

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

Diego Martin

29th April 2016

Diego Martin North Secondary School Hall



Rapporteurs' Full Report



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1.0 OPENING

The Consultation began with the singing of the National Anthem; followed by an opening prayer. The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Wesley Gibbings, then proceeded by welcoming all present to the Diego Martin North Secondary School for the 14th and final 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 on the Local Government YouTube channel.

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, The Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley. This was followed by the welcome remarks delivered by the Chairman, Councillor Katty-Ann Christopher of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation who welcomed everyone on behalf of the Ministry to the 14th and final Local Government Reform Consultation in the Diego Martin North Secondary School at Diego Martin.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

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

2.0 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME REMARKS

Chairman, Councillor Katty-Ann Christopher



Chairman of this evening's proceedings Mr. Wesley Gibbings, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West the Honourable Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government Mr. Franklin Khan, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East Mr. Colm Imbert, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central Mr. Darryl Smith, Minister in the Office of the

Attorney General and Legal Affairs Mr. Stuart Young, all other Ministers and Members of Parliament, Chief Executive Officer of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation Ms. Marva Carter, Councillors and Aldermen of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, all other Councillors and Aldermen, all other Chief Executive Officers, specially invited guest, residents of the Diego Martin Region, ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, good evening.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the best region to live in. Matthew Chapter 18 verse 19 says, 'again I say to you if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask it will be done for them by my Father in Heaven'. We are here to discuss local Government reform this begs the question what is Local Government Reform? According to Ronald Waite; Local Government Reform refers to locally elected Councils whose main purpose is to provide or administer services with a great degree of independence as modern circumstances allow. Simply put, it is the process of electing capable persons to manage limited resources so as to benefit the greatest number of persons. Services lie at the heart of Local Government, we are the first points of contact for residents in distress, residents seeking assistance and those other persons unable to make it to central locations such as Port of Spain to access Government services. What does this mean for the Corporation? It means that our Disaster Unit must be well equipped, well staffed and ready to act in an instant so as to restore comfort to burgesses. It means that we must be able to provide basic needs to families. It means that the health, technical and administrative departments must be staffed with professional persons capable of carrying out their duties. It means we must replace some of our lengthy processes with efficient and accountable systems. It means that our Councils must be able to provide or administer services with autonomy as much as possible. Presently we have various road networks which connect to others outside our purview. Our equipment is unable to service our unique terrain; we have services that are contracted or assigned to our region that we have no control over. We are unable to help persons acquire much needed social grants in their time of need. We have schools that we do not have the resources to assist. Ladies and gentlemen that is why we need Local Government Reform, let us discuss these issues tell us what affects you and how it should be addressed so that our lawmakers would be able to meet your needs. Let's make this Reform meaningful so that at the end of this evening we can all proudly say together we are making Diego Martin Region the best place to live. Thank you and Good night.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, began his address by extending warm salutations to all in attendance, introducing himself and welcoming all present to the 14th and final consultation of local government reform in Trinidad and welcomed all to the Diego Martin North Secondary School. He then extended thanks to the host of the consultation, the chairman of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, Ms. Kathy-ann Christopher. The minister then acknowledged the members of cabinet present at the consultation. Following this, the minister introduced his video presentation which was then displayed.

Following the video, Minister Khan then explained the contents and purpose of the video which had just been presented to the audience. It is as follows, "The video you just saw illustrates the system and the dynamics that are not unfamiliar to most of you. Whether it is a clogged river, empty lot which needs cleaning, a blown street light, school repairs, a local heritage site, waste management etc. under the current system, when a community needs to get something done,

it has to take place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries which run through the centralized heart of government. At its most fundamental level, this is the challenge that faces Trinidad and Tobago. Something about our service delivery does not commensurate to our expenditure. This is what we have to fix as a country. In that context, for those of you who followed the general election campaign of 2015, you would have heard our now Prime Minister articulate two major policy shifts which will occur under a new PNM administration. They are: 1) the creation of a brand new ministry called the Ministry of Rural Development. While Diego Martin is not a deeply rural area, it still falls upon us to indicate that it is the recognition of this administration that there needs to be a more balanced spatial development agenda throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is in that context that the People's National Movement decided to form a brand new ministry being the Ministry of Rural Development. The fact that we reduced the cabinet from 33 to 23 and saw it necessary to have a ministry entirely dedicated to rural development goes to show the focus that the cabinet and government put on this ministry. I am doing this consultation in rural areas and I spend a lot of time on it. 2) The other issue is local government reform.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the two policy shifts that the PNM will embark on and in that context we are now in our final consultation of the local government reform process here in Diego Martin. This local government reform process has been driven by our sister island. For those of us who want to be fair and honest with ourselves. For most of us, there is something about Tobago's service delivery that you must admit is superior to that of Trinidad. Their open spaces, recreational grounds, and public buildings are better maintained and they deliver service at an improved level to what Trinidad has been delivering and that, is largely due to the Tobago House of Assembly Act which empowered the Tobago House of Assembly through the 5th Schedule that assigns specific responsibilities to the THA in their service delivery function. It is that model we now want to incorporate into the local government reform agenda. In terms of Trinidad local government reform, successive government administrations in the past since the 1970s to now have always admitted that the best way to deliver services to a community is through local government. For some strange reason, nothing happened. The only thing of significance that has happened since 1962 to current is the Municipal Corporation Act #21 of 1990.

Those of you who could remember the Old County Council System, those councils were transferred into municipal corporations. The county council system under the new corporation act morphed into the new regional corporations and that is as far as it went because if you take the county councils and the regional corporation, what did not change is their functionalities and their responsibilities. In the county council system, St. George County Council was in charge of minor roads, drains, cemeteries, recreation grounds, some aspects of public health and that's it and when you look at the municipal corporation act now, it is the same thing. There is no added responsibility. The organization did not transform for better service delivery. Effectively, it was one and the same. I make the point today because essentially, successive administrations have kicked the can down the road. I want to say today on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet that we will not kick the can down the road any further.

Local government reform is going to take place. The reason why local government reform never took place is because human beings don't give up power. Centralized power always remains

centralized. You cannot ask someone to give up the authority he thinks he has. The only way it can happen, it must have the total buying of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and it does. Some of the impediments of local government which have tampered with it over the years include - First and foremost, political interference. Let's face it, Trinidad and Tobago is a multi and diverse country. One of the hindrances of local government of the past depends on which central government was in power. When the PNM is in power, it is the perception of a UNC run corporation that they are being ostracized, side-lined and starved of funds. Conversely, when the UNC is in power, the PNM run corporations feel that they are starved of funds, are not getting what they want and that there are mechanisms to halt their performance.

This local government process is timely. When we change the legislature and empower local government responsibility, it will apply to everybody. Diego Martin Regional Corporation chairman and Councillors are for PNM. There is no UNC shadow in Diego Martin. If I go to Penal/Debe there would be nine UNC and not a PNM shadow in Penal/Debe. The principle is that the same powers and authorities that the Diego Martin Corporation and Council will have, it is obviously the same level of power and authority that has to be handed over to the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation because that is what good governance is all about.

Inadequate funding – there has always been inadequate funding. For the portfolio of assets that you need to manage, there is never enough money because central government likes to own everything. Example, 1) there is a program called PURE in the Ministry of Works and Transport which spends approximately one billion dollars a year in road paving but do you know that 50% of the roads that PURE paves are minor roads and regional corporation roads? Now I ask, that 500 million dollars should logistically be assigned to the regional corporations and let them decide which roads they would like to be paved because when PURE comes to pave the roads, no Councillor is consulted. So, you see an agency of central government coming into your space and you have ten traces or streets in your electoral district, they come to pave 5. Who told them which the top 5 is? Now the Councillors will be happy that 5 roads have been paved so they won't say anything but truly that level of authority should reside with the regional corporation.

Recreational grounds – most corporations have as much as 30 recreational grounds to maintain. The budget for recreational grounds in a corporation is 1.5 – 2 million dollars. Obviously, that is insufficient to manage the portfolio for the year. No offense to the current Minister of Sports, but there is an entity called the Sports Company of Trinidad of Tobago which you starved of funds appeared and started to build two pavilions in your region without any consultation with the council as to which grounds would be preferred for the pavilions to be built in. If we understand what the governance is about, what the service delivery is about, we will understand how to allocate the money.

Finally, the sluggish administrative structure within the regional corporation. How can you deliver service in a modern environment with significantly more portfolio and responsibilities and still have the same administrative structure and human resources capabilities? That is a recipe for inefficiency and non-performance. We plan to change that. After this reform process is concluded, we are going to retire the Ministry of Local Government. It is not local government, it is central government. Local government is the portfolio of the regional corporations and the municipality. In a reformed system, there will be no need for a minister of

local government. Let us empower the regional corporation to deliver the services to the people. In principle, that is what we decide to change.

