

Ministry of Rural Development & Local Government

Local Government Reform Consultations

Port of Spain

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City Hall



Rapporteurs' Full Report

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1.0 OPENING

For the first time, the consultation began with the singing of the National Anthem by the audience, after which Mrs Nedra McLean was invited to say the opening prayer. The Master of Ceremonies, Wesley Gibbons, then proceeded by welcoming all present to the Port of Spain City Hall for the seventh of the islandwide series of consultations on Local Government Reform and thanked them for their presence. He also went on to make all aware that the consultation was being broadcasted live on radio and he welcomed the listening audience.

Mr Gibbons proceeded to introduce the key personnel for the consultation amongst who were: the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young and Attorney General and the Honourable Minister of Planning Camille Robinson-Regis.

This was followed by the welcome remarks which were delivered by the Mayor of the city of Port of Spain, His Worship Councillor Keron Valentine who welcomed everyone on behalf of the Ministry to the 7th Local Government Reform Consultation at the Port of Spain City Hall.



MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister the Honourable Stuart Young

2.0 MAYOR'S WELCOME REMARKS

His Worship the Mayor Alderman Keron Valentine



Good evening Honourable Minister Rural Development and Local Government, Senator Franklin Khan; Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development; Honourable Vice-President of the Senate; Members of Council; Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Spain Corporation Mrs. Annette Stapleton-Seaforth; Mayors; Chairmen; specially invited guests; burgesses; residents; stakeholders; members of the media. The honour is mine this evening to welcome all assembled here at City Hall to the 7th Installation of Consultation of Local Government Reform hosted by the Honourable Minister of Rural Development and Local

Government. This evening the Minister and his team are here to speak to the issues of governance which in the future will guide the management and direction of cities, towns and municipalities across Trinidad.

Our Minister is on record as having given life to the idea that any new Local Government model in Trinidad ought to work as effectively as that of our countrymen and women of Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly. Port of Spain as many ought to know is not only the seat of governance of our great Republic but for quite some time in our history, was the place from where all business was conducted in both Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, I encourage the technocrats to review and remember Port of Spain prior to 1962 in the context of Local Government system. As we continue to define our nation and its mechanisms of governance through this consultation, I encourage all to truly reflect on what we seek and such initiatives ought not to be narrow focused but must take into account the needs and possible wants of our City and country of the next 100 years.

The tools of governance must be aggressive but yet consistent with the realities of social and economic times. Is it possible at all that in the context of our model we can be brave enough to place the burden of responsibility for all tax collection on either the City or Regional Corporation and if we are to do so what is the time frame for such as we operate this evening. Ladies and gentlemen this Consultation is not about window dressing, this is a moment when we can truly begin a meaningful process, one that will usher in such systems and procedures that will allow for serious work of meaningful Local Government to develop and in the process give to the citizens what has always escaped them following Local Elections. I am of the firm belief that our burgesses and our people ought to be getting much more than they now get under the present structure of our Local Government system when they vote and elect members to the council. So by this I look forward to healthy discussions once again I welcome you all.

3.0 MINISTER'S ADDRESS & VIDEO PRESENTATION MINISTER FRANKLIN KHAN



MINISTER KHAN

The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Franklin Khan, addressed all present and welcomed them to Port of Spain's City Hall for the consultation. He delivered his address with the aid of a video presentation which was displayed at the beginning and end of his address. The Minister gave a brief explanation of the video presentation which was shown to the audience. It was as follows, "The video you just saw illustrates a system and the dynamics that are not unfamiliar to any of us. Whether it's a river, a crack in a drain, an empty lot next door, delivering a social service to someone in need; crime and security, a blown streetlight, medical care, school repairs, a local heritage site, unemployment, waste management, a bus shelter etc. Under the current system when a community needs to get something done, it has to take a place in one of the many clogged and narrow arteries that run to the centralised heart of government."

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

He began, "These consultations are unique, in the sense that it is one of the few occasions that public consultations in Trinidad & Tobago will look solely at Trinidad. The reason being, Tobago's local government's 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 between the THA and the people of Tobago."

Looking at the Tobago experience we see that there is more that separates us than water. We are separated by a whole different system of service delivery – so it's not the sea but whole bureaucracies that differentiate our local government landscapes. That is what fundamentally distinguishes the governance structure of Trinidad and Tobago. No matter what spin we put on it, whether what side of the fence you are on, for those of you who have been to Tobago, somehow or the other you feel Tobago is governed better than Trinidad. The roads are smoother, the public buildings are well kept, the place is cleaner, the hospitals work better, their social service delivery is much better. Like many communities across Trinidad, Tobago used to have to come to the central Government for just about everything. Port of Spain is unique because the city of Port of Spain falls with the Mayor under Local Government but it is also the seat of central government. So when I make this presentation in other parts of the country there is this dichotomy that the central government resides in Port of Spain. So we have to clearly define the roles of central government but it is also a city that is crying out to handle its own affairs. Tobago has the authority and autonomy to inform, manage and dictate and influence almost every aspect of its own affairs and development. As a result, we see advancements and initiatives like The Tobago Emergency Management Authority, Medical Alert devices in (3 years 520 persons), Social service delivery (example of a young person suffering abuse). These are just a few of the many examples that illustrate the differences in our bureaucracies. Since in 1962 successive administrations have researched, tracked, discussed and consulted with the public on the benefits of a decentralisation of government through the mechanisms of the local government. The high point Trinidad's evolution in this regard came with the Municipal Corporation Act #21 of 1990. But essentially, successive administrations have kicked the can down the road. Now, the ball is in our court.

Over the years, the major impediments that have prevented local government structures from being efficient and effective, I will list 5 of them. First and foremost, Political interference; ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry of Local Government is not local government. The Ministry of Local Government is central government. Local government exists at the level of the corporation and that is why the question has been asked continuously, why are we disbanding the Ministry of Local Government? The Ministry of Local Government is not about local government, plain and simple. You have to be empowered to do what you have to do. Nobody has to have a big stick over your back and every simple activity you want to engage in you have to write the Minister for approval. Political interference – I just want to give this audience another assurance, this empowerment that we would be embarking on is not for PNM corporations only. The same power that would be handed to the Mayor of Point Fortin, the same power that would be handed to the Mayor of San Fernando, to the Mayor of Port of Spain, where we have all councillors, all aldermen, not a single opposition member on the city council of Port of Spain but by the same token in Penal/Debe, there isn't a single PNM member, either council or aldermen, but the same power that the Mayor of Port of Spain will be getting is exactly the same power that the chairman of Penal/Debe Regional Corporation will be having. I just want to give the assurance that this is A-political in governance.

The corporations will be accountable to the Minister of Finance on fiscal matters and by extension; they would be accountable to the Auditor General. They cannot make policy contrary to national policy. That is where the cabinet comes in and that is where in particular

the Ministry of Planning and Development comes in. But beyond that, you are empowered to do what you think is best for your burgesses. And you will be accountable to them and you will know how good you have performed when 3 years have elapsed and election time comes around again, they will adjudicate on your performance. It's as simple as that. Accountable to the Minister of Finance for the monies that you have been disbursed, you're accountable to the Auditor General as to whether you spent it transparently and there was no corruption involved in the awarding of contracts and you will now be accountable for your performance to your burgesses.

The other major impediment is inadequate funding. We all know that and this is what we plan to correct. Most importantly is the inadequacy of the supporting legislation that requires the empowerment of your decision-making. In a democracy, you cannot do things unless it is legislated. I cannot say I empower the Mayor of Port of Spain to take certain decisions. If the law prohibits it, I have no authority to do so. So the legislative agenda is paramount in a process like this. It's for this reason, as Mr Rondon mentioned, there is a technical committee that has been mandated to work out the nitty-gritty of this reform process. It is headed by PS Bascombe and includes a wide range of skills but there is also a ministerial oversight committee which consists of about 5 ministers, chaired by myself and the vice chairman is the Honourable Stuart Young. Mr Young has a very significant role to play with this in conjunction with the Chief Parliamentary Council because is they who will be draughting the legislation to put into effect what you the people of Trinidad will be telling us that you want to be done. If there is not legislation to do something, it just cannot be done in law.

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

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

functional and clearly working. There should be clear mechanisms in place to report issues and to have them solved.

Our proposal, as we stated in our 2015 Manifesto, the PNM's vision for Local Government seeks to remove all of the red tape and bureaucracies that prevent local government bodies from doing their work in an effective and efficient manner. This document has now been advanced into the official policy debate. To revolutionise and bring the system in line with the recurrent recommendations of the many teams, committees, and different administrations that have engaged this process over the years, we propose the following reforms: Secure Funding, Collecting Your Own Taxes; local Government bodies will be allowed to keep certain taxes and other revenues collected within their boundaries. 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.

Very fundamentally I move to the next point.

New Responsibilities – I spoke about the County Council System and the Municipal Corporation System by and large having the same responsibility. Under this Reform exercise we plan to give Regional Corporations and the cities and boroughs significantly more responsibility almost mirroring the Tobago House of Assembly. I will just outline a few which is subject to consultation process:

- **School Maintenance** - as we speak 6 hundred and something Primary schools and 2 hundred and eighty something Secondary school, all those schools have to be repaired and maintained and right now there is 1 agency of the state that does all that called the Education Facilities Company, that could never be efficient. If school maintenance is now decentralized through the municipalities and corporations and by extension the cities. You know as a city you have 5 Secondary schools and you have 12 or 15 Primary schools, it will be a more focused approach and you will make sure that when

September reaches school are opened on time because the maintenance contracts would be given to locally based contractors that you are in charge of and you will have supervisors to monitor the performance of these contractors because it is your children that is going to the school. So if the Education Facilities Company Limited monitoring that and is repairing a school in Toco, there is no nexus to Toco but if Mr. London in the Toco Corporation the Sangre Grande Corporation is in charge of that they will have a vested interest in school maintenance.

