



SPEAKING NOTES OF

THE HONOURABLE KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR, SC

POLITICAL LEADER OF THE UNITED NATIONAL CONGRESS

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

MONDAY NIGHT FORUM

FYZABAD

02 JULY 2018

[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

INTRODUCTION

Good night my UNC family! Thank you for coming out in your numbers tonight to show your love and support for our great party, the United National Congress!

I know many families – perhaps not in this constituency but in neighbouring communities – were affected by the floods after heavy rainfall yesterday.

I know your UNC team was on standby, and on hand to provide assistance to those affected. I wish to thank the councilors and aldermen who were out on the field yesterday, helping where they could.

This is because UNC works for you, and the UNC cares about you.

Not like those in the PNM Government led by Dr Rowley. They do not care about you.

BYE-ELECTIONS

Your party has been hard at work in many areas, but of course especially in the areas of Belmont East and Barataria, where our candidates for these two local government seats have been doing great things.

This weekend, Mrs. Sharon Maraj-Dharam, our Barataria candidate, hosted a legal clinic, and Ms. Liana Babb-Gonzales, our Belmont East candidate hosted a medical clinic. We've received positive feedback from people in these communities.

Next weekend Sunday July 8th OUR Belmont East candidate will host a free legal aid clinic and, our candidate for Barataria will host a fee medical clinic at their respective campaign offices.

Both women have shown their commitment and readiness to represent the people of these areas, and to work on their behalf.

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We ask you, if you have friends and family in these areas, encourage them to vote for the UNC in these two seats.

My friends there are a number of critical issues I wish to share with you tonight, and they all fall under the common theme that this PNM Government cannot be trusted.

National Investment Fund Holdings

Property Tax

Galleons Passage

Crime, crime, crime

PNM Deception – National Investment Fund

Let me show you, why we can never trust this Government. This NIF is like a Ponzi scheme.

On October 2nd 2017, in his presentation of the 2018 budget Finance Minister Imbert announced that as the assets of the CL Financial Group became available from the liquidators, these assets would be divested either as public offerings on the TT stock exchange or through placement on a new national mutual fund.

On May 10th 2018, some 8 months after, he now tells us that the monetizing of the CL debt with an Initial Public Offering of 49.9 percent of the **SHARES** of a newly incorporated company which he announced as The National Investment Fund Holding Company.

Lie 1: Company not in existence at the time.

Do you know that at the date of this announcement there was no such company in existence?

A company search reveals that the NAME “The National Investment Fund Holding Company” was only approved by the Companies Registry one whole week after, on May 17th 2018 (Ref: CYR 2018051408549).

Moreover, the company itself wasn't incorporated until May 29th 2018, almost three weeks after Mr Imbert announced the name of the Company.

Lie 2: Change of plan: no shares but bonds

But that was not the only deception.

According to the Trinidad Guardian of May 25th 2018 business headline: “Imbert: NIF IPO in July”, Imbert revealed at the weekly post-Cabinet media briefing that Government was targeting the end of June or beginning of July to launch the prospectus for the NIF for the sale of assorted CL Financial assets.

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The prospectus, he said, will provide information on the IPO, including various equities and securities in the fund, information on the dividends it is expected to yield and price levels.

But on Tuesday June 26th as he piloted amendments to the Corporation Tax Act, Imbert had a complete about turn on the NIF. At that time and to date neither Members of Parliament nor the general population have seen this prospectus.

Imbert announced in the Parliament that the new National Investment Fund Holding Company Limited (NIFHCL), which was formed to hold the CL Financial assets transferred to Government, would now issue \$4 billion worth of **bonds**, not shares as initially announced in the mid-year budget review, and repeatedly stated on PNM platforms.

So since October they were seeking to find ways in which to dispose of these assets, in May he announced one formula in a company that didn't exist and, days after, changed the formula to something completely different. This is pure PNM deception. Instead of being offered **shares** in profitable companies the population is being asked to **lend** the Government money by way of buying bonds..

It appears that just like with property tax, they are making this up as they go...except that with billions of dollars involved, this reeks of a lack of financial planning and recklessness and incompetence.

