

# Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

## Sangre Grande

27<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
Guaico Government Secondary School



## Rapporteurs' Full Report



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## 1.0 OPENING

The Consultation began with the moderator welcoming the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan; Minister the Honourable Stuart Young, Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith; Mayors of Arima and Point Fortin, Senator Kadijah Ameen, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government Ms. Desdra Bascombe; Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation Mr. Terry Rondon, Councillors and all participants to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Consultation. The National Anthem was then sung by students of the Guaico Secondary School followed by the opening prayer by Pastor Henderson and welcoming remarks by Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation

Mr. Terry Rondon. Member of Parliament for Cumuto/Manzanilla, Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein and Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith then delivered their welcoming speeches.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young

## **2.0 WELCOME REMARKS**

### **2.1 MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR CUMUTO/MANZANILLA Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein**

Good morning to each and every one of you. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government Franklin Khan, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young, Member of Parliament for Toco/Sangre Grande Mrs Glenda Jennings, Your worship, Mayors of both Arima and Point Fortin, Senator Ameen, PS of the Ministry of Local Government, Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation Mr Terry Rondon, hardworking members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Force and the Municipal Police, specially invited guests, members of the public, media houses; good morning again. I wish to thank the regional corporation for their kind invitation to this consultation.

As the Member of Parliament for Cumuto/Manzanilla you would understand and appreciate the chairman had indicated earlier that we are in a rural area and an area as rural as you can get and of course it is imperative for us to receive the necessary services to be easily accessed by our constituents. And so at the end of the day, we want to find out how do we the people hold the corporation accountable, we want to know how we can account. And so as a member of the opposition, we have given our commitment Minister, to work alongside government to ensure that the policies, planning and facilitation processes are accountable and transparent and that benefits the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As Terry had indicated earlier, you cannot be a politician; you cannot be in government if you don't care about people, so at the end of the day we want to know how the services will impact upon the persons. And so we will support a local government consultation process that is unbiased, collaborative and one that seeks to address any legitimate concern of the opposition which represents the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And such concerns are fairness of allocation, the power of the corporation, the planning and facilitation process, the technical competence and of course, we speak about how early you have to get up to leave Matelot to come down, so what are the tax concessions you will extend to councillors to allow them with their vehicles to be able to reach wherever they have to go because they are in fact travelling officers. And questions have been proposed to us, the opposition, on whether the consultation will be addressing issues such as the abolishment of the Local Government Ministry, would the corporation be linked to the Ministry of Finance, what type of changes will there be to the national policy framework and what are the plans that are in place for the regional areas? Will there be a transfer of central government staff to local government and if so, has there been a consultation with the staff, the unions and other key stakeholders?

Taxation: what will be taxed? We speak about...I heard you speak about earlier about the autonomy and executive authority which will be similar to that of the Tobago House of Assembly; how will that function? Will there be a policy for local development, what will happen with the Municipal Police Authority? Is there going to be a decentralization of approvals? What is the role of local government and the Ministry of Works? And how will the disaster management operate and this is particularly of interest to me, again this being a very rural area. And what is the local government consultation process, what happens after? And are there regional plans to inform future development and of course, will

proportional representation remain as a part of the process? And definitely, who is going to manage the transition to new a new form of local government and again as I started I'm going to end. To whom would local government be accountable and there is that strong accountability process coming up. And so there are much more questions but I would stop at this point Honourable Minister. As a matter of fact, I will submit this letter to you. And I will stop and I hope that during the consultations, these concerns will be addressed. Thank you.

## **2.2 MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR TOCO/SANGRE GRANDE Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith**

Ladies and gentlemen good morning I would move along with protocol. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the public consultation on Local Government Reform to the Constituency of Toco/Sangre Grande. Sangre Grande is proud to host this leg of these consultations and I am confident that your time here today will be productive and invaluable to improve the quality of Local Government in this country. Ladies and gentlemen, the significance of today's exercise cannot be understated, it is in keeping with longstanding scholarly recommendations on good governance to develop a system of decentralised government to reduce hassle, improve efficiency and make the government missionary more amendable to changing needs of the people. Ladies and gentlemen just four (4) months after coming into office, your government has taken steps to make this initiative a reality, by first seeking the input and collaboration of you the people, you the people who will serve to add validity to the policy and legislation which will emerge. May I remind you that in our manifesto there is clear commitment to amend the relevant legislation and Local Government apparatus to give the regional corporation a greater level of autonomy, as exists in the Tobago House of Assembly.

According to the UNESCO Human Development Atlas, Toco/Sangre Grande has been sighted as the largest and one of the poorest communities in Trinidad. We are serviced by the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, which also has the responsibility for parts of the neighbouring constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla. Honourable Minister over the past months I have been listening with keen interest to suggestions and concerns to my constituents and we look forward to your discourse today, on the question of Local Government Reform.

Ladies and gentlemen this is your opportunity to add your voices to the growing mass of support for this Local Government Reform. As we heard the Chairman said earlier twenty-four (24) years labouring for changes, now you have the chance to be part of the process. Today's consultation will focus on wide ranging questions and I can tell you that as your Member of Parliament I urge you all to make most of this exercise this morning and make full and constructive contributions to the discussions that you will engage in. All your views count, this is people centred government. I commend the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for putting people first and I pledge the support of the people of Sangre Grande and the environs. I thank you and welcome everyone again to this Consultation on Local Government Reform.



### 3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, addressed all present and welcomed them to the third consultation at the Guaico Government Secondary School. He delivered his address with the aid of a video presentation which was displayed at the beginning and end of his address. The Minister reminded the audience that he attended North Eastern College in Sangre Grande and considers it his second home, although he is originally from Mayaro. To this day he maintains strong ties with the people and city of Sangre Grande.

The Minister gave a brief explanation of the video presentation which was shown to the audience. It was as follows, "The video you just saw illustrates a system and the dynamics that are not unfamiliar to any of us. Whether it's a river, a clogged drain, an empty lot next door, delivery of social services, school repairs, waste management or a bus shelter, the list goes on and on. Under the current system and this is fundamental, when a community needs to get something done, it has to take a place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries that run through the centralised heart of government."

After having explained the video to the audience, Minister Khan proceeded with his address.

He began, "These consultations ladies and gentlemen, are unique, as it is one of the few times that public consultations are being held in Trinidad & Tobago but it is only being held in

Trinidad. And the reason for that is that Tobago's local government machinery has progressed well beyond that of Trinidad's. This is the direct result of the reforms that the old Tobago County Council went through in the formation of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and the implementation of the THA Act.

Looking at the Tobago experience we see that there is more that separates us than water. We are separated by a whole different system of service delivery – so it's not the sea but just to use a pun, it's the bureaucracy. That is what fundamentally distinguishes the governance structure of Trinidad and Tobago. No matter what spin we put on it, whether what side of the fence you are on, for those of you who have been to Tobago, somehow or the other you feel Tobago is governed better than Trinidad. The roads are smoother, the public buildings are well kept, the place is cleaner, the hospitals work better, their social service delivery is much better. You do not have problems of when school opening hoe much schools would not be opened and all these sorts of things because there is devolution of power and authority in Tobago that Trinidad sadly lacks. This is really the fundamental principal behind Local Government and the local government reform process.

Like many communities across Trinidad, Tobagonians used to have to come to Port of Spain for everything. There was a time Tobagonians had to come to Trinidad for a passport. There was a time when Tobago had to come to Central Government to get the authorization on virtually anything; how they maintain their public spaces, how they maintain their heritage sites; ladies and gentlemen all that is of the past now. If Tobago has that autonomy today, why shouldn't the people of Sangre Grande and environs have that autonomy? Tobago is unique; there is something called a Tobagonian. Isn't there something called a Sangre Grandian? Isn't there something unique about Sangre Grande, about Biche, about Matelot, about Toco, about Grande Riviere? Because you have your own identity and you create your own identity. It is incumbent upon a centralised government system to empower you to manage your space, manage your community, to manage how you live. And nobody should take that away from you. Again, this is the fundamental principal that underlies the Local Government Reform process.

We will deal with the nitty-gritty. We will deal with how Mr Stuart Young and his team will draft the legislation. We will deal with how the Ministry of Finance make its allocation, Ms Newallo asked and I would answer in due course. That is why we are having these consultations. We have outlined a general principal and policy but the actual detain of the mechanics is up to the people. And that is the purpose of the consultation, how it will actually be implemented. And let me just warn this audience before we start, one of the characteristics of underdevelopment is that nothing transformational happens. You serve a five year term and you just plod along and by the time you catch yourself, you served two five-year terms and 10 years passed. That's a decade and two decades and five is a quarter of a century and by the time you catch yourself a quarter of a century would have elapsed and you have made no progress from where you started to where twenty-five years took you. Transformation needs transformational leadership. Transformation does not happen by itself and one of the problems with Trinidad and Tobago is for whatever reason, whether the left side or the right side, things transformational rarely happens in Trinidad. I want to say here today that I feel proud to be selected by the Honourable Prime Minister as the Minister of Rural Development and Local

Government, because these are the two fundamental transformational issues that are facing this country right now. Local Government empowerment and the creation of a brand new ministry called the Ministry of Rural Development.

Before I proceed along the Local Government agenda, let me just digress for five minutes and talk about Rural Development because Rural Development is fundamental to this empowerment process especially in terms of corporations like Sangre Grande, Mayaro, Princess Town, Siparia, Penal/Debe, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo. It does not matter to me who was responsible for it but since 1962 when this country gained Independence till present, two much of the developmental agenda of Trinidad and Tobago has been focused on the urban areas. You could say PNM is to blame, you could say UNC is to blame; it matters not at this point in time. The fact is that a significant portion of the resources of this country has been absorbed in urbanization and urban development, especially along what is now called the 'East-West Corridor.' To tell you how seriously this administration sees that and in particular our Prime Minister Dr Rowley, we have reduced the cabinet from 33 to 23, we have shredded and disbanded 10 full ministries and yet the Prime Minister saw it fit to have a Ministry entirely dedicated to rural development. That is the fundamental stress that we are putting on Rural Development. At another time and another place, I will deal extensively with our rural developmental agenda. Suffice it to say that as part of the Local Government empowerment program, especially in the rural areas we are coming up with serious strategy, serious empowerment for local government, and the pendulum as it were, is shifting from the urbanized areas to rural development. We will be developing rural policy on banking. Why should somebody in Biche have to travel to Sangre Grande to go to Republic Bank to take out five hundred dollars? Why can't there be an ATM machine in Biche? So you go and you press in your number and it doesn't matter what bank you bank with because there is LINX and LINX links all the banks. Why should somebody in Matelot...not Matelot...but Toco, Matura, to come to Sangre Grande to conduct simple banking transactions? Why for example, T&TEC has a policy where if your house is further down the street and it calls for three telephone posts to reach the house, they tell you that you have to pay the capital cost of those three poles. So to get your light somewhere in Balandra because you're on a side street with no houses, you have to pay \$30 thousand to get a connection. Someone in the urban areas does not suffer from that. So the Ministry of Rural Development would be dictating policy which will be national policy as to how T&TEC has to deal with rural people.

