities and I am seeing Trinidad is going in that direction. The people are clamouring for more consultations, they are clamouring for more engagement with the community.

Regional Planning we will invite all Corporations to develop a Regional Plan, when Martin Joseph was alive, before the 2013 Local Government Election we did, in fact, have a Regional

Plan for the fourteen various Corporations. The PNM Corporations will be asked to use those plans as the basis to formulate a more robust plan, obviously, the UNC has the option to use it or not to use it, I mean that's your call.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, **Boundaries** speak now or forever hold your peace. This part of the Reform process will consider changes in boundaries. It will even go as far as to say fourteen Regional Corporations with fourteen Executive Councils for an island of 1.2 million people, is that too much Government? Whether we should cut it to twelve and consolidate couple Corporations into one. I don't know, the jury is out it is based on the Consultation that we will determine what will happen.

Finally, I said finally twice already, finally the **Organizational Structure** to implement this change. I mentioned before that the Corporation administrative structure has not changed from 1970's to now. The human resource capability but the world has changed, project delivery is a science now. For example, the average Corporations had no engineers, they have no quantity surveyors, they have no assets managers, and they have no supply chain managers. These are new skills that you get Ph.D.'s in and if I ask the Public Service Commission do you have supply chain managers in your organization? I am almost certain they may ask what is that. The new organization will reflect the new skill set that we hope to bring to the Corporations. I want to draw the attention of this audience, the Corporation will no longer be an administration the Corporation will be a service delivery unit. At the end of the day what do the people want is not an administration, they want service delivery. As we speak it is not designed to deliver service so you go to the Regional Corporation Office first and foremost and I know Mayaro is included. Half past ten and it have nobody in the office, eight o'clock; Mr. Hazarie say it have a hundred and something casual workers, it has a gang. I have never seen a Regional Corporation gang in Mayaro or in Rio Claro after nine o'clock. You will still see CEPEP, I have never seen a Regional Corporation gang working after nine sometimes before nine. Same in the Ministry of Works you know because we are not delivering the quality of service to the people. We have to train people in Customer Service Representation, you cannot as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago go into a Government office and don't get service. So we're empowering you, giving you money but you have to come scratch in the organization and I will close on this final point. Successive Administrations in Trinidad have invested on an average four hundred to eight hundred million dollars a year on GATE. Right now as we speak there are thousands of bright young graduates out there looking for jobs, most of them are underemployed. I make the point, to these young people under employment is worse than unemployment. They are your children and how would you feel that your child goes to UWI gets a bachelor degree in engineering and you say go ahead and study because it has GATE. They do masters in Project Management and now they feel they could conquer the world and when they look and they see a pavement building, they take their project management skills. But it's not going right and your dear young mind and you're saying something is wrong with Trinidad and Tobago. These are the people we have to bring on board and I make no apologies for what I am about to say. The new staffing arrangement at the level of the Regional Corporation will include to a great extent young graduates coming out of the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the University of the West Indies. You have to make way for the next generation and those of us who are moving on in age now have to hand over power. We are not handing over power to the old generation, we

are handing over power to the next generation because they are extremely capable. We only see the couple lil bandits who shooting up the place but we have a vast cadre of young bright people out there willing to work. They have all the right attitude and that is the people we have to have confidence in now as a nation. Ladies and gentlemen, I have articulated what our plan for Local Government Reform is there will be challenges but we have to have the buying of all. I must say this is the penultimate Consultation the last one will be held on Friday, Diego Martin for which the Prime Minister will attend. Whether it is a PNM run Corporation or UNC run Corporation I cannot say in earnest that we have met any major objection to the reform process. There would be the areas that you would want to see fine-tuned and smoothen out the rough edges, there would be ideas that you would want to incorporate that is not on the plate right now and that is a basis for discussion. In a general sense, I think there is tremendous buying into this process of devolution of empowering the communities to act on their own behalf and to form new Regional Corporations in terms of a new Governance structure. Ladies and gentlemen from Independence to now nothing has changed on Governance in Trinidad and Tobago. This is probably the only fundamental change that is going to take place from 1962 to now. We will be drafting legislation, we will be, amending the Municipal Corporation Act, we will be amending the relevant tax laws. We will be amending section 69 of the Municipal Corporation Act for standing committees and after Friday, the legislative team will be working in earnest to see what type of legislation we will draft. The timetable for this is as follows, Friday is the last Consultation we will prepare a policy document for the approval of Cabinet. That policy document will be the basis in which the legislation is drafted, we will probably have one more round of Consultation. Not as the fourteen Municipal Corporation, probably one in the North, one in the South; we will come to you specifically and say these are the legislative changes we are putting. Hopefully by September early October we'll have an Omnibus suit of legislation in the Parliament very likely in front of a Joint Select Committee. Then October 21st is when Local Government Election is due, we have a three month period in which we can keep the election. Without spilling the beans I want to give you the assurance today that Local Government Election will be held in the year 2016. There is absolutely no question about postponing Local Government Election, it will be held and it will be held before the end of this year. Basically, that is the agenda items and as we pass the legislation we will be putting the new administration into space. Hopefully by 2017 -2018 we will be budgeting along these lines and it will be a gradual transition but I personally have felt proud to lead this charge on behalf of the Prime Minister in particular and the Cabinet and as I said this is the penultimate Consultation. It was a pleasure speaking to you, as I take my seat I will be joined by Ms. Bascombe who is the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and we would be fielding your questions your comments. Bearing in mind that everything you say is recorded, we have top equipment here everything will be transcribed. We have a team that looks through every single spoken word that has been said in every Consultation, distilling it, crystallizing it, reformatting it and nothing is left to chance. We incorporate all the ideas the committee meets and every idea is considered serious and important so once again thank you all very much and it was a pleasure address you here.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Male Participant (Mixed 50s)

Thank you, good night to the Honourable Minister Khan, Minister Rambharat, Member of Parliament, other guest; I just have a few questions, comments, if we are speaking of more autonomy and responsibility and you cited an example of the sport company, then I believe we should disband or dismantle the special purpose companies such as Rural Development, Community Improvement, East Port of Spain, Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprise Limited because these are duplicating the work of the corporation. And if we are looking at the climate, now with scarce resources, that allocation should be directly pumped into the corporation and also seafood industry, especially for the corporations at the coastal areas. So I think we have to look at that seriously, we cannot continue with these special purpose companies; it's inflationary work and again the duplication.

My next point is, one of the issues I think we have, has escaped us as the system to get quality service delivery, is the synergies with the ministries and agencies, especially as it regards to infrastructural development. For instance, I am purposing that we have a quality assurance department at these corporations, to ensure that network and synergy with the Ministry of Work and all other agencies that do, especially infrastructure work, because we have a number of issues across many corporations of substandard and shoddy work, and is a waste of taxpayers' dollars, especially in these times. Going forward, I think we have to move away from the rental of offices, and each corporation I know some have administrative complexes; we have to go the way of housing, accommodating all these corporations, and moving away from that mass expenditure on rental. So basically, I'm also asking, well I know it's a bit early, are we retaining or will we retain the system of proportional representation for the election of aldermen? So basically, I'll go with that for now.

Moderator:

Thank you very much; some very relevant questions Minister; the synergizing of ministries and the work of local government authorities, for example.

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

The quality assurance obviously is part of what I call asset management and that type of skill; whether you have, we so far from that as we speak. If you don't have a quantity surveyor and an engineer to even do your estimates and your design, quality assurance is meaningless in an environment like that but in the reform organization, obviously there will be functionalities in such an area. With regard to the special purpose companies, you are basically right in what you are saying. As we speak there is a committee that is chaired by Dr. Terrence Farrell that is reviewing the role of special purpose companies and to streamline that whole system. Because, again I don't want to bash the last administration too much, but where it's necessary it has to be done; these special purpose companies,

were involved in things without any relevance to what their portfolio was. It was relevant to who the minister was; so in other words, if the minister of local government is a particular gentleman, Palo Seco enterprise limited whose core responsibility is land management of the Petrotrin land asset, went ahead and build bridges and pave road and build pavilions and spend hundreds of millions of dollars for the state. So that is what we are trying to streamline now.

Moderator:

Proportional representation, what is the proposal on that.

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

Again we still in consultations but on the face of it, we have no major objections to the proportional representation used as a basis for the selection of aldermen that was used in the last local government election; whether we will put it beyond that, I doubt very much.

Moderator:

Another point he raised, it appears as if he is suggesting that some of the ministries and government agencies will seed some of their responsibilities to local government. How far do you see that process reaching?

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

Well, it will depend on the legislation and the approval of cabinet but what we are saying, once the cabinet says that this responsibility will now be assigned to local government, the legislators will put it on the schedule, something similar to what they call the fifth schedule in the THA Act, and it will be law. So if you do not comply with the law, you break the law; and when you break the law, there are consequences for breaking the law. So it is as straight forward as that.

Moderator:

Minister, during your presentation you spoke about the funding mechanisms and the fact that these municipalities will be responsible for raising their own revenue; how, and you did speak about the topping-up. How do you see that working realistically? Because certainly a corporation likes Mayaro/Rio Claro, the revenue base is at least going to be different, if not less, than some of the others.

