

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

San Juan

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San Juan North Secondary



Rapporteurs' Full Report



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1.0 OPENING

Mr Leslie Gibbons introduced himself as the Moderator for the evening. He welcomed the radio audience and the live audience at the San Juan North Government Secondary School Auditorium. The national item was played and a prayer was offered by Pastor Ian Frederick to signal the start of the 5th consultation on Local Government Reform.

Among the key personnel present at the consultation were the Honourable Minister Mr Franklin Khan, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and Honourable Minister Stuart Young, Minister in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Also in attendance, were Minister Fitzgerald Hinds, Minister Terrance Deyalsingh, Permanent Secretary Destra Bascombe and Alderman Roberts.

Mr Roberts delivered the welcome remarks.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young

2.0 WELCOME REMARKS

Alderman Anthony Roberts – Chairman San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation and Deputy Chairman Technical Committee



Moderator, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan – Minister of Rural Development and Local Government; the Honourable Stuart Young – Minister in the Office of the Attorney General; Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby Dolly – Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts; the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds – Minister of Works and Transport; the Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh – Minister of Health; Mr. Adrian Leonce – Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant; Ms. Desdra Bascombe – Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and Chairman of the Transition Technical Team and other members of the Technical Team who are present with us today; members of the Council of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation; CEO of the

San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation Mr. Kenwyn Pantin and members of staff of the Regional Corporation, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed an honour for me on behalf of the Council and Burgesses of the municipality of San Juan/Laventille to welcome you honourable Ministers and each and every one of you attending this 5th session in a series of public consultation on Local Government Reform in Trinidad.

San Juan/Laventille is one of the more densely populated municipalities, in fact, we are the 3rd largest in terms of population, the 2011 census puts us at a population of approximately 168,000 persons, just behind Tunapuna/Piarco and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo municipalities. Our region ladies and gentlemen comprise of parts of 8 (eight) constituencies and they are St. Joseph, Barataria, San Juan, St. Ann's East, Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Port of Spain North, St. Ann's West, Arima and Chaguanas West. Minister Khan, I ask the question 'What does Local Government Reform mean for the burgesses of San Juan/Laventille? What benefits should we expect to be derived from this initiative?' I have had the opportunity to experience both sides of the spectrum, where, as a Burgess in this region I experienced distress and dissatisfaction from not being able to obtain timely and efficient goods and services from the Regional Authority. And as a practitioner, I experienced equal pain and trauma when the body I have the honour to lead, has grave difficulty because of inadequate funding, low productivity and a myriad of other reasons why we are unable to effectively deliver goods and services to our burgesses and this is their right.

Honourable Minister once the Reform agenda could adequately address these concerns and those of the persons present here today, I assure you that we eagerly anticipate your discourse this afternoon and, more importantly, the implementation of this long-awaited initiative. So, Minister, I thank you and your Ministry for gracing us with your presence and we look forward to more visits to the region of San Juan/Laventille and interaction with you. I thank you very much.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLIN KHAN



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

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

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

He began, “These consultations members of San Juan/Laventille are unique in the sense that it is only occasion I can recall that a public consultation in Trinidad & Tobago will be held solely in Trinidad. The reason being, Tobago’s local Government machinery and service delivery systems have progressed well beyond that of Trinidad’s. This is directly due to reforms in their Local Government status, and the social contract that now exists between the THA and the people of Tobago.

Like many communities across Trinidad, Tobago used to have to come to the central Government for just about everything in the old days of the Tobago County Council. With legislation passed in ‘96 the THA was given legal and local authority and autonomy to change that. Because of the THA Act #40 of 1996, Tobago has the authority and autonomy to inform, manage and dictate and influence almost every aspect of its own affairs and development. Let us be honest all of us have gone to Tobago, Tobago is cleaner, the public buildings are better kept, the verges of the road are better kept, the service delivery by and large is superior to that of Trinidad. And that has to do ladies and gentlemen with devolution of authority, as a result we see advancements and initiatives like for example in Tobago there is something called TEMA - The Tobago Emergency Management Authority, fastest response to any emergency you can every get. Tobago has a Medal Alert Device system that for the last three (3) years they have given 520 elderly persons this little button to press in case you fall or you know older people have this tendency to osteoporosis to break a bone or what have you, just press a button and an ambulance comes for you.

Social service delivery for a range of activities are much better handled in Tobago than in Trinidad. These are just a few of the many examples that illustrate the differences in our bureaucracies. Tobagonians have the power to treat with their own community, their own unique cultures and ways of life... why shouldn't we? Isn't there some place called Laventille that is unique? Isn't there some place called Santa Cruz that is unique? Certain communities are so unique that while they are not a separate island like Tobago that would demand certain greater levels of autonomy, the uniqueness of communities justifies in essence that sort of devolution of power that this Local Government Reform process envisages.

Now there is a transformation agenda that this administration is pursuing vigorously. For those of you who followed the election campaign closely the Prime Minister then leader of the Opposition, virtually every night spoke about two (2) things: Local Government Reform and the creation of a Ministry of Rural Development, two (2) major transformational issues. So I guess I am the Minister of Transformation because both portfolios have been handed to me and I want to make the point that underdevelopment and I want you all to listen to this carefully, underdevelopment in any society is characterised by the lack of transformational things happening. I will give you an example, an administration gets into power and they plod along and by the time you blink your eyes five (5) years have expired, then there is the perception of whether you did good or bad and you may lose office or you may be voted in for another five (5) years and you just plod along and a decade would have passed and all of a sudden two and a half decades would have passed, quarter century would have passed and when you reassess your position as a society you would realise nothing transformational has taken place. Ladies and gentlemen that is underdevelopment. So it is in that context this administration is pushing for the transformation of Trinidadian society and in particular the transformation of the governance structure and there is no greater place to implement that than to implement it in Local Government Reform.

Rural development I say more on Rural Development when I am in a rural community like Siparia or Sangre Grande but San Juan/Laventille is largely urban or quasar urban although on the extremities of the corporation Maracas, Las Cuevas, La Fillet and some of these places it is rural. So we will have a rural policy to cover for these areas. By and large and do not want to sound too critical of the urban areas but the developmental agenda since 1962 to now has been to largely skewed to urban centric development and there is now an infrastructure and facilities deficit in rural areas which this Ministry plans to as I say bring the pendulum back to the middle and do not have it swinging on one end. The issue of rural development like I said its non-political and I have gone to town in other areas to speak about that, but I will not speak about that here in San Juan this afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen in speaking about transformation since in 1962 successive administrations have researched, tracked, discussed and consulted with the public on the benefits of a decentralisation of Government and really and truly it has all been talk. The only real significant thing that happened in terms of Local Government Reform was when the Municipal Corporation Act #21 of 1990 was proclaimed and basically while that was a major change where we moved from the County Council system St. George East, St. George West, St. Andrew, St. David, Caroni, St. Patrick, Victoria, the Municipal Act where the country was divided into fourteen (14) Municipalities, that was largely boundary changes but the functionalities of

the Regional Corporations bore a great resemblance to the County Council system because the schedule of responsibilities never changed. So County Council was in charge of cemeteries, minor roads, minor water courses, playgrounds, local health to some extent and garbage collections. Here we have twenty-five (25) years after you have the same schedule, garbage collections, recreation grounds, cemeteries, minor roads, some aspect of public health and what have you. So nothing significant has happened. But essentially, successive administrations have kicked the can down the road. Now the ball is in our court and I want to make a bold statement today that under our Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley we are not going to kick the can along the road any longer, Local Government Reform is going to happen in this term of office of this PNM administration (crowd applauded).

The pitfalls of centralised governance have been uncovered, discussed, debated and everybody has agreed that Local Government Reform is the way to go. There is a wealth of information and reports in the Ministry of Local Government. Ladies and gentlemen when I became Minister of Local Government and Rural Development I had a high pile of reports but there was never the political will to implement the reform. There was the Hazel Manning initiative, there is no Minister of Local Government in history than has done more work than this woman on Local Government Reform but it did not happen. Then there was the Surujrattan Rambachan initiative in 2013 where he had a white paper in parliament on local Government reform and yet it never happened and I will go brave now and tell you why it never happened. It is the human physique never to devolve power, the only person who I know who devolved power is a man called Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union in a programme called "Perestroika" where he disbanded the Soviet Union, the world super power into the individual republic. It is because of that psychology of trying to hold on to centralised authority that the Prime Minister who is the main architect of this programme has gone on record to say that the Ministry of Local Government will be retired. You cannot have a Ministry of Local Government with a big stick supervising the Regional Corporation and say that you are devolving power but I will deal with that later in the presentation.