To recap, our vision is for a fully operationalized and networked local government system because we think this is imperative to people-centred development and to the accomplishment of any national vision. Now I will deal with our specific proposal in the manifesto. I will outline specific proposals as per the PNM manifesto. It is not cast in stone but we as a party are offering the people of Trinidad and Tobago but it is a consultation which is why we stayed away from preparing a policy document. We took it from grown zero and only use the manifesto with the basic ideas of it to build the template so the 14 consultations we have kept will now articulate the way forward. Every single word has been recorded, catalogued, distilled, analysed and will form part of the report on local government.

The first area we plan to deal with is secure funding for the regional corporations. It is our intention to do amendments to the finance and audit act to allow regional corporations to collect, retain and spend land, building and property tax within their region. That will be an immediate source of income. As we speak, the government only has one account which is the consolidated account. We are going to change the laws to allow 14 corporations to open 14 accounts on behalf of the government collect and retain municipal taxes, and expend the municipal taxes in their very area. That is a fundamental change. Tax compliance will be better handled at the level of the corporation. In that area, we think we are on firm ground.

Secondly, we plan to give some form of executive authority to Councillors. A Councillor has no executive authority or power. The Councillors only have power at a council meeting as a body where they can only make decisions. The implementation of those projects is in the hands of the administration and the public service. What we want to do is have a system which resembles that of Tobago. We are not going to take the Tobago House of Assembly model wholesale but we want a system that provides some sort of executive authority. On that count, we are proposing that Councillors should be a full-time job. The reason why Councillors' salary is so small is because the Salaries Review Commission deemed the Councillors to be part-time workers and they set their remuneration package because the job is part time. If we have full-time Councillors with executive authority, that will solve the problem.

It is our intention to propose based on consultation, that mayors and chairmen must be part of the elected council. Currently, the chairman is a surprise pick of the party and not an elected position. For democracy, that is the way to go. **Accountability** – we are saying that we give you executive authority and proper funding, and we will change the legislature to suit you. Public officers must understand that when they deal with public funds, they are working with a trust of the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a trust fund. Meaning that you are holding this money in trust of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that you have a responsibility to spend it wisely and without corruption. We are saying that the councils will deal directly with the Minister of Finance for funds allocation. When the Minister of Finance allocates to you, you determine what projects you spend it on and how you spend it. Now you will be governed by two things: 1) the legislation will be coming soon 2) you are accountable to the auditor general.

One of the challenges of the auditor general is post facto. Things could happen and before the auditor general makes an intervention, the damage is already done. We are contemplating that a major concern of the consultation that the people of the communities are requesting some

sort of more online audit, more real-time audit so that they can nip things in the bud. We are not sure what type of system but we know there will be a major audit component through the Ministry of Finance or through the Central Audit Office that will be coming out of Parliament but we know that the people are asking that if we empower local government, there must be a significant audit function. Thirdly, the schedule coming from the county councils and now to the regional corporations, new responsibility because it is the service delivery that the country is crying out for. Here are some of the areas we plan to hand over to the regional corporation: **School maintenance** – a function that naturally resides with the regional corporation. If the Diego Martin Corporation has six secondary schools and 35 primary schools, obviously it is a better service delivery system that if the school maintenance falls within this laser focused area. As we speak, only one company handles all the primary and secondary schools in the nation. It is not a function of the Minister of Education but rather the system of service delivery. We are talking about systems and we think this is an area where we can hand over to the regional corporation. 2) **Social welfare** – Who better knows the old lady on the run around for her pension? Who better knows in your community the families of extreme poverty, the family that is subject to domestic violence, to child abuse, to incest? These are all things that are happening in your community. It is the local government representative who will know that. So obviously social service delivery function could easily reside at the level of the regional corporation. Allow me to share some statistics. Over the last ten years, successive administration has spent approximately two billion dollars a year on social service delivery. If we say two billion a year then ten years is 20 billion dollars. Do you know that after spending 20 billion dollars in Trinidad and Tobago, the poverty level is the same as it was in 2004? So a country spends 20 billion dollars on social service delivery and its poverty level is flat. Obviously, the money is misspent because the system of delivery is inefficient and incompetent. There is room for leakage and corruption. There are families in this system who are well connected and are bleeding the system. The system is not administered properly for the people who really need the money. It is not that the government is not spending the money because 50 billion dollars is enough for 1.3 million people. The problem is the haemorrhaging of the service delivery that is hampering us as a nation and it is our thesis that local government reform will solve that.

Administration of community centres – this is something that will naturally fall under the regional corporation because these are community projects, not central government projects. Community centred by its very name. The community resides here and not in a headquarters in Port-of-Spain. **Local tourism** – classic examples such as the Blue Basin water wheel are projects which have to be handled by the Ministry of Tourism but you as a corporation could market your sites into the national and international communities. So, these are some of the specific areas that we want to handle. **Local contractors** – While I must warn you that from a legislative point of view it is difficult to bar people from accessing state funds and contracts on geographic grounds. We must find an administrative way to incorporate contractors into projects like these because when 1 million dollars is spent on a drain in a community with a local contractor, it is not 1 million dollars for the drain, it gives you the piece of concrete but the multiplier effect of that million dollars turns out to 2 million dollars of expenditure in your community.

That local content aspect is very fundamental. **Effective policing** – we plan to employ 100 municipal police officers to work with the community policing just as how disaster management is the first respondent, your municipal police will be the first respondent. However, Minister Young and I will be working on the legislature for that since there are issues with the municipal police which include: 1) the municipal police is a receptive officer. He is an officer of the law and under our system of governance, he is supposed to report to the police service commission; but more importantly, he carries a firearm. He can misbehave or misconduct himself in public office so then he must fall under the view of the complaints authority. There is no method to discipline a municipal police. The CEO of the corporation can't do anything. If we bring in municipal police to that level, we have to bring then to a proper legislative framework and Minister Young is working on that.

Developmental control – The planning and facilitation of the development act have been passed and proclaimed. Looking at it now to see what amendments we need and in essence, what we will be doing is devoting power and authority for the approval of small development and house plans, in particular, to fall under the remit of the regional corporation. Once we staff the regional corporations with these sorts of things. **Disaster management** - This is one of the areas of local government reform that is working excellently. I want to congratulate the regional corporation of Diego Martin in particular to the despondence of disaster management since that system came into being. **Involvement of Civil Society** – We are deepening the democratic process. One of the complaints we have from the community is that they are only empowered once every three years to vote in local government and once every five years to vote in general. People want more democracy than that so we have to have a system involving civil society in the decision-making process. The Prime Minister is even considering putting it in law that before certain decisions are made you have to consult. Town meetings just like what happen in America all the time. The example I like to draw is Walmart. If Walmart wants to go and build a megastore in a community, town council meeting one time you know and if the community says they do not want a Walmart then Walmart cannot go you know. Sam Walton or Barack Obama could go and it doesn't matter you know it is about the community. The community has the power and the state and local government system in America is extremely strong. **Regional development planning** – This is also an area we want to involve the corporations in. I proudly say as the PNM well before the 2013 elections, it was the first time in the history of local government we had 14 individual manifestos with 14 development plans for the 14 regional corporations. We will be asking you to take those plans and develop it and use it as a template and you will now have your 14 regional development plans in your corporations to work with. Obviously, the UNC run corporation, we cannot tell them to use PNM's plan but the call is theirs. In principle, we are saying to have your regional development plans.

Final two points. **Boundaries** – speak now or forever hold your peace. This is the time if you want your boundaries changed, now is the time to talk. When we had the county council system, the counties and the wards of Trinidad developed by Governor Woodford, whom Woodford Square is named after, and the counties and the wards were defined by natural boundaries like a river. So south of the Caroni River up to a certain point is the county Caroni, the Nariva Swamp was the county Nariva then down the south coast was Mayaro and that's how it developed. The regional corporations are now settlement boundaries. So, the example I

like to draw, is what used to be called county St. Patrick was divided into Penal/Debe which developed its own identity and the Siparia Corporation which largely included the rest of St. Patrick. So, boundary changes will be fundamental to this reform process.