Housing, for example, over the years massive housing estates have been built in Trinidad: La Horquetta, Maloney, Edinburg 500, you name it. That is not akin to rural development. Rural development we want village expansion, so you don't have a new community coming to invade your space. So in other words you go in to the North Eastern corner of Trinidad and Tobago, you have a housing settlement in Vega de Oropouche, then you have one in Matura, just 20 or 30 houses so the village absorbs those housing areas and not just bulldoze 300 acres of land and build 1000 houses. Fundamentally, the purpose of rural development is not to urbanize rural areas. Is to keep it rural, keep it country, to keep the relationships that you have built with your families and neighbours but to bring the amenities to you that currently are enjoyed by the urban population so that you can enjoy your life to the same level as the people in the urban areas.



Over the years, the major impediments that have prevented local government structures from being efficient and effective, I will list 5 of them. First and foremost, Political interference; ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry of Local Government is not local government. The Ministry of Local Government is central government. Local government exists at the level of the corporation and that is why the question has been asked continuously, why are we disbanding the Ministry of Local Government? The Ministry of Local Government is not about local government, plain and simple. You have to be empowered to do what you have to do. Nobody has to have a big stick over your back and every simple activity you want to engage in you have to write the Minister for approval. Ladies and gentlemen I am fed-up on my desk, getting a file everyday with requests from the corporation to do simple things. I ask the PS all the time, do I have to approve this? She says according to the law, yes. I do not want to approve these things anymore, I do not. It should be in the power, in the hands of the Mayor, in the hands of the Chairman of the corporation. Simple, simple, simple matters that have to come to central government for approval; that is the devolution process.

Political interference – I just want to give this audience another assurance, this empowerment that we would be embarking on is not for PNM corporations only. The same power that would be handed to the Mayor of Point Fortin, the same power that would be handed to the Mayor of San Fernando, to the Mayor of Port of Spain, where we have all councillors, all aldermen, not a single opposition member on the city council of Port of Spain but by the same token in Penal/Debe, there isn't a single PNM member, either council or aldermen, but the same power that the Mayor of Port of Spain will be getting is exactly the same power that the chairman of Penal/Debe Regional Corporation will be having. I just want to give the assurance that this is A-political in governance. And if the people of Penal/Debe voted a UNC council into power, that is their right. Just as it is the right for the city of Port of Spain to vote in a PNM council. You are accountable to your burgesses and your citizens.

And let me deal with Ms Newallo questions now. The corporations will be accountable to the Minister of Finance on fiscal matters and by extension; they would be accountable to the Auditor General. They cannot make policy contrary to national policy. That is where the cabinet comes in and that is where in particular the Ministry of Planning and Development comes in. But beyond that you are empowered to do what you think is best for your burgesses. And you will be accountable to them and you will know how good you have performed when 3 years have elapsed and election time comes around again, they will adjudicate on your performance. It's as simple as that. Accountable to the Minister of Finance for the monies that you have been disbursed, you're accountable to the Auditor General as to whether you spent it transparently and there was no corruption involved in the awarding of contracts and you will now be accountable for your performance to your burgesses.

The other major impediment is inadequate funding. We all know that and this is what we plan to correct. Most importantly is the Inadequacy of the supporting legislation that requires the empowerment of your decision-making. In a democracy, you cannot do things unless it is legislated. I cannot say I empower the Mayor of Arima to take certain decisions. If the law prohibits it, I have no authority to so do. So the legislative agenda is paramount in a process like this. It's for this reason, as Mr Rondon mentioned, there is a technical committee that has been mandated to work out the nitty-gritty of this reform process. It is headed by PS Bascombe and

includes a wide range of skills but there is also a ministerial oversight committee which consists of about 5 ministers, chaired by myself and the vice chairman is the Honourable Stuart Young. Mr Young has a very significant role to play with this in conjunction with the Chief Parliamentary Council because it is they who will be drafting the legislation to put into effect what you the people of Trinidad will be telling us that you want done. If there is not legislation to do something, it just cannot be done in law.

The sluggish administrative structure is what hinders local government and to me that is the greatest challenge that we face and we'll probably deal with that during the consultative part. As a government we have articulated a local government policy reform position. All nice and we, we host the consultation; we hear what you have to say and what we need to do. Mr Young and his team would draft the legislation to put whatever reform you want that is palatable to the state into effect. But when it goes into effect, who is going to effect it? My biggest fear in this whole process is the capacity of the regional corporation to effect the new power that we have put into their hands.

As we speak one of the most unproductive arms of the state is the Regional Corporation. And nobody can deny that. You go out 10 o'clock and you want to know where the gangs are and you cannot see them. You go into the regional corporation offices at half past 10 or 11 o'clock and you can see very few people. You cannot see an officer to make a complaint to; you cannot make an appointment to see anybody. You're lucky if you see a secretary. And these are then human resource issues that we have to face frontally. It's all well and good to make nice legislation but the proof of the pudding is in the eating and when we go out as a country and we go to any government agency we see the inefficiency. We are partly, and sometimes wholly responsible for the inefficiencies that have plagued us for decades. So ladies and gentlemen, these are the impediments that the current local government faces.

Local government has become ineffective and burdened with bureaucracy because control, funding and authority are centralised in the Ministry of Local Government and Corporations are currently treated as departments of the Ministry. The litmus test for the inefficiency of local government is the number of people lining up to see their MP to deal with things of a local nature. Few people realise that the real role of an MP is as a legislator, to go into the parliament and pass laws. His main responsibility is not to clear your clogged drain; that falls under the regional corporation. The fact that you have to go to your Member of Parliament shows that the system is not working. We want to have a system that is operational and functional and clearly working. There should be clear mechanisms in place to report issues and to have them solved.

How many ministers know your communities like you do? Can they all know the lady down the road who can barely walk anymore? And that she has to go to Port of Spain every year she survives, to the Ministry, to prove to them that she is indeed alive. Otherwise, her pension will be cut off. Can any single Minister know exactly what street light is blown? No, they cannot. That is a function of the local government agencies, the local councillors because your first port of call as a citizen and as a burgess is your local government councillor.

Our vision is a fully operationalized and networked local government system. This is imperative to people-centred development. You have to start to take charge of your lives, you have to take charge of your communities and you have to take charge of how you organise yourself. Our

ability to fix a road, to take care of a public space, our ability to deal with local economies, all that has to now become part of the local government agenda. If you feel handcuffed in making the decisions in your own community something is wrong with the governance in Trinidad and Tobago.

This is not a matter of fixing physical infrastructure or organising how work is done, it is also a psychological adjustment of your mind. For example, in the United States, if Wal-Mart wants to come into a community to build a big store, they can't just do it you know. Is town meeting in your tail and the residents would come out and if the adjudicate that they don't want no Wal-Mart there...Wal-Mart could know Obama, no Wal-Mart ain't building because the system of governance is very much empowered to the community. America votes for everything. They vote for judges you know. Here you can't even say anything about a judge because it is sub-judiciary. America votes for sheriffs, they vote for Mayors, the vote for state prosecutors and these offices are accountable to the people. The state of Vermont, one of the most beautiful states in the United States does not have any fast food restaurants. Vermont has no McDonald's, no Home Depot because the people of Vermont have decided not to allow big corporations into their state so that small businesses can thrive.

Our proposal, as we stated in our 2015 Manifesto, the PNM's vision for Local Government seeks to remove all of the red tape and bureaucracies that prevent local government bodies from doing their work in an effective and efficient manner. This document has now been advanced into the official policy debate. To revolutionise and bring the system in line with the recurrent recommendations of the many teams, committees, and different administrations that have engaged this process over the years, we propose the following reforms: Secure Funding, Collecting Your Own Taxes; local Government bodies will be allowed to keep certain taxes and other revenues collected within their boundaries. Executive Authority: Local Government bodies will be given a level of autonomy and executive authority similar to that of Tobago House of Assembly. New Responsibilities: Local Government bodies will be responsible for school maintenance, social welfare services, sporting programmes, agricultural and local tourism. As we've seen recently, the more schools we build the harder it is for central government to keep them all open and running. Local Contractors; local Government bodies will be responsible for developing the competencies, expertise and facilities that will create opportunities for local work to be done by local suppliers of goods and services. More Effective Municipal Policing; Broader responsibilities and staff will be given to the Municipal Police closing the gap between the community and officers of the law. Development Control; Control of Development will be under the authority of Local Government bodies, the ability to fully participate in the planning and development of communities will be expanded beyond approval of plans and construction dwelling houses and simple buildings.

Infrastructure Works; The system of implementation of local infrastructure projects will be completely restructured and decentralized to allow for efficient and timely implementation by Local Government bodies. Disaster Management; Local Government bodies will be reformed to facilitate direct collaboration with Central Government agencies to plan for and become effective first responders in Natural Disasters. Involvement of Civil Society; The Public and Civil Society will become more involved in the Decision making process and in so doing lead to the growth of a more sensitive, caring and responsive society. Regional Development Planning;

Detailed Regional Development plans have been done for the fourteen (14) Municipal Corporations. Those manifestos will be adopted with some changes by the corporations that are controlled by the PNM. Again I have no authority to tell any of the regional corporations that they have to adopt the PNM manifesto. They can come up with their own ideas and they are free to do so. These will serve as a guide for future Development.

To ultimately reduce the rivers of red tape, supporting and inhibiting legislations will need amendment. Further amendment to the Municipal Corporation Act to give Corporations the level of autonomy and executive authority similar to that currently enjoyed by the Tobago House of Authority. Amendment to the relevant taxation laws to allow local government bodies to retain certain taxes collected within their boundaries. Amendment of Section 69 of the Act to reflect the new Standing Committees to give greater oversight, accountability and transparency to all Council matters.

So ladies and gentlemen, two final points I want to make. Under these reforms we want some comments on potential boundary changes. There are 14 regional corporations in Trinidad. Is that too many? Is it enough? If we have 14 empowered corporations, Trinidad and Tobago may be the most over-governed body in the world. However the floor is open on that, whether it should be consolidated in 12 or remain at 14. Legislative changes are not made every day, so you will have to include everything that you would like to see because it would take some time to get back into the cycle.

The biggest challenge will be how we organize the corporations to handle this level of authority. This is a golden opportunity for young people. The new corporations will have new administrative structures and we would be calling for new skill sets, auditors, accountants, engineers and we will be giving the young people the opportunity to fill these vacancies over the coming 3 to 4 years so that they can contribute to the level of service delivery in the community. We have invested heavily in GATE and producing graduates by the hundreds and thousands but we are not absorbing them in meaningful jobs. Sometimes we suffer from underemployment and sometimes that is worse than unemployment. You don't want to have children with universities who are only able to muster a meaningless OJT job that does not command their skill set or take advantage of their education. They would prefer to stay at home until they are able to get a better job. As a nation we have to try to absorb the graduates that we produce and put these things into the hands of the next generation.

I will close on this; we have to put some trust into the hands of the next generation. And I commend the 6<sup>th</sup> form students who are here today because really and truly we are doing this for them. So that's my story.

