

The Minister of Public Administration (Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute in this debate on the Appropriation (Financial Year 2013) Bill, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy on his maiden budget presentation. He has demonstrated his understanding of the national and global context, and proposed measures that would continue the good work pursued by his predecessor, to strengthen our economy with a view to the long-term health and development of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy referred to two concepts in his budget presentation. The first concept is “value for money”, which was referred to twice in his representation; firstly in the context of improving the Human Development Index and secondly, from the perspective of balancing our budget and as part of the financial reform process.

The second concept referred to is the “ease of doing business’ which is crucial to improving the competitiveness of our country, according to the World Bank’s 2012, Ease of Doing Business rankings. Trinidad and Tobago stands in the 68th position out of 183 countries. Although this is an improvement of 13 places since the Government took office in May 2010, we are still not satisfied with our global competitiveness as alluded to by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. His point is that we are nowhere near where we should be if we are to attract further investments and accelerate the transformation of this economy.

He cited the World Bank Report, which showed that our country underperformed in the area of business facilitation. Key areas of concern include: starting a business, registering property, getting credit, dealing with construction

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permits, trading across borders, protecting investors, paying taxes, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

As Minister of Public Administration, I must admit that the public sector is responsible for several of these services that need to be improved if we are to become more competitive. In fact, the public service is deemed to be a major contributor to improving the ease of doing business in the country. There remains a large untapped potential, unexploited within the public service that can lead to significant improvements in this area.

There are two other critical measures that follow from the emphasis on value for money and ease of doing business. These are productivity and accountability. The Minister made the link between productivity and international competitiveness and their impact on our ability to generate sustainable wealth. If we look at the public service closely, we would recognize that it is indeed a business. Think about it. The public service creates, provides and distributes goods and services. The people of this country pay the public service—that is the Government—to run their business for them. Even if there is no direct financial cost there is an opportunity cost for acquiring or accessing the public service.

When a citizen leaves Tabaquite or Rio Claro or Las Cuevas or—as the last speaker, the Deputy Speaker—Princes Town, Toco, Siparia and Moruga and have to come to Port of Spain to apply for any public service including scholarships, there is a cost in terms of the time that is spent and which in some way could have led to some other productive activity.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the need to look at public administration across the entire public service as a business, with a mandate for improving the ease of doing business, improving our competitiveness, reducing actual cost, reducing

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opportunity cost and ensuring that—regardless of race, creed, colour or geography—our citizens, including the public officers themselves, can get the best possible service in the shortest possible time, at the lowest possible cost and at the highest possible quality.

In my view, if the public service is responsible for producing and providing goods and services, it must be held accountable. In other words, with responsibility comes accountability. If you agree with me that the public service is a business that could benefit from the business approach and profit from business orientation, then you must also agree with me that this is everybody's business.

[Interruption]

Mr. Sharma: Good point, good point.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: We are all shareholders of this business. It is to our advantage to grow the business. It is to our advantage to make the business more efficient, more reliable, more customer focused, more citizen centric, more transparent, more productive and much more accountable. The business of Government is the governance of business and not just in the private sector but in the public sector.

What are our strategies for transformation? For there to be successful transformation, there must be increased collaboration across Ministries and departments in order to deliver integrated services. There must be highly trained and motivated staff with the right training tools and rewarding roles. We must have—and I do not want to just say, “efficient”, because a lot of the time we talk about efficiency. We have to speak to more effective service delivery through multi-channel capabilities, including our one-stop-shops and the “no-wrong-door” approach as we heard from the Minister of the People and Social Development.

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Mr. Speaker, in June of 2010 the Green Paper on transforming the civil service through renewal and modernization was launched by the former Minister of Public Administration, former Sen. Nan Ramgoolam. Since then we have reviewed and looked at this paper and done some future analysis. In order to serve our 21st Century citizen, public service must build effective collaboration across Ministries and agencies, as I just stated, in addition to collaboration with the business and civil society. Therefore, we have expanded the Green Paper to include renewal and modernization of the entire public service. This involves, as we move towards that White Paper, consultation with focused groups and open discussions.

Mr. Speaker, in the issue of moving forward in the human resource architecture, I really want now to turn to a project that we have been working on over the last fiscal year. It is called, "Modernizing the Human Resource Architecture for the Public Service."

You know, what was very interesting to me is that when we looked at the public service of Trinidad and Tobago, one of the first things that we heard is how archaic this architecture is. It is important to note that we are dealing with an architecture that was established in the 1960s, as you, Mr. Speaker, would know. One of the things that came out of all our focus groups is how archaic the systems are, that do not allow for the effective management of the resources, how bottom heavy is the public service. We now know today the amount of conflicts we have in the public service between contract and established employees and the lack of the required competencies and accountabilities.

We have heard a lot about inadequate performance management. When we hear about the length of time for appointments through the Service Commission

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Department, the large number of contract positions with terms and conditions have yet to be determined. Those terms and conditions I am saying, is not just a year old, in terms of, for determination, but sometimes 10 years old.

Mr. Speaker, this was very, very alarming for me when I came in. Therefore, the first thing that we did, was to say, let us look at what should be an architecture for a modern public service, a 21st Century public service. In order to do so, what we did was we decided to have focus groups and with those focus groups, it was very interesting to hear some of the things that came out of that focus group.

Mr. Speaker, you would be surprised to know that we held this series of focus group sessions which were held in Trinidad and Tobago from March to May 2012. The following statements I make here represent some of the positions presented by civil servants. Interestingly, this is one comment that we heard. “The public service is not a healthy working environment—”

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn for tomorrow, Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at 10.00 a.m. and we will continue the debate on the Appropriation Bill before us. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 11.53 p.m.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2013)

BILL, 2012

[Fifth Day]

UNREVISED

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Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 01, 2012]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Public Administration was speaking on the last occasion and has 35 more minutes of original speaking time left.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the House was adjourned last night, I was saying to the hon. Members in this Chamber that the public service is a business as it provides and distributes goods and services paid for by the taxpayers. And if we all agree to that, then the public service is everybody's business, with all of us as shareholders.

