

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

Chaguanas

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Chaguanas Borough Corporation Hall



Rapporteurs' Full Report

Submitted by
FKJackie Consultancy
Tel: 719-5094

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1.0 OPENING

Mayor Alderman Gopaul Boodhan welcomed the radio audience and the live audience to the Borough of Chaguanas. The National Anthem was played and a prayer was offered by Pastor Dave Alleyne to signal the start of the 6th consultation on Local Government Reform. Among the key personnel present at the consultation were the Honourable Minister Mr Franklin Khan, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis, Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development. Also in attendance, were Mayor Clyde Paul, Chairman Roberts, Chairman Terry Rondon and Deputy Mayor Debideen Manick. Mayor Boodhan delivered the welcome remarks.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis

2.0 MAYOR'S WELCOME REMARKS

Mayor of Chaguanas, His Worship Alderman Gopaul Boodhan



Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Good evening all; it is with sincere pleasure that I stand before you today to bring greetings and provide an official welcome to the Borough of Chaguanas. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Senator Avinash Singh, Senator Boodhoo, my colleague in Local

Government Mayor Clyde Paul, Chairman Roberts, Chairman Terry Rhondon, Deputy Mayor Manick, Councillor Heeran, Councillor Joe, Councillor Mohammed Mohit, Alderman Abeem Phillip, Councillor Hosein and the other councillors who is on their way here this evening. Staff, CO of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, my dear burgesses.

As Mayor of Chaguanas, it is a great honour to host here at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation this; the 6th consultation on Local Government Reform. Occasions such as these provide a forum for open discussion where ideas and views are shared which go a long way towards ensuring that plans are made for the development of Chaguanas and by extension, Trinidad and Tobago. The borough is the fastest growing developing town in Trinidad and Tobago with a population of just over 110,000 persons. The borough council consists of twelve (12) members; eight (8) councillors representing electoral districts as well as four (4) aldermen. Notwithstanding some of the challenges that we face, Chaguanas is undeniably one of the best places to live, to visit, to shop and to work.

Our team at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation are committed to continuing to work with all stakeholders, burgesses and members of the business community to further develop Chaguanas towards becoming the model city of Trinidad and Tobago through steadfast building on our four (4) pillars of development. Our pillars of development are Responsibility, Security and Education, Wealth and Economic Development, Beautification and the Environment and Technology. Over the past years, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation has embarked on various projects in relation to our four (4) pillars of development. Reform of the Local Government system is the pathway towards the fulfilment of the covenant between the Government and the people to mutually work towards the improvement of the quality of lives of all our citizens through the delivery of superior services and amenities as well as comparative with the local needs and expectations.

Essentially, Local Government is about empowering persons and communities to manage the affairs in accordance with the accepted demographic principles. Significantly some of the more focal areas of Local Government reform should include: structure of the Local Government, finance and taxes, human resource and productivity, the legislative reform, infrastructure,

service delivery, community involvement, citizens participation and also importantly, participation if women and youths, health and the environment, technology and communication. Just to touch on a few areas. **Productivity** – It is our hope that a reform of the structure of Local Government systems would provide a more efficient management of human resource and also create greater employment opportunities. Furthermore, the privatisation of certain sectors within the regional corporation should be looked into under the similar nature of how we have contracted garbage services so we could get a more efficient and productive operation. **Safety and Security** – Additional staff for our municipal policing and this would also help us in aiding with community policing and having greater input and in one particular area, with schools and young people. **Planning and Building** – A new face Town and Country Planning Department and right now in Chaguanas we have three (3) offices minister that are available to have a Town and Country Planning Department for the central region could be housed here and this concept will be able to create a faster turnover time in securing approvals for both residential and commercial, as well as to have the one-stop desk so that we could provide greater efficiency and increased quality of service. **New Legislation** – Legislation in some nature required to deal with petty legal issues through the establishment of a community court/municipal court and what is of importance to us in the Borough of Chaguanas most importantly, it is my wish, the council, the borough and the burgesses of Chaguanas, that Chaguanas move from Borough to City, becoming the third city in Trinidad in the shortest possible time.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, all, the soul of people's governance is Local Government. I sincerely thank you.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLYN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, addressed all present and welcomed them to Chaguanas for the 6th 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 Chaguanas 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 is 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 Chaguanas that is unique? Isn't there some place called Endeavour 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 to implement it in Local Government Reform.

We will have a rural policy to cover for areas. By and large and I 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 it's non-political. 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 7 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 limitations 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 Chaguanas will be the same powers that the chairman of Diego Martin 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 9 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 operationalised 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, as it will generate an immediate cash flow for the Corporations. Collect and retain, the word is not only collect so for example if the Chaguanas Borough Council Corporation was responsible for collecting land and building taxes in the Borough of Chaguanas they know who owns every building you know, the Ministry of Finance in Port of Spain does not know that and if they know and when they collect this tax they keep it and spend it within the Chaguanas Region wouldn't they go after it, would they send out their officers and say 'hey March reach you know your interest is starting to accrue, pay your tax'. So you will virtually get 100% compliance. One of the issues that the Minister of Finance faces as we speak is Tax Compliance, a lot of the shortage of revenue is because people do not comply and people do not pay their tax and who pay their taxes do not pay it on time. So if the tax collection system is decentralized to the regional corporation, obviously there would be better compliance, you will now have a greater need to comply. You will say I live in Chaguanas, I pay my taxes in Chaguanas, and my taxes will be used to better Chaguanas as a town. So that is the concept of generating your own revenue through regional 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 – The third area and this is the most...probably...apart from collection of taxes, executive authority, new responsibilities. I outlined the same schedule of responsibilities under the county council system. I outlined the same schedule of responsibilities under the municipal corporation. This reform exercise is going to give significantly more responsibilities in terms of your schedule of work and any other transformational process. First and foremost: **School Maintenance** – 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 and every September 3rd or September 4th, you know what the headline would read, ten schools ain't open and you looking to see how much ain't open. If the school maintenance program fell under the regional corporation where you know in your space called Chaguanas Borough you have five (5) secondary schools and say thirty (30) primary schools, isn't it a more focused attempt so that when you award a contract very likely to a person or to a company from Chaguanas to repair a primary school, it would be incumbent on you as a councillor to make sure that that school repair takes place in time for when school reopens? And it is a smaller cadre of work and it is in smaller batches that you will be implementing this program, so it has to be more efficient because you have buy in into it because the council that is supervising this work is a Chaguanas council. Very likely the contractor who is doing it is from Chaguanas and the environment; the people who will be benefiting from it is citizens of Chaguanas and the overall benefit will be to the children of Chaguanas. So what better way to do it? **Social Services delivery** – Secondly and probably the most important addition to the portfolio of Local Government is the delivery of social services. I want to specially welcome the Minister of Social Development and Family Services Ms Sherry Ann Chrichlow and she is gracing us with her presence and the Prime Minister has indicated on several occasions that if is one area that he wants to be devolved into the level of Local Government is Social Services. Ladies and gentlemen, let me just talk about Social Services. Check the budgeted allocation for social services over the last ten (10) years. Every year is a couple billion dollars. We have spent almost \$30 billion in the last ten (10) years to deliver social services to the underprivileged and those in need and it ain't help the poor people you know. There is still poverty in Trinidad that is not commensurate to the amount of money we spend on social services because everything is seeping through a crack and is seeping through inefficiencies and in some cases, corruption. The people that this money has been earmarked for are not receiving it. So an old lady wants to get her pension; she has no money in the bank, she has no income but she taking two (2) years running around from Port of Spain to Chaguanas to San Fernando for some officer to say yes you are entitled to a pension and they want to see your bank account and they want to know if you have family abroad and they want to know if they sending money for you and they want to know if the house on your name and if the house on your children name. Granted there has to be a screening exercise but it is so cumbersome and it is so unfriendly to the people who are wanting in need that it is not effective. You know more than anybody else who are the families at risk, where does intense poverty reside, which family is suspicious of child abuse or incest or crime. As it is said a society is judged on how it treats the vulnerable; vulnerability of children, of the aged and the families who are at risk. So there will be a total transformation in service delivery to be pioneered by this Local Government and Minister Chrichlow would now be a fundamental part of this reform process because the whole Ministry of Social Development will now have to be reengineered and there will be a handing over of some of the authority that they had to the Local Government. **Employment Exchange** – Another area...this means that the Local Government corporations 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, skill set 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. **Local Contractors** – I've said that all along during the consultation. Within reason we would want the contracts that are awarded by Local Government to reside within your community. Obviously if you have a community that does not have a qualified contractor you would have to go outside. When you have local contractors 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. **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 as to how we want to implement this program but we should be starting the recruiting exercise very shortly. There are some issues in terms of municipal policing but they could work hand in hand with national policing because it really makes sense for a corporation of a borough to have its own municipal police. As we speak they report to the CO; there is a thinking in the Ministry of National Security that it is a military and security function and somehow or the other they must have a line of authority that reaches the commissioner of police because the CO of Chaguanas can't discipline a superintendent. The disciplinary function has to come from the police service commission and by extension, the commissioner of police but that is legislative. Administratively, we will be proceeding shortly to recruit those hundred (100) police officers per corporation. **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. **Infrastructure works** – Again we want to put the municipal corporations in charge of infrastructure according to the Act. I quote the example of Sports Company and I would quote another example in terms of infrastructure. 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. **Disaster Management** – I want to congratulate the regional corporation, this is one aspect where first respondents is doing an excellent job. Finally, **Involvement of Civil Society** – Governance is about people. I am sorry Minister Young is not here today but he is

contemplating including in the legislation making it mandatory to consult on certain decisions. It is all well and good to have a vote every three (3) years and you have no say after that. We may even make it mandatory in the legislation that before certain things happen in your community, you have to consult. The state of Vermont, one of the most beautiful states in the United States does not have any fast food restaurants. Vermont has no McDonald's, no Home Depot because the people of Vermont have decided not to allow big corporations into their state so that small businesses can thrive. It is a revelation not to see the big M sign but that is their right. If Wal-Mart wants to go into a community to build a store, Wal-Mart could know Obama, he could know Hilary Clinton, 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. That is how American democracy works and that is the type of power we want to give to local communities.