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

Well, we have to work out a matrix; because at the end of the day, all the money is government money. It is just a matter that you having a system as to how you allocate money, but the issue of collecting municipal taxes is a simplified system and it is an applicable system to municipalities' because you benchmarking yourself with the rest of the world. But will that be sufficient to run your corporation? The answer is no, in most instances. So what we have to find is a formula for allocating financial resources. A lot of the question in the consultations, when I spoke highly of the THA, some of the comments that came from the floor, is that THA is mandated in law to get four percent (4%) of the national budget; and if they get the four percent (4%), that is a significant amount for the THA to spend, granted that their schedule is larger. So what certain people in the consultations were trying to impress upon us is that we should probably come up with a formula; something like what the THA has to make the allocations. What we want are the allocations to be transparent because we don't want it to be said that corporation X is getting more money than corporation Y, because corporation X is for the ruling party, and corporation Y is for the opposition and vice versa.

❖ **Leroy...(Male African 60s)**

Good night, I am Leroy...I from Rio Claro here, now I hear you talking about at least, if a contractor building a pavement or he doing something in the area and he come from outside the area and he's doing this work here; what I am saying is, if you get a contractor from here, you should have watchdog, I mean people from the community, that they could able to go to talk if they see shoddy work, they could talk to somebody in the community and say, 'here this now, this what this man is doing is shoddy work.' But if is a man from this area he go say 'I living in Rio Claro, it ain't make sense I doing shoddy work here and I'm living here. You understand me? So you get a man from the area'; sometimes work go on in this area here and man come from outside because I mean they maybe know the minister, they send them. And they doing all kind of thing and when you tell them, they say, 'you can't tell me nothing boy, what you going to tell me, I get work from the boss, you can't tell me nothing.' But if amongst the people here, he comes out of here, you could go to the corporation and say 'here this now, so and so be the case, this man what he doing here, instead of he put five (5) length of steel, you know he put two (2).' You understand me? So you could able to do that.

The next thing is, if you collecting my taxes, I don't mind they collecting my taxes but when you collect my taxes you only fixing one (1) area and you ain't coming by me; that can't work. And next thing is, I'm going to pay a tax but I have to stand up in a long line; that shouldn't be, it should be smooth sailing. Is time that we have educated people, we have people here; smooth sailing. You go to pay your tax, time you reach there you shouldn't be spending two (2) or three (3) hours there to pay your tax. As you reach you slip out; you

have slip areas so that you pay your thing and slip out. Thank you very much; that is my contribution.

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

Well he said exactly what I said with regards to contractors from outside, but I want to warn you, to caution you; that is easier said than done because you cannot discriminate in Trinidad and Tobago.

Moderator:

Now Minister, in previous consultations, people have raised the issue of tax compliance and whether or not, putting these matters in the hands of local government, of municipalities, will ensure that there is a higher level of compliance. Now the gentleman raised an interesting perspective to that which is that sometimes the physical arrangements, the very physical arrangements for making the payments, for example, online payments are not part of our reality as yet. How do you see...

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

Well, what we discussing now here is principle; the next phase is implementation. Obviously, you have to equip the corporations to do it. They have to have a database, they have to have software, they that to have certain things that are similar to what the ministry finance now runs. So there will be challenges as we speak but it is the principle we trying to articulate at this point in time and obviously, the logistics of the implementation will be worked out in due course. I just want to make a point on the headquarters of regional corporations; that is an extremely valid point. In the modernization process for local government there is only one corporation that has headquarters facilities that is commensurate to this, is Chaguanas; beyond Chaguanas there is no corporation, even the Port of Spain City Council and the San Fernando City Council is operating from limited facilities. So we would come up with a very robust plan to build headquarters for these regional corporations.

❖ **Andy Paul (Male African 50s)**

Pleasant good evening to everyone. I am Andy Paul; principal of Mayaro Government Primary School. So, immediately I am going to the area of school repairs. We have a serious challenge presently, where schools are in a dilapidating condition and you really have no one to turn to because you have articulated well, the problems you have with the FCL. What I like to know is if you can explain the real role the regional corporations will, what control they really have and by extension, will the other agencies within the region be assisting. Let me explain: we have had the unfortunate circumstance of approaching another agency

within the constituency and it is very problematic despite we are very thankful for the work they would have done to assist us, but we cannot understand why it is five (5) men, it takes two and a half (2½) weeks to put up four (4) doors in a school. That is beyond my comprehension so, when you go to these, and to add to that, why it is we have to wait for a plumber from this institution since last year and we have plumbing needs that this organization can lend to us. So we would really like to know what role will the other agencies be playing as you look at local government as it pertains to school repairs.

Moderator:

Mr. Paul before you go, another educator at another consultation saw a special role for the expanding municipal policing system. How would you respond to a proposal for reintroducing the concept of 'through and see' officers to keep an eye on the young people who are on the streets after school hours?

Andy Paul

Well I have been saying from the very inception, governments come and governments go, but the day that a government start to pay particular attention to the primary schools we will solve ninety-five (95) percent of the problems we having at the secondary schools. We got to start at the primary schools; we solve it there. I am not saying that you would not have problems at the secondary schools but you will have far less than we are having now. So yes, there is a definite role for them.

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

I just want to tell you that the Prime Minister is of the firm view that what you have said is correct and there will a focus on the primary school in this administration. What, which was the agency that was putting up five (5) posts in five (5) days?

Andy Paul

I prefer not to say that publicly

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

No, the agency, you don't have to call the people name.

Andy Paul

Ministry of Works.

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

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I glad the principal raise that point. There was a time all school repairs was done by the Ministry of Works. There was a time police station, maintenance, the Mayaro police station, the old one on the hill they when you had to go in the yard and they send up capitols and thing to fix it. The service delivery system then was working. What has happen over the years is that the state agencies started to become less and less productive. As a matter of fact, contracts were very few and far between in the 70's, in early 80's and in the in 60's in particular you know. Every single form of maintenance was done, either through the county council or through the ministry of works and transport.

These gangs were disseminated with retirement and we didn't get a next generation of productive workers and that illustrated the general malaise of productivity in Trinidad and Tobago. We use the contract system to try to increase productivity and sometimes you now have to go back and wonder whether the contract system is really increasing productivity; I know what it is increasing, it increasing cost. Because I have seen some studies that show that if you have an efficient maintenance in-house service in these organizations, they will do work at half the price of what it is contracted for. And contractors is in collusion; you have three (3) tenderers, they talk to each other and they come up with a price; it is a mess. The point we are making and is a point I making in a lot of the consultations, ladies, and gentlemen, Trinidad can no longer depend on the bounty of the almighty to survive; by that I mean oil and gas. The days of high oil prices and high gas prices seem to be over for a good while. As a people, our survival will depend on our productivity. Put that in your pipe and smoke it; there's no other way out, and the level of inefficiency, incompetence, and low productivity, those days have to be over.

I call on the union; there are the three (3), four (4) unions that are on the technical committee. The union has a role to play in this. This productivity this is atrociously bad you know. If you go to the private sector and you go to the state sector it is chalk and cheese. And you cannot, if you are unproductive in a global environment as we are in today you don't stand a chance like a snow-cone in hell. So that is all I would say and I want you to go back and spread that message. Productivity, we have to, people come and complain and they quarrel but the very people who complain go back tomorrow morning in the corporation, clock in their card at seven (7) o'clock and by eight (8) o'clock they home. And there is no management system in place to stop that okay. But it is still always my view that productivity is a function of management and why you cannot be productive is because of poor management. Once you get strong management and strong leadership the productivity issue will be addressed. But that is a challenge we face.

Andy Paul

Just one quick thing, will there in this new system, will the corporations be given a budget for school repairs? And finally, let me thank you for your simplicity in your presentation, I think it was very down to earth and we can really relate to it. Thank you so much.

Moderator:

Thank you, Mr. Paul. He asked the question about the budget; will there be a budget line for example, on school repairs in the regional corporations?

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

Well, there will be a budget line in school repairs whether you use it or don't use will be subject, but that will come in your estimates. But you know I wonder, we keep spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year on school repairs and there seems to be no end in sight. But granted schools have much more facilities' now than when I went to school. When I went to school you were satisfied with the basics; the administrative staff in schools now is very complex. Long time was only teachers and principals and students now they have all different type of staff. Long time you had to sweep out the classroom for yourself; now there is janitorial service, there is security service, there are all sorts of thing. And these things take millions of millions of dollars to administer. And yet, at the end of the day, when you go to a school you feel as if things are going right; so there are challenges ahead.

❖ **Nazimool Ali (Male Indian 50s)**

Good night Minister; all protocols observed. My name is Nazimool Ali, originally from Ecclesville; I am from the Rotary club of San Juan, San Juan business association and the Agricultural society of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to raise a few points and give a few comments but firstly I want to tell you that where we are right now, is a more dangerous zone than Laventille in Rio Claro here today. Not because of gang relations, not because of criminal activity but think about if you have an accident or a heart attack; what about the ride to the hospital? Which is the better way to go, San Fernando or Sangre Grande? We have had too many deaths at the Rio Claro health centre from simple heart attack related issues which we were not able to handle properly. I serve as a director in the eastern regional health authority in the past two (2) years and I would like to recommend to you that in your proposals, get the both corporation of Sangre Grande and Rio Claro/ Mayaro to have a say in the RHA and in the health care. Because there are 135 thousand people living on one-third of the country's bandwidth in Acreage and you can see on your map, and you have to remember we have people living here too.