So what we are saying is that Local Government is also physiological, it is beyond garbage collection, retaining walls and waterways, traffic and transport, community centres, empty lots, mosquitoes; almost every decision made by Central Government inevitably has an effect our software. Our hearts and minds: our sense of well-being, autonomy, creativity, security, identity and belonging and most importantly our sense of community. Our sense of being able to make a difference in our basic capacity to dream and to passionately pursue those dreams is really being taken away from us by Central Government because you are not in control of your own communities. Centralisation of decision-making affects our need and ability to unite and to build stronger communities. So again I want to make a brave statement Central Government is more likely to be the problem than the solution.

I will tell you how Local Government is not working as presently construed and the best litmus test to that and I call on my MPs here on the front line, it is the amount of people that come to see you on a Thursday evening because every MP here will tell you that there are hundreds and if you do not have an appointment system there will have about three hundred (300) people coming to see you for what? They are coming to see you to ask for simple things that are supposed to be delivered naturally from the system of Local Government Reform and I want to

warn the MPs, your main duty as a Member of Parliament according to the constitution is that you are a legislator. You are there to go to the parliament to make laws to govern Trinidad and Tobago and your prime responsibility while you are owe allegiance to your constituents you cannot be to fix every drain, fix every pot hole, fix every broken street light because it will just consume your time and you will become unproductive, inefficient and you will be deemed incompetent at the end of it all. It is because the system is not working in your favour and it is only when Local Government Reform takes charge of what it is supposed to charge of that you now will be given the space to do things that you were voted into office to do which is to make legislation for the country, to make policy decisions, to be part of a cabinet to run the country at a level of articulating policy for the country.

The major impediments preventing existing local Government structures from being efficient, consistent, relevant or sensitive, cost-effective timely or sustainable are: Political interference, manipulation. Ladies and gentlemen the politics of Trinidad is what it is but in the Local Government Reform agenda what we are saying is that this reform process will be apolitical because the powers that will be put into the hands of the Chairman of San Juan/Laventille, in San Juan/Laventille I think that there are thirteen (13) councillors, twelve (12) PNM and one (1) UNC. So the powers that we give to Mr. Roberts in this Local Government Reform process will be the same powers that the chairman of Debe/Penal will be having. Ladies and gentlemen let me just tell you that Debe/Penal has twelve (12) UNC and zero (0) PNM, it is broad as it is wide because the Local Government Reform agenda is apolitical, it is transferring power and authority into the hands of the communities.

Inadequate funding - as line Minister with the responsibility for Local Government I know the pains you all suffer and everybody and successive administrations have said Local Government is underfunded. But Local Government is underfunded by who so ever is in authority because the whole system is so locked in inertia that nothing new happen. I will give you a good example of inadequate funding - they are asking me where we will get funding to fund the Local Government Process? Take playgrounds, for example, I asked the Minister of Sports to give me a list of the facilities that comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Sports and the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago. Do you know what is the list? Hasely Crawford Stadium, Ato Boldon Stadium, the Larry Gomes Stadium, the Brian Lara Complex when it is finished and all the indoor sporting complexes. It is about fifteen (15), there is something like over four hundred (400) recreation grounds in Trinidad and Tobago that falls under the jurisdiction of the Regional Corporations. Now, an average Regional Corporation gets about four million dollars to manage over 70 to 100 grounds it depends on the size of your thing. It is obviously insufficient but low and behold comes the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago and they just enter your town and start to put up lights all over, build a pavilion and all sorts of things. Nobody knows from whence they came. What process did they use to say which ground should have lights and which ground they should build a pavilion on because that falls under the jurisdiction of the Local Government Authority? So if the Ministry of Ministry of Sports through the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago spends three hundred million dollars on dealing with recreation grounds, obviously that money resided with the Regional Corporation. My brother Hinds is here, there is a programme in the Ministry of Works called PURE that spends approximately one billion dollars a year in road paving. At least 40% of the roads that are

paved in PURE are minor roads that fall under the jurisdiction of the Regional Corporation. If the Regional Corporation is restructured with the quality of staff to implement projects like these, that is four hundred million dollars coming your way. It is not that Minister Hinds want to pave minor roads you know it is because the Local Government architecture and the Local Government infrastructure does not have the manpower and the expertise to manage some of those projects, that is why it has been centralised in a Ministry of Works under a particular programme called PURE. So when we go through the Reform process and we put in new structures in the Regional Corporations then and only then the monies are available. It is just that the money is now allocated in a very centralised model and the decentralisation process that will bring the type of resources that you all need in the Regional Corporations.

The sluggish administrative structure that only facilitates unnecessary bureaucracy and an overall lack of transparency and equity.

Local Government has become ineffective and burdened because there is a Ministry of Local Government and let me make one thing clear the Ministry of Local Government is not Local Government, the Ministry of Local Government is Central Government, Local Government is the Corporations. That is why we are saying that we can do without a Ministry of Local Government because you are empowering the Regional Corporations to handle their own affairs, they report to the Minister of Finance on fiscal matters, they account to the Auditor General on matters of transparency and effective use of state funds and who is their boss, not me, their bosses in the Regional Corporation are you. You the burgesses will determine how effective they have been, which is once every three (3) years when you vote them in or you vote them out. So they will now be accountable to you the burgesses of the corporations.

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

Our proposal, as we stated in our 2015 Manifesto, the PNM's vision for Local Government seeks to remove all of the red tape and bureaucracies that prevent local Government bodies from doing their work in an effective and efficient manner. This document has now been advanced into the official policy debate. To revolutionise and bring the system in line with the recurrent recommendations of the many teams, committees, and different administrations that have engaged this process over the years. The PNM Manifesto as everybody knows we have said that over and over again is now official Government policy and we plan to implement official Government policy. Let me now deal with the specific aspect of our Local Government Reform agenda. First and foremost:

Secure Funding – Collecting Your Own Taxes –

With legislative changes Local Government bodies will now be able to collect and retain land and building taxes and I say collect and retain with a formula because one of the things that Minister Imbert keeps saying is one of the issues of tax collection is leakage because we do not have a system to effectively collect revenues that are due to the state. Now if land and building taxes now fall under the direct ambit of Local Government it is a smaller piece of geography, you would have more focused manpower to go after the people and it is because it is not centralised. So if San Juan/Laventille knows its cadre of buildings, what the taxes are, so their income revenue for that year let us say is thirty-five million dollars, they know who the people owe them the thirty-five million, the thirty-five million dollars coming into their coffers for them to spend on their community, so they will make much more effort and greater effort to collect those taxes as compared to the Ministry of Finance. It makes so much common sense. So it is one area Minister Young and myself in particular through the office of the AG and the Chief Parliamentary council we will be looking to revise the taxation legislation so that the local Government bodies could collect and retain those local taxes.

Most important now following the THA model we are going to hand over Executive Authority to councillors. I know councillors should clap for that you know because you all are really at a loss because you are accountable to your burgesses but you have no executive authority. So how can you be accountable without executive power it is just a paradox. So you now will be accountable and all this thing about the administration and the CEO all those things will end because you will now have executive authority similar to the secretaries in the Tobago House of Assembly. So now you will have a level of responsibility and executive power and almost not quite like a cabinet Minister because you would be in charge of a portfolio in your Regional Corporation, whether it is infrastructure, whether it is health similar to Tobago. So now you become accountable to your burgesses and you can no longer hide now and say I have no authority because we are giving you the authority under this local Government reform. Ladies and gentlemen let me warn you one time; with the devolution of power and new levels of authority comes greater accountability. And as a PNM administration let me warn all of you one time, we will not support corruption because as I said at a previous consultation, if we are a society of corrupt people you might as well centralise the corruption because few people will thief. If you decentralise corruption, you're just decentralising for more people to have access to the public purse. So with responsibility and authority, you are now accountable. You will be accountable to the Minister of Finance, the Auditor General, you will be accountable to your communities through a consultation process and we will be encouraging burgesses to report councillors for misbehaviour because you just cannot get this authority and do not be accountable and discreet with how you handle it.

New Responsibilities - Thirdly, we will be giving you new responsibilities. Remember when I made the point about the county council system and the regional corporation seeing that the schedule of responsibility was almost identical. Under this new local Government reform exercise, we will be giving new responsibilities to the local Government corporations.