Minister Khan concluded his address with stating, "These are our thoughts. I want to ask you that when Mr Young and I take the stage, feel free to make any comment you want...without using obscene language and aggressive language. But nothing is taboo. If you feel what I have said is foolishness, say so. If you feel we miss the ball, say so. If you feel it was good, say so. If you feel we could add a couple things to it, say so. But today is your day, the people of Sangre Grande to make your voices heard as we build the agenda on local government reform that we hope should be completed, at least to the level of putting the legislation to parliament before the next Local Government Elections which is due sometime in October, November, December.

We are looking at putting that in the parliament to a joint select committee. Thank you all very much.”

### **Moderator**

Minister what you have outlined here is a very comprehensive multi-layered approach and this question is inspired by a conversation I had with a lady at the back, so I hope that I am not short circuiting what she has to say but there would be a concern in terms of the time frame for implementation, certainly the initial version of what you have offered, what would you say is a reasonable time frame for implementation of some of these things?

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

Well nothing can happen without legislation that is why we have Minister Young here in particular and he can give you the legislative agenda in terms of that. Everything has to fold post legislation because we are handcuffed to do things without legislation.

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

Thank you very much, good morning everyone it is a pleasure to be here. The good news is working parallel to these public consultation programmes we have the technical committee that you heard the Minister refer to. On that technical committee we have one of our most senior draft persons on the committee and we are working assiduously, so as we go along and policy decisions are being taken, we are also drafting. So we will bring the legislation to parliament before the next constitutionally due elections for Local Government. So that is a commitment that we have given and we will stick to it. We are working on it so it will happen.

One of the important points that I think needs to be made and Minister Khan again referred to it in his presentation, is legislation is only piece of the puzzle. So we will provide the legislation, you now see the administrative side. So I think what I would like to say to all of the communities is start having those discussions with the corporations, all of the corporations start thinking through the implementation side, because too often we get caught up focussing only on the legislative side. We will provide the parameters, we will provide the framework, we will provide the legal way and means for it to be achieved but, the implementation is going to come down to each and every one of you.



## 4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

### ❖ **Pastor Courtney Francois (Male African 30's)**

I am Pastor Courtney Francois Minister of Religion and I am very happy to be here, good morning everyone. I just have two (2) contributions I would like to submit today. As a Minister of Religion I am very saddened with the level of poverty that we experience in this region and there is no question in our minds that we are at the bottom of the ladder, in terms of Trinidad and Tobago as a region as it relates to poverty. One of the things I would want to submit that I think is integral to the development of Local Government, you alluded to it in terms of one of the international countries you mentioned, but the name of the country eludes me. Where we would have a system, where we would know for certain the exact amount of people in every village that is under the poverty line and that we are able now to determine if it is Guaico, if it is Coal Mine, we have one hundred (100) here, three hundred (300) there and that is public knowledge that is published on the website. We would like to know now that you are approaching to treat with it in terms of reduction, what are the specific measures that we are engaging. So that if you have three (3) years, we know in the first year you attempt to reduce a three hundred (300) persons from under the poverty line, we know that you have built a factory and in the first year you would have absorbed one hundred (100). We know in the second year we only have two hundred (200) remaining to treat with and that is also publically published. Additionally to that, we would like to know also all major stakeholders, churches and all other bodies. We need to know now if there is employment available that it is also published, so that we can put it in our bulletin and what have you and say okay in Coal Mine there is an opportunity coming up, fifty (50) persons will be employed, you all go down there and see how you can benefit from it. But we do not want also, technocrats like to deal with percentages but the lay person we want to deal with the number. Do not tell me how much is the percentage in reduction, tell me whether it is 10 (ten) or 15 (fifteen) persons.

The other contribution I would like to make quickly is; I am not hearing too much about how we reform the indigent and those who are getting in close running with the law and stuff like that, in relation to Local Government Reform. But I do think before it even reaches court where they have to go to jail and all the different kinds of stuff that accompanies that hurt, where we have to have families always going down to Port of Spain or Arouca, I think there needs to be established institutions or an institution, where we can reform our own young people right in our community that still has close relation and proximity to their family members, so that that first intervention call is made there to reform and you can invite councillors, pastors all kinds of people who are able to assist them before they cross the line and end up in prison. Those are the two (2) I would wish to submit at this time thank you very much.

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

You raised two (2) points there; one (1) is restorative justice, which Minister Young could make a comment on, although restorative justice and the justice system will not fall under

the Regional Corporation. National Security and the justice system is a function of Central Government. The issue of planting an economic seed into these rural communities and I want to make two (2) points, one – over the years it is my personal opinion not necessarily the opinion of the government, a lot of attention was based on urban poverty. The feeling was that if you live in an urban area and you are poor and you do not have an income, you cannot even plant a fig in your backyard or you cannot plant 2 pieces of cassava. So in that sense the urban poverty situation was given greater attention than the rural poverty. But I can tell you and the statistics now shows that rural poverty is probably greater than urban poverty in Trinidad and Tobago, because Toco/Sangre Grande, the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, parts of Princess Town especially in the Moruga area and part of the South West peninsular, especially down in the Cedros/Icacos/Bonasse area, these are areas that have high levels of poverty. How do countries solve poverty? It is rural urban migration and the Ministry of Rural Development is to stop that. So what we have to do now is to come into rural communities and establish some economic activity to keep the people in the villages, for example, we announced a fishing port in Moruga, which will be starting later this year; there are plans to build a road from Valencia to Toco the route alignment is currently being done; we want to have a ferry service from Toco to Scarborough and all these things will help boost economic activity, tourism what have you. We may not be able to take every single village and build a factory but at the end of the day I will close by saying a lot of the rural economic activity has to be based on agriculture. This government is going to put a major focus on agriculture, as I speak agriculture contributes 0.5% of GDP, that is a travesty and an embarrassment to Trinidad and Tobago and we plan to put a greater focus on agriculture especially in rural communities.

#### **Moderator**

The gentleman had a concern about what I would describe as data driven decision making and certainly there would be the need for some institutional support for such data, statistical information and so on. Would you care to address that and secondly the restorative justice, the impression I got from the pastor was that there are interventions that precede matters hitting the justice system and perhaps Minister Young can address that as well.

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

Well to have data driven decision making you must have data okay and we have a challenge in collecting data. There are issues with the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and what all agencies of the state must now see itself as is as suppliers of data because data is value and data is strategic information and the level of computer power and software in the world now, sometimes I am baffled as a country that we do not have access to more pertinent data on every aspect of human endeavour. But it is something that we are addressing.

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

Just to take up on the first point before we get to the restorative justice very quickly. We are going to work into the system a budgetary process that would be similar to what you see taking place with Central Government and Parliament. So each Regional Corporation will be required to come on an annual basis to its burgesses and citizens and present how it expects to spend the money, the expenditure part and there will be built in as well probably on an annual/semi-annual basis a need to again present via town halls etc. to answer the questions that burgesses and citizens may have. So that is going to help with the accountability and the transparency.

With respect to the restorative justice as Minister Khan said, it does not fall into Regional Corporations and Local Government Reform but you would be happy to know that at the Attorney General's Office we are working on a suite of legislations to do with children and as part of that process we are going to have something revolutionary called Peer Testing. Peer assessments where with respect to minors, they actually have the opportunity, if they have been charged with a crime and they admit to it, to then present themselves to their peers, it will be a group of trained peers to discuss what the 'sentencing' but it would not be sentencing, but what will be meted out to them. We are hoping that will be the first step towards the type of restorative justice you are talking about.

❖ **Uric Stephen Williams - Marabella East/Point-a-Pierre/Cocoyea/Tarouba (Male, African, 70s)**

Mr. Minister Sir there are two (2) rivers, the Poole River and the Petite Poole River they have been clogged for the longest while and that is causing problems to farmers in the Manzanilla area. All the rivers up there are clogged and the lands become soggy soggy so that you cannot get anything out of the land except disease. From the Mitan Bridge coming down to Sangre Grande I would like to see that old coconut estate cleaned up no bushes. The only thing we should have erected there is the board houses that normally Guyana supplies. You mount up these board houses in between and you can rent it out to tourists, because from Piarco to the Atlantic Coast, is a shorter ride from Piarco to Carenage or Piarco to Maracas Bay. If we clean up the beach and only put these houses that I am speaking about and tables and so on, we can pull billions of US dollars into that. There is also an area up at that point where the Tobago boat normally would have come in, but during the war they had to abandon passing up all where they pass now, because the guys up on Forte George used to be firing cannons balls into the Bocas to ketch submarines and the Tobago boat had to use the North Manzanilla point from Tobago, which is about a 45 minute ride coming down. So you would not have to gas up the boat every day, you could gas it up once a week and that would solve a lot of problems.

Now building a nation we have to start from the crib, all these screens that we have about the place must be showing sports and culture. In all the bus terminus and anywhere a public screen is there should be showing George Bailey mass costumes. These are the things and the places where you start building a nation from there you go to primary school (*crowd applauded*) you would have them watching the same sports, track and field and

what have you and at the end of every day there is to be a match, a football match and a cricket match. So that by the time these youths reach home they are tired they are going and sleep and this would go on to the secondary schools and the colleges. One of the things that you have to look at is providing them with the right facilities, good cricket grounds, good football fields and table tennis equipment and all the different types of equipment.

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

Just a quick response on the Pool and Petite Poole, I will bring up that matter with the drainage division of the Ministry of Works because on the face of it those rivers should be kept clear and the Mitan bridge and the Manzanilla Coastline, yes I travelled there for years, from Mayaro to Sangre Grande to come to school. At one point in time I felt I knew exactly how many coconut trees there were from Mayaro to Sangre Grande. Having said that it is one of the most pristine drives in the country and it is my thinking that one day the state should acquire that entire piece of land from the Nariva River on to the Manzanilla Coastline for a national park. I would not like to see those coconut trees destroyed and just houses start to go up there but the Minister of Planning is here and the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation of which that coastal strip falls under their jurisdiction. This is one of the projects I hope you all could consider because it is ideal for a national park.

❖ **Ralph Minors – Sangre Grande Regional Corporation (worker) (Male, African 40s)**

There are two issues that have been bothering me for the longest while, one of the problem is that as a worker of the Regional Corporation I was surprised to see the NHA workers not here this morning because they say that they were not invited. NHA is one of the biggest problems, you are cleaning the drains and all the slush on the road for months. For months they took out slush from a drain and they put it at the side of the road and nobody is to move it, months passing and you are seeing slush on the road.

The next problem is that we have two (2) facilities, public facilities in Sangre Grande and for a whole year now these facilities are not functioning and the corporation has workers. What is the problem that this facility is non-functional?

**Moderator**

Gentleman what would you propose should be in place to ensure that these things are functioning?

❖ **Ralph Minors**

Well I propose that the supervisor who is sending people to clean the drain together with the contractor who is supposed to be taking up the rubbish, supposed to be blazing on a more regular basis, so that will not happen.

## **Moderator**

And that you have some system of accountability as was mentioned in the general framework.

### **❖ Pastor Gabriel Henderson – (Male, Indian 70's)**

Retired Public Servant and holder of about five (5) portfolios in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to commend the Minister Franklin Khan so very much for initiating and also by extension Minister Stuart Young for implementing and having conversation with Local Government Reform. I believe the main advocate for this is Martin Terry Rondon the present Chairman and the Councillors and all those who organise this reform. I think they need a round of applause (*crowd applauded*). Minister I do not want to reiterate what you already said, apparently you were peeping from my notes. But I just want to emphasize political interference and I know Mr. Martin Terry Rondon has been forcing all the time to have this eliminated. I heard him say he does not put political symbols in place when he is doing local government work, so I want to emphasize unity in all the corporations as you have mentioned before.