Before the adjournment last night, Mr. Speaker, I also made two very important points, and these were two concepts enunciated by the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his budget presentation, value for money and ease of doing business. I demonstrated that in accordance with some of the world leading gurus, that the public service has a role to play in the ease of doing business and ensuring that there is value for money.

Mr. Speaker, I also started last night by speaking to the current status of the public service HRM architecture—the human resource management architecture—because we wanted to understand where we are today, and it is clear that when we did a review of the current structure, the HRM architecture of the public service is archaic, there are systems that do not allow for the effective management of the resources, it is a bottom heavy organization and there are a number of conflicts caused by tensions between contract employees and establishment employees; there is a lack of required competencies and accountabilities, inadequate performance management.

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I also indicated and all of us know that, on the other side as well Members would know that, that we have a serious problem in terms of the appointments through the Service Commission Department, appointment and promotions the time taken, and, in addition to that, where contract employees are concerned, the time taken for the determination of terms and conditions. In some cases, this goes on for years.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we did in this last fiscal year is carry out a number of consultations, starting with our internal stakeholder, the public servants themselves, and I started giving you some of the comments that came out of those focus groups involving members of the civil service. I want to start with some of the frequently made comments in those focus groups.

1. The public service is not a healthy working environment; it is organized chaos.
2. We need to restore the pride and respect once held for the public service and public officers.

I am sure everyone will recall during the 60s and the 70s the respect that we had for public officers.

3. The basis for promotion should be revised.
4. The structure of the public service needs to change to incorporate technology that is available.

I get to dislike the name “clerk typist”. The position has evolved, yet the pay has remained the same. We perform so many jobs, we are not confined to just typing.

Mr. Speaker, these were some of the comments of the members of the civil service, and what that indicates to us is that there is a cry for the modernization of the public service by the public servants themselves. They are prepared to give

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more. They want to do more and we are not giving them the opportunity to do more.

Dr. Browne: Correct.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: On that basis, what happened is, we decided that we needed to look at a new HRM architecture. The problem there with that is that we must understand that if we are talking about an HRM architecture, people just figure it is an organizational structure.

When I am speaking to the HRM architecture for the public service, I want to say it involves the organizational structure, positions, job designs, salary classifications, career paths, capacity, capability, et cetera, the legislative and regulatory framework including those of central HRM agencies, whether it is the Service Commission Department, the Personnel Department, and the HRM processes themselves in the public service for promotions, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, in order to move forward to do this, I want to tell you that what I did over the last year, starting in November of last year, I asked for all the various HR agencies to come together, and we have heard the statements so many time that the HRM function within the public service is fragmented. You have the Service Commission Department, you have the Personnel Department, you have Ministry of Public Administration, you have the PMCD and, therefore, I thought that we should bring together all the parties to discuss what is the way forward for the new architecture for the public service.

I want to maintain that these bodies are constitutionally independent bodies and, therefore, it was not our intention to get involved in how promotions or appointments are made, or selection of public servants. We were not getting involved in how terms and conditions are determined, but we were trying to get all

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these bodies together in one room so that we could collaborate to determine what is the new architecture for the public service. Therefore, we established something called the Strategic Human Resource Management Council, comprising the chairman of the Public Service Commission, who is represented by the deputy chairman; the Director of Public Administration and the two deputy public administrators; the CPO and her two deputies; the head of the PMCD, which is the Personnel Management Consulting Division of the Ministry of Public Administration; the PS of the Ministry of Public Administration and the PSD; and I chair that council.

One of the things we came up with when we analyze the current structure, which is no news to anyone here, is that we have what is called a very pyramidal shaped or triangularly shaped public service. The service is large and bottom heavy, with a low ratio of professional employees to support staff, and if we break that structure, that triangle, into three levels, we will see that at the top of the triangle—what we call the level one—is very concentrated, with very few leaders who make all the decisions. Then we have a second level which is comparatively a small middle core focusing on professional services and providing optimal service delivery. But then, we have a very large group at the bottom called level three, where there is a large group of clerical and secretarial staff, who, Mr. Speaker, have upskilled themselves and await promotion. Some of these people who are operating in clerk typist positions have masters' degrees, and in some cases PhDs. It is amazing that this is the level that they are sitting in this organization.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say, however, that this is in fact the way most organizations of that era were structured and, therefore, I want to say that that structure served the public service during the era that we were talking about

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from—because the public service was established in 1962. The public service celebrates 50 years this year and, therefore, we pay tribute to all those public servants who made their contribution [*Desk thumping*] over the last 50 years to the public service.

Hon. Member: Hard working people.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: But, Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is different, there is a complex range of functions to be provided by the public service and, therefore, we did not have the technology that we had then.

So, if we want to deal with the 21st Century citizen, who is informed and exposed to modern tools and systems used by progressive Governments, globally, to deliver public services, the expectations of the public service are ever-increasing, we need to define a new structure that is citizen centric. I want to say something. Although over the last 10 to 15 years there have been initiatives and efforts to transform the public service, these changes have not kept pace with the expectations of citizens. All of this inform the structure of the new architecture of public service.

In addition, we also looked at the requirements of performance-informed budgeting. You would recall that in last budget it was enunciated by the then Minister of Finance in last year's budget about performance-informed budgeting. Just to give you a quick definition as to that, because it is important that we put all of this in context and, therefore, performance-informed budgeting links funds allocated to measurable results achieved. The budget is drawn up a way that looks at why money is allocated, and whether it is used to produce the desired results. It therefore requires public sector agencies to set targets and collect performance

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data, thereby strengthening Government's accountability mechanisms, and it presents an opportunity for sectorial collaboration on all these targets.