Take Port-of-Spain for example, nobody could convince me that Laventille is not part of Port-of-Spain. Laventille, as Dr. Rowley said last week, is a suburb of Port-of-Spain. Do you know the Trinidad Hilton is not in the city of Port-of-Spain? Brian Lara's house is not in the city of Port-of-Spain but St. James is part of Port-of-Spain and right of the East Dry River is San Juan/Laventille. This is the basis of why we have to redefine our boundaries now to sociology of the area and to suit the geographic space that defines a city and if Cipriani statue is the heart of town, as you go left, Laventille is a natural suburb of Port-of-Spain. So, these are some of the considerations that will be taking place. I think Diego Martin is a fairly well defined regional corporation but I make no judgement on that. That is your call, make your recommendation.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, the **organization** – What I said sounds good but how is it implementable into what we will be putting in place now in the regional corporation? I mentioned the old structure, it still exists but the regional corporations will now be service delivery machineries. They will not be administration per say. For example, all regional corporations have public service positions. There are no engineers, asset managers, quantity surveyors, supply chain managers. If you ask the public officer what is a supply chain manager, they wouldn't know the answer. You cannot run a modern organization with service delivery without supply chain management. You cannot run it without asset or project management, quantity surveyors. In some cases, architects. Our new structure that we will be proposing will include all those skills because we are giving you a heavy responsibility portfolio. So, I mean it looks good but as a people, now we have to make it work and we will provide all the tools for the regional corporation to make it work because at the end of the day, what we want is better delivery of service to the people of the regional corporation and in this case, the people of Diego Martin.

On the legislative side, basically it is taxation laws we will have to revise and the municipal corporation act which will give executive power which will give a new schedule of responsibilities and Minister Young, and his team is in charge of that. In closing, **the timetable** – we were careful in not presenting a policy paper before the consultation. We plan to have what we call an omnibus suite of legislation to present to the parliament hopefully by September. This suite of legislation will go towards a joint select committee for deliberation before it is debated and passed in both houses. **September** – October 21st is the day that local government election is due. The municipal corporation act gives us a three-month period in which the elections should be called. So, how we will contest this local government election is that we will have the legislation in parliament and elections will be held before the end of the year. I want to say that under no circumstances will the local government election be postponed. I give you that assurance here tonight that local government elections will be held in the year 2016. So, what I have attempted to do is to capsule what we plan for local government reform.

I will finally close on saying that we have condensed all the questions and comments that came from the 13 corporations and there are a couple areas which seem to be coming up all the time which is the rule of Councillors whether they will be full time or part time, the accountability level and site as we give the regional corporations more money, people say that they think the

municipal policing is good and the people have bought into the idea that they want elected mayors and chairmen of corporations. A lot of other areas they have brought up but I have cautioned them that this is a reform exercise, let's not bite more than we can chew. It will be a sequential step because we cannot hand over everything to local government. There is still a role for central government and while you can make a legitimate case that everything should be re-administered to local government that also will be a recipe for disaster. You have to build capacity first.

So, ladies and gentlemen, it has been a nice time I had here addressing you but before I take my seat, I would like to show one final video clip.

The Minister then went on to explain the second video. It is as follows, "Ladies and gentlemen, the second video is used to juxtapose against the first video to show you where we are today and what has transposed to local government. So once again, I thank you for your attention. Diego Martin is fortunate to be the final consultation." The Minister went on to introduce a ten-minute video clip of a summary of the entire 13 consultations and what they brought out. It showed snippets of the past 13 consultations throughout the island; highlighting several participants and the passion they portrayed at the consultations. Minister Khan expressed his joy in the high level of participation and the support he has received from the population. He stated he feels empowered by this and we will be able to move forward to making a better Trinidad and Tobago. He was then joined on stage by the Prime Minister and Minister Young to handle questions and comments from the audience.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Paula Henry, Diego Martin East (Female, Mixed, 40s)

I think it is a very exciting time when all of us could be gathered here today to discuss these very important matters. I have just two concerns and two questions actually, and that is the one where, yes we are talking about the fact that we need greater service and it's not commensurable with the finances received but Honourable Minister Khan mentioned in the United States where civil society always gets together to discuss matters and when you have greater involvement in the community you have a greater buying and greater accountability. So, for instance, people get together and decide how much taxes they want to pay. Why? Because they know how much money they need for their schools and to maintain their parks. They know the problems in their community and people actually make that decision so central government does not tell people because we know that every state is different. That is the whole idea of decentralization. So if people get together and discuss what their community needs, we will have a better idea of how much we need to actually contribute. That's one point. How are we going to involve the community in making these very difficult decisions? I have ideas. We have community centres in our areas just like we can have a meeting like this and advertise it, we want to discuss schools, rivers, garbage collections, we want to discuss what facilities we want for our youth and it will be under that forum that we will draw a basis.

I think it is important that we are talking about the autonomy of local government. What representation does local government have in central government to make sure that we are getting our questions answered?

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

We hear you about the collaborative and engaged process. Taxation on that level is not something we are going to address on this level. You will recognize Trinidad and Tobago is a very small place and at this stage, I do not think we can look at different taxations across the various corporations.

In addition to Minister Khan's response, it is going to be up to the municipal corporations to decide how you are going to allocate your budget so they may decide, for instance, this school needs refurbishing, need new buildings here and there. There is going to be a new level of autonomy in deciding what projects you will undertake.

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

I have been saying this at all the consultations. We are empowering local government with more responsibility, with a larger portfolio of responsibility. That responsibility mostly lies in the delivery of service. It does not necessarily reside in policy decision. Policy decision still remains under the remit of the central government. To use the U.S. as an example is not a proper example to use because America is a federal government and the states form part of

the federal government, the states were there before the federal government. It was the states who decided to come to form a federal government called the United States of America. In our case it is different. The central government is the government of Trinidad and Tobago and the central government is now devolving greater level of authority and autonomy to the regional corporations.

❖ **Marcia Bishop (Female, Mixed, 50's)**

Good evening to the panel, I want to give Minister Khan a very good address and there are some areas I had in mind to speak about that you didn't talk about which is the area of the municipality having its own taxation so we wouldn't have to go down to Port-of-Spain to pay our taxes and things like that so I was happy.

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

Allow me to rectify something here before it gets out of hand. There is no proposal for the municipal corporations to have their own tax system. That is completely out of all that we have thought today. What I think that is meant is that at the local level, we will collect the taxes that are due for buildings in Diego Martin, the corporation here will collect those taxes here and keep those revenues in the corporation but the corporation will not set taxation so let us not get any ideas about that because it will confuse the issue.

Let us again not get too carried away. As this is developing, I am now expecting that those who have been calling for local government reform for all these years, now that we are at the juncture of affecting local government reform and putting the authority in the hands of the local community, I am expecting that the biggest hurdle that we have to cross is first and foremost getting competent people to offer themselves to serve in local government so that all we propose can be carried out with a certain amount of sense. If all of them were to say yes, we want local government, then the next thing you know, the people who were supposed to offer themselves bringing to local government the management saying, "not me and politics. That's for somebody else to do," then the next thing you know, we put all these things into place under a poor talent crew and of course, to the community, when you put these responsibilities in the hands of local people, a certain amount of discipline is required from the local community to make it work. As I said in San Fernando at the first consultation, if we don't exercise that discipline and involvement of the community, you may very well find that the second state is worse than the first. Because, if it is that you have power in Diego Martin and the officers in there have increased responsibility but everything there is for "my family" or "my friend", then somebody will be looking to foster corruption. It may very well mean that somebody there did not understand what local government reform meant and it may work to your disadvantage. Those are the two areas that I would like to see a commitment from the community. 1) That people of competence would get to local government by way of the polls and take on the management of these new structures and 2) when you get the authority, you treat it with responsibility and integrity.

❖ **Richard Young (Male, Chinese, 60's)**

Good evening, my name is Richard Young, I'm a pensioner and since September, I have been known as Stuart Young's father. What I wanted to suggest is that, you talked about accountability and one of the missing aspects of accountability is not described as finance accounting and I think you need to consider a shared services model which is an international practice where you put all your accounting and the finance together under one unit owned by the regional corporations. Additionally, what that is going to do is create, enrich and have a sustainable career. Just to what our Prime Minister just talked about, competent people into that area and that will surmise a platform for the diversity of the economy because I honestly believe that we talk about it and business services outsource. It will also be a derivative of that old shared services and we have to really have the political will to do it otherwise we will be back in the same old position.

I have submitted a paper to the technical committee and I stand willing to discuss all the details.

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

I know what you are speaking about, it is called enterprise-wide software. So, the challenge is it must be at a centralized location and whether it will reside with the ministry. I know in terms of efficiency, and accounting robustness, it is a good idea but where will it reside - whether it is in the Ministry of Finance or in some residual part of the Ministry of Rural Development.

❖ **Errol Joseph (Male, African, 70's)**

Good afternoon, I come from the area of Covine in Diego Martin. The minister stole some of the thunder from my presentation here this afternoon when he said that the model we are looking at is the Tobago House of Assembly model, not in total but some abridged version of it. As a member of a couple NGOs operating in the Covine area, we had situations this year where we held for the second time the Pigeon Peas Festival and for those of you who don't know, it has never been held in any part of the Western Hemisphere and the first place it happened was Covine. It came out of a document; I'm not going to go into that proposal now except to say that one day we hope to share it with our MP. However, when we came to the point when we decided to have a pigeon peas festival, we needed to have some collaboration and I want to thank our Councillor and chairman of the corporation because this year we received valuable collaboration. However, I recognized that she was arm strung because the mandate of the corporation does not allow her to expend finances and some technical assistance too.

