

TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

# BUDGET STATEMENT

for Fiscal - 2023



Towards a Smarter, Greener, more Autonomous Tobago

*Presented by  
the Honorable Farley C. Augustine  
Chief Secretary and Secretary of Finance, Trade and the Economy.*

*June 23rd, 2022*



# **BUDGET STATEMENT FOR FISCAL 2023**

**TOWARDS A SMARTER, GREENER, MORE AUTONOMOUS TOBAGO**

**Presented By:  
Honourable Farley C. Augustine  
Chief Secretary and Secretary of Finance, Trade and the Economy  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022**

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## TOWARDS A SMARTER, GREENER, MORE AUTONOMOUS TOBAGO

### 1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Madam Presiding Officer,

Deputy Chief Secretary,

Secretaries,

Assistant Secretaries,

Minority Leader and other Members of the House of Assembly,

Chief Administrator and other Administrators,

Senior Staff of the Tobago House of Assembly,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen in the public gallery,

Local and international audiences following this presentation on radio, television, and other live streams,

Members of the Media,

Good Morning.

- 1.1 Madam Presiding Officer, I want to thank Almighty God for guiding me, strengthening me and using me to serve as I perform this critical function on behalf of the people of Tobago.
- 1.2 I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the people of Tobago for gifting this Administration with the constitutional authority to lead the growth and transformation of the island.
- 1.3 Gratitude is expressed to my staff at the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy, the Office of the Chief Secretary, colleagues in the Executive Council, and everyone that participated in the pre-budget consultations.
- 1.4 Extra special appreciation must be relayed to the Electoral District of Parlatuvier/L'Anse Fourmi/Speyside who have so kindly lent me to the entire island of Tobago. Thank you for your support and understanding.
- 1.5 Finally, I want to thank all of you who are taking the time to listen to this presentation, inside of this House, and via the different media houses and online feeds.
- 1.6 On this historic morning, I have the honour and privilege to present the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Tobago House of Assembly for

the 2023 fiscal year in keeping with Section 41 of the THA Act 40 of 1996. It is indeed a momentous occasion for the brand-new Progressive Democratic Patriots (PDP) Administration, as well as for Tobago and the rest of the country, as it is not only our first Budget, but this is the first time in 21 years that Tobago is receiving policy directives from a new dispensation. Interestingly, we are only the 3<sup>rd</sup> political party, since the installation of Act 40 of 1996, to present a budget in this chamber.

- 1.7 The Draft Estimates, Madam Presiding Officer, are presented against the backdrop of worldwide gloom and anxiety, caused by three major disruptive global events – the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian-Ukraine war resulting from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and climate change. These events threaten the stability and, indeed, the very existence of many countries across the globe.
- 1.8 Madam Presiding Officer, it is evident, even from a cursory glance at the current global developments, that the world has entered another of its dangerous periods. Economic recession, growing unemployment, growing world food shortage, high inflation and a resurgence of the tension associated with the “cold war” era are the most obvious manifestations of this period of danger.
- 1.9 We therefore cannot afford to proceed on the basis of complacency or in the folkloric “mamaguism” that God is somehow a national of this country who has conferred immunity upon us from the dangers that have already struck, as well as from those developing to strike. Your new PDP Administration of Tobago will face the threats with courage, alertness and planning, as well as with the most progressive agenda ever seen in this country, after genuine collaboration with the people of this island.
- 1.10 Madam Presiding Officer, at this point, I want to highlight the significance of today’s event. No single document expresses a nation’s political and policy priorities more fully than does the Annual Budget. The Budget allocates expenditures to the hundreds of government programmes/projects and identifies the revenues – taxes, non-tax funds, and borrowed funds – to pay for these expenditures. More importantly, it expressly presents key policy mandates of a Government for the next fiscal year. Accordingly, our Budget will present the key policy mandates of the Tobago island government for the next fiscal year.

- 1.11 It is of critical importance to note here, Madam Presiding Officer, that the current constitutional arrangements that established the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago have limited, if not denied outright, entitlement of all Tobago Governments, since this colonially arranged marriage, to the political and policy powers of the Budget, due to uncertainties associated with the revenues to be allocated to Tobago by the Central Government.
- 1.12 For instance, Madam Presiding Officer, in the May 15th 2022 Midyear Budget Review, the Minister of Finance increased the national budget by \$3.082B but only allocated \$60M or 1.95 per cent to the THA. This does not look like an oversight but is rather a deliberate contradiction to the recommendations of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) that were accepted and approved by parliament in 2000. But whether oversight or deliberate omission, it is a breach of the law which stipulates that the THA should be awarded between 4.03 per cent-6.9 per cent of the National Budget. Madam Presiding Officer, I am putting the nation on notice that this disregard will not be allowed to continue any longer. New Tobago dispensation, new rules of engagement!
- 1.13 Madam Presiding Officer, the budgetary proposals which follow were influenced primarily by a series of stakeholder consultations, submissions from the Divisions of the THA, ideas from an online platform, a series of consultations and the PDP mandate.
- 1.14 Madam Presiding Officer, in the presentation that follows, I shall endeavour to discuss the fundamental issues, the challenges and opportunities for development which, defined in its broadest sense, encompasses not only production and productivity but the entire socioeconomic, constitutional and institutional ecology of Tobago.
- 1.15 Madam Presiding Officer, for the remainder of the presentation, I will proceed as follows. First, I will provide an outlook for the international, regional and domestic economies. Second, I will identify and discuss policy reactions and actions that must be urgently taken to save lives and livelihoods. Third, I will articulate the long-term socio-economic development framework and the policy agenda for Fiscal 2023. Fourth, I will present the budget numbers and the financing options. Finally, I will provide a conclusion.
- 1.16 Madam Presiding Officer, I wish to alert this House and the listening audience that today's presentation is less parsimonious than I intended. However, I

thought it necessary and important to take the required time to carefully set out the vision, policy agenda and programmes of my Administration. Notwithstanding the length, I assure you that the presentation will be dynamic and ground-breaking.

- 1.17 Madam Presiding Officer, I now examine the outlook for global and regional economies, and then the outlook for the national and Tobago economies.

## **2 OUTLOOK FOR THE GLOBAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND TOBAGO ECONOMIES**

### **a. Global Economic Outlook**

- 2.1 Madam Presiding Officer, Tobago's development efforts face significant headwinds emanating from the international economy. Projections for global growth are now very much dampened by the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In fact, the most recent projections of both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are about 3.6 per cent in both 2022 and 2023, assuming no further escalation in the Russian-Ukraine conflict or expansion of economic sanctions.
- 2.2 According to the IMF, among the major economies, the United States of America (USA) is projected to grow by 3.7 per cent in 2022, while Canada is projected to grow at 3.9 per cent. Both economies are expected to contract in 2023 as monetary policy tightens to suppress inflation.
- 2.3 In the Euro area, growth is forecasted at 2.8 per cent on average in 2022 and even lower in 2023. In the United Kingdom, forecasted growth for 2022 is 3.7 per cent, but this is expected to fall drastically to 1.2 per cent in 2023.
- 2.4 In Asia, China is forecasted to grow at 4.4 per cent in 2022 despite some localized lockdowns in Shanghai and Beijing, but to rise to 5.1 per cent in 2023. India is forecasted to grow to a high of 8.2 per cent in 2022 but will fall to 6.9 per cent in 2023.
- 2.5 Madam Presiding officer, according to the Economy Forecast Agency (EFA), the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) price of oil is forecasted to rise slightly to about **\$114 US** per barrel by December 2022 but is expected to rise even further in 2023. The Henry Hub price of natural gas is expected to rise to



**\$11.35 US** per MMBTU by the end of 2022 and should fluctuate between \$10 and \$12.5 per barrel US in 2023.

- 2.6 Overall, this trend will likely dampen demand for whatever Tobago seeks to export in 2023 and beyond. Associated with all this will be growing inflationary pressures. Increases in the cost of fuel and food linked to both the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war will lead to higher inflation, inflation expectations, and greater demand for wage increases.
- 2.7 The major implication is the need for wise investments to grow Tobago's competitive capacity in the face of these challenges, starting in Fiscal 2023, if possible.

### **b. Regional Economic Outlook**

- 2.8 Madam Presiding Officer, a good development strategy for Tobago will target production of goods and services that can be exported to the markets of the Caribbean region. So they too must be screened for headwinds and enablers.
- 2.9 Economic activity in Latin America and the Caribbean was poised for recovery to pre-pandemic levels but now faces increasing uncertainties owing to developments at the global level. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in this region is projected to grow much less than the world average, in the amount of 2.5 per cent for the next two years. However, within the Caribbean itself, growth rates are projected to be much higher at 10.5 per cent and 9.1 per cent in 2022 and 2023, respectively.
- 2.10 The development challenge within the region is great when consideration is given to the mitigation and adaptation measures required because of climate change and the decarbonization agenda. Every year, weather-related disasters create huge disruptions to production and financial losses within the region, driving down demand for the types of services Tobago can export.
- 2.11 The tourism-dependent economies in the Caribbean have started to re-open from pandemic-induced business closures and, as a consequence, there will be some uptick in economic activity. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) expects overall air travel numbers to rise \$4.0B by 2024, slightly exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels. Within the Caribbean region in particular, the figures should be about 82-92 per cent of the 2019 numbers between 2023 and 2024. Cruise travel is also expected to rebound after facing disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 2.12 Guyana is poised for the largest growth within the region, driven by activity in the petroleum industry. With the lifting of economic sanctions by the USA on Venezuela, the crisis in that country should be greatly reduced, reversing the trend of outward migration and kick-starting the economy. This is a consequence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the need to guarantee oil supplies given that Venezuela possesses one of the largest reserves of oil in the world.
- 2.13 The data suggest mixed prospects from growth and development stimulus in the regional economies, again signalling the need for thoughtful investment in Fiscal 2023 to boost Tobago's capacity to win markets for its exportable output.

### **c. National Economic Outlook**

- 2.14 The outlook for the national economy is of importance to the budget strategy of Tobago because the Trinidad economy is the source of much of the transfer on which Tobago relies and much of the inflation the island imports.
- 2.15 In that regard, the outlook for the national economy is also mixed.
- 2.16 Like other petroleum exporters, Trinidad and Tobago enjoyed relatively high energy prices in 2021/2022, which will continue into Fiscal 2023.
- 2.17 On the other hand, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago in its latest Economic Bulletin reported overall reduction in energy sector production in the third quarter of 2021. There was a decline in natural gas production with the closure of Atlantic Train I and the maintenance closure of Atlantic Train II. Mining and quarrying activity also declined. However, there were strong increases in crude oil production, as well as in increased petrochemical output, the latter driven largely by the growth in methanol and ammonia production.
- 2.18 For the third quarter of 2021, the non-energy sector also experienced mixed fortunes, with increased activity in the transportation and storage, finance and insurance, and manufacturing sectors. That notwithstanding, the manufacturing sector still had about 38 per cent excess capacity, with most of the growth in manufacturing concentrated in the food, beverage and tobacco sub-sectors.
- 2.19 The country's gross official reserves as at the end of April 2022 stood at US \$6.7B, representing about 8 months of import cover. Conditions in the foreign exchange market were quite tight over 2021 in spite of the improvements in energy revenues.

- 2.20 Although business activity has slowly restarted, lingering effects of the pandemic are still evident within the labour market. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) recorded a 6.5 per cent unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2021 as compared to 4.2 per cent one year before.
- 2.21 In March 2022, the rates of headline and food price inflation nationally were 4.1 per cent and 7.9 per cent, respectively, and core inflation was recorded at 3.2 per cent. In spite of rising global interest rates, the Central Bank, starting in March, has kept the repo rate at 3.5 per cent to facilitate the domestic recovery since inflation rates are still relatively low.
- 2.22 Overall, there has been little or no progress with respect to the diversification of the economy in Trinidad away from the energy sector. This points to the continuing need for budget policy in Tobago to be designed to stimulate meaningful development in order to lead the diversification of national exports while creating significant productivity growth to create buffers against imported inflation and generate foreign exchange.

**d. Tobago's Economic Outlook**

- 2.23 Madam Presiding Officer, I now turn my attention to the Tobago economy. The most recent data produced by the Economic Management Research Unit (EMRU) in the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy indicate that Tobago's GDP at constant prices fell by 7 per cent in 2020, relative to 2019, and rose by approximately 4 per cent to an estimated \$1.7B in 2021, relative to 2020. The positive improvement in 2021 has been largely attributed to the gradual reopening of the island's economy in 2021, as well as increased government spending.
- 2.24 Madam Presiding Officer, it is worth noting here that, in the last decade (2011-2021), there were 7 years of declines in GDP, to the point where the island's constant-price GDP in 2021 was equivalent to that of 2011. This means that the economic pie did not increase. However, modest GDP growth is expected in 2022 and 2023.
- 2.25 The data also indicate that the state sector was the largest contributor to Tobago's GDP in 2021, accounting for approximately 48 per cent of the island's GDP. The second largest contributor was the Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services sector, accounting for about 28 per cent. The tourism

sector was the third largest sector, accounting for about 10 per cent of GDP in 2021.

- 2.26 Finally, the data suggest that the agriculture and manufacturing sectors were relatively small, collectively contributing about 2 per cent to Tobago's GDP in 2021, with agriculture's contribution amounting to a mere \$18.7M. Read accurately, Tobago's GDP data speak loudly to continued underperformance of the Tobago economy and the urgent need for budgetary allocations to focus heavily on productivity growth, income generation and the development of competitive export capacity.
- 2.27 Madam Presiding Officer, shifting my attention to labour market conditions in Tobago, I wish to note that the entity charged with the legal responsibility to produce labour market data for the country – the Central Statistical Office (CSO) – continues to produce these data with significant lags.
- 2.28 The latest labour market data for the country and for Tobago are only available up the first quarter of 2021. This situation is untenable and must be addressed frontally in the shortest possible time. Madam Presiding Officer, we cannot plan effectively without current and reliable data.
- 2.29 Madam Presiding Officer, the most recent labour market data suggest that unemployment in Tobago for the first quarter of 2021 was approximately 3 per cent – a figure which is significantly below the national figure of 7 per cent.
- 2.30 The share of the labour force employed in the government sector stood at 54 per cent, with the private sector employing about 46 per cent. Comparatively, the share of the national labour force in the government sector stood at 28 per cent, with the private sector employing about 72 per cent.
- 2.31 Madam Presiding Office, the share of the island's labour force with tertiary education as the highest level of attainment stood at 17 per cent; the share with secondary education as the highest level of attainment was recorded as 55 per cent; and the share with primary education as their highest level of attainment was about 28 per cent. The levels of education and skills point to an economy with weak capacity to adjust in a self-reliant way to the competitive challenges of economic development in the national and global market process.
- 2.32 Madam Presiding Officer, I now turn my attention to prices and inflation. The data above point to an economy that is virtually defenceless in the face of the

threat of inflation imported from the rest of the nation and the world. The most recent data on prices available from the Central Bank suggest that Tobago recorded headline and food price inflation in March 2022 of 3.9 per cent and 6.3 per cent, respectively. Core inflation, which excludes food and energy, was recorded as 3.5 per cent.