- **Social Welfare Service Delivery** - the Prime Minister speaks about this all the time. Who better knows the old lady who is getting a run around to get a pension than the Councillor? The Councillor is your first port of call and while I maybe in Port of Spain but if I was in Sangre Grande I would be saying you have to bring this lady quite from Sangre Grande to come to Port of Spain to fill out a form, verify her address, get somebody to investigate her bank account. Social Welfare will be much better handled at the Local Government level, all the Grants, all the Old Age Pensions, all the Housing Grants, whatever aspect, who better knows the families that are at risk. The families that suffer from intense poverty, families that are subject to domestic violence, child abuse, incest, all of these things happen in our communities but if there is a vacuum of knowledge, it goes unchecked. The Local Government Representative now will have direct responsibility for all these services and then the Social Welfare Division will now be reporting to the Regional Corporations and you will be in charge of them to make sure that the officers go out and do their work. I will tell you how this system is inefficient. Successive Administrations spend up to 3 to 4 billion dollars a year on Social Welfare. On Monday, the UNDP had a seminar on poverty that is not affecting our poverty figures at all you know. So if we check the last 10 years averaging 3 billion dollars a year, that is 30 billion dollars this country has spent on helping people and we have the same amount of poor people or if not more because it is a haemorrhaging system that is inefficient that is incompetent and sometimes there is massive corruption. The people who actually need the money and need the help did not get it. We will try to put a stop to that.
- **Sporting Programmes, Agriculture, and Local Tourism** – only recently the Prime Minister mentioned he would even consider granting the Corporations and Cities control of community facilities. So if you have Community Centres in your jurisdiction obviously the management of the community facilities are better handled by you in the community. One of the complaints that we have as we speak in particular the PNM administration of the past we built hundreds of Community Centres all over Trinidad and Tobago hundreds. Some brand new, some big, some small, some medium but every single community now virtually has a Community Centre and when you go out to the community what is the complaint, they cannot access it. So we spend millions of dollars to put facilities for the public and for some strange reason because of the administration that we have put in place, the public does not have easy access to facilities. So 80% of the 24 hour day the facilities are unused. So these are some of the areas that we will have better control of and we plan to hand over those responsibilities to Local Government.

- **Employment Exchange** – this is a pet topic of the Prime Minister. A lot of people claim to be unemployed and there is no system to have a database to match the unemployed to the job opportunities. In the Regional Corporations and in the Cities you will have a responsibility for your burgess compile a list of unemployed and that list now will have a shared interface with other agencies of the government. So if you have an unemployed person who has a particular skill and that skill is needed in another part of the economy, you would be able to match the person with the skill and at least create a job opportunity. I give this example the Prime Minister said that he went to a Common Wealth conference in the United Kingdom – the Channel Islands, which are some very wealthy islands that the population is 80% lawyers. So he asked one of the Members of Parliament of Jersey (one of the islands), what is your unemployment rate, expecting an answer like 7% 8 % 9% what have you. The Member of Parliament told him we have 164 unemployed people. He was able to pull up on a computer screen the names, addresses and skills of the 164 people that are waiting to be matched to a job opportunity when it arises. We may never reach there but at least let us try to build an embryo system that sort of resembles that so that at least we can give the unemployed some relief.
- **Local Contractors** - we plan to have a system where preference should be given if there are jobs in the City of Port of Spain, let contractors who reside in the immediate vicinity of Port of Spain have preference to the award of contracts. They will take greater care in the delivery, the chances are that the workers from these firms will be residents of the immediate community, there will be the multiplier effect when they get their salary where they shop and where their families shop. It is not a nice feeling although it is not illegal that you are building a box drain in St. James and the contractor from Penal, from Siparia, from Couva or Sangre Grande. Like I said there is nothing illegal about that but something about it does not feel right especially if it is a small contract because you have so many people here who could build a box drain. I must say that the best pavement construction that I have seen all over Trinidad and Tobago, the quality of the work is done by the Port of Spain City Corporation (crowd applauded), granted that they are a little slow (crowd laughed) but I am telling you the quality of the workmanship is something you do not see again and there is no contractor in Trinidad and Tobago that I know of that gives you the quality of workmanship than the Port of Spain City Corporation workers demonstrate in the construction of footpaths.
- **Effective Municipal Policing** – in our manifesto we indicated that we would be beefing up the Municipal Police Force to 100 per Corporation which means that there will be in toto 1,400 Municipal Police officers manning their areas. They will by and large function as Community Police, they will not be investigating homicides and some of those high-end crimes but it will be Community based police where more often than not the police themselves will come from the community because you will be falling under the Regional Corporation. As we speak Honourable Stuart Young and myself are in discussions with the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police to some extent as to how this structure will unfold and very shortly we will be taking some notes to cabinet to determine that. As we speak the Municipal Police reports to the CEO, it does not fall under the Police Complaints Authority but they are precept officers

so they could abuse their power and if they abuse their power the citizen has no recourse on them. So these are things we have to put in place now and a command chain in a quasi-military operation has to reach to the Commissioner, so you cannot be a police officer and do not have a command chain that takes you to the Commissioner of Police, it just does not smell right. Actually I think it is flawed in law also. So these are some of the administrative and legislative changes we will make but suffices to say very shortly and I can almost guarantee before the end of this year the Municipal Police Force will be 1,400 people in Trinidad and Tobago.

- **Developmental Control** – there is something called the Planning and Facilitation Development Act that has been partially proclaimed, it does in fact call for Local Planning Authorities sort of and there are some issues that the Minister of Planning has with the legislation and we will probably be seeking some amendments but by and large no matter what amendments we put, there will be a devolution of authority to the Municipalities and to the Regional Corporations to approve plans for simple buildings at a minimum. So while you are building a house in Mathura you have to come to Town and Country Planning in Port of Spain to get a plan approved, it is not a sky scraper you are building. So simple plans could stay right in your local region/area be approved and it will just save people headache.
- **Disaster Management** - I have said it in all the consultations this is one area of Local Government that is working quite well. We have TEMA in Tobago. The Municipal Corporations are the first respondents in the Disaster Management chain. I have an app on my phone from the Disaster Management Unit, every single thing that happens in this country it appears here within 5 minutes, whether a roof blow off in Morvant, the Claxton Bay dump site is on fire, Beetham catches a fire, I mean every single thing comes here and the respondents from the Regional Corporations are commendable and we will expand on that.
- **Involvement of Civil Society in the decision making process** - one aspect of the legislation that we will be contemplating, Minister Young and I have been speaking about it, is the involvement of Civil Society in the decision making process. We are going so far as to contemplate, again with your feedback that we may even put in the legislation that Consultation has to take place before certain decisions are made. One of the things that people complain about is that we say it is a democracy but it is only a democracy once every 5 years or once every 3 years you know, when you go and redden your finger but beyond that you have very little participation in the decision making process. It is all well and good to say you stain your finger red to elect MP Young so he will act on your behalf. That is right but would you not like some little more authority than that? That is why the legislation is now saying that for certain key decisions we are contemplating that is, that there must be Public Consultations so that you will have an input. It happens in America all the time because in America, people criticize America a lot but America is the seat of democracy, the Mayor of New York is the Mayor of New York you know, he has power, the Mayor of Atlanta Georgia is the Mayor of Atlanta Georgia. When he runs his city Obama cannot tell him what to do, this is the type of system that we want, Civil Society Representation. If Walmart wants to open a store in a community in some state in America, Town Council/Town Hall meeting immediately

you know and if the community say no Walmart, trust me it is no Walmart because the people are empowered. Again we set our target up there if we could reach half way we would have accomplished a lot.

- **Boundary Changes** – as we speak there are 14 Corporations, I ask you the question, you give executive authority to 14 Corporations plus you still have a Central Government, is that over government? I ask you to contemplate on that. But having said that we want to study the boundaries and see whether there can be judicious changes in boundaries for more efficiency and in particular the City of Port of Spain. I want to make some fairly controversial remarks. The City of Port of Spain, if you say the heart of Port of Spain according to Sparrow ‘Cipriani statue in the heart of Town, Cipriani stature Frederick Street’. I am from Mayaro I do not know Town so good. Port of Spain ladies and gentlemen the Hilton Hotel is not in the City of Port of Spain; Brian Lara’s house on Lady Chancellor next to the Zoo is not in the City of Port of Spain and nobody in this country could tell me that Laventille is not part of Port of Spain. If St. James could be part of Port of Spain nobody can justify to me why Laventille or the significant part of Laventille is not part of Port of Spain (crowd applauded). I throw out the challenge to you, so because nobody do want Laventille you all do not want Laventille in the City because Laventille is naturally a part of the City of Port of Spain. So Port of Spain now will have to tell us where you want your boundaries to be. Whether you want your boundaries to be from the Lady Young Road come right into Port of Spain because Cities have Boroughs within the Cities. You go to London and you have Kenton and what have you and Westminster and these little areas.

Understand something, Port of Spain is a City that is stymied for growth and I make the point when I speak to Chaguanas, Port of Spain - you go west is the sea, you go north is the mountains and you go south really is the Beetham dump and when you go east is the community of Laventille. You have to embrace Laventille and City of Port of Spain has to take charge of the community of Laventille and work with the people of Laventille to build a better City of Trinidad and Tobago (crowd applauded). I throw out that challenge to you.

- **The Organization Structure** – for the new Local Government process as I told you before none of us in Central Government nor in Trinidad and Tobago is happy with the current level of Service Delivery in Local Government. If we give you all this authority and all this power you have to perform better but to perform better you have to have a new organization, a new structure, a new management structure and a new skill set. The point I like to make on this is that we will be staffing this new structure with young people (crowd applauded). Ladies and gentlemen governments in Trinidad and Tobago have spent too much money on GATE, we spend close to 600 million dollars a year on GATE and we have been spending that since Mr. Manning’s time in 2004, so it is 10 years of 600 million dollars that is 6 billion dollars. 6 billion dollars on educating your children and when your child goes to UWI or UTT or whatever university and comes out with a Bachelor’s degree and you tell them go and do a Masters because it is GATE you are getting it virtually free, you come out you do a Masters and then low and behold in the untenable position that your child cannot find a job. It hurts you know because

what this country suffers from is underemployment more than unemployment you know (crowd applauded). In a very real sense I know that as a fact underemployment is worse than unemployment because the person who is underemployment feels more deprived than the person who is unemployment. You have a child with a Master's degree in Business Administration or some skill – Social Welfare work or what have you and they get an OJT in the government and the boss tells them to go and copy this for me or file that in this cabinet, they feel hurt. So we will be building a structure in Local Government that will call for new skill sets and I say I make no apologies for it, it will be largely staffed by our young graduate population that we have paid for their education (crowd applauded).