School Maintenance – If in San Juan/Laventille have eight (8) secondary schools and five (5) primary schools, isn't it better that you manage the repairs during the vacation to make sure that all schools are opened on time when the August holidays are completed? As we speak now, one company called the Education Facilities Company (EFC) is responsible for two

hundred (200) plus secondary schools and over six hundred (600) primary schools. It is just an act in futility and these are some of the new responsibilities that will be coming to local Government bodies so you will have a focused attention into the deliverables and it is really in your interest because if you sub-divide the schools by electoral districts, one Councillor may be responsible for four (4) primary schools and one (1) secondary school but he would be watching that like a hawk and he will make sure because he has to please his burgesses that those schools are repaired on time and he will look at the contract management system because all those contracts now will be coming through the corporation through their own tendering and procurement procedures.

Social Welfare delivery – This was something that was started by Patrick Manning where he wanted a social worker in each electoral district because social welfare again can be better handled at the level of the regional corporation because all politics is local. You know more than anybody else who are the families at risk, who is the lady who is getting a run around to get her pension, which family is suspicious of child abuse or incest or crime. So you know through the social delivery system through the councillors will have better control of that and it will be more equitable. Ladies and gentlemen, successive administrations spend 6 to 7 billion dollars a year on social services and then when you watch, the poverty level is still the same and people still complain that they are not getting what they supposed to get. You know why? Because the system is not efficient and out of that 6 billion dollars probably 1 billion only reaches down to the people who actually need the services. So the state at the central level...but no Minister at the local level can go and boast that the budget for social services is 7 billion. What are the people who are in need getting for that? And it all has to do with how the system is administered and can it filter down to the level where it is most needed. It is our thinking that Social Welfare delivery would have devolution of authority in line with our local Government reform agenda. Sporting programmes, agriculture, local tourism, for example, because every corporation would tell you they have tourism potential. This obviously has, you have Maracas, Las Cuevas up to La Fillette. So local tourism can fall within the ambits of the local Government and try to attract local tourists into their communities. Something that the Prime Minister wants, it's called **Employment Exchange**. Within your corporation, you should have a database of unemployed people and through a centralised system with the Ministry, you should be able to match skills from your community with the needs of Central Government and local Government and even within the private sector in your community. Dr Rowley always gives this example that he went to a CPA conference in the UK and he went to the island of Jersey and he asked a member of parliament what is your unemployment rate expecting him to say 5%, he said we have 164 unemployed people on the island and he pulled up his computer screen and have them by name, age, skillset and they are waiting to be matched to an upcoming job. We may probably never reach there but at least, the model supposed to drive us to greater heights. Database management, you'll are the councillors, you don't have a database in your mind where this job could be and if you spend your time trying to match all these people with jobs you become an employment agency. You have no time to dot the other responsibilities that you have. Another aspect that we're looking at is **Local Contractors** and ladies and gentlemen, this one hits hard. When the regional corporation has to tender through the Tenders Board, you could have a box drain building right here in Santa Cruz and the contractor from Penal. Nothing is wrong with that constitutionally but it is not right in terms of

driving the local economy. If the box drain is given to Santa Cruz or San Juan contractor or somebody from your corporation, the chances are that the workers would be from here. When they get their pay they will buy in local groceries, local shops so you have the multiplier effect in the community. So by and large, we will want to institute a system where corporations work within the confines of the constitution remit you have to understand that anybody is entitled to work anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago, so we will have to devise a system where it will have some sort of rating process to give preference to local contractors under local jurisdiction.

Effective Municipal Policing – We have gone public on that, in our manifesto you will see 100 police officers per corporation. As we speak I am in discussion with the Minister of National Security and the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General to see what structure we will have for municipal police. As we speak they report to the CO...very little sometimes five (5) or six (6), we are going to have 100 per corporation and all these spurious programs like Comfort Police and all these things will give way, and the municipal police will now be in charge of their municipalities as the first course for citizens to come into the law enforcement thing and then with higher levels of crime the national police will take charge. So the municipal police arrangement is very community based and I think it will go a long way in assisting with the crime situation.

Developmental Control – We will be implementing new legislation so that more authority will be given to the local Government corporations to approve plans, to approve buildings, to approve even some sub divisions within their own community.

Finally, **Disaster Management** – I want to congratulate the regional corporation, this is one aspect where first respondents is doing an excellent job. The other day they had some roof blow out in Morvant, within hours the regional corporation was on the ball, disaster management unit kicked in place; as first respondent, you'll have been doing an excellent job and you will be handed more responsibility, more autonomy, more resources to be first respondents in the disaster management scenario. However, I just want to tell you that ultimately disaster management will always be a function of national security because disaster management has to fall under the ambit of the Minister of National Security because when natural disaster takes place, the bigger disaster is not the disaster but how people behave after the disaster. It's looting; it's all sorts of things so in terms of natural disasters, in all countries of the world, it falls under the Ministry of National Security.

Regional Development Planning - For those of you who remember the 2013 Local Government Election the PNM produced fourteen (14) individual manifestos for the corporations as a blueprint of how they can develop their communities. We encourage you to take another look at this document, edit it and make some improvements if you so desire. Finally I want to touch two (2) final points: **Boundaries** – Let me just focus on boundaries for a while. There are fourteen (14) regional corporations and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). So if we have fourteen (14) regional corporations with fourteen (14) executive councils, I ask you the question, is that over Government? Should we reduce the number of regional corporations? I have no answer; that is what this consultation is about. Really and truly, fourteen (14) regional corporations with executive councils is a lot. Human nature is like this, once you give something you can't take it back. So if you already have the fourteen (14) corporations, it is difficult to say reduce fourteen (14) to twelve (12) but all I ask you is to consider that position.

Secondly, **Boundary Changes** – If you are keeping the fourteen (14) regional corporations are the boundaries meandering in a way that suits the local communities? I must hit a jep nest here but let me still say it because I am brave. Is the community of Laventille more suited to be placed within the city of Port of Spain or to be placed within the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation? I just ask a question, ma'am, because I also put it to you, you cannot tell me St James is part of Port of Spain and the Trinidad Hilton right over the East Dry River is not part of Port of Spain. The city of Port of Spain and its suburbs is what a city is made up of, New York, Houston, London what have you. Laventille is a natural suburb in Port of Spain; it looks towards Port of Spain for its activity. I would not decide something like that and I would not adjudicate as to where Laventille would fall. That is why we would have a consultation here in San Juan/Laventille to get your views and have a consultation with the Port of Spain city corporation to have their view. I cannot see as a sensible human being and as a line minister with responsibility for this, that the Trinidad Hilton is not in Port of Spain but quite down in St James, part of Port of Spain, if the centre of Port of Spain is Frederick Street and Cipriani Stature in the heart of Town. So these are thought-provoking ideas but it is really for you to give us the information. Finally ladies and gentlemen, **Organization and Structure** – I have rated up and championed the cause for local Government reform through my entire discourse but I also want to say as presently constituted, Local Government is one of the most inefficient and unproductive parts of Government. I make no apologies for saying that. Eight o'clock in the morning you don't know where any of the gangs are and you go to the regional corporation office at ten o'clock and you could hardly find a secretary, farless officers to serve the people. So while you clamour for the authority, and clamour for the power and you clamour for all the new responsibilities, you'll have to prove to central Government that you can accept it and deliver it with the level of efficiency that we require. That is why the technical committee of this transformation process is mandated to come up with new structures and new skill sets that could populate this new responsibility. As we speak, most regional corporations do not even have a single engineer, they don't have quantity surveyors, they have no procurement experts, they have no supply chain managers and all these new skill sets of the 21st century do not reside at the level of the regional corporation. And one of the most attractive things about this Local Government reform to me personally, is the avenue it will bring for young people to get meaningful jobs at the level of the Government. New skills...ladies and gentlemen, we have invested \$6 billion in GATE for the last fifteen (15) years. Very good but what are the GATE graduates doing. We didn't go through the full cycle of thought but when you give free tertiary education, if the economy cannot absorb the graduates, they are more frustrated that if they didn't go to school. I make the point that underemployment is sometimes worse than unemployment. You all have children; you would not like to know you send your child to university, to UWI or UTT, they come out with a Bachelor's degree, they tell them to go back and further their studies, they come out with a Master's Degree and when they graduate now they can't get a job. And when they get a job they are totally underemployed because they get a job as a Clerk (I) in the public service with a Master's. There are a lot of people like that. OJT's, people with Master's go to an OJT company and they tell them to file this for me and photocopy this for me and the training component is not there. So this will be bringing in a whole new cadre of skills in fourteen (14) corporations so that graduates in Sangre Grande could now work in Sangre Grande and ease up Mr Hinds with the traffic on the East-West