My suggestion is 1) that the statutes be changed so that you have that the corporation has that authority because I think that when we elect people, we expect to see them work for

us and sometimes that has not been the case but not in this case with our Councillor. So that is one of my first recommendations, that he find a way to do so. 2) In that same scenario, we had a situation where there is a watercourse passing straight through the festival area. For those of you who don't know, we blocked off the Covine road, with permission, of course, we had the festival there and I know the corporation tried very much to have that drain cleaned especially in a time where we have the kind of problems with Zika and that kind of thing. It dawned upon me that if the corporation had the responsibility to clean that drain, we would have gotten it cleaned in time for the festival. And so, in those two particular areas, expanded responsibility for corporations will be good. Thank you.

❖ **Nadine Romany (Female, Indian, 50s)**

Good afternoon members of the panel and public. If the health issues of the region fall under Ministry of Health, spraying of mosquitoes, Councillors have to go to the Ministry of Health whose schedule is from Blanchisseuse to Port-of-Spain and I would like to see each regional corporation have their own spraying unit to deal with mosquitoes. I would also like to see each municipality having their own landfill. This way, we may be able to control transmitting diseases to different municipalities. When we have to take our rubbish from Diego Martin and send it to Port-of-Spain, we are creating and we need to look at the bigger picture. Start planning and getting really bigger. I don't know how many of you know that spraying is from Blanchisseuse to Port-of-Spain then they come back with a cycle. I would also like to see that Councillors, because the stipend that Councillors receive now is very small, they have offices now and they get \$1000.00 to run the office which includes lights, stationary, you name it and the telephone. I would like to see that these things are put in place so that Councillors can truly perform. When you have Councillors with just their cell phone, you're calling and nobody is answering, it cripples the function of Councillors. I want to know what you are putting in place for Councillors who are not functioning properly. We're talking about full-time employment, and agree with it right I would really like to see you put that in place.

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

There has been talk and the Minister of Health, in fact, supports your ideas that each regional corporation should have their own insect vector unit and it is something we are actively considering. With regards to each corporation having their own dump sites, stay away from that. The waste management is a scientific thing now and dumpsites have to be evaluated in a geological and geotechnical sense so there is no seeping into the ground water and what have you. We are relooking at this whole solid waste management in a very scientific way. As we speak, Trinidad's solid waste management is very old and antiquated and out of timing. Stay away from each corporation having their own dump site.

❖ **Allard Bois (Male, African, 60s)**

Good afternoon, I just want to speak briefly on two issues for Diego Martin East and West. Starting with Diego Martin West, the last seven months has been a disaster in the rich plain area. Thank God the garbage truck is working, we get the water now but it is a disaster. Richplain road is the nastiest road in Diego Martin. Since we lose CEPEP, it is a disaster. Just about the week before Carnival, a crew came up from the regional corporation and cleaned a drain in Agnesfield road where I live and that rubbish, the rain washed down some this week and the rest is still there all over the road, it is a disaster. Thankful the garbage truck is working.

Second point, North East Diego Martin. We who try with culture, sports, we are getting little or no assistance. Mr. Daryl Smith for the last few months has been around talking with people and that is all. Nothing is happening. We have been trying where the culture is concerned, nothing is happening. I have been trying with others to build the Valley Harps pan yard for fifty years with no assistance from the government. None. You pass around Morne Coco road and look around at that place there and see what we have done over the years there. At that area, we held a beautiful health fair Saturday. That is the area now where people hold Health Fair. The Lions held earlier this year and then the other day we had a bigger health fair. Mr. Daryl Smith was there. Unfortunately, our representative is tied up. We see him more on television, he is working very hard. This is where I see that our Councillors can play a bigger part in servicing us.

Another thing, I want to see this rural development authority or whatever you call it coming out. We have a situation with plenty people who voted. The URP present form should be abandoned. We have CEPEP the only organization working. Regional Corporation hardly working. We have to do something. URP in this present form isn't working at all. URP has become top-heavy.

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

It has been a recurring decimal in the consultations. It is something we have to streamline. At a previous consultation, one lady said this week corporation come and cut the grass on her street and the next week CEPEP come and cut the same grass and the following week URP came and cut the same grass. There has to be an overlapping in responsibilities and we are in the process of trying to streamline two corporations in particular because the regional government is entrenched. The two peripheral programs are URP and CEPEP and as we speak, the government is trying to streamline those operations.

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

I think we can spend all the time tonight outlining the things that brought us here because of what Mr. Bois has just said and it has driven us to do things differently. It is because we know that these things are happening that we are saying, 'let us not allow them to continue in that way,' we are looking for a new way that will bring improvement so let us talk about looking ahead. Let us not get undisciplined on it. Let us agree that we know that what we

have now and what we are doing now require the intervention. Let us talk about what the intervention should be and I think at the end of that time, we would be better off rather than trying to convince somebody that these things are happening. I think we all know a lot about what is happening and not happening right and that has driven us for years saying we need to have a reform of the system. You cannot have three people doing the same work. You have to have accountability. You have to have a response. We want to have people accountable who are responsible for knowing that we are paying people to do those things but they are not being done because the management is not holding the people under management accountable. That is why grass is growing on the garbage in the road. We know there are a lot of people on local government payroll who do anything but work for local government. But if we put accountability in place where people could identify what they are responsible for and where their money is going and who is getting it and what work is being done in that new system, we might have a chance at improving the quality of our lives. That's what we are all about. That's what it's all about.

❖ **Larry Diaz (Male, African, 40s)**

Good evening, I travel both Diego Martin West and Diego Martin South East. A few things that I thought needed to come out a little more just got a passing mention of increased involvement of civil society and by extension, the general population so I was looking into more about things like democracy and public participatory budgeting at the local government level. In terms of some legislation, the Minister alluded to the fact that when we went into the 2013 elections, there were 14 different developmental plans for the corporations. Sometimes in cases of things like traffic, the developmental plan for Diego Martin has to be looked at in a wider context because all of us trying to get into Port-of-Spain on a morning. If we make changes in Diego Martin without certain changes being done closer to Port-of-Spain, the bottleneck wouldn't be totally alleviated so there needs to be more collaboration between the adjacent municipalities. Basically, I want to see about participatory plans for budgeting and the people's franchise outside of just the voting at the three or five-year intervals. Also, increase the civil society involvement in the process, taking it back to the communities.

I believe a lot in being prepared when coming to a consultation. I did find the website TT Local Matters, having called the Ministry, I found this to be very comprehensive, so I want to applaud and commend y'all on efforts and I look forward to working with you all wearing a different hat of the volunteer disaster management unit and the Minister gave us kudos. This year we have had some very devastating fires on these hillsides in the Diego Martin region and most of these bushfires are started by people not adhering to going to the fire station to get a fire permit. If we were to probably look at legislation whereby we increase the policies for setting these fires without a fire permit, it would save quite a lot. Thank you.

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

That depends on the civil society's effectiveness, motivation, and sincerity. Not everybody who comes together and calls themselves civil society might be in advantage but if there is

proper organization and accountability at the level of civil society organization, then more often than not, they can play a positive role. Let us also understand that there are people who will see opportunities using the rubric of civil society to try and get more than their fair share of authority without responsibility. There is a very big role for proper civil society involvement. It can't be a free for all for anybody saying, 'I am civil society and therefore, I should run the show.'

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

How far do we push civil society's involvement in local government?

This is a good test, the legislation as it is now, actually allows for example when you have certain planning items taking place and people apply for planning permission, there is a publication of planning permission, you don't find civil society coming forward to make their objections etc. So people like to talk about involvement of civil society but exactly as the Prime Minister is saying, you have a responsibility now to come forward. One of the things Minister Khan and I have been developing through these consultations is for the budgeting process. We are considering something similar to parliament that on an annual basis, every corporation has to come forward to a gathering such as this, where they can ask questions, suggestions can be made for next year's budgeting process etc.

❖ **Female Participant (Female, African, 70's)**

Good evening to the Prime Minister and members on the platform and to my fellow Diego Martin citizens. I am indeed pleased with what I heard this evening with Mr. Khan's presentation because he spoke directly, now I'm not into partisan politics so my remarks have nothing to do with partisan politics. I am holding a simple document which I wrote ever since August 2007 and I updated it around the time of the election. I was invited to update it in 2010 and the heading is, "Establishment of The Ministry of Homeland Affairs, Expansion of Ministry of Local Government and Establishment of a Personal Development Sector," and the things that I have heard this evening, to me speak to some extent to all three of these. For instance, when the last speaker talked about how he thought he would hear more on participatory democracy. The establishment of a Ministry of Homeland Affairs was supposed to take care of that because I described it as a mega public relations ministry for the government. So, a part of having a Ministry of Public Communications, information depending on which is the government in power. I am saying that something like this would give people an opportunity to constantly have a permanent mechanism by which the public can interact with the government of the day. That was not my major point.