- **Legislation** - on the legislation part Minister Young will take the stage with me shortly and we will be looking at the suite of legislation that we plan to amend, very likely the core legislation to be amended would be the Municipal Corporation Act, the Finance and Audit Act obviously with the terms of the taxes and other consequential amendments to various forms of legislation as we roll out this exercise.
- **Timetable** – ladies and gentlemen the timetable for this is as follows 21st October 2016 Local Government Election is due – under the Municipal Corporation Act you have a 3 month period in which you can hold elections, so the backend date for this election will be January 21st, 2017. January 2017 is also THA elections but we are not going there. Without spilling the bean I am telling you that Local Government Election will be held before December 2016. Obviously I cannot give you the exact date but I want to give you the assurance that under absolutely no circumstance will Local Government Election be postponed by this administration. It will come on time and within the remit of the law. However what we plan to have before that election is called is a suite of legislation before the parliament very likely before a Joint Select Committee and we will go back to the population at the end of this year and say this is the Local Government exercise that we offer to you. Legislation is already there in parliament to be debated very shortly, once it is debated and past as law we begin the transformation exercise over the next 2 to 3 years. So hopefully by 2018/2019 we will have a fully operationalised Local Government system that you will be all be proud of.

I now invite you to give your feedback to what I have said, if you find I talk foolishness tell me so, if you find I sound good still tell me so but I want to hear what your views are in terms of what we have rolled out to you. Nothing is taboo feel free to speak your mind. Everything you say will be taped and it will be translated verbatim into pros and to text so every statement that you make will be well researched, well studied by the technical committee and everything that you say will be incorporated in the Reform exercise before we change the legislation and roll out our ideas of Local Government Reform.

I want to give you the assurance that although I have outlined certain broad parameters that we want to adopt nothing is cast in stone it is a consultation. Consultation means that we have come to hear what you have to say to impact on our judgment as to what we want.

4.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SESSION

❖ Joe - Male Participant (African 50s)

We would love to see the end of appointed office with every Local Government Official being elected and this coming be banga season half arrived we expect that Local Government will create many of the jobs and economic opportunities and add substantially to the GDP. I ask again that a role be created for at least some representatives not necessarily to be members of political parties and in all of the search to try to get graduates to staff the new Local Government bodies, do not forget that you need graduate plumbers and carpenters and electricians and masons and so on.

Just more democracy creates more growth. Some people say the reason why America is so prosperous is because it has so much democracy. I think it is also important that Local Government bodies should be able to both borrow and to lend without interest and to issue their own bonds. The control of local police forces in my mind does not go far enough, it should also be in control of the Fire Service, they can be in control of over the Ambulance service, there should be control over Community and Recreation services and then even possibly detachments of the regular military, people like the Cadets and they; Volunteer Defence Force, so in case you have a civil emergency and there is problem with communication or you have a national emergency and other resources are busy in their local communities, the Local Government bodies can have a resource that they can call on, in the case of things like earthquakes, floods, fire etc. I have a lot more to say but I won't.

I would just say that I live in Dinsley, Piarco, Tacarigua and to my mind for any Local Government to have the Tacarigua savannah the way it is, unkempt, no bathrooms, proper toilets; to keep the Tunapuna market the way it is you cannot use the bathroom there; to have the Dinsley main road the way it is, big holes for the last 15 years; to allow people to have gates as wide as the width of their property and them believe that they have a right to park a vehicle after their gate and to allow their gates to project out in the median of the road and to have trees hanging over so you cannot walk without your head being cut off or going so far into the road to prevent the movement of traffic to me that is Local Government that does not know what it is ought to do.

There should be permit parking, you live in a house you can park 1 car on the road with a permit any other car you have to get a permit and pay for it and if you need to get a permit for a guess, you go to the Town Hall and you pay for the permit and you let them know so and so will be staying home by me tonight or you buy some stickers in advance. I hope I have some popular recommendations.

I hope that the opportunity for creating new towns and cities is not left out of the possibility of the legislation and you do not give sovereignty to Local Government bodies such that they own the land, they own the territory and no new growth can come out of it.

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

The gentleman has said a lot. We are in the first phase of this Local Government Reform process, you know that there is a saying do not bite more than you could chew. The intent

of the Local Government Reform process is not to make 14 independent republics of Trinidad, there is still something called Central Government which has overall governance of the country and Local Government is really to deal with matters that impacts on the local communities in the first instance and it is not really creating 14 states, with a Central Government becoming a Federal Government. There is a fundamental difference in that paradigm. So what we will do in the first instance is expand the schedule of responsibility and with time if you perform well, 5 or 10 years from now we can bring back more amendments to the legislation to include other aspects of the schedule. The first instance let us bite what we can chew and let us try to get this Reform exercise ongoing.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

On the borrowing aspect when you look at the THA Act that is something that is still governed by the Central Government from the point of view of you have to get the permission from the Ministry of Finance, it is a lot more complex than just saying issue bonds. What will be the security for the bonds, when your last point is that they do not have security over the land etc? What is the security that they are going to provide apart from a government security? So there are a lot more complex issues than that and these are things that we are going to give consideration too and as Minister Khan has said let us take it 1 step at a time.

❖ **Male Participant (African 60s)**

Good evening, everybody, I thank Mr Khan for these Consultations, we had Consultations in Constitutional Reform, we had Consultations in other matters concerning the welfare of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Now, Minister Khan, I think management on the whole not only for Local Government but management for Trinidad and Tobago would need serious consideration because you see the 'thieving' thing, I think that this government has to make sure that it does not continue from what it had in the past from previous governments, you understand what I am saying. We need inspectors and examiners for works being done. You see what go on in HDC, you come in and say that how 100s of millions of dollars in refurbishing what contractors do. Remember contractors are there to make money, they do not really care how they do the work so I would like inspectors and examiners for all works being done (*crowd applauded*).

Construction – you talk about small contractors and this and that, you give compliments to the Port of Spain Corporation, I am a worker of the Port of Spain Corporation and I would like to say that since I have been working quality before quantity is one of the mottos of the Port of Spain Corporation (*crowd applauded*), that is why you would always get quality work. But what is happening is that we do not get the money to do the work, yes we do not get the money to do the work. So when they come and say my drain not clean, my road not fixed, that not done and this not done and they say they do not have the money to do it, you know the first thing they does say they thief the money, so this is what I am trying to avoid then, if you understand what I am showing you.

Boundaries - I live in Sogren Trace Laventille Road East Dry River Port of Spain according to you, the boundaries according to you. I think it should change and have fewer Corporations in conglomerate according to what you are saying and have about 4 or 5 major bodies within the ambit of Local Government and legislation for the people who are going there. You see a mayor, according to you the Mayor of New York, the Mayor of Port of Spain, I want to see the Mayor of Port of Spain have real teeth real teeth. The councillors especially my Councillor Hillan Morean (*crowd applauded*) I give thanks unto Hillan Morean, that is one of the best Councillor I have representing me in Laventille and on the ground he is there, well I would say 25 o 7 (*crowd applauded*), understand what I am saying.

I was late so I left the paper of what I had at home but hear what going on, you see the river I want the river clean from Hilton going straight down to the fisheries because that was one of the biggest playing ground in Port of Spain. We had football, cricket whatever you say from up there to down there. Mr Mayor I would like you to take into consideration for the Central Market to refurbish the market in a way that the vendors will really come and burgesses would really come to the market because that what is going on there is not the right thing.

One more point I am making. You see the vacant lots in Port of Spain I would like a programme so that they can rebuild those lots, get the owners or give them somewhere to rebuild those lots and have those lots for people to enjoy.

❖ **Mr Asad Mohammed – Vice President of St. Ann’s/Cascade/Hololo Community Organisation - Male Participant (East Indian 50s)**

I am very supportive of the attempt to devolve power to Local Government, I think it is part of a general policy of subsidiarity in governance which is internationally accepted principle and I think that we should take the subsidiarity even further. I think we need to look at revamping the Village Council system because over the years the Village Council system was set up to provided exactly what you spoke about Minister a 2nd tier but people suspect and very often it is controlled as the local party group. I think we have to depoliticise Village Council and I think that we have to try and create community organisations to participate in government. So I think devolution should continue further.

In the same vein, I think that Local Government is also highly politicised. I support completely the idea of having elected Mayors and Chairmen because too often you find a party person being an Alderman and coming on board as the Mayor or Chairman. I think that if we have an elected representative it would mean better democracy in the area. However, I do not agree with you Minister that every 3 years we should change the person if they are not performing because the way it is structured right now people vote for the dominant party in that constituency. So if it is a PNM area or a UNC area or whatever they vote for that candidate. I think we have to really consider if not now in the future a system like what we have in Canada. In Canada local elections cannot be contested by representatives of the major parties, they must be local people responding to the local

community (*crowd applauded*). So I am just putting that out there as something we could think about in the future.

With respect to the boundaries of the communities, I cannot agree with you more Minister. I am from St. Ann's/Cascade but we are part of the City of Port of Spain, our water, our garbage, our traffic everything comes through Port of Spain. In fact, we are part of San Juan/Laventille but we do not really feel it, in fact, it is a very distant area. We feel that we should be part of that but you do not have to recreate the wheel Minister regarding boundaries. Minister Swaratsingh cheered a committee under the 2 previous administrations and a substantial amount of work was done on reviewing the boundaries and the 14 Municipal plans you talked about in this document here each one of them reviewed the boundaries. The proposals in those plans for Port of Spain is to have the Ridge, the water ridge which combines a political area with a water management area, Cascade/St. Ann's the upper part of the Valley, that work is substantially done. Port of Spain is part of a metropolitan area in which you have collaboration with Diego Martin, San Juan/Laventille and Port of Spain in a Port of Spain metropolitan area. So a lot of the work is already done Minister and I do not think we should recreate it. You will find in your own Ministry a report done by one of the units which review all this documentation and makes recommendations. There is some criteria that we need to think about in that, you cannot have Port of Spain with 40, 000 or less people and Piarco/Tunapuna with 200,000 people. So there must be a formula that works in area and population and a few things to come up with it, it is not a whim exercise. The last time we had a revision was in 1990 so there is a lot of work done.