So these are some things that we are contemplating; it is not easy to make legislation because when it becomes law, when you do not implement the law you break the law. The punishment in breaking the law is either a fine or jail and that is how the system operates. **Regional Development Planning** – Again some of the regional development planning will be delegated to the regional corporations.

Just two other points I would like to make: **Boundaries** - There are 14 regional corporations in Trinidad. Is that too many? Is it enough? If we have 14 empowered corporations, Trinidad and Tobago may be the most over-governed body in the world. However the floor is open on that, whether it should be consolidated in 12 or remains at 14. I just ask you the question; I would like to get your feedback. Finally, **Organization and Structure** - As we speak, 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, far less officers to serve the people. A lot of people, and I am saying this as the line minister, are drawing money under false pretence, protected to some extent by the councils themselves. That has to stop. That is why the technical committee of this transformation process headed by PS Bascombe 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 you feel sad that they cannot find meaningful employment. It deflates your ego. It deflates your sense of accomplishment. This is an area where we could be absorbing a large quantum of skill

sets and I want to make the bold statement that this will be largely staffed by young professionals. I say no more on that; I want to hear your response. 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 hopefully before a joint select committee and we will be contesting the election saying we have completed the reform agenda, this is the legislation in Parliament, go out, vote for your respective councillors and we would have the next two and a half years to roll out this program. I think we're on the right track; I feel proud to be leading this charge with the support of the Prime Minister in particular and the other members of the cabinet.

Mr Khan concluded his speech by inviting members of the audience to ask their questions and voice their concerns. He then showed a closing video.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Mr Seebaran – (Male, Indian 70s)

I represent concerned people born and bred in Chaguanas. The notion that reformed legislation can change Local Government is a dream because you have to accompany it with mechanisms to change the culture of elected officials. My first question what mechanisms do you plan to introduce to change the entrenched culture that makes elected officials distance themselves from the needs of the people and where decisions are made for example in this borough, a selected group of privileged people. You write each elected official a letter and they do not respond. New legislation cannot correct that.

My second point has to do with the police, you can add on 2,000 municipal police here and unless they are properly trained and they have the will to prosecute wrong doing nothing will change, like the neglect of the market. The market is a disaster area, everybody has extended their booths so you have to walk single file. If somebody loses a firecracker in there you will have people trampled to death.

Taxes - how can we be sure that the tax money will be spent to meet the genuine needs of the people and not spend on vanity projects like making Chaguanas a happy city?

Accountability – what can be done to make borough officials willing to level with the people? When my application for use of this auditorium for a public education purpose, I was turned down. I asked the secretariat for reasons why and she told me that the borough had no compulsion or obligation to provide me; a citizen, with any reason why.

Contracts – can we make contractors provide a warranty to remedy defects in their work for a period of time? (*crowd applauded*) I look at Beckles Street and other streets in Chaguanas, John Street took 6 years to rebuild and it is already filled with potholes.

➤ Moderator

We are trying to get some solutions and guidance, you have raised quite a number of points and I am sure the Ministers will address all of them. The very first point you made had to do with the fact that and it is a fact, legislation is not going to lead to behavioural change on its own. What would you do, if you were in charge what would you do about the culture of Local Government?

Mr Seebaran

Training, organisation development and when I say training I do not mean preaching, I mean engagement of people in learning tasks that are designed to change their attitude. I can speak about this because I am a graduate in education.

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

When the Reform exercise is completed we envisaged that the Councillor's job will be full-time we would have some executive authority a quantum of which is still debatable. What that will mean is that we will probably need a new breed of councillors but having said that let me just caution you, there can be no established criteria save and accept. You must be a

citizen of Trinidad in good standing and over the age of 18 to contest any public office in Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot say you must have a degree, we cannot say you must have 20 years' experience in a similar fashion. Anybody who is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago in good standing with the law and over the age of 18 can offer themselves for electoral office. Having said that, it is incumbent on the political parties to choose what it perceives to be the best candidate to offer the people. The candidate does not come there on their own, a candidate comes flying a symbol, except if you are an independent candidate but, by and large, there are very few independent candidates in Trinidad now. It is incumbent on the political parties that their screening exercise is such that they offer the people the right type of person who they feel can execute the job.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

I would like to refer to Mr Seebaran's question on changing legislation and I am sure you would recognise that the Municipal Corporation's Act is a piece of legislation that changed the entire Local Government system from what we knew with the County Councils to what we know now as the Municipal Corporations. So it is not an impossibility and really speaking with us coming to the various corporations and asking the people for their input, it is not just going to bring legislation to the parliament but the suggestions and inputs that you bring will form part of the new legislation that comes to the parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a blueprint that we have suggested but it is not that we are going to be forcing anything on anyone and that is why these consultations are so important.

With regard to the issue of accountability, no one can legislate integrity, integrity has to be part and parcel of the person who the political parties choose to come forward to form the Executive Councils that will make up the new Local Government system. Integrity cannot be legislated however we have indicated that we will ensure that there is a constant system of feedback. So whenever there are issues the legislation will include a system where the people of the Regional Corporations can give feedback, can participate and can hold the Executive Councils accountable for whatever decisions are taken. So those would be the new aspects of the new Local Government Reform.

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

On this issue of using auditoriums and using government facilities that are really designed for the people. You go to any community and they will tell you that the people in charge of the big community centre I cannot have access to it. And it is a fact. The government spends millions and millions of dollars in providing facilities for the use of the general public and it is your space. Somehow or the other some administration takes it over and hugs it for only a few (*crowd applauded*) and that has to stop (*crowd applauded and Minister Khan was very adamant*). This auditorium is a pristine facility and I can assure you that 90% of the time it is not used and it is empty (*crowd shared his sentiment*). There has to have a system that makes it more accessible to the community and stop this cornering thing for yourself and looking at empty chairs doing what. Do not be so discriminatory that this is

not entitled to it and that group is entitled; open it up for the people's benefit (*crowd applauded*).

❖ **Mr Abdul Alleem - Freeport – (Male Indian 60s)**

I would like to make a few comments on what the Minister said before I make my contribution. There is something in the Regional Health Authority Act that allows for consultation for the people but most people do not know about that and I do not know why it has never been in this Act. Every year before they implement they are supposed to have a meeting and I see it on the papers where they invite people to come and talk on their plans and so on, so this is something you can look at.

The second thing is that I am not sure that whether adopting the Tobago system; the Tobago House of Assembly Act what you said was that is successful because Local Government has evolved in Tobago and I am not sure that is the case. I think the real thing there is that they get the money; they get the money to do what they want to do and if they do not get the money, there is a mechanism in the Act where they could go to a tribunal and they could appeal to that tribunal and it happened in the past. So that is the key thing they have a lot more money, none of the corporations in Trinidad get that type of funding that they get.

In the case where you spoke about there should be consultation within the corporations of projects, it happens to a certain extent already. If you look at the EMA Act you will see there are companies when they have to do things – when they have to get a certificate and they must consult with the people and they must publish it in the papers. I cannot understand why it does not happen here because this is where you are saying democracy operates.

I want to say that what you said that giving increased responsibilities to these corporations will work because these corporations haven't demonstrated that they could take additional responsibilities. The responsibilities that they have now they do not implement it (*crowd applauded*). Now I will back up what I say take for example the potholes on the road like stupidity. There are people they call Road Officers and I do not know if they ever go and look at the roads. In the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation since about 10 years now they gave me a letter stating that they will do a culvert, that work will start on such and such date up till today that culvert is broken down the road floods every time. Right now if you go it is dry season it has water piled up there and that is Regional Corporation. They want to increase their responsibility and you want to give them that? I cannot understand why we must give them increased responsibility.