Lie 3 : Significantly higher interest rates

The deception continues. The Minister is reported in the media, and this has not been challenged, as having said that the interest rate on the bonds would be four and a half percent but government wanted to make it more attractive so it could be MORE. ¹

The Minister was also at pains to explain that the rate of interest being offered was SIGNIFICANTLY more than current market rates.

¹ Trinidad Guardian Saturday June 9th 2018, Page A10 "Imbert: Organised political mischief against property tax "

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In Parliament on June 26th the Minister was clear that the rate of interest being offered was fixed at **1 percent more than government borrowing rate.**

Lie 4: Debt is A Gift to the Nation

He portrayed this as a gift to the population. How is borrowing from you a gift to you? This reflects the actual need of the government to convince people to invest, especially the longer-term bonds.

It reflects the lack of confidence of the government in its own bond and an acknowledgement of the need to make this offer sweeter than normal because of the lack of confidence of the population in the government. Hence, there is now tax concessions on top of the higher interest rates.

Borrowing:

But what are these bonds? Bonds are borrowing. So the Government is using this opportunity to borrow 4 billion dollars from taxpayers but unlike regular government borrowing, the Government is treating this as income, as the borrowing is being backed by the remainder of the value of shares in the company.

So for the government it is free money. To explain, the Government puts some \$8 billion dollars in assets into the fund.

Because of its unsure potential to generate a sufficiently high revenue base as investment assets, the government now includes shares in the highly profitable TGU which it had surreptitiously tried to sell to Ferrostaal and then issue bonds for same.

It then sells bonds for \$4 billion and is totally dependent on the remaining \$4 billion in assets to either generate enough money over the period to pay off bonds as they mature, or they will be forced to either borrow or sell additional bonds to generate funds to pay off the maturing bonds.

This means that at no time do people who buy these bonds own shares in the company. They hold debt.

Lie 5.: Government Guarantee

Interestingly, the NIF is being created with a debt profile of almost half its assets from the start of its operations.

Government then takes the money raised by the bond, but leaves the debt in the Company effectively shielding the Government of the obligation to repay but also facilitating the concealment of this borrowing as state sector borrowing and likely avoids consideration as part of the ballooning public sector debt which the rating agencies have cautioned about.

It should be noted that unlike the traditional Government borrowing, there is no government guarantee for this bond, despite the fact that the assets OWNED BY TAXPAYERS are to be used secure the bonds.

The Government has refused to guarantee this debt because they don't want it to appear on the states books as Government debt. Their concern is not how the debt will be repaid.

They don't care about repayment because they know they would not be there to repay. That is why they have been borrowing.

Borrowings/Debt

They came to Parliament and raised the borrowing limits so they could borrow more money, and they have! In the last 33 months, Rowley government has borrowed over \$17 billion to take the Public debt to \$94.6 billion.

This does not include the \$1.2 billion dollar loan taken from the Andean Development bank two months ago, drawdowns of \$4.3 billion from the HSF, the \$4 billion they propose to borrow from you under this NIF.

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But borrowing and the difficulty in repayment is only part of this problem. Where are they spending it? What is being done with these billions? State companies still owe contractors billions.

Contractors have gone bankrupt waiting for payment for work done, companies have closed down, employees lost their jobs because this heartless government refuses to pay for work done.

By the end of the financial year the Rowley Government would have spent over 152 billion dollars and as soon as rain sets up, this country floods.

They built stadium, they building overpass, \$400 million plus new highway, Sandals Resort, PM House in Tobago, fixing golf course but people being flooded out every year because they refuse to spend on basic infrastructure.

Lie 6 This is for job creation

At a meeting in Diego Martin on **22nd March 2018** Imbert announced the IPO of assets from the CL Financial companies.

He said then:

"All of these assets which total over 10 billion, will be the security for the National Investment Fund. We are going to sell units in that fund to the general public, so you can now own part of Republic Bank, WICO, OCM and MHI and so on. So we are giving back all of these assets owned by the CL group to you the people"²

Instead he is borrowing from the people.

According to the report by Sean Douglas:

"Imbert said such investors (in the fund) will benefit themselves and help the country by generating public revenues to be used in job creation."

² Trinidad Guardian Saturday March 24th 2018, Page A13 "CL Financial companies for public offering"

Further, he said **“I am making an appeal – support your country and support yourself. Keep people in jobs”**³

The purpose of the NIF is not now nor has it ever been to raise revenue to create jobs.