Mr. Speaker, this is the way of ensuring that there is efficient and effective use of resources. Therefore, we needed a new structure that could embrace technology, deliver service that is citizen centric in the shortest possible time frame with the highest level of service, the lowest cost is timely but yet effective, and what that calls for is the delegation and devolution of authority and decision-making through the organization.

The new architecture that we came up with over the last year is one that instead of being pyramidal or triangular shaped, is diamond shaped, and it still has the levels one, two and three. So you still have a level one where you have the leadership of the public service, but that leadership must be capable of delegating decision-making down into the hierarchy of the organization.

Then at level two, Mr. Speaker—this is where the most changes will take place—is where we widen that professional technical stream, where we have public officers who can turn policy into action and who can take the right decisions in the shortest possible time frames and have that effected if we are to have effective service delivery.

At three level, Mr. Speaker, of your diamond—it is now very narrow at the bottom—is what we have catered for, the developmental of that multi-skilled individual which we have right now in the public service; those public officers who perform the range of integrated duties. Therefore, we realize that by having this second level, we are able to delegate some of that decision-making down into the organization, and even to the third level where we have the multi-skilled individual.

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In addition, we cannot delegate decision-making or authority without accountability and reporting and, therefore, with that professional pool, we are able to get accountability and reporting.

10.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me just speak to the bottom of the architecture which is level 3 which is the creation of the more modern and integrated jobs. It is the integration of the clerical and secretarial classes and the entry point to the administrative class into a new series to provide administrative support to Ministries and departments.

Mr. Speaker, we have designed and Cabinet has given approval for the establishment of the management support office series to be able to fill this third layer in the public service. At the entry point is what we call the management support officer I who is the entry level point, then above that is management support officer II which that person can perform more varied and complex tasks and providing more specialized services. At the third level you have what is called the management support coordinator who is supervisory and is capable of integrating the work of all the MSOs, providing quality control and supporting the work of the entire division.

Mr. Speaker, what that tells us is that by having this, we already have some of those multiskilled individuals who can start filling these positions in the public service. But, I want to say because of the new thrust to make sure that it is all merit-based that there will be a competitive process. The MSO series has gone for classification by the CPO, and we hope to have that classified before the end of the year. Therefore, we will provide a new set of opportunities for those upskilled individuals who want to enter the public service.

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If I speak now to the level II, and just before I say that to level II—because what we are saying is that we are now going to be able to provide opportunities for even those at level III of the organization to go to level II. But, what is level II? We said level II is where we are talking about a whole set of new professional streams.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you would recall that we constantly hear the complaint of the number of contract positions created in the public service. The reason for that, and the evidence was there, if you look at the contract positions that have been created, they are in finance and accounting, some are in HR, some are in strategy and monitoring, some are in IT—information technology, and therefore it tells us that the public service did not keep pace with what was emerging, the challenges emerging, and the new professional streams required to service the public.

So, at level II, what we intend to introduce, which will be developed, the job specs for them which would be developed over this next year, is the area of programme management in order to give effect to the performance informed budgeting; because, as I said before, this new architecture will be the vehicle to be able to implement effectively the performance informed budgeting system. So programme managers will be required in order to manage programmes where we have those set targets and where we will be able to monitor and evaluate your performance against those targets that are set. Therefore, your budgetary allocations will be driven, will be informed, by those targets and how well you meet those targets.

Mr. Speaker, procurement specialists: we have to have procurement specialists who are accountable and responsible for transparency and value for

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money in all procurement processes. We have to have new areas of finance and accounts. Facilities management and logistics is an area that has never been treated with in the public service. There are no established positions but yet we have contract positions.

Information and knowledge management, because we know now that we effectively use tools to allow the sharing of information between employees and the public, and knowledge is not lost when employees are moved from one division to another. Strategy and monitoring, audit, human resources, and a very important area that we are developing in the professional stream is called the monitoring and evaluation stream which will allow for the monitoring and evaluation of your performance, so that you can ensure that you understand if you are meeting your targets.

This, again, will be done on a sectorial level. For example, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, they contribute to the same sector, and therefore within that area they can determine how well—what are they contributing to the development of that sector, specific performance metrics and how are you meeting those targets and that is the role of your M&E Unit.

Mr. Speaker, there was so much evidence telling us that this is what we needed to do in this particular structure and I want to give an example. We met with the Public Services Association, the council, and we had a consultation with them. One of the issues that came up for example, Mr. Speaker, is the dental technician. We have dental technicians classified at the level of manipulative, and today the dental technician, that role has evolved where they are able to go out into the schools and assess children. They are just not an assistant anymore to the

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dentist in the health centre. That is an example of where we continue to classify them as manipulative, their job function evolved and therefore, when they got the experience, they would leave the public service. So this is an example of where we take a group of people like that and move them into level II and classify it as a professional stream, because dental technicians or dental assistants is now a new professional stream.

Another example is the food inspectors. Food inspectors, that job, the whole role of it, has evolved. Mr. Speaker, that is another area that we would want to develop a professional stream.

Mr. Speaker, as I said that, let me just say that one of the things that we would be doing, and we have proposed in this new architecture, is to allow for renewal points throughout the entire architecture to bring new life and energy into the organization through entry points at various levels of the architecture. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that it would allow management trainees where development occurs through a programme of orientation, understudy and rotation. This development is needed to translate the intellect, intercapabilities and action on the job, but we cannot take management trainees and put them at the bottom of the organization.