Is not about the east/west corridor or the north/south because of the oil. Now that we have a harbour in Galeota, maybe you forget, all the pipe pass on this road. The number one agricultural access road in this country is the Naparima/ Mayaro road; look at the condition. We cannot any longer tolerate that and if it has, I mean, by the time you reforming things, I giving you things to deal with now. We can't get a hospital I have asked for two (2) helipads; one (1) in Mayaro for heart patients and burn victims maybe from Galeota, one (1) Toco for drowning victims and snake bites. When I brought a proposal to the RHA it was 400 thousand dollars each. We have helicopters to do everything else we are not asking for an

ambulance, we know we can call on the army to move a patient; these are people living here.

I want to point out to you that the EMBD was in charge of agricultural access roads. This is an agricultural cultural constituency and from here to Toco, ninety percent (90%) of the people depend on agriculture. How long are we going to wait for the agricultural access roads program to be accelerated? The people here have nothing else to live by. Right now I spoke to Minister Clarence here today, the cocoa board has been disbanded for almost two (2) years. You have two (2) million pounds of cocoa hanging on trees, nobody buying cocoa right now because they can't sell. What are we doing to create that income for these people here? Are we going to legalize marijuana now in Trinidad so maybe that may be the next avenue? Because I am telling you if they don't get it one (1) way they going to get it the other. And I am saying to you, you need to address this apart from the consultation, and the long-run effectiveness of everything. And if you have people signing on at seven (7) and leaving at eight (8) or nine (9) Minister, you are in charge. I will call on you to be accountable for the time them people leave; PS, start clocking them. Is 168 hours in a week, you working for 40 but you accounting for 14 hours and we suppose to take that? Five (5) thousand people get send home from the steel mill. Maybe you have to set the example if you want service now? So on behalf of all our colleagues who are afraid to speak, I am saying to you, is way beyond the call of duty I know that you have to respond too but I wish you take into context what we are saying.

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

Yes, the points are well made. I will probably have a discussion with the Minister of Health because health doesn't really fall under local government but your point of access in terms of emergency; because emergency management is a fundamental part of planning as we speak; all over the world. So helicopter access is something probably that is worth consideration because a human life is nothing to play with and your point is well received. With regards to agricultural, agriculture access roads, the Prime Minister, if I should say so, has put a lot of faith in myself and Minister Rambharat to deal with these rural issues. To deal with agricultural access roads, to deal with agriculture production, to deal with making agriculture a business to make sustainable employment for communities and we are working closely and trust me we have vested interest in Mayaro, Moruga, Toco, Sangre Grande. And these are the rural communities you are right a hundred thousand people live in one-third of the island, okay. And it is a lot of open space; there's a tremendous amount of potential. It is the first time you have a government that is taking a laser beam look at these communities to come up with solutions for them. So give us a little more time and you will start to see some positive things happening.

❖ **Lewis Jack (Male African 60s)**

Good night, my name is Lewis Jack; Mayaro. Something for the past three (3) years, three (3) months here, you have ten (10) youths coming to me every day and I hear we talking

about educating youths, we have plenty educated youths in the country and these brothers I ain't hear nothing talk about agriculture. These brothers come to me and ask me if I could see the Minister and ask him about land that they could get some parts of land somewhere that they could plant. And so to eliminate the concords and what-so-ever snag in the school so they could plant vegetables that they could produce to the schools. It shocking to me to see that these brothers have that eye because as Minister say no oil again you know, no oil. So let we go to the land; let we plant it. Give the land to the youths; educate the youths and give the land to the youths. This is my contribution tonight.

Moderator:

Yes Minister, what the gentleman is suggesting as well, and if I can give it local government slant or a municipal, is that the coordinating of food production activities in the region; feeding into the school feeding program and other things like that.

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

As we speak there is a plan with the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Education that we are going to virtually make the menu on the school feeding program, almost entirely local, save and except some basic things like wheat and certain aspects of rice and vegetables, but it will be transformed into a local diet. It will be eliminating a lot of the processed foods and it will be more trying to bring back the young people into liking local things; liking cassava, liking sweet potato, liking breadfruit, liking even fruits because when I went to Mayaro Government, recess time we pelting down mango in the cocoa, okay and mango was your snack; whether is green mango with pepper and salt or ripe mango or sapodilla, had a big sapodilla tree. Now you just going and buy potato chips, plantain chips, a corn curls, or an Ole, some pack of process things. So the whole concept of fruits has to come back; there is nothing derogatory about sucking a mango recess time. So all these are cultural changes because remember the bombardment of foreign culture is what has 'confuffle' our mind as a people you know. And the children now has to go back to these basic concepts. And sometimes hard times coming on a family or coming on a nation does do a lot of good you know because it puts you back into perspective as to what life really is about. And I think Trinidad has a golden opportunity now to use this little downturn to reassess our value system and chart a way forward as a people.

❖ **Bunny Lynch (Male African 60s)**

My name is Bunny Lynch I representing the Mayaro/Rio Claro Lion's Club as their president. A pleasant good night to all the government ministers, local corporation and everyone. Minister Khan, I want to get back to item three (3) on your agenda; I must say that you did present and your presentation was well defined and I love it. However, on accountability I want to turn the table a little bit here; on accountability you are handing over a lot of powers to this local government and I am saying here that with the auditor general, will

there be a review rather than waiting four (4) years when they are gone from office that this could be done before they leave office. Simple, thank you.

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

That is a very valid point Bunny but we have no direct jurisdiction over the auditor general and how fast they will do their audits. But what I am contemplating seriously is that the Ministry of Finance set up a dedicated audit department just to do online and real-time auditing of the regional corporations because you cannot hand over so much autonomy, so much privilege, so much power and so much funds and there are not checks and balances. They'll be implementing new procurement legislation within the next couple months; they will also be guided by that.

And really and truly we must have a system of complaints that has to come in through this audit departments because the best macho is the people because you do know when you pass on a project and something not happening right here. You don't even have to have access to all the papers; you see how the contracts stumble along the way and you know things are not going right there. Classic example is the Point Fortin highway; if you drive down the creek and saw what was happening you know something wasn't going right with that contract. Okay so, the people, I will be there but I take your point that auditor general is insufficient to have oversight and we will be working on another system.

Moderator:

Any thought been given, and PS perhaps you can address this in your response, to some process of internal auditing?

➤ **Response from Ms. Desdra Bascombe the Chairwoman of the Technical Committee:**

Yes, there will also be a system of internal control. The technical committee is currently looking at the establishment of each corporation and we are building in auditing committees as well as internal auditors. So there'll be internal auditors and well as the external auditor who is the auditor general; plus we are quite cognizant of the possibilities' of too much devolution.

❖ **Louis Castillo (Male African 50s)**

Good night to the Honourable Minister Khan, Parliamentary representative Mr. Parry, Minister and Senator for Agriculture, Minister Clarence Rambharat. The name Louie Castillo and I'm the President of Rio Claro Unemployment Association. I heard you talk about different structures in the reform but I ain't hear you say much about employment practices in the corporation. One (1), nine (9) on this service sheet, do you think that the government, selected local government, they need training? Yes, I support that and I believe they need training from all now. We can't wait until the consultation take place because after the election is passed they choose to serve who they want and leave the citizens of Trinidad and

Tobago. They only time we are equal here is when is time for the survey; every creed and race find an equal place because is a head count.

When is time for employment in the corporation it sad, it sad. When we come and talk to a Minister and we tell the Minister we need some employment the Minister say boy my hands are tied; but a dispatcher in the corporation could pull in he whole family, right. The Councillor could go and hire a whole village; now we have four (4) Councillors up here, four (4) ministers. We have the minister, the representative from Mayaro, Minister Parry; we have the Minister of agriculture Minister, we have the Minister of Local Government and we also have the Minister of Killdeer, you understand, because Killdeer gets everything; we have the Minister of Killdeer too, right. So I want to know what is for the reform; and what is the employment practices and how we will be looking into this? Because at the end of the day the more youths get employed is the less man I have to give a twenty (20) dollars out they, right and that is my concern.

Because when it look on the streets even though they sweeping in the evening check and see who it is. Who coming to clean up for the corporation? Check and see who it is, right. It has plenty other youths on the streets there and they are not making it known when these opportunities are being made available so you could come and apply so everybody could get some oil on the table too, so understand. So let we look into that, they need the training to deal with people. Everybody living here; every creed and race find an equal place and let we put party politics away and look to get the man on the streets some employment too. That is one bandit we go get less of.

Moderator:

So sir would be concerned, therefore, given what you said, that the new system might be giving too much power and authority to the individual representatives.

Louis Castillo

If the employment practices stay the same, that is too much power in one (1) hand.