With respect to empowerment with Local Government Representative, while we fashion the Tobago House of Assembly then we must think about remuneration for the Councillors who will be full time employed in the new regime.

While you are concentrating on collecting revenue please bear in mind that Sangre Grande regions the gas stations pays 5% tax, over a decade we have not heard anything about where that money goes. That money is for road rehabilitation.

Crime – you mentioned about contract labour, you know get into gang labour and this is the major cause of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. So while we can emphasise contract labour at the local level, let us bear in mind that we can also reduce crime.

You mentioned about including the young people here at the school and they are here today but where are the boys where is the male. I had implemented a Heads of agencies meeting almost a decade ago at that Regional Corporation and we need to include people who are young people, sports clubs, police youth groups and so on in that meeting.

Finally I would like to recommend a former Chairman of the Regional Corporation, I appreciate so much what the Minister said with respect reducing the fourteen (14) Municipal Corporations it may be twelve (12) or even less. I want to advise that Port of Spain, Diego Martin and San Juan those in the North West become one (1) corporation and I also have the name here – the North West Regional Corporation. So we include those three (3) corporations into one (1) body and also Central you have the Central Regional Corporation so you already have twelve (12) to work with.

And finally Minister I just want to emphasise that as a Minister of Religion that we have prayers in all of our meetings. We have a national prayer at the Regional Corporations that is more than twenty (20) years old since Act 21 of 1990, it has not changed but needs



change and we have to address certain problems. So that national prayer some of us do not even know it, I myself even forgot it, we should have change of prayer in the Corporation.

❖ **Mr. Dave Gajadhar – (Male, Indian 40's)**

Apart from Local Government and what we are planning to implement we are faced with real difficult problems and that is, we do not have the kind of revenue that we used to have. So we really need to start looking at innovation and creativity and every Regional Corporation is unique. Sangre Grande for instance there is agriculture, there is tourism, there is land and gravel, there are so many avenues that we could take to really start bringing in revenue back into the community by creating sustainable jobs long term and developing the people of the area. One of these examples is aqua culture, I mean I heard Cray fish is \$80 a pound, is anybody doing that in a farm. Is there any Cascadu that is being farmed locally? What is the Local Government doing to develop revenue in our communities?

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

Exactly as you are doing now and you are proposing solutions, it is for the Corporations to take those on board. Each Corporation would now be in charge of the region so if it is that they want to get into the aqua farming etc. those would be the projects that they can direct its revenue to, because somewhere like the Sangre Grande Regional like you said you would have a different landscape compared to for example Port of Spain. So each Corporation would now be more empowered to make the decisions for the citizenry.

❖ **Marva Neptune-White – (Female, African 50's)**

Resident of Ambassador Avenue Blake Avenue Picton Road Extension. Now based on what you said with the fourteen (14) Corporations I think that that is a good idea because it would be more personal, it would be like Sangre Grande Corporation would represent Sangre Grande so you have a personal interest in it, instead of making too too wide.

A word I would like to the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation workers and even Ministry workers to take pride in your job. You know we do not have a job and we are complaining and complaining and when we do get a work now you cannot find us working. So if everybody take pride in their job and be honest and truthful to themselves to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay things would be done (*crowd applauded*). As much as this government is trying to put things in order the onus is on us and if I do not take cognisant of myself and say what can I do to make it better for me, all this plan would be of no avail. We must all take responsibility and if it our country and make sure and do our jobs honestly (*crowd applauded*).

I was asked to come here this morning to talk about the woes of our problems in Blake Avenue Extension but I realised from the information I got it is more for Local development but I would still like to mention that I have been living there since from the previous government and even before that when PNM was there and we have no electricity. Last year a girl was raped repeatedly, children going to school without school being ironed, you cannot get up in the morning and prepare breakfast in the darkness. So we have an electricity problem that we would like to have addressed.

There is also an infrastructural problem in our area, no drainage, with the roads and so on we have unemployment problems. Just imagine a lady has hear problems and the ambulance refuse to come in to get her because of the terrible road conditions and when there is dry season there is dust in our face and when there is rainy season there is mud in our waist. So it is real problems in that area and the regularisation we would like it to be addressed because nobody likes to be living in a place and you are uncertain.

Someone was telling me this morning that when you go Land and Building Survey they are saying that our land is agriculture land, which we did not know all the time as they were telling us that it is domestic land and now they are saying that it is agriculture land. We would like that to be addressed and I am telling you that unless the lord build the house the man that builds the house builds in vain. Let us put God first in everything that we do and everything that we say and it will be accomplished (*crowd applauded*).

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

That is a Land Settlement Agency matter. Exactly what area you said again?

❖ **Marva Neptune-White**

Ambassador Avenue Blake Avenue Picton Road. We do not even know our address, imagine you are living at an address and you do not know what address to put. We need that address to be addressed.

❖ **Carver Richardson – (Male, African 30's)**

Good morning everyone, Ministers, Councillors, Chairman all other protocols observed. My question this morning is on Regional Planning and the question specifically is, would the legislative amendment cater for meaningful Regional Development? This question is really predicated on the fact that specifically Toco/Sangre Grande has been left behind for quite some time (*crowd agreed*). The fact remains that there have been development documents, there is a Sangre Grande Spatial Development Plan which is a public document and I believe it was done by the People's National Movement prior to the People's Partnership government. We are speaking about really developing the area and you want meaningful development in the area but there must be a partnership between private and the government. So the question really is would the legislation take into consideration partnerships between the public and private for development plans under the Regional

Corporation, that would be bigger than the fiscal capability of the Regional Corporation, based on the change due to collection of taxes etc.

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

It is a number of areas you will be touching there. The first is on a national level the planning and decision making as to what areas of Trinidad will be developed in certain ways would remain with the Ministry of Planning. What we will be doing is giving the various Regional Corporations more autonomy in terms of when it is approved and you are building in the various areas, you will get that permission from the Regional Corporation.

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

On the point of public private partnership, as we speak the Regional Corporation cannot enter into a public private partnership on their own accord. The jury is still out on that, we can have discussions as to how it could be handled if at all and whether it will be addressed but it is a good point that we need to flag.

❖ **Francis Pierre – (Male, Indian 50's)**

Good morning Mr. Khan and Minister Young I am the Building Inspector in the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. Two questions, one is Minister Khan raised about capacity, in our Corporation and I have been in Local Government for twenty (20) years, we do not have the required staff. PS will tell you we do not have Public Health Inspectors, we do not have WS IIIs so from a point of capacity part of why we do not perform the way that we are supposed to perform is at present, we do not have a lot of officers. So first we have to build capacity so that we will start doing what we can do at this level before we take on additional responsibilities.

I was glad to hear you say that the minor developments and building plans would be approved at our level because in 2014 the Planning and Facilitation Development Bill was passed. In that vein when will it be proclaimed so that we could start getting that on the ground? Right now a simple plan takes probably four (4) months, two (2) months by Town and Country and two (2) months here before a simple plan can be approved. Once the Bill or Act is proclaimed it will as you said; minor plans will come to us simple plans and that could be reduced by maybe a month, once it is being dealt with here. We have been working twenty (20) years to get something like this off the ground.

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

That Act falls under the direct armpit of the Minister of Planning and Development but suffices to say that prior to the election as a party we expressed certain issues that we had

with that legislation. Just as we expressed certain issues that we had with the Procurement Legislation, this legislation is now before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament for proposed amendments. The Minister of Planning and myself will be holding discussions on that to see what amendments that we may want in the Act, not if any, there definitely will be amendments that we would want and we will proceed on that. But on the face of it the whole issue of devolving some of the authority for the approvals of buildings to the Regional Corporations we have no issue with that. But there are other aspects of the legislation that we will be looking at and very likely proposing amendments to it.

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

Yes very quickly, the philosophy remains which is a decentralisation of those types of approvals to the Regional Corporations as the Ministers outlined. The two (2) Ministers are looking at it, they will then come forward with the proposed amendments and we will get it into parliament. It is an Act the only proclamation parts so far are the appointments of the bodies.

With respect to the first part of what you raised you would be happy to know that we as a government we are looking at a policy, it is actually live now before the cabinet for us looking at the whole Public Service and unitisation of the more permanent posts as opposed to this whole contract thing that has developed over time. So that is on the agenda and that will fit squarely into like a glove what you were just mentioning about a number of positions in various Public Service offices etc. that have not been filled. So you will start to see that take place shortly.

❖ **Zilda Pariag (Female, Indian 50's)**

I represent the National Land Tenants and Rate Payers Association. We of this association want to commend government on continuing this consultation on the Local Government Reform. We are as concerned as to the consultation and the reform, we know that this body might be introducing rates and taxes, Land and Building taxes that is. We represent quite a number of land tenants in this country and as a matter of fact we have extended our association and our membership has been far and wide throughout the country. Our area of concern as I say is the introduction of Land and Building taxes. We know that government has quite an issue on their hands with squatting mostly in the government reserves that is in the Millau and Valencia area. We know that government had the pronouncement made as to the regularisation of squatting, you know how far that will take us, but that is for government lands, state lands. What is the situation with the private lands where you do have tenants, they are also rate payers and they pay their land and building taxes? I think this is for the Honourable Minister of Legal Affairs because most of the tenants has paid their statutory leases. As you know legislation was passed in parliament in 2012 and it has not been assented to by the President and some of the tenants are now facing court actions and even eviction from their lands. The landlords are

saying that there is no law there is no legislation. How can this be addressed? We in the Association already know the exercise of assessment, evaluation of properties is quite a task in itself and we are willing to partner with the relevant bodies to assist in any way we can. As you know revenue generated is not only paid by the normal land tenants.

### **Moderator**

Are you suggesting along the way because this is a discussion on Local Government Reform that there ought to be a role for Local Government jurisdictions on questions such as this? Are you suggesting that? Because otherwise you are dealing with another sphere of public activity perhaps for the Ministry of Planning.

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

If I may it is a number of issues that you have raised there. The first thing is as everyone knows and it was announced by the Minister of Finance in the budget with respect to the Land and Building Taxes, it was never; not on the books. What was happening was a waiver there is no longer a waiver so there is the reintroduction this year. The Ministry of Finance is looking actively at it, he has given a commitment that it would be at the 2009 rates. That is going to form part of Local Government Reform as one methodology similar to the Tobago House of Assembly Act of providing them with a methodology of revenue generation in the various Corporations.

With respect to the other land issues that you have raised that will be for another forum. The point is that the legislation is outdated but it came from a policy decision in the 80's to regularise and give rights to tenants who were on land at that point in time. It needs to be looked at again from a policy point of view and we will when we are doing that open it up for the widest possible consultation.

With respect to private owners and their rights unfortunately the mechanism for enforcing your rights is to go to court.