According to the Act, excess funds of the corporations and I do not know how many of them have and how much time they have excess funds but they can do certain things with these funds. For example, they can build an institution devoted to the care of infants and indigent persons and this is in Section 112 Subsection 2(a) of the Act. I want to know; if they ever build anything for infants? That is why we have street children all over the place, they have not reached to the state to look at these things yet much more to give them additional responsibilities.

Erection and maintenance of monuments and foundations this is also in the same section of the Act. I want to know when last they ever built anything like these. Section 125 1 states 'No person may break up or open the surface, pavement or soil of any street within a municipality'. If you go to the different corporation areas you will see people at will mashing up pavements, they put their fences almost on the pavement and nothing, and no enforcement and you want to give them more responsibilities (*crowd laughed*). They are not doing what you have in the Act. Section 131 1 & 2 gives the power to erect and maintain fountains and monuments, which corporation erect fountains and monuments in this country? Chaguanas A Park that is the only place probably.

Chaguanas Corporation is responsible for the Chaguanas market, today a lady came to me and she say you know when you go in the consultation tell them that the new market is leaking (*crowd applauded*) for a while now and they cannot fix the leak. You want to give them more responsibility?

We have a big problem in this country of blocking of drains Section 145 a & b of the Municipal Corporation Act gives the corporation the authority to Act on these things, no action, you go and report – nothing. So if you study the Act you would see that these are just a few that I pointed out and I am saying what is there in the act is not being implemented. Look at this thing with the community centres, I do not know of a Corporation that build a centre yet or if any help in the maintenance of a community centre.

My recommendation is that if we intend to fund the Corporations as they should we adopt the Tobago model or we scrap the Corporations, all the Regional Corporations and we implement a system like how we have CEPEP. You see CEPEP, CEPEP delivers contrary to what people say (*crowd applauded*). So what we should do is deliver the service through companies like CEPEP where you have local contractors doing the work that is Local Government as you say. Look at this seriously and all these people who sit here and sit in these Corporations and enjoy a big life cut it out (*crowd applauded resoundingly*) and if you want to know what to do with the workers in the Corporations I have all that too.

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

On the fundamental point because he thinks the Corporations are not doing what it has to do properly now, that should form the basis for giving them additional responsibilities. What we are putting in place is a governance structure, it is the implementers of that structure that is in question. If you check my point and I want to stick to that point, it is that this new system will largely be managed by young people, let us give the young people a chance to show us what they are worth in Trinidad and Tobago and to change this country around (*crowd applauded*).

❖ **Ramdeo Boondoo - (Male, Indian, 70s)**

I am the president of the Roots and Tubers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, president of the Edinburg Agri-business Association, I am also recognised as a contributor to the 50th

anniversary of the Borough of Chaguana. Unlike my previous colleague I have full confidence in this new venture (*crowd applauded*) and with our astute leadership I think we can reach there. A lot of people are afraid of getting into new things I am a senior citizen but I am not afraid of getting into new things. I am also a practising farmer, a researcher and plant breeder, I specialise in root crops in the country. My burning question here we want to become a citizen of dirty people? My problem here is the Corporations have failed in dealing with the garbage problems in the country and I live in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo area, I practice in the Chaguana area and we are having some serious, serious problems with the dumping of garbage. When I heard the Litter Wardens were sent home I was too happy for that. I was a former Trade Unionist and I do not like people to lose their jobs but these people were receiving monies under false pretence. You go to Pierre-Connector is garbage on the road, the Perseverance Road – garbage, just south of the Caparo River – garbage, Chandernagore area – garbage. Hear the kind of experience I have, in one of the areas I called the praedial larceny to deal with some dumping where we actually caught people - that is not their job; talk to the Borough Corporation - they told me the boundary is north of the Caparo River and the Hondo River so it falls outside; I called the Health department in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation they keep dancing me; somebody tell me to call the EMA, I call the EMA it is not their problem; I got back to the chairman of the Regional Corporation he told me to send him a text. This is the kinds of things. I have gotten so fed-up of this situation, I called the CEO's office, the secretary asked me my name and the reason for me wanting to speak to the CEO, I told her I have been trying to get this problem solved all the time to no avail and I am supposed to speak to the CEO. The CEO cannot see you but I said that I am a citizen of this country, I am a resident in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation and I need to speak to somebody to get this situation addressed, you know she hung up the phone on me. So I want to know who she is working for; you understand.

➤ **Moderator**

Mr Boondoo some solutions on how would you address some of these things structurally, forget about the individuals involved.

Ramdeo Boondoo

You will have to reinstate the Litter Wardens but under the condition that if you find rubbish anywhere they do not get paid (*crowd laughed*).

The other thing about the secondary roads I am so fortunate that I live in the Palmiste Longdenville area, there is a road they call the Bartlett Road. The first quarter mile of that road, this week CEPEP come and clean it, 2 weeks after URP come and clean the first quarter mile, the next 2 weeks the Regional Corporation gang come. You know what happen with the rest of the road? It is abandoned. So we need accountability we need people to do their job, that is the most important thing.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Mr Boondoo you raised a very fundamental point, the point of monitoring. I think what we have been failing very miserably at for years is giving people tasks and not having it monitored and making sure at the end of the task that they have in fact done what they are being paid for. Too often we have people who are assigned a job, they do the job in a half-hearted way but they get the full pay and with the kinds of changes we want to implement that will come to an end. It is important for us to ensure that once a job is given or a task is given it is monitored and at the end of the day, once you do it effectively, properly then you are paid for what you have done (crowd applauded).

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

Just to close off on that, ladies and gentlemen we cannot build a society on unproductivity and laziness. We are all citizens of this country and everybody has a responsibility to be productive and to have a fair day's work for a fair days pay. Who will guard the guards? If the worker is not doing his job, the supervisor is doing his job, the manager who is managing the supervisor is not doing his job the society will collapse. So let us take it on as while Mrs Robinson –Regis has given the management structure, there is also the individual responsibility for people to perform.

➤ **Moderator**

Minister, Mr Boondoo also raised the issue of overlapping responsibility, he spoke about CEPEP and URP how will the new system address that issue?

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

That is a valid point we know it exists but what has happened over the years, is that when the core function is not performing we put a parallel system to start to perform and the when that stops performing you put another parallel system to perform. So take maintenance of the verges of roads, highways and main roads fall under Works and minor roads fall under Regional Corporations. For years the highways were good and the Regional Corporations used to cut the traces you know but something went wrong and when you see none of them was working some other alternative system had to be put in place, so that is how CEPEP was born and I know when CEPEP was born the Regional Corporations laughed because all their workers now have nothing to do. By the same token, the Ministry of Works is the same thing so now CEPEP has become the official road cleaning and road maintenance organisation in the country. CEPEP was supposed to be a transient institution. So at the end of the day so this Local Government Reform process, if it functions as the way it is supposed to function, things will happen properly. You cannot have a maintenance system in the country that is so 'ad-hocly' managed.

❖ **Gysha Taitt - (Female, African, 60s)**

I am coming from La Paille Gardens Caroni I agree with Minister Franklin Khan when you spoke about the school, they are taking so long to open the schools after recreation time that is one thing I agree with. The second part that I have come to talk about is about the elderly. The elderly are suffering too much. When they get their pension to go in a bank and stand up, 10 miles to reach to the counter to get the little money they are getting. I find that that has to be fixed because when you come to age and you stand up there, how long can you stand up, how long can you stand up and wait. I am standing up here for so long the amount of things I had to say I kind of forget part of it. (*crowd laughed*)

➤ **Moderator**

Madam is raising some important points and I am glad that that the Minister of Social Development is here and she is taking notes.

❖ **Bernard Bailey - (Male, African, 40s)**

Before I make my substantive contribution I would just like to endorse what previous speakers have said about the magnificence of this building. It is indeed a magnificent building and it all came about due to the impartiality and equity of a former Local Government Minister Mr Rennie Dumas. He was enthused to do this building with much encouragement from the former Mayor Surujrattan Rambachan. When one compares this facility to the one across the road where staff and council operated in very cramped conditions, it is indeed a transformation. So Mr Minister the PNM has set the wheel in motion a long time ago for this reformation in Local Government. So we went to recognise Mr Rennie Dumas and Mr Surujrattan Rambachan in the reality of this building.

Finances have always been a perennial problem in Local Government, lack of resources to carry out responsibilities and one fine example is the addition of new housing developments within local bodies. The limited resources they have to deal with, for example, sanitation, they have to stretch it to further accommodate new residents and so on. They deserve it they are people many of them vote in their new areas. So what I am saying with this Mr Chairman we could accomplish 2 things, we could kill 2 birds with 1 stone. We can accomplish the diversification with CEPEP by allowing CEPEP contractors to carry out these functions like road restoration and road building in the small areas. I am saying if CEPEP develops the competencies and the skills to pave roads and restore roads in small areas, they could use that same principle and graduate to bigger areas. The drainage, the garbage collection that is one of the biggest bills in Local Government, we are saying we will be able to break that monopoly and lead to a more equitable distribution of the economic resources, by allowing other people to participate in this, local people doing work in local areas.