In addition, we could speak to the returning of many of our scholars who cannot find places in the public service. This is one way of being able to ensure that those scholars, instead of coming into the AP programme, can move into the professional streams before they are promoted to the leadership level.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is AP?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: AP is the associate professional. Thank you, Minister. Our scholars, when they return, we put them on an AP programme, the

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associate professional programme, to allow them to develop and get experience before they fit into a public service position.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues here is how do we retain the best and the brightest in the public service and how do we get experts who are in technical fields, who may be desirous of coming to the public service? How do we facilitate that? We have looked at modern compensation systems. I do not think I need to say very much about the compensation system.

I heard a number of people in consultations over last week, after the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, speaking to the issue of compensation not being able to retain the best and the brightest. Therefore, we have to recognize that what has happened over the time—and I just want to say that the Personnel Department will continue working with the Public Services Association in the conduct of the job evaluation exercise for the service, but public officers are crying out for an improved system for compensation, one that feels fair and we are heeding their calls.

Modern classification systems have moved away from long and narrow grading structures, such as our classification and compensation plan, to a pay banding compensation method. Mr. Speaker, some of the benefits of pay banding, which we want to explore over the next year, is that it is an efficient method of placing jobs in bands in accordance with the value of that job. It changes the employee's focus on upward progression through the hierarchy to a focus on competency, development and growth, which will allow for lateral pay progression within the requisite bands, similar positions which are hierarchical in nature; for example, clerks I to IV will be placed in the same band and the differentiation will be based on the qualification and performance. While the pay bands are few, they

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are very wide; creation of a system of pay progression which is aligned with the rewards of performance, thus building a culture of performance, elimination of overlaps between grades which can create a feeling of inequity and flexible arrangements that will reward talent that is short in supply.

Mr. Speaker, why I read out those advantages, those benefits, of this new system of pay banding is that, over this last month, a number of public officers went to a conference by the Public Administrative Institute in the UK and had such discussions. These officers include members of the Ministry of Public Administration, members of the CPO's office, members of the Service Commission Department, and, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, the President of the Public Services Association and two delegates from the union.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Chairman.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: The Chairman, sorry, of the Public Services Association. The reason for that was to be able to get a meeting of minds because we recognize that the existing system cannot continue into the future especially as we try to deliver this new-model HR architecture.

Mr. Speaker, let me quickly say that what we have recognized is that as soon as we are able to do so, we must ensure that, if we implement this new architecture, that there are systems for continuous review of the policy enabling legislation and structure of the public service to take into account advances in all the areas of the introduction of new skill sets. Why I said that, Mr. Speaker, is because, if you look at what has happened over the years, that system that we have today through the legislative and regulatory framework does not allow for us to have that flexibility. Therefore, this is why the public service was unable to respond to the many challenges over the years. So therefore, the creation of jobs, we need to ensure that

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they are flexible and encourage multiskilling. Therefore, as we create this new architecture, we must have this system that allows us to do so.

One of the issues here—let me just quickly say then, with this new architecture, we have been able to address the fragmentation of the HRM through the SHRM council, and we intend to expand the SHRM council to include other associations such as the Police Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission because, as I indicated last night, one of the things that we are doing is that we are moving away from just the renewal and modernization of the civil service to the renewal and modernization of the wider public service.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet has granted approval in principle and therefore to this new structure and we have started some of the planning for the transition programme. We have also drafted, as I indicated, the MS series and that is therefore classifications. We are, right now, Mr. Speaker, discussing with particular agencies, for this next fiscal year, pilot agencies, and later I will be indicating what are those Ministries that we have identified as pilots for this particular project.

Mr. Speaker, capacity building as well: we recognize that we cannot implement this new architecture without strengthening all our central HRM agencies. We have gone out, and you will see it in our PSIP projects, that we have gone out for the strengthening of the Service Commission Department, the strengthening of the Personnel Department, and, in addition to that, we are right now going out for—it is out already. It was advertised as something called the competency based management system.

The Public Service Academy which trains public servants has held a number of training courses in the areas of HR management including job description

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writing and what we call competency-based interviewing. What has happened, we have really eliminated the competency-based aspect in terms of the recruitment and selection exercises.

I am pleased to say today that we have out for tender a competency based management framework which will help bring greater objectivity to the processes of recruitment, selection and transparency, performance management, very important, and therefore, we are able to determine proper compensation for employees. The result will be a better fit between the requirements of the public service and the skill sets of the individual public officers, but this must be complemented with the modernization, as I indicated, of all our HR agencies including their service commissions, the Personnel Department and PMCD. We signed an MOU with Canada where we expect to receive assistance in terms of the strengthening of these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just speak very quickly to this whole issue of contract positions. One of the problems that we have is that we have been hearing over the last year, a number of complaints about the number of contract positions.

10.30 a.m.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in 1990, we had 200 contract employees in the public service. In 2010, we had 11,000. All of the professional jobs and the integrated support functions have been created as contract employment for reasons that I gave before—because the public service itself was not able to keep pace with the development and establishment of professional positions.

However, in order to deal with this backlog in the CPO's office, we have moved towards standardizing contract positions, to ensure that we have a standard job specification for some of these contract positions, which will allow for a

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standard compensation package, and eliminate what happens when we take a year and two years to determine the terms and conditions for contract employees. It is really an unfair practice to contract employees to do them this. Therefore, we have taken all the clerical and secretarial—we have done 26 job descriptions so far, and we have started at the clerical and secretarial manipulators; some HR positions; communications; legal, et cetera. We have eliminated hundreds of varying similar job descriptions through this standardization process.

Over the next year, what we intend to do, is to move forward with other areas such as IT; information management; financial management; auditing; M&E, because what we are doing, we are using these contract positions now, the job descriptions will inform us in our exercise as we develop new job specs for the established positions. Therefore, we will be developing a cadre of skills at this current time, as we move towards that new architecture. So these people will have an opportunity to compete for those new professional jobs that are created at level 2.

Mr. Speaker, what is important in this area is that from now on we will be able to have advertisements in the papers with the pay—when we see advertisements in the papers we do not see a compensation package. We will now be able to advertise the compensation package for that particular job.