I have here the copy I had for Dr. Rowley even when he was in opposition so I brought additional copies to share once again. The local government, I'm thinking that CEPEP and URP are really extensions of local government. The work that they carry out, if you look at the act, essentially it is the same work so it is a duplication of effort. I understand why for political reasons it may have been established and operated in the way it did. My thinking is that if we seek to have a proper quality of supervision in the Ministry of Local Government

call it the “amended version” I am fine with that. The problem is a lack of supervision and in terms of a plan. I too live off St. Lucien road and I remember hearing early a morning a wacker and I ran outside to see whose it was and it was the corporation. Would you believe in a residential area, people whose grass was overgrown is being cut but yet still an abandoned lot behind us for over 30 years where we have seen dead bodies, the police there, coke addicts everything. That is not being cut and recently they suffered chikungunya in my drive. So, I am saying it was a misuse of human resource in terms of you paying to cut people grass for the community is left undone. Plus, the drain has not been cleaned in over 20 years but you still have these able-bodied people going along. So I am saying that there really needs to be greater planning and supervision of the work of local government even with your new plan to succeed. The structure is one thing but to get it done from the ground.

I for over a year used to clean 100ft, which is not my property going out to the main road.

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

I wasn't clear on what she meant by the Ministry of Homeland Affairs, I was studying border control in the United States. I just want to make a comment on one point she made. I grew up in Mayaro and when we were small, we used to cut our yard and cut the piece of road in front the yard and that is what civil society is about so if everyone was to do that, the road clear. (*Great applause*)

Nobody wants to accept responsibility for beyond their boundary line and what is happening in this country now is that the state has to do everything. If you have five neighbours and you have an empty lot that is overgrown and there is Chikungunya and Zika, if there is a reason the regional corporation couldn't come and cut it, five of you all couldn't come together and put some system in place and cut the lot? You cannot depend on the state all the time. That is the kind of thing that community spirit is about and that is what we should try to engender in our communities now.

❖ **Donald Verbent (Male, Mixed, 50's)**

Good night all, pleasant good afternoon. I am from River Estate, I have been in research in housing and settlement development for the last 35 years and I first want to thank Minister Khan for this opportunity to have something to say about local government reform. I am blessed with all my experiences and expertise over the years will be available to you anytime you need some more specialized attention.

The Citizens Security Program is a fantastic program and it now has to go to the level of Citizen Security Safety Councils which would mean that the citizens in their communities would for councils and the citizens in the regional departments would also have councils and there will be a national citizens safety council which will augment your beautiful plans for municipal police development stands for. Now, my recent research is in children studies. I have a grandson of two years and when I come out on the road, the speed these people

driving at has me really scared. So, I am hoping if it is not within this management system of local government, it is integrated into the new system where citizens with young children would have protection by road humps where there are heavily populated children communities. Regional sporting areas: one of my nearest sporting areas, when I come on with my grandson, as soon as the big boys come on we have to clear out. There is no space. The jobs prevalent and the intrusion of churches and other structures are in the sporting area. Management of the sporting territories has to be properly done and monitored and management of the housing areas has to be properly done.

Finally, you are going into social welfare. I am a CEDAP candidate. The last budget said there are 179,000 persons over 60 years and when I go for my CEDAP medication, I hear there is a list of 800,000 persons on that CEDAP candidate. Now, I don't know how accurate that is or how it can be corrected. If you are going into a new local government and I accept Dr. Rowley's challenge of a better quality of candidates.

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

Regarding CEDAP, that is a responsibility of the Minister of Health. You cannot drill down security things too deep. You have police, municipal police, and the citizens' types of security groups. I will prefer if we stay away from that because I do not want to have vigilante groups and some of these types of concepts. National Security is a function of the state and the state's primary responsibility is to secure its citizens and it is a responsibility that this administration obviously takes very seriously.

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

However, that is not to say that elements like neighbourhood watch and similar crime-stopping ideas can't contribute to the general sentiments and feelings of citizens' security.

❖ **Patricia Bastaldo, Petite Valley (Female, African, 60's)**

I have a problem with my road. I went to my MP on several occasions, the last time he gave me a letter to carry to the Diego Martin Corporation. My letter went and the guy said he will call me and up to this day I haven't gotten a call. Three sets of Councillors passed and I have not gotten that road fixed. My mother was checking out this road, she dead and gone. My father died at 96 and we still have not gotten the road fixed. Now it is 12 years now that I am trying to get that road fixed and I can't get it fixed up to now. I have come to see if I can get some closure here.

Moderator:

Thank you very much for your representation. The chairman is here and the members of parliament are here and I am sure they will give you a listening ear at the end of the consultation. Thank you very much.

❖ **Ulrich Williams, Manzanilla (Male, African, 70's)**

Good afternoon Mr. Prime Minister and other cabinet members. 1) In this country, we need effective drainage. All the rivers, drains and ravines we have in this country are clogged up. We need to have effective drainage in place and after we have effective drainage, we can start enjoying the best of the atmosphere we have on the east coast. That's along the east coast Manzanilla Beach which can be developed into a top of the line resort where people from all over the world would be welcome.

The local government should take over the beach of Manzanilla and bring it to a resort standard. They will collect all the taxes and revenue that come from it. That should be the local government responsibility.

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

Mr. Williams, please bear in mind that you have made that point at four consultations already. We have taken it into consideration. Mr. Williams, we have heard you many times. We have taken all your suggestions as they are very valid. Thanks a lot.

❖ **Felicia Balor, Diego Martin North (Female, African, 50's)**

Good evening my concerns are 1) from the beginning to the end, the rubbish. Diego Martin very stink, I will say it blatantly and I don't care who is vexed. If you travel and look on the both sides of the highway you see plastic bottles. If we have people recycling things here, we talk about America, separate your rubbish. If you have an entrance where the rubbish truck can come into your area, make bins in our front area and make your rubbish separate so people could do recycling and make money by that. If we put recycling bins in the corporation, drop it off. It's mostly rubbish I'm talking about because when I'm travelling, I like to see a clean place. The rubbish people now only looking to pick up things in bags. The bottles are not being picked up. There used to be a piece of galvanize for the bottles that they would pick up but they do not bother with it anymore.

One more point. What I would like us to do as people and ministers is to use the media to show people how to keep the place because we don't read, listen or see. The children putting rubbish everywhere. The government has to put things in place so that we can charge people for littering.

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

Allow me to interject. Littering is an issue but littering has to do with patriotism and love for your community. I do not want to offend people in Diego Martin here tonight but I want to draw your attention that I have been to 14 consultations and I always tell people that if it is one community I admire, is the people of Point Fortin. Point Fortin has the most patriotic burgesses in all of Trinidad and Tobago. A Point Fortin citizen or burgess would not drop a piece of rubbish on the street in Point Fortin you know. Point Fortin is the cleanest borough

in Trinidad and Tobago because they have a sense of identity for their community and if we can transcribe that to all of Trinidad and Tobago we will be at a good stage.

❖ **David Maynard, South Diego Martin (Male, African, 40's)**

I have just four suggestions. 1) Allocations to local government should be based on the corporations' success in raising its own revenue. Two to every dollar to raise. I think this is per corporation in putting mechanisms in place to raise revenue, be it be through their own services or through taxes or fines. Secondly, it would promote accountability as they would have to go to the government to account for their revenue.

2) In terms of tackling lawlessness, I think we should give corporations the right to create their own laws or by-laws to tackle problems that pertain to their corporations. I think the municipal courts should be used to tackle these cases as they come up so as not to get into the backlog with the court. It comes for 14 different municipalities. At the same time, I think we should recognize the different needs of each corporation when they introduce separate manifestos at each consultation.

3) Increase the auditing and monitoring functions. I would like to big up local government to only be the magnifier of what pertains in each particular council whether it is good or bad.

4) Finally, the question of the boundaries. I think we should not touch them. Local government but not local. We should look at the idea that people would be more driven if their community development is in their own hands. Even Laventille. We are saying that small government but not so small. Secondly, if you go to certain communities, they will raise the question of tampering with boundaries.

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

Thank you very much. You listed out quite a lot. The municipal court quite frankly is not a practical reality. We can't have 14 different legal systems operating in Trinidad and Tobago so it is going to continue as just the centralized laws of Trinidad and Tobago and it just has to be that way otherwise it wouldn't be workable.

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

At a forum like this, you can make a legitimate argument to bring any aspect of service delivery under local government but we have to draw the line somewhere and I have said that in all consultations. Let's not bite more than we can chew. We are going through a process that has to be sequential and at the state that we are at now, we cannot take it there. We have to take it midway and we have carefully selected the responsibilities we want to assign to the local government authorities now and within reason we will take comments and questions but we will not expand it to a large group.