One other issue I would like to touch on I have no questions per say but some issues I would like to throw out. In terms of reforming Local Government, one must go into the culture of Local Government and you touched on it, Mr Chairman. Let us take for example a daily paid

in the corporation and those who are monthly paid, I have seen in one of my previous interregnum in this corporation, I have noticed where a daily paid checker literally ran, managed effectively the accounts department but he ended up in a cubby hole, no room for development, no room for promotion, he was trapped at daily paid. We are saying if local authorities have more autonomy to hire all staff and to promote them accordingly to merit etc. Mr Chairman, it would lend to a better and smoother run organisation.

❖ **Lennox Sirjuesingh - Retired School Principal & President of the Trinidad and Tobago Local Content Chamber - (Male, Indian, 60s)**

I want to begin speaking about my chamber whose motto is about building capacity and sustainability and when I say legislation being proposed for a measure of local content within the Corporations, I am very happy because it ties in well with question of the naming of your Ministry Minister, which puts Rural Development first and Local Government after because they go hand in hand. Most importantly is that such a Ministry will be seeing about developing people, not merely providing services but developing them economically and otherwise.

In the interest of time and the battery of speakers behind, I just want to say that the question of planning is vital. I will give you 2 examples one an example of how not to plan. We waited until about 30 years in this community for a library, when we got it or when we thought we got it, we heard that the Magistrate's Court next door is too hot and suddenly the library should move away and we should put criminals to trial there. Even more surprisingly some of our residents have started to say how busy that place is the children will get knocked down. Let me tell you something, there is no busier corner in the world than San Fernando library corner, 5 roads merge there and I do not think that anybody has been knocked down going to the library.

The other thing the Minister mentioned is about residential areas and business. I was invited by eTeck about a year ago, they invited me to speak about local content in their industrial parks and I was shocked to hear that their plan included a 90-acre industrial estate on Factory Road which will be in the city centre should Chaguanas become a city. When I questioned why talking about the traffic jam, pollution etc. I was told we will build an interchange. So I am saying planning must take into consideration not the here and now but the long term and I will hate to see my borough turn to a city and then all of us have to run away and live far away from the centre city as has happened in so many places.

❖ **Gary Taguely – Resident of the Borough of Chaguanas - (Male, Indian, 50s)**

I want to thank Mr Sirjuesingh for raising the issue of the library. I was leading the group of young people in 1984 to start the first Chaguanas Community Library, voluntary service when the state had abandoned the mobile that used to come and visit us here to provide library services. So I want to make a plug and Mrs Regis would remember that she came to open the relocated library in Centre Point Mall in the early 90s. So I want to make a plug for the completion of that library service in Chaguanas, it is well needed.

The second point I want to raise is the issue of boundaries, when we moved from County to Regional Corporations from 8 Counties it was, to 14 Regional Corporations in Trinidad, the issue was we moved from a very scientific way of dividing the country to natural geographic boundaries to manmade boundaries of roads. So what you had happening was that on one side of the road you are in Chaguanas and on the other side of the road you are in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo and something is wrong with that, for all kinds of reasons in terms of services, how services are delivered, your neighbour across the road is being serviced by a different Corporation. So we have to rethink that and see whether it is not so much how many but the quality of the division. To get to Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo administrative boundary from Tabaquite you have to come to Chaguanas, generally, in the flow of traffic you can come through Gran Couva but if you are taking a taxi you can come through Chaguanas and then go to Gran Couva. Something has to be wrong with that kind of arrangement.

The other issue of boundaries is the issue of data collection. We still have a lot of ministries that are divided and by legislation according to the old county system. So they deliver services by the County system and you have the Regional Corporation also delivering services and therefore you cannot make a connection between what Health is delivering, what the Corporation is delivering, what Education is delivering. We are in a mess and so we cannot make good decisions and policies because the data is so dispersed and divided and not forming to a particular set of boundaries. So we have to look at that.

The last point I want to make is if you are talking about 100 police officers for each Corporation we need to take on board that Pt. Fortin has 18,000 people, Arima has 24,000 persons and Chaguanas has 89-90,000 persons. What is the rationale for 100 for 90,000 and 100 for 20,000 persons? Again you also have to look at the geographical spread, the kind of area that they would have to cover.

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

With the municipalities it is just a general principle for 100 per Corporation, we did not want to go into the nitty gritty of what matrix you would have to use to determine what you would actually need because then you would speak about geographic space, then you would want to talk about population density but in general, that is the plan.

I wanted to comment on the County Council and the Regional Corporation and that point is so valid and I have been saying it in other consultations, I did not mention it here. When the County Council system was abandoned a lot of arms of government still maintained it. The Education, for example, you still have Victoria Education district. Ministry of Works, in particular, you still have St. George East, St. George West, St. Andrew, St. Patrick and what have you. As a matter of fact I even asked the Chief Parliamentary Council does the County still exist in law because my interpretation of the law, I am no lawyer, is that the Municipal Corporation Act replaced that in law, so that there is nothing that exists legally in Trinidad called County Council, County Victoria or County Caroni. The other arms of Central Government now have to retool its distribution, administrative structure to suit that. A comment on what you were saying on how the County's boundaries were established. Remember the Counties were established by I think Governor Woodford in 1830 something.

Trinidad is a different place now to then, so there needed to be some realignment of boundaries in particular based on settlement patterns. So in other words you could not take back the whole of County St. Patrick for example and say that I did not realise that Penal/Debe is a growth pole and there is something happening in Penal/Debe that qualified it to be a region onto itself as distinct from the rest of St. Patrick. So the society evolve and policies evolve with time.

❖ **Kenneth Sukha – (Male, Indian, 60s)**

I have read the white paper and I have over 100 and something questions, I know I cannot, so I will only deal with 3. First is boundaries and everything that I have heard tonight here appears to miss the point. The boundaries in the Municipal Corporations are arbitrary without proper consultation. There was a committee from cabinet headed by Nicholas Simonette an expert on Local Government who examined that with a team of experienced public servants and they wrote a report on that and no government since then has had the political will to read that report and implement it. I suggest that the people who are dealing with Local Government Reform read that report. Even before that, the Town and Country Planning in the 1960s made certain changes to those boundaries that would have served us well. So please look at that.

The second point I would like to make is on Property Tax. Under 2 governments ago cabinet appointed an Interministerial committee based on Local Government Consultation, where the only criticism of Property Tax, in fact, there was none, the only request on Property Tax was by the Regional Authority to get the right to collect the Property Tax that the Board of Inland Revenue was collecting. That committee strongly recommended to cabinet that that should be done and listed all the reasons why it should be done. The then cabinet appointed Trevor Hamilton and Associates as was mentioned in your report but no mention is made that they also drafted the necessary legislation to put that into effect, which was handed to the then Prime Minister in December 2007 but by some mysterious means in 2009 the Property Tax Act did just the opposite and it took away the Property Tax powers of the Cities and Boroughs and gave it to Central Government. Now we are hearing this government saying that they are going to use the old rate. They cannot use the old rates under the new Act because it is a totally different tax base and totally different dates of evaluation but there is nothing that is put out in the public domain as to how they are going to do it. We talk about a Revenue Authority to collect taxes that is nonsense. Our authority here in Trinidad if you look at the Water and Sewerage Authority are the most useless organisations we have who are the most influenced by corrupt politicians. The Public Service an independent Public Service is the place for it. Unfortunately successive governments have destroyed the independence of the Public Service by removing contract workers from under the jurisdiction of the PSC.

My final point on Tobago, the speaker who brought it up was correct but what he failed to mention is that the reason in Tobago why they can achieve that is because they get a percentage of general revenue by far higher than their percentage of the population. Obviously, if you bring that in Trinidad the authorities in Trinidad would have to get a substantively lower percentage.

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

The issue of allocations that is having the attention of the committee because in this Local Government Reform exercise we have to find a transparent and equitable basis for resource allocation. If we empower the Corporations the extent to which they are empowered obviously one size does not fit all but we have to find a very scientific way as to how we make these allocations and it may not be entirely up to the discretion of a Minister of a Cabinet, there may be some legislative aspects of it. That is why we are having this consultation to have your views.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

In addition to that, the Property Tax or any other Taxes collected within the Corporation will go to the Corporation and not be sent to the consolidated fund as happens now. So the Corporations will be empowered to collect and keep the Taxes and then what will happen is more of a topping up to meet the amount that is needed by the Corporation to effect its work.

❖ **Catherine Joefield – Former Alderman Local Government– (Female, African, 40s)**

I did not serve under this Corporation. Minister firstly let me correct you in one thing I heard you call former Ministers' names who had contributed significantly to the Local Government forum. This is my 3rd Local Government forum since inception and I will like to tell you, I want to personally congratulate you because I have been in other past line Ministers sat in consultations and when there were people come up to the microphone and had different point of views he used to walk out of the meeting. So I must congratulate you for sitting there and listening to the plight of the people. (*crowd applauded*)

Secondly, Minister I heard you spoke about empowering the council. When you empower the council which is putting the whole Local Government Authority to the council on a whole, what then is the role of the CEO? The CEO who represents your Ministry although you said that there will be no Local Government but what becomes of the role of the CEO? What becomes of the role of the Heads, the branch of the Local Government from the CEO and her officers as specified in the ACT? What becomes of that role?