I want to talk very briefly on Financing and Local Government. I think it is important that property taxes which is the major form of financing Municipal and Local Government everywhere in the world it works, be allowed there but the last revaluation was not completely or not technically correct. The real problem is in the evaluation that exists in the one that is going to be imposed this year, a lot of discrepancies between old valuations and new valuations. In fact, the way it works out is that the poor subsidise the rich because the rich do not pay enough for their property taxes and services while the poor pay too much for their rates (*crowd applauded*). So we need to have a system to do that. 2 brief more points Chairman.

You said that you are not recreating the wheel but there are many things that are sitting around Minister that are ready to be implemented. The 14 plans that are sitting down there need revising. Minister Manning did a Local Government Planning process, she did an investment programme. The PAFD why not bring it to parliament? It gives immediate devolution of power, statutory power to Local Government. Why are we sitting down on these things 6 months now, why are we have not brought that to parliament to give power meaning to this devolution process.

The final point is how do we maintain checks and balances on Local Government? When we devolve power to people and we make them powerful we have to make sure that there are checks and balances. I talked about revitalising the Village Councils and Community Councils you mentioned that yourself but there are a range of other international best

practices, Participatory budgeting. Methods of community engagement in monitoring Local Government, not just the elections and finally the last point I want to make.

I mean we are in Port of Spain right now, I know that we need to control parking in Woodbrook and I know we need to deal with small scale retailers as how I call them on Charlotte Street. These are problems that every evolving city has, we do not need draconian measures to demonstrate the power of a Municipality these are issues that could be worked out with stakeholders at that particular level before we come up with policies to deal with that. So as we proceed to devolution I feel that we have a lot of work already done but we need to engage some of the activities that are already in place as we move forward.

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

It is a lot to assimilate but let me just deal with the 2 gentlemen simultaneously on 1 point. The City of Port of Spain has to restore pride of place. Port of Spain stature as a city has dwindled over the past 2 decades (crowd applauded). The City Corporation there is a Minister who happens to be a Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South, who is the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Port of Spain is grossly underpopulated, we have to bring back people to live in the city and that is what the Urban Renewal exercise is about (crowd applauded). It is a strange piece of psychology. In Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo a councillor wins with 5,000 votes, in Port of Spain they win with 600 votes because Port of Spain it is in the law that Port of Spain must have 12 electoral districts, again it may be something that we may want to consider to change. If you have to include Laventille and Cascade and what have you, just a scenario, it would mean that some of these Central Port of Spain areas that only has 1,500 voters it makes no sense. The city has to work in tandem with the Ministry of Urban Development and to restore pride of place, I mean you are a capital city and you do not really look like that you know. You go to London you know that it is the capital of London, you go to Paris, you go to Brussels, Washington is different because you have California, Los Angeles and New York. You have to restore pride of place and to me, that is the biggest challenge that is facing the Corporation.

With regards to some of the ideas that that gentleman has put out, there is a lot of it; you are pushing against an open door, it is what we need to filter and actually include in the legislation.

Moderator

Minister Young one of the things that Dr Mohammed suggested is that there are things in place legislatively that can be brought to parliament even at this stage.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

I mean that is something that I would like Mr Mohammed to submit the paper to us but it is something that we will look at because we are in the stages of finalising the Legislative

Agenda which we will have by the end of the month. So there are things, I mean you raised the property tax we are very aware of the difficulties in the evaluation system and because of the freeze in the waiver over the last few years, there is not an up-to-date roll etc. So these are things that we are aware of and we are dealing with.

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

Just one final point for those of you who have elaborate presentations there is a system where you can submit written proposals to the Consultation, the forms are out there, there is a website, there are email addresses and what have you, there is a secretariat so please submit your detailed proposal. Trust me ladies and gentlemen every single thing that is said is reviewed, every document that is presented will be reviewed where we will be filtering out what we think are credible ideas and what we think are not so credible but we will still keep it in a pile, what is implementable and what we have a challenge in implementing. So this Consultation is truly a consultation.

❖ **(Female, African, 40s)**

Good night Minister Khan very good initiative. I just have a complaint against the Couva/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, there is not a good coordination of bulk waste removal. When you call, the last time I called for the removal of a bulk waste item all after 8'0 clock somebody would answer the phone and saying nobody has reached yet call back. I had to keep calling - calling, they eventually came and when you talk to them, we cannot come today. They eventually came, 1 gang came and then obviously no coordination, after 1 gang came and removed it another gang came now, obviously they did not know that the next gang removed the bulk waste so this next gang came. So I am asking you are the Minister, you are the man in charge of Local Government for all the Corporations, for better coordination of bulk waste removal of that Corporation sir Couva/Tabaquite Regional Corporation.

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

Thank you very much, we will look into it but were in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo a couple weeks ago so we want to give some preference to the issues facing the city of Port of Spain.

❖ **Lacey Kerr – WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT (WINAD) (Female, Caucasian, 30s)**

WINAD welcomes this focus on Reforming Local Government to make our governance system more responsive to citizens' needs and wish to submit the following the perspective instead of recommendations for strengthening the system of governance in Trinidad and Tobago. Local Government design and delivery does not serve all the people in the same way, it will definitely serve women and men differently and for this reason, it is important to view women's views, their interests and women's participation to be fully integrated into

providing leadership at the local level; accessing goods and services from Local Government Authority and Restructuring Local Government. The following set of recommendations are intended to provide specific measures for women's fold and equal participation in Local Government and ensuring inclusiveness for all citizens:

1. each Local Government Authority must have 50% women on the Council
2. each Local Government Authority must include in its development plan and all policies gender issues and concerns; gender sensitive training for all councillors and aldermen as well as all the executive management
3. each Local Government Authority must include gender indicators in the evaluation of its development plan and policies in its service delivery
4. development plans and policies must be developed using participatory processes to benefit from the diverse knowledge and experiences of the burgesses and robust data collection
5. Local Government Reform must establish a clear commitment to gender mainstreaming to allow for the allocation of resources; review of internal processes to determine where gender and equality exist; develop strategies for enabling gender equality and ensure that all data collection intended to inform public policy is informed by gender analysis.

We will provide further elaboration on this perspective and additional recommendations to the secretariat. *(crowd applauded)*

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

The whole issue of gender will form part of the deliberations I can give you that assurance. Just to pick up on the point of 50% of your council being women as a matter of fact there is a Common Wealth organisation of Local Government called Common Wealth Local Government Forum, it comes out of the Common Wealth Secretariat in London, similar to the CPA the Common Wealth Parliamentary Association and they have a report on that and Trinidad features very prominently in it. As a matter of fact as we speak, we have 35% of our councillors are female (crowd applauded), strange enough we are in the top 10, the number one in the Common Wealth is Lesotho which is a Clave in South Africa. Lesotho has 57% women, the 2nd highest is South Africa itself and I think then Bangladesh and we are somewhere about 5th, 6th or 7th I am not sure of the exact thing (crowd applauded). So while there is room for improvement we have been doing well.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

The point Assad Mohammed that you are raising about accountability and participation, that is something that we are looking at with a similar process that takes place in the parliament now with the Central Budget, which is that every Corporation will be mandated via legislation to come annually and present its budget to the people and then at the end of

the year to then present how it expended its money etc. and subject to questioning from the floor.

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

I just wanted to make 2 points. Mr Mohammed raised the issue of the Planning and Facilitation of Development Act, with regard to that we have formed a committee to review that because certain aspects of that legislation were proclaimed but it only dealt with a specific area of that legislation. When the legislation came to the parliament we had some serious concerns about several aspects of it in opposition and we felt that we needed to review that before just bringing it, before allowing the entire piece of legislation to be proclaimed.

Secondly, with regard to gender budgeting and gender facilitation and so on the PNM manifesto which is now government policy speaks very specifically to gender budgeting and ensuring that there is adequate gender participation in all aspects of life in Trinidad and Tobago (*crowd applauded*). So that is government policy.

❖ **Alana Morton – Cascade (Female, African, 30s)**

I am a user of the city of Port of Spain almost every single day I have a few suggestions that I would like to make and I am very happy to submit the entire document to the secretariat later as well as electronically. I would like for us to look into creating legislation to tackle food waste, this is something that has been legislated in France and now most recently in Italy and is in practice in other places though not legislated per say. Food waste really is where we have food that is either maybe on the shelf beyond whatever the suggested shelf date is or restaurants because they have not used it for the day it is thrown out even though it is perfectly good food. We have in our country poverty, we have people who are not able to eat every day and we have homeless shelters and so on where a big part of their budget is expended on food and with the rising costs, I think Food Waste Legislation is something we can look into and food banks where that food is not wasted. Wasted food every year totals hundreds of billions of dollars around the world.

Someone mentioned vacant lots earlier and my suggestion is especially in communities, residential communities are to turn vacant lots into green spaces where we can also encourage urban farming and growing fruit trees to benefit the communities (*crowd applauded*).

We have a bi-local food drive and we are also encouraging the School Feeding Programme to use as many local products as possible but I shop in the local grocery, I buy food for my household and often times an apple is cheaper than a pommecythere and caimite and sapodilla is like \$40 for 4. So I suggest where we can start planting local fruit trees because in a lot of urban areas people have grown concrete so there is no space to grow green things and we are losing our local fruits. Also, look into urban farming and in those green spaces people who so wish can also participate in growing vegetables in these community

green spaces. This is done in places like New York City, Seattle, all over the place, I have provided links for some of the research I did today.

I would like also that we urgently modernise the Central Market and I have suggestions on how we can do that as well as it can be a revenue generating base where it is big enough to build a park aide and provide a park and ride service every day into and out of the City, as well as on market days it provides enough parking for the people that use the market. Food Tourism is a real thing and this is another way we can expand our economy. The current way that food is sold in the market is a health disaster waiting to happen, fish, meat and so on is sold in a fly infested hot environment there are no ice machines, there is no chilling, there is no air condition. I mean it is a wonder one of us is not dead from foodborne diseases. So I really want us to modernise our Central Market, this is the capital city as you said and our Central Market is the pits (*crowd applauded*).