It is to pay off part of the deficit the Government has generated.

Not a cent is to be used to create productive capacity to generate new revenue streams to pay the public debt they have been growing.

Lie 7 Who is to benefit?

The Minister of Finance boasts that his Government is making provision for the man who has untouched savings of \$100,000 and \$250,000 that he has lying around in a bank, that can be withdrawn and placed in this facility.

Given the current state of the country, many do not have that luxury of hundreds of thousands lying around waiting for Minister Imbert. Some people don't even have enough to get by, to put food on the table, to pay bills...

It seems now that having almost completely run out of tax options, Minister Imbert is now seeking to borrow even more.

So if the average person is unable to afford this facility, who is going to benefit? There are obviously special considerations for institutional investors and company friends of the Minister.

³ (Trinidad Newsday Saturday 24th March 2018, Colm tells public: Buy units in Clico Fund)

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But if Minister Imbert is so confident that workers in this country have surplus money let him place an income restriction and see if the average public servant can afford to lend him money.

This all stems from the Ministers flawed thinking that average citizens have "surplus money" and it is that thinking which has determined his policies including the repeated tax hikes which citizens have been saddled with every year since the PNM came into office.

Unemployment

It has been more than one year since we have had unemployment statistics in Trinidad and Tobago.

The last set of unemployment statistics is since June 2017. Why are they hiding the crisis of unemployment? And without knowing the true state of workers in this country, how can the policy decisions of the Minister of Finance ever be informed. He will always be wrong.

The fact the Minister prefers to ignore is the level of hardship being experienced by the average citizen, the level of frustration by people who cannot get jobs or by people who have to dip into their savings to make ends meet.

Soon they will be told they have to pay higher utility rates and property tax.

This NIF is for those with money. In Fyzabad the trade unions gave the government a failing grade in every aspect of their governance.

We should give them a red card.

Just like the Minister changed the method of calculation of the GDP so he could claim that the non-energy sector grew and therefore claim economic growth in a situation where there remains a significant deficit and the GDP remains lower than what he found when he came into office.

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This is fact... even with the highly questionable information Minister Imbert uses, the GDP now is lower than in 2015 under the PP Government. How is that growth?

PNM Deception – Property Tax

Lie 1 Economy has turned around

Imbert indicated during the mid-year review that the economy is turning around.

According to him, the non-oil sector is growing, the energy sector is booming and they have collected millions more in revenue than they had estimated.

Yet there is no relief for citizens.

He continues borrowing, running up massive debts that you and I, our children and their children will have to pay.

More pressure coming as they are considering increases in utility rates and he remains adamant on imposing the dreaded property tax on the population.

Lie 2 Proper assessments of Property

There is a level of uncertainty with regards to the implementation of the taxes.

I am aware of persons who have indicated that valuers are coming to their homes and valuing their property. I am not aware whether these persons have been trained or qualified to conduct valuations.

Strangely enough, just a few days ago on June 28th 2018, the Ministry of Finance issued the following:

EXTENSION NOTICE CENTRAL TENDERS BOARD

Consulting Services for the Provision of Technical and Professional assistance inclusive of a **programme of training in the valuation of Industrial, Commercial, Mixed Use and Specialist properties for the Valuation**

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Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT).

Prospective consultants are advised that the closing date for the receipt of proposals for the above mentioned project has been extended from Thursday 5th July, 2018 to 1:00 p.m. (local time) on Thursday 12th July, 2018.

After they passed the legislation, and pushing implementation, are they only NOW SEEKING consultants for training Assessors?

So what training do these assessors that have been coming around and assessing people's property have?

Remember that it is on their word that will decide what you are to be taxed.

Is it that people who have no knowledge in property valuation, have no previous experience and now maybe no training or certainly inadequate training at best are going to decide how much I have to pay?

Taxation is subjective?

There is also a major safety issue at a time when there has been an enormous rise in the level of home invasions.

Our citizens have not been told of whether these persons will be coming with an ID and present to you in order for them to come into your homes.

The Minister is only interested in TAX TAX TAX. He does not care about your safety.