❖ **Horish Atness, North Diego Martin (Male, African, 50's)**

Good evening to all. I am deeply impressed by what Minister Franklin Khan said today concerning councils and their roles and responsibilities. It touched me to the point where I agree that it is time that village councils be a part of local government reform and that part I want to state that Minister Franklin Khan stated that once things are happening within the community, must come from the community level and the community development focus could lend a hand to the regional corporations and the boroughs and the corporations. One of my first suggestions is we have to get rid of the CCP and have a duplication of the CCP whenever the municipal police force come and gone because these CCP officers just drive all over the place not doing the function that is worth the villages because the villagers cannot stop them and ask them what they noticed. They are just there all over the place. I say good riddance with that when the municipal police come and gone.

Secondly, I don't want to sound anti-labour, but I believe that it is about time that certain departments within the regional corporation, when they come out to work, and they do a full day's work for a full day's pay and the way I see of getting it done is for whenever a crew is in an area working that at least two or three persons sign an approval of what they have done because you are seeing regional corporation workers, whether they be road supervisors or whatever department, they just come, look around and do as though nothing is happening and then they leave within an hour or so and nothing is being done. Give it back to the community whereby if they come and if they are working on the street, let three or four neighbours on the street sign an approval that they agree with the work that was done.

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

That is something that we consider but how we were considering it is - at a lot of the various consultations, people threw out that they want some sort of representation that is not a party representation. Some people were saying that there are independent senators, we could have independent Councils appointed but by whom? That is the only area I can see it coming up that the village councils would appoint a representative but it is something that we would have to consider at a policy level.

❖ **Elizabeth Belcon (Female, African, 40's)**

Good evening Honourable Prime Minister and Mr. Khan, I've been following the Consultation since the start to the finish now at Diego Martin. I want to put a plug in yes for Community Councils because a lot of people do not know how much the Community Councils affected and effected the communities that they belong to over the years. I would hate for it to be discarded and it really needs to be put into policy where there is a link between the Regional Corporations and the Community Councils together to get things done. Just very quickly I have to say Blue Basin Waterfall my God somebody needs to give us some assistance the community is struggling to keep Blue Basin Waterfall as a tourist

sight. It's a real attraction and it has been totally desecrated. So Community Council this is where we come in freely have been taking care of the Blue Basin Waterfall and its environs but I'm telling you it's overwhelming now. Is the dumping of the rubbish and we really need some assistance, I have a list of willing community members who want to do more but they need some formal assistance. In terms of finance and support through the Village Council, we are the ones who have been doing it thank you.

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

She's pushing against an open door here.

❖ **Female Participant (Female, Indian, 60's)**

Pleasant good evening to the Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, Minister Khan, Minister Young, Minister Darryl Smith. Sir is too much to mention but I have it in writing, it is a private matter but I want to know if Darryl Smith walked with his camera tonight. He came with his camera by me and promised to look into certain things. That was before Election but as Election over now, I don't want to make it a public situation but I have two letters here. One for my Prime Minister and one for Minister Darryl Smith.

Moderator:

Hopefully, you have the opportunity to make that presentation at the end of the Consultation.

Female Participant

Well, I have the letter for my Prime Minister, I can't go to my Prime Minister? I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. *(Delivers letter to the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley)*

Moderator:

Okay, thank you.

❖ **Heather Jack Diego Martin North/East (Female, African, 40's)**

Good evening Dr. Keith Rowley, good evening Minister Franklin Khan and Minister Stuart Young. I have some concerns in my area down at Dorrington Gardens and Dorrington Gardens Extension. We have Regional Corporations far in between and they come and they clean in terms of cutting the grass at the back. We have a spring coming from the Superville Quarry Road and in there; there is a little tributary that comes along back at the two sides of Dorrington Gardens. Now sometimes they come like six weeks apart to clean they will cut and they would leave all the cuttings in the drain and we have been calling. The only person we have gotten through to is Miss Catherine Mendez, she sent the group, they came but they told her that they moved out the rumble. My suggestion is that they go back to what was happening twelve years before when they are finish cleaning get all that stuff out of the

drain and collect it at the front by Gopaul's shop where they normally do it. So that we can help to alleviate the mosquitoes because we are having a problem with that. My second point is the problem with the mosquitoes and the spraying we are having a very sick and nauseous after they come and spray. We are not studying that, we know that it will help the Zika and the other issues but the long term effect that it will have on our bodies. If there is something that could be done to kind of curtail that; maybe something else that they could do right but if we can get something in place that can help us along we'll be very happy thanks.

❖ **Camille Carisquerro, Rich Plain (Female, Mixed, 50's)**

Good evening all protocols observed, I would like to congratulate Minister Franklin Khan on this wonderful job that took place over the months with the Consultations on Local Government and it is. The Tobago model the effect of it has been recognized in that I had some relatives visit within the last few months and they visited Tobago and they came back and said the difference that they saw in Tobago as compared to Trinidad. I said it's coming it's gonna come soon. I have a specific point though in that there is a concern amongst some friends and burgesses around regarding the Diego Martin River. Now in a few years ago especially when Darryl took over as Chairman of the Corporation we saw the river being maintained. We knew it was not the Corporation's function so to speak but some effort was put into the clearing of the Corporation. We know the rainy season is going to be upon us soon and we are seeing that the river needs some work to be done. I, however, have a specific concern, I belong to the St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church which is within the Diego Martin West Constituency. Our Parish hall has a problem with the river it's undercutting under the hall. Some progress was made in terms of getting to the necessary Ministry, we approach Local Government we were told to go to the Ministry it was water resources then the Corporation they tried to help. With the change in Government, everything is stagnant now we need to know where to go...

Moderator:

Okay thank you very much we just want people to bear in mind these Consultations really cannot address some of these very specific concerns. Some of the representatives are here and if I were you would make sure they don't leave without them listening to what you have to say about these problems.

❖ **Omardath Maharaj (Male, Indian, 30's)**

Honourable Prime Minister, everyone here gathered good evening, I just want to make three quick points if anybody knows me I use the opportunity to say something on behalf of agriculture, fisheries and the environment and rural development. A few weeks ago a small group from my class at UWI partnered with the Diego Martin Council Slater across the room I must acknowledge him and thank him for a clean-up at St Peters Bay. A few of the points

said here earlier, for me say that we must parallel this conversation on Local Government Reform with more importance being placed on volunteerism and personal responsibilities for some of the things in our spaces. The second point is the Prime Minister did allude to the fact that we need to track a better quality of candidate at least at the Local Government level. I think we also need to bear some mind that if it is we want to rely on a greater participation in the democracy process by community councils and members and so forth. We also need to lend some effort towards capacity building at that level especially in rural areas where you have a lot of interest groups parallel with sports, culture and everyone has an interest. The final point I wanted to make is how are we going to address frustration in the system? I've been to some of the Consultations, not as much as Chairman Rondon but in Rio Claro, the point came up about an Ombudsman type where you can go there if you have any issues. I have a personal issue I live within the city of the Couva/Talparo Regional Corporation and the fact is if you are averse to the politics in, that we are entrenched in a Westminster System party politics exist no matter. If you want the community to participate and I need to put my taxes towards the operation of that Corporation, the fact is if people know as the Councillors in that area know that you are opposed at a time to their politics and their functioning. They have problems and they do nothing for you and we have been championed, we have petitions all these things for drain, we have caimans in the drain, a whole history. The fact is they do nothing for you so if it is you now move away from the Local Government and we don't want to create a system where you have to sidestep to go and nag somebody for assistance. Where it is you would go to seek some redress in that area?

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

One of the issues that came up and I tried to address it but I am not sure if it is a solution, I raised the issue especially in Rio Claro is in this new reform system how do we protect minority interest in the context of the Regional Corporation because they are empowered they are not under the whip of the Minister of Local Government. In Corporations like Diego Martin where it's all PNM I would assume when you get your allocation there is some equity and parity in the allocation to your nine or ten Councillors. You go to Mayaro/ Rio Claro, for example, it's four two and there is evidence that at the level of the Corporation the minority two is squeezed out of the development map. If we are putting so much authority in the hands of the Council, in split Councils we have to have some mechanism to protect the interest of the minority. As we speak the only adjudicator of something like that is the Minister of Local Government because he can make an intervention and say hey guys allyuh going down the wrong way. But if we say we're empowering the Regional Corporation in its entirety there is no Minister of Local Government, the Minister don't have any time to study if you give a Councillor who is not in your party. I would be discussing that with Minister Young as to see how if legislatively or otherwise administratively we can put a system in place to protect minority interest in the Corporation and it is both on the UNC side and on the PNM side.