Street vending as well, some of the areas that are abandoned – buildings, old buildings like the old Workers' Bank at the bottom of Duncan Street, for example, can be converted to commercial and move the existing street vendors into these commercial spaces, spread them out across the city so that they are not all competing in one area. Also, make sure that green markets are available, interspersed in the city as well where fresh fruits and vegetables can be sold during the week. So this is a way to 1 we get rid of our mosquito problems by not having vacant lots and garbage all over the place.

A lot of my suggestions have to deal with waste management and recycling. Legislation needs to be brought to compel recycling in this country, we need to work with corporate people because a lot of the stuff we use is imported so toxic things like toner and so on we are not disposing of properly. I work in a government office NALIS and I think that as a government agency we should be setting the pace for the rest of the nation. We need to have plastic, we need to have metal, we need to have paper, we need to have toxic waste and so on properly disposed of and recycled. I am a member of STASH and STASH is most of us who are aware know STASH has a local recycling campaign going on and this is something that can be extended throughout the communities via the Corporations, whether you build depots, whether you have collection days for garbage to be sorted.

As regards to parking in and around the city we need more parkades, Dock Road can accommodate and brand new multi-storey car park, we need to build one in Woodbrook. I would work with the business community if I were you all to provide shuttle services on Ariapita Avenue in the evenings so that everybody can park there, residents will not have people blocking their driveway, business people get their customers because their customers are not being towed and everybody is happy.

So I do have a lot of recommendations where these things are concerned and who do I leave it with. (*crowd applauded*)

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

On the waste food legislation that is not Local Government that is a suggestion for the Legislative Agenda. A lot of points are being raised tonight about vacant lots, what you have to understand with respect to vacant lots that is really an enforcement issue because we can use the current legislation to deal with it. Part of the difficulty as I understand it is

one – identifying who the owners are, then the law would require you to notify the owners that you are going to be entering onto their property if they do not do certain things in a certain time, you cannot just go onto people's property, clear it and start utilising it for farming land etc. So these are things that are in place, the Corporations need to step up and put in the notices if people do not do what they are supposed to do in accordance with the notice, then the Corporations can go on and clear the land.

A lot of the points she has made and it really does justify the need for Local Government devolution of authority is that as we speak a lot of the responsibilities that she has put on the City Corporation does not fall with them. So you talked about parkade it falls under the Transport Ministry, you speak about all other things but there is a miss-match of Central Government Authorities that impact on your City. So once the City gets control of its space within reason that is the only way we can solve some of these problems because when you talk about Port of Spain as a city and you job suppose it to the modern cities of the world, we really have a lot of catching up to do but I think that the potential is there. We can help you legislatively, we can help you with the resources but you need an empowered council and a vibrant mayor for this to happen.

❖ **Uric Williams – Manzanilla (Male, African, 60s)**

I came down here to say something that many chairmen and mayors may not be aware of. I am a military engineer, the following things were constructed by me in various parts of Trinidad – Mon Repos Police Station, Freeport Police Station, Traffic Branch building opposite the market and bridges at Moka in Maraval, Store Drive in Diego Martin, the southern end of the University Road that takes you from the Old Southern Main Road into the university compound and there is also a bridge that stop the flood at Trincity Mall that is built along Range Road in Five Rivers, there is a maxi taxi stand in Sangre Grande not far from the Regional Corporation, that was built by me, there is also a basketball court in Mathura ...

Moderator

Can you please get to your recommendations for Local Government component of what you have to say?

Uric Williams

Well, I would want to believe that if the Government Authorities know that these things are there they will pay attention to them and maybe assist in maintaining them.

Moderator

So you are saying that Local Government bodies need to pay greater attentions to maintenance. Do you have a proposal with respect to Local Government Corporations getting the maintenance story right?

Uric Williams

I would like that the Local Government people visit these sights and see where anything is wanting in the maintenance and they act on it (*crowd applauded*).

❖ Stephen – Gonzales (Male, African, 50s)

I want to be very specific first of all Mr Minister I want to thank you for remembering Port of Spain because Port of Spain is a ghost town you know. For us who live in Port of Spain we fear it in the night, Port of Spain is active in the day in the night you can get killed. I want to be real specific, where I live is Gonzales and we are one of these communities, you know up to this week we have shells on the road and my children learn to dive and watch TV from on the ground because shells flying outside.

First of all, we see Port of Spain, Charlotte Street, Frederick Street and thing as a predatory model. When we get paid out money does stay there it does not come to Gonzales we does go home broken and we would like to get money staying in Gonzales like how it does stay in Cunupia, we call it the Cunupia model. People in Cunupia own their businesses we do not own anything. We ask the Minister of National Security to give us a unit where we will have security, the unit was done by TSP Ministry of National Security Port of Spain Corporation. I want to commend my Councillor because she was very instrumental in getting the mayor to acquire the land because the land by us belongs to the Corporation. We got police and we got a centre, we want to bring commerce and industry and thing into Gonzales and the security is our problem. They gave us police and the police right now coming to work and watching TV and playing gambling game on the TV. This 100 police you say you giving us we want community police, we want fathers for our children because a lot of the families up by us is mothers some of them cannot cope. When you have a young man coming up and he has a female teacher and a mother he faces challenges and we have houses that turning out murderers, snatchers, thieves, girls to carry the visit bag in the jail. They are turning them out for generations, we have to intervene sir Port of Spain Corporation is the best people to help us to intervene. We want to teach keeping the money in Gonzales and stop giving the money to strangers in Sangre Grande, down in the West, everybody taking our money, we have nothing home. If you can factor that in if you could teach us to keep our money home (*crowd applauded*).

❖ Vaughn Rondon – Caribbean Procurement Institute (Male, African, 40s)

I know that we are looking at the legislation, far too many times we look at a centralised approach and we go to autonomy and we forget some of the economies of scale that can benefit. One of my recommendations would be to look at procurement at a centralised level where we are able to look at the sourcing and pass that on to the various Corporations. When we look at right now across the Corporations you would have a varying number of vehicles. I think by now we should know what is the best truck for the Corporations, what is the best tractor. Every Monday morning you see a tender coming out in the newspapers by now we should get it right. So what we are looking at although we are looking at the autonomy we should have that level of centralisation where you have group

buy in, group sourcing and enable to negotiate based on the economies of scale. So what I would like to see is more procurement involvement at the centralised level and drilled down into the other Corporations (*crowd applauded*).

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

The procurement legislation and the amendments that we are bringing and the rest of the Act that needs to be proclaimed actually deals with that because you will have registered persons that you can go and procure your goods from but also I think the point that you are making is a good one from a shared services point of view and let us find a way where all of the Corporations can pool in and get the shared services and economies of scale that you are talking about.

❖ **Rishi Lakhan – Local Government Practitioner for over 20 years (Male, East Indian, 60s)**

I am now retired but I have a few concerns although I agree with the presentation, Mr Minister. Quite a good presentation I think you have your fingers on the pulse of the issues that are affecting Local Government. One of my concerns is with respect to the number of young people that will be coming into the system, what I am talking about here is the elected members, councillors and aldermen on a full-time basis. This means that they will be getting higher remuneration and so on but with that I would like to note if there would be some compensation package after they leave office because for them to take up the position and be full time it means that this is going to attract higher calibre of people to want to come in for screening and so on to be a representative and it means that they are going to have to leave their jobs. So if it is you come into the system and after 2 terms and they decide for whatever reason or not they will not like to run again or they may not be put back as the representative on the basis of the party. What is there for them I believe 2 terms is sufficient to decide if you would give them a pension or something after they leave office because its politics and they are going to find problems in getting a job. That is my concern with these young people because they have families they have mortgages and so forth.

The system as it stands now local government practitioners who have served like myself for 20 years or more and they came out of the system, there was nothing there for them because as you quite rightly said the salary reviews commission has the position as part time so they were just left like that. I know with respect to the Local Government Association, discussions were there and decisions were taken to ensure that those practitioners that were there in the system presently and before that something would have been done for them to get some sort of compensation but nothing ever came out of it. With respect to the Municipal Police, the sanctioned strength rising to 100 in the 14 Municipal Corporations is quite good, that is excellent. It means it will give the Assistant Senior Superintendent the authority to discipline the officers because once the sanctioned strength is under 100 now is 86 here in the Port of Spain Corporation, the ASP does not have the authority to discipline them. As you said it's a paramilitary organisation but they are run under civilian regulations. There are no regulations governing the Municipal Police

in Trinidad and Tobago, so there need to be regulations to govern the Municipal Police in Trinidad and Tobago. Right now they are operating under civilian regulations and they cannot be really disciplined.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

It is something that is under active purview and consideration, we are working on it.

Rishi Lakhan

Thank you very much. Also with respect to the Municipal Police and Municipal matters with respect to the Regional Corporations and the cities and so on, I would like to suggest that we consider that we consider Municipal Courts, to introduce Municipal Courts back into the legislation. It means it will free up the magistrates court with respect to Municipal matters and retired magistrates could put to have their Municipal Courts right here in the city one day in the week, 2 days for the week, just to listen to Municipal matters and the fines, of course, we retain at the various Corporations.

I would like to know that after the legislation is passed and so on that entrenchment, right now Local Government is not entrenched in the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, so entrenchment of the legislation in the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

The entrenchment into the constitution is under active consideration, the jury is still out we want to hear your views on that.

❖ **Rudolph Williams – Port of Spain (Male, East Indian, 60s)**

I would like you to consider that this event here today provides an opportunity for us to imagine the possibilities of our best future as our nation's capital city and as a people in front and in charge on the road of our destiny. So that while the conversation and the mechanical work towards Local Government the system is good, I would like you to consider that no real life changing social traction can take place unless we also at the same time pay attention to the transformation of the mindset of the people who power the system. In other words, we have to engineer ourselves or re-engineer ourselves into a new way of being, in order to be inherently capable of handling the various challenges and making use of the opportunities that abound in our newly imagined future. Change your mind that is the rubric I would like to offer for consideration.