- 2.33 Given trends in the national and international markets, the forecast is for continued rising inflation in Fiscal 2023. Madam Presiding Officer, this signals the need to boost our defence against inflation and protect the population from the falling real standard of living it inevitably brings.
- 2.34 Turning my attention to the fiscal operations of the THA, Madam Presiding Officer, I wish to highlight the fact that Central Government transfers to the Assembly have typically been significantly below the amounts requested. On average, on an annual basis, the THA requested \$4.8B but received \$2.3B for the fiscal years 2017-2022, which is approximately 47 per cent of its overall budgetary request. Specifically, the shortfall in recurrent expenditure for the period averaged 36 per cent, while the shortfall in development expenditure was about 84 per cent.
- 2.35 Additionally, Madam Presiding Officer, a disproportionate share of the allocation was assigned to recurrent expenditure. Specifically, on average, 88 per cent of the allocation was assigned to recurrent expenditure, with about 12 per cent (or an average of \$272M) being assigned to development expenditure for the period 2017–2022. Two hundred and seventy-two million dollars (\$272M) amounts to underinvestment in Tobago’s development. It cannot finance the launch of a serious development programme in Tobago. Urgent steps are needed to address this investment deficit, starting in Fiscal 2023.
- 2.36 Moreover, Madam Presiding Officer, annual revenues collected in Tobago averaged \$226.4M for the period 2015-2020 – roughly 10 per cent of Tobago’s actual allocation from the Central Government for that period and 13 per cent of Tobago’s GDP.
- 2.37 Madam Presiding Officer, as I indicated to this House, the total liabilities of the Assembly as at December 13, 2021, stood at \$738.1M. In addition to this, there were contingent liabilities in respect of bond financing, which amounts to \$215.8M payable by 2027. This means that the total liability of the

Assembly was in the vicinity of \$954M, which is about 57 per cent of Tobago's estimated GDP for 2021.

- 2.38 Overall, the data on liabilities point to the urgent need to grow Tobago's GDP and for an allocation to service these liabilities to avoid an emerging debt crisis.
- 2.39 In general, the outlook for Tobago is one populated with challenges, and there are mounting calls for an intensification of the steps towards economic development, which my Administration has started.
- 2.40 In addition, Madam Presiding Officer, like the outlook for the international, regional and national economies, the Tobago outlook also signals an urgent need for budget allocations in Fiscal 2023 to begin the process of strengthening the diversification and development foundations of the Tobago economy and the national economy.
- 2.41 Madam Presiding Officer, I will now highlight a few of the policy actions taken by this Administration since assuming office.

### **3 URGENT POLICY ACTIONS TAKEN**

- 3.1 Madam Presiding Officer, the data and findings unearthed from our international, regional and domestic enquiries so far, point to the need for the intensification of the basic-needs approach my Administration instituted since assuming control of the Assembly.
- 3.2 Having witnessed and noted the devastating impact of COVID-19 and the attendant disruption of lives and livelihoods on assuming office, Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration took the deliberate policy decision to provide for the basic needs of Tobagonians within severe fiscal constraints inherited from our predecessors.
- 3.3 Madam Presiding Officer, policy decisions were taken in the following areas: health, housing, food, education, debt management, and support for businesses.

#### **a. Health**

- 3.4 Madam Presiding Officer, you will recall that when this Administration took office in December 2021, our COVID-19 health challenge was at its peak. However, we took immediate action and through our COVID-19 strategic response, we were able to drastically reduce the number of deaths and

hospitalizations. We expanded our capacity to properly store and look after the bodies of the casualties of COVID-19, which reduced the pressure on loved ones, families and friends.

- 3.5 We increased the COVID-19 vaccination uptake Madam Presiding Officer and, most critically, we strengthened our medical care capabilities at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the Scarborough General Hospital. We established a pure parallel system for COVID-19 patients at the old hospital, thereby reducing patients' exposure. In addition, we improved COVID-19 home care by creating and distributing physiotherapist-led breathing exercises along with improved reporting and communication tools. Madam Presiding Officer, we saved lives.
- 3.6 Additionally, from December 10<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, we distributed 222 general assistance grants valued at \$1.4M for relief and assistance in the areas of medical care, burials, food, clothing, household items, and home rental.

**b. Housing**

- 3.7 Madam Presiding Officer, in the area of housing, we have given out home improvement grants to several households. Tomorrow, we will distribute an additional \$9.7M in grants to 700 plus households in the single largest home improvement grant distribution in the THA's history. Madam Presiding Officer, many of these households have been waiting for years and have become very frustrated with the process. It is for these reasons that the Executive Council took the decision to clear the backlog by making the payments. Since then, the process has been reviewed and a new and cleaner process has been put in place. Our aim is to deliver the much-needed support to our most vulnerable in their time of need.
- 3.8 In addition, we have already assigned 54 service lots to Tobagonians as a result of our first draw for lots at Riseland Housing Development.

**c. Food**

- 3.9 Madam Presiding Officer, there is a need for a long-term solution to the current global food shortages, we have taken the decision to accelerate our capacity and capability to produce alternative flours and promote household production of fresh vegetables while building out the island's food sovereignty and security systems. As we must have all heard by now, National Flour Mills increased its price for flour by thirty-three per cent (33%) as of yesterday, resulting in a

twenty-eight per cent (28%) increase for citizens. Madam Presiding Officer, this is even more justification for this strategic decision.

- 3.10 The Food Card Programme based on the findings of the 2021 special audit was transferred to the Division of Health, Wellness and Social Protection. Work is being done with our bankers to upgrade the programme to the E-wallet model.

**d. Education**

- 3.11 Madam Presiding Officer, we have reinstated in-person teaching and learning in all of our schools. Relatedly, we returned the school feeding and nutrition programme to full capacity, providing meals for all students in the programme at the Pre-School, Primary and Secondary School levels.
- 3.12 In a collaboration between the Divisions of Health and Education, we designed and implemented COVID-19 protocols at all our schools. We provided remote learning devices for over **1000** primary and secondary students.
- 3.13 We upgraded our school transportation programme in keeping with the new policy that was developed by the Division of Education, Research and Technology. We provided grants to the tune of \$1.6M to maxi-taxi owners contracted under the school transportation programme to assist them with the required safety upgrades and maintenance.
- 3.14 Further, we have already made 21 million dollars available to the Division of Education, Research and Technology to conduct extensive school repairs during the 2022 July/August vacation. I am advised that this is the single largest July/August school repair programme that the THA will be having. This is well justified as the plants were closed for two years.

**e. Debt Management**

- 3.15 Madam Presiding Officer, to ascertain the correctness of the debts inherited, I commissioned a forensic audit into the programmes associated with the liabilities. The audit should be completed by September 2022 (much later than we hoped for, but that deadline is necessary to facilitate the volume of work) and in the interest of transparency and open government, the findings will be made public. And where the evidence points to infractions of the law, the culprits will be prosecuted.
- 3.16 Notwithstanding, I have given a public commitment to provide compensation, in very small part, for the works completed in these projects. We understand



that many contractors unfortunately got tied up by the wrongdoings of the past Administration, but our legal team and the auditors have advised that we can only provide small payments at this time so as to not jeopardize the outcomes.

- 3.17 As an immediate response to these inherited fiscal constraints, I established a debt management committee in the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy. This committee has been gathering information on cost-efficient and implementable modalities and has submitted an interim report which is being actioned. Madam Presiding Officer, our goal is to manage the liquidation of these liabilities without compromising or upending our current and future development agenda for the island.

**f. Support for Businesses**

- 3.18 Madam Presiding Officer, in recognition of the lethal damage COVID-19 has inflicted on the Tobago business community, I commissioned the Economic Management and Research Unit (EMRU) in the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy to conduct a study on the impact of the pandemic on businesses in Tobago and to identify practical, implementable and affordable solutions as to how the Assembly could further assist towards ensuring indigenous business continuity.
- 3.19 Madam Presiding Officer, the preliminary results from the study indicate that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some 40 per cent of our businesses experienced challenges meeting their payrolls and some 37 per cent their obligations to financial institutions, occasioned by reductions in sales (up to 89 per cent), shortage of cash flow (up to 63 per cent), and disruption in the supply of raw materials/inputs (up to 35 per cent).
- 3.20 Madam Presiding Officer, these challenges have been identified as the major threats to the Tobago business community. As Chief Secretary and Secretary with direct responsibility for the development and management of the Tobago economy, I have been having extensive discussions with some of the leading banks and non-bank financial institutions with the aim of mitigating the harmful effects the pandemic has had, and continues to have, on businesses on the island.
- 3.21 Madam Presiding Officer, at the same time, the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy is in direct discussion with some commercial banks with the aim of co-creating a Tobago-specific cash flow solution. We are currently preparing

a THA-backed \$60M liquidity facility to assist the island's business sector to recover from the adverse effects of the pandemic, along with practical and affordable ways of increasing the volume of domestic, regional and international visitors to the island.

- 3.22 Madam Presiding Officer, this has been a snapshot of the policy actions taken and my colleagues will present more during the debate.
- 3.23 Madam Presiding Officer, I will now set out in detail my Administration's Policy Agenda for Fiscal 2023.

#### 4 **THA POLICY AGENDA FOR FISCAL 2023**

- 4.1 Madam Presiding Officer, I have said repeatedly in many places that the aim – or, more aptly, ambition – of my Administration is to make Tobago “***the greatest little island on the planet***”. It is to develop every child, every family and every village in Tobago. Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration recognises and acknowledges that, for development to be meaningful, it must ultimately positively impact the livelihoods and quality of life of Tobagonians. In other words, Madam Presiding Officer, development is about “**improving the People's welfare**”.

- 4.2 Madam Presiding Officer, our vision of Tobago is as an island with the following attributes:

- ***A per capita income and standard of living that surpass those of other small-island states;***
- ***A highly educated and innovative population;***
- ***A technologically-driven, innovative, productive, resilient and competitive economy;***
- ***An efficient, effective and accountable public service;***
- ***A modern, scientific, and efficient healthcare sector;***
- ***Constitutional autonomy within the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;***
- ***Every Tobagonian having opportunities for self-actualization;***
- ***Protection and caring for the most vulnerable;***
- ***A population that is united, peaceful, safe and secure;***
- ***Green and modern state of the art public infrastructure; and,***

▪ ***Open, transparent, accountable and inclusive governance.***

4.3 Madam Presiding Officer, despite the old, unproductive noises coming from our political opponents and detractors, who have had their day and who were comprehensively rejected by the people, my team and I will continue to chart and implement a progressive, innovative, and people-friendly course.

4.4 In keeping with our vision for Tobago, Madam Presiding Officer, the Budget Statement for Fiscal 2023, the first installment of the longer-term development goal of making Tobago “***the greatest little island on the planet***”, is themed: **“Towards a Smarter, Greener, More Autonomous Tobago.”**

4.5 Madam Presiding Officer, we are starting now.

4.6 Accordingly, the core development framework and the strategic priority areas for growth, development and transformation in Fiscal 2023 will be the focus of the remainder of this section. I will be discussing the following themes: governance reform, economic transformation and business development, tourism sector development and the orange economy, food security and sovereignty, the blue economy, human capital development, health and the social protection programme, community development and empowerment, institutional reform and transformation, development of young people, sport development and recreational infrastructure, public safety, and physical infrastructure development.

4.7 Madam Presiding Officer, I start with governance reform.

**a. Governance Reform**

4.8 Madam Presiding Officer, good governance is undoubtedly the linchpin that holds a society together and determines the successful outcomes of its development efforts. In Tobago’s case, one element of good governance is autonomy, that is, the right of Tobagonians to determine their social, economic and political destiny.

4.9 Madam Presiding Officer, after nearly sixty (60) years of Independence and almost forty-two (42) of the modern-day Tobago House of Assembly, it remains an irrefutable fact that the current constitutional and legislative arrangements that established the government of Tobago and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago deny us our autonomy. Actually, they take away our

right to determine our social, economic and political destiny without interference from the national Government.

- 4.10 Madam Presiding Officer, the autonomy bills before the Parliament have been found to be woefully inadequate and were therefore comprehensively rejected by the majority of Tobagonians. Notably, there has been no legislative action on this critical issue for nearly a year now. Let me put the national community on notice that this Administration will take all the necessary steps for the people of Tobago to be given their constitutional right to self-determination.
- 4.11 To this end, for the first time in the history of the THA, Madam Presiding Officer, we have established a new Division – the Office of the Deputy Chief Secretary. The Office includes a Department of Intergovernmental Affairs (DIA) with the principal responsibility to secure self-government for Tobago in the shortest possible time.
- 4.12 Madam Presiding Officer, the first major gain from a sufficient level of autonomy is that it will allow Tobago to control and deploy its resources and plan its development in the context of the national economy wisely, in the light of relevant facts, and without reference to the goings-on in the Cabinet.
- 4.13 The second major gain will be a greater focus of the national investment capacity on national economic diversification and development through Tobago.
- 4.14 Madam Presiding Officer, some of this relates to proper boundaries for Tobago being recognized in the law and some to the monetization of the oil and gas located in the seas around Tobago. This new THA Administration has resolved to purposefully pursue legislative and regulatory changes towards a ***fair-share revenue agreement*** associated with greater autonomy for Tobago.
- 4.15 Furthermore, Madam Presiding Officer, given the recent discoveries of oil and gas in the waters around Tobago, it is time to return to the bargaining table to negotiate a new revenue-sharing agreement between Tobago and Trinidad. We are grateful for the template that the Dispute Resolution Commission has established and see the upper limit of **6.9 per cent** as a good starting point, not a settled position. Therefore, this will be the starting point of our conversation(s) with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance in respect of Tobago's allocation for development spending in Fiscal 2023.

- 4.16 As a matter of fact, Tobago and Trinidad should advance the conversation to include consideration of formulae for sharing of natural resources, consensual exploration of these resources and reward sharing.
- 4.17 As part of the development of the Office of the Deputy Chief Secretary and this bold new push for greater autonomy, this Division will negotiate our just dues through an Energy Bureau, and it will simultaneously rally the support of our large, intelligent and powerful diaspora living in Trinidad and elsewhere around the world.
- 4.18 With regard to mobilising our diaspora for the push for greater autonomy, one must appreciate that our efforts this round must be radically different from anything we have tried before. Tobagonians are tired of the repetitive cycle of – first, consultations in Tobago; second, ensuing public debates with the same leading voices; third, a proposed bill; and then fourth, rejection by the national parliament. We have been trying that method since APT James and it has not resulted in the granting of a Tobago government structured the way we want. We are officially tired of the excessive talk and lack of real action by the national parliament. So, as we speak, efforts are underway to establish the first THA outpost in Port of Spain. Just as Scotland operating a Scotland House (representing the government of Scotland) at number 58 Victoria Embankment, Temple, London, THERE WILL BE A TOBAGO HOUSE located on Pembroke Street, Port of Spain. We can't get autonomy by staying in Tobago; we will take the time to educate our Trinidadian friends and family on this matter while pushing for the national parliament to correct a colonial wrong.
- 4.19 Madam Presiding Officer, I now look at our strategies for economic transformation and business development.