You spoke about the employment exchange; you also stated that in every corporation there is supposed to be 'database' of employment, a database of people who are unemployed. Mr Minister I am living under this Corporation and it is over 24 years I sign a book here under Chaguanas Borough Corporation that employment book and I could tell you I have seen other people come, other people go and ask them how they got employment their names were never in the book. I am stating here as a burgess, there are people who are paying \$5,000, \$10,000 to get a work under this Corporation and it has been happening for years. I am glad that you are going to put the authority into the council hand and not into the administration hand.

With respect to the delivery of goods and services, under this Corporation Mayor, Council, everybody should go (*crowd applauded*). The delivery of goods and services is 0%, even a simple box drain they cannot finish, a simple pavement. Right now they are putting a pavement in front of a school that never flood. I live in Edinburgh 500, that area is highly dengue-prone go to the Regional Health Authority they will tell you that. We ask for box drain, we write for box drain over 15 years we cannot get a box drain. That development there is mostly HDC what we have there is the reverse, half of you know the inverse that they use to separate your boundary, no box drain. When the rain falls hour house, under your house is flooded. No cleaning I have to come and beg the Mayor, I almost cursed him to get a gang to come and clean the area. Why is that supposed to be?

With respect to CEPEP, if we do not have CEPEP in your community 6 o'clock on a morning to wake you up we have no work, the only people working is CEPEP. Imagine CEPEP have to clean highway. Minister have your relevant PS do an audit, you see Chaguanas Borough Corporation, take it from me, take it from Ms Joefield; audit Chaguanas Borough Corporation.

With respect to the efficiency of the service, we have problems with the government relevant agency we have WASA. WASA will come in your community and dig up the road and leave the road just like that. What is the role of the council? To get that road fixed back. You have building codes being violated left right and centre, when you come and you make complaints in this Corporation, you have people who in charge telling you they do not want to rock the boat. Why? Because they are buddy-buddy violators. Likewise the businessman, there is a business man sitting here right now, I am speaking my mind, sitting down here right now violating out ACT, you are not supposed to extend your business on the pavement. When I am walking down and other little children are walking down you have to be ducking under his business, his business extended since Christmas, his wife was singing on the street. Extending the business violating the ACT why are these things being allowed to take place. The council here is weak, from top to bottom needs to go. (*crowd applauded*)

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

Let me just make one small comment on that. The propensity for Trinidadians to break the law has reached to an intolerable level right now as we speak and you see that point the lady made a while ago I have seen it. There is a tendency now for people to put their parlour front on the pavement so when you are standing up at the counter you are standing up on the pavement, you are not coming onto a property. I came from Munroe Road and I am coming from Port of Spain and I take Munroe Road Toruba and I came down throw Charlieville and that is almost ubiquitous in Charlieville. Everybody there has their shop in front of the pavement obviously that is against the regulations but nobody is tackling it. It is not only happening in Chaguanas it has reached a ridiculous level in Chaguanas and somewhere along the line, we have to bite the bullet. The same thing is happening with squatters in Trinidad I mean all these lawlessness and the lack of respect for law and order is starting to permeate this society. We really have to start to take stock, I am glad the

woman brought it up, we may not solve it tomorrow or next year but it is something that we have to solve ultimately as a country.

❖ **Errol Rampaul – Civil Engineer (Male, Indian, 50s)**

I am so happy to hear the last point that was made because that happens to be my first point. I have been involved in the development of codes and standards for the last 20 years. I am originally from deep South, I live in Central, I work in the North. I am appalled at how our country is developing, I am grieved on a daily basis and I see our country turning into a ghetto, one big ghetto. What do I mean by that? Exactly Minister what you just said. Everyone thinks they can put their boundary, they can put their parlour and they can put their house on the road. I grew up in an area in the deep South where the right of way was 75 feet, in other words nearly 40 feet on either side of the centre line of the road, this is not a main road. We had a guy 20 years ago, I happened to be working at Local Government put his boundary 4 feet off the paved surface with barbed wire and Local Government did not do anything, Town and Country did nothing. We wrote, we spoke and we complained, at that time the Chairman had said he did not know who did it, he very well knew. The point I am trying to make is that the system is broken something has to change. Today 22 years later the same thing is going on, I am talking about my parent's home, next door a guy has come build up land and he has put a building on the road, where the fence is supposed to be he has put a building on the fence. We wrote, we jumped through all the hoops, they told us we have to get a side mark, I did all of that, everything we could. Town and Country and Local Government has done absolutely nothing to this day, exactly 1 year later the guy is now renting the space for commercial use.

Moderator

But by what way of Local Government Reform would you recommend would be the way to go to address a problem like that?

Errol Rampaul

I live in a residential area, a gentleman who is a contractor comes and puts up a building next to me there is a 40-foot clear span downstairs, and he is operating a fabrication shop. Again I wrote to the CEO had several discussions, 9 months later they send you to the Building Inspector, the Building Inspector sends you to the CEO and again that same CEO this happens to be in Couva, the secretary will not make an appointment for you to see the CEO. She is swamped I have been hearing that for 9 months, something is wrong. It grieves me even where I live now to see people building tall buildings 10 feet from the road and I am sure the CEOs and the Technical Officers and the Building Inspectors are passing there every day. Nothing is being done.

Solution – I want to suggest that there be a bipartisan approach to this. We need a Standing Committee and I am glad we have both Ministries here. Right now I understand the new Act that is going to guide the operations of the Town and Country Planning Division gives a level of responsibility and building codes and so on to the Ministry of Planning. I am suggesting we need to set up a Task Force, Standing Committee so it can transcend to

whichever political party, this has nothing to do with politics, this has to do with a broken system. Whoever happens to be in power will inherit the problem. So it is better we have both sides agree, have a Standing Committee and work consistently to solve this problem. It grieves me that no one is concerned enough to do something about it and those in authority, can tell you what will not work but I have not heard a single answer as to what can work. I am willing to be part of that committee, I am giving that commitment today, my work has been in that area and there are many other people like myself that can add value. So that is on a personal level.

On the organisational side, I want to say that the issue of building codes in this country, people think that there is a building code, there is no national building code in this country, do not let anyone deceive you. It does not exist. What happens is a national building code will tell engineers how to design a building, we actually use the American, the British, Canadian and so on. I happen to belong to an agency which is intent on giving this country a national building code but we have not been able to convince the very Ministries who have that responsibility to say yes. The last regime tried something, tried to put something in place, put an appointed cabinet committee and the person who they appointed as the Chair is not a professional, not qualified, has no business being a Chair and mash up the whole thing and I want to say, Mr Minister, we need to try again. Hand in hand with that we have a document called Design and Construction Small Buildings since 2006 that was issued, from that time we have been pressing the doorbell at the Ministry of Local Government up to now that has not been adopted. I cannot understand when you have other agencies, private citizens willing to provide solutions and add value to take our country forward, why our regulators so reticent, reluctant, unwilling to address the mandate that belongs to them. Now I belong to the Public Service and I understand your cup is always overflowing so I understand that what I am suggesting is we set up committees and it cannot be voluntary work only, get some of the retirees the experienced people out, pay some people full time, but we have to do something to save our country going down the tubes.

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

The building code is something that we are considering as we speak through the Ministry of Planning what we have to be careful is that it is not set so high that the ordinary person cannot build a house. So within the confines of seismicity and other structural issues, one will evolve very shortly.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Can I also indicate with regard to enforcement we have gotten a number of people to work more assiduously on enforcement issues so that you will see more people coming out and more enforcement matters going to the courts of Trinidad and Tobago?

➤ **Moderator**

Will there be a role for Local Government authorities in the enforcement?

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Yes because a lot of them see instances of first indications that there is a problem, come from the Regional Corporations then to Town and Country Planning.

❖ **Mr Mohammed – Munroe Road Cunupia (Male, Indian, 60s)**

My take is an entirely different one, I came here with a proposal because I heard that this seminar is based on Rural Development and there is a proposal for my territory there for many years on the drawing board and absolutely nothing has been done. In the vicinity of the Munroe Road area we have 3 playgrounds, sporting facilities, we have lands almost 20 acres that are available. There is a drawing in that entire area, 10,000 people, we do not have 1 Health Centre, we do not even have a Police Post, no Community Centre. We have 2 they call them pavilions but we have 2 sheds, no water, no lights and no facilities. As a matter of fact, we had some bad experiences it is a sad one, I would like to share it with the public. Up to Saturday, we had 2 large A class cricket matches going on there and 1 player wanted to do his number 1, poor fella, he had to ask the umpire hold up for a while, run to the bushes to the back and run back on the field. A sad state and you have 200 people looking at matches and this is what we have? So it is poor arrangement; as far as the Corporation is concerned.