Moderator

How do you propose this system of Local Government Reform would achieve that?

Rudolph Williams

That an empowerment and transformation in the minds of people so that as we put systems in place the people would be in tune with the systems. A great deal of the

problems is that our people, in my opinion, are not in tune with the progress that is taking place, in terms of the mechanicals and infrastructure. So that you build a big building and you have a telephone system and nobody is answering the phone still for instance. So that we are backwards in our minds although the government keeps putting these new things and new technologies in place. Simple things like a man does not turn up to open the beach facility, his head is behind what is there. The beach facility is there yes fine, he just does not turn up or if there is an electronic system somebody does not attend to it because they have an attitude that is behind the whole progress that is taking place. So I would like you to consider that as a way of integrating that into the legislation and into the future of Trinidad and Tobago and Port of Spain.

❖ **Ricky Taylor – Sogren Trace Laventille (Male, African, 40s)**

Mr Minister, I like what you say today about the Councillors and the mayor and everybody, giving them full authority over the Ministry. I am no big talker but I want to get some points straight to you all so I want you to understand. This is Port of Spain, this is our capital city and if we go to any other city throughout the world they respect their capital. The reason why we are not getting so much votes in Port of Spain itself is because we have been driven away from Port of Spain. Because why it is because of the criminal elements among us and we have so much things in place for the criminal elements and still things are not happening how it supposed to be in Port of Spain.

Imagine if a gunshot let go no one gets held. You expect me to live in a place like this and security systems is not in place? All the things we talking and beating around the bush and we trying to get things together in the right way, I appreciate that, I understand that but his is one of our points we have to get at in the East/West corridor. We have cameras, millions of dollars spent for cameras in the East/West corridor you ever hear a case solved with it yet. Mr Minister never, waste of money that is a waste of money.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

Actually, just to correct you on that point there have had successful prosecutions with the use of CCTV cameras.

Ricky Taylor

I just feel I should hit on that point you know. They say Local Government will control certain workforce in the school system and thing, I have a problem with our youths in Trinidad and Tobago especially. If things like that I want the Local Government supposed to be bringing certain programmes in school, like kindergarten school come right up. We deal with a child according to the works, we have certain things in place coming up, from kindergarten coming up. Any disciplinary things like that with the child we have certain organisations in place so when a child is giving problems, the parents, police any organisation has to come in place to deal with, they come and deal with it before the child excels to other things.

❖ **Ronald Timothy – Chairman South East Port of Spain (Male, African, 70s)**

I will be out of the box. The main problem is where I live is guns. The Minister spoke of contracts and contractors, who gets the contracts – who have the guns (*crowd applauded*). That is who gets the contracts, forget it. Where I live and I am specifically speaking about children, I want you to understand that and you cannot be doing government people across the board cannot be doing the same thing all the time and expect a different result. I am speaking about the behaviour of children, that what the gentleman was speaking about I am here to elaborate on it a little more. It is Local Government thing, this is Port of Spain we are talking Local Government, this is Port of Spain, this is the people of Port of Spain, this is the children of Port of Spain (*crowd applauded*) so it is Local Government. I am in Local Government, I live in East Dry River and this is Local Government and I am appealing to Local Government, the Mayor and others of Local Government I am appealing to. We have to change the policy with people only after they are out of the box after they become criminals you want to deal with them and give them things, what about the children (*crowd applauded*).

Moderator

How would the system of Local Government address the young age?

Ronald Timothy

Because, Local Government you have just said it, you want to put everything in Local Government. You bring Port of Spain Local Government, the people Local Government, the children Local Government, the guns Local Government. So we are in Local Government. If we make changes from Local Government everything will start to work. So let us work with Port of Spain, let us work with continual guidance, and let us work with dealing with these children when they are 5, 6 and 7 before they reach 9 and pulling the gun. I live in an area where I have seen it, I have seen 9-year-olds passing by me with their gun, and they are passing with their gun because that is the recruitment age. If you do not have programmes which I have already between the time, Mr. Khan you are going to get yours, I have already given out more than 100 13 page proposals, down the stretch more than 16 years asking for them to deal with these children and nothing. They would not deal with the children and they are only going after the criminals and them who are already criminals and making sure that they get money to buy a gun. I am not lying everybody here knows that (*crowd applauded*). This is Local Government, you talking Local Government you are going to get my proposal.

Mr. Young, you are from my area you know, you do not even know, you do not know that you are from my area. Your father's grandfather's shop, your grandfather's shop is from Piccadilly Street. You know that well good, so I know everybody there I am 76. I am not joking what I am telling you I know, I know who used to clean the street and who cleaning the street now, so why I have to be cleaning the street now? Why I have to serve fast food outlets alone? That is Local Government so let us deal with these children, I am making an appeal right now. The Mayor is here he knows me, I am making an appeal now. We have to deal with the children.

➤ **Response from the Honourable Minister Stuart Young Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General**

Your point it is taken (*crowd applauded*).

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

Let me just make a comment on this matter because we are in the City of Port of Spain and we have, to be honest about certain things. I hear from a lot of the contributors that corollary to what you are saying and it is a serious corollary that unless we deal with crime and criminality the future of the City of Port of Spain is under threat (*crowd applauded*). So we can pump any amount of money and build new high-rise, we can give the City Council all the money to fix the drains etc. but the city will not be a place to live or a nice place to live as London is a nice place to live or as Paris is a nice place to live, unless we deal with the issues of delinquency, criminality and the type of behaviour pattern that breathes that criminal behaviour. That is not solely a function of Central Government, it has to do with the education system, it has to do with crime and policing but I think we should flag it as an issue that the City Corporation will have to address in conjunction with other arms of the state.

❖ **Folade Mutota – Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) (Female, African, 50s)**

I just want to give a brief reflection on your proposal for civil society participation. I hear your point that it is something that you are working on. But we want to suggest that we move along the trajectory from consultation to participation. A participatory process allows people to be more actively involved in decision-making so that the citizens would be able to vision along with the council and the administration in the Corporations and so on, so that we design the governance system for our, in the case of Port of Spain, for our city. More importantly, I think, participation allows you a number of things. First of all, it is accountability and it is accountability not only on the part of the leaders but also accountability on the part of us as citizens and the role that we must play in strengthening our communities.

It will also help us to build leadership capacity so that the number of positions that you are opening up and so on and the leadership positions that will open up in the political environment we start to prepare people to take on those responsibilities.

I also want to say that it will improve service delivery because we are all vested in it and we all have a responsibility to make sure that the wheels run smoothly and I think also the question of innovation. A participatory process really facilitates innovation and I think that that is where we would want to go.

I want to finally say that the last 2 speakers were very on point. If we have a more participatory process it really allows us as citizens to work with our leaders to develop our security strategy. Take ownership of them and make sure that what has to be done is done. I have no difficulty with the Ministries that have responsibility for National Security etc. but

we look at what can come out of the community and feed into the National Development Policy and it has to start in our communities, the participatory process. So we will submit a paper to you.

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

Please do and we really appreciate your comments.

❖ **Christianne (Female African 60s)**

I am from Woodbrook. I am a little concerned about one thing and that really has to do with the harmonization of boundaries. We have police boundaries, magisterial boundaries, regional boundaries and none of them tally. I am really wondering whether something is going to be done about this.

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

That is a point under serious consideration. Just let me say that I have asked the CPC to advise me because when the Municipal Corporation Act was implemented, it disbanded as far as I know the County Council system which was set up by Governor Woodford and say here is Caroni, here is St George, here is St Patrick, here is St Andrew/St David but the Local Government Act superseded that so in law these things no longer exist but here you have the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Education still have Victoria district, still have a St Andrew/St David district and well don't talk about the judiciary. They in a different template they use in how they have their magistrate boundaries and you know in law, if you commit an offense in this jurisdiction, you have to be charged in this jurisdiction. So it is really a miss-match but in developed societies, the boundaries are consistent by and large. So again this is one of the challenges Trinidad face as a country because we make legislation and sometimes we do not consider what are the consequences these legislations will bear to bring on the society. So is not a matter of going to Parliament and debating a law and there are consequential amendments to be done and nobody takes that on. So sometimes I say we really have a long way to go but that issue is a critical issue on this reform exercise.

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

I agree. It's all about the harmonization and something we will look at.

Christianne

And it's also about the disorganization. The country is extremely disorganized because as you know if someone lives on Z road, it is very difficult to find them or if they live on Todd's Road there are numerous communities and everybody's address is Todd's Road and therefore, we really waste a lot of money because of that.

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

I mean for years we are hearing that TTPOST is going to bring a zip code system, for example, which is the ultimate in addresses because if you write an address in Trinidad, there is no template to find out where this place is and a zip code system was designed to that. I mean I have been hearing that for two (2) decades and somehow or the other, the postal service has not been able to deliver but your point is well taken. We are fairly disorganized but we'll get it right one day.

❖ **Naleena Xtavier (Female African 40s)**

Yes, pleasant goodnight to everybody. I would just like to make two (2) points. I was born in Belmont but I live Laventille now. Since I've been living in Laventille I've realised that the drainage system is very bad and there's no toilet facilities set up for plenty people who live in houses and that is really terrible. So I'd like you all to check on that too, you know, as somebody who support Laventille for so long, we are not really getting that kind of infrastructure and I think that is something that you need to check on. People still dumping stuff in bags and that is terrible. As you know, we are number one for wastage so you need to check on that, thank you.

❖ **Stacy Ann Piosoria (Female Indian 40s)**

I have a passion for disaster management. It is a field that is overlooked and at the bottom of the ladder but I am very happy Minister that in your presentation you made mention of TEMA and replication of their system. However, I even heard you talking about the chain of command so I thought you were in that business already because that is so important in the development of our disaster management system. A lot of work was done under Minister Manning, the system has moved a little bit but fourteen (14) or fifteen (15) years I've been around the system and it has not moved forward considerably because of the draft policies and the law and the legislation, so I am happy as well that Minister Young is here so that he can review those policies and the laws and one of the successes of TEMA, which was born by Owen Sandy fighting for that kind of legislation in the THA Act and we ask for similar procedures to be followed and done here. Especially now when you are looking at empowering the people in the communities; there is nothing that can impact on a community, on a person, on a home, on a country like a natural disaster. We had the events of Diego Martin flooding; we learnt some lessons from it but not all. There is a lot more to be learnt. It was not documented; no post-mortem was done but I ask that the way forward, you look particularly at that disaster management system because you are looking at your human resources and what impacts it. That impacts people not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically. So please bear that in mind and in your chain of command as well which is so important, where we manage disasters in regions now, what if a massive earthquake were to happen and we have to now link all of these regions to work together, to synergize under one chain of command. Thank you very much.