**b. Economic Transformation and Business Development**

- 4.20 Madam Presiding Officer, our strategies for economic transformation and business development are built on productivity growth, support for innovation, mobilization of foreign direct investment, diaspora engagement and support for businesses.

*i. Productivity Growth*

- 4.21 Madam Presiding Officer, permit me to describe Tobago's economy as **services-led, tourism-driven, and government-powered**, with productivity challenges that we must frontally engage.
- 4.22 Madam Presiding Officer, to address the productivity challenge in the public sector on the island, we propose to:
- accelerate the digital transformation of the operation of the THA to marry speed with efficiency;
  - train, retool and reskill public servants and public officers at all levels;
  - lead an internal campaign to generate sentiments of pride, joy and patriotism among workers of the THA;
  - provide specialized training for administrators, heads of departments and other persons in supervisory positions;
  - introduce a more rigorous performance management system to monitor and evaluate worker productivity and identify training needs;
  - promote greater public accountability for public resources;
  - improve the working environment to ignite and sustain the productivity of workers; and,
  - implement a recognition and award system for service excellence across the THA.
- 4.23 And to treat with the productivity issues in the private sector, we propose to:
- engage the different business chambers and other business organizations on the island with the aim of co-creating solutions to their productivity issues;
  - provide financial and technical assistance to businesses through the THA's Venture Capital Equity Fund and the Business Development Unit to incentivize productivity improvements in the private sector; and,
  - provide the quality of public infrastructure that will enhance and promote productivity in the private sector.

- 4.24 Moreover, Madam Presiding Officer, we will engage with the labour unions and businesses in a tripartite arrangement to arrive at additional strategies to address the productivity problems on the island.

*ii. Innovation*

- 4.25 Madam Presiding Officer, we also need to expand and diversify our economy and, therefore, to find new and more efficient and innovative ways of doing some of the tasks we now perform, produce new goods and services, and make their delivery to market more efficient. However, Madam Presiding Officer, we recognize that, for innovation to take place, we must foster an enabling environment that encourages and supports innovation in our society.
- 4.26 Our education system needs to be re-oriented to produce students who can pursue critical and innovative ways of thinking and turn them into life-altering technologies and businesses. In addition, the THA must become an innovative institution where public service is continuously brought up to date by the application of new processes, the introduction of new techniques, and the creation of new value.
- 4.27 This Administration therefore commits to creating an environment that supports scientific research and the development of innovative products and services. In this regard, we propose to:
- provide targeted financial assistance to both individuals and businesses for innovation in products, services and business processes;
  - establish and fund a Tobago innovation challenge programme at the primary and secondary levels of our education system;
  - support research and development in food technology, agri-technologies, renewables and the general sciences in collaboration with tertiary institutions;
  - develop the Tobago Strategic Policy Framework to guide the development and promotion of innovation; and,
  - support the commercialization of innovative ideas and technologies, and protect their intellectual property rights.

*iii. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy and Diaspora Engagement*

4.28 Madam Presiding Officer, we are mindful of the fact that, to fuel our economic transformation, we need to significantly address the financial constraints affecting the Assembly. We also recognize that to drive our development in any meaningful way, we must mobilize resources beyond our budgetary allocation and our domestic resources. In this regard, we believe foreign direct investment can be a significant catalyst to drive Tobago's economic development. Over the last 20 years, Tobago has not done well in attracting foreign direct investment. Accordingly, this Administration will work to reduce or eliminate some of the legal as well as institutional constraints that negatively impact Tobago's attractiveness to foreign direct investors. In this regard, over the next fiscal year, the THA will move aggressively to stimulate foreign direct investment flows by:

- developing a comprehensive investment policy that addresses the key constraints to doing business in Tobago;
- lobbying the Cabinet to amend the Foreign Investment Act and to review and improve the fiscal incentives that are currently offered to investors in Tobago. This is critical to the entire country's economic diversification efforts;
- having the current land licensing regime removed. (It is inimical to Tobago's autonomy efforts to have some Minister sitting in an office in Port of Spain, without a clue about Tobago's needs, cultural nuances, and spatial issues but deciding who can come and invest and where they can invest. Only a PNM THA could have so carelessly given away Tobago's economic independence. This Administration will be doing a comprehensive spatial plan for Tobago. This plan will determine and protect environmentally sensitive areas, the integrity of small villages);
- creating appropriate zones for commercial activity, residential activity and agricultural activities. (This spatial plan will be the new way to manage FDIs among other investments and where they are placed. This is what Tobago should have done in the first place. It is wholly undemocratic, and can potentially lead to corruption, to have one or two public officers deciding for an entire island where FDIs should go);



- streamlining the processes and procedures for foreign investors for ease of understanding of the requirements for investing in the Tobago space. (Already, foreigners and Trinis are commending us on our decision to abolish the archaic dress code policy. Even some Central Government Services in Tobago have adopted the policy, namely Registrar General's office and Licensing. Meanwhile, "yachties" in Trinidad are complaining that they are required to come ashore dressed in long pants and shoes to access services of customs and excise and immigration);
- expediting the development of a land use or spatial development plan that would identify designated zones for certain types of development projects;
- lobbying the Cabinet to use Trinidad and Tobago Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates abroad to facilitate investment; The Tobago desk at our Embassies and Consulates should be reestablished; and,
- launching an aggressive investment marketing campaign to encourage persons from the diaspora to invest in Tobago.

4.29 Madam Presiding Officer, there is a large number of Tobagonians domiciled outside of Tobago that are willing to contribute to the island's development. We must harness the skills and abilities of these persons to deepen our economic and social transformation. In this regard, over the next fiscal year, we propose to:

- develop a comprehensive diaspora engagement strategy to provide a clear framework for the diaspora contribution and participation in Tobago's development;
- develop and maintain a comprehensive database of Tobagonians in the diaspora;
- collaborate more effectively with Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) groups in diasporic communities in providing philanthropy of different forms to the health sector in Tobago;
- promote a diaspora homecoming event to coincide with the Heritage 2023 celebration;

- develop a mentorship programme utilizing successful professionals from the diaspora to assist in capacity expansion of young Tobago professionals; and,
- collaborate with NGO groups in diasporic communities in hosting trade shows and exhibitions, thereby providing market exposure to Tobago businesses, products and services.
- Collaborate with local NGOs, cultural groups, fashion designers, agro-processors and other artisans travel to areas with significant number of Tobagonians living abroad to engage and promote opportunities available at home.
- provide a suite of incentives for Tobagonians returning home to invest in commercial activity on the island.

4.30 Madam Presiding Officer, the Diaspora Engagement Unit and the Foreign Investment Unit in the Office of the Deputy Chief Secretary will be tasked with leading our strategy to attract foreign direct investment from our diaspora.

*iv. THA Support for Business*

4.31 Madam Presiding Officer, the development of an indigenous private business sector in Tobago is another critical pillar in our strategy for economic development and transformation. Over the past 20 years, the THA established a number of programmes and initiatives to provide financial and technical support designed to boost business development in the island. However, these programmes have not succeeded in developing private businesses in the island to encouraging levels.

4.32 Madam Presiding Officer, under the Enterprise Assistance Grant Programme (EAGP), 2571 grants with a value of \$32.7M were dispersed since its inception in 2011. Adjacently, under the Enterprise Assistance Fund (EAF) that was established in 2004, a total of 275 loans valued at \$26.5M have been issued to date. Madam Presiding Officer, this loan portfolio is plagued with a very high and troubling rate of delinquency of 32 per cent. This does not speak well for the management and overall sustainability of the Fund. In fact, this speaks of a reckless management of State resources and the sometimes dangerous intersection of politics and business.

- 4.33 Similarly, Madam Presiding Officer, under the Venture Capital Equity Fund programme which commenced in 2011, a total equity investment of \$13.5M has been made in five (5) investee companies, 80 per cent of which are currently experiencing severe financial hardship. And I must hasten to add that the financial hardship of these businesses started sometime ahead of the pandemic.
- 4.34 Madam Presiding Officer, as the Secretary with the responsibility for these programmes, I have given the Boards the mandate to reorganize and repurpose them to improve efficiency and their overall level of effectiveness.
- 4.35 There will be policy changes, especially within the Business Development Unit. For starters, the Unit will be required to now consider providing grants and/or loans for the purchase of stock or raw materials. SMEs will also now be empowered to use the funding to purchase equipment and/or stock internationally. Additionally, the BDU will be required to consider grants and loans for the creative sector. So now, local filmmakers, musicians, performing and visual artists can look forward to investments in their craft.
- 4.36 Madam Presiding Officer, there is still the need for us to find innovative and creative ways of mobilizing larger volumes of cost-efficient investment capital to fund economic and business development projects on the island. It is against this backdrop that my Administration is seriously pursuing the establishment of an economic development financing mechanism along the lines of a Tobago Development Bank.
- 4.37 Madam Presiding Officer, I am pleased to announce that discussions have been held with officials of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago about the establishment of a Tobago Development Bank. The officials of both entities expressly stated their support for the idea and have committed to providing technical support for the design of the governance and operational aspects. The CDB has also expressed its willingness to fund the preparation of a detailed Concept Note to initiate the process.
- 4.38 Madam Presiding Officer, we envisage that a Tobago Development Bank will perform the following functions, among others:
- mobilisation of investment capital to fund the economic expansion and development programmes and projects of the Assembly;

- provision of banking and financial intermediary services to financial entities indigenous to Tobago, such as credit unions;
- provision of low-cost educational loans to Tobagonians;
- serving as the banker of the Assembly;
- provision of land-banking services to Tobagonians; and,
- subsuming all the existing THA business financing and development programmes in its operations.

- 4.39 In addition, Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration has decided to establish a Trade Unit in the Division of Finance, Trade and the Economy, with the core mandate of creating trading links and export opportunities for Tobago export-oriented businesses. The Unit will also provide the necessary technical support to these businesses to ensure that they meet all the standards and requirements to export their products regionally and internationally. The Unit will be geared to building the much-needed infrastructure to expand market access that will boost the viability of the island's businesses.
- 4.40 Further, Madam Presiding Officer, Cove Eco-Industrial and Business Park (CEIBP) remains one of the most important assets in Tobago's industrial development equation. It provides factory spaces for businesses to establish their production plants. It also provides long-term land leases to businesses that prefer to construct their own factory spaces to meet certain production requirements that are not available in the built spaces. Currently, there are fourteen (14) tenants operating production plants at the business park. The business park is operated and managed by the Eco-Industrial Development Company of Tobago (E-IDCOT).
- 4.41 Madam Presiding Officer, the new Board of Directors of E-IDCOT has been mandated to immediately conduct an evaluation of the company's business model that specifically looks at its processes, systems and human resources. In addition, my Administration is actively pursuing the development of E-IDCOT into Tobago's premier project management entity, which will manage all the major development projects of the Assembly. This is intended to create a circular flow of finance among the entities of the Assembly and reduce financial outflows.

- 4.42 Madam Presiding Officer, the Studley Park Quarry is pregnant with significant revenue-earning potential, notwithstanding the failure of the last Administration to birth these possibilities. This Administration is intent on harvesting the revenue-earning potential of this treasured asset and, accordingly, the new Board has been mandated to review and address where necessary the business model of the company. It has also been mandated to explore the possibilities of diversifying the product offering towards new value-added products such as stone tiles, sandpaper and to explore new export markets.
- 4.43 Madam Presiding Officer, please permit me to look at our strategy for development of the tourism sector and the Orange Economy.

**c. Tourism Sector Development and the Orange Economy**

- 4.44 Madam Presiding Officer, tourism is an important sector in Tobago's economic landscape and, for the short-to-medium term, it is expected to continue to play that role. Madam Presiding Officer, our borders have now reopened. We are learning to live with COVID-19 and actively preparing for the resumed inflow of visitors. We must rebuild our tourism sector and regain lost momentum. Therefore, in Fiscal 2023, this Administration intends to make the required investment in order to take specific steps to begin unlocking and deploying the underutilized development potential of the tourism sector.
- 4.45 However, as you are well aware, Madam Presiding Officer, we do not have sufficient high-end rooms to sustain an economically viable tourism industry. The preliminary estimates suggest that we need at least 5000 high-end rooms to build a viable tourism sector in Tobago. Currently, the shortfall is about 2,500 rooms.
- 4.46 Madam Presiding Officer, I am happy to announce that we have had preliminary discussions with two major investors. Collectively, these two investments will result in the direct injection of approximately \$1.5B into the Tobago economy. Both investments are likely to add about 850 rooms in the next three years.
- 4.47 Madam Presiding Officer, one of these investments relates to the Rocky Point Hotel development. This project started in the most troubling manner, but we are attempting to responsibly manage this project in the interest of Tobagonians. When we got into the office, the developers reached out and

indicated that they had not had a formal conversation with the THA prior. It is unbelievable that a tourism-related project (a 5<sup>th</sup> schedule item) of that magnitude was planned for Tobago without Tobago's leadership's input. After learning of these developments, we did the responsible thing and invited the principals to Tobago to tour the land and meet with the stakeholders. It is the expressed intention of my Administration to monitor and work closely with the developers to ensure that all the concerns that were raised are addressed to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. We are awaiting the final designs and plans.

- 4.48 All things being equal, Madam Presiding Officer, indications are that, during the construction phase, these two investments will provide approximately **1,050 jobs** for young Tobagonians and approximately **425 full-time jobs** upon commissioning and full operation.
- 4.49 Madam Presiding Officer, we are exploring and evaluating a development model where the value of concessions and the land provided to any developer are exchanged for shares/equity in a holding company. This is a model we intend to pursue where development projects in Tobago require concessions from the THA.
- 4.50 Madam Presiding Officer, as it relates to Manta Lodge and Sanctuary Resort, this Administration is actively pursuing the divestment option in relation to these properties, which were purchased by our predecessors in 2014 for \$32.0M and which continue to attract millions of dollars in expenditure annually.
- 4.51 Further, Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration will establish a Tourism Cross-Sectoral Committee. The Committee will provide guidance and take actions on matters impacting tourism development which are outside of the direct purview of the Division of Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation and its supporting companies. (It is my understanding that a similar committee was in operation several years ago.) This initiative is rooted in the recognition of the gaps in addressing several issues which impact tourism, not the least of which are visitor safety, beautification of downtown Scarborough and open spaces, management of sites and attractions, service delivery across the industry, air and seaport facilities, health protocols, and other cross-sectoral issues.