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

Let me just say one thing here on the issue of Land and Building Taxes. Ladies and gentlemen that has been a political football for the last five (5) or six (6) years. Every serious country in this world has Land and Building Taxes or some form of Property Tax we have always had that from since the British (some people in the crown applauded). Somewhere along the line people got the impression that they could no longer pay those taxes but I will tell you something, when January the 2<sup>nd</sup> reach the first thing my mother would want to go and pay is her Land and Building Taxes because there are old people in this country who believe that if you do not pay your Land and Building Taxes the government will seize your land and a lot of people are frightened and they are not paying Land and Building Taxes. Land and Building Tax is a legitimate tax it is enshrined into the



laws of Trinidad and Tobago, this year we are collecting it on the 2009 rates and we will decide how we move forward. But fundamentally as a principle I revenue generation it is a valid and legitimate tax which I am sure the vast majority of the population are willing and able to pay.

❖ **Anthea Brizan-Langton – (Female, African 30's)**

Good morning everyone I am from Moses Street. I have two (2) issues that I wanted to talk about or ask about. The first thing is as a not so young person I have a few ideas, a few ways that I would love to help and contribute because Trinidad and Tobago has been very good to me and I want to be able to contribute and give back. Would it be that through the Regional Corporation if I have any proposals that I can submit to them? Is there an area where I can submit ideas I may have on education or on transport because a major problem within our community is the persons living in Toco, Manzanilla and Guayaguayare not getting transport to go home and having to wait for hours. What do I do if I have ideas or suggestions that I can put forward? Where do I go to?

Second question – I work at one of the institutions in Sangre Grande that just about everybody has somebody who attended North Eastern College. Everybody either went or has a family member who went and we have produced at North Eastern College and our institution structurally is in a wreck and I am asking if there is any way that the corporations, I know that we are supposed to be going through EFCL or whoever to get stuff fixed and done. To me that is something that the Corporation should be able to lend some attention to seeing that this is in their home, seeing that this is their community. Everybody had to do everything at North Eastern College at one point in time. This function would have been at North Eastern College in the past but I figure that it is because we are in such a mess it cannot be held there. You understand, North Eastern College is a place where everybody have some kind of tie and it is in ruins.

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

The first concern you are right in the sense that somehow there is not a secretariat that could solicit ideas of innovation and problem solving. So if you have solutions to rural transportation for example, which I call Guayaguayare, Toco and Matelot I am at a loss as to tell you who to go to, whether you go to PTSC or Ministry of Works, whether you go to the Ministry of Planning or what have you. But obviously that may not fall under the Regional Corporation. All these ideas can be put in writing and submitted to the Ministry of Planning because the ministry of Planning coordinates the entire ministry portfolio of Trinidad and Tobago on matters of that nature.

With North Eastern I feel sad to hear, I have not been there for many, many years but I personally promise my alumni that I will pay a personal visit there and use my personal influence in the government to solve some of those problems (*crowd applauded*).

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

Just to finish off that point, you would have heard Minister Khan say in his presentation that is one of the ideas in the policies of the Local Government Reform. The Corporations are best suited to know what is going on in their back yard.

❖ **Stansley Thompson – (Male, African 50's)**

Morning to all, protocols observed. I am from Port of Spain but I am here on sports and the irony of it is that I saw the mayor walk in here a little while ago and I came to talk about that. Only yesterday I heard him talking about sports and culture being the effective way of fighting crime and we cannot forget that. I want to let you know especially Minister Khan, I have a suggestion, when we were growing up we had the Village Olympics and I want to suggest to you, you have something call Rural Olympics. I can help you with an idea how to raise funds to have it and I am telling you all the border lines that we are having now and we cannot go there all of these youngsters will want to go there. Put sports on the agenda and culture, according to Mr. Williams earlier on and of course we know St. Ann's North. But I needed to say this and I see the Mayor of Point Fortin, when you enter Point Fortin you see the icons up there, like Steve David and Wilfred Cape. If we project these youngsters then they will have no alternative to try to emulate our icons.

On any kind of committee that we have, we should have a probation officer, an icon – sporting icon, municipal police and also somebody who can bring some spirituality into the lives of the youngsters.

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

The Ministry of Rural Development has really struck in my opinion a very positive cord in Trinidad and Tobago because from all of our consultations people seem to be engaged with the idea especially rural communities. I like to say that it has become so popular that I have been getting letters from people of Port of Spain saying that they are a part of a rural community. So it is just to tell you how engaged this idea is and I really plan on behalf of the government to do justice to this concept and to start to roll out some serious plans and programmes where we can really improve the lives of rural people.

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

Prime Minister speak about during the campaign that idea you have is in fact an idea he has and I know that he has passed it to the Ministry of Sport which is to regenerate throughout all of the rural and urban areas of Trinidad and Tobago a sort of Olympic setting. So that is on the agenda.

❖ **Annette Brisane – (Female, African 60's)**

Pass principal, retired principal of North Eastern College Sangre Grande and I am proud to say that the Honourable Franklin Khan was one of my past students. I have been a part of this community for over thirty-five (35) years, my family has been a part of this community for more than one hundred (100) years, so I have a lot of history in Sangre Grande. I know that Sangre Grande and its environs Mathura and all these areas is an agricultural environment and we are not seeing anything put in place to develop agriculture and to allow agriculturists to become well paid, owners of Mercedes Benz, big houses and things like that because they can from their hard work of feeding the nation.

Is it possible that you can have a system that used to be in Trinidad and Tobago at one time, the Central Marketing Agency which collected produce and paid a minimal useful cost for crops? So a man can say that if I plant a hundred acres of bananas I will get \$2.00 a pound for every banana that I plant and you are sure of that, whether sold or not. Some system where he is sure to get revenue. A system in place to ensure that the selling and so on can be given to another agency but the farmer will have a definite income so that he is sure that when he plants he is going to get something from it and he can go to the bank and say I have ten acres down, I can have so much money and I can pay for the loan that I am going to take right now. So something has to be put in place for the farmers, they are feeding us without them we are nothing. We need to have something serious in place, not only for the selling of their crops and the care of their crops but also things like pest control and praedial larceny. So I put that out in the mix, I hope something can be done I think it is extremely important, without agriculture we are dead. We need to have agriculture flourishing and agriculturists must be rich people, they must not be poor people struggling anywhere (crowd applauded).

My next point had been addressed to some extent by the lady of the Rate Payers Association talking about land taxes and so on. Sangre Grande and its environs has changed from when I came to Sangre Grande how many years ago, the pristine environment is changing. You are going up to Mathura I am seeing a lot of squatting houses spoiling the area. I know that people need to have houses but it should be organised in a special way. People cannot just come and live in places like that, they are given certificates of comfort and then they have to go to school, we have to lay down sanitary facilities for them, you have to find schools for the children to go to, these things need to be regulated and organised. Can we have a system by which we can have what we call I do not know if we can call it organised squatting but something organised. On the stretch in that Arena area people are building houses like wild and it is there for a purpose. So we look at the environmental function of 'squatting' a very very serious situation.

I am very thrilled about the ferry from Toco to Tobago because North Eastern College took part in an Asset Fair many years ago and their contribution was the ferry from Toco to Tobago. I have some slightly different ideas for the ferry, it will bring a lot of development for the area and is there somewhere we can bring our ideas to you, which may be a little different from yours. Can I see someone to speak to regarding the ferry? I thank you for this consultation.

❖ **Victoria Jemmott – (Female, African, 50's)**

I am from Boys Towne. We need a home for the Corporation, when I say a home, we have outlived that home, we need an office, a complex because we have disabled persons, if you are blind or you are in a wheel chair you cannot go up the steps to the main office. Meals are transported manually up the steps to the hall when they are having meetings and it is dangerous. The building is a sick building, we have allergens coming through the vents, peoples sinuses are acting up and the staff is sick. Most of the times they are not comfortable in that building.

Another thing that I would like to see is the money collected for food badges, this is collected by the EHA and in this new building that that will be placed under the Local Government. It is hundreds of thousands of dollars that is collected there. Under the Local Government we can have accommodation for lectures, laminating of the badges and issuing of the badges and the money can be used for the burgesses here.

The old Post Office and we have other abandoned buildings, we have many vagrants and they live there, they smoke, they cook, they carry on with their sexual activity and they are very aggressive to the pedestrians on the street. We would like to see that treated with.

On the stretch coming up there is a big variety store that can be a hazard for motorists who have to use the shoulder and it is a target for bandits too.

❖ **Barbara Corban – (Female, African 50's)**

I am from Paul Street Sangre Grande. First I would like to commend and thank our local Health Department and our sanitation workers for the good garbage collection service in our district my concern for Local Government is the collection of household items for recycling. I was glad to hear a senator only yesterday appealing for recycling to be seriously undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago. Most items collected at present seems to be soft drink plastic bottles, aluminium cans and tetra pack containers, paper and card board all on a relatively small scale. All the other grades of plastic, electronic waste etc. seem to be mostly neglected. I myself have been keeping my household waste for recycling but our Regional Corporation although they have placed beautiful bins labels with words to encourage people to sort their disposable waste for recycling, yet take all the waste collected to the dump. I suppose it may be known that people go to the dump to salvage waste items maybe exposing themselves to harmful metals from discarded electronic equipment which may be detrimental to their health. Two (2) years ago I asked my cousin who lives in Chaguanas to take me to the Piranha compound in California Couva to dispose of my plastic old paint and electronic waste and to ACE recycling at O'Meara Arima to dispose of my waste stationery cardboard and newspaper. I have another collection to dispose of right now but to make another trip to Couva is not a pleasant prospect even though they gave me a certificate of appreciation for recycling their recycling services.

I have met several young people either studying or graduated with a degree in Environmental Management now unemployed in their chosen field and frustrated, their skills need to be utilised perhaps the Regional Corporation can do this.

A possible suggestion for location perhaps the site and facilities laid down for the now abandoned Aluminium Smelter for the construction of a recycling plant for all grades of plastic and until this is accomplished Local Government can consider utilising the services of Piranha T&T for the disposing of plastic and electronic waste from district households.

Litter control – perhaps it would be necessary to launch a campaign educating people who buy foods and drink to take away, to consume their food in a suitable location and manner and to dispose of their waste in a bin instead of consuming their food in the streets and depositing their waste at whatever point where the road, sidewalk or drain when they have finished their meal.

### **Moderator**

Now that is a big issue and I want to ask the Minister whatever happened to the Solid Waste Management Policy that was deliberated upon by experts and fed into the Ministry of Local Government?

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

When I went into the Ministry of Local Government there was a pile of reports this high on Local Government Reform from Hazel Manning to Rennie Dumas to Surujrattan Rambachan, they all had it. Very good reports, the will to act was never there by the same token a little lower than this pile of Local Government Reform was a pile this high on solid waste management, modern methods of garbage disposal and how as a modern society we treat with garbage disposal. Nothing has happened because the will was never there. We are disposing garbage as we did in the 1950s, take it to the Betham, and take it to Claxton Bay. All we are doing now different from long ago is the trucks are compressing it and sometimes compression is worse because the fellas who are on the garbage trucks cannot get anything to salvage from it because they are in fact doing a sorting for you on the dump site. But having said that it is one action item that I intend to take very seriously and I will be going to cabinet very shortly on some innovative proposals.