In addition to that, another benefit out of this exercise is that we have been able—and Cabinet has approved where employee contracts will be drafted and approved by the Ministries themselves, through their permanent secretaries, instead of having to go to the Chief State Solicitor. The Chief State Solicitor has set out a system, a methodology, in how they actually draft these contracts. In addition to that, there will be the auditor to ensure there is compliance with the methodology.

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Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, we have gone out and have dealt with a number of consultations with stakeholders, and I just wanted to name some, as I indicated to you before: the civil service—we have had consultations at the leadership level; heads of departments; permanent secretaries; deputy permanent secretaries. We have held consultations with the Public Service Commission; the Teaching Service Commission; the Trinidad and Tobago Public Broadcasters Association; and we have also had consultations with some of the—and later this month, in fact, we will have some more with some of the Chambers of Commerce.

I want to ensure that we also understand when we are building capacity in the line HRM functions, to enable the PSC to achieve long-stated goals, this will be a comprehensive exercise. In addition to that, I spoke last night about the integration across the public service, integration of an integrated platform. Part of that is that we have never—we want to implement something called communities of practice, and we will start with the HRM, which means that there will be standards set, so there will be a community of practice for auditors; there will be a community of practice for finance managers; communities of practice for HRM and human resource managers, Mr. Speaker.

In that community of practice, there will be standards and best practices shared in that community of practice, so we ensure that we standardize our practices across the public service, and that we meet best practices and we share experiences among the various—in that professional stream.

I want to deal with this vexing issue, the whole issue of the number of acting positions in the public service, and I want to deal first of all—these long-standing issues faced by public servants that are burdensome and really unreasonable. One of these as you know, Mr. Speaker, has been enunciated over several times, is the

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numerous persons holding acting appointments, sometimes for 10 and 20 years at the very lowest level of this organization. You will be surprised to know what was holding back these appointments. It was because, for example, at the clerk typist level and the clerk stenographer's level, there was a requirement that you have to have shorthand; you know they must have shorthand and they must do this shorthand exam, this Pitman exam. The public service examination board had not had this exam since I cannot remember; I think it was 1992 or something like that, somewhere in the 90s.

As a result of that, I signed a legal order that ensured we were able to remove that requirement. As a result, the Service Commission Department was able to move forward in collecting data on all those who were acting in those positions and making them permanent. This has significantly impacted on the number of outstanding vacancies that we have in the secretarial class in the public service, and in many cases persons have been acting in those positions for 10 years. Hundreds of appointments in that category have now either been made or are in train.

Let me assure you that I am conscious of the constitutional independence of the Public Service Commission, and I maintain an appropriate relationship with that body and its administrative arm. I am happy to report that the Service Commission Department has installed for the first time several simultaneous recruitment teams dedicated to reducing the backlog of appointments in the civil service, something that has not happened for years. I could not understand, all it took was collaborative effort among the various agencies to achieve this. The pace of appointments has already dramatically increased, and the Ministry of Public Administration is ready to provide support needed to ensure the success of this new

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My Ministry has also been in discussion with the Public Service Examinations Board for the administration of a professional examination, for entry into the administrative class in this fiscal year. The last time this exam was held was in the 1990s; this has denied many officers—this is separate from the shorthand, Mr. Speaker. This has denied officers an opportunity for promotion into the administrative class and has resulted in bottlenecks at the lower levels. This is not right, but there is now good news.

We are actively working towards beginning a preparatory training course in January 2013, for a period of six months culminating in the official examination being held soon thereafter. The exams board, along with the Public Service Academy, has already made significant strides towards developing the curriculum for this programme. I firmly believe that hosting this exam will only serve to boost the morale of our clerical officers, as they will see that we now recognize their efforts and want to see our officers develop, grow and—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Speaker, I did not realize time flew so fast. Let me get on now to—when there is so much to say. There are other areas as part of this HR modernization effort towards—I wanted to say one of the things we recognized was that there are many existing systems out there—many other Governments have tried and have proven success in these areas.

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One of the areas in the whole—this book by David Osborne, *Reinventing the Public Service* [*sic*], and there is the *Reinventor's Fieldbook*. I really want to tell everyone who is interested in the public service that they, should have a read of this book because we would understand how it is to remove the **bureaucracy** of the public service. We just have to have the political will to do it, and we have to have the will of the people of this country to say yes, this is what we want.

In terms of service delivery, last night I spoke to the whole multichannel access to services, the no-wrong-door self-assistance approach, Mr. Speaker. I want to just speak very quickly as to what this no-wrong-door approach is all about. The one-stop-shops for Government services, and that is, the time has come that we do not have to go to specific Ministries to have a service done. In fact, the Minister of the People and Social Development spoke to this issue, it is about integrating our service delivery platform. We should be able to go to any Government office in any part of this country and receive any Government service. Therefore, I can go to one teller in a Government office and be allowed to renew my passport, renew my driver's licence, obtain a housing grant—it is a one-stop-shop for Government service, and the technology allows us to do so.

I say this because I listened to the Member for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, and I could not understand what he was getting at when he talked about decentralization and, “dey moving everything to Chaguanas”. Mr. Speaker, this country comprises every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] What is this issue? Why do we want to bottleneck Port of Spain and overcrowd for the simplest of Government services, a citizen must leave Moruga and come all the way to Port of Spain for that service.

I have news for the Members opposite, this Government is serious about

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taking that service delivery to the four corners of this country, to Icacos, to the south-west peninsula, to the north-west peninsula, to Toco, and that is what we will do with our one-stop-shops. Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago as I said last night—when we considered the opportunity cost, we considered what can happen to the effect in the quality of family life, when they have to take the time out to come to Port of Spain to pay taxes.