4.52 Madam Presiding Officer, other initiatives we intend to undertake will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- an aggressive strategic marketing campaign, aimed at revitalizing the domestic and international arrivals;
- strategic partnership with tourism stakeholders in pursuit of several green initiatives that will make Tobago that ideal green, sustainable, hospitable, relaxing, warm and therapeutic place for vacationers;
- upgrade of existing public and community awareness initiatives that highlight economic opportunities for residents;
- the provision of financial and technical resources through the Tobago Tourism Agency to enable the adaptation of digital technologies such as websites, booking engines and property management systems integrated with channel managers to improve business processes; and,
- the provision of financial and technical assistance to assist businesses to undertake appropriate organizational changes and the transformation of business activities, processes, competencies, and models.

4.53 Madam Presiding Officer, as previously mentioned, Tobago is a service-driven, tourism-led economy. For an economy such as ours to be buoyant, it will require predictable, sufficient, and reliable air and sea transport. At my last check, Madam Presiding Officer, the paltry offerings by Caribbean Airlines of 12 flights daily are sold out till the Tobago Carnival in October, and even beyond. And while this is so, the hotel and guest house capacity remains at fifty per cent bookings.

4.54 The excuse I was given is that it is costly to keep the ANR Robinson airport open till 1:30 am in the morning as we have grown accustomed to. In other words, it is too costly to keep the Tobago airport open till 1:30 am, while the Trinidad airport is open 24 hours every day. I have checked with AATT and discovered that the cost to keep the airport open till 2 am daily will cost only \$16,800 per day. Somebody in the Central Government thinks it is too costly to pay \$16,800 per day to keep the Tobago airport open for this economy to get moving again.

- 4.55 Madam Presiding Officer, we propose to foot the bill from our airlift support resources to keep our Tobago airport open. After all, air and sea ports are part of the remit of the 5<sup>th</sup> schedule. This is a clear signal from this Administration that we do not just want autonomy, but we are ready for the responsibility. Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL), you now have no excuses. The movement of CAL between the both islands is an essential service and it is the duty of the Central Government to fund such an operation. Therefore, I am using this platform to say to CAL, 'Please return to full capacity!'
- 4.56 Madam Presiding Officer, the gains from the targeted investments will be considerable. The tourism business establishments will become more efficient, which will free up time and resources to focus on strategic tasks. Business incomes and savings will grow as the gap closes between enticing a potential visitor and closing a sale. New good jobs will be created as the sector develops and, altogether, Tobago will experience a rising standard of living.
- 4.57 Madam Presiding Officer, the Creative Economy, also called the Orange Economy, comprises designs and visual arts, tourism and cultural heritage, new media and software, performing arts music and literary arts, and publications. The most recent estimates by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) suggest that if the orange economy globally were seen as a single country, it would be the 4th largest economy (currently worth \$4.29 trillion dollars) and the 9<sup>th</sup> largest exporter of goods and services (\$646B), and it will have the 4<sup>th</sup> largest labour force (144 million workers).
- 4.58 Madam Presiding Officer, we inherited a poorly maintained and underdeveloped Shaw Park Complex along with the newly formed Tobago Performing Arts Company (TPAC), and we immediately set out to bring some structure to the space. We got the Air conditioning fixed, so now the space is useable. We supported with THA resources the adventures of the TPAC as it is this Administration's intent to explore available opportunities in the orange economy. The possibilities for the orange economy were bought to the fore by the overwhelming response to one of TPACs signature productions--**the Bitter Cassava**. This production was well received in both Tobago and Trinidad. Over the next fiscal year, we propose, through Shaw Park Complex and TPAC, to undertake the following initiatives:



- provide technical support to primary and secondary schools in Tobago for the VAPA programmes;
- provide technical support to the various communities to enhance the quality of their Heritage productions;
- host a Festival of Performing Arts called Melé to showcase local plays and local cultural talents;
- embark on a marketing campaign to take the Bitter Cassava production to regional and international audiences;
- provide technical support aimed at making the Tobago Carnival a distinctly Tobagonian product, blending the cultural nuances of Tobago with a contemporary Carnival flair;
- build out all performance and training spaces at the Shaw Park Complex to include among other things: a recording studio, a green room, LED Room, dance studios, small theatres, meeting/conference rooms etc;
- explore film-making opportunities;
- have a dedicated team that will market Tobago as a filmmakers' paradise;
- create documentaries, soaps, sitcoms, children content, public education content and creative advertisements for the promotion of Tobago among others;
- bring world-renowned experts in the performing and visual arts to take up residency at the facility to promote the training of our young people.
- transformation of Shaw Park Complex as an academic facility where tertiary level institution(s) can offer their degree programmes. This will be part of our development of Education for export; and,
- within the next month, the Departments of Culture and Antiquities will be resident at the Shaw Park Complex. Finally, Tobago's most expensive development project is being put to good use.

4.59 Moreover, Madam Presiding Officer, the Tobago Festivals Commission will be mandated to offer to visitors some of the signature Heritage Festival events, including goat and crab races throughout the year. Further, the Commission along with the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute will oversee the introduction of a Food and Wine Festival in 2023. Relatedly, the Department

- of Culture will establish a Steel Pan Academy in Tobago, which will include the making and tuning of steel pans and also classes in playing the steel pan.
- 4.60 Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration has decided to establish an Antiquities Unit to more effectively use our archaeological artifacts as part of our tourism product. In Fiscal 2023, the Antiquities Department will rehabilitate and refurbish various historical sites, inclusive of the Speyside Waterwheel, the Roxborough Cocoa House, and the Canoe Bay Sugar Mills among others to more formally integrate them into the island's tourism product. The Department will also develop an Antiquities Registry System that will more accurately keep check of our cultural and historical assets.
- 4.61 Given that Tobago has had a more storied past than most other Caribbean territories, there is an URGENT need to have an Assembly Bill sent down to parliament to have legislation enacted to protect the island's artifacts. We have a few indiscriminate and inconsiderate citizens pilfering and trading artifacts from across the island. Individuals have stolen artifacts from State lands and private holdings, and have taken these artifacts into their homes and even exported some. Some have harvested the artifacts and sold them as scrap iron. Others have repositioned artifacts to their own yards and used artifacts, such as the large copper pots once used to boil sugar cane juice, to plant flowers and adorn themselves, thereby robbing the population of access to part of their history.
- 4.62 We will explore having archaeologists and university students participate in controlled/authorized digs. In the long run, Tobago will have to invest in climate controlled facilities and appropriate spaces to house artifacts and historical records on the island.
- 4.63 Madam Presiding Officer, I now turn to Food Security and Sovereignty.

**d. Food Security and Sovereignty**

- 4.64 Madam Presiding Officer, the state of the agricultural sector and food security in Tobago are untenable. The island's agricultural sector contributes less than one per cent (1 per cent) of Tobago's estimated GDP, which amounted to \$18.4M in 2021. The sector employs 2.5 per cent of the labour force or about 800 workers. This means that labour productivity in agriculture, crudely measured, is just about 44 per cent, even lower than that of the government sector at 88 per cent. Further, it is estimated that as much as eighty (80) per

cent of the fresh agricultural products sold and consumed in Tobago are imported from Trinidad. The data signals an urgent need for rapid productivity growth in, and transformation of, our agricultural sector.

- 4.65 Additionally, Madam Presiding Officer, the COVID-19 pandemic, the disruption of supply chains globally and the Ukraine-Russian war with the attendant increases in food prices have made it more urgent for decisive actions to be taken towards the development of our agriculture sector and food security systems.
- 4.66 Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration intends to make safe and nutritious foods available and affordable to all Tobagonians. Towards this end, we are committed to undertaking all necessary steps to revitalize Tobago's agricultural sector and build sustainability in the island's food security systems.
- 4.67 The Division of Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development is committed to addressing delays in Tractor Pool services to farmers. A Committee has been established to review the operational efficiency of the Tractor Pool service. In cases where the demands for land preparation services exceed Tractor Pool's ability to deliver these services, the Division will outsource to private tractor operators.
- 4.68 We intend, Madam Presiding Officer, to get more young people involved in agriculture through the strengthening of 4-H school clubs as well as apprenticeship programmes. The Kendal Farm School will be upgraded to the Tobago Agriculture Research Institute (TARI), which will deliver a Tobago Youth in Agriculture Training Programme. The strategic objective is to establish an institution for continuous training and development of farmers and a cadre of skilled young agri-entrepreneurs to drive the sustainable development of the sector. The institute will place greater emphasis on the use of virtual training and more community-centric, face-to-face training as it seeks to make its offerings more accessible.
- 4.69 Madam Presiding Officer, in addition to the aforementioned initiatives, TARI will also utilize existing infrastructure at Hope Farm, Goldsborough, and other sites across Tobago to link research, training, and practice geared towards stimulating growth and productivity in the agricultural sector through the deployment of *climate-smart agricultural technologies*.

- 4.70 The roll-out of TARI will be spearheaded by the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries in collaboration with Tobago Agribusiness Development Company (TADCO). Work on the establishment of TARI will commence in Fiscal 2023.
- 4.71 Madam Presiding Officer, TADCO has been mandated to lead and ensure the sustainable growth and development of the agribusiness sector in Tobago. TADCO will re-purpose the Shaw Park temporary market into a day/night market where farmers, agro-processors, food vendors, artisans and craftsmen will be able to sell their products.
- 4.72 Madam Presiding Officer, the THA will strengthen ongoing collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) towards enhancing the school nutrition programme through greater infusions of local agricultural produce in the meal offerings. This initiative is intended to provide a guaranteed market for locally produced agricultural products to be consumed in the School Nutrition Programme.
- 4.73 We also intend to foster greater synergies between the agriculture sector and the tourism sector through festivals such as the Yam Festival, the Blue Food Festival, the Breadfruit Festival and the Mango Festival.
- 4.74 Another aspect of the agro-tourism initiative will be the revitalization of the cocoa industry, especially its valued history and culture.
- 4.75 Madam Presiding Officer, to support the research and technical agenda of the sector, various databases are being digitized to make the collection and sharing of data more efficient. The Research and Development of Information System (RADIS) project has also been launched by the Division. Data enumerators have been employed to start collecting agricultural data from the various agricultural districts.
- 4.76 Madam Presiding Officer, we propose to increase production and productivity in the agriculture sector by:
- making agriculture lands accessible and available for farming through an enhanced road infrastructure development programme;
  - establishing at least two highly specialized mega-farms of no less than 100 acres each;

- introducing, promoting and deploying appropriate farming technologies; and,
- providing financial and technical assistance to incentivise agricultural production and agro-processing in Tobago.

4.77 Madam Presiding Officer, I now turn to the Blue Economy.

**e. The Blue Economy**

4.78 Madam Presiding Officer, according to the United Nations and its affiliates, the blue economy is defined as the range of economic sectors and related policies that determine whether the use of oceanic resources is sustainable. The blue economy concept is about promoting economic growth while preserving and improving the livelihoods that are dependent on coastal assets and the ocean. Madam Presiding Officer, given Tobago's geographical location and its associated marine park resources, the development of the blue island economy presents significant potential for the socio-economic transformation of Tobagonians.

4.79 Madam Presiding Officer, globally, the fishing industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry that provides significant economic growth and development opportunities for small-island economies like Tobago. We are all aware that many Tobagonians currently derive their livelihoods from our marine resources and coastal assets. However, there is still substantial untapped potential to use these resources to spur diversification and the strengthening of Tobago's economic base.

4.80 Madam Presiding Officer, our core strategy is the modernization of our fishing industry. In this regard, we will provide the necessary resources to the sector to:

- start work to establish the Tobago Institute of Marine Education (TIME), which will deal primarily with research and development and the training of fishers and other operators in the industry to have this facility operational while exploits in the development of marinas are beginning. (Tobago must not have a marina built without there being trained professionals in the space to manage the operations and maintenance opportunities associated with marinas. In this effort, we

are prepared to partner with the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and to send on scholarship to the Caribbean Maritime University in Jamaica a cohort of young people to be trained);

- to support the establishment of marinas in the Tobago space with the THA leading the way. (Recently, I had cause to politely and legally tell NIDCO that it was out of place. Act 40 of 1996 is clear: once it is a 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule matter, the activity SHALL be carried out by and through the THA);
- strengthen fisherfolk associations with the strategic aim of having them transition into cooperatives;
- provide financial assistance and technical support to assist fishers to increase fleet, fleet sizes, the configuration of fleet types, and infusion of modern fishing technologies;
- relaunch the Gas Rebate Incentive Programme;
- promote the development of value-added in respect of seafood products that satisfy international up-to-date food safety standards by financing options through our Venture Capital Equity Fund Limited (VCEFL) and Business Development Unit (BDU);
- upgrade all fishing facilities on the island and ensure that they are HACCP-compliant or to meet international up-to-date food safety standards and be functionally effective;
- research, develop and deploy appropriate sargassum (seaweed) management systems and technologies; In the next fiscal year, Tobago will move away from the use of backhoes and excavators for the clearing of beaches. We cannot be battling coastal degradation and contributing to it at the same time;
- develop and implement an integrated and coordinated security and safety framework that includes, but is not limited to, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, Police Service, Maritime Services, Air Guard, Division of Health and TEMA; and,
- commission a fish audit to determine the types and sizes of fishes, the breeding grounds and quantities in our waters.

- 4.81 Madam Presiding Officer, please permit me to now speak to the issues of the environment and climate change.

**f. Environment and Climate Change**

- 4.82 Madam Presiding Officer, as many are aware, North-East Tobago was designated as a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Reserve approximately nineteen (19) months ago. The North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve presents a rare, largely intact, Caribbean Island Ridge-to-Ocean ecosystem that includes the world's oldest tropical rainforest reserve. The Biosphere Reserve encompasses 83,488 hectares, with a marine area of 68,384 hectares that is home to coral reefs and mangroves among other resources.
- 4.83 Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration intends to exploit fully all opportunities for the development and marketing of the Tobago that come with such designation. The UNESCO MAB designation presents prospects for:-
- enhancement of Tobago's international reputation and brand recognition which can be used by entrepreneurs to successfully market local goods and services;
  - the attraction of **"Green Visitors"** in greater numbers and creating additional spending in the wider tourism sector;
  - increased funding for international donors, development banks and private investment to support environmental conservation activities and development of the green, blue and purple economies in support of sustainable development;
  - enhanced opportunities for education and professional development through international exchanges; and,
  - an elevated focus on the environmental challenges of concern.
- 4.84 Madam Presiding Officer, it is important to note that UNESCO MAB designation provides a robust framework through which a progressive, ecologically focussed, culturally sensitive, people-centred development agenda can be pursued. Indeed, international organizations are already showing an interest in establishing long term investment profiles and partnerships based on the UNESCO MAB development framework.