But we have here a proposal that has been on the drawing board that is approved by 2 Commissioners of State Lands that passed us already. I want to leave this for the Ministers tonight. Our proposal says that we need these facilities, we have the land, the land is available, 20 acres of land. We also have a proposal that if you do not have funds we can fund it, the business community is ready to put the funds out to build that infrastructure and you in turn if it is 10 or 15 years from now you repay them. So we ask you to give it serious consideration, we would be happy to discuss it further and almost 10,000 persons will be benefiting from this.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Well it is along the line of Public/Private sector partnership and so it is well received and we will look at it.

❖ **Sheldon Joseph (Male, African, 40s)**

I have a concern; I am from 175 Peters Field Main Road Chaguanas. I am in a situation right now where I have a neighbour with hog filth coming down into a drain that is not even cast, 6-month-year-old baby inhaling this thing along with 5 other children living in that vicinity there. Apparently what is existing; everybody seems to be afraid the existing persons that are doing these kinds of things. Mr Minister, I come before your presence because if no one else besides you, it has to be God. But if God put you into a privileged to look after the people, I think if you dwell upon God he is going to help you along the way. I am not seeing

you as a one man army because uneasy lies the head that wears the crown but I am asking your assistance, please. I am also in an area where bushes are being caught on fire and no one seems to care and when you speak about it one is rushing you with a cutlass, telling you 'I do not business about you go to the relevant authorities'. What is happening? The reason why I came, I came on a note because I am not fearful but I know personally that I am being threatened with my life, my children are being threatened with their life because of the pollution that is existing and you only after God I believe could assist and I beg of your assistance.

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

Is it a farm or is it an individual mining these pigs?

Sheldon Joseph

It is a neighbour that has a certain amount of animals and he has no control even calming the scent and when you talk to him he is aggressive. I do not need to get into any aggression. Mr Minister, I have 6 children to deal with and the reason why I came here is because I believe that God will manifest something with that privilege that you have and I ask of you to establish it among the people that are existing and requesting your assistance.

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

Do you know who your Councillor is?

➤ **Moderator**

Who have you turned to so far to address the problem?

Sheldon Joseph

The only place as to whom I know of is the Borough which I believe has a name and I am asking God to develop the strength to pursue that which they are saying that they would do.

➤ **Moderator**

So you are saying that you have made representation to the Borough.

Sheldon Joseph

Yes sir, I have made representation, I have made a report and now I am just asking, please I am begging because my life is being threatened because of the condition. I stand on behalf of a whole village which is fearful to come forward because their lives are being threatened. When your life is being threatened anything can happen and you have nothing to say but if

it takes my life I stand before the Minister and I am asking for his assistance. Please visit, do something, help, I ask.

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

Is the CEO of Chaguanas here? This is a directive - will the Corporation send a Public Health Inspector to that gentleman's plight, let somebody from the Corporation take his name and address and in the shortest possible time either tomorrow or Friday make a visit to see the validity of his complaint and if the Public Health Inspector so adjudicates take the appropriate action. That is an instruction. *(crowd applauded)*

Sheldon Joseph

May I say one thing Mr Minister before I leave to you 'uneasy lies the head that wears the crown' and I hope that the seat that you are sitting on, I know that it is hot but with God all things are possible. *(crowd applauded)*

❖ **Myrtle Richards - Chickland– (Female, African, 50s)**

At Chickland we had a pavilion which was broken down about 3 years ago, we thought it was to be built back and it was just broken down and left just as that. So we are in dire need of a pavilion at the Chickland grounds.

Secondly, we have a Community Centre which was built in the 1970s which are in a very dilapidated condition right now. At the present moment, there is a guy who I think the state leased some lands to the back of the Centre and he is now encroaching on the Community Centre, he has blocked around part of the Community Centre, extended a shed over to the Community Centre. He said that he was doing prayers, now he block off this side of the Community Centre, he is planting peas on the other side, he has a car that is parked in the back of the Community Centre, whenever we go there to work we have to ask him to move the car and he does not want to move it. On many occasions, we had to go to the Police Station to ask him to remove the car and he still does not want it to be removed. We have reported him on 2 occasions and he still did not move the car. So right now we will like to know if the man at the back of the Community Centre if he has permission to use the Community, the Community Centre grounds to get to his house or we would like to know what the situation is because when we go there we always have, there are barrels and bricks. We are frustrated when we go there because apparently he is taking over the Community Centre for his own. So we will like the relevant authorities to see to the matter and give us a sign of release on this matter.

➤ **Moderator**

Well, some of the relevant authorities are here.

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

Well some are here and the main person is the Minister of Community Development but all transactions here and let me just tell everybody, everything you say here is recorded verbatim, it is transcribed into pros and we respond to everything.

❖ **Sadam Hosein (Male Indian 20's)**

I am an attorney at law at the profession. Firstly let me start off by saying that I do agree with the proposal of the reform of the Local Government sector in terms of the greater autonomy being afforded to the municipalities. Minister, you indicated that greater executive authority would be given to council because right now they stifled in terms of the restrictions that they face but with this greater executive authority, we need greater accountability. One proposal I would like to make that may be included in the package of legislation, now these fourteen (14) municipalities if they are kept let them account to the public, select the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament so that the entire country and not just the burgesses of the various municipalities can judge the work that was done by that corporation. Also with respect to the tax collections, I believe it is a good idea but implementation might be an issue. Collection is always easy but what about implementation? What about those persons who aren't paying their taxes and the government has to levy? Is the cost effectiveness of you collecting taxes outweighing the revenue that is coming in? So we probably have to look and that also and lastly, I question the timing of this consultation in the premise that you indicated that...the Local Government Election would be held at the end of this year, however, the legislation would be ready also. So effectively we are voting in a new council but with the same system...so then what is the effectiveness of this consultation? Why is it at this time and not after the members of council are elected? So that is the difficulty, whether or not this right now is effective because all I see here is a pamphlet. This is not going to help me decide the day the election bell is rung. We need to have further consultation when the legislation package is ready so that we can actually see some reform happening in this country. Thank you.

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

We were in a dilemma. Now when and how do you have consultations? If you prepare a document in detail and say table it in a consultation, you have been accused of - you done know what you have to do and you only faking this consultation. When we start from ground zero, we say we ain't have no formal document, we ain't draught no legislation yet, there is no legislation package, let us hear what you have to say. Then the converse of that, they say well you ain't bring nothing to us to study, how do you expect us to comment? You point on the Public Accounts Committee I think is valid. When the legislative package is prepared it will be circulated a mass, it will be online, it will be there for people to comment. To have another round of consultations may be a challenge and to deal with the

point of why now...because we were only elected in September. There is a constitutionally due election in October this year, we are not going to put off the election. Based on the timeline that we had, the most feasible option was to say okay, we'd have the legislation package prepared by October, we will go to the population based on that and then we will have a two to three year transition period to effect. Because this is fundamental change, it can't happen overnight. So the timeline we have set, I think is an acceptable timeline and when it comes to its conclusion hopefully around 2018, I think you will like what you see.

Sadam Hosein

I think the consultation is even more important when the legislation is ready because this is a talk shop, we can say what we want here but we don't know what is actually going into the legislation and I think at that stage is where you accountability steps in, whether what we tell you is put inside there. So I think that is the stage at which we should have the consultation.

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

Having said that...I don't want to protract this talk...this ground zero consultation is getting the ordinary man to tell you what he wants. We will craft that now in a legislative framework but when the legislation is prepared with article 1 and act this and act that and subclause this and sub-clause that, you alone could understand it. The vast majority of the people here would be at a lost. So it is important that we have the consultation at this level and when the legislation per se...we can get the Law Association and couple other people to comment specifically because the law embodies the views of the population but just put into legal language. So commenting on legislation may be different to this kind of consultation. This is the kind of consultation that we pay greater focus on.

❖ **Vincent Hewitt (Male African 60's)**

Pleasant good evening, I am from the Cunupia area. If at any time Madam Minister and Mr Minister that I have a problem, I would never ever come to a forum like this to articulate a problem because as far as I am concerned if I have a problem nobody can't solve it but I have a number of issues and I think Local Government reform going to address a number of issues in the Cunupia area. I want to take out a little portion because you made mention of it, the community centre. In Jerningham Junction, we have a community centre that is run by a Don, He alone...he is the manager, he's the chairman, he's the executive chairman, he's the secretary and I am asking...and he is aided and abetted by community development who like Coco Cola in jar litre. The like Coco Cola in jar litre. What I would like to see coming in the Local Government reform is the articulation of a process that would ensure that the accountability that we speak about and all the susceptibility and all the other 'abilities' are dealt with, in that we have people sitting down in high places, they would do a number of indifferent things, they would break the law without impunity and just turn they back like

this and say they resign and that is the end of it. I want something to be done about that. And if something could be done about that Mr Minister then we could have a continuation but when you could drop a block right here, bap! Form a company today, execute something tomorrow and the very night before it finishes you dissolve the company and where does Local Government take us with that because we are going to get a lot of these things happening with the contractors coming in the local authority. They are going to be contractor today, take your money tomorrow and the next day they go and they say they bankrupt. What is the legislation going to do...if there are any law, you understand, has the ability to address those concerned? If there are none, Mr Minister then the issue of local reform would take longer than you expect to come into place and ensure that the burgesses of Chaguanas get what is due to them. In terms of the operations of the borough council, I think you are on the ball. You know, you see and I know that you are prepared to address these issues and in addressing these issues we know we would have to park up a lot of people. Mr Minister, I wish you and your government all the best in your local reform and I want to ensure you that you have my support from the Cunupia area and more so, that issue with the village council if it could be addressed would be very fine. I want to thank you very much.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Mr Hewitt you talked about contractors and so on, I am sure you recognised that there will be a new system of contracting goods and services. Once the procurement legislation is put in place and that would also cover the Local Government system. It's not just for Central Government alone; it would also cover the Local Government.