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

That's a touchy one because you really have to end up asking who is going to guard the guards and at some point in time you have to have confidence in people and the best way to have confidence in people is to vote for them; that is what democracy is all about. But what I will also say because I wear another cap; I'm the chairman of the party that is celebrating 60 years in office as a political institution tomorrow. It is, with this reform exercise, with the empowerment, with the execute authority, with the new mandate for funds, with your ability to collect taxes and spend the taxes on your community; it is a tremendous responsibility that now falls in the hands of the Councillor. So it is incumbent on the political parties to offer to the population a Councillor of a particular calibre; of integrity, knowledge and expertise to handle the job.

While a Councillor will need some training while he is elected into office, this is not a job you are applying for you know, this is a position you are elected into office. And if you feel you do not have what the skill sets require to execute that job effectively you should not offer yourself or if at a minimum you offer yourself, your party should not select you and impose you on the people. So it is incumbent on the party now to streamline the screening exercise so that you could get the right set of people to represent you at the level of the local corporation. But having said that, somebody at a previous consultation said you suppose to have a degree to be a Councillor. From the way you talk I say no; according to the constitution, you can seek public office once you are eighteen (18) years and do not have a police record. So you cannot set academic criteria for the selection of Councillors but you'll have a screening exercise that will give you the capacity of the person.

And I want to draw your attention a fact, that two of the best legislators, administrators, and ministers that this country has produced which is Kamaluddin Mohammed and Errol Mahabir, came through the local government system, none of them had degrees. They have gone down in history as two (2) of the best ministers, Kamaluddin Mohammed in particular who acted as Prime Minister for Dr. Eric Williams on several occasions. Jarret Narine, a former minister agriculture came through the local government system, okay. Esmond Forde is now deputy speaker of the house; he came from through the local government system. Anthony Garcia who is not the Minister of Education, a former principal of Fatima College; he came through as a Councillor from Arima. So there is a lot of calibre that exist in that capacity and there is a lot of shining lights in the local government system and there are a lot of people who can now establish careers in local government system and with the hope of using that as a stepping stone to get into national politics and the central government system, okay so.

Louie Castillo

Yes, one more thing Minister, you say this mosquito virus that going around, the Zika, and people should clean up their premises and their lot and thing around; now I have an abandoned estate in the back of me and I come to the corporation on several occasion for they to get the owner to cut it and lower the brush because all the rodents and reptiles coming on my property. I went several occasions they tell me they can't find the man and this; I ask them they suppose to cut it and send the bill to the gentleman. Is that not still part of the corporation's duties to clean these place with this virus going around?

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

It is, yes.

Louie Castillo

Well up to now that place still abandon. The last time I went in the corporation they have to call the police to put me out and all kind of thing like I don't know my constitutional rights.

So the chairman here, I don't know how he could answer to that because on several occasions I come to them with that problem and the bush still they.

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

Well, I don't want to protract that conversation but in the context of the Zika, empty lots that are not maintained, the risk there is not the vegetation you know, is the risk there are receptacles that could be existing under the grass, like old tins and saucers and bottles and what have you. So other words, not because of Zika you go in Cat's Hill and cut down everything and say you cleaning up Cat's Hill; Cat's Hill is a natural forest, okay, but we are focusing on residential lots that are overgrown, that have the potential to have receptacles.

Louie Castillo:

I living in a housing scheme, so I need the corporation, advise me how I can go about it to get the corporation to deal with this matter.

Moderator:

Thank you, Mr. Castillo, well the chairman is here and I hope that he's taking careful note of what you have said.

❖ **Viola Age'Archer (Female, African, 60s)**

Good night, I am Viola Age'Archer...I am here speaking on behalf of myself and probably the villagers who will observe what I am about to say. I am looking at two (2) social points. I have worked at the regional corporation for over a year, as a public servant; now I am retired and I notice something there. As they said before, by ten (10) o'clock the workers are out; I am here talking from clerk four (4) go back down from when I was there. They are drunk; yes! And this, I am not talking now from the top of my head, I am talking because I know this; I would want to see two (2) things happen. One (1), we need to have an AA branch in the area, between Rio Claro and Mayaro, one (1) and the other one (1), I will say this as a villager who has no interest in any political post; when we look at yesteryear we will look at the Councillors like John Warwick, Guava, and these people.

Remember, Mayaro did not only have one (1) Councillor for Mayaro/Guayaguayare but when you look at the other areas on the Rio Claro end you see so many Councillors there. It is a lopsided thing and I wish you would look at this and try to do something about it; because that lone Councillor cannot furnish from Guayaguayare to Ortoire, good grief, he can't do it. So I wish we would come back to how we were in the past; then people would have more responsibility in smaller dosage and I believe it will be a lot more workable. That is my contribution.

Moderator:

Thank you very much; by AA, you meant absentee anonymous?

Viola Age'Archer

Alcoholics Anonymous.

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

She made a very valid point that's worth consideration, in terms of the number of Councillors because the number of Councillors is chosen by the population of your electoral district. So there is an average that the EBC sets it works within that framework but then geography should also be a consideration. Because if you representing a paisley populated area the geography just gets unmanageable and Mayaro Guayaguayare Councillor, Kyron James suffers from that. Terry Rondon which is Toco's fishing pond; suffers from that. I think Terry probably has the latest electoral district in Trinidad; it is from Matelot to Fishing Pond you know, including all of the north/eastern seaboard. So it is something that should be taken into consideration and it is a point that I think the technical committee should take a note of; I see the Chief Parliamentary council is taking a note. Very, very good point Ms. Archer.

➤ **Response from Ms. Desdra Bascombe the Chairwoman of the Technical Committee**

And she also made another important and interesting point about being drunk on duty; those officers could be the subject of a disciplinary charge but far too often as supervisors we are failing to supervise. We want to be friends with everybody and that just cannot take us into the future ladies and gentlemen.

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

Yes, let me just make a point on that; a lot of the negative comments throughout these fourteen (14) consultations, came towards Councillors, okay. And some of it may be justified and some of it may not be justified but in doing my own research, I have come to the conclusion that the public servants and the administration are very culpable in these matters, okay. And while you cannot discipline Councillors because they are elected, you can't fire them because if you fire them you just fired them except you catch them in corruption that the police could charge them, but there are a lot of administrative remedies that exist in the public service that the PS and I will have to talk very seriously about. Because it is a recurring decimal in all corporations of absenteeism, indiscipline, lack of productivity and that is a frown and look now alcohol anonymous in the office, which means it has drunk people working, okay, plain and simple. I know for a fact, by 10 o'clock men come out to the bar, take a nip and they gone back to the office. These things happen in some of these corporations and ladies and gentlemen, these things have to stop.

❖ **Roger Morales (Male, Mixed 50s)**

Pleasant good night; Yes, Mr. Roger Morales, the acting Vice Principal of Rio Claro East Secondary School, that is here. So I just wanted to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Rambharat, yourself, Mr. Rushton Paray, Mr. Hazarie and others. Now one of the things I noted quite clearly in your contribution was that the contribution of the Minister was that the emphasis on ensuring that local government encompasses provisions of services and facilities and so on for school, educational institutions. Now, if you cast your eyes on the roof of this auditorium here you will see certain things that are not looking very good and they bear silent but grim testimony to the fact the EFCL is not really doing what they suppose to do. This was a project that was reported to the EFCL many times; nothing has been done.

The school has a basketball court in the back but it cannot be used because there are some issues there with that. There are also cricket nets, cannot be used, issues with that. There's the creation grounds at the back here which has a lot of other issues, cannot be used. And very recently we learnt that there was this major consultation on discipline in schools, trying to find out reasons why children misbehave or why; what can we do to solve the problem? I am saying if the education ministry envisions a range of educational experiences for children and they are denied the opportunity to have extra and co-curricular activities because of the absence of facilities then that itself can be a contributor to some of these problems.

And if it is the local government initiative to improve local government, is actually saying you know what, since these schools belong to the community, the children who go there belong to the community, the stakeholders who should form the school, the significant others; yes those stakeholders are from the community; then what happens? You have people actually ensuring that their school produces the type of citizens that they will want to live next door to; who wouldn't be criminals who wouldn't be creating the type of problems we are experiencing today. But if you have an institution that is supposed to take care of these issues and not doing it then it is failing. And I am saying that what we need to do, out of all the other reforms that have to be taken, you take into consideration not only the provision of the physical infrastructure and facilities but also things like substitute teachers.

Transportation is also another major issue in these areas here, for example: I had the experience of being in QRC an evening, waiting for someone and there were guys on the field training, some were playing basketball, some were, I think some literary debating club, some were doing home lessons, others were all over the place and yet so many co-curricular activities happening way after school hours because transportation was accessible and there was maybe arrangement where things can happen. In these areas what happen, as the school dismisses you have the school buses line up there waiting and the children have to go home because they have no other form of transportation; after a certain hour, you are not going to get any.

So if on the local government level you can also make arrangements for those students who are attending the clubs, the extra and co-curricular activities, the things that actually make up a school apart from just the academics, then we can ensure that the people in the area

take care of persons who actually mean something; that is their people. When you have things decentralized, when you have the actual control and the mechanics of government decentralized from the area; what happens? You have people who are not concerned and if even they are not concerned the real grim reality, the stark reality doesn't face them.