Think about the impact on the creativity of innovators, of entrepreneurs on business, Mr. Speaker. Think about the quality of family life when we do not have to be queuing to go into the city of Port of Spain. [*Crosstalk*] This is why I wanted to say this morning—this is why we have moved forward in terms of how we are dealing with our service delivery platform. One of the things that we have started is the service delivery charters.

Hon. Member: Do not worry.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: This is just for the benefit of Members. This outlines the organization's commitment to high quality service. We may have seen this when we go into private organizations. They have a service charter that tells us what is the maximum time I must wait before I am attended to. What is the maximum time for a transaction to be completed? How long must I wait before the phone is answered? How many rings? I must expect the public servants on the other side to be courteous. These service charters will go up on the walls of each of our Government offices. In some cases it may require that there may be waivers on fees for not meeting these requirements.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Administration has been collaborating with various public agencies for this. First of all, let me say that the Ministry of the People and Social Development in terms of the targeted conditional cash

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transfer programme; that service charter is well on its way.

The Ministry of Education, the CXC/CAPE/private candidates' examination, the Ministry and Minister of Education will expect to see his service charter going up on the wall very soon. The Ministry of Health medical records—and recently, Mr. Speaker, we have started work with the emergency section of the San Fernando General Hospital; the Ministry of Housing and the Environment grants, that office will also have a service charter.

The MPA awards and management for scholarships, in fact, the scholarships division of the Ministry of Public Administration will be the first to launch its service charter and have it up on the wall.

10.45 a.m.

I want to speak very quickly about ICT before going into Business Process Engineering. I know Members opposite had a serious problem when I made a statement that over the last many years, during the last administration's period—well, first, I spent close to \$1 billion in ICT infrastructure and what has been the impact? In just the same way we cannot throw money at a problem, we cannot throw ICT at a problem and expect that we will realize improvements if there are any, and they are marginal.

When we apply ICT—the only way we will realize significant improvements through ICT is when we are able to reform the accompanying business processes. Then and only then we will realize significant improvements. Therefore, ICT—then, too, in terms of value for money—must be more targeted and strategic investments in technology will see less duplication and more common underlying business processes across different agencies. We must use ICT to make sure we standardize our business processes and that they are embedded within the

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business processes; therefore, the reforming and re-engineering of our processes are in the context of the e-government platform. That is how we will get the connective service delivery and our one-stop shops, when we re-engineer our business processes.

Last year, we had a training programme, which we started, and we had a number of Ministries, including the licensing office of the Ministry of Transport—I cannot remember all right now, but all of these Ministries participated and we used an expert from Singapore because they are ranked number one for some years now in terms of delivery of government services.

When we are talking about using the e-government platform, as I said, with the one-stop shops it must be multichannel and, therefore, it is being designed that it can be done from your smartphone; it can be done from your Blackberry; it could be done from your home computer; but we must still offer that personal interface for that citizen who wants to meet with a public officer. Once we are able to bring in technology, we will find that we are able to integrate the back end of the public service, the transaction-type functions and free up more of our public servants to become customer focused, citizen centric.

The institutions that we worked with, which are in the business process re-engineering training programme are the North-West Regional Health Authority, the Ministry of Education, the Service Commissions Department, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Transport, Licensing Division.

Let me speak very quickly to clustering because the use of clustering has been cited as a new economic development strategy, according to Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School and guru of competitiveness. It will allow for increased productivity, driving and directing the pace of innovation and stimulating

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the formation of new business within the cluster.

Government clusters can be a group of Ministries, agencies, statutory authorities and departments that provide related services. With technology and re-engineered processes, this is realizable. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, clustering allows us to implement monitoring and evaluation systems by sectors, facilitating the performance-informed budgeting and you can measure your contribution to each of these sectors of the economy.

Very important in clustering is that it allows us to implement something called shared services. We heard the Minister of Finance and the Economy speak about shared services in the banking sector. The potential areas for shared services are like human resource, finance and accounting, IT and facilities management, where a client Ministry will actually set up a service level agreement with a providing Ministry.

I am pleased to say that we have embarked on a pilot project for an in-house shared service model without reimbursements, meaning we do not pay for it. The client Ministry is not paying for it and it has started with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Communication in shared services in IT, finance, legal and facilities management. We anticipate that the development of shared services, in tandem with clusters, will help us to maximize existing staff capability, increase efficiency and decrease expenditure.

Let me turn very quickly to scholarships. One of the problems that we have—and I want to say that this division has been working quite hard; one of the best known and widely used service is the Scholarships Division at the Ministry of Public Administration. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have heard all the complaints of the lack of transparency in the process of awarding financial

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assistance by the former administration of the then Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, to this day questions are still being asked as to how these decisions were made. I saw a letter to the editor in one of our daily newspapers from someone who is still incensed with the way that fund was managed, and the person is right to be upset even though more than three years have passed. On coming into the Ministry of Public Administration, I want to say that that must never happen again because of the distrust that has developed for the Scholarships Division of Trinidad and Tobago, the actual award of scholarships.

We have listened and we have acted and we have put in place several strict accountability and reporting mechanisms. What we done, as a key initiative of the Ministry of Public Administration, in February of this year, we launched a Scholarship and Advance Training Information System called SATIS, which facilitates an online application process. This is not a hidden programme where the criteria for granting scholarships are unknown and unrecorded or where a personal note from the Prime Minister is all you need to get a scholarship.

Hon. Member: Which happened in the past.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: What we have done—which happened with the past administration—I want to say that since we have implemented that system, we have had very good responses from the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The system is transparent and open. We have established—and Cabinet Members will know this—we went to Cabinet and we developed an evaluation framework for every scholarship that we offer to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and each of those evaluation frameworks is open and transparent. When you are making your submissions, you are able to follow that evaluation framework and design your

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With the SATIS system, you are now able to track your application. You know how many points you will get for your first class honours. You know how many points you will get for every diploma that you have, so the whole evaluation system has allowed for an open and transparent approach to the selection of candidates for scholarships.