I just cannot sit idly by and not respond to my former principal, Mrs. Brisann I need to see you before I leave. Two things she said – agriculture. The Ministry of Rural Development is working extremely closely with the Minister of Agriculture. As I said our country we only have 0.5% of GDB coming out of agriculture, there is a concept called Farm to Table that the Minister of Agriculture is trying to implement, which is taking away the middle man from the marketing and she is right. The CMA used to do that function, I do not know what NAMDEVCO does as we speak. Really and truly the middle man is licking up so to speak the price structure of agricultural produce. Senator Avinash Singh who is a major sweet potato farmer told me that on his farm he sells sweet potato at a \$1.50 per pound and by the time it reaches the supermarket it is \$5.00 and \$6.00 a pound. The same thing with the fishermen in Moruga, they are selling Carite for \$12.00 and \$15.00 a pound, by the time it reaches Princess Town and San Fernando and do not talk about Port of Spain is \$40.00 a pound. The value extraction is coming from people who add no value to the product and

that is where the States' Marketing Agency guaranteed price and packaging will come into play. Ladies and gentlemen I speak on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture that we have some innovative agricultural policies to put agriculture at least on the semblance of the right track for quite a while.

Squatting – I am well aware that the regional corporation of Sangre Grande and Toco/Sangre Grande in particular probably has the highest per capital of squatters in all of Trinidad and Tobago and the reason for that is because there is preponderance of state lands in this part of the country. However, having said that the squatter is a poor man but it still does not give you the right to act lawlessly. Somewhere along the line the state is now working on a plan to regularise squatting and at some point in time we have to put a serious stop to it.

❖ **Kaiwan Braithwaite (Male, African, 30's)**

Pleasant good day all members of Parliament, all members of council, councillors, all elders and all my members of Toco/Sangre Grande. I believe everyone here knows me, better known as 'market man.' Honourable Ministers, I see you all have 6 things today which are democracy, accountability, autonomy, employment, equity and service. I would like to deal with three. One missing also: transport...cause this is the country. I will start with employment. Sangre Grande have a serious problem with employment. There are a lot of educated youths in Sangre Grande...moms just make the point, there are persons with Environmental certificates, degrees in Forestry and whatsoever and we do all that is necessary...just like the Honourable Khan said just now, he doesn't know who to send the woman to, transport or to PTSC. This is the same thing we are going through. I have a lot of paper work, a lot of letters I have written to every single ministry in Sangre Grande. Everyone knows this, I have time and date. We will start with National Quarries. If you watch, most of the youths between 18 and 30 are not working in Sangre Grande. They are only employing elders. How can you employ someone who is 50 years old? Reiterating your point, you said I'm young and strong, so why not employ me who can give some service to our country? How could you put someone who is 55 years old permanent? Also Ministry of Works, Transport, Mr Rondon, my councillor, Ms. Jennings, except the mayor...but I don't play. Secondly in Sangre Grande, Land and Agriculture which is the most important point. Toco/Sangre Grande has been and is the food basket of Trinidad and Tobago for more than 40 years. Hear where we have the problem. Youths like myself who are farmers, who are planting, whether it be on state land or private land...every time we go to this place called El Reposo is a set of run around because we don't have deeds, we don't have this, we don't have that. How could build our families or a proper stability for Trinidad and Tobago if we are not getting the proper avenues in which to excel at agriculture? We are the food basket, we never out of food in Sangre Grande, we provide most of the food, we provide over 70% of the food in Trinidad and Tobago and yet, we cannot get any sort of justice in Sangre Grande. You all always forget us.



**Moderator**

How do you see local government playing a role in addressing that concern that you have?

❖ **Kaiwan Braithwaite**

Firstly, by not only making decisions behind doors, within air-conditioned rooms excluding the youths especially. You'll be making a lot of decisions and excluding the youths of Sangre Grande and then you'll want to say the youths involved in crime. All you quick to blame the youths for crime. Everybody knows me, ask them how I does work...hard every day, Sunday to Sunday and yet I can't get a Deed of Comfort. Why? Because Grandpa leave this whatever, that is state land...then someone who you don't even know from somewhere in the country, Guyana or somewhere buying the land what you was telling we was state land all the time. And then some bulldozer coming and pull down all your crops...that is the problem, that is how crimes does start.

**Moderator**

So you are seeing greater interaction between burgesses and the local government system, to have that kind of dialogue going?

❖ **Kaiwan Braithwaite**

No, well we really appreciate this and why I came here today is to make sure that we not planting a tree and it don't bear, I will really like to see this tree bear.

**Moderator**

The minister is here listening to you now. Do you have any other points?

❖ **Kaiwan Braithwaite**

I have one more: transport. A lady said it earlier on. We people of the country...you see our roads, especially where I am living. I from Caigual Fishing Pond. Only people from the outside who have their big money and who can afford to have transport and their big vehicles...the other day we had a protest, which you all may have observed, our roads are terrible. Up to this day since I born we never had a taxi stand. I have to pay \$20 and where I dropping out I still have to walk for two hours and something...ask anybody here...through the bus. When you all could provide PTSC buses, well you say 3 services a day. Whether it be Matura, Toco, Blanchisseuse, North Manzan, Mayaro...anywhere within the community, Fishing Pond, Caigual, we will really appreciate that, especially the youths who trying to make something of theyself because I reiterate my point, there are a lot of educated youths in Sangre Grande and why we have to leave here to go in town. You know what was my last job? Working in town in HDC and I left it. We have facts and dates and time...I have every single thing. And what I cannot take, we are fed-up of talk in Sangre Grande, we want action.

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

Just a quick response. This meeting is about Local Government Reform, not Rural Development. I spoke about rural banking, rural housing policy, we having a rural transport policy. Actually, I am carded to meet with the Ministry of Works and PTSC next week, I want them to show me what is their rural transportation network looks like and I obviously will see a lot of gaps in it and I will be coming up on them as part of government policy to say under rural transportation the PTSC is mandated to have service to the following routes and that is why the Ministry of Rural Development was created to have oversight of delivery of service to all rural communities. So in other words, if I want a rural policy for transportation implemented the PTSC cannot say no and we are going to bring back that. And the focus is...and I don't want to take too much of time on this. If PTSC's mandate is to make money, they will want to run down the Bus Route day and night, every half hour because the buses will be filled. They will not want to send a bus into Caigual. However, as a matter of national policy, we will be telling them Caigual needs a service 6 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the evening. They can't run it every hour on the hour but we will be coming up with a rural transportation policy and a schedule and I call on the chairmen of the regional corporation to come with me as to where these areas are whether is Caigual, whether is Mayaro or Moruga and what have you. Well said and one final point on land tenure. We know that is an issue with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine resources and the minister is taking personal attention on that.

❖ **Kaiwan Braithwaite**

I do appreciate that and I do hope that we would really bear fruit. However, take a look of everybody who is here. 95% of the persons who are here right now are over 35 years old.

❖ **Sheldon Bishop, Toco (Male, African, 30's)**

My question and comments is on the municipal policing which are 100 strong police. What safety will be put in place to ensure that these 100 police wouldn't be corrupted like some already there? On the small and medium contractors on the reform, what safety will be put in place to ensure that the small man will have the same opportunity...not so much like the big man, but would have a level playing field because as it stands, nobody knows really how to get a contract in this country? All we does see is 4 men appear in an area and we hear a contract be given out and sometimes the man who get the contract, he never there. But he done have he friend who giving him the contract. What safety gonna be put in place that the small man would be able to register with the corporation when it come into effect and will be able to get fair play in....?

## **Moderator**

Thank you very much. Municipal policing and transparency in the awarding of contracts and final, a point that he made in passing, which has to do with a level of positive discrimination in favour of the small and medium enterprises in the district.

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

With regard Municipal police and corruption, obviously the most we can do is have a robust screening exercise as to who you recruit. I mean it is a risk we are exposed to as national society. So if you are telling me on the average corruption is so rampant in Trinidad and Tobago, that on the average if we recruit people from the national community and the chances are that they will be corrupt, something is fundamentally wrong with this country. But what I am saying is that the screening process, you will have certificates of good character, they may even want to take lie detector tests and certain things like that as the national police does at that time, but we will be very robust in the kind of recruiting policy that we establish. What was the other point? Small contractors, medium contractors, again there is something called the Fair Share Program where that is designed through the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprises to have an opening for small contractors. Obviously the system would be skewed towards large contractors and let me quote a good example. A small contractor has no capital. You give him a *bligh* on the first contract but you know the state is very tardy in paying. So if the contract is worth \$200,000, when he gets his advanced payment of \$20,000 that cannot go to any length of the contract. So what will happen now is that he will be doing certain parts of the working, sending in an invoice waiting for payment to fund the contract. And then the other contractor who is bigger has the cash to finish off the contract and they will say this man ain't perform and this one perform. So there are a lot of issues about how to have an incubator for small contracts to give them on a level playing field. What happened under the Manning administration, we took a decision for small contractors who have start-ups to pay them 50% as up-front payment on the course of the contract. Regretfully, a lot of them walk with the money and you never see them again you know. So it is all nice and well to say that you want to help certain categories of contractors but there are risks involved.

### ❖ **Marlon Navarro (Male, African, 50's)**

Good afternoon everybody, good afternoon Minister and everyone else. My contribution is sports. As the other gentleman was saying just now, Toco/Sangre Grande is a forgetful area in Trinidad and Tobago and there is no sporting facility in this area. They give us a heaping set of lights in all the grounds...to play what? You can't play nothing under those lights because the grounds and them not good, totally not good. The one on Ojoan Road in Sangre Grande, they put a walking strip in the middle of the ground for people to walk whole evening and then they not cutting the ground. You walking and grass cutting your foot, snake could bite you. I want this local reform...that a sports committee directly dealing with

sports in the area. See about the grounds, cut it because we had so many good sportsmen come from this area. For instance we had Keshorn Walcott, Colin Samuel, Anton Wolf...they was on the national football team, my nephew was on the national football team and there is nothing in the area for sports...that killing sports in the area. As they fella say just now, these things...when you don't have youth occupied on the evenings...let them go on the grounds, play something and tired and go home and sleep, they will go to crimes in the night. For the past couple months, there is a lot of killings up on my side there and is youths. We need to do something about sports in the area. We don't need no stadium you know...

**Moderator**

Within a local government body, are you seeing something like a sports unit or something like that?

❖ **Marlon Navarro**

A sports committee, yes, because you go in to these councillors and them and you not getting the answers that you need. They men they sending to cut the ground, the coming to cut the ground when rain falling with a tractor....

**Moderator**

And I guess you are talking about more than just maintenance of the ground because there are issues related to sports organizations...?

❖ **Marlon Navarro**

I want a sports organization to deal directly with sports in this area.

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

The vision of the Local Government Reform and the decentralization...because one of the problems you will have now with the regional corporations is the budgetary side. They may be requesting large sums of money and central government is not providing it so the whole decentralization policy is to give them the ability to listen to the people in the community and the needs of the various communities, as opposed to someone sitting in an office in Port of Spain and deciding what going on in Toco...so to give them more empowerment and the decentralization from a budgetary point of view to make those decisions and to make that happen.

❖ **Marlon Navarro**

...Yeah because all the other areas in Trinidad and Tobago have good sporting facilities.