Vincent Hewitt

I want to thank you Madam Minister but what I want to know is that something is put into place, the law is put into place that when they take your job and they do what they want to it and they go next morning and dissolve the company, something could still be done to them about it.

❖ **Evangelist Zora Rahamat (Female Indian 60's)**

Good evening to you Ministers, all protocol observed. I do social and voluntary work in the county of Chaguanas...born and bred in Chaguanas area. I have heard many concerns and I appreciate you. I congratulate you for taking your time to listen to what our concern is but one thing I didn't hear anybody address and this is what I want to know, what are you going to implement in the Borough of Chaguanas for the homeless people? That is my concern this evening because I have been trying to get the Borough of Chaguanas and all the Ministers and all of them around here to get involved and to help me to make the citizens of this area better citizens but no one wants to go with me. Thank you very much for your time, God bless you.

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

Well, we have the Minister that deals with the homeless, the social delivery and family affairs but again that aspect of social delivery will not fall under the Ministry of Local Government in the reform exercise so I guess this is not the forum to protract that conversation but she has other avenues to explore.

❖ **Alex Alexander (Male African 50's)**

I live in Cashew Gardens; my situation is pertaining to new areas. I live in a fairly new area, Cashew Gardens. My new area is almost ten (10) years old. My new area has no recreational facilities as well as a community centre. My question is how old does my community have to be to have these amenities and where do I go? I say let's try the Tobago model because the Tobago people get it. I say also let the corporation come into the villages on the outskirts to see what is lacking. I think it would be better than the populous of the village trying to...under the pretext of a row or crowd to come to the office but the regional corporation come out and see what it is going on?

Moderator – But what about your local government representative; the person who you vote for? Isn't there a role for that person as well?

Alex Alexander

Yes, sir but then also it's not just because of the relation I have with the local representative. It's not that. Pertaining to the other areas let the regional corporation come out because they are aware. Probably they would hear it through the grapevine but still they are cognizant of all that is taking place. That is my contribution.

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

There is little to comment on that; it's just the aspect of new communities and facilities. Cashew Gardens is an HDC settlement. The HDC is quite conscious now that it has to do more holistic community development than just build houses and I think new housing areas will be so designed and I think that is one of the areas where there were major gaps in terms of the home construction programme and that is being corrected. As it relates to Cashew Gardens getting a community centre, I mean that is for another ministry to handle. So you could probably again use some mechanism to get your information to the Ministry of Community Development.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

For all HDC developments, there is land allocated for community centres, for recreation facilities and depending on the density of the proposed allocation, land allocated for Primary Schools and in some instances for High Schools. Older HDC developments like La Horquetta, Malabar, Maloney and Bon Air all have land allocated for that and in most instances the community centres and the recreation spaces have been developed. I am sure there is some allocation of land for those things; it's just that they haven't been put in place as yet.

Alex Alexander

Yes, Ma'am. I am fully aware pertaining to the allocations because I have gotten a cadastral from HDC regarding where they want to put particular facilities. It just there.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

I know. So the thing is now we have to make sure that these are put in place. As I said with the older developments they were put in place at the time. Sometimes it took a little while before you actually got the community centre. Bon Air is an area that has been in existence for a while and up to now they don't have a community centre but it's not that it wasn't planned to have it. So it will be done.

❖ **Dillon McClarin (Male African 50's)**

I live at Montrose and my concern in this local election is the borough doesn't do their work at all and my concern is school children. More school children does be passing every day on that main road and every day is a fight. No police, no local police does be policing passing on Montrose Main Road at all. A serious incident that happened in Montrose there and no police. When you call the police twenty-four (24), twenty-five (25) minutes, they coming when thing done happen. That is my most concern with the school children on that stretch and people in the village does hardly see police in the area policing. That is my concern.

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

Well, I did raise the issue of the Municipal Police working in conjunction with the National Police but I think if one area has gotten real buy in and everybody seems to be happy about and I hope he meant it in the shortest possible time, is this aspect of Municipal Police. I think it is very well received. We are working closely now with the Ministry of National Security to see if we can fast-track that whole recruitment exercise.

Dillon McClarin

Because every evening when school over is a problem on the main road there. Montrose Main road.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Can I also say, there is also a proposal to have Truancy Officers and those officers will deal specifically with the school children to make sure they go to school, to make sure when they leave school they are not loitering and that is one of the important aspects of the Municipal Police.

Dillon McClarin

If you passing on the main road you can't pass, you know, school children blocking you. You understand me? That is a serious concern.

❖ **Calum Mohammed (Male Indian 60's)**

My concern is about unregulated development that is taking place all over the country both in the cities and out of the cities. This has led to our cities and boroughs becoming ghettos. They are virtual ghettos. When I go to Port of Spain or come to Chaguanas, first thing I do when I get home is I have to go and take a bath because when I walk in the City of Port of Spain and in Chaguanas it is almost like a sewer I am walking through and this unregulated development have to come to a stop. Ministers could approve any legislation that they want to; I have no problem with that. The problem we have here is enforcement of these regulations. These regulations need to be enforced regardless who violated them. I have written to the Minister of Local Government concerning a councillor. This councillor who we elected is renting an office paying government money on the road reserve! In Chaguanas! These are the kind of people we have elected. Lawless people that is representing us. When are these matters going to be resolved? We need to have these officers accountable. You just cannot be elected to uphold the law as a lawmaker and you are a law breaker. That has to stop. You cannot be a law breaker and legislating laws for people. You must resign. I want everybody to listen to this very carefully. This Minister of planning when she was...I think it was 2005, I wrote her concerning an enforcement matter. The Minister took the matter up to be enforced. When the matter came up to the Chaguanas Magistrate Court on the 31st May 2011, the attorney from the Ministry of Planning went and tell the Chaguanas Magistrate Court that the parties have submitted a plan which was approved by the Ministry of Planning and that the parties have demolished the building. The building is on the highway reserve. The building is still standing on the highway reserve. So you had an official from the Ministry of Planning going to the Chaguanas Magistrate Court and lying and telling the Magistrate that the party broke down the building for the party and the building

is still standing there on the Highway reserve as we speak here today. This is the kind of things that the public of Trinidad and Tobago have to face every day, in every government department, in every one of them. Up to this week, I have sent an email to the Minister of Planning concerning this matter. Up to this week, nothing has been done. I have everything written on paper; I have the facts. It was reported to the Commissioner of Police, nothing has been done since 2011. I am asking the Minister since she talked about enforcement today to look into this matter, this is a criminal matter that took place within the Ministry of Planning and Development and it have to be addressed. I am sorry I had to talk in this matter. I am trying to project what I am talking about. Thank you very much.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

Sir let me say I do not recall getting your email. I may have it but I have not seen it as yet. If you say that something happened in 2011 I am going to make sure that when I go to the office tomorrow, I am going to check on it because as you rightly said in 2005 I was the Minister of Planning and I dealt with it to move it towards enforcement and in 2011 I was no longer the Minister of Planning but now if it still exists, I am giving you the undertaking that I am going to examine that matter and it will be resolved. I have taken note of it and if after this session...if you can come and tell me specifically, I'd be happy. You're welcome.

❖ **Rudy Edwards (Male African 60's)**

Good evening everyone, all protocol observed. I reside in the Borough of Chaguanas; in connection with this reform on Local Government reform, I would like to look at it from the very fundamental level where we begin by selecting the most suitable person to represent us at the election for the Local Government representative. What I would like to see is a reform of the procedure, the process by which we select that representative to function at the Local Government level. Right now we go about doing so by voting for one person out of the several persons who would present themselves to the electorate. What usually happens as we know, people vote according to their party or as Lloyd Best would have said their tribe. We need to try to counteract that somewhat because by doing so we often do not get the most suitable candidate to represent us to function at the Local Government or even at the Parliamentary level. What I would like to suggest is a reform in the manner of voting to select our representatives and the suggestion I am making is that instead of voting for one candidate at the elections out of all the candidates that present themselves, we would vote for two (2) candidates. For a ballot to be considered a good ballot it must have on it been marked for two (2) candidates instead of one. If it is marked for one or zero it is not considered, it would be rejected or if it is marked for more than two (2) candidates it would also be rejected. We need to have at least three (3) candidates in an election and out of those (3) the elector will mark the ballot for two (2) and of course as is customary, the person who gets the most votes will be declared the winner...