Just to tell you some of the very key points that have been made by various Members, some are saying to us—and I just want to say that several applicants who have been using the system have complimented the MPA on the electronic system. It is a user-friendly system. Some say, “I feel like it is not a government agency. It feels like something I have seen abroad. I am glad that the Government is moving in this direction. I am glad I do not have to come to Port of Spain to fill out an application form for a scholarship.” That is the start of how we are moving, through technology, to make sure these services reach the doorsteps of our citizens. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would say this.

In addition, I wanted to say that one of the things that we have also done is establish an interim human resource management needs listing for Trinidad and Tobago which identifies priority areas of study critical to national development and the award of scholarships. This document is already being used by the Scholarship Selection Committee and score all applications for scholarship offered to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development for collaborating with the Ministry of Public Administration in conducting the job vacancy surveys across the private and public sectors within Trinidad and Tobago and allowing us to establish this list.

The reason for that—because I know the issue was raised about these first class honour students—is that we are awarding a lot of scholarships in areas that are not relevant to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. What it does is that the Government does not get a return on the investment when you are compelled to hire and take on a scholarship winner in the public service and they are not making a significant contribution. In addition to that, the scholarship winner, who is returning, the scholar is frustrated because he or she is not really making a valuable contribution based on the area of study.

Yes, we are widening the number of professional areas in the public service and the private sector has opportunities, but there are still too many scholars who are going abroad, studying, spending a lot of money and yet when they come back, cannot make that contribution.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this year Cabinet approved the first class honour scholarship, but what we have approved is that the first class honour student is eligible for a scholarship, but it must be in an area—and there is a wide range that we have published—it must be in an area relevant to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is how we get value for money in this country.

Let me quickly turn to the other area about accommodation for our public servants. We have an area where we talk about outfitting and in that outfitting area, I want to say, it is an ideal opportunity. We have developed something called an outfitting policy, which will ensure that our public servants are comfortable in the area that they are working. We have designed it to ensure that all accommodation must meet particular criteria before selection and these facilities must be fit for purpose, well furnished, comfortable and conducive to high productivity. Very important, it must be safe and energy efficient.

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Too many times, we have public servants accommodated in areas that are not ergonomically designed to ensure the high productivity of that public servant. We have designed a whole outfitting policy so that public agencies, when they are going to design or select accommodation, must ensure they meet these requirements. It is an ideal opportunity as well to boost the renewable energy sector because one of the things it is asking for is energy efficiency, to develop smart buildings so the accommodation must meet the requirements of a smart building.

There are a number of e-government projects. I do not have the time to go through all of them. Again, too, we would know, under the IDB-funded public sector reform e-government, we have knowledge-brokering programmes. We continue the institutional strengthening of the CSO and brought on board a project manager. There are several other government projects that we would be pursuing under that loan.

Telecommunication: I just want to say very quickly that I would be working closely with the Minister of Science and Technology. What we have done over the last year—I could not understand why this never happened—is that we have looked at how we amend; we have developed a number of amendments to the legislation to ensure that there is healthy competitive behaviour in the telecommunications industry. The reason for that is that a critical element to achieving widespread access to affordable high-speed broadband services is important throughout the entire country.

One of the problems we have is that if the public service does not take up the e-government services and does not use it; if there is no uptake, there is no demand and if you do not have that demand in the public service, then it will not translate

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itself into the private sector. In order to achieve all of this, the e-government platform that we are talking about and the one-stop shop, we must have high-speed broadband services available. I want to just quote that for every 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration, we can expect an average of 1.3 per cent additional growth in national gross domestic product.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year, in order to ensure that we have healthy competitive behaviour, we have commenced work in the strengthening of the legislative and regulatory frameworks which Minister Griffith will be taking forward this year. In addition to that, we also developed the universal service regulations because we expect that the universal service itself would be used to help build out this infrastructure to underserved and uneconomic areas.

We have done pricing regulations as well. Minister Griffith spoke about numbering, number portability. We have gone to Cabinet and it is in the drafting stage right now—accounting separation, quality of service, data submission regulations, et cetera, and we have developed the national broadband plan and strategy to ensure that we have that roll-out.

The reason I wanted to raise that issue is that one of the issues raised yesterday is this whole public/private partnership. The World Bank has been working with the Government over the last year with respect to this national broadband plan and strategy and one of the areas coming out is that the partnership for the broadband should through a public/private partnership.

So when the Member for Point Fortin speaks—I was glad to hear her comments yesterday that this is a modern approach, but the negatives I heard about this PPP approach, I could not understand. I will pass this around [*Document in hand*] to tell you. This is a World Bank document that speaks to the area of the

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PPP approach in broadband communication. It has been tried all over the world and it has proven to be a success. I think that the cooperative model might be the one—*[Interruption]* You said that. I complimented you for that, Madam, but I heard other negative comments from others on that side with the PPP approach.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a minute. I am very happy about the approach, Minister, but what I like more than ever is that you would put the proper systems in place. It falls on you and they must leave it up to you to put the proper systems in place. I know that we can depend on you. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Madam, and I thank you for the vote of confidence. That is the way the new politics goes.

Let me just quickly turn to the whole issue of my constituency. I think I have another—

Mr. Speaker: You have 10 more minutes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, we hear so much—I want to tell you all something and I must say this here today. I keep hearing about section 34—I am not going in that dangerous area, but I want to say something about section 34. Whatever happened with section 34, you know, at the end of the day, all of us inside this room are responsible for that and everyone should have gotten up and apologized. *[Crosstalk]*

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, all I am saying is myself and the Prime Minister—*[Crosstalk]*—I am just saying they should apologize to the nation as well, and like everyone else who has done so.