Corridor. Couva/Tabaquite/ Talparo people now could have opportunities to gain employment in their own community. Finally, on the legislation part, after I conclude my presentation in two (2) minutes, Minister Young and myself will take the stage to field your questions. A significant component of this exercise is legislative change; we plan to revise in a significant way the Municipal Corporation Act, the taxation laws and amendment to Section 69 of the Act provides for standing committees and if it needs a brand new piece of legislation, we will so do. At the end of these consultations, we want to know what the end product is and if we know what it looks like we will know what steps to put in place to give you that end product. In terms of the timetable, I want to give the assurance...Local Government Election is due by the 21st October 2016, under the Act, we have a three (3) month period to hold the election. The latest the Local Government election will be held is January 21st, 2017 and I want to give you the assurance on behalf of the Prime Minister that Local Government Election will not be postponed; it is going to be kept within the constitutionally due time. What that means is that we hope to complete the legislative agenda by September, early October. Mr Young is in charge of that and he has the whole CPC's office working diligently. As a matter of fact, the member on the technical committee is the Deputy Director of the CPC and she is working very hard, she is very knowledgeable on what the Local Government reform agenda will look like and we will have the legislation in place in time...very likely...probably towards a joint select committee. We will hold the Local Government Election on the premise that this is the reform agenda that will be now going in and the new council now will have a three (3) year period of transition. By the time we hold the other election in 2019, one year before 2020 General Election, all supposed to be fine, working well on the Local Government side. I also want to encourage you to join our conversation on the Facebook page, Local Government Reform Consultation or also to go on TTLocalMatters.com for the white paper or any media updates. I hope I have done some justice in articulating what this administration looks at. I think it is very exciting. It is the first time serious changes in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago will be taking place. Nothing like this has ever happened since Independence 1962 to now and where you will have to get accustomed to managing your own affairs, where the communication will now have participation in what decisions are making. Mr Young and I were discussing part of the legislation may demand consultation with the public before a decision is taken. We may very well put that in the legislation because if we want community involvement, you could legislate it. I don't want to backpedal too much but I always say the whole idea of state Government and community Government...the United States and my famous Wal-Mart example. If Wal-Mart wants to go into a community to build a store, Wal-Mart could know Obama, that can't help him. Is town council meeting in his tail and if the town says you can't come there, you can't come there. And that is the type of power we want to give to local communities. In other words, if somebody is going to open a big quarry up in Santa Cruz to cut down a hill, the Environmental Management Authority and the Ministry of Energy should not have full jurisdiction over that. You the community who have to smell the sand and breathe the dust must have a say in whether a contractor comes to open a quarry in your space and that is the empowerment that communities will now have. As I said, I discussed it with Minister Young, we may well legislate that so that the community by law will have a direct input. I hope you liked what I said.

Minister Khan concluded by showing a final video.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Carl Cupid - (Male African 60s)

Good evening everyone I have jotted down some notes here that I will just read for the audience and the officials. The first point I have here, relates to the numbering of houses, identifying each house in a community regardless of where it is, whether it is to the top of the mountain - it must have some number that is registered somewhere.

The second point here it deals with the same housing business. Many shacks have electricity people who are not on the radar so-to-speak but there is GPS so we can spot them anywhere.

Number 3 I have here, it has to do with a community college type learning centre in each district, whatever you call it - district/corporation - at the level of community college similar to the COSTAATT model.

Number 4 I am talking about the tributary transportation system, it is more or less the 'PH' people who feed the main artery into and out of Port of Spain and Sangre Grande and so on in the east-west corridor and other places.

Number 5 you would no doubt have an adequate cadre of professionals at each level in each corporation, whatever it will be called then.

Number 6 you have to start planning for climate change, it is not exactly too far away but we should start planning for that.

Number 7 I think that you mentioned the repairing of schools and so on, repair and maintenance. I think some principals need to be trained, we are not making them into maintenance managers but they must know something about maintenance management. There is this big compound with all sorts of equipment even some of them what you call, well they have swimming pools etc. and mechanical equipment. The principal must have in front of him/her or on his system, a maintenance schedule and so on and so forth, so he/she would know when the maintenance people are falling short.

I can speak for the rest of the evening on a lot of topics but I know other people would want to give their opinions and so on, I thank you very much.

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

it's 7 (seven) or 8 (eight) points I can't recall all but the first point on numbering of houses, I mean in a modern society and in developed countries all houses are numbered and that is largely a function of TT Post and I know that they were planning a zip code system in Trinidad and Tobago. I am not sure how far that has reached but really and truly the level of scientific knowledge in terms of our address system is much wanting and it is a point well taken and we will probably bring it up with the relevant authorities.

I do not know what you meant by the shacks have current are you saying that the shacks do not deserve current? They are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, they are human beings; there are issues with squatting and we plan to regularise squatting in a very human-friendly way. But there is a proliferation of squatting in Trinidad and Tobago, this Government plans

to put a stop to it, but at the same time, you have to show a little human touch when you deal with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

I think you hit the nail on the head by the issue of the houses and as you called them shacks they are not shacks, they are differently built but you have touched on 2 (two) legislations there. The first is under the Property tax that is the law of Trinidad and Tobago, what you are required to do is a valuation and have a roll. So it is to get the houses onto the roll and then for an evaluation to take place and that will assist; that is how that ties into the Local Government.

With respect to what Minister Khan touched on - the squatting - we are actively looking and we have had presentations at the Ministry of the Attorney General by the Land Settlement Agency because that is a policy decision. I think it was in the 90s or the early 2000s a decision was taken that squatters who existed at that point in time would be regularised but you are doing a constant balancing, so as to not encourage people to go and squat on state land. So it is something that is attracting a lot of attention and that will fall into the Local Government because when there is a regularisation from a taxation point of view we need to find some sort of middle ground there.

With respect to the management of the school I think principals already have that responsibility because as a principal you are in charge of a school compound and it would be incumbent on you, it is not a legislative obligation but as a principal you would want to make sure that your premises are properly maintained etc. and that will now feed into the Local Government Reform in making sure that the schools are maintained adequately.

❖ **Anthony Watkins - (Male African 60s)**

Pleasant good evening to all Ministers on stage, ladies, gentlemen. I am Anthony Watkins President of San Juan so I am here as Citizen Watkins this evening. I just want to say to the Ministers in the assembled multitude that this Local Government Change as planned it is necessary, it is a great aspiration and it is noble, I think it is something that will change the face of Trinidad and Tobago and the lives of our citizens. However if we are going to be doing something good we must make sure that we do it well. So I want to raise a couple of issues in there.

One of them is that this whole process is really going to require some changes and the changes will take us to some transformed state but leaving Egypt and arriving at the Promised Land are the easy parts of the journey, the problem is in the desert. What is that process between what we do in October or November and when we arrive at the end state and we need to address the operational issues, structure, process, technology but we must not lose sight of our people. We must be sure we consider the impact of this on people.

I like the issues of identifying the new competencies and that is absolutely necessary. Great to say that we are going to have local contractors providing services but often when we make that call to find suppliers of services inadequately prepared to engage in a formal process and I would like to flag to the local corporation that we have to begin to prepare

and develop our local service suppliers so that when the time comes they are ready legally and organizationally to be able to meet some of the contracting obligations. While the current or incumbent leaders in the corporations are running the business of the corporations I would also want to flag and to you Minister but certainly to the transition team, that leading change is a job in itself and while somebody is running a corporation they are not going to be able to lead the change at the scope of which is planned, envisaged and that will come upon us.

I am sure that we will engage in a lot of communication but I would really want to go to the other end of the communication and ensure that we have effective and open listening mechanisms to be sure that people talk with us, people share their ideas and that those things are listened to in the places where decisions are being made and where activities are being planned.

At the other end of it, I think it is something that Minister Khan referred to, the fact that people will have difficulty letting go of things. So while new responsibilities and duties will be coming out to the Local Government end of it, we need to also consider the people at the other end who will no longer have some things within their remit and how do we help them to manage some of those losses and the letting go process at that end of it. Those are my thoughts and suggestions.