So I'm saying here today, I hope that this is not just another talk shop. I hope it materializes into something and hope that politics is not played with this issue; both sides it is a bipartisan effort. And one of the concerns I also noted was that you mentioned the whole idea of how are the minorities or the persons who are not represented by major parties within the corporation; how will they be addressed? I suggest sir that we have a national committee oversight, which will deal with matters, in a sense arbitrate where some people feel that they are unfairly treated because sometimes people just talk like how my friend spoke their earlier and nothing happens. So we are saying we should have a national, the oversight should, the central government should give the responsibility, yes, but they should have oversight to ensure that things are done properly and hold people accountable for the roles that they should play. How it is envisioned I think it is a very, very good idea and I think we should work together to ensure that it comes out in the best way possible.

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

You made some valid points, you have to understand that rural communities will have certain disadvantages that don't exist in urban communities; the transportation system for example. If you're playing football in QRC after school there is no question about you getting transport to go home. If you in Rio Claro East, there is a challenge; we are working on a rural transportation policy but there are constraints to that because again is the volume. You cannot expect PTSC to send a bus here and wait for four (4) children. It is just par for the cost and we have to come to terms with certain aspects for freeness; in education, in particular, I make no apologies for it. When I went to school I have to pay my passage to reach to school, I had to buy my books, my mother had to pack a lunch, and everything. Now a child gets a maxi to drop him or her to schools, they have breakfast, they have lunch, they have school books, they have a teaching staff, they have an ancillary staff, they have security, they have all sorts of things and for some strange reason, the education is not happening. So it is not a matter of pumping more resources and more money into the education system. Something has to be fundamentally wrong in how it is structured and administered and what have you; in term of curriculum planning, in terms of teacher dedication, all these sorts of thing. You have reached a limit of the freeness and now you say now get transport for children who have to stay back and play football; I mean it makes no sense.

Roger Morales:

Sir, sir what I want to say is this, I hope you get me correctly, what I was saying that the local government reform will ensure that responsibility is taken right here because you did mention they will be raising their own taxes. Now what I am saying is that we talk about equity; the children in south-eastern and competing in the same way as the children from

any part of Trinidad and Tobago; and this is what governance is about, solving those problems.

Moderator:

Okay, I think at the very start you had made a suggestion in terms of community involvement in the management of the schools so perhaps the local government system can ensure that there is this connection between communities and the schools and how the schools are managed in totality.

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

But that is there through the local school boards.

Roger Morales:

But what I am saying we talking about decentralization of functions at the local government level. Substitute teachers; I have a daughter in the UK that stepped out of the classroom for two (2) minutes and there was another teacher there when the other teacher stepped out. In Trinidad we have classes, is a problem. What I am saying is that I am dealing with education here and I am saying, let the locals, let us solve our problems here. Let us have committees on the school board; let us have the Councillors, let everybody sit down and say what is best for our children here in south-eastern. Let us bring these to you sir because what is happening here tonight may not be everything and let us solve the problem. If this thing comes into being and I hope it does that we can have some real intelligent input and I'm willing to be a part of it, sir. So thank you very much.

❖ **Gary Dickson (Male Indian 60s)**

I am a retiree from the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation worked there 33 years, do a monthly paid job for 23 years, retired as a daily paid worker and after three years I am still waiting for some of my payment. I write the Ministry, no response the people in there cold and impersonal like vending machines, the blue machine does talk to you friendlier. I mean is three years now I retire and waiting for my money that real bad you know. However when I heard about the Reform I went back to the Green Paper from Mrs. Hazel Manning and the vision and mission. The vision states sustainable local communities rooted in the principle of robust participative democracy, embracing all. Your mission states, to facilitate the transformation and modernization of local communities by empowering citizens who participate in the decision-making process. Now based on the practical experiences I had with the Council at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation I could tell you none of this wouldn't apply. There are so many projects that I can quote and show you that it failed miserably because it was the Councillor's desire that was his legacy. Fonrose two million dollars, well it useless it can only hold fifty people, the community didn't want that. On the 18th of October 2011 the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional, six Councillors with the Chairman had

a public consultation about the Rio Claro Recreation Ground. They agreed not to build the Pavilion, they said money was a problem. We requested a full international size playfield with proper drainage and that was the first step. They started the work in 2012 and at that time the oil was about one hundred dollars a barrel and the project was twelve billion dollars, five years later watch the project. They compromised the entire project the size of the playfield it smaller because the Minister wanted to build a Pavilion. Everything that they agreed on in the consultation they didn't do it, something completely opposite. It has projects in this region that it had no need for so how it is we are going to participate in that decision-making process when you have all the authority under the Act. I don't see how this community will benefit from Local Government Reform if these people we continue to elect, you know manage it like their own personal business.

Moderator

So the question to you Minister is - how do you convert the will of the communities through Local Government.

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

Well, there have to be systematic systems in place, I don't know the specific issues that face the Rio Claro Recreation ground but on the face of it, I cannot see you spending twelve million dollars on no Recreation Ground to say to make it a full size and don't have a pavilion. Where would people come? What you're playing for yourselves? You must play for spectators but besides that, that is not the issue the issue is what is consultation and how effective will consultation be. Now let me just guard you against one thing if you want to do some project in Rio Claro and you say you're having a consultation. Do you know who are the people who will come out and invade the consultation? Is those who will oppose the project you know. Those who are for the project may not show the level of interest because the anger of the people is the anger of those who oppose the project. More often than not, in some of these consultations you go you always have the anti-view taking place. That is something we have to work our way through because it happens all the time. The people oppose to what is about to be done they are the antagonist who always come out and say don't so the project.

Gary Dickson

What I said is what they agreed on in the consultation they did contrary to that, that is what I said. They agreed with the public that this is what we're going to do.

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

But my concern goes beyond that because after four years Rio Claro Recreation Ground still in a mess.

Gary Dickson

Ahh! That is my concern too and in terms of my payment, I would really like your assistance with it.

❖ **Karen (Female African 50s)**

Pleasant goodnight, I am from Guayaguayare Mr. Khan the problem is bus service for the children from Guayaguayare like the bus does pass like 6:30 in the morning. One bus comes to Guayaguayare it is for the children and adults especially the children who coming to Rio Claro. I don't know if we could get a better service for the children because when you reach Mayaro on a morning children does be there all 8:30 am and school calls 8:30am. If we can get a bus service I feel it will be better for the children because when they come late that showing up on their thing so if they could get a better service for the children who coming to Rio Claro. Another thing is....

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

And to Grande is it okay for the children going to Grande?

Karen

Yes, the children going to Grande they have a bus but the other thing is that Newlands Guayaguayare I don't know what happened with the community centre. They break it down and I don't know, something happened it had a contractor he started and I don't know what is the problem. If you can look into it for us please because we don't have a community centre.

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

That is Newlands community centre.

Karen

Yes, Newlands community centre.

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

I think PSA was supposed to build that if I am not mistaken.

Karen

Yeah but one guy was supposed to do it and he didn't get to do it, they shut him down so if you can do that for us, please.

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

Okay, yeah and the bus service

Karen

And the bus service; thank you very much.

❖ **Stanislaus Ottley (Male African 60s)**

Goodnight Minister, goodnight Councillors, members and people present here tonight. I know the Minister Mr. Franklin Khan very good when I used to play football within First Division in Mayaro and I welcome you here tonight. I wanna come straight to a point, I have worked on four projects major sporting facilities in Trinidad and Tobago. National Stadium, Mayaro Complex and I could go on and on and none of the projects were completed. As a consultant none of the projects were completed through, I don't know if to say effective communication or accountability. Also, I'll give you a little example of where I am from; Shell Recreation Ground I had to leave Shell to go to meet Mayaro United National Team both football and cricket. I became a qualifier umpire and a qualifier referee. For the past twenty-five years, Shell is seeing a major problem even up to now. I have done a four by six box drain it was never completed on behalf of the County Council. Right now our lights are going on we have to report it to T&TEC which should not be and would like whoever is in power or whoever is in-charge to take these things very seriously. Because I can talk for documents where I had to sign documents on behalf of my company for bad works through contractors. Contractors getting work they are not paying the sub-contractors that they employee and they are the contractors. Going in the areas like Danbury Hill, Laventille, Diego Martin, Point and certain areas and the contractors cannot go there to work. They have their employed people from the village, all the contractors can do is send supervisors but all workers must come from the village. I won't go further more on those contracts because I have been in experience with it and it's a lover in my life and I love myself the most so that I can love people. Another thing is to say where education is concerned why it is today like when I was going to school if I reach late I had to stretch my hands and let the teacher inspect my fingers and get two rulers. Where is the guidance of our teachers? Are they not our children's parents from school until school over?

Moderator

Mister, Local Government, can you provide a link to Local Government? We are talking about Local Government Reform this evening.

Stanislaus Otley

Well, it falls under Local Government because my Ground in Shell twenty-five years and thirteen years have never been used. Just material park-up on the Ground, toady we get lights and what is happening.

Moderator

So how would you propose the system being changed to ensure these kinds of things don't happen?

Stanislaus Otley

I think the Minister had a very good point tonight on the Local Government new systems that they put out and I hope we don't because don't matter what you do maybe there will be somebody in the organization who will spoil it thank you.