- 4.85 Madam Presiding Officer, given the challenging socioeconomic legacy of COVID-19 and in consideration of key environmental and ecological issues that we must address given our dependence on natural assets for our socioeconomic wellbeing, the potential of this designation to be an important post-COVID recovery catalyst for North-East Tobago and the entire island must be harnessed, and we intend to do just that.
- 4.86 Madam Presiding Officer, on the other hand, climate change remains the biggest existential threat to life and livelihoods that we have grown accustomed to. For Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean Region, **sea-level rise (SLR)** and **rising sea surface temperatures (RSST)** pose significant threats to coastal ecological systems such as coral reefs, beaches, coastal communities and infrastructure.
- 4.87 Madam Presiding Officer, within the Buccoo Reef Marine Protected Area, RSSTs and the anthropogenic effects arising from land-based activities have already resulted in a significant coral decline in the Buccoo Reef. In addition to serving as nurseries for pelagic species, coral also plays an important role in wave attenuation. Therefore, coral decline also results in feedback effects that manifest along our shorelines in the form of coastal erosion and accretion.
- 4.88 Madam Presiding Officer, these effects are very evident along Tobago's treasured coastlines. We are concerned about erosion along every coastline around the island. Recently, a technical team from the CDB visited and conducted an assessment of coastal erosion around Tobago. Madam Presiding Officer, having led the team along the site visits, I can tell you that they were very astonished by the severity and aggressive nature of the erosion taking place around the island.
- 4.89 Madam Presiding Officer, the situation in the east is also dire, with homes, beaches and fishing facilities under direct threat. The preliminary and conservative estimate given by the CDB team for the implementation of a well-engineered coastal protection and restoration program is at least **\$1.2B**. I am advised that the team submitted an interim report to the Ministry of Planning and Development for funding consideration. Madam Presiding Officer, our technical officers are in constant contact with the Bank's team and await the required and necessary funding.



- 4.90 It should therefore be clear, Madam Presiding Officer, that addressing the issues related to RSSTs, SLR and coastal erosion requires an approach that incorporates **coastal risk assessment**, including, but not limited to: -
- the modelling of the impacts of Sea Level Rise on coastal geomorphology;
  - modelling of the impacts of RSSTs on coastal biological systems, e.g., coral reefs;
  - community-based vulnerability assessment within coastal communities;
  - identification of coastal adaptation pathways;
  - identification of the limits to adaptation; and,
  - selection of the most appropriate adaptation options.
- 4.91 Madam Presiding Officer, the Coastal Management Unit in the Division of Infrastructure, Quarries, and Urban Development is engaged in a process of finding hard solutions. However, the tactical installation of armoured rocks and other hard structures along vulnerable coastlines is only one strategy which, regrettably could at times lead to **maladaptive** coastal management outcomes that could exacerbate the effects of coastal erosion.
- 4.92 Madam Presiding Officer, such **maladaptive responses** already exist in coastal southwest Tobago, in areas such as Black Rock, Swallows, and the Pigeon Point Heritage Park. What is therefore urgently required is a suite of solutions that include infrastructure fixes, nature-based solutions, institutional strengthening, and a clear plan of action. In this regard, Madam Presiding Officer, the Secretary with responsibility for coastal management is currently engaged in a process to undertake a comprehensive study of coastal erosion across all of Tobago's shorelines.
- 4.93 This project is entitled **Living with the SEA**. Beginning in Fiscal 2023, we will establish a **Living with the SEA** working group that will be tasked with the responsibility of developing a comprehensive coastal resilience plan for areas that have been affected by the impacts of climatic and environmental changes.
- 4.94 Madam Presiding Officer, as part of the global community, Tobago remains committed to playing its part in meeting global climate targets, notwithstanding our insignificant role in fuelling climate change. In pursuit of a net zero economy, the THA intends to account accurately for the role that

its natural assets play in offsetting carbon emission by exploring non-invasive ways of measuring the carbon sequestration capacity of Tobago's forest resources. Some experts believe the results of such an exercise may very well reveal that the island has already achieved and, indeed, exceeded the net zero target.

- 4.95 Madam Presiding Officer, this information is expected to be particularly valuable to our international environmental reputation and tourism marketing efforts. Further, verifying Tobago's status in terms of the net zero target allows us not only to get involved in the potentially lucrative carbon trading market, but it also provides useful information to guide economic development on the island along sustainable pathways by monitoring the cumulative climatic impact of existing and planned economic activities against the carbon offsetting capacity of the island.
- 4.96 Madam Presiding Officer, reforestation is an important climate mitigation strategy that contributes to the achievement of the net zero target, given the role of forests in carbon sequestration. However, in small island developing states (SIDs) like ours with limited land space and competing land uses, efficient use of the limited space is a social, economic and environmental imperative. In addition to continuing with conventional reforestation activities, the THA finds it prudently necessary to invest in agroforestry systems, including, but not limited to, the **The Tobago Breadfruit Initiative**, which helps to address issues related to food security in a way which integrates households and communities in the process, while addressing the climate challenge by positively contributing to the carbon sequestration capacity of the island.
- 4.97 In addition, Madam Presiding Officer, focus will be placed on restoring natural ecosystems like mangrove forests to address climate impacts. The integrity of natural ecosystems like mangrove forests is a critical element of the matrix of solutions for addressing climate change impacts, particularly in small island developing states (SIDs). Mangroves have a superior capacity to sequester carbon compared to terrestrial forests. They provide a range of ecosystem services and critical functions, which includes, among other things, shoreline stabilization, storm protection and water quality maintenance, as well as the

provision of habitats, feeding and nursery grounds for a variety of terrestrial and marine species.

- 4.98 In this regard, Madam Presiding officer, my Administration is committed to making the required investments in the restoration of natural ecosystems by supporting the restoration of wetlands across the island, including where necessary and practicable, the acquisition of privately-held wetland assets that are considered critical to our conservation and net zero ideals.
- 4.99 Madam Presiding Officer, globally, the energy and transport sectors are the source of a very significant majority of greenhouse gas emissions and, therefore, these sectors hold the key to meeting the climate challenge. Reducing global carbon emissions to net zero by mid-century is consistent with efforts to limit the long-term increase in average global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius. However, this calls for a transformation of how we all produce, transport, and consume energy. It also calls for the meaningful involvement of citizens in the process, as the transition to net zero is for and about people. A transition of this nature can only be achieved with the sustained support and participation of citizens.
- 4.100 Madam Presiding Officer, for many countries, the net zero path is narrow and staying on that pathway requires immediate investment in clean and efficient energy technologies. While Tobago isn't a significant producer of energy, its long tradition of environmental stewardship, our international obligations, and our commitment to the net zero pathway call for scaling up investment in renewable energy, particularly solar electricity.
- 4.101 In light of the rapidly-reducing cost of solar power infrastructure and as the technology becomes more efficient, electrification must be considered as an important economy-wide tool for reducing emissions in support of our net zero ideals. Accordingly, the THA is committed to facilitating the process to ensure that the energy requirements of all new public housing developments and existing THA-owned facilities will be satisfied in part by renewable energy powered by solar electricity. The THA is committed to the development of a policy framework to incentivise the inclusion of renewable energy in supplying power to all new industrial, commercial and residential developments that are privately owned.

- 4.102 Further Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration is committed to a progressive urban and rural planning agenda which provides for significant uptake in the utilization of renewable energy in facilitating the establishment and maintenance of commercial infrastructure and communication in support of sustainable development.
- 4.103 We will partner with the private sector to eliminate the use of plastic bags at groceries and department stores island-wide.
- 4.104 Finally, Madam Presiding Officer, the THA intends to incentivize greater use of greener and more energy-efficient vehicles by working with public and private partners, locally and internationally, to facilitate the establishment of the appropriate infrastructure on the island to power those vehicles. Already PTSC has signalled that its next fleet of busses, due to arrive in 2023, will be electric. The THA's next fleet of vehicles will also be electric. This Executive wishes to signal that all publicly-owned car parks and locations with public offices will all have charging ports for electric vehicles.
- 4.105 Madam Presiding Officer, I will now speak to education and human capital Development.

**g. Education and Human Capital Development**

- 4.106 Madam Presiding Officer, education is the key ingredient in our growth and transformation matrix to make Tobago **'the greatest little island on the planet.'** As Chief Secretary and also as an educator, I place a very high premium on education and knowledge capital. Accordingly, this Administration has resolved to make the necessary levels of investment in the education, training, retooling, and reskilling of Tobagonians, especially our young people.
- 4.107 Madam Presiding Officer, our strategic policy objective is to prepare Tobagonians to be responsible and productive citizens who can actively participate in the island's development and compete on a global scale.
- 4.108 Madam Presiding Officer, the goal of this Administration is to immediately begin the rebuilding and transformation of the island's education system into a modern, digital, technologically-driven, client-friendly, high-performing and resilient learning ecology.

4.109 Our intention is to make the investments necessary for the development of the education sector in Fiscal 2023. Madam Presiding Officer, the investments will be geared towards the following:

- the completion of all the preconstruction works and requirements for the construction of the New Scarborough Secondary Smart School at Bacolet at a projected cost of \$500M, which will be funded by a CDB loan;
- completion of the assessment of the other secondary schools for their upgrade to Smart School designation;
- development and design of a plan for the construction of a new special school for students in the speech, language and hearing impairment sector;
- capacity-building training in school leadership and governance in the focal areas of school-based management, performance-based management; public school discipline policy and planning; effective school framework; and positive behaviour management;
- provision to our teachers with the necessary training and resources that will equip them with the competencies required to effectively engage students in technologically-enabled digital classrooms;
- monitoring and evaluation of the performance of students at the primary school level via the Tobago District Assessment;
- assessment of COVID-19-induced learning losses and making the necessary interventions to correct same to avoid future learning losses;
- development and strengthening of the Technical Vocation and Education Training (TVET) to provide for a two-track education system in Tobago that will include our trade schools;
- conversion of Roxborough Secondary into the Caribbean's premier and possibly only TVET school that takes a youth from secondary education all the way to tertiary education. It must be one of a kind. And, Madam Presiding Officer, I am ironically making this pronouncement 3 days after the passing of one of the island's foremost TVET educators and Roxborough Secondary teacher: Mr. Arcturus Browne of Charlotteville;
- an aggressive campaign to acquire sufficient and suitably qualified teachers in TVET;

- reassessment of the School Nutrition Programme to ensure that our students are being fed clean, safe and healthy meals. A school feeding observatory will be set up to facilitate timely access by parents to the weekly menus. The Division of Education, Research and Technology has already signalled its intent to now pay \$15 per breakfast and \$25 per lunch (a \$5-dollars increase);
- creation and alignment of the school curriculum with a Tobago-specific cultural and historical agenda that will reinforce the students' and their communities' sense of self;
- development of specific interventions and associated investments to improve the performance of our students at both the primary and secondary levels;
- ensuring that all critical remedial or enhancement works on the school plant are completed on time and within budget;
- retrofitting schools at the various levels of the education sector to accommodate special-needs students and staff;
- effective September 01, 2022, the hiring of pupil aids and teacher aids to assist with the integration of students throughout the public school system. (Effective September 01, 2022, the hiring of Occupational Therapists, Speech/Language Therapists, Physiotherapists, Art therapists and Diagnostic Specialists for our schools in general and our schools for the Deaf at Bon Accord and Happy Haven more specifically. Currently, we have none formally engaged in the education system); and,
- constructing a purpose-built, modern, technologically advanced school for special-needs children on the island. (Madam Presiding Officer, Tobago should be collectively ashamed that, in 2022, we have inadequate facilities for special-needs children. We are all to be blamed for the lack of proper measures to integrate special-needs children into the school system. This Executive has established a special committee led by the Head of Planning, Mr. Bobby Andrews to complete the planning and speedy execution of plans for the development of this school at Signal Hill. Already, one architect has committed his services and those of his students for free to this project. Given that we are

collectively responsible for their marginalization, I wish to appeal to all Tobagonians to contribute in whatever way you can to this project. There will be designated maxis traveling from Tobago East and Tobago North to transport the special-needs children to school. These maxis will be used until we can acquire special-built buses. Support staff will accompany these students on the maxis).

4.110 Madam Presiding Officer, the gains from investment in the development of human capital will be many and widespread. If, as intended, we invest from pre-school to university, then as a society, as communities, and as individuals, we will be able to make better decisions and increase our chances of transforming Tobago. Productivity is expected to grow, boosting taxable capacity, savings and self-reliance. The costs of criminal behaviour will fall dramatically, and social harmony will grow.

4.111 Madam Presiding Officer, I now turn to the Health and the Social Protection Programme.

#### **h. Health and the Social Protection Programme**

4.112 Madam Presiding Officer, the general health status and wellbeing of any population have implications for its socio-economic development. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has upended the health and wellbeing of the global population, has clearly demonstrated this. It has also tested the resilience, and exposed the fragility, of the health care systems in all countries.

4.113 Madam Presiding Officer, our own health care system was severely stretched and stressed by the pandemic. The fragility and weaknesses in our health system were laid bare before us, worsened by the inept management of our predecessors. We are committed to “**fixing dis**”.

4.114 Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration is committed to reorganising and transforming the institutions, systems and processes towards building resilience and specialized capabilities into the island’s healthcare delivery. Among the development measures we propose to implement in Fiscal 2023 are:

- the upgrade of primary care delivery systems throughout the island, aimed at prevention and treatment of all diseases, particularly non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

- aggressive and continuous public health education and promotion;
- continued development of the Infectious Disease Centre (IDC) at the old hospital to enhance our ability to engage in research and treatment;
- full operationalization of the Roxborough Hospital to deliver all tertiary medical care services;
- an integrated **Digital Data Management System** for the seamless sharing of information across the entire health system. This will also feed critical data and information into the island's Public Health Observatory (PHO);
- an **Insectary, Food and Water Testing Laboratory** to support the surveillance of, and response to, vector-borne, food- and water-borne diseases;
- **improvement of diagnostic capabilities** by installing necessary imaging and laboratory equipment, and training the complement of staff to facilitate quick testing and timely return of results to clients. Early detection allows timely intervention and treatment;
- a structured programme for continuous training and upgrading of our medical and support staff; and,
- development of a comprehensive waste management system featuring modern green waste disposal solutions. Soon Tobagonians we will be sorting our waste and managing our eco footprints.

4.115 Madam Presiding Officer, it is said that there is ***“no health without mental health.”*** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a more focused and robust approach to the mental health of our people (adults and children).

4.116 Madam Presiding Officer, in this regard, in Fiscal 2023, a mental health education drive will be implemented to enlighten and empower children, teens and adults with the scientific facts.

4.117 We will also strengthen our capacity to deliver community mental health services by expanding the human capacity infrastructure, such as halfway homes, community day-care centres, and community homes. The goal is to make mental health an easy and caring household conversation, without the stigma.