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

You're pushing against an open door here and that issue is under active consideration in the reform process also.

❖ **Nadja Rudder (Female Mixed 30s)**

I am representing myself as an individual from the community of Belmont, Ideas Infinite as well as the Plastic Key Recovery Program. I applaud the suggestion to include civil society as part of your decision-making process and I'd really like to see that come to fruition. On another note, I want to speak specifically to waste management in the community. I believe this falls under Local Government to some degree in terms of the management of the burgesses. As a member of the Belmont Community, I have seen that there has been a removal of bins from along the roadways on account of waste migration, I was told. However, even if that was done, on the lower levels of the community collection of waste is very feasible. But the topography of the community doesn't lend itself to the efficient operation of house to house. I am sure the Minister could recall going up and visiting your burgesses from house to house, could you imagine to collect waste house to house? I want to suggest that we try to implement something off the major road where you have a built-in bin, not necessarily renting something from an organization to incur cost but do it in a manner that it is not on someone's premises; nobody wants any type of waste management in front of their property and for sure, there are a lot of vacant places within the community in which we can try and implement something. I want to endorse fully everyone who stood here and spoke about recycling and we would love to see...(Minister Young interjects – That is coming on the legislation)...we are partnering with Stash and in terms of helping them manage how people bring their waste because if there is no one there to regulate, it gets very messy. We do have an understanding as to how that flows. You mentioned wanting to involve contractors from the community; I have a major concern and not that I'm against contractors getting it but sometimes, as it is now, we are awarding contracts to persons by reason of them being a thug in the area and you are creating a system in which the young people are going to look towards these so-called leaders. So we are creating a system of dependency where they youths are going to be going to these people for employment. Are they going to be emulating them in order to get contracts in the future? We need to be able to cut off the life feed to these thug-like organisations. The last point would be endorsing the inspection of works because in the community right now they are building a roadway and I have seen the contractor bulldoze people's fence and leave waste thereafter and some of the work had to be redone...in terms of cost. Thank you.

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

Contract supervision is an area that we need to improve significantly on for sure and let me just make a statement on waste management. We are in a very backward state in Trinidad

as we speak. As I said in several consultations already, we are disposing of garbage as we did in the 1950's. There are four (4) major landfill sites in Trinidad: Beetham, Claxton Bay, Heights of Guanapo and Guapo. Four (4) in this country and these landfill sites are most antiquated ways of disposing of garbage so recycling legislation is coming to that and we have to look at more modern methods of disposing of garbage and it's something that I have a high priority on.

Ms Rudder

Would you consider imposing a ban on the environmentally damaging Styrofoam? You must consider that. If we're serious about waste management, we need to consider that, thank you.

❖ David Thomas – Belmont, East Dry River (Male African 60s)

I have really one concern and that is how do we stabilise my community by empowering the citizens? And one way I have looked at...as you said Dr Rowley went to England and they were able to tell him how many persons were unemployed and I am saying that is exactly my suggestion which has been for years that we could have a register of all the people who are challenged in a community and the people in the community know them and through that register we can determine...we can look at employment and we could also find a way to drive entrepreneurship through co-operatives. Now the Ministry of Labour already has a system where they match people but the thing is a lot of people do not access it. I am saying that it can be done by going into the communities, walking around and getting the information and that is really....because whatever you do in these communities of East Dry River and Belmont would not be successful unless the community is stabilised.

❖ Frank Ferreira - Belmont (Male Mixed 70s)

I wish to thank Minister Khan for his contribution but I don't agree with everything you have said in connection with the boundary demarcation, the changes. Port of Spain per se, for my estimation in the fifty's. You look at the lighthouse, you look at St James with the Cocorite area before you reach the Cocorite highway, St Ann's/Cascade is part of Port of Spain, Gonzales where I live in Belmont is Gonzales/Belmont and then you have parts of the East Dry River and so on. What happened with the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) over the years, they have restructured a lot of Laventille into Port of Spain which I found kind of strange. It is true the country is small but we have twelve (12) councillors for the area. If we include Laventille into Port of Spain we're going to have way in excess of twelve (12). So we have to be extremely careful when looking at Local Government and the restructuring of part of it, reform of it. I produced a number of papers over the years, 2008 in particular and 2012, a paper on Local Government reform. The major points that I want to list here: Fix dates for Local Government Elections, Term Limits for Local Government office of three (3) years, Mayors to be elected by popular vote with a limit of two (2) terms,

Appointment of a Local Government Ombudsman, preferably an attorney, Resumption of collection and administration of house rates and or property taxes by all Municipal Corporations, Strict penalties to be instituted legally by councils for properties being vacant and abandoned for over three (3) years. (And I am sure Stuart Young as the attorney in the Minister's office could provide us with some type of information on that.) Updating and regularising of data of properties, Names and addresses of owners, former and present, contact numbers, status regarding if domicile living locally or living abroad, Introduction of an office of enforcement to regulate planning, a functioning complaints unit and an appellate quasi-judicial body to handle litigation. And I'm sure Minister Young could look at those things but I'm going to present them with the document. Finally, I live In Belmont and Belmont, Gonzales, Laventille is considered depressed areas. We need to do something seriously about the youth and their temperament. I as a retired politician; I've been trying to do some work within the schools and the colleges in particular, as regards the mentorship programme. It is something that you all could look at carefully but Minister Khan, you're stretching yourself and the local government ministry to the limit. When you start taking a lot of responsibilities as regard school maintenance and we have a lot of problems with contractors and young men being shot outside in Belmont...I have first-hand knowledge of that because I live it. So be extremely careful. I just want to sum up something. Honourable Stuart Young as the Minister, as my representative in Parliament, I just hope that you can open your office close to my house there where I could walk across so I can have an appointment to see you. Instead of sending me down to Observatory Street and I could be murdered down there. It is not opened; it is opened for special meetings but it is not open on a day to day basis.

❖ **Andre Arthur (Male African 40s)**

I am an employee of the Port of Spain Corporation. My main issue is vagrancy. Will central government be taking control of the situation in Port of Spain before they hand over that social problem to the regional corporation because it seems as though everybody from wherever they migrate to Port of Spain? We have maybe about a thousand (1000) vagrants in Port of Spain. So if it is that you're giving us the authority to handle the social activities of these people, are you going to set up something first and then hand it over or we have to do it ourselves?

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

Well, homelessness...the jury is still out on that. Minister Young could comment on the legislation but as far as I understand, the vagrancy issue has some challenges because if somebody is not declared mentally ill you cannot go and arrest them. Then you can go and charge them for loitering which is what Mayor Lee Singh had attempted to do and got into all sorts of trouble because they just appear in court, they grant them \$500 bail and they back out on the street. We need a coordinated approach to homelessness and it has to have a human touch to it and is one of the areas that this administration is working on.

❖ **Kevin Ramcharan (Male Mixed 40s)**

Thank you very much; I work in Port of Spain. My issue with the presentation is we didn't hear much on the devolution of planning into the corporations and not just from Central Government. For example, I'm a secretary of a tennis club and every year I have to go to Magistrate Court and sit down and wait for my registration of my club as a private members' club. That is clearly something that should be in the corporation that licensing of that sort of thing. Why are we going to the Magistrate Court to clog up that system more where it could be, in my mind, instead of the corporation dealing with it? Secondly, the question of traffic management, who is in charge of that? Nobody is certain, whether it's the Ministry of Works and Transport, whether it's the City Corporation. I am coming from Diego Martin to Port of Spain and I have a problem with traffic, who do I speak to? These are issues which I think any reform has to take into consideration. Before I go, I just want to comment on three (3) points made, one by Mr Lakhan, I believe I totally endorse the idea of entrenching whatever local government reforms are into the constitution. I agree with Morris-Alleyne about harmonizing the boundaries where possible. The previous speaker spoke about electing the mayor and deputy mayor on a popular vote but I think that you don't run as a councillor and then get appointed mayor. You should be running for the position of mayor separate and apart from the other councillors. Those are my recommendations; thank you very much.

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

I agree with him with respect to freeing up of the magistracy and dealing with the licenses via the corporation. To me, that is something that is administrative and should be handed over. It's also a form of revenue for the corporations and when it comes to the traffic... traffic issues in Trinidad from my understanding are with the traffic division and the Ministry of Works and Transport.

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

Traffic management is one thing; it is a flow system. So you need centralised traffic management to work. Port of Spain City Corporation cannot be responsible for traffic in the city because it is a function of what comes down the highway and the bus route. So it is a flow system that has to be managed with the synchronization of all components of traffic management. Traffic management department resides now with the Ministry of Works and Transport...luckily now, there is software that could simulate flows and what have you. So on the face of the traffic management should be a simpler exercise but I don't even want to go into that because Trinidad again has too many issues with that. There are too many private vehicles; the public transportation system is still wanting and then the proliferation of foreign-used vehicles. We have, as we speak eight hundred thousand (800,000) registered vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago of a population of 1.3 million. So in other words, everybody who is over eighteen (18) and has a driver's permit do in fact have a car or more

than one and that is an untenable situation in any small island but again, that is an issue outside the remit of Local Government.

❖ **Female Participant (Mixed 50s)**

I am a 7th generation citizen of St Elizabeth's Village. For those of you who don't know, St Elizabeth's Village is an area of St Ann's. My question has to do with illegal immigration and the impact that illegal immigrants are having on local government services?

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

I'm not sure that I understand the issue. You're saying that the illegal immigrants are...?

Moderator

They are probably putting stress on the services of the Local Government...