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

Well, Mr Watkins is an organisational expert par excellence if I should say so. I take your point that the management of change is a job by itself, even independent of what the Technical Committee is doing as we speak. The science of change management, there are now degrees in change management offered at certain universities. We cannot take it likely because there is a natural tendency to the human being to oppose change because people live in their comfort zones. So it is something that I will take on board and we will see how we can bring the change management process and dovetail it into the entire system.

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

I think if I may, one of the points you raised touched on what Minister Khan was speaking about earlier when you say we must listen and we must provide a mechanism. Before the listening part, you have to provide a mechanism for people to voice their concerns and he touched on it in his presentation. One of the things we are looking at is an active obligatory consultation process, so for certain decisions that are going to affect the community and it exists for example in the EMA legislation, if there are certain things that are going to take place you have to publish - this is what I plan to do, this is what I intend to do and it would be to find the right formula that when a decision is crossing a certain hurdle and a threshold, it then necessitates a publication of this is what I intend to do and thereby allowing a process for people to come forward and voice their opinions, for that to be taken into consideration before a decision is taken place and more so in the planning aspect. So it is something that we are looking at from the planning aspect, something that will change the landscape of the corporations/burgesses. But also what we are looking at from an

accountability point of view is now that you are giving the corporations and you are devolving and you are giving them more responsibility especially over finances, similar to what takes place in parliament, is we may legislate that they must come and present this is how we spent the budget. So you have the equivalent of a meeting like this a town hall, where it provides the citizens and the burgesses the ability to come and ask questions and in my view it must be twofold. Both at deciding what is to be budgeted for stage, so the corporations can decide how they will expend the money because you are always going to have limited resources to give the citizens the ability and the opportunity to voice their concerns as to where money should be expended and then a decision will be taken. Then at the end of the process to come and be accountable to the citizens for how the money was spent.

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

I just want to make one final point on the consultation that Minister Young spoke about. Ladies and gentlemen really and truly the average Trinidadian does not feel empowered. So even though for example the EMA has a consultation on some quarry, the average person would say 'they know what they doing yes, we can't stop that or the boys involved in that and who are we'. People generally do not feel empowered and this Local Government Transformation process as I said earlier in my presentation is a mind game too. We want the community to start to feel empowered, start to feel that I could stop a project if it does not redound to the interest of my community and get that mindset in your mind. So that when we in act consultation with the community, get that you will be empowered by law that you could come now as a group or as a citizen group or a community and say 'we want A we do not want B' and feel empowered. This is now not only legislation it is not only restructuring, it is a psychological thing, for the first time one message I want to bring to these consultations, we are hoping that at the end of this transformation process communities for the first time could genuinely feel empowered and they are to some extent in charge of the destiny of their own community.

❖ **Royce Russell - Barataria (Male, Mixed, 60s)**

All protocols observed I have three (3) serious issues killing our community, choking our community. First is the bars, I can't get home at all Thursday, Friday, Saturday because of at least six (6) bars - double-parking on the street, I can't get home driving. We have about six (6) roadside mechanics in Barataria, vehicles parked on the both sides; on rocks and whatever. These are things for umpteen years and nobody is addressing it and it has reached a critical point where it is really killing our community the bars and the roadside mechanics. I don't want to be too negative because the Minister is here, community development yesterday we had a nice opening of our centre on the positive side.

The other issue is we have an industrial park in Barataria and I don't think that anybody had a plan about the extension of that industrial park. 3rd Avenue and 6th Avenue all they have is 20 feet trailer bringing down lines overhead, this is wrong. I mean they didn't plant for this thing to be growing so fast that we can't even use out street because the trailers take

over the whole of Barataria. The Minister of Works is here Mr Hinds I hope that this solution could help because from the highway they can open a road right there where the industrial parks are so that they do not have to come through Barataria, damage our road, damage the overhead lines. The more we report nobody pays any attention. So Mr Minister I am glad about this consultation and I hope this complaining will help with our bars in Barataria, our roadside mechanics and the 20-foot trailer passing day and night, people cannot sleep and noise and all these kinds of things, I hope it is addressed.

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

If I may, this brings home a very important point; the truth is that there are existing laws and existing statutes that govern what was brought forward there. With respect to bars, bars have to get licences so if residents have issues with that, they need to go forward and bring it home and it goes unto Minister Khan's last point which is about empowerment. It makes no sense and I throw this challenge out to all of you, it makes no sense sitting down in your home complaining, gathering as a group complaining and doing nothing about it. Write to the Ministry of Planning, write to the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation because we have on the books now existing laws that can be enforced. In fact recently just before getting involved in active politics I did take that on behalf of some residents and we challenged it and we used the Planning laws, we used the Municipal Corporation act because you are required to have approvals and we prevented people from incursion into various communities. So you need to get active, you need to do your part to ensure that the laws are enforced.

❖ **Jo – (Male, African, 60s)**

Good evening my name is Jo. First of all, I would like to say - thank you very much to this present administration for this initiative, I was very disappointed when it seemed that the previous administration had no interest in it and this administration is to be applauded. How I see this is an attempt to redistribute the democracy, what I hope for is that we are going to end up with great progress and economic dynamism that people are going to see the connection between democracy and economic progress. What I imagine is that San Juan will have better roads than elsewhere; that they will try to have better policing than elsewhere; that they will try to have better schools than elsewhere all under Local Government's ambit in some way; communities that are safer, better police, better plans and I will decide that I am going to leave Tacarigua and live in San Juan once more. This is what this process should be. I grew up here as a child I used to bathe in Sun Valley; I can't remember the name of the pool down by the Silver Bridge, we used to bathe just before there; we used to bathe in Concorde; we used to go to Maracas, La Cuevas, walk through the hills and I don't feel safe or have not felt safe to do that in many, many years, to camp at night especially with women folk and I would hope that one of the changes that local Government transformation could bring, is that I can do all of those things with my grandchildren. Camp out, picnic facilities, policed, there is a presence of the law so that I could have a real good time in Trinidad and Tobago like I used to have up until age 18.

I think also maybe it might be good if there could be a role for those who do not have any active affiliation with a political party to be elected representative. You know for whatever reason you are not active in any particular party but you would love to serve and I have seen that where I lived before outside of Trinidad and Tobago. I think that that would really energise a lot of people who do not really want to be labelled in a particular way.

Another thing I think we would love to see here is the ability to tell a parliamentarian or Councillor sorry we do not want you anymore and if 50 of us get signatures and we walk down to the town hall and we have a meeting and it is decided you gone. If you are going to do something really important that you call us all and we go and we ballot and depending on what it is that is what determines the outcome.

You know in China as well as in Trinidad and Tobago actually, Local Governments have more power than even to some degree our Central Government. There is a very low-level court in China that handles local capital matters; it is almost like an arbitration or mediation system. I believe that we have a lot of people who could deal with issues in their community with those kinds of powers and what I would expect - is rather than restricting the remit of Local Government the way that possibly we think of it and to really get people engaged and excited. We talk about education being responsible not for the school but for the curriculum for how the school is run; training - being responsible for we need more carpenters we need more plumbers; health care - we want a hospital right here, we will build our hospital, it is not as if we build the hospital and somebody that does not believe is accountable to us runs it, we build a hospital, we hire the people, we determine what the quality will be; housing – I know that my neighbour down the road really needs a house, why should that be decided by the HDC and why should a house cost half a million dollars and they can't afford it? We can do things in this community to make this possible and more doable. We do not like garages in our neighbourhood throwing oil in the drain, sending the same oil in the water that we have to drink in Caroni-Arena Dam and so on, so we have decided that these are the regulations for operations of garages and we will get a lot of our monies from fines apart from licenses, fees and permits. So for instance, when you go to use the bathroom in the Tunapuna market where I go to now, instead of paying a \$1.00 maybe the correct price is \$5.00 but hopefully it will be clean which is not the case at present.

I am very concerned all of these graduates we need them to regulate, inspect, supervise, assess, measure, we want lawyers, accountants; we want auditors to make sure that there is no corruption that is going on that is not being prosecuted or punished. We also want master electricians, master plumbers, master carpenters as part of the process. These people that I am speaking about, these roles or these responsibilities in my mind should be the responsibility of the Central Government to have these people as inspectors, enforcers, regulators. So the Central Government has a regulatory enforcement, inspection and oversight role. Thank you good night.