❖ **Shurlan Hartley (Male, African, 50's)**

Good night Honourable Prime Minister, Ministers of Government and Local Government personnel and people of Diego Martin. I represent the Westend Sports and Culture Organization our concern is on what can Local Government do for the peace and development of the community particularly the young people between the ages let's say from 19 down. Westend has developed a template where we are currently organizing sports and cultural activities among the ten constituencies amongst the Local Government Election. We are currently promoting the youth football actually our competition will begin on Sunday and it will run for two months alright. What we are asking is that the support from the Political Directorate from the burgesses and from the corporate sector. People who are really interested in helping the young people of the community to move towards more positive development in their lives. We want people to know exactly what Westend is doing and we look forward to your support. I would like to thank the Corporation so far because we have had tremendous support from them we have also have tremendous support from the Royal Bank Corporation so thank you very much.

❖ **Female Participant (Female, African, 40's)**

Good night our Prime Minister and all our Councillors and our Ministers that are present everybody goodnight. Just a few things one of the things I think when you're doing the legislation I think you need to limit, I do not believe in people ruling forever so I think we need to have a limit on the number of years that Councillors can serve. A period of time whether it's two terms, three terms and that's it get out - let somebody else get a chance and prove themselves I do not believe in long term serving. The other thing is in the past we've had it and we still have it now where Councillors are also people who are contractors with the organizations with the Corporation. I think that part also has to be stated outright, you must not also be a contractor if you're a serving Councillor on any kind of thing. Mandatory statutory meetings that are public and if it's once a quarter so that the rest of us can have our say. Darryl Smith had started it when he was the Chairman and it never continued he left in September last year and that was the end of it. So we never had a chance to say anything those little private meetings you have we don't know anything that ever happens. The other thing is you have two problems with the Corporation at this point the Municipal police do not have the power to do certain things I know this because I called more than once. You have two things you have derelict vehicles and you have abandon vehicles. Abandon vehicles are moved by the police of Trinidad and Tobago, the Police Service. The Municipal Police cannot it is not within their powers and therefore, the Corporation person who came could not move it either. So you have it sitting down there for five years and cannot be moved and calling the police doesn't help. So you need to vest some kind of powers like that in the Municipal Police so that they can do certain things. The last thing is that last year we had quite a few persons that big graduation class of Public Health Inspectors, the Corporation at present there are four very aged public officers. I can name them because when I call I can't get help because they do not have the powers as

Public Officers to do anything the law does not allow it. The law allows Public Health Inspectors. You have a whole fleet of Public Health Inspectors and nobody has....

Moderator

Okay, I think we get the point of the Public Health Inspectors, you spoke about the ambit of the role of the Municipal Police and term limits; Minister is that something that is going to be considered?

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

Well the issue of term limits, term limits rarely came up in the Consultations over the last thirteen Consultations. If we had term limits we would not have had a man like Mr. Terry Rondon here who has served this Country with distinction at the Local Government level but it is an idea and it will be dealt with. Just let me make a point on the Councillors who are contractors that is a conflict of interest and I personally do not know of any specific situation but if it does exist it is a clear conflict of interest and it will be dealt with.

❖ **Phillip Graves, Diego Martin (Male, African, 50's)**

Good evening Mr. Prime Minister, people of Diego Martin all protocols observed. I live in the Diego Martin main road and operate a business there, of vehicle inspection I must say I give full support to the reform because I've had dealings with the Corporation and the Chairman. There is the need for funding take for instance between Mercer Road and Charles Avenue on the Diego Martin main road they have been repairing the pavement and there are these big holes there that if you fall down you can be lost in them because the complete slab is missing for weeks. A lot of works needs to be done I know that something is necessary so if the Corporations can collect funds revenue and.....

Moderator:

Sir that point was made earlier by the Minister in his presentation and I don't think we need to recap that at this stage so is there another point very briefly.

Phillip Graves

Okay yes, the enforcement of the laws as far as motor vehicles are concerned in the Diego Martin area. I mean at least twenty thousand I see pass in front of me there where I live and...

Moderator:

So you think that Local Government should take responsibility for that?

Phillip Graves

No I am talking about in the context you have the Municipal Police in the area and so on to collect revenues for the function of the Corporation. If they can, funds and so on could be generated, could be used in the Corporation.

❖ **Mc Cain Maraval (Female, African, 60's)**

Good evening Prime Minister and good evening to the people outside and inside. I live long enough to see Local Government business coming it birthing, it showing a lil bit and birthing and I am so happy. Two things transportation how we're going to do that? And the next thing is supervision. People in Trinidad don't like to be supervised, the supervisor doesn't like to supervise and the people don't like to be supervised so, please. The next thing is man's mentality; man's mentality has gone I don't know how the government is going to help us men meaning human being to get that mentality. If only we could think and slow down a lil bit we wouldn't have a lady coming and saying she have to clean her drain, she has to pick up and she has to thing and if she sees the containers and whatever. So Local Government apart from all what they have to do they would also have to do with man's mentality.

❖ **Karen Alexander Diego Martin East (Female, Mixed, 50's)**

All protocols observed sir I'll make two of my six points and I'll give you the piece of paper. I would like to make a plug for evidence-based Local Government administrations. In that, I would like to see some constituency profiles develop that speak to infrastructure, the people in the constituency, the organizations, the processes and the resources. Having done that I would like to see some kind of formal system for constituency-based needs assessments. We have to have a system for determining constituency minorities and constituencies coming from that you will have constituency budget. The other point is that I would like to see Local Government deal with local economic development. I would like to see some constituencies' skills bank that will sort of increase economic activities within constituencies. I would like to see local area economic profile and community tourism and business improvement districts where relevant in various Corporations. We need to have a system for fixing those business districts and making them into something thank you.

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

The regional spatial planning process takes care of that and the legislation also takes care of that and obviously we want to be future-driven and we probably can be building these Regional Corporation profiles as you said before. The constituency profile problem with political constituency those boundaries are not in synced with the national planning template and that is the inconsistency in the system.

❖ **Arlene Mendez, Diego Martin Northeast (Female, African, 30's)**

A pleasant good night to everyone, where I'm living I don't have a proper roadway when rainfall I have to remain on the roadside I don't have access to my home, my children shoes wet, my shoes wet everything like that. It has been sixteen years now my question is I've been to the Diego Martin Regional Corporation the Councillor, whoever party was in place, I've been to my MP, I've been everywhere. So my question is how can I be assured that my

needs and my concerns would be met by this Corporation? And if it is not being met who can I inquire about my situation?

❖ **Verna Atwell , Bagatelle (Female, African, 50's)**

Hello goodnight, Honourable Prime Minister, I would like to see the Corporation come into my area because my area for the past 21 years and over I have been living Bagatelle and it seems to be getting worst. Most of the problems we have are not about just spraying it's about people not having drainage in their yard, people building their walls, they putting up they housing and the housing falling over in your yard. Rain is coming so we are gonna get flood out, we have a whole lot of problem. I am surrounded by people have a lot of open lots they right now in my yard in my neighbour yard it has rats running around and we have so many little problems. We need the Corporation to come into our area and organize our area, Bagatelle is an area that has a lot of people living and it have young children and we need to have it upgraded...

Moderator:

Okay madam in this hall there is several Local Government representatives and members of Parliament but the Consultation is not here to pick up those very specific grievances.

❖ **Anastacia Daly, Bagatelle (Female, Mixed, 30's)**

Goodnight all protocols observed, I would like to say that I was very impressed with the Minister's presentation and I do look forward to the Local Government Reform. However, I am interested in finding out what kind of organizational structure that you have in place for the positions to be filled. Also, I would like to find out what you're going to put in place for the chosen individuals to ensure that they perform their duty and if they don't what can be done and how can we go about to remove them? Pertaining to the local contractors I would like to suggest which I think you did that the local contractors to be chosen within the community. However we have an issue with quality work and I want to know what you're going to put in place to ensure that there is fairness in the distribution of the contracts and when distributed how can we ensure as a community that we get the quality work that we need and should get.

❖ **Hyacinth Bartholomew (Female, African, 50's)**

Goodnight everyone, in terms of the Minister speaking about social government, social development, and social services. I would like to propose a serious consideration for building shelters as community centres cannot always suffice to accommodate fire victims, domestic victims, violence victims and persons displaced through homelessness under difficult circumstances not just in Diego Martin but throughout the regions in Trinidad. A strategic location so that the Police Service, fire service, responsible NGO's and the

Corporation and their agencies concerned can respond to the assistance of persons in these needy situations not on a permanent basis but for a certain period where there can catch themselves and be assisted in the long term.

Moderator

Okay, madam, you have this written down there?

❖ **Hyacinth Bartholomew (Female, African, 50's)**
Yeah.

Moderator

If you can leave it with us the secretariat will take it and sift through it but we really have to wrap up thank you very much for the contribution.

❖ **Hyacinth Bartholomew (Female, African, 50's)**
Alright.