Let me turn to the constituency of San Fernando West. One of the issues here, the San Fernando Waterfront Project over the last year which has received a

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lot controversial comments; there have been extensive discussions. I want to say on our coming into office, one of the things on my campaign trail is I promised that we would have dealt with the San Fernando Waterfront Project. What was very interesting to me is to see how many project plans were done for the San Fernando Waterfront, starting far back as 1975. Almost 11 plans, and they are too many to name, by consulting firms all paid for by various the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things my constituents asked me on the campaign trail is to ensure that we take this work, we move on with this work, and that we add value to the work. That is what they did. When we came into office, they turned up at my office door, and they said Minister you made a promise. I said yes, I intend to keep that promise.

Mr. Speaker, these San Fernando West constituents who are—some are professionals, some are passionate, some have known this project for so long, came together and they designed, they came up, they reviewed all the various project plans from the past and they came to the major conclusions:

- That we needed to rezone, relocate activities for more compatible land use;
- Reclaim, create land for development for recreational, commercial, industrial housing;
- We must have water front recreation developments;
- There must be a traffic hub;
- There must be marina development;
- You must use existing infrastructure along the old railway line to link Marabella and highway, thus addressing the traffic problems; and

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- Large scale parking and shuffle system.

Why I say this, Mr. Speaker, when we speak to the San Fernando Waterfront Project it is not just about a boardwalk, it is more than just a boardwalk. It is about all the stakeholders coming together and seeing a part they have to play in that particular project. Therefore, there will always be some controversy because you will always have conflicting goals amongst stakeholders; whether it is among the business community, whether it is among the taxi drivers, whether it is among the residents, whether it is among the fishermen. What we have to do is to ensure that we can resolve those conflicts, and make sure that everyone is satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, the intention of the San Fernando Waterfront Project is to be able to ensure that at the end of the day we have economic growth for San Fernando; that the business community which claims so many times and complains about the dying business activity in the center of San Fernando is returned through this waterfront project—so, therefore, business people will move back to the center of San Fernando, and invest that there must be opportunities for recreation because there are no recreational opportunities in San Fernando. There must be entertainment because what has happened in the entertainment industry most of our children have to leave San Fernando and go to Movie Towne and all over. When we did these consultations—I remember in Gulf City in particular, in the Gulf View area—the parents saying to me, Minister make sure within that project there are opportunities where my 18-year-old son and daughter can stay in San Fernando and be entertained. We must have a space for culture, entertainment, night life, Mr. Speaker.

The Waterfront Project was a 24/7. It was supposed to ensure that there is activity 24/7. Part of the issue is to ensure that we also maintain the heritage of

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San Fernando, so the architecture must be one that fits in with the architecture of San Fernando. It is not about tall buildings. I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really came out in the project is that many people who look at the Port of Spain Waterfront Project feel that the Port of Spain Waterfront is disconnected from the city of Port of Spain. The residents of Port of Spain cannot enjoy this particular project because of the Wrightson Road in between. So therefore, there is this pedestrian area to ensure that it connects to San Fernando so the San Fernando Waterfront Project involves a link front the San Fernando Hill, all the way down to the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that one of the issues here is that we have a number of heritage sites in San Fernando and one of them is that old railway station. I am sure many of you remember “last train to San Fernando.” And there is that old railway station that we would like to refurbish and make it a heritage site that will allow for a museum, for example, to go into there. The whole thing is about when we are talking about tourism and the Minister of Tourism has promised to come, to take a look at the project, it must be—because tourists today, the global tourists—the Minister of Tourism, the global tourism industry is demanding sites where there can be that kind of educational opportunities; that link to history is what they are looking for. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, that is why the project was—why can we not go to Naparima Bowl, enjoy a good play or a good concert? And that link straight onto the boardwalk of the wharf where you can go and have a meal after at a restaurant on the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development had gone out and a feasibility study is in process. Because again too, this project is an ideal candidate for the public private

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partnership approach and several business people have been asking, they are very keen on getting this project started. I have been given assurances that the project will start over this next year.

The other issue, I just want to say with respect to San Fernando, is that we have gone through a number infrastructure projects in Marabella. I have said that a couple of times before in terms of the number of roads. I want to thank the Minister of Local Government, the former Minister of Works and Infrastructure, and the current Minister of Works and Infrastructure, for the number of roads through the PURE project that we were able to get paved. I am also happy to say that we have gotten permission to move forward with, I think, the Naparima Bowl as a heritage site. And there are a number of heritage sites in San Fernando.

We have also started the construction of what we call the restoration of the hundred steps. It is one that is known to all San Fernandians. Many of us used it at one point in time. Therefore, I am pleased to tell the citizens of San Fernando, my constituents, that that project has started as of today, thanks to the Minister of Local Government through the PAESL. So that project is ongoing.

Another major project in San Fernando when we speak of URP and those areas is the women's programme. We have started and I want to thank again the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises Development, you know, the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre because last year what happened is when the women graduated out of the training programme, they did such great work, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues there is that I felt that they could forward into their own businesses. But some of these women need further help into how they actually form a business, how they prepare a plan, and they may lack the confidence to go forward.

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Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises Development was able to assign an officer who could look after these women and who could actually give them the confidence to move forward in such a project. Minister, we have started that project and this year another batch of women have graduated and these women, through you Mr. Speaker, will also participate in that programme. [*Desk thumping*]

This is what this Government is about. When this Government speaks about change, it is about how we make things that did not work in the past, work tomorrow. I want to tell you that if we do not believe in change it will never happen. I know that words like change and transformation has become a football in this because of the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to tell you that at the end of the day all of us are here to make our contribution to this country. We have to remember all of us in this august Chamber must remember that we have children and grandchildren to come. What would they say about each and every one of us? We must remember that, Mr. Speaker, I want to appeal to the Members on the opposite side that we stop the politicking and get on with the business of the country. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]