Lie 3: Imbert said Pensioners will not have to pay property tax:

Section 23:

(1) The Board may upon the application of the owner of land authorise the deferral of the payment of the assessed tax on the land on the grounds of the impoverished condition of the owner and his inability to improve his financial position significantly by reason of age, impaired health or other special circumstances, that undue hardship to that owner would otherwise ensue.

(2) An application under subsection (1) shall be made in writing in the prescribed form and shall be accompanied by evidence that the applicant—

(a) is in receipt of—

(i) a public assistance grant;

(ii) a disability grant;

(iii) a senior citizens' pension; or

(iv) a Trinidad and Tobago conditional cash transfer card, from the State; or

(b) does not receive an annual income exceeding the maximum amount specified

in section 3 of the Senior Citizens' Pension Act.

(3) The relief granted under this section shall be valid for two years and may be

renewed if the conditions of the applicant as evidenced under subsection (2) remains unchanged.

- All pensioners will have to pay property tax.
- They will get a deferral but that tax attaches to land, so on inheritance their children will have to pay the deferred tax.
- The tax is deferred on a 2-year basis, every 2 years they will have to go to the office and seek a deferral.
- They will have old people, disabled people lining up.

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- They promised a form will be generated for the exemption, up until now no form has been drafted.

Lie # 4 Squatters to pay Property tax:

- Every person who squats on land will have to pay the tax as an owner has been defined as an occupier.
- Section 15 (2): The liability to tax of the owner of any chattel fixed or affixed to land does not create a legal entitlement to the land upon which the chattel is located where the owner of the chattel is not the legal owner of the land.
- They want you pay the tax for the land but it does not give you an entitlement to own the land.

They are making this up as they go. It is poorly thought out.

That is why last year when they tried to ram property tax down the throats of the population threatening to take people's property etc, we took them to court and the court said they were WRONG.

They are taking rental value as the value on which to base your property value.

You have no tenants, never rented, have no income coming from your property that you saved for decades to build, that your children will inherit, have no intention of EVER renting out, but Imbert eyeing your house.

That is why I said that when we get into government, this property tax this government holding like an axe over your heads, will be removed.

PNM Deception – Galleons Passage

This PNM Government seems to think they can say and do anything and get away with it.

They have driven up the country's debt, going around buying boats without proper procurement processes, and giving the people some "Nansi" story every week.

The Opposition has been holding them to account, but they are so deceptive, we have to scrutinize every word they say and every document they bring to Parliament.

Last Tuesday, Senator Wade Mark brought a motion to the Senate calling on the Government to make public the documents regarding the acquisition of the Galleons Passage.

Remember that ghost ship? The one that is forever coming to Trinidad and Tobago but still cannot reach?

A few days later, after Opposition Senators held a news conference calling again for the documents to be made public, on Friday, Minister Imbert laid some 7 documents in the House of Representatives:

1. Evaluation Report- Schulte Marine Services;
2. Memorandum of Agreement;
3. Pre-purchase condition survey;
4. Provisional Certificate;
5. Sea Trial Report;
6. Draft specifications;
7. Valuation Report.

However, the Dunn and Bradstreet report – which Senator Mark's motion specifically requested – a report that conducted a financial and forensic check on the shipyard, the owner of the vessel and the builder - That report is still missing! It was not laid by the Minister.

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Let's start with the valuations that were commissioned on the Galleons Passage.

The first valuation was from Oceanic Design and Survey, a company that is affiliated to the owner of the vessel Sea Lease Pty Limited, which valued it at US\$19M.

Both the Oceanic Design and Survey and Schulte Marine Concepts (SMC) appear to have relied on information provided to them by the design company and/or the shipyard. Both are what we refer to as "desktop/armchair surveys". Both surveys are relying on pictures and other reports generated by third parties.

The second valuation was done by Schulte Marine Concepts (SMC) valued the vessel at \$US35- US\$38M.

So even the owner of the vessel didn't think the Galleons Passage was that valuable.

I want to focus on the SMC Valuation. It is a total of 4 pages long and the Minister of Finance paid \$US 4,500 (approx. TT\$30,000.00) for that, and the methods used to value this vessel by this company are unclear.