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

The issue of Shell Recreation Ground is unadulterated incompetence and also mismanagement of Rio Claro Recreation Ground. That ground has been on the card and a lot of millions spent there, the Ground is badly sighted in terms of the topography of the land so is a lot of retaining wall to hold the back of the Ground. Added to which if you playing cricket and the boundary line is right next to the wall you can't run down a ball going for four because you will capsize over, you understand. The Ground is just badly designed, obviously, the idea maybe was to make it the Regional headquarters of Grounds in the Rio Claro/Mayaro Region. The issue of Recreation Grounds is something I would pay a special focus on; Mayaro Recreational Ground in a mess okay. There is no Pavilion, the Ground fence around and one of the points I wanted to raise. Why fence around a Ground when there is no intention to charge? Because when you fence something you're making it into a mini stadium and a mini stadium means that it is paid facilities so that if you have a key game or a premier league game you would pay to do it. But what happened over the years is that we're taking rural Grounds putting up these block fence on it and you're taking away the greenery from the sight of the population. You go to England and you go to rural England and is just greens and the Ground and you see people playing football and cricket and there is no fence around the Ground. Those fences start when you had no tethering of animals you know, when cattle use to come and put down their hoofs in the raining season and when is football and it dries back yuh break yuh foot when you're playing football. But there are no wild cattle nobody grazes animals on Grounds anymore. There is absolutely no basis to fence a ground except you want it to operate as a mini stadium so all these are really from the old days but in terms of recreational facilities this Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation is very much wanted. Your three main Grounds are Mayaro, Shell and Rio Claro, where Guaya United does play in Guaya? La Savanne well La Savanne is not bad, I see Poole - not Poole, Union has a fairly good Ground it is very well maintained it is lit and couple others but it's some work the Corporation has to do.

❖ **Doodnath Jaimungal, San Pedro Road, Poole (Male, Indian , 60s)**

Good afternoon, I would like to draw a very important problem that is taking place. I wrote the Minister letter but apparently I didn't get any response so I am going to read what I wrote on the 5th of January. I would like to draw to your attention of a Health problem between light Poole 34 and 35 at San Pedro Road in Poole Rio Claro in which a contractor is dumping garbage in front of my home. This area is a residential area with children and the elderly living. The Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation truck together with other contractors dump old stove, fridges, galvanize, old barrels, washing machines, electrical appliances and other water-collecting containers. This garbage comes from the whole of Nariva/Mayaro, Guayaguayare, Mayaro, Biche, Navet you name it. The Chairman of the Corporation is aware of this situation because his truck is dumping garbage there also, what a gross discourse of injustice. This is an ideal breathing place for Dengue Fever mosquitoes, there is also rats, cockroach, snakes and a lot of flies and it's disgusting. You can't even eat your food in peace, my children and grandchildren can't even visit me because they are afraid of the health risks involved with these dangerous insects and animals. This dump is less than 100 feet from my home and it is a very dangerous situation, it is a health hazard to visitors, children, and an eyesore to the general public, it is unsightly to visitors. I would like it to be relocated to some other place, I would appreciate it very much if you would assist in this very dangerous situation. It was reported to the health department in Rio Claro and the Regional Corporation to relinquish the dump but nothing was done. The Chairman and the CEO of the Corporation ignoring the advice of the health inspector Mr. Lalloo to relocate the dump. Chairman and CEO how can you allow a dump in the middle of a residential area, is it because of money? Come on man have a heart nah we are folks too. How can you take garbage from in front other people's home and dump it in front of my home?

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

The issue the gentleman has raised needs to be reinvestigated because he is claiming that white waste is being collected throughout the Mayaro/Rio Claro Region and it is being placed in a dumpsite close to his house. If that is a valid claim the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation can be accused of entertaining an illegal dumpsite because there are only three legal dump sites in Trinidad Claxton Bay, Beetham, and Heights of Guanapo. You cannot look for an empty spot and dump, especially white waste because white waste is a receptacle for mosquitoes. If that is the practice Mr. Chairman I would suggest that you all desist from it.

➤ **Chairman Councillor Hazarie Ramdeen for Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation**

It falls under the Public Health Department, we are the Corporation. The Chairman of the Health Department is here. We stopped immediately asked the gentleman to move it out from there and that is the most the Chairman can do.

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

So is illegal dumping that is taking place there?

➤ **Chairman Councillor Hazarie Ramdeen for Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation**

He has no right to dump it I support him, get rid of it so we stop it.

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

No well then put up a sign and send a police officer now and then to see who is dumping.

➤ **Chairman Councillor Hazarie Ramdeen for Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation**

They went in and they checked it okay; so he was told to remove it within one week time.

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

Okay.

❖ **Julianna Archer, Mayaro (Female African 50s)**

Good evening, all protocols observed, I'll get straight to the point, one seeing that the revenue from land taxes and house taxes would be collected by the Corporation now and be used for further development of the community. Can there be measures put in place to assist persons who may not have their property title updated? Currently, in Mayaro, we are seeing persons that are occupying land that is not their own. Persons that own the land may not have the finances to get their land title in order so for the purpose of collecting revenues that are not being collected at this point if person's land taxes are properly or are in order then that is a potential revenue that the local area is not collecting. The second thing can these agencies Local Government or the agency then notify persons because for example my family during the Panday Administration period, there is a piece of property nine acres in Guaya that were put under real property ordinance if persons are acquainted with what it means. And actually, Petrotrin took ownership of the land and leased the land to a contractor. When we went to Petrotrin Head Office to find out what is going on because we've been paying the land taxes for it, right not because of convenience we've updated basically the titles on the property. What I wanted to know can the Local Government be notified once a Government agency wants to take possession of land seeing that the taxes are paid in the Local Revenue Offices. They should have an idea of who are the persons who are making the most recent land tax payments and notify these people. I can't understand how a state agency without consulting Local Government and the owners of the land can then take ownership and refuse to deal with them when they come and

send legal letters to these people. One last suggestion seeing that there is an issue of accountability can there be a central audit unit? And they can have independent officers placed in each Corporation because you see that whole thing about accountability it needs to be handled by an independent group of individuals not individual. A group of individuals within the agencies so if we see any sort of discrepancies they can then call an alarm and notify their head agency Thank You.

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

I think your final point is a very good point, you need a central audit division that is external to the Corporation. That is why you have external auditors and that has gotten a lot of traction in the Committee. With the issue of land that is beyond the remit of this meeting but the state cannot acquire private land, there are only two ways the state can take land is by private treaty or by compulsory acquisition through the Parliament. So something is wrong with the title and let me just clear up something here there are a lot of country people who believe once you paying land taxes the land is yours. The land could only be yours through a Legal Title okay. A lot of people use to run and pay taxes and say well I pay taxes on this land for the last couple years and assume that to mean that you own the title. I know the Mayaro land has challenges and there is a guy called Gomez who say he own the whole of Mayaro and that petered out into nothing after a while. There are issues about land which is not the remit of this consultation.

❖ **Wendell Perez (Male African 40s)**

Goodnight to the head table, Minister, Permanent Secretary, to the Member of Parliament, to the Chairman of the Regional Corporation and The Minister of Agriculture. I am the President of the Mayaro Boys Sports Club, some of the points were covered already so I'll just be very brief. One of the things is Local Government and we're talking about service how do we access in terms of we are hearing terms which are talking from a policy perspective but what we are talking about down to the ordinary citizen. How do we access that service and how are we informed of the services that are afforded through the Local Government? I mean that may sound very shallow but am saying that in the sense that one of the questions that were given to me and coming to hear by a student of the SEA Class, SEA next week Thursday is that: Mr. Perez what does Local Government do for me? So I just wanted to add that into the mix we talk about service, how do we as citizens of this region because it's the Mayaro/Rio Claro Region Corporation. Mayaro being the County Rio Claro being a Town and the Chairman of the Corporation has the most difficult work because this area this region encompasses so many different things so many different aspects. Not just the topography in terms of the distance and the land space but we talking about agriculture from different walks of life all coming to one alright. If we look at the Mayaro area for me and those in my group we say the number one issue is erosion, sea coast erosion. If we ask someone in Rio Claro their number one issue might be unemployment so I mean it is great.

Another one that we need to look at is in terms of the now we are talking about so many inefficiencies now what we want is that clear part that going forward what happens who do we address the concerns. Some of the concerns raised here can we in terms of that Local Government make it accessible that we can send those questions in terms of real-time and get responses. Let me just give an example on the Naparima Mayaro Road just entering Ecclesville there is a piece of construction going on the rain has started slightly. How does that in terms of the Regional Corporation in terms of Governing that piece of structure because it looks like someone is diverting the course of that river and when the rain comes what is going to happen. I just want to make the point - how we bring service which is one of the things on the board here and how we let the people of the region know of that service and access that service.