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

But you see you have problems because you have some areas with massive stadiums and massive sporting facilities not being utilised. So from a policy point of view, we will be empowering those on the ground to make those decisions.

❖ **Marlon Navarro**

According to my partner just now, I would like to see that tree bear fruit. Thank you. That is my contribution.

**Moderator**

Like the THA where you have portfolios, is this something that is contemplated in the new model?

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

It is contemplated but we cannot transpose the THA act in its entirety to the regional corporation. As we speak, recreational grounds fall under the jurisdiction of local government. The fact is the resources. They guy is right; when I fly over Trinidad in the night I see all these grounds lit up but when you check the ground itself, the bush high so. So you spending millions of dollars to put lights and somehow or the other, the resources not available to cut the grounds. And that is where the empowerment of local government will have its focus on and a sporting committee to me is a valid idea.

❖ **Male Participant (Indian, 50's)**

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Minister of State in the Ministry of Legal Affairs Honourable Stuart Young, members of Parliament, our mayors, councillors, our CO and our Chairman, pleasant good afternoon. Mr Minister, you have said one of the measures in your local government reform would be the collection of land and building taxes by the regional corporations. When we thing about the city of Port of Spain or the city of San Fernando, where it is highly commercialised or Couva/Point Lisas where it is heavily industrialised you will realise the collection of land and building taxes there will amount in millions, whereas here in Sangre Grande might be just a few hundred thousand. How are you going to make up for that short fall with respect to those...city of San Fernando, city of Port of Spain and other local government areas?

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

From a policy point of view the decision has not yet been finalised as to how those taxes will be collected by the various corporations, whether it would be a BIR office or the equivalent in all the corporations but we do recognise the issue that you have raised, we do recognise that there will be a disparity as to revenue generated from the different corporations and we're working on that. So it's not going to be that a certain corporation, for example, where Point Lisas is and there are millions coming in as a result of their industrialisation that they get to hold on to that, and other like Sangre Grande who might be more of a less commercialised area suffer. So that is under active consideration.

Thank you. I would also like to know if you are adopting the THA model, where the THA...they get 4% of the national budget as their budget...so let us say 4% of 60 billion that is 2.4 billion? I want to know...because in Tobago is about 50,000 persons, Sangre Grande is about 300,000 persons, how do you make up for that shortfall? I would want to know.

Actually, that ties into the point I was just making; that too is part of the whole policy decision making where there will be a percentage for all the regional corporations of the national budget and then depending on the size, the amount of the population per corporation you then start to distribute et cetera.

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

Let me just make a point on this THA model. We are looking at the THA model because there are certain deliverables in there...their delivery system seems to be superior to what we currently have in Trinidad. It does not mean that we are going to implant the whole thing in its entirety. Tobago is unique, Tobago is a different island and through the THA act it was negotiated with the powers that be in Tobago that they would 4.5% of the national budget. That matter does not arise here. So we are looking at the administrative and the service delivery component of the model, it has nothing to do with the revenue generation side.

Honourable Minister, you have said that you are looking at reducing the number of regional corporations, if that decision is taken...

No, I did not say that. I said it is a matter for consideration in the consultation. I was very particular; I have no views on the matter. As we currently speak, there are 14 corporations, it is your judgement call to propose to us whether you feel it should be reduced or not.

...Because you see I am thinking if that should happen, I would want to know what would happen to the workers.

There will be so many new vacancies under this new structure. The issue of redundancy does not arise. Even under the old structure, the regional corporations are so understaffed it ain't funny. So I cannot see any issue of job security being pertinent to this discussion.

You were very critical of the work ethic of people in the regional corporations...

And I remain so.



...And I am saying that we need to understand what is needed to motivate workers. There probably are factors that are demotivating them. I am also saying that whenever there are negotiations with the local government or with the unions, there are factors that are taken into consideration. For instance, a man might be given a task, 400 meters to cut or clean a drain but he might be there on the job at 5 a.m. or 5:30, so if he finishes at 9 and he does that amount, what about the URP workers starting at 7 finishing at 2 and they might do 100 meters? So I am saying Mr Minister, we need to look at all the factors that may influence certain decisions and we need to be very particular...

Sir, you are a councillor? Please do not try to justify the lack of productivity as we currently speak in the regional corporations. You are the leaders. Management is responsible for productivity in any organization.

I am not justifying anything sir. I am saying what is happening because there are negotiations with the union. If the union say look, a worker can do 400 meters and if he finishes that by 7, 9 or whatever. I am not justifying....

But that is a minority or workers. That is task jobs; I am speaking generally but proceed.

I am saying that we need to look at all the factors because it may be happening in your head office too. What is really creating and there...for instance, look at in Sangre Grande, that office we have there, it is not conducive to good...you know...so we need to look at all the factors honourable minister.

❖ **Male Participant (Male, African, 60's)**

Good afternoon to everyone, honourable leaders, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Minister, you might want to have my number. I also went to North Eastern College and my number is 707-1556. And I say this based on some of the comments, especially in relation to transport but my passion here this morning is about the children, and I see children here right now, students Form 6. And I want to talk a little about education and how the playing field is not level and in relation to what will be our role in local government in relation to education in the zone. Because education is the key to come out of all the humbugs that we have anywhere in the world and when I look at it, I can tell you off the bat...I haven't heard a single person mention anything about the students and certain disabilities and I will tell you the cry right now. And that is what I want to know, since we're talking about reform...

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

The good news is there actually is a national education consultation forum taking place and those comments would be more suited and I am asking you to makes sure that when that kicks off under Minister Anthony Garcia. From a local government point of view; all that is envisaged is that the maintenance side of the schools would be given to the corporations. You cannot have broken across government policy to do with education per corporation. So

when the education consultation starts, that would be the appropriate forum for that side but the maintenance will be dealt with by local corporations.

I want to bring the points, just for information sake Honourable Minister, you asked about how many secondary schools, I said 18, we have 45 primary schools also but the population density has increased so we have a problem and I would take it...yes when we have that forum but there are some things that we need to understand more than anything else. In a budget, we hardly have anything set aside for retraining and that is one of our major issues and I will tell you what is happening right now in terms of PTSC in terms of some of the things that is happening. You have a system where the union calls the shot and the union members are the people who actually are employed with the PTSC and you may send a person for training and the kind of training, as you say, is not structured and because of that you will hear the union say this man took training to be a mechanic 3 months, let's make him a B Class mechanic and what happens...and the last thing I'm saying is performance management. We're supposed to set goals with people and if we have to appraise them...if we don't set the goals, we cannot appraise them. And that is basically one of the greatest setbacks. Because when we look at the word 'accountability', accountability stems from all of that. If we do not set any goals, we can't appraise you. I want you to look at that seriously in terms of local government.

❖ **Female Participant (African, 50's)**

Health in Toco...I don't know if local government has anything to collaborate with our MP with health in Toco. We don't even have a maternity ward in Toco, sometimes you have to make your children on the road, and our health problem is very bad. Our school in Toco...so long it broken down, they in a caravan right now...Toco Composite School. Employment...please... our eco-tourism, let us go to our nature trails, our waterfall, we're looking for employment for our youths and for the youths we want programs. Education programs for the youths, we don't have that and last but not least, let us all be in Toco/Sangre Grande, we all would be very thankful and appreciative if this term, this year, that something happen in Toco/ Sangre Grande. We don't have fire station, we don't have nothing so please, Toco/Sangre Grande need seeing about.

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

You're pushing against an open door there.

❖ **Simone Guild, Councillor, Valencia (Female, African, 30's)**

Thank you. Honourable Minister Mr Franklin Khan, Honourable Minister Mr Stuart Young, Mayors, Chairman, members of council. Many residents speak about...and as a councillor I have a challenge also with the maintenance of our recreational grounds. We spoke about

the fact that they are not maintained and we do not acquire adequate funding but also the act in my personal view of 21 in 1990 has a conflicting portion of it. It states that we are to maintain all green spaces and recreation grounds but it also states we are only to allot our funding to our vested areas. And I have 8 green spaces, only 1 is vested. Our funding that come is only for the Valencia Recreational Facility, the other 7 are done under a humanitarian basis and I think that...to Mr Honourable Minister Stuart, there is an amendment there for that act so that we can acquire the funding for all of our green spaces, that should allow us to apply for the funding for all green spaces to be maintained. Secondly, with the employment at the corporation, especially at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, it is my personal view that the collective bargaining agreement between the corporation, the union and the ministry needs to be reviewed. As the young man said before, 50 years olds are the ones getting employment and that is because over a period of time, every year only persons under the development program projects that we have would be able to acquire service. That is one time for the year, some people have 5 days. You have to accrue those days successively every year and only after a certain amount can you...so you are 50, 60...it makes no sense. So I think that the collective bargaining agreement between the union, the corporation, the ministry needs to be reviewed to allow an application process by way of...and also we have an issue where females are not being adequately employed...in our LHA teams we have 100% males, not one female. And this is a serious issue that we need to look at. So I think that making this process one by application by way of competency of the persons, their skills, everything like that comes into play and labourers, masons, every part of the corporation will be employed through an application process and through fairness and also with a gender based equality. I am also requesting that the corporations adopt instead of just OJTs...as we say many of the persons come and they do copying and stuff like that...I am asking for probably a yearly internship for probably 3 months whereby students who leave COSTATT, students from CCC and YTEPP are able to come into the corporation for approximately 3 months from our skilled engineers, our disaster management coordinators, our masons, our carpenters and get the experience that they actually need and acquire to go out and get a proper job with the field and the experience that they have. Social services in Sangre Grande, I understand that we are going to acquire some sort of social service aspect under the corporations. I am pleading...we are a disaster stricken area, when it comes to landslips, Cumuto, Valencia, Mazanilla, Toco, we are disaster stricken and to wait on national self-help to acquire grants for these persons is a lengthy process and it is one where if a person's roof flies off we have to wait 3, 4 months to get material to fix the roof. I am pleading with the minister and the body to please allow self-help...especially for the disaster victims...let it be placed in the corporation's ambit. There is a resident that just wanted me to point out 2 things. The...measures, she would like it to be implemented in the corporations, as well as the revitalizing of the cocoa and coffee board.

❖ **Darrien James (Male, African, 30's)**

Pleasant evening again to the Honourable Ministers, thanks for being here. What sort of initiative in terms of international relations would this new policy have in place for green development, let's say energy and solar power generation or maybe carbon credit offsetting and trading? That is my question. Thank you.

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

That is actually a national policy, it's there. You would have heard it in the manifesto that is a government policy. We are going to focus on sustainable, renewable energy.

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

And that falls under the ambit of the Minister of Energy and we have good things in place, She is committed to 10% of energy by 2020 as renewables. We hope to keep that promise and carbon credits and stuff that would operate at a national level through the Ministry of Energy and through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

❖ **Kathrine Trottman (Female, African, 50's)**

I have a serious issue in Sangre Grande here. I welcome local government but in the end of the day some of us might not see local government because we have a hazard in Sangre Grande with some birds that nobody seems to take care of it, also we also have some draining in the heart of Sangre Grande where I live have a public convenient place...it have over 3000 rat. You know what I would like to see Mr Franklin Khan, that the health minister get out from the building in Sangre Grande and come and walk because it have food outlet there and old people have to be using at the side of the road when they come to get pension. And we're going to local government which is good but in the end of the day, I listen to a councillor speak about money and money and money and health hazard in Sangre Grande it is not bad, it is very bad. I have to call in to the radio station, I have to call to every outlet in the regional corporation to come and clean that public place. I live in the heart of Sangre Grande and I telling you half of us might not live...the pavement is mashing up. Old people fall down on the pavement. It have 2 dustbin in Sangre Grande, sometimes it overfull and nobody come to clean it. We need some help in Sangre Grande. Thank you.