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

A lot of interesting ideas, a lot of it, we do not really need to comment on, they are well received. I just want to comment on one (1) point he made and which I believe in, if this thing rolls out properly and with time, there can be competitions among corporations to attract business and to attract residence. Like in the United States now, you would have the state of New Jersey having adds 'come and invest in new Jersey because the taxes are low, the community is lovely, our school system is good'. More autonomy for corporations, they can now operate I do not want to say mini-state but you know distinct areas to attract business, to attract the right type of community, to attract the right type of investment as they plan the future development of their corporations.

❖ **Yvonne George – Laventille/San Juan (Female, African, 50s)**

Good evening my problem is squatting. I am the owner of 4.6 acres and I am going through big trouble with human, they are threatening me for my own thing. I go to the police no problem, it comes like the land is their own, they tell me to go to the JP, the JP give me information. When I reach to the court with trespassers and the different things the JP give me, my lawyer told me you will not reach anywhere with that all you have to do is pay lawyers. I went to my representative; she informed me showed me that that is a big problem because squatting comes like a norm. I paid so much money for my land and within the time up to now I have not collected a rent and it have thirty (30) people renting on my land, no rent for my land I paid for. When now I reach to the lawyers who my MP informed me to go to, the lawyer told me I have to put out \$100,000 to certify that this land is mine and I have my deed, golden deed. My opinion is that squatting is a crime; you can get your death from people who come and squat on your land. A next problem I have, the Government which is you all said that we all have to pay the same property tax. I built a house, within my timing I did not finish to pay no property tax, but now that I have to pay the same property tax as you all said, what would it be because I don't know what to pay. My next big problem is that those people who are renting on my land they are going to pay property tax and they never paid me rent. I would like to know what should I do because I do not have \$100,000.00 and I am the owner of the land which I paid \$150,000.00 for. I would like to get some sort of help to own my land for my grandchildren.

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

I do not know why your lawyer would tell you the law is not going to help you. The only way you would get proper recourse is through the courts, quite frankly \$100,000.00 is absolutely ridiculous as a fee and I have no fear of saying that.

Yvonne George – Laventille/San Juan (Female, African, 50s)

Can I say something, please? Yes, when I went to the lawyer she said that that would be of no value because she said that even though she writes a letter.

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

The writing of the letter is not going to help you, you are going to have to have a court determine that the land is yours and you have to move quickly otherwise they can get something called adverse possession rights. So regardless of whether you have the legal ownership after sixteen (16) years they would have extinguished your rights. You need to file those claims in court but you also have available to you, you will see signs all over Trinidad ‘trespassers will be prosecuted in accordance with’. So I do not know if that is what the JP was telling you but you could bring your own private criminal, that is a criminal legislation and bring those claims against them. The truth is, it is a difficult position and the only way as the law currently is so that you will get recourse, is that you need a judge to make an order that those people vacate the land and the land is yours.

Yvonne George – Laventille/San Juan (Female, African, 50s)

I would also like to know if you are a landowner and you are renting somebody your property and they build a house on it, when you go to pay your land tax, would you have to pay that property that person property tax or do you pay for just your land tax alone?

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

We are in the process of looking at the Property Tax and the Land and Building Tax which was actually repealed by the Property Act in 2009. You keep talking about renting, you have people on your property renting, if you are the landlord and you are renting to them you should have an agreement preferably a written agreement and yes you would be as the owner you would be the person who is obligated to pay the land tax for the land, so you need to work that into your rent, persons renting would not be the ones to pay or obligated to pay the property tax.

❖ **Ian Riley – Laventille/San Juan (Male, African, 50s)**

Good afternoon I am an entrepreneur born in Barataria, National Award holder in Business. I have a question off of a question that was raised about Barataria Industrial Park for whom? We are talking about the community and we talking about community business and community opportunity and I am asking myself a question with the paradigm shift when this begins to happen I am asking Barataria Industrial Park for whom? The people of Barataria do not own the industrial park and when the money shifts and billions start to spend in Barataria, would the contractors registered, live, born, bred and grown in Barataria

get access to these contracts or is Massy Stores that is branching out in every community will be qualified to tender and to bid and the local contractor who is grown there is pushed out of his own community opportunity to make money rise and grow (crowd applauded). So I want legislation to be put in place for that, I want protection for that because I am born in Barataria and I do not have an industrial opportunity in Barataria. Am I going to be given privilege in this new legislation coming up? Thirty-five (35) years in business, I have priority to get one of the parks or is it going to be a company coming out of Arima, China, India that is going to now register in Barataria and bid on the contracts for \$150 million and the Barataria contractors pushed out? What are we doing about that? I would like that question to be answered.

The other thing is what are we doing about training the people who are taking over the Councillors? It is all well and good to have a Councillor with the power and authority close to and as powerful as a Minister but is he capable of driving that opportunity, to drive that change - are you putting training and opportunity for him to develop and grow to drive this forward successfully.

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

Let me just deal with the second question first. When you seek public office you seek it under the pretext that you are qualified to execute the job you are asking the people to vote you for. So while there is some component of training to people who hold public office, Minister or parliamentarians or councillors, you are not training them to do their job you know they assume that they are qualified to do the job that is why they offer themselves for office. But having said that it is for the burgesses now to determine. If the Local Government Reform takes place and it will take place so you need a new calibre of councillors because you will now have executive power. Now it is incumbent on the political party's process to choose the right Councillor or the right candidate for the election. So if party 'A' who so ever party he chooses somebody who the burgesses feel is not qualified to carry out the duty, on the face of it the burgesses will not vote for them. So it is not to say that anybody could go up for a Councillor it will mean now that if you have a new skill set that will demand to perform the role of a councillor it is incumbent on the political parties that are offering people to you to make the right selection.

Ian Riley – Laventille/San Juan (Male, African, 50s)

Well, that is one part of it but the administrative arm to drive the support to the Councillor is going to take a lot of dynamics and changes.

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

There will be training but you are giving the impression that you take in an entry level person and then it is the responsibility of the corporation to train them to do their job - that is not the case. You have to have some level of competencies to offer yourself to the

people for that job. More importantly, with regards your business component, I don't know if Minister Young would like to make a comment on that but I would just like to say you know there a limit to where we can carry this. I made the context about local contractors in the context of Regional Corporation but when you move out into the private sector it is fair game for everybody. Once you are a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago the constitution allows you equal rights under the law. I was just making a specific case in terms of more than often that petty contracts and small contracts within the ambit of the regional corporations but where you are carrying it now to the Barataria industrial park I think that that is going a little overboard because we are a small island.

Ian Riley – Laventille/San Juan (Male, African, 50s)

Well to take the country forward we have to go overboard in the state which it is at presently.

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

So what you are saying is that because you are from Barataria you should be given preference in a \$100 million dollar contract on an industrial estate?

Ian Riley – Laventille/San Juan (Male, African, 50s)

I just used that as an example and I am not talking about Barataria only, I am talking about constituencies throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There should be some measure of opportunity not protection for community-based business people or contractors to have the opportunity to grow from opportunity within their community. That is all I am saying. It is something that should be looked at carefully.

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

You are pushing against an open door on that one.

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

The truth is from a policy position - for example CEPEP and actually, as a Cabinet, we have given directives that it goes back to its roots. So CEPEP is supposed to be - you are not supposed to have contracts forever, it is an incubation period and we have directed that for the corporations and for the various constituencies the contractors should come from there as just one (1) example. When we talk about legislating to protect or to help local business and local contractors that legislation is for the contracts that would be awarded by the corporation. I do not think that you were suggesting that outside of that any construction going on for example in San Juan/Laventille Corporation had to be you could only get it if you are a contractor based there. But certainly one (1) way that we intend to deal with it

and to help persons from the respective communities, is when it is community programmes to be given out by the Corporations you look for persons in the communities. Have a registration process that at certain levels and you can do it, different tier contracts would be given to those from the community. I do not think you can see a contractor who has just started up gets the construction of the administrative complex for San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, but certainly the contracts and it happens now those contracts under a million dollars, \$500,000.00 and you go up with tiers. You can have a system that favours local content.