- 4.118 Madam Presiding Officer, as it relates to in-patient services, we propose to increase the bed capacity to at least 8 male and 8 female or by 33.33 per cent up from the current capacity of 12 beds. Additionally, we are going to establish a dedicated child psychiatry ward with a capacity of 2 male and 2 female beds. In addition, we are going to upgrade and reopen the Tobago Rehabilitation and Empowerment Centre (TREC), which was closed and converted to a COVID-19 facility during the height of the pandemic.
- 4.119 Madam Presiding Officer, Tobago has two state-of-the-art hospital plants and, therefore, the critical physical infrastructure to support establishment of a medical school. Our intention is to, in partnership with a consortium of international hospitals, explore the option of establishing a teaching and research hospital model on the island. This will ensure that Tobago can move to the cutting edge of teaching and learning in the medical and allied health sciences.
- 4.120 Madam Presiding Officer, just like the other elements of our investment programme to upgrade education and healthcare capacity, the benefits of building a medical school in Tobago are substantial. For now, I only indicate that the investments will provide Tobago's providers with reliable, cost-effective and sustained healthcare processes. These will enable our providers to achieve the goal of delivering international-standard care and grow Tobago's reputation for enhanced patient outcomes. It is through advances like these that living standards will improve in Tobago and the nation
- 4.121 Madam Presiding Officer, we recognise that there is a very strong link between health, wellness and social protection. The island's social safety net was literally torn apart before the pressures of COVID-19. The demonstrated incompetence of the last Administration did not help the situation. Hundreds of individuals and families were unable to receive much-needed help while some Secretaries had hundreds of food cards and social emergency cards in their back pockets playing politics. Madam Presiding Officer, it is not surprising that the 2021 Auditor General's report on the THA COVID-19 programmes was damning.
- 4.122 Madam Presiding Officer, as we move forward to making Tobago **the greatest little island on the planet**, we are committed to building resilience, efficiency

and effectiveness in our social protection programme. To this end, we intend to:

- fully digitize the social protection processes to ensure greater accessibility and more timely delivery of support to our most vulnerable;
- restructure the social protection department to ensure that staff at all levels are provided with capacity-building opportunities in the areas of leadership, industrial relations, public service policies, performance management, report writing, and social protection department policies;
- review policies and streamline the processes of the social protection department to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion and, more importantly, that no one is left behind;
- institute a robust community engagement programme across the island where staff of the Social Protection Department are available at Health Centres, Community Centres and other community-based locations to facilitate greater access to the services of the department; and,
- review and streamline the processes of the Social Emergency Card and Food Card Unit to ensure greater public accountability.

4.123 Madam Presiding Officer, let me now speak to Housing.

**i. Housing**

4.124 Madam Presiding Officer, appropriate and affordable housing is a basic need of every child and family. Accordingly, my Administration is committed to improving both the quality and the availability of affordable housing to low and middle-income families, as well as to our young professionals.

4.125 At present, there are over 8,000 applicants in the system awaiting public housing solutions. Many applicants need to update their files. A digital platform will be created to facilitate this process. Some applicants have been waiting over fifteen years to hear their names called to no avail. This is not surprising, as I have been saying for some time now that our predecessor only built 356 houses in the last twenty-one (21) years, which is an average of 17 homes per year; The previous Administration also provided an average of 11 service lots per year. If that isn't underperformance, I don't know what is!

- 4.126 Madam Presiding Officer, given the current high price of a standard dwelling unit and the low average income of most households in Tobago, the THA is compelled to intervene (through subsidies) as the major player to address failures in the real estate market. The Secretary of Settlements has been mandated to “**fix dis**”.
- 4.127 Madam Presiding Officer, I am pleased to report that, under his astute leadership, the long-awaited Shirvan Integrated Housing Development and the new Bacolet Housing Development, which are projected to provide approximately 400 housing solutions and 122 service lots to Tobagonians, respectively, are actively being pursued. These projects have garnered significant private sector interest, with several unsolicited proposals already presented.
- 4.128 Madam Presiding Officer, while we welcome unsolicited proposals, the Requests for Expressions of Interest for these two housing developments will be published before the end of Fiscal 2022. Let me put on record, Madam Presiding Officer, that we welcome proposals for affordable, resilient and sustainable housing solutions that deliver on Value for Money (VfM).
- 4.129 Additionally, work is advancing at the Riseland Housing Development with technical and financial support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Madam Presiding Officer, it is projected that the infrastructure works will be completed by the beginning of Fiscal 2023 (most likely October 2022). Further, developments at Adelphi, Courland Phase II and Adventure Phase III are to follow and, collectively, these projects are being designed to deliver 300 housing units to Tobagonians.
- 4.130 Madam Presiding Officer, in keeping with our stated commitment to expand villages and keep families together, we are actively exploring the use of lands in Speyside, Kendal, Pembroke and Culloden for the purpose of housing.
- 4.131 Madam Presiding Officer, in keeping with the Land Use Plan being developed, the Division of Settlements will be collaborating with the Division of Infrastructure, Quarries and Urban Development (DIQUD) to establish new road networks and re-establish existing ones, such as the Miss Mills Trail, to make lands more accessible.
- 4.132 Madam Presiding Officer, we are also undertaking a strategic review of social programmes to simplify accessibility and delivery to Tobagonians. The Home

Improvement Programme includes several grants and subsidies geared towards providing financial relief, ranging between \$15,000 and \$50,000. Madam Presiding Officer, the strategic review will look deliberately at these amounts in the light of the grievous socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other related social conditions.

4.133 Madam Presiding Officer, it is important to note here that in the new fiscal year, applicants will be able to access home improvement assistance via simplified digitized forms which are less onerous and feature secure and efficient workflow processes while providing for transparency and accountability.

4.134 Going forward, Madam Presiding Officer, the strategic framework for the sustainability of our housing programme will be anchored on the following: -

- multiple funding modalities, both public and private;
- projections for future growth in demand based on the demographic trajectory of the island's population;
- upgrade of the current housing stock, with emphasis on attaining certain minimum standards of housing quality;
- the availability of state lands;
- formulation of general policy guidelines;
- auditing of infrastructure and utilities;
- establishment of the planning and regulatory framework;
- identification of the responsible agencies; and,
- green construction technologies.

4.135 Madam Presiding Officer, we have begun to think through an ambitious but achievable housing programme. It is our intention to provide **1000** fully-serviced housing lots in our first term. This is 250 units per fiscal year or a 300 per cent increase in delivery. We intend to pursue our housing programme using partnership investment instruments with investors both at home and abroad. We encourage Tobagonians at home and abroad to join us in investing in a piece of our paradise.

4.136 We anticipate that the provision of 1000 housing lots will lead to the direct injection of more than \$1.5B into the Tobago economy.

4.137 We intend to commence work on our housing strategy in the second quarter of Fiscal 2023.

4.138 Madam Presiding Officer, let me now speak to community development and empowerment.

**j. Community Development and Empowerment**

4.139 Madam Presiding Officer, the conceptual definition of communities presents a very targeted unit of measure for economic growth, development and transformation. Therefore, the development of the island's communities into socially cohesive, organized and productive socio-economic units is one of the most significant policy objectives of my Administration. We intend to mobilize, organize and empower our communities to actively participate in the socio-economic transformation and governance processes of Tobago. This is a critical component of our expressed mandate to develop the island ***“child by child, family by family, community by community”***.

4.140 Madam Presiding Officer, for too long many of our CBOs NGOs and FBOs have been left in a state of relative dysfunctionality. We are persuaded that building effective functionality into them is essential to the realization of our policy mandate.

4.141 In Fiscal 2023, Madam Presiding Officer, we propose to:

- develop the administrative framework for the rollout of a District Fund Programme (DFP);
- develop an institutional framework for the entrenchment of community administration;
- upgrade and expend the community-based technical vocational training programme;
- institutionalize the relationship with the faith community through the Tobago Faith-Based Council;
- conduct upgrade works on several multipurpose facilities and community centres across the island;
- continue the reconstruction of the Integrated Community Centre and Pavilion facility at Charlotteville;
- embark upon full refurbishment and upgrade works to the Scarborough, Plymouth, and Bethel community facilities;

- a new policy framework for putting community facilities back in the hands of the community;
- commence the planning and design of a community facility for Roxborough; and,
- establish two skills training facilities in the East and the West of Tobago.

4.142 Madam Presiding Officer, our institutional arrangements for community participation will be defined by a greater degree of direct participation in policymaking, providing greater opportunities to practice democracy. The formulation and establishment of institutional arrangements for community governance fall within the purview of the Division of Community Development, Youth Development and Sport. The Secretary in this Division is already engaging in community-wide consultations to establish the community governance model the people want. We anticipate a full rollout of the new arrangements before the end of Fiscal 2023.

4.143 Madam Presiding Officer, together with other arrangements to enable public participation in the policymaking process, Tobago will achieve several returns from these investments. Most important among these is greater participation in shaping the development policies of government by the owners of Tobago – Tobagonians.

4.144 A second gain will be better policies – in the sense of policies that are desired by the people who will better learn the roles, responsibilities, and limitations of government officials.

4.145 A third gain will be a more harmonious and satisfied population.

4.146 Madam Presiding Officer, let me now outline our plans for institutional development and reform.

#### **k. Institutional Reform and Transformation**

4.147 Madam Presiding Officer, it is through state institutions that the resources of the country are utilized for development purposes. Therefore, the capacity and capability of our institutions have direct implications for development. Global empirical data have shown that countries with high-quality institutions experience greater socio-economic development outcomes and better public accountability.

- 4.148 Madam Presiding Officer, over the last twenty-one years, we have all witnessed public denouncement of the poor quality of the THA's institutional systems and procedures in successive reports of the Auditor General. A case in point, Madam Presiding Officer, is the 2006 Auditor General's report, which revealed that the former THA had recorded in its financial statement that it had **\$225.8M** in a bank account but could not provide the banking details to support this. Incredible!
- 4.149 Madam Presiding Officer, there are hundreds of other similarly scandalous findings in every Auditor General report on the THA in the last 21 years. It is my hope that the minority councillor, who in her previous incarnation had direct responsibility for these matters, will shed some light during her contribution.
- 4.150 Madam Presiding Officer, I wish to give Tobagonians and the national community the assurance that, on my watch, these financial capers are a thing of the past. ***We fixing dis!***
- 4.151 Madam Presiding Officer, as Secretary of Finance, I am pleased to announce that the Assembly, in collaboration with the national Government, has embarked on a project to advance the Government's Public Financial Management Reform Strategy. This is aimed at strengthening the Government's public financial management system, which has been plagued with two fundamental challenges, namely, an outdated Public Financial Management (PFM) framework and poor information management.
- 4.152 With financial and technical support from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was able to actively initiate the project named the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) project. The THA was selected, along with three Ministries, to be part of the pilot of the Government's IFMIS Project Implementation strategy. The intention is to move the Assembly fully onto IFMIS by the start of Fiscal 2023.
- 4.153 Madam Presiding officer, recognising that the progress of the project is dependent on drive and support at the highest level, the Executive Council has recently approved and appointed an IFMIS Support Committee to provide oversight, technical support and project reporting. It is also envisaged that this Committee will encourage user acceptance as well as promote an effective,

persuasive and practical change management process throughout the critical stages of the project's implementation. Furthermore, we will continue to ensure that the appropriate resources are adequately allocated to support the project implementation processes.

4.154 Madam Presiding Officer, my Division will lead the implementation of the project and will also serve as the Pilot Division within the Assembly. To date, the Division has successfully led the first phase of the end-user training and capacity-building sessions.

4.155 The Division is expected to complete the implementation of the Pilot and go live at the beginning of Fiscal 2023.

*i. Policy Research and Development Institute*

4.156 Madam Presiding Officer, another critical area for our institutional strengthening project is policy research and policy development. This is the critical first step in the socio-economic planning and development functions. Accordingly, we have to grow, develop and expand our capacities and capabilities to collect, collate and analyse data to produce scientifically validated information and knowledge for use in planning and decision-making at all levels of the society. We therefore propose to upgrade the Policy Research and Development Institute (PRDI) to a semi-autonomous institution purposefully designed to do the following:-

- collaborate with and support the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and other data collection entities to upgrade the collection and dissemination of official data and statistics;
- build institutional capacity, both technical and financial, to transform the data collected into scientifically valuable information and knowledge that can facilitate project planning and decision-making; and,
- provide a good range of technical business development services to the public.

4.157 Madam Presiding Officer, the Assembly will seek technical and financial support from international financial institutions, such as the CDB and the IDB, toward the development of this most important Institute. It is proposed that its work should be supervised by a Technical Oversight Committee



comprising specialists in at least the following areas: (a) statistics; (b) big-data management and analytics; (c) project planning and appraisal, including impact assessment; and (d) economic development.

4.158 Madam Presiding Officer, to effectively undertake this upgrading exercise, we propose to recruit the services of a highly qualified and expert statistician and general data analyst to anchor the technical work of the PRDI and serve as its Managing Director, who will lead the process of defining, recruiting, and evaluating the technical capacity of staff to be engaged. This is programmed to take place in Fiscal 2023.

4.159 Madam Presiding Officer, to improve the institutional efficiency of the development planning process on the island, my Administration has taken calculated steps to control Town and Country Planning in Tobago. Madam Presiding Officer, you will recall the motion that was tabled and debated in this honourable House. Since then, meetings and discussions have been held with the Minister of Planning and Development, and agreement reached that the THA will assume full responsibility for Town and Country Planning in line with the provisions of the 5<sup>th</sup> schedule of the THA Act 40 of 1996.

4.160 Accordingly, accommodation has been identified and secured at the recently refurbished PRDI Building. At present, the records of the Town and Country Planning Department are being digitized. However, to expedite the seamless transfer of operations to the THA, I have committed to meeting the costs associated with the digitization of the Tobago records and systems.

4.161 What this means is that Tobago will, for the first time, have full control of the two fundamental functions of the Town and Country Planning department – **development planning and development control**.

4.162 Very importantly, the new arrangements for Town and Country Planning will allow us to have full control of our development agenda, thus removing the related frustration and hardship Tobagonians have endured in the past.

*ii. Reform of Public Administration in the THA*

4.163 Madam Presiding Officer, effective and efficient public service delivery in Tobago and Trinidad has been an inconsistent reality. There are thousands of testimonies from citizens about the poor, disturbing quality of public service delivery in Tobago. This raises the spectre of “**bureaucratic politics**”- a huge, permanent, and virtually uncontrollable organization called the THA,

run by entrenched, unelected and politically appointed officials. Having had my own unpleasant experiences and a notable body of complaints since becoming Chief Secretary, Madam Presiding Officer, I have no need for further evidence or argument to convince me that we have to **“fix dis”**.