The SMC valuation now raises more questions than answers:

1. The builder of the vessel has never constructed a vessel of this size. The GP is 74m long, the longest vessel Sea Transport ever designed was 68m long.
2. There is no track record of the yard, Nansha Shipyard in Guangzhou, Guandong, China, that constructed the vessel.
3. The vessel having been completed, the plans and assessments were not available. The question is why?

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4. The valuator complained in the report that documentation for the vessel was limited.
5. There were no final specifications available, they had to rely on a draft specification.
6. There are differences between the draft valuation and the final vessel. Why were there alterations to the vessel from the original plan?
7. It is pellucid that the vessel suffered significant damage to all its four (4) propellers, drive shafts and stern tubes system. Damage of the nature constitutes major damage. The damage occurred during the vessel's sea trials in the year 2016. Not a scintilla of documentation has been provided with regard to the said repairs except the passing comment in the SMC valuation report which identifies that only the No. 2 main engine drive shaft and stern tube were not replaced following whatever catastrophic event which may have occurred in 2016. This engine is reported to have a "high temperature issue" which the Buyer (Trinidad and Tobago) has been informed. There is no evidence that this issue has been addressed and indeed SMC recommends that the engines not be run at 100% capacity.
8. Engine 2 has a high temperature issue (overheating). It was recommended that the engines not run the engines at 100%.
9. The main engine manufacturers report is not provided.
10. All of these issues and the vessel was valued at US\$35-US\$38M.
11. Also, this valuation was pegged on an assumption that high quality European and international standard equipment was used. The vessel was constructed in a Chinese shipyard so it is safe to assume Chinese equipment was used. The US\$35 - \$38 million estimate of value provided by SMC

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assumes a high quality European built and equipped vessel of similar size and capacity as the Galleons Passage. Unarguably the vessel now in Cuba does not match that description.

When we look at the Pre-purchase condition survey the client is identified on the Lloyd's Register Marine pre-purchase condition survey as the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Mr. Vishnu Dhanpaul, the inspection dates are 4th and 5th December, 2017 (proximity to this date and the appointment of the inter-ministerial Committee is interesting). It seems that the particulars of this vessel were known before the said committee was nominated

1. The vessel is now confirmed to be for tourist-class.
2. It indicated the number of passengers is 672, Imbert said 700 passengers.
3. The vessel indicated it can carry 94 vehicles, Imbert said it will carry 100 vehicles.
4. The vessel was built with a design speed of 22 knots which the vessel has not achieved in its sea trials. It is noteworthy that if the design speed was not reached with the vessel empty then it most certainly will not be reached when she is loaded.

I have estimated that her expected service speed will likely be 16-18 knots which would mean a journey time of as much as 6 hours.

5. All the equipment was not tested.
6. The provisional certificate of registry from Vanuatu indicated the vessel was built in 2015. (I think it meant construction started in 2015). 3 years ago!

The vessel was completed in the year 2016 which is when the

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International Tonnage Certificate was issued - February 2016. The documents provided suggest (see page 10 of the Oceanic Design and Survey Report) that only her "internal fitting out" remained unfinished. This is normal where the last "bells and whistles" will be left to the very end. It is inarguable the vessel was fully functional when she was damaged in her sea trials.

7. The sea trials were commissioned in 2016- the boat is not a new boat as they claimed.
8. The Memorandum of Agreement provided was incomplete, they did not give any appendices that was attached to the MoA. Notably Appendix B which outlined the rectification, modification or upgrade works.

Interference by high government official

Tonight I ask the question - whether a high-ranking government official from Trinidad and Tobago attended a conference sometime in October 2017 where that official met with a high-ranking Venezuelan government official?

We must understand that the Government was looking for a boat to purchase in 2017. So it is my question whether these two high-ranking officials struck a deal, with Trinidad and Tobago agreeing to bail out its Venezuelan counter-part.

All of this should be of grave concern, but this Government continues to try to make them out to be trivial.

There are serious health and safety concerns as hundreds of persons will be using this vessel on the sea-bridge, and we've been told that the repairs/upgrades that are still required will be done after it arrives in Trinidad and Tobago.

This PNM Government has already risked people's lives when the water taxi was used to transport passengers to Tobago.

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Remember that? Remember watching people being pulled from one vessel to the other over a large gap?

Too much is at stake here, and the Government must come clean on this matter.