❖ **Floret De Leon Riley – La Canoa Road Santa Cruz (Female, East Indian, 50s)**

Firstly I want to say tonight is really bittersweet for me, I want to say congratulations to Minister Khan for really bringing this consultation but thirteen years (13) too late or I shouldn't say thirteen years (13) too late but thirteen years (13) later. 2003 June 3rd to be exact and Toney Roberts is here and he would remember that I submitted a report to this very Government on changing the way social services delivery is carried out in the communities, in the 591 communities in Trinidad and Tobago. All of the things that people mentioned here about looking at boundary lines, looking at competition, I even mentioned things like urban-rural partnership, transformation systems and I talked about profiling the communities to find out exactly what is required in the communities and looking at whether it is preventative, remedial, supportive whatever it is services. Minister Khan I am going to tell you, you are embarking on this transformation and it means that if we are going to transform it cannot be business as usual. There is no place for Ministries because the Ministry really exists to support the needs and the requirements of communities so it is the needs and the requirements of communities that determines the functions that are carried out in the Ministry and that is the only way that Ministries exists in the first place. I am glad that you mentioned about the THA because Mrs Claudia Groome-Duke couldn't get enough of my report and, in fact, we had several meetings after that and I am glad to hear that Tobago has taken some of what I had put forward. The whole question of paying for performance was raised in that report. The whole question of having competitions among the communities all 591 like I said. A lot of research was done and put into that report, maybe Toney would be able to say where the report is at this point but I am willing to share whatever I have of that report with you. It dealt with a lot of the legislation whatever have you.

Subsequent to that and there is a problem with us in Trinidad and Tobago, we go based on friendship and you know on a lot of paper if you have certification and so on. I agree with you, you must have a certain level of education. I returned to Trinidad and Tobago about three (3) years ago after teaching emerging technologies of the 22nd century in the United States and here it is my university is telling me I can't help you, you do not have a Ph.D. but come do a Ph.D. with us and then you can offer services here. Now prior to that, I was the change management consultant for the European Union funded project in twenty-four (24) countries within the Health Sector. I am glad Minister Deyalsingh is here, looking at health sector reform in these twenty-four (24) countries. I can tell you our attitudes here have to

change. The twenty-four (24) countries could not get enough of me, however, when we held a consultation here in Trinidad and Tobago only twelve (12) people turned up for the consultation and they begged for it. Some time afterwards they begged the leaders of the project to please have it back here again and it is only then when they recognised that we brought in people from the Southern Regional areas to come in that they decided to come. We got to change our thinking and that is a really hard thing to do, changing the thinking and changing the structure and when we can do that then we will start to talk business.

The Ministries, we cannot have all these Ministries, what you call them Regional Corporations, there are 591 communities figure out how we are going to and the report says it and how we are going to compete with the communities so that we will get that push for development faster and faster. I just want to make one more point, there is the last report that was done in 2012, Minister Dolly has that report and it talks about developing the district of St. Ann's East, Santa Cruz and La Canea, in particular, looking at creating a vibrant economy, education, everything is in there, it is a complete report and she has it.

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

What she has said makes sense, what I said in my presentation is that there are piles and piles of reports, we are going through all the reports, we are distilling it, we are still having these final rounds of consultation but all the institutional knowledge will be used in coming up with our proposal. I want to give you the assurance that the difference this time and from any other time is that now I think we have under our new leader, we have the political will to take the step and whether we get it 100% right the first time we are going to do it.

❖ **Harvey Borris, Former Councillor (Male African 50s)**

Let me start by saying, of course, I love my country. Mr Minister, sometimes a Government seek to *mamaguy* the population. In this case, I want to clearly state it is normally done a year or two years before the elections. In this case, I am clear that this Government aim to do the transformation of Local Government because it starts at the very beginning of the term. So I want to congratulate the Government and you, in particular, Minister because for sure the Government means to do this transformation. I am convinced of that. On that hand Minister, let me just say this, we need to look at Local Government...in keeping with what my colleague Ian said a while ago, where Local Government begins to really focus on the local entrepreneur, the local person who want to develop him or her, they want to create that development in their community and also their business skills as the case may be. There must be something put in place specifically where that is concerned where pilot projects are put in place to help businesses...just as the CEPEP as you said Minister, where in the community San Juan/Laventille is trying to ensure that I or this person who is a businessman, who is a contractor, to be able to grow to move from the \$50,000 contract to the \$1 million contract to the \$100 million contract...that is the growth and commitment that we must be committed to in our various communities. We need to understand that the

commitment must be there. In addition to that, I've heard where persons say that central Government must have certain authority over Local Government but that again is putting back Local Government in short pants. For local Government to understand that they are a big man or woman, which they ought to be because they are Local Government. When people elect you, they elect a representative, not a person under central Government but a representative of their local area; that is the local Government of the area. And as such we will have agencies in place but not necessarily controlled by central Government to control Local Government because you end up in the same situation. So I am suggesting that we put things in place to ensure that we do what we can do, in terms of elevating persons. I conclude by making this final point because this is an experience. When we were looking at removing properties or constructions within...that was on the road reserve, Mr Minister, we were only able to move the poor man who was on the road reserve. Up to this day those who on the road reserve who have the big lawyers and big money, up to this day we have not been able to touch one. One! But we were able to go and mash down and remove all the small persons who were on the road reserve because they had no fight back where we are concerned...you know, picking the low hanging fruit and this is where we must look for that level of equity in respect to when we move the law, we move against all, whether you're big or small, we move against all. Today I stand here representing...I am a Director of the San Juan Business Association and a director in charge of community and local Government and I am asking that we consider whatever we do, whatever we put in place, that we be fair across the board. We don't do like the last administration, when they offered car incentives for councillors to purchase vehicles and by the time councillors from our region, myself, in particular, went and make the arrangements to purchase vehicles, they removed the incentive whereby only their Councillors were able to use the benefit. These things are unfair and I want to really end by complimenting the Government because I think you're on the right track in this particular case. I want to give you my full support and I am hoping that when you finish the consultation we can see the true rollout of Local Government, similar to that of Tobago, where people, where Mr Chairman Mr Roberts or whoever is our new chairman, will have that authority to really make changes and transformation within San Juan/Laventille where they can request of Local Government tax incentive to put certain business in certain parts of Laventille to create growth, to create...and really looking at the economy and looking at tourism but looking at it as though this is your country to which you are in charge. I thank you.

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

Mr Boris, your comment is well received and I thank you for that sir.

❖ **Phil Clouden (Male African 60's)**

This is my first attendance at such a gathering and it's my pleasure to be here today. It's the first time that I have been exposed to any kind of political forum other than last September I voted for a winner. Now I hear that you guys are looking at revolutionising, reforming,

transforming Local Government from since 1962. And I think the whole idea of grass root involvement, community involvement, is the way to go. However, you got to execute all these brilliant ideas and plans, people are still complaining about issues that they have been frustrated with for years but this forum is particularly to make a change, transform and I am hoping that you employ all the resources whether it be expatriates, people that are sitting at home with a Masters but don't want to do a clerical job. And as I reflect upon Dr Rowley's reach out to the population for volunteerism and I look at your organisational chart for committees to drive the initiative so we can get the desired results, I stand here ready to volunteer. However, where do I go? Who do I see to get this vision of Dr Rowley about volunteering? Not that I need a paycheck but we need to make a change and if you guys are very serious about the idea of transforming, responsibility and management to the local level so that we can get quicker results. Bureaucracy will stifle us. So bringing it to the grass roots level is a brilliant idea, look towards volunteerism, look for community involvement but find a vehicle for us to go through. Thank you.

❖ **Jesse Daniel, President, Morvant Central Community Council (Male African 50s)**

I want to speak on two (2) brief issues. One has to do with the issue of the municipal police, that municipal police should be given broader responsibilities to build a better healthier relationship with communities. I am raising this in the context of...I am asking myself what is the social contract that exists between the police at present...now as I said I am from the Morvant area. Let me just say, for me Morvant Central, in particular, is a very homogenous community, where for example I am the third, my children are the fourth generation...For example, my MP for the community Mr Leons, I can say I know him, I know his parents. So I have a sense of who my community is. But what I have a concern with is...and I'll give you a little example. Recently I'm driving home in my car in my area. A policeman comes out with a big gun, 'Stop!' I'm like, now who the hell is this? I don't know him; he to me is a stranger in my community. In fact, I will go so far as to say he is an unwelcomed but necessary stranger in my country. Why I say unwelcome is because when you bring police into my community, I don't know who they are, they don't know who I am, there is no opportunity for us to have that social interaction where for example, a new inspector is brought into the Morvant district, the community can begin to know ok these are the officers and the officers can know certain representatives in the community so when we have problems we can come together to build the relationship. But when you bring people from Central, for example, or whatever area and you bring them into my area, I see him walking the streets I don't know him, he don't know me. He doesn't know the youths in my community. Then the question becomes what is his role? Who is he serving and who is he protecting? Because clearly when he comes and he stops me and he stops others in the community without knowing...I don't get the feeling he's there to protect me. I get the feeling that my community becomes under a bit of a siege. Because I know when these officers go in certain other communities and areas, they go to protect and serve. They don't go and lock down and start to just search and stop every vehicle, that doesn't happen in certain communities and I am saying that my community should be given the same respect. So I am hoping that with this new reform that we are talking about that the community will have an opportunity

to know who is being selected as officers to work in their community and even when new persons are being brought in that we have an opportunity to welcome these new officers into our community that they now feel welcome rather than being unwelcomed guests into my home.