5.0 CLOSING

The Honourable Minister Stuart Young

Well on behalf of the Government and we have the Prime Minister who will address us, I'd just like to thank everybody throughout the fourteen Corporations for taking the time to participate throughout this process. We've gotten some really good ideas we are taking things on board, ultimately we will sit down take policy decisions and we're bringing the legislation to Parliament by October/November of this year, I'll like to thank you all.

The Honourable Minister Franklin Khan

Ladies and gentlemen of Diego Martin I want to thank you all for coming out in such large numbers and making such wonderful contributions. This is the fourteenth, the final Consultation I am particularly impressed it has brought home to me the power of consultation and the power of people's ideas. When I started this consultation process I felt deep down in my heart, I didn't say that we have the answers, I mean I was obviously proven wrong because there were so many new and fresh ideas that came out of these consultations. Which just show the power of people and the power of the collective wisdom of the National community? Everything that you have said here is recorded in the fourteen consultations and all have been distilled and transcribed and that whole process continues over the next coming weeks where we will prepare a Policy Paper for the approval of Cabinet. It will commence in earnest the drafting of the legislation and then you all will be briefed. Probably on a monthly basis as to how the process continues from now until the legislation and until the final rollout of the new administrative structure and the new reform structure of Local Government. Before I close seeing that this is the last Consultation I want to thank in particular my co-host I would say who has been with me all the time I normally say my right-hand Stuart Young but I am left-handed so he is my left-hand. Mr. Young has been very instrumental in this consultation both on the legislative side joining me on stage for the Consultations. Minister Camille Robinson has also been very much involved and when Stuart is not available she takes the chair. I want to thank the technical committee which is headed by PS Bascombe and Vice Chair Mr. Anthony Roberts who is abroad at this point in time, they are doing tremendous work and I want to also thank them. Finally, I want to thank Advance Dynamics the company we had engage in this Consultation process they have done a wonderful job in setting up the Consultations. Fourteen Consultations they've been all over Trinidad and Tobago with us, the quality of work that you saw in the wrap-up video and in all the graphics that was made is all the work of Advance Dynamics. I think they have really enhanced the quality of this Consultation process; ladies and gentlemen Consultation Local Government Reform is going to happen. I have absolutely no doubt about that we are committed to it and as I said there is no better way to ensure

something happens than having the total buying from the top and I know we have the buying of the Prime Minister so I hand over to him now.

The Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley

Thank you very much, Minister Khan, Minister Stuart Young, thank you very much, fellow citizens, particularly those of you from Diego Martin and particularly those of you from Diego Martin West. I want to simply say that when we wrote our Manifesto and we placed into it a commitment to reform the Local Government system that might have been the most fundamental task that we have assigned ourselves for this term of Office which is at hand. What we are aiming to do is very far reaching a lot have been said even by those of you who have not approached the microphone. You would have sat there and you would have empathized, would have supported would have agonized would have objected to what was said by others. But you were part of the process by listening and speaking to those who are going to formulate Draft Legislation aimed at capturing the best of what has been put to us in the last few months. I was fortunate enough to be at the first Consultation and to have outlined from the Government what we think the process can deliver and tonight I am here at the last of those Consultations. Still hoping that we can encapsulate into Draft Legislation that is workable; the change that we anticipated that we can make when we put this commitment in the Manifesto. It is not every idea is a good idea and is not every good idea that will form part of the Legislative Structure. From all that you've said the assignment now falls on the technicians, public servants and the Ministers and advisors who are guiding the process to Draft Legislation to capture what you think Local Government should be in Trinidad and Tobago. When that Draft Legislation is completed and is laid before the Parliament it's not gonna be a law the following day. There would be a further period where you can now be looking at the Legislation as against this kind of Consultation when you say well what is happening in my area, what is good, what is bad, what are my experiences. When we reach the stage of Legislation you will see how we are trying to fix it and you will have an opportunity again to comment. It may not be fourteen Consultations like this but it may be a period of time when we say to you if you pay attention to the Legislation we'll publish it in a variety of ways and we will ask you to comment on the Draft Legislation. Then we will finalize that, we will Act it into Law and that is when the challenges will begin when we put new Legislation into Law because change usually is not an easy thing. There are many people who will want the change to come but leave it the same way and there are many people who will ask for the change but the change does not only stop by the person next to you, you have to be involved in the change. I said before and I am saying again these proposals for Local Government Reform will only be successful if they are embraced and operated by the people for whom they're intended. If you leave it to the public servants if you leave it to the Cabinet, the politicians - it's not going to work because the way it is going to be designed; it is going to be designed with you being involved. So if you're Corporation is given

the power to determine what goes on with respect to building approvals or developmental control and some things are going to happen in Diego Martin and under Law they are required to speak to the public about it before they do it and you don't come out and say you support it or oppose it well then what is the value. You have to participate, you have to inform yourself as to what is going on; you have to read, you have to listen, you have to put on your clothes and go to the meeting and challenge your Councillor. Let them justify to you what they are doing; let them justify to you how the money is being spent. And of course, somebody raised a point this night what happens when things don't go right, who will be held accountable? The answer to that is that you elect people to represent you. The people who go in there to carry out these programs and to spend these monies are representing you for a specific period of time and if they do not represent you then you have no business supporting them to represent you again. That is where your power lies you give them the opportunity to represent you to spend your money to hold your workers in the workplace. If they are not doing that and you know that the power is in your hands to remove them. I can tell you when the Tobago House of Assembly was formed in Tobago in 1980 and being given this kind of autonomous authority, Dr. Williams said we will try it in Tobago and if it succeeds we will import it into Trinidad and a lot of people laughed. But the bottom line is I can tell you now in Tobago people in Tobago now know who is responsible for what and holding them responsible. We have had changes of Government in Tobago in the THA when people say to the Corporation in the THA we are not happy with the way you running our affairs and put you out of office. That is how it's supposed to be but in-between the elections we're going to give you the authority to participate and that is what is called participatory democracy. It is not that everything that has to be done ought not to be done until you are consulted but there'll be opportunities to be consulted on the issues that affect you most. It will be your choice whether you participate or you leave it up to others, there are some people who are cynical and believe that whether I participate or not a thing will go wrong so therefore I'm not wasting my time. And there are others who believe if I come out and participate in the conversation, in the decision-making I could somehow influence it to go the way I think it should be. What I'm appealing to you to do is to get into a mindset of participating in the process. We have schools, we have school boards you'll have management of your community centre, your parks, and recreational grounds. You should be in a position to be able to relate to the Corporation as to how these things are going. The social services this Government spends a lot of money on social service support am sure in this audience many of you know people who should get that support and not getting it or not getting it on time and worst you know people who getting it and shouldn't be getting it. You understand and we can better deal with those things if the delivery is being done closer to you and we have to limit our expectation. I want to end on this note the Government whether it is Central Government or Local Government is not a substitute for individual responsibility. There will be a greater challenge for you to have individual responsibility when you are given more authority so the

Government cannot be all things to all men. But certainly the Government can be a participant in allowing you to be the best that you can be in your community particularly in looking out for the aged and those who are least able to look after themselves. And especially those whose future will be at stake, the children whose schools and healthcare delivery would be in your hands in the community. So don't encourage slackness, don't encourage worthlessness and for God's sake don't encourage corruption and if you do these things Local Government could change the quality of life. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago today is committed to devolving power to the communities if it doesn't work it's because we either designed a bad system or you didn't participate in the work. What we are doing is giving ourselves a chance thank you very much for participating, thank you very much for coming out.



DIEGO MARTIN CONSULTATION

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 350 participants in attendance. Participants were generally receptive to the presentations of the Prime Minister and the Ministers and they were extremely eager to give their input to local government reform as was evident by the very long queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 210 (60%) male participants and 140 (40%) 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% participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (85%) appeared to be middle-class income earners with a few from low income and some high-income class. There was 70% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 30% being a majority mixed-race and some Indo-Trinidadian participants. There were a few participants representing the Chinese and Syrian community.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 28 respondents from the plenary; 17 female, 11 male. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	18	40 – 70 (17), under 40 (1)
Indian	3	40 – 70 (2), under 40 (1)
Chinese	1	40 - 70
Mixed	6	40 – 70 (5), under 40 (1)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Village councils – more citizen involvement in decision-making	6
Autonomy – checks and balances	4
Taxes – where do we pay	1
Accountability	3
Health - Zika	3

Full-time Councillors	1
Garbage/Recycling – promote through media	2
Culture/Sports	4
URP – non-functional	1
Greater collaboration among Corporations	1
Crime - Community security systems	1
Road safety - speed	1
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – rivers, roads, drains, churches etc	4
Boundaries	1
Municipal police	3
Staff – honest day’s work for pay, better rep	4
Agriculture, fisheries and the environment	1
Complaints – who deal with it?	2
Councillors Terms of office - limit	1
Contracts – transparency, quality	2
Behavioural change – mindset	1
Local development and tourism	1
Disaster Management - Build shelters	1