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

Very good point we happen to reach there as yet, there was a program in the Ministry of Local Government that was about to be started which was called the 211 project which was a centralized system to take complaints and to give online responses to it. We have aborted that project largely because it is a centralized system so that system has to be decentralized into the Regional Corporation but it is something that would be taken into consideration. Also, I spoke about customer service. I am forecasting a customer service desk in each Corporation that you could come and make inquiries to pleasant people so they can guide you through the system there is no system that when you come into the Corporation and there are Customer Service representative saying good day sir, how are you where do you come from, what can we do for you. The person can sit down and give you a genuine hearing as to what your issues are and then they can channel you through who to see, what to see and what to do. So I think that customer service area is a critical area in service delivery.

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

At the peripheral Consultation, the issue of an Ombudsman was raised and that is something, not an official Ombudsman but somebody who would follow up your complaint if you're having an issue with the Corporation.

❖ **Tamara Sudama, Rio Claro (Female Indian 30s)**

Good evening everyone, I have two concerns I know you mentioned the intention to introduce a Town Hall structure with this Consultation and the Reform. My question is would this be applicable to the residential developments being done by the HDC and the LDC and so on. The second thing is you brought up the point with minority interest and people who will be holding all this responsibility who are elected are linked to some political party. We expect these parties to produce a calibre of candidates who will be representing

us. But it all comes down to political will; everyone will think their project is more important than the other so my thing is what if we take the politics out of the Local Government? We have persons who are unbiased, who are professionals in these areas and they are the ones who are responsible for allocating projects.

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

Very positive thoughts from a young person but you know there is a calypso I think Sparrow has sung with a Bajan and a Trinidadian and when they finish cooking the pelau the Bajan say “take your meat from meh rice”. Taking the politics out of the system now is like take yuh meat out of meh rice because it is so entrenched in the pelau already that you cannot take it out. In an ideal world, I could have seen Local Government without party politics okay. I think in Canada in certain provinces in Canada there is Local Government without party politics. Am I right Clarence? Yeah but other than that Trinidad party politics is too entrenched and it will almost be foolhardy to attempt that. What we should try to do is put systems in place that brings a greater level of equity in terms of the administration of resources and the allocation of resources. It is a challenge because it is all well and good to say when you get into office you represent everybody but each party is under pressure from their own supporters to do things in a particular way. It calls for strong leadership and leadership is one we are desperately needing in this country right now both at Central Government and at Local Government and community level. We are not producing the quality of leaders in our community again. Young Perez who spoke there Mr. Perez his father was a Village Council President he was Mr. Mayaro and people looked up to him and Mr. Ford. I know more Mayaro people than Rio Claro people but they were certain community leaders that they established they stamp of authority, they commanded respect from their communities. We are no longer producing that type of leaders I encourage the young people to try to make their stamp on the community and once we produce leaders like that I think we would be in good stead.

❖ **Fitzroy Ottley (Male, African, 60s)**

Pleasant good evening to all, first of all, I want to congratulate the honourable Minister in terms of this Consultation. I think it is long overdue because I have seen Consultations in Local Government from way back from 1988 or 89 and this has been long overdue. My concern, however, has to do with this whole question of bringing together proper productivity. I want to start with the issue of productivity first; a lot of people feel that we don't produce and they are quite correct. Actually and let me just slip in this little piece, there is a petition going on now to free quite a lot of people who are in custody and who have been there for quite a number of years in Remand Yard. To me, it is a ridiculous thing that has happened in this country because you can't have somebody who is in Remand Yard who has not been convicted and give them mercy or pardon them. It has to be the most ridiculous thing, what they should do however is have mercy and pardon the agencies that have them there for ten and fifteen years like the magistracy, judges, lawyers, police these

are the people who really need pardoning. These are the people, not the prisoners or the people who are in Remand Yard because they've concocted an agenda to keep these people there without they facing their peers. So how can they pardon someone, if you hold me in Remand Yard for ten years for a petty crime that you say I did and never brought me before justice and now you releasing me and saying you pardon me then somebody have to pay me for that ten years that I spent. I brought that in because of productivity we talking about that was raised by the Honourable Minister. The other one that I want to raise is something that I have been saying for quite a long time and that is how do we account for the minority people in a community? So the Party selects the Chairman or the Mayor and that Chairman or Mayor is from a particular Electoral District and then someone from a next Electoral District belongs to another Party then we have a problem. The Mayor belongs to the ruling section of the Corporation and the complaints fall on deaf ear. I have been saying for a very long time and I firmly believe that a Mayor or Chairman of a Corporation or a City or a Borough ought to be elected by the people. On the ballot where the people in the entire district, the entire region elects the Mayor. So he will be accountable to every single body especially if you want to have executive powers given to the elected people in the Corporation. And the other point Mr. Minister that I want to raise is the question of this whole relationship with Mayaro and Rio Claro. Four elected representative for Rio Claro two for Mayaro if they belong to different parties well the devil take the high post for Mayaro at all times. I have been saying for the longest while that it is time Mayaro stands alone. It is time Mayaro stands alone and Mayaro has a lot of resources we have 17 miles of beach we have gated communities are now being built in Mayaro we have so many resources that are being piped. If we should charge the tax for every, how they measure gas and oil? Every cubic of gas that passes through the lines to go to Point Lisas, if we charge a toll that would be like Panama Canal. That would be able to put Mayaro high on top. So we serve in Mayaro, we have what about fifteen thousand people that we serve we cool, what we need is efficiency, efficiency in the system. We are paying the price for inefficiency, poor leadership right through in Trinidad and Tobago and if we should replace poor leadership with good leadership. Bring back proper accountability and efficiency I dare say that we will be able to turn this country around but we will have to start with Mayaro and Rio Claro. So my friends in Rio Claro and I have quite a lot of friends in Rio Claro, is not that I have a problem with Rio Claro yuh know. Is just that I firmly believe that Rio Claro is an animal on its own and Mayaro is an animal on its own. What has to happen is not a matter of how big you are but it is really how efficient we are in organizing the resources that we have so that it could share equitably to all our people in this community thank you very much.

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

Sir, yuh make a nice parlay for Mayaro there but it is impractical in all honesty, I want to be up-front with you. On Monday we were in Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, Tunapuna has six constituencies in it Lopinot, Bon Air West, Tunapuna, St Joseph, St Augustine and Dabadie/O'Meara. The Same argument you take there and say Mayaro with fifteen thousand people can have their own Corporation you know what that argument will go on to. Guaya will say well we ain't bound for Mayaro yuh know, the gas line passing

through Guaya, not Mayaro. So then Guaya will say I want to stand on my own because Mayaro has no value to the resource base you're talking about so there is a limit to where you can take that argument. The Constituency of Mayaro and I should make this point, the Constituency of Mayaro at the Central Government level it is the only Constituency that is represented by one entire Regional Corporation. The Regional Corporation of Mayaro/Rio Claro is identical almost, must be about 80% to the Constituency of Mayaro. There is no other Corporation like that; the closest that comes to it is Sangre Grande well Toco/Sangre Grande but there is a significant part of Cumuto/Manzanilla into the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and the only area is part of Biche or something like that. So it is a discreet unit there will always be variety within your geographic space and if you take that argument to the limit that you are proposing the people of Guaya will say we different to Mayaro. There is a limit to where we can take that argument so you made a very spirited effort to convince me but as a Mayaro person myself I am not convinced.

Fitzroy Ottley

The issue of the elected...

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

Oh yes let me comment on that, that idea has been raised at several Consultations that you should be electing your Mayor. It has gotten some level of traction but let me just give you the caviar to that. It will be like saying how the Prime Minister is appointed to date? The Prime Minister fights a Constituency and the Prime Minister Is the leader of the Political Party that commands the majority of the House. You do not vote for a Prime Minister as you vote for a Presidential Election. So that is the same type of system that operates at the level of the Corporation. What I would tell you we will do is that we will recommend that the Mayors or Chairmen of Corporations must be an elected member of the Council. So the days of Aldermen being Chairmen and Mayors will be passed but to say have a Chairman election or a Mayoral election will be a little difficult because it will be contrary to the National Politics. That will be putting a totally different spin on it and it's something we can't let the tail wag the dog. If you have a Prime Ministerial election over the entire country well then you have a justification to say you voting the entire Corporation for you Chairman or your Mayor but remember we still trap in a West Minister Model. So we can't break out of it in its entirety but the point has been made at several Consultations that you will vote for your Corporation but long ago, in fact, you won't even know who your Mayor would be because you didn't even have to announce your Alderman list. So the people would be getting a Mayor after the election and they do not have an idea who the Mayor will be or the Chairman. In this case, now where you have a list of the electors going up for the Local Government election so you have six like say Mayaro/Rio Claro you have six Councillors. You know at least it would be one of those six people so nobody can spring a surprise on you with an Alderman. At least we get it half way there but to have an elected Mayor or Chairman is jumping the gun a little.

❖ **Selwyn Ward (Male, African, 40s)**

Goodnight ladies and gentlemen, Honourable Minister, MP for Mayaro I just want to be short and I would like to have my say. I am a concerned citizen my concern is the amount of garbage there is on Mayaro beach and Mr. MP from Mayaro at the right of the temple there is a road, go down that road right now you are going to see a landfill. Honourable Minister Khan say there are three illegal dumps in this country but they are making one there right now as I speak. Anyway, you go on that beach from St Joseph Point to Galeota Point there is garbage right through, I don't know what the Regional Corporation is doing but is time they do something about that, that is my contribution.