That's one point. I just want to raise another point quickly. I have had the opportunity to see Local Government at work in certain other jurisdictions abroad. One of the things I would like to see added in this new reform is that when you have people moving from one district to another...I have been in areas where for example if someone has to move from Tunapuna to come and live in the Morvant area, there must be a registration process where they have to register with the local councillor or whoever in that area so that way we can monitor who is coming and going from our communities. For example, if person X wants to get a passport and he says I am living in such and such area, that person should be able to go to the council in that area and get a letter saying yes we are aware Mr So and so does live there and so forth. Before that person can be given any form of documentation saying that they are living there, the council should have some say that we can monitor who is coming and how do we protect our community. I am asking that some kind of addition to the reform be given to the community so we can know what is going on in our area.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young, Minister in the Ministry of Legal Affairs.**

You hit the nail on the head. The vision with the municipal police and being able to have a strength of a hundred is exactly what you have described and is going back to the days where everybody in the community knew the Sergeant at the police station, knew the Constable et cetera. That is the vision. The only difficulty I see with that from a roll out and a logistics point of view...and I face it when I am walking in my constituency in my community is that I often have those from the protective services tell me if I'm in an area...and I don't like using the term a 'hot-spot', when you're in that area they say they don't want the nefarious persons that they're in the army, the coast guard et cetera because they feel threatened. But that is not the role of the municipal police. What we are looking to do by building back up that strength is exactly what you have described; they become more oriented with the community. The training we envisage for them is a different type of training in addition to the normal police training so they can help from a social point of view as well, going back to how our Prime Minister said it was in his days. So again the recruitment process should be persons from the community from the corporation into the municipal corporation police.

❖ **Wilma Cowsen (Male African 60s)**

Good evening Ministers and burgesses. I stand here to address the question of the hundred municipal police. Reason: I was a police officer for thirty-five (35) years. I am now the manager of Wilma Council and Correction Service and I stand here ready to assist in the whole question of the reform with respect to the one hundred municipal police. I hope too, that there would be a component of serious community policing within that hundred municipal police. Reason because fifteen (15) of my thirty-five (35) years' service I spent as

a community police officer and it worked. I think this would have been better if the powers that be right now, in terms of the police service, looked at community policing more seriously and help develop it. Minister Hinds and Mr Roberts, they can attest to the type of community policing work I did with the police service. So I stand here ready to assist you. My number is 375-5980.

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

Thank you very much sir, for offering your services and it will be well received and we are committed to policing through the municipal police.

❖ **Wayne Robert, Santa Cruz (Male African 50's)**

The question of funding to Local Government and the taxation, I would like Mr Franklin Khan to just expound on that, the whole question of funding because I fear that when the taxes are taken up by the local Government...where these taxes go, up to Central Government and then redirected? So probably I can get a little clarification there and the next point is the whole question of...now we talking about Santa Cruz being a gateway to Maracas and my whole question and point is on the question of unemployment as you know Mr Young. I think you recognise me. The whole of St Ann's East there are a lot of opportunities for employment and the Government through local Government if they can facilitate some of the infrastructures where we have all this local tourism taking place and a lot of people still unemployed. Everybody looking toward the state but if the state can put the infrastructure in place I think we could go a long way. I have spoken to Mr Roberts...in San Buccoo, Upper Santa Cruz that area is bursting at the seam...there's that small bridge to come into the area there. I think something should be done in that area because it is a disaster waiting to happen there with the traffic and so on. On the Saddle Road, that project that was taking place there with the landslip, every time I pass on that road there I get goose bumps, I'm very scared and I think something should be done to remedy that situation. I endorse this reform 100%; I think it is forty (40) years too late but better late than never. So I fully support this here and I am hoping to see some meaningful changes. Thank you.

❖ **Mr Cupid (Male African 60's)**

Good evening again. I believe that the HDC may be at cross purposes with the delivery...not necessarily the delivery but the whole arrangement of allocating and building communities *vis à vis* the agriculture sector. They need to do something else in terms of moving communities; sometimes a whole community would move from one place like Upper Belmont Valley Road straight up to La Horquetta that kind of thing. And also, the matter of allocating each house an identity - each building. It will have an impact on the crime fighting effort.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young, Minister in the Ministry of Legal Affairs**

You will be glad to know we have looked at that and we are looking at that in terms of the National Security apparatus.

❖ **Councillor Delamo (Male Mixed 60's)**

I think this endeavour is a glorious opportunity for you to rationalise employment at Local Government level and placing people closer to their homes. I estimate that you would look at...have a 20% reduction of commuters on the road if people close to home. That would then impact on our gas subsidy because we would be using less gas but the social impact would be parents would be closer to their homes and the benefit to be derived from that is: being closer to home will also impact on their real wage because monies that had to be expounded towards transportation would now be there in the home. As it stands now, when I used to work I used to leave home dark and come home dark, you sleeping while you're having your dinner but it could now impact that the family could now have some time in the evening to really blend. I think towards the supplementing of the policing service but we seem to always forget that fire is also a part of security and I haven't heard anything about fire and I am concerned because my fire station at Morvant has one appliance part time. I don't think there is any at Santa Cruz and so on, so if we talking in terms of security, apart from the crime we must have that sort of security. The other problem...we speaking about squatting but as far as I am concerned, it is my biggest challenge – unplanned development. We have to really reach a point where we say enough is enough and then start doing the right thing from then. Good evening.

❖ **Vicky Acevero (Female African 50's)**

Good evening ministers. I have two (2) points to make. The first is about trash and garbage. I know that you said that Local Government has always been involved in the business of garbage collection. What I would like to suggest is that we strengthen the legislation for recycling; we really have a major problem with dealing with trash here. I have to go so far as to say the Beetham was burning but when it burns it also releases all those neurotoxins and those neurotoxins as we learned from Flint, Michigan really do have an impact on our young people and they cause developmental delays and there are many other nefarious effects of waste disposal and I think we could do a lot better. The other thing I would like to suggest is that when we think about quality of life index as we go forward in this consultation on transformation and maybe taking each one of the things that we've talked about and giving them a certain rating 1 to 10, we would be able to say Santa Cruz has got a 10 in terms of schooling, in terms of helping old people, in terms of road access and so on and maybe that would make it easier for the accountability to occur and for people to see the transparency, if we actually rated things that lead to a better quality of life for our communities. Thank you.

5.0 CLOSING

The proceedings of the Local Government Consultation at the San Juan North Secondary School in San Juan were concluded abruptly upon completion of the feedback session due to time constraints.



SAN JUAN CONSULTATION

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 150 participants in attendance. Participants were generally receptive to the presentations of the Ministers and they were very eager to give their input to local Government reform as was evident by the queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 120 (80%) male participants and 30 (20%) female participants. The majority (70%) of participants represented the age range 30 – 70 years. There was no representation of participants under the age of 30 and approximately 30% participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (90%) appeared to be middle-class income earners with a few from high-income and some low-income class. There was 80% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 20% being a majority of Indo-Trinidadian and some mixed-race participants.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 15 respondents from the plenary; 3 female and 12 male. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	12	40 – 70 (12)
Indian	1	40 – 70 (1)
Mixed	2	40 – 70 (2)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, parks, fire stations etc	4
Transportation	2
Squatting	3
Change management	2
Parking on roadways cause traffic	1

Crime	1
Opportunities for entrepreneurs, small business	2
Train Councillors to properly perform their duties	1
Implement past reports on reform	1
Public/private partnerships in reform process	1
Autonomy for Local Government	1
Community involvement to initiate change	2
Municipal policing	2
Taxation – who does it go to?	1
Unemployment	1
HDC and allocation	1
Recycling	1
Have a rating in terms of quality of life in each Corporation	1