I call on the Minister of Finance – stop lying to the people of this country. Give us all the facts on this boat.

PNM Deception – Anti-Terrorism Bill

Now the Government came to Parliament to adopt a report by the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Terrorism Bill, and it was clear that the Attorney General wished to simply pass the legislation with amendments coming out of the JSC.

However, even though the Committee did great work, and I commend the Members of the Opposition who participated in the process, there are critical issues in the Bill which must be fixed.

The most important is that the Bill, in its current form, gives too much power to the Attorney General.

Specific clauses in the Bill give the Attorney General powers that are not possible under the Constitution, and they must be amended.

Throughout the debate, and during the Committee stage of the Bill, AG Al Rawi failed to articulate the rationale for increasing the powers of the office of the Attorney General exponentially.

One of these was the AG would have access to financial information under the FIU. We fought against that.

We in the Opposition have proposed that where the legislation confers powers onto the Attorney General that those powers would be more appropriately housed in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for local matters and the Central Authority for international matters.

We submitted amendments to the Bill which do not change the material impact of the law, but would ensure that we have the appropriate checks and balances on any attempted or perceived political interference.

The AG proposed to give himself extra powers under the legislation so that he can get your financial information or refer

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matters to the Commissioner of Police and then the Commissioner would be obliged to give him a police investigation on any person.

I stood strongly against the AG having these powers. The government needs the Opposition's support to pass this Bill and I have signalled that the Opposition will support this Bill only if those powers have been removed.

We simply cannot trust this Government.

And what happened? The Prime Minister jumped in and tried to accuse the Opposition of not wanting to pass the Bill.

Trying to paint us as obstructionists.

Perhaps he doesn't understand but the Parliament is not a "rubber stamp" for any JSC.

In the Parliament I indicated that Muslims make up about 12% of the population and they need to be protected, that this legislation does not target one specific group. The Prime Minister indicated that he needs to protect the entire nation.

He claims to protect to the entire nation but none of us feels safe, because his Government has failed to reduce crime.

The UNC played a significant role in the Joint Select Committee that was appointed to consider the Bill by ensuring that the Bill does not target any specific groups of persons. We ensured every person rights are protected and that every person's rights under any law are protected from abuse.

There have been significant changes to the Bill:

1. **Use of Arabic words**- Comments from the Muslim stakeholders objected to the Arabic words being used as the names of the Committees such as "ISIL (Da'esh); Al Qaeda

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Sanctions Committee it gives the impression that the bill targets operatives that call themselves Muslims. These were subsequently removed and replaced by the "1267, 1989 and 2253 Committee".

2. The Bill had implications for Muslims who decided to send their **zakaat** – their charity - abroad to international charities and organizations, where they may be caught as funding terrorism. We ensured that the legislation has been tightened that persons who legitimately send their zakat abroad would not be captured.

3. Declaring a **geographical area**- the Minister of National Security under the Bill will have the power to declare certain areas in foreign countries as a declared geographical zone where persons who wish to go to those areas must give notice to the Commissioner of Police.

Many Muslim brothers and sisters will be departing soon to perform Hajj and some may be studying or conducting business in middle eastern countries. They may be required to pass through certain countries that may be declared. We have ensured that these citizens are protected.

Any time the Minister declares an area the Opposition has the ability in Parliament to bring the matter for national debate and negative the Order.

We have ensured that any person who enters these zones without even knowing and return are given an opportunity to give their notices.

We understand that the fight against terrorism is an important one and that there are reports of radicalisation in our tiny twin-island country.

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We note that the UK Government's travel advisory indicates that terrorists are VERY LIKELY to carry out attacks in Trinidad and Tobago⁴.

It states: "Although there have been no recent attacks in Trinidad and Tobago, more than 100 Trinidad and Tobago nationals have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight along with Daesh (formerly referred to as ISIL) and are likely to pose a security threat on return."

We are aware of the critical need to have legislation in place.

But while we take action against terrorists we must ensure that no group is discriminated against.

The UNC will ensure that the rights of every single citizen are protected and continue to be protected.

I have always been a strong advocate against discrimination and persecution.

I will always fight for you and stand up for what is right even at times when it is not the most popular decision.