- 4.164 Madam Presiding Officer, adapting the requirements of bureaucracy to those of democracy has been a persistent challenge for public administration, generally. The core issue is accountability – the capacity of the public to hold public officials accountable for their actions or inactions. Public official accountability is a key and permanent feature in “the greatest little island on the planet”.
- 4.165 Towards this end, Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration has been having discussions with a number of international institutions and agencies with the aim of securing technical support and grant funding to effect our public Administration reform agenda. Madam Presiding Officer, discussions were had with the IADB, UNDP, CDB and numerous private sector entities. Conversations were also had with the Ministry of Digital Transformation and a suite of other connected government agencies. In these dialogues, I made a very strong case for the THA to be the pilot for projects and programmes.
- 4.166 In keeping with this, Madam Presiding Officer, we propose to launch a new initiative titled **“Innovate Tobago”**. Madam Presiding Officer, Innovate Tobago is conceived as a public service initiative that promotes, encourages and incentivises public servants to come up with new and more efficient ways of doing their work. We are placing innovation at the heart of public service transformation, public service delivery, and economic development.
- 4.167 Madam Presiding Officer, adjacent to and linking with Innovate Tobago, our aim is to transform the entire THA operations into an overarching digital ecosystem (DE) under a project called **“Tobago Online”**. Tobago Online has two key components, ***E-government*** and ***E-economy***, aimed at the following:
- promotion of an integrated, efficient and effective public service;
  - development of a new and efficient ways of delivering public service;
  - and,
  - fostering of efficiency growth in economic activity.

4.168 Madam Presiding Officer, I am happy to report that several commitments were made to provide technical and financial support towards our public administration reform agenda. The findings from the following audits will shape and define how we move forward with our public administration reform programme:

- process;
- system;
- HR and training needs;
- technology use;
- innovation; and,
- customer service.

4.169 Madam Presiding Officer, it must be noted here that the audits will take place across all the Departments of the Assembly. Notwithstanding the fact that the audits will define the way forward, Madam Presiding Officer, we recognize the need for immediate actions to be taken to improve public administration on the island.

4.170 We also identified the need for some specific training for our senior public servants and we have been providing such training. Relatedly, Madam Presiding Officer, we intend to fully build out and operationalize the Tobago Public Service Academy, which will be the premier training institution for the retooling and reskilling of our public servants on the island.

4.171 Madam Presiding Officer, another identified issue impacting public administration in the THA is the rapid rate at which our senior public servants are being transferred to act as Deputy Permanent Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries in Trinidad. In keeping with Section 31 of the THA Act 40 of 1996, I have discussed this matter with the Prime Minister with the aim of us co-creating a solution to the problem. I propose to take a motion to the House to have Section 73 of Act 40 of 1996 amended by reclassifying ‘Administrator’ as ‘Permanent Secretary’. Madam Presiding Officer, we are **“fixing dis”** for our senior public servants and in the interest of better administration of Tobago!

4.172 Madam Presiding Officer, at the level of the Executive, I have already issued mandate letters to the Secretaries in every Division clearly outlining their policy directives. However, this is only the first step. In Fiscal 2023, we intend

to establish the **Policy Mandate Secretariat**. The Secretariat will lead, guide and support the implementation of the policy mandate framework in Divisions, Departments and special purpose companies of the THA.

4.173 Madam Presiding Officer, our intention is to establish the Policy Mandate Secretariat in the office of the Chief Secretary before the end of Fiscal 2023.

4.174 Madam Presiding Officer, please allow me to turn to development of our young people.

### **1. Development of Young People**

4.175 Madam Presiding Officer, according to the 2011 national census, the island's youth population, that is, persons 10-35 years of age, was recorded at 24,800. This figure is significant as it represents 41 per cent of the population of Tobago (60,874). Madam Presiding Officer, such significance must be recognized in the broader scheme of the future development of the island. Therefore, purposeful attention must be given to growing and grooming these future leaders, workers and caretakers of Tobago.

4.176 Madam Presiding Officer, I want to say to the youths of Tobago, paraphrasing Jeremiah 29:11, ***“For I know the plans I have for you: plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a brighter future.”***

4.177 Madam Presiding Officer, our mission is to co-create the opportunities and an enabling youth-friendly environment that will ensure that every young person in every family and in every village self-actualizes and contributes to making Tobago ***“the greatest little island on the planet”***.

4.178 Madam Presiding Officer, our portfolio of projects and programmes for the island's youths is purposefully designed and engineered to produce young people who are intellectually accomplished, politically conscious, culturally literate, economically empowered, socially connected, technologically savvy, and healthy, and who can co-exist in diverse circumstances in liveable communities. To put it simply, Madam Presiding Officer, we want every young Tobagonian to be able to hold their own nationally, regionally and internationally.

4.179 Madam Presiding Officer, the Department of Youth and Sport has completed the **Tobago Youth Empowerment Strategy (Tobago Y.E.S)** and a 4-year implementation plan designed on an ecological perspective. In keeping with

our commitment to open and participatory governance, the strategy will be put out for public discussions.

4.180 Madam Presiding Officer, apart from the Divisions of the Assembly, other state agencies (including the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service) and key youth stakeholders are recognised as critical to the success of our youth development agenda. Over the next fiscal year, we will:

- appoint the Committee for Sustainable Youth Development (CSYD);
- aggressively pursue digitization of processes and procedures in support of a shared digital platform to improve efficiency in the delivery of services to our youth;
- improve access to development opportunities for our youth;
- establish a “Youth Work Lab” to engage the intellect of our young people and youth leaders in examining the critical challenges facing us as a people, and to arrive at workable solutions;
- establish the Youth Information Management System (YIMS) as part of the E-government digitization project to provide for the registration of youth and youth organizations, and for our young people to have real-time access to services;
- establish the Tobago Youth Apprenticeship Programme (TYAP), which will deliver internship training for young persons in all sectors of the island’s economy. TYAP will also serve to rationalize and reposition both the World of Work and the Y.E.S programmes;
- establish “Youth ‘Micro-business’ Hubs” across the island with the necessary adjacent financing and technical support that will foster entrepreneurship and innovation among young people;
- develop and pilot a Youth Business Incubator (YBI) to provide a youth-friendly nurturing environment for young people to be imbued with business acumen;
- initiate the Implementation of the Tobago Youth Service Programme on a phased basis;
- implement the Environmental Youth Ambassadors, Youth Leadership Exchange, and Youth Leaders Mentorship programmes;

- implement the Reconnecting Youth Programme Mentorship Programme to promote respect for the elders and other laudable actions by our youth;
- construct a housing estate dedicated to young professionals aged 40 years and younger; and,
- legitimize the Youth Tobago House of Assembly by creating a direct channel where every quarter, questions from the youth assembly will be answered in the House by the adult representatives and at least once per quarter, this House will take up a motion from the youth assembly and debate it as well.

4.181 Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration has taken note of the fact that institutions like Cadets, Pathfinders, Boys Brigade, Scouts, Brownies and Girls Guides have been great contributors to the development of many of Tobago's great leaders. Accordingly, we have taken the decision to provide the support necessary to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of these entities going forward. In addition, we propose to establish an organization tasked with promoting a culture of volunteerism and social responsibility among other youths

4.182 Madam Presiding Officer, please allow me to turn to sport development and recreational infrastructure.

#### **m. Sport Development and Recreational Infrastructure**

4.183 Madam Presiding Officer, this new THA Administration views sport as a vehicle for positive economic engagement of youths as well as for the promotion of their physical wellbeing. It is an avenue through which our talented young sportsmen and sportswomen can develop professional careers that are economically viable.

4.184 Madam Presiding Officer, our very own Dwight Yorke, Kelliann Baptiste, Kenya Cordiner, Cyd Gray, Renny Quow, Akeem Stewart, Semoy Hackett and many others have all participated and performed with excellence at the professional level globally. Therefore, it is evident that Tobago's children and young people are very capable of becoming professional sportsmen and sportswomen. With this in mind, my Administration is committed to ensuring that a sports-friendly environment is created in Tobago and that the necessary

technical and financial infrastructure is put in place to ensure that they realize their fullest potential.

4.185 Accordingly, Madam Presiding Officer, in Fiscal 2023, we propose to make the needed investments to do the following: -

- undertake a sporting facilities development and upgrade programme to bring some of our critical facilities up to regional and international standards. Among the facilities targeted are the Cyd Gray Stadium and the Tennis Courts at Shaw Park;
- introduce training programmes for coaches and sport administrators aimed at ensuring that they are internationally certified and equipped with the knowledge and technical skills to increase Tobago's flow of world-class athletes;
- introduce a comprehensive sport development programme across the entire education system from nursery to tertiary;
- finance inter-community competitions aimed at rebuilding and developing sporting activities at the level of the community;
- resuscitate the Lalonde Gordon Sport Fund and appoint a Management Committee to oversee its efficient operation. The Fund will receive and process applications for financial support and provide counselling to prospective athletes. It will also identify elite athletes and monitor and support their performances at home and abroad;
- introduce arrangements for providing academic support to our young sportspeople aimed at ensuring that they achieve high scores in the SAT exams, thereby being enabled to benefit from lucrative international scholarships;
- introduce a sponsorship programme to boost opportunities for Tobago's young athletes to participate in national, regional and international sporting activities;
- work will begin on Tobago's first fit-for-purpose motorsport facility in the new fiscal year. At this point, we have preliminary designs. Consultations with members from the varying motorsport disciplines have begun and are expected to continue over the next month or so. Visits were already made to proposed sites and we expect to begin the new fiscal year with the plan being made available for public discussion

and then to the beginning of construction. We will not be able to afford the full FIA certified facility in one bite. Therefore, the project will be phased, with each phase following FIA building codes and rules. The first phase of the facility will allow for drifting, drag racing, radio control equipment, karting and dexterity. The facility that we will build in the first phase will also allow for defensive driving training and will be made available for other activities. We welcome private sector involvement and investments as we will employ PPP modalities to get this facility going;

- Tobago will also receive its first permanent Beach Soccer facility. At the moment, an analysis of possible locations is being undertaken. Other beach sports will be accommodated at the same facility;
- a few of the football fields that are below regulation size and are already lit will be considered for conversion to futsal facilities;
- lights at Patience Hill and Louis Dor grounds will be installed soon.
- complete the enclosure of the Canaan playing field;
- over the next 3 months (and in advance of the new fiscal year), work will begin in Plymouth on the new cycling track; and,
- work will also begin soon on refurbishing the two YMCA pools.

4.186 Madam Presiding Officer, this Administration has received many complaints and concerns about the size of the Indoor Sporting Facility under construction at Bacolet and the location of the Pavilion being constructed at Goodwood. In response, we have commissioned a review of the technical details of these projects with a view to ensuring that the investments will serve the long-term sporting development needs of Tobago. Action on the results of the review will take place in Fiscal 2023.

4.187 Madam Presiding Officer, while improving the foundations of our sporting activities, gains from these investments are projected to be considerable. They include greater community participation in sport and inter-community commercial relations, and eventually greater capacity to compete and win on the national, regional and world stages. The incomes of our professional athletes will grow accordingly. Even more important, the investments will help Tobago's children to develop physically and mentally, to build capacity for



teamwork, to acquire and practise leadership skills, to build self-confidence, and eventually to develop adequate ways to cope with the challenges of life as they mature. These outcomes will raise the living standards of households and communities across Tobago and the nation.

4.188 Madam Presiding Officer, please allow me to turn to Public Safety.

**n. Public Safety**

4.189 Madam Presiding Officer, the fundamental duty of a government is the safety and security of its citizenry. It is widely held that any government that cannot provide for the safety and security of its people has no right being in office. Over the last three decades, the different governments were severely challenged to provide the level and quality of public safety and security to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. It is sad to note that Trinidad and Tobago placed sixth in 2022 among the countries in the World with the highest murder rates per capita.

4.190 Madam Presiding Officer, public safety and criminal justice continue to be the major socio-economic development challenges facing the country. They negatively impact on business development, foreign direct investments, visitor arrivals, and the general socialization of individuals. While Tobago is relatively safer than Trinidad, my Administration has taken serious note of the changing face of criminal activities on the island where firearms are now the weapon of choice in the commission of murders and robberies.

4.191 Madam Presiding Officer, in light of the foregoing, my Administration has decided to intervene directly. Accordingly, I have been holding monthly meetings with all the heads of national security outfits and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (PATT), Airport Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT) and Tobago Emergency Management Agency (TEMA). At these meetings, extensive discussions were held on the various coordinated strategies that should be deployed to improve public safety on the island. I gave my commitment that the THA will assist where necessary and possible towards ensuring that tools, other equipment and the working environment needed to enhance the performance of these units are provided. In keeping with that commitment, Madam Presiding Officer, the THA has handed over two boats to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) to be part of a Marine

Unit in Tobago. Going forward, these engagements will be formalized into the Tobago Security Council.

4.192 Madam Presiding Officer, in addition, my Administration proposes to establish the Department of Public Safety (DPS) in the Office of the Chief Secretary before the end of Fiscal 2023. The core mandate of this Department will be the supplemental and complementary delivery of public safety services along with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Fire Service and the other agencies of national security. Madam Presiding Officer, the DPS will also have the core function and responsibility for the protection and security of the physical assets, critical installations, and officials of the THA.

4.193 Madam Presiding Officer, the following units will comprise the proposed Department of Public Safety:

- Assembly Police;
- Traffic Wardens;
- Litter Wardens;
- Environment Police;
- Life Guards;
- Reef Rangers;
- Forest Rangers; and,
- TEMA.

4.194 Madam Presiding Officer, the DPS will be established in keeping with the provisions of the Supplemental Police Act; Chapter 15:02. It is to be noted that work has already begun on the appropriate governance and public accounting frameworks for this Department. This initiative is project to created 150 additional permanent jobs when fully implemented.

4.195 Efforts are underway to provide public lands for a new correctional facility on the island. We will give agreed-upon acreage to National Security at no cost so that a proper facility can be built. Madam Presiding Officer, I visited the Tobago prisons recently. I visited on a Thursday. By the next day a decision had been taken to remove all of Tobago's inmates and take them to Trinidad. Not a single word was said to the affected families. Most likely, that was a security decision. Given the state of the facility we have at Scarborough, we have committed to sending a team from the Division of Infrastructure to do

some upgraded works so that the our non-violent inmates can be returned to the island. There is a social cost to not having our prisoners rehabilitated at home. Have we counted the cost to families? Have we considered the cost of having our Tobago sons and daughters and youths indoctrinated into more serious criminality?

4.196 I have also visited the Scarborough Fire Station and have decided to take up the cost of 300,000 that is needed to complete works there. This contribution will be forthcoming within a few weeks.

4.197 I visited Camp Signal Hill and it is clear that national security does not care about Tobago's security. I have given a commitment that a team from Infrastructure will visit with a view of completing their dorms so that our Tobago sons and daughters won't have to work and sleep in squalor. I have had a recent meeting with the Chief of Defence Force, who is trying his best notwithstanding the constraints. Although national security isn't in the 5<sup>th</sup> schedule, Tobago's security is very much our business.