Moderator – I will suggest you flesh it out a little bit more and submit it through the channels we have for written submissions. It's a very interesting point but it does not quite fit in with what we are talking about here this evening.

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

These ideas are not to be discarded flippantly because I was following him and there is some merit to what he has to say.

❖ **Raffie Mohammed (Male Indian 50's)**

I live in the Chaguanas area. Mr Minister, I heard you said something that made me leave my seat. You said that the proposed reform Local Government, you are proposing to use the young professionals that went through training through the GATE assistance programme and you're going to employ them there. I want to also ask you, while it is a good suggestion, someone with a certificate or a paper in hand does not give him head or control or to carry out the functions that you are proposing for such an endeavour but I applaud, I support you. I am just recommending that you consider also keeping people with experience to guide them and then the time will come when they move on and these people will then...so we wouldn't have the problem we are having today because we put people there as square pegs in round holes; they are not qualified to be there. They don't know what it is...you give them a bill of quantity they don't know if it is a, b, c. I'm talking about the Borough. You look at John Street, there is a health centre there, and the pavements are wider than the road. You ever see this in any other country? You have travelled a lot. The pavements are almost 5 feet wide. This same Borough Corporation, vehicles park on one side of the road to access the health centre and when they park there, service trucks have to climb on the pavement. It is so congested for us burgesses. Nothing has been done; they pass and see these things going on. While we talk about that, if you want to be inclusive of having traffic congestion addressed we will support you. The traffic congestion in Chaguanas...you want me to take my taxes and these people taxes to put it into the hands of this new authority and you telling me nobody is going to address the traffic problem. I going right San Juan, I have to leave home 5 o'clock to get out of Chaguanas. Most people here have to do that, the 500 people...see them coming out cutting all through the back. You ask me to take my money and give them to do what? Mr Minister, I want you to be inclusive that traffic management...and it's not hard, you know. Between 6 and 9 you have some no entries, it's going to work temporarily. We look at the flooding problem; rain falls, there are a lot of people affected by flooding. I want you also to look at that Mr Minister as you go forward in reforming Local Government. It could work. It will work because we will make it work but there are things that have been left out. I would like you to look at flooding; it comes under Local Government. Throwing a fridge in a drain that would cause it to flood, you know. There are thousands of houses that were not there five (5) years ago, seven (7) years ago, three (3) years ago and this Chaguanas Borough is close to a hundred thousand (100,000)

people. One thousand (1000) police officers, please consider two thousand (2000) because the numbers we have to deal with here...we have a crime-ridden area just up the road. You check out the papers every day and is who kill who and it's worse; you have to also include that. Think of some way of reforming...we look at the homeless people. You don't want to have a reformed borough and city and it have vagrants on the road. You want to make it a place that visitors and we the burgesses feel comfortable that our money is being spent...we getting value for money in this Chaguanas Borough Corporation. As you go forward, the Borough of Chaguanas will support you. It is one of the best things to come out for Local Government, taking us from the backwards times of County Council, taking us here as we go forward. We know it has to go forward.

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

Thank you very much. You're pushing against an open door.

❖ **Natasha Williams (Female African 40's)**

I live at the Thomas Village, St Thomas and we sending letters to the corporation right through for our road to fix, for our drain to clean and for the grass to cut. It has children...I standing up for children right now because we sending letters upon letters. Road - when rain falls children sneakers getting dirty all kinda thing. We don't need that right now. We need the road to fix, we need the drain to clean and that is all I need. You know? And...government go, government come is the same problem we have. So let we do something, you understand? Local Government...we love allyuh. The same we love allyuh, the same way we need the children.

❖ **Naila Clinton (Female African 20's)**

I hail from the area of Montrose and I'd like to focus just on unregulated development. The Montrose area has been plagued for the last two (2) years by what seems to be a resolution of an unfulfilled resource. It is an illegal establishment on the Caparo River and I have grown in this community since I was a baby and I know the fact that that reserve is not supposed to be occupied by a paved establishment. That contributes to noise pollution, land pollution in the height of the dry season. It is a car wash. And so us as Chaguanians need to be able to stand up for what is right. If you see an establishment, you need to be able to empower yourself with rights and knowledge and pick sense from nonsense. We cannot complain about the ways in which the borough has failed us if we are going to turn around and fail each other. That is something we really need to sit and meditate on because it is something that my family has written to the Ministry about and like many other people who have come here with unresolved issues, the clear issue is that issues are coming through Central Government but there is no tracking system, there's no follow through, there's no follow-

up, you are leaving contact information and nobody is getting back on to you. You may be written back by one person...I could actually attest to the Minister writing back to my family in hopes that this matter is resolved but that's where the buck stops. It needs to be spread more evenly across the board. My second thing, as a young professional, I was listening to this broadcast for the entire evening so it stood out a lot to me that you want to bring young people to the fore. My area is Educational Psychology and I am a researcher which is why I am passionate about the work that is being done here. It actually made me focus on what it is I don't know about the Local Government process and how to be more involved as a young person bit by bit. So I appreciate this forum for that. One of the things that I would want to recommend is that you get a feel of what your human resource is in this area and it's not just about educated or uneducated; one of the fellow Chaguanians who spoke before mentioned skilled professionals who may not have the certificate per se so it needs to be a merging of people who would have trained at tertiary level and people who have the knowledge and the history and are skilled but don't necessarily have that paper. It's the same way like this participatory forum here, there needs to be collaboration and more so, there needs to be respect and empathy. When an issue comes to the borough, you need to take some ownership and think what if this was happening to me? I think that mentality is what we need to push this borough forward into the City Corporation that the Mayor spoke about in the beginning of this broadcast. I want to thank you very much for your time.

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

Let me just say ma'am, you have personified what I have said about young people. We have to put trust in y'all and the level of your articulation is tremendous. I appreciate what you said; it was well said and I feel now more confident that what I have said is right and if we trust the future of this country in y'all hands I think it will be in very good hands. You have made my night.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Camille Robinson-Regis Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development**

What Minister Khan said about the young lady I would like to endorse and I would like to remind the public and the more experienced in the audience that the governments of Trinidad and Tobago have spent a lot of money educating our young people on GATE to go to UWI, to go to UTT, to go to the University of the Southern Caribbean and we must reap the benefits of this education that we have paid for. I think that is important so I endorse what my colleague Minister has said. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for coming out and for the participation that we have received this evening and if I may be so bold to say, I want to wish the women in the audience Happy International Women's Day and thank you for the contribution that the women of this borough and Trinidad and Tobago have been making. I leave the rest to my colleague. Thank you very much for coming out this evening.

5.0 CLOSING

To conclude the proceedings of the Local Government Consultation in the Borough of Chaguanas, Minister Khan thanked all citizens and burgesses of Chaguanas and the surrounding areas for attending and special thanks to Mayor Boodhan and his staff. Minister Khan stated that in all Consultations he still gets an undercurrent that says ‘boy all yuh talk these things so many times all around in the past but somehow I believe that it is not going to happen’. He told participants to believe, they must believe, support the new Reform and that this time it is going to happen. Minister Khan informed the audience that before moving forward with the implementation of the new Local Government Reform, which will be significantly better than what currently exists, he would accept a 70% plus readiness, as ‘nit-picking’ on every single aspect will get nothing done and it could never be 100% right.



CHAGUANAS CONSULTATION

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1.1 GENERAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

There were approximately 300 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 very long queues formed behind the microphone.

There were approximately 210 (70%) male participants and 90 (30%) female participants. The majority (70%) of participants represented the age range 40 – 70 years. There was less than 20% representation of participants under the age of 40 and approximately 10% of participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (90%) appeared to be middle-class income earners with very few from low-income and some high-income class. There was 70% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 30% being a majority of Indo-Trinidadian and some mixed-race participants.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

There were 23 respondents from the plenary; 6 female and 17 male. The following is a breakdown of the ethnic background and age of the respondents.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	11	Under 40 (1), 40 – 70 (10)
Indian	12	Under 40 (1) 40 – 70 (11)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Mechanisms to change culture	2
Municipal Police - training	1
Taxes – how will it be spent	1
Accountability	2
Properly manage Corporations	1
Garbage collection – too much garbage everywhere	1

Better services for elderly	1
Contracts - Locals do work in their areas	3
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, drains, parks, pavilions, community centres etc	9
Better long-term planning	1
Complete Library	2
Boundaries	2
Property tax	1
Revamp entire Chaguanas Borough Corporation - ineffective	5
Town and Country – enforce building codes	2
Pollution	3
Consultation too early – gimmick?	1
Homeless persons	2
Public/private partnerships in reform process	1
School children – unruly on roadways	1
Unregulated developments	3
Ballot election for Councillors	1
Human Resource database for each area	1
Youth Involvement	1