And I have said, we will support good law, and we will support this legislation, however the changes must be made to protect each and every citizen of this country.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/trinidad-and-tobago/terrorism>

Your Voice Matters

My friends, in spite of how things may seem, we must have hope.

I commend those who are ready and willing to raise their voices, to speak out against what this Government is doing.

We must let the Government know that we will not accept poor governance.

That we will not accept **PNM corruption** – from

- Ferry Tales, with the bills of the magic Mystery Ferry going up in costs by millions every time it stops somewhere, to
- the National Investment Fund – a carefully crafted plot to divest our state shares, your patrimony into bonds to sell it off to foreigners, and have ready cash available to them to siphon from- or
- like Fake Oil, where millions of dollars are still missing, and no one has been held to account.

Runaway crime –

A vote for the PNM tells them it's okay to have rampant crime become the norm in this country; with women working in office getting their throats slit to young boys being shot in the yards of their homes and NOTHING being done by THREE Ministers of National Security.

Jobs

It is saying that it's okay that not a single new job has been created, while more are being sent home, driving citizens more and more into abject poverty.

CUTS

The Rowley Government

- stopped food cards for the needy and vulnerable,
- they slashed disability grants,
- they took away the laptops,
- they keep imposing more and more taxes.

How can we work to save T&T?

That is why we are here. I am tasked, and the Opposition takes its role very seriously – to act as **guardians of our** democracy, and guardians of our constitutional rights.

This why I ask you tonight, will you join with me, will you ensure that on election day, you make certain that the PNM knows that we, as a people, are saying no more.

And we must stand together now to return our country to the blessed and bountiful society we can be, a society of equality and equity we were once, and will be again, under a UNC Government.

Hope For A Brighter Tomorrow

My brothers and sisters, as bad as things may seem, we must remain hopeful.

We can and will overcome our challenges, together. What is it we all work so hard for? What matters most to us is our children.

Our children offer us hope, every day that we are pummeled and pained by this Rowley government, we bear it for the sake of the children, because we know that with hope, dreams and wishes can be fulfilled, life can be better and a better future guaranteed.

What we dare to hope for is a day, a morning

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- when we can wake up knowing that we had a restful night, free from worries, free from crime, knowing that no crime has affected our home, or that in our community,
- we want to wake up when we don't see the screaming headlines announcing the deaths of mothers and children, sons, daughters, fathers in our land.
- We want to wake up to a day when the food that we get up to prepare, that that day will be a healthy day, a wholesome day, it will be a day when we are not faced with panic about illness, about one of our members, our loved ones falling ill.

Together We will all make this day happen.

- We will feel safe, knowing that the community comfort patrols were returned and expanded...
- That a national operations centre is collecting intelligence and data in crime hotspots and all areas to dispatch resources as soon as problems arise...
- We want a day when we can know for our children, for the elderly, for our most vulnerable, that should they fall ill that they can get the best health care right here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Together, We will all make this day happen.

On that day,

- there will be a children's hospital open...
- There will be fully staffed and stocked district health facilities.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- The pharmacy shelves will have the CDAP drugs for the underprivileged and vulnerable...
- There will be more world class medical facilities, backed by world class staff...
- There will be more clinics in rural areas so the old and infirm do not have to travel for many hours and sit on corridors waiting for medical care.

How Do We Get There?

We have a long way to go to achieve this future that I envision. So how do we get to where we want to be, that bright future?

First of all, we must believe that such a day is possible.

Everything is possible, once you believe, and this something that each of us can do every single day.

We can make that day a reality, when we stop thinking that the changes required are impossible and beyond us. When we believe that they are within our grasp, that we can do it and we will do it!

So let nothing divide us except our vision, our goal, our aim, to take Trinidad and Tobago forward into the future.

Let us Unite, let us unite with that vision and when we have that same vision, together, united, we make that our life works mission to achieve it.... That is what we must do now.

We will do this united under the banner of the rising sun!

We are committed to getting ourselves ready for that day, a day of equity, a day of equality, a day when hopes are realized, a day of emancipation from this cruel and wicked Rowley government.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Are you ready to move with us? Are you ready to return the party with a plan to rescue Trinidad and Tobago from this uncaring, incompetent Rowley-led Government?

Let us work together to return our beloved nation to greatness.

God bless and thank you all.