❖ **Adesh Narinesingh (Male, Indian, 30's)**

I am a public health inspector in the county. What I have to say may kind of tie in to what she was relating. My concern would be, in terms of local government reform, what would be the role or how will public health be incorporated into this? But more specifically in terms of the role of public health inspectors attached to the ministry of Health? Now just to

backtrack a little, the Ministry of Health and Local Government used to be one ministry but in times past both ministries were split up. Us inspectors, we remained with the Ministry of Health but we have something happening where...we just want to know what role would we have because...we had inspectors, we had people...

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

The point is, you all are important, you all play a very important role, so from a policy decision point of view we will have to take a decision as to where exactly you would be housed for want of a better phrase but you all will continue to play the important...

❖ **Adesh Narinesingh**

I just want to raise my concerns as to where we are heading. We have people who make complaints to us and sometimes we don't know if the matter has been referred to the Ministry of Works, sometimes it has to be to the regional corporation. In past policy documents regarding local government reform, it was proposed that a lot of the duties and functions that we perform currently be taken over by the Ministry of Local Government and in past times there were people who were sent on scholarships to the health course. I just want to know...

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

Let me attempt to answer that and you have made the point. We are not certain where it will fit right now. There is a lot of grey areas between the Regional Health Authority where their CMOH operates where the Ministry of Health operates, where the Public Health Inspectors which falls under the regional corporations operate. I have had some preliminary discussion with the Minister of Health. He is willing to divulge some of that power from the Ministry of Health to the regional corporations. As a matter of fact, he went so far as to say that Insect Vector should fall under the regional corporation. So we will be streamlining that and it would be crystal clear when we're finished as to what are the responsibilities of the LGA as it relates to public health in particular.

❖ **Female Participant (Mixed, 30's)**

A pleasant good afternoon to the Honourable ministers, to the mayor and to all the people in Toco/ Sangre Grande; I have 3 short concerns. One of the concerns is my grandfather is over 88 and he lives in the Wallerfield area, owning a big parcel of land and for years they haven't gotten a renewal of leases for these lands. And one day I was having a conversation with him, I was saying that families are extending and I think it would have been a good idea if the government could at least allow more than one house to be on the parcel of land where families could come together and contribute to agriculture. Because you have one

house, one person with 17 acres, 20 acres and nothing ain't going on and we want to boost agriculture and there is young people who have the innovative ideas and skills to make this happen. And that is just one of my contributions in terms of the agriculture part of it. The other thing is, I heard you mention before that the allocation of money when it comes to the small contractors and the large contractors, the problem is financial settings to get the program on the go because the large contractors would have the money. But why not, if somebody is starting off, let's say young people or somebody new starting off in this business venture, have them under the wings of the large contractors, so that they too can still have something to do and don't have it for the large contractors alone. You have to spread it out. How I will get the experience if I want to go into this business....

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

I think I could answer that. It is going to be tiered system that may not be done legislatively but certainly via moral persuasion. So you're going to have your small, your medium and your large contractors, with the small contracts it will be under a certain amount of money et cetera and people will have to pre-qualify.

❖ **Female Participant**

All that is good but we want value for the dollar too. We don't want to have the small contractors and they can't do the work, so I am saying that if the large contractors, the young people who can be under them but they can share in it, you know, it would be a better idea than just having this one person having this contract over and over again and you want to have a reform and is just one set of people right through. The young people can't get the experience. When you are going for a job they want experience. How am I going to get the experience if I am not given the opportunity? The third point is I am from Sangre Grande and I take pride in my community and I would like to see, not only the elders but I would like to see the youths involved...where they could come up with ideas to help this community flourish.. .because we have a lot of natural resources here. We have a lot of youths with a lot of talent that they can't come out with because they're kind of stifled in the aspect of it, you know. And I want to see the environment blossom, in terms of infrastructure, with the birds that Ms Kathy Ann raise, that is a major health issue. When the birds put their droppings and that dries up and dust flies in the air and you inhale that and that goes into your lungs, that is a major health issue and we need to address that in Sangre Grande. It's in the middle of Sangre Grande, if a tourist comes in I ashamed to say I belong to Sangre Grande because no beautification in the environment. We need to address that and as I say, the youths have a lot of ideas and we need to push them, let them come forward and we need a little more communication from the ones on the top. Communicate with us, we know things a little tight but if you communicate with us we will be able to understand. Thank you.



❖ **Eltina Robinson – Salybia (Female, African, 50's)**

Good afternoon to the head table and neighbours and friends of Sangre Grande. I am coming from the...was the beautiful village of Salybia, a tourist attraction. Right now is a zone. The drains clogged up, the bush high, we coming out in the forest. We have a savannah where the youths could go out and thing, we need upgrading. We have a all-purpose court, it is not a all-purpose court again. They little children and all does go out there and ride their bicycle and try something. Right now we don't have that. We had 3 cases of dengue in the village and they came and spray only by the house alone where had the dengue. So the rest of people exposed to the dengue right now. So I would like the councillor or whosoever could come into the village and we could show them we problem.

❖ **Patricia St Bernard (Female, African, 50's)**

I am addressing the issue of social services. I am the Deputy Regional Director of the Sangre Grande Regional Services Office which is part of the Ministry of Social Development. So the Ministry had embarked upon a transformational approach of social services in 2009 and the office was established on Foster Road to deliver national family services which includes several grants that you spoke about. We started with a complement of 16 staff to begin providing the services. For the years the model worked, a social worker was assigned to each district...because as you know we have about districts including Cumuto/Manzanilla, Valencia, the Sangre Grande environment, Toco, Biche and so...a social worker was assigned to service each district to work along with the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation including the councillors for the various districts providing the services and doing needs analyses, developing outreach program and so. After two years and because of uncertainty and short term contracts, most of the social workers migrated to other ministries. Some returned to their substantive posts. We have one social worker remaining and I have her here with me, Ms Gabriel who services the Sangre Grande environs. We are making a plea, after several requests, I have made several requests to our Human Resource Division in Port of Spain because at our level we are not responsible for recruitment and selection of staff. So I propose to re-establish the agency to its original state whereby a cadre of social workers will be employed and sent to the office along with social work assistants so that we can ensure than the delivery of services reach Toco area, the Cumuto/Manzanilla area...those areas that currently do not have a social worker to service...so we can effectively deliver the service to the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation under reformation of local government.

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

So you are saying you had officers in 2009 when they started the program and now you're down to one?

❖ **Patricia St Bernard**

Well the 17 officers is a breakdown of 6 social work officers, 3 social work assistants and administrative staff. So the critical staff, the core group that we need now are the social workers

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

So as the person in charge for social work in Sangre Grande, what is your opinion? Do you think it would be better served if you were part of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation with a full complement of staff serving the people of the Sangre Grande Corporation and reporting to Mayor or to the council?

❖ **Patricia St Bernard**

But that is what I am proposing, as soon as possible.

❖ **Students, Guaico Secondary School (Females, African, 17 or 18 years of age)**

Good afternoon. All protocol observed. My name is Akasha O'Brien and my name is Jenacee Gomez and I only have one question: How would local government reform deal with the improvement of social services in my community?

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

You just got the solution from the lady there. The government spends a tremendous amount of money on social programs. The Ministry of Social Services budget is about 3 or 4 billion dollars a year. What is happening is that the administration of the programs does not reach out to the people who are most in need and it is absorbed in a lot of cases, by corruption. Food cards for example. We know of incidents where there are people who have University Degrees, there are police officers and what have you and they have 2 and 3 food cards in the home and whereas the food cards are not reaching the people who are deserving of it because there is corruption in the system because of the social service delivery. Now while we may not be able to wipe out corruption in its entirety, what we feel is if we have a system that comes through local government, the chances of it reaching the people who are in need will be significantly increased.

❖ **Dexter Charles (Male, African, 40's)**

My boss Mr Rondon is a hard worker like myself. I does work and I does take dignity in my work, since 1988 I working with County Council but it had some mishap but nevertheless, what we want to see in Grande...Grande is my town and I want to see my town good. I want

by the help of all of you, let go some money in the corporation, let Mr Rondon see about Grande and Toco please. I begging allyuh. This place, Mr Rondon is a hard worker and I does work hard because I love to work, since 1988. And one more thing, allyuh give me 5 acres of land let me start to plant some garden please. It have hard working youth men. I like to work hard you know, I like food, I like my belly, I don't make joke with that so if allyuh could organize a 5 acre of land for me it will be all well and good.

## 5.0 CLOSING

To conclude the proceedings of the Local Government Consultation at the Guaico Secondary School, Minister Young thanked all participants for attending today's consultation as it shows the positive side of consultation and highlighted that part of consultation is the listening part which is very important. Minister Khan stated that the government is a consultative one and expressed that the consultations keep getting better and better as many valid points were made by participants and that he understands that persons would want to air issues that are affecting them and they are so justified. He assured participants that the Local Government Reform process will happen, the government has the political will to do it and that the process is driven and guided from the top and has the personal endorsement of the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley.



SANGRE GRANDE 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 Ministers and they were very eager to give their input to local government reform as was evident by the queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 192 (55%) male participants and 158 (45%) female participants. The majority (85%) of participants represented the age range 40 – 70 years. There was less than 5% representation of participants under the age of 40 and approximately 10% of participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (90%) appeared to be middle class income earners with a few from low income and some high income class. There was 65% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 35% being a majority of Indo-Trinidadian (33%) and some mixed-race participants. There was less than 1% representation from the Caucasian descent.

### 6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 30 respondents from the plenary; 14 female and 16 male. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	23	40 – 70 (14), under 40 (7), under 20 (2)
Indian	6	40 – 70 (5), under 40 (1)
Mixed	1	Under 40

### 6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Poverty	1
Institution in the community for reformation or prisoners/delinquents	1
Facilities for promoting culture and sport	4
Improve/upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, parks, schools	9

NHA not functioning	1
Crime	3
Unity in Corporations/ No Political interference	1
Boundaries	2
Youth involvement especially males in reform	1
National prayer should be in all Corporations and everything	3
Develop alternative revenue sources – agriculture, tourism	6
People do jobs with pride and honesty	1
Public/private partnerships in regional development	1
Capacity Building in Corporation - staff	1
Minor developments and building plans approved at Corporation level	1
Land and Building taxes	2
Transportation – long waiting periods	2
Squatting	1
Ferry from Toco to Tobago	1
Recycling/litter control	1
Municipal policing and transparency in the awarding of contracts	1
Fair chances for small and medium business	1
Education	1
Toco in need of health facilities and others such as fire station	1
Employment opportunities for all – female, young not given fair chance	2
Alternative renewable energy sources	1
Duties and functions of Public Health Inspectors	1
Social service delivery	2