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

...Impacting on the health services, on the educational services. This is a challenge that we face also.

❖ **Curtis Victor (Male African 50s)**

I represent the East Dry River Improvement Committee; I live at Clifton Street, East Dry River. Firstly, I want to commend and thank the leadership in government for seeking to devolve power. I think this should have been done many years ago but I have, to be frank. I think most of the things being devolved right now is simply too hot to handle and I have a serious concern about things like the public building and schools et cetera being placed under the supervision of the council and I will tell you why. Councillors generally have to live within a certain geographic area or distance from the corporation where they work. Where I live lots of gangsters...I mean we have been talking this thing since before elections about what's going to come and people are waiting for this thing to be real to happen so that they could go at councillors to get contracts. And let me tell you this sir, where I live people don't use Glock and all them little things again, the little fella on the street if he hears some shots, just by the speed of it, he could tell you that's an AK-47, that's an M-16, that is a desert eagle. This is what I have to face with. I am visually impaired and when I am going home is the gangsters that would tell me Mr Curtis don't pass here now and don't pass there and I know that it is very dangerous what is going on right now. I have a friend who was shot seven (7) times, Councillor Peter John on the 16th December and just after him Burt Allette was killed and this is a very serious thing. Councillors have to live in the area and when you put these things in the hands of councillors the bad boys know that is the baddest man gets the contract; people kill for money! Simply because of this, I think you all are putting councillors' lives in serious danger. Why not devolve power...and when I say power...I don't want you all just giving councillors responsibility because over twenty (20) years ago I was

at a retreat and at that time the Honourable Jean-Pierre was the Minister of Youth and Sports and the feature speakers were persons like Augustus Williams, Steven Sargent, Martin Joseph and the one common thing was this: where governance is concerned you don't give responsibility without real authority. I believe the councillors are given endless responsibilities and they have no real authority because somebody is in the back almost pulling the strings. They can't really do anything; this is a fact. I have to be truthful and I say again, you are putting their lives in danger. With respect to the bringing parts of Laventille, that might be good simply because you have a representative for Port of Spain South who is the representative of persons who live as far up as Picton Road but even lower than that, the representative in Local Government is in San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. So there is a disconnect where the people are concerned. I would want to suggest to in terms of Local Government that the authorities properly educate the citizenry as to the parameters or the boundaries of councillors' responsibility and authority. I have witnessed already an MP that would go into an area and when confronted by persons with problems, the first thing the MP would bawl is who is your Councillor or we deal with the bigger picture, we deal with the legislative agenda, it's your Councillor. So people target councillors for things that they are not responsible for. If Local Government reform must be meaningful you must educate the public as to what are the real parameters. I will say this also, as it is right now Local Government is seriously underfunded and you all admitted to that, so if there is any slack or tardiness in Local Government over the past 25 years, the responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of Central Government. So to come now and tell us that we are going to get things running good is really an admission that you all have been holding on too much and not really doing what you should and I think now that you are doing it, I agree.

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

After the Local Government process that would be clearly articulated to the community because there are a lot of grey areas but we will publish very widely the schedule of responsibilities that fall into the hands of the councillors. Let me make one comment on the bad boy syndrome and that we putting councillors at risk because if you tell them that the councillor is now responsible for school maintenance and what have you...the guys out there see this as the award of a contract and you really put the councillor's life at risk. That may be accurate in certain communities because if you go to Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo they are glad to maintain their schools. If you go to Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, the people of Toco want to maintain Toco Composite and Toco R.C. and Cumana R.C. so your problem is specific to an urban community and what you have to do now is try to craft solutions to your specific need but when we make legislation for the entire country we have to have an even hand. Your point is not a justification to say don't give school maintenance to the Regional Corporation, however, in the case of the City of Port of Spain and to some extent, San Juan/ Laventille, there is a unique challenge you have which we now have to craft solutions for that unique challenge.

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

Housing is a problem right through; let me tell you all about Housing. As we discussed today with the Prime Minister we have over a hundred thousand (100,000) applications for houses. There are not even a thousand (1000) houses or a few hundred houses available. There is also this thought process that there is an entitlement by citizens to houses. We just can't simply build enough houses for citizens. There's a whole process, so that is not something that is going to devolve to the Local Government level.

❖ **Onika Morris-Alleyne (Female African 30s)**

I was born and raised in Woodbrook and now I live in Cascade and I am a transportation planner. Two (2) very short things:

- a. Wherever the Mayor is, call me please and secondly;
- b. Mr Khan brought up the issues of traffic and I want to kind of get into traffic versus transportation not too deeply but what I want to say is municipal transportation issues as opposed to municipal traffic issues could possibly be handled by local government through the proposed municipal planning offices as long as they have a municipal transportation officer or a group of municipal transportation officers and that deals with public transportation within the municipal boundaries and other things that could be dealt with.

So I just want to point out that that is something that could be considered.

❖ **Carlyle Roberts (Male African 70s)**

There was something that Mr Khan said about urban development and I can't understand that at all. When you speak about local development and you speak about urban development it seems as though one interlocks with the other one and it's not necessary to have the both of them together. As a Minister of Local Government Mr Khan, maybe you might be able to say what was your aim and objective whilst you are there so I could more elaborate on what I have to say. Thank you.

Moderator

We really don't have the time for any elaboration at this time. The Minister did mention those things earlier on.

❖ **Michelle Leacock (Female African 30s)**

I am speaking on behalf of East Dry River. From what I know, Arima Regional Corporation had a programme for the Zika...I don't want to call it an epidemic but they bring on some workers to fight the Zika thing, the clean lots and what not. I don't know if Stuart or Mr Khan if you could bring on board some workers...*(Audience laughs.* Minister Khan – That is your boy, don't worry.)...temporary workers to see if you could...this is the City, Arima is a

borough so you know it has a lot of empty lots...if you could bring on workers, young workers and try and spray the place and try to fight the Zika epidemic and let us gain employment. I know things tight but, at least, we could try and do something for the youths out here instead of stigmatising the gangsters and everybody and give them something. I don't know if you familiar with what Arima Regional Corporation did with the Zika.

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

The regional corporations have their budget. We allocated \$500,000 for each corporation; they have the flexibility to spend it as they see fit. But that falls with your mayor and your Councillor.

Michelle Leacock

Well is just employment I looking for as my friend say times hard....See? Same thing we talk about with the councillors. So I am coming to you now and tell you if you could give the councillors the resources and the finances, we going to get work for the young people to at least fight the Zika, fight vagrancy, fight the rubbish. Look we have one of the countries with the most waste and we are a small island. You understand? And if you bring on board these people and give them...if is temporary work at least...at least something just to hold the faith just for a little while it would be good. Enjoy your night.

❖ **Earl Wilson, Burgess - Belmont (Male African 60s)**

I am going to be pretty precise. Two (2) things: If people look at the manifesto for the Local Government by the PNM, it's fantastic; it gives all the things on the devolution of power and what they want to do. My main concern is...in the manifesto on page 54, where we speak to the local government in terms of the planning and building responsibilities. My experience as a city engineer in San Fernando and also as an engineer practicing is that our local government does not have the technical capabilities to deal with these matters and we need to up the staffing and the quality. Example too, even simple things like our infrastructure where we have sidewalks ranging from four (4) inches to twelve (12) inches; old people cannot stand up on them. Now you go to any international city, do you see a twelve (12) inch curb? So we have no standards. So the first thing in order to solve the problem is we must define a standard like any large city like if you use Maryland. Mr Brown was in charge of local government before and I had written a number of standards in terms of building construction. Those are the things we need to do. That the drains are properly graded and level so the water would run and they must be built in a particular way, this is what the standard gives. Cadiz Road has just been paved but we are four (4) inches of asphalt over the slipper drain. Any old person 80 years, if they knee buckle could fall; they could sue the government because nobody is working to a standard and the inspectors don't know better. This is what we need to address and I will help if anybody willing to write these standards and get it right so we could have twenty (20) years from now a city that we could be proud of. Thank you.

5.0 CLOSING

To conclude, Minister Young as the representative for St Ann's West took the opportunity to thank everyone for participating and encouraged everyone to continue to work together to get the work done. Minister Khan observed that the Port of Spain City Hall consultation marked the halfway point in the series of 14 islandwide consultations. He expressed how pleased he was with the turnout and the level of contributions made. He remarked that all comments were articulated very well. He assured the audience that at the Central Government level it is the desire of the cabinet and the Prime Minister to see Port of Spain restored to its former state and position of pride of place. He thanked all for coming and wished them a good night.



PORT OF SPAIN 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 queues formed behind the microphones.

There were approximately 165 (55%) male participants and 135 (45%) female participants. The majority (70%) of participants represented the age range 40 – 70 years. There was less than 15% representation of participants under the age of 30 and approximately 15% participants over the age of 70. The majority of participants (85%) appeared to be middle-class income earners with a few from low income and some high-income class. There was 75% representation from the Afro-Trinidadian population, with the remaining 25% being a majority of Indo-Trinidadian and some mixed-race participants. There were a few participants representing the Caucasian community.

6.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

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

Ethnicity	Frequency	Age Range
African	19	40 – 70 (16), under 40 (3)
Indian	4	40 – 70 (4)
Mixed	4	40 – 70 (3), under 40 (1)
Caucasian	1	Under 40 (1)

6.1.3 CATEGORIES/TOPICS

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

Topic	Frequency
Elect Local government members/ Mayor	3
Democracy	1
Improve and upgrade current infrastructure – buildings, roads, parks,	4

schools, etc	
Parking	2
Transparency and accountability	3
Boundaries	4
Property Tax	2
Waste Removal	2
Gender mainstreaming	1
Food wastage/Recycling	2
Green spaces from empty lots	1
Maintain current infrastructure	1
Crime	3
Procurement at a centralised level	1
Compensation for LG workers on retirement	1
Municipal Police	2
Behavioural change	2
Mayor needs more authority	2
Focus on changing youth	2
Civil society participation	3
Disaster management	1
Contract supervision	2
Employment database	1
Vagrancy/homeless persons	1
Illegal immigration	1
Define responsibilities of Councillors	1
Housing	1
Traffic management	2
Improve building standards	1