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

When you say garbage you mean seaweeds or garbage?

Selwyn Ward

Rubbish! From the plastic one that does stretch to the glass bottle, all over the beach 17 miles of garbage. Ask the Regional Corporation what they doing about that.

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

And which is the road with the dump site?

Selwyn Ward

Just next to the Hindu Temple, there is a road, about 30 feet go down that road right now Mr. Khan you're going to see it.

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

That is the road before Euro shop?

Selwyn Ward

Yes! No, just after the temple on your left, just after the temple.

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

Okay.

Nazimool Ali (cont'd)

Yeah, Mr. Khan, I'll be very brief but I need to raise a few points with you. Just like Woodbrook the land is controlled by the Port of Spain Corporation I wish that Sangre Grande and Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation could take control of all the agricultural state land in this area. Whereby which you can raise revenue by rental and lease however put a

clause in there not exceeding three years and it has to be mortgaged. Because we have people buying state land that has been leased to other people which will grow into something you can't handle it in the future. So I wanna say in relation to State land and Ministry of food production as Minister Clarence has already said give back Caroni to Caroni. What is happening Local farmers are saying they don't have access to land tenure I am saying land tenure can be given but control and ownership should stay with the Corporation.

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

Before Mr. Hazarie comes, let me deal with you one time it is not our intention to have fourteen independent Corporations run by a Federal Government okay. It is devolution of power at the Local Government level, devolution on some form of authority. we can't bite more than we chew anybody can make a legitimate and articulate agreement to empower Regional Corporations to do almost everything for health for education for even national security through Municipal Policing but you have to draw the line somewhere draw the boundary. As we speak Local Government is in a very primitive state what we doing, we expanding their horizon we expanding their remit we expanding their autonomy but we don't want to bite more than we could chew. Let's take it one step at a time this is phase one and let us focus on phase one and when phase one does well in about a decades time or fifteen years' time we will have another Consultation like this, obviously without me and you can articulate your point.

❖ **Chairman Councillor Hazarie Ramdeen for Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation**

Thank you, Honourable Minister, Member of Parliament for Mayaro Mr. Rushton Paray, The Honourable Minister Clarence Rambharat Minister of Agriculture. This is one Chairman can't do everybody work for them, I cannot do everybody work. You have Councillors assigned in Electoral Districts, what is taking place in Mayaro we have Councillors there, Hazarie in Rio Claro can't see that. He who tries to do everything will achieve nothing and I want to make another point. Minister looking at the Municipal Police we only have four Municipal Police in Rio Claro, one Acting Inspector, One Sergeant, and two Corporals. Recently we got five, five trainees but they are not trained to do police work. They are trained to do administrative work so they can't go out on the field and when you look at all our properties I mean it's plenty. I am kindly asking I am not here to complain but I am requesting if we could get the full complement of fourteen that four I spoke about and ten Constables it will help us a lot. If you could assist Minister by giving our Chief Officers, we don't have a Corporate Secretary and Financial Officers if we need legal advice, and is a strain on our Corporation. We have a Road Officer 3 and a WS 3 and we will be very happy with that thank you.

➤ **Response from Ms. Desdra Bascombe – Chairman Technical Committee for the transitioning of the Ministry of Local Government**

Interviews for Corporate Secretary work ended last week so there should be light at the end of that tunnel we're scheduling interviews for the Financial Officers early in May.

Moderator

Is there anything on the Municipal Policing?

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

Well I spoke about the policing, you effectively have no police because you can't have four officers one is an Inspector, one is a Sergeant and two is Corporal. Who working? They supervising themselves and my understanding is they does only be driving the Mayor and the Chairman and doing that type of work too. So the whole issue of policing we have taken a policy decision that we will beef up the force to one hundred offices per Corporation. This we plan to do even before the Local Government Reform because I am going to Cabinet to ask to recruit these officers under the current system and the transformation is really legislative. We transferring them from the Statutory Service Commission and the Public Service Commission to the Police Service Commission. That is legislative that would call for special majority whether it happens or not, the jury is out on that but I will be going to Cabinet shortly to do that. The only constraint on that would be the training and accommodation because I don't want to have a Police Station bigger than the Regional Corporation Headquarters how it will look.

5.0 CLOSING

Ms. Desdra Bascombe offered her closing sentiments:

“Ladies and gentlemen this is Consultation thirteen out of fourteen and it has been one of the most productive Consultations. There is not an empty seat in the room so we quite appreciate your attendance and participation. We’ve heard issues about accountability, transparency the need for auditing the need for assistance and control mechanisms within the Corporation in order to make this transformation initiative work. I’d like to leave you with two pearls probably of wisdom probably not. I’d like you to take ownership of your community because clearly you have a passion for it, take ownership and do not only rely on manna falling from heaven. One is ownership and the second one, I also heard this in Point Fortin that of volunteerism gone are the days when we used to have school bazaars to do things around the school. Does that still happen? I am encouraging you to start back those days it will get the children involved, the teachers involved, the parents as well as the PTA. There is a role for everyone in building this community of Mayaro/Rio Claro Thank You.”

To conclude the proceedings of the Local Government Consultation at the Rio Claro East Secondary School at Rio Claro, Minister Khan told the burgesses of Mayaro/Rio Claro that it has been a pleasure being at this penultimate Consultation in Rio Claro. He agreed with Ms. Bascombe’s statement that this is one of the better Consultation and that they have been challenged in certain Corporations where there were four and five constituencies and there still wasn’t a crowd like Rio Claro. Mr. Khan complemented everybody who has mobilised the community to come out, he thanked the Corporation, the MP’s and Mr. Rambharat; he stated the discussions at the evening’s Consultation was serious.

The Minister went on to say that one of the underlying currents he gets at all the Corporations in all the Consultations is that people are thinking: we’ve heard this story already it never happened and even though persons complimented him on his presentation somewhere there is the feeling that it will not happen.

He recapped on the point he made during his presentation about buying from the leadership he reinforced that it is an extremely fundamental point. Minister Khan shared the example of Panama being the only country in the world that established a subway line from conceptualization to the first train leaving the station in four years. He said Panama did it because they had buy-in from the president and that is the same level of leadership buying we have from the Prime Minister. He gave the audience his assurance and said this Local Government Reform process is driven by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and because of this it will happen. He further explained, it is overseen by a Ministerial Committee and has a lot of Senior Public Officials involved. He acknowledged that Minister Stuart Young has been an instrumental part of the Process of the Consultations and he would have been here

at Rio Claro but he is presently in Japan. He told the people of Mayaro/Rio Claro, Minister Young will also be in charge of the legislative drafting.

As Minister Khan wrapped up the evening's Consultation he reminded the burgesses of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Region that this Local Government Reform process is really to build communities, empower communities, to give a better service to people and make communities happy communities. He told the people, you cannot homogenize an area, Mayaro, Rio Claro and its surrounding communities will always be different to one another but it does not mean that they cannot come together and form a Corporation that is well run. He continued with his closing remarks that the example he uses always as a benchmark community is the community of Point Fortin. It is the most patriotic community in Trinidad and Tobago he said, it is the best run Borough, the people don't litter. Minister Khan encouraged all in attendance that we have to reignite that community spirit; there will be a lot of differences he said, political, administrative etc. but at the end of the day we need to build strong communities. He ended by saying this Local Government Reform process is putting that power in your hands and thanked all for coming out in such large numbers and making some very spirited contributions on behalf of their various communities.



RIO CLARO CONSULTATION

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 200 participants in attendance. Participants were generally receptive to the presentations of Minister Khan and they were very eager to give their input to local government reform as was evident by the queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 150 (75%) male participants and 50 (35%) female participants. The majority (80%) of participants represented the age range 40 – 70 years. There was less than 8% representation of participants under the age of 40 and approximately 12% of participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (90%) appeared to be middle-class income earners with a few from high-income and some low-income class. There was 55% representation from the Indo-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 45% being a majority (35%) of Afro-Trinidadian and some mixed-race participants.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 20 respondents from the plenary; 16 male, 4 female. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	12	40 – 70 (12)
Indian	6	40 – 70 (5), under 40 (1)
Mixed	2	40 – 70 (2)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Communication - Repetition of same work by different agencies	1
Contracts – quality, use local, accountability	4
Taxes – who is it for?	1
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – schools, roads, parks, community centre	5
Role of Regional Corporations – public education on services	2
Healthcare – access to emergency services	1

Agriculture – access roads, sustainability for farmers, involve youth, access to tenure	3
School feeding program – use produce from each area	1
Accountability - auditing	2
Corporation Staff – training, drunk on duty, increase	2
Inequality in resource allocation – one area benefits	1
Need more Councillors to furnish Guayaguayare to Ortoire	1
Need AA in Rio Claro	1
Transportation – rural school children	2
Scepticism – another talk shop?	1
Illegal dumping	2
Property Tax – update titles	1
Complaints/Reports – who to go to?	1
HDC/LDC – who deals with issues	1
Politics affecting autonomy	1
Mayaro needs separate Corporation	1
Elect Corporation officials	1
Garbage on beach	1
Municipal Policing	1