4.198 The Coast Guard's operational Base alongside the fishing depot in Scarborough, is in need of new toilet facilities and facilities to house women officers. A design and scope is being completed by Infrastructure. I should let you know that former chairman of the THA, Lennox Denoon, supervised the construction and opening of that operational base and therefore I see it as my duty to supervise the repairs that are needed. It should also be noted that this Executive is not the first one to give this kind of assistance to the National security apparatus. I will make the point again: we cannot want more autonomy and not want more responsibility.

4.199 A commitment is given to the Cadets to have the legal paperwork done to ensure they have legitimate use of the lands they were previously gifted at Signal Hill. The Government quarters which they now occupy in Shaw Park will be given some minimal upgrades and we will assist in getting uniforms for their charges.

4.200 The Police Station in Scarborough will get assistance in repairing their dorms.

4.201 Madam Presiding Officer, permit me to speak about physical infrastructure.

**o. Physical Infrastructure Development**

4.202 Madam Presiding Officer, my Administration is cognizant of the fact that the state and nature of the island's physical infrastructure have significant

implications for economic performance, quality of life, public safety, and the overall functioning of our socio-economic ecosystem. In fact, there is a preponderance of the evidence that suggests investment in physical infrastructure “**crowds in**” rather than “**crowds out**” private investment. Given the current state of our development and where we intend to take Tobago, our physical infrastructure developmental needs are enormous. We therefore must deploy skilful resource mobilization and astute financial management strategies to satisfy our infrastructural needs.

- 4.203 In Fiscal 2023, we propose to expand the road network in the island by developing new link roads, thereby opening up new lands for development activity. Roads identified as critical priorities under this programme include a Road from Mt St. George to Mason Hall Road and on to Castara, One from Union to Orange Hill Road, one from Calder Hall Trace to Cradley, and one from Hooglie Bush Road to King Peter’s Bay Road.
- 4.204 We also propose to devise a system to better prioritize roads for critical maintenance and upgrade throughout the island. In addition, we will develop a comprehensive drainage improvement and flood mitigation programme for southwest Tobago to reduce the incidence of flooding in areas such as Canaan, Bon Accord, Carnbee, and Lowlands. We will also develop a robust cleaning and maintenance regime to ensure existing drainage systems are cleared to minimize flooding particularly in flood-prone areas.
- 4.205 In addition, we propose to conduct a full audit of Tobago’s public infrastructure, including the Cultural Complex, aimed at: assessing current infrastructure needs, assessing the feasibility of our infrastructure development programmes and preparing a plan for the expansion and green-upgrade of public infrastructure, prioritized for consistency with Tobago’s forthcoming development strategy. Further, in keeping with our strategic intent for balanced development in Tobago, we propose to construct a marina at Kings Bay. Thus far, we have published a request for proposal for this project. We will continue working on the proposed Scarborough development project. To this end, a Technical Committee has been established to research and investigate the technical specifications and the costs of this project and report to Executive Council.

- 4.206 In Fiscal 2023, the funds spent on infrastructure development will directly create new good jobs for our skilled workforce in the construction sector. They will also boost productivity and general economic performance in every other sector of the economy and set improved foundations for job creation and rapid economic growth and transformation.
- 4.207 Madam Presiding Officer, I now present the draft Estimates of Expenditure for Fiscal 2023.

## **5 THE 2023 EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES**

- 5.1 Madam Presiding Officer, the total draft Estimates of Expenditure of Assembly Fiscal 2023 amounts to \$3.97B, of which Recurrent Expenditure Estimates amount to \$3.07B, Development Expenditure Estimates to \$900M, URP to \$59.59M, and CEPEP to \$53.17M.
- 5.2 The total estimated expenditure of the Assembly was predicated on a forecasted National Budget of \$57.4B, an increase of \$1.9B in Fiscal 2023 and an allocation of **6.9 per cent** thereof to the Assembly in keeping with the upper end of the DRC recommendation.

### **a. Recurrent Estimates and Highlights**

- 5.3 Madam Presiding Officer, the Recurrent Estimates for Fiscal 2023 totalling \$3.07B are disaggregated as follows:
- |                                   |     |                |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----------------|
| ▪ Personnel Expenditure           | - - | \$830.45M;     |
| ▪ Goods and Services              | - - | \$975.37M;     |
| ▪ Minor Equipment Purchases       | - - | \$80.10M; and, |
| ▪ Current Transfers and Subsidies | - - | \$1.18B.       |
- 5.4 Madam Presiding Officer, the recurrent expenditure for Fiscal 2023 represents an increase of \$992M over the parliamentary allocation for Fiscal 2022. The recurrent estimates disaggregated by Divisions for Fiscal 2023 are as follows:
- |  |     |            |
|--|-----|------------|
| ▪ Assembly Legislature                 | - - | \$30.30M;  |
| ▪ Office of the Chief Secretary        | - - | \$216.42M; |
| ▪ Office of the Deputy Chief Secretary | - - | \$69.15M;  |
| ▪ Finance, Trade and the Economy       | - - | \$184.25M; |

|   |     |            |
|---|-----|------------|
| ▪ Tourism, Culture, Antiquities and Transportation                              | - - | \$255.85M; |
| ▪ Education, Research and Technology  | - - | \$485.06M; |
| ▪ Community Development, Youth Development and Sport                            | - - | \$161.34M; |
| ▪ Infrastructure, Quarries and the Environment                                  | - - | \$455.36M; |
| ▪ Food Security, Natural Resources, the Environment and Sustainable Development | - - | \$250.98M; |
| ▪ Health, Wellness and Social Protection and,                                   | - - | \$918.40M; |
| ▪ Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development                           | - - | \$40.43M.  |

5.5 Madam Presiding Officer, some key programmed recurrent expenditures for Fiscal 2023 are:

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| ▪ Tobago Regional Health Authority (TRHA)         | \$600.0M;     |
| ▪ Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL)            | \$75.0M;      |
| ▪ Tobago Festival Commission                      | \$50.0M;      |
| ▪ School Feeding Programme                        | \$43.0M;      |
| ▪ Project Financing Repayment                     | \$31.2M;      |
| ▪ Tobago Agribusiness Development Company (TADCO) | \$23.0M;      |
| ▪ Development of Green Spaces                     | \$20.0M;      |
| ▪ Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation      | \$18.7M;      |
| ▪ Tobago Performing Arts Company (TPAC)           | \$15.0M;      |
| ▪ Information Technology Centre                   | \$12.9M; and, |
| ▪ Assistance to Sporting Organisations            | \$5.8M.       |

5.6 Madam Presiding Officer, I will now present the Development Programme Estimates.

**b. Development Programme Expenditure Estimates and Highlights**

5.7 Madam Presiding Officer, the Estimates for the Development Programme for Fiscal 2023 amount to \$900.0M. This represents an increase of \$636.0M over the parliamentary allocation for Fiscal 2022. The Estimates are disaggregated as follows:

- |                                     |     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| ▪ Pre-Investment                    | - - | \$3.40M;        |
| ▪ Economic Infrastructure           | - - | \$360.27M;      |
| ▪ Social Infrastructure             | - - | \$400.63M; and, |
| ▪ Multi-sectoral and Other Services | - - | \$135.70M.      |

5.8 Madam Presiding Officer, to activate our agenda for economic growth and transformation, the Development Programme Estimates will deliver support for:

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| ▪ The Enterprise Development Company of Tobago (E-IDCOT) | \$15.0M;     |
| ▪ Venture Capital Equity Fund Limited                    | \$9.0M;      |
| ▪ The Business Incubator Programme                       | \$8.2M;      |
| ▪ Enterprise Development Loan Programme                  | \$5.2M; and, |
| ▪ Enterprise Assistant Grant Programme                   | \$5.0M.      |

5.9 Madam Presiding Officer, as we seek to revitalise and reposition our tourism sector, the Development Programme Estimates cater for:

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| ▪ Construction of Tobago Cruise Ship Berths | \$10.0M;     |
| ▪ Store Bay Beach Facility                  | \$6.0M;      |
| ▪ Tobago Tourism Agency                     | \$5.0M;      |
| ▪ Pigeon Point Infrastructure Works         | \$5.0M; and, |
| ▪ Restoration of Historical Sites           | \$3.0M.      |

5.10 Madam Presiding Officer, as we seek to develop our food security and sovereignty system, the Development Programme Estimates provide for:

- Agriculture access roads \$37.0M;
- Improvement to beach and landing Facilities \$9.0M;
- Improvement to the Botanical Garden \$2.3M; and,
- Agri-business and Agro-Tourism Development Program \$2.0M.

5.11 Madam Presiding Officer, as we embark on the transformation and modernisation of our education system, our Development Programme Estimates make provision for the upgrade of several educational institutions, including:

- Improvements to Primary Schools \$8.5M;
- Improvement to Secondary Schools \$8.0M;
- Upgrade of Mason Hall Government Secondary School \$5.0M;
- Construction of School for the Deaf \$5.0M;
- Establishment of Childhood Centres \$4.5M;
- Upgrade of Technical Vocational Facility at Roxborough \$4.0M; and,
- Scarborough Secondary Pre-construction Consultation \$2.0M.

5.12 Madam Presiding Officer, as we seek to expand housing opportunities and improve our housing stock on the island, our Development Programme Estimates provide for:

- Development of Adventure Phase II \$21.0M;
- Affordable Housing Project \$12.0M;
- Home Improvement Grant and Subsidy \$10.0M;
- Housing Development Incentive Programme \$10.0M;
- Shirvan Integrated Housing Development \$9.0M; and,
- Village Expansion Programme \$2.3M.



5.13 Madam Presiding Officer, we continue to upgrade and expand our road infrastructure and protect our coastline from the harmful effects of coastal erosion. Accordingly, our Development Programme Estimates provide for:

- Major Improvement Works on Secondary Roads \$28.0M;
- Improvement to Milford Road Bridges \$18.0M;
- Scarborough Enhancement Project \$14.0M;
- Turpin Bend Solution \$10.0M;
- Windward Road Special Development Programme \$10.0M;
- Road Resurfacing Programme \$8.0M;
- Rehabilitation to Claude Noel Highway \$8.0M; and,
- Coastal Protection Programme \$8.0M.

5.14 Madam Presiding Officer, the Development Programme Estimates are associated with the critical and strategic areas identified as necessary to kickstart the island's longer-term sustainable development agenda. My Administration has commissioned a team led by Dr. Vanus James to prepare a long-term development plan for Tobago. In early July, the team will start a series of consultations with stakeholders across the island as we seek to chart the way forward. The CEDP 2.0 has long expired and there is an urgent need for a new medium-to-long term strategic plan for this great little island.

**c. Other Expenditure Estimates**

5.15 Madam Presiding Officer, in Fiscal 2023, we intend to spend \$59.59M and \$43.37M for URP and CEPEP, respectively. These figures are programmed to meet the announced increases in salaries for workers in these programmes. Madam Presiding Officer, our decision to institute the wage increases was based on the fact that these workers are among the lowest-paid and their standard of living has been severely compromised by the astronomical increases in food prices. Additionally, this Administration intends to implement a basic living wage policy in Tobago and this can be construed as a first step in this direction.

5.16 Madam Presiding Officer, I now present the financing options.

## 6 FINANCING THE 2023 EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES

### a. Revenues

6.1 Madam Presiding Officer, for Fiscal 2023, the estimates of tax and non-tax revenues are as follows:

|    |                              |     |                      |
|----|------------------------------|-----|----------------------|
| 1. | Taxes on Income and Profits  | - - | \$138.05M;           |
| 2. | Taxes on Property            | - - | \$5.00M;             |
| 3. | Taxes on Goods and Services  | - - | \$67.52M;            |
| 4. | Taxes on International Trade | - - | \$2.50M;             |
| 5. | Other Taxes                  | - - | \$4.10M;             |
|    | <b>Total Tax Revenue</b>     | - - | <b>\$217.17M;</b>    |
| 6. | Property Income Taxes        | - - | \$0.02M;             |
| 7. | Other Non-tax Revenue        | - - | \$2.05M;             |
|    | <b>Total Non-Tax Revenue</b> | - - | <b>\$2.07M; and,</b> |
|    | <b>Total Revenue</b>         | - - | <b>\$219.24M.</b>    |

6.2 Madam Presiding Officer, the total revenue projected to be collected in Tobago for Fiscal 2023 is \$219.24M.

6.3 Madam Presiding Officer, the revenue projection presented above is the Tax and Non-tax revenue likely to be collected from the economic activities conducted in Tobago and the utilization of resources in and around the island. We are well aware, Madam Presiding Officer, of the longstanding anomaly in the current economic accounting and recording practices which do not apportion to Tobago its share of aggregate revenues collected.

6.4 Currently, taxes, fees, duties and levies of companies with branches operating in Tobago pay their taxes on their Tobago operations in Trinidad. This is in direct contravention of 49 (2) of THA Act 40 of 1996, which stipulates that those institutions with subsidiaries operating in Tobago should pay taxes attributeds thereto in Tobago. Another source of leakage of Tobago's revenue relates to the taxes and import duties paid by residents of Tobago for goods landed in Trinidad due the underdeveloped state of the island's international trading infrastructure. These are problems recognized by our predecessors but never resolved. We are going to *"fix dis"*.

**b. Multilateral Engagement**

- 6.5 Madam Presiding Officer, the Assembly has continued its engagement with various multilateral agencies. Quite recently, we received a visit from a technical team from the CDB. Among the matters explored were the construction of an innovative facility to replace the Scarborough Secondary School and development of a Coastal Erosion Protection Programme. Conservatively, it will require about \$1.2B to address problems of coastal erosion and another \$500M for the construction and outfitting of a smart facility to replace the Scarborough Secondary School, as well as for technology upgrades to several other schools on the island.
- 6.6 In addition, this Administration held discussions with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for a repurposing of the Scarborough Renewal Programme at an estimated cost of \$35M, and for funding of the Riseland Housing Development at a cost of \$8M.

**c. Foreign Direct Investment and Diaspora Engagement Funds**

- 6.7 Madam Presiding Officer, another possible source of financing of the 2023 Estimates will take the form of foreign direct investment on the island and funds mobilized through engagement of persons in the diaspora. Attracting foreign investment in the capital-producing sectors will be a key priority of this Administration. Let me pellucidly clear in the event that I wasn't, we are open to Foreign Direct Investment, but please come straight to Tobago.
- 6.8 On the basis of FDIs, incentives will be provided along with branding and marketing support for private investors, especially those geared to production for export. In this way, Tobago can assist the country in generating foreign exchange and in advancing the national diversification agenda.

**d. Public Private Partnerships (PPP)**

- 6.9 Madam Presiding Officer, we are actively pursuing the PPP modalities of financing to execute some of our housing development projects as well other major public infrastructure works. Let today's budget presentation serve as a public notice that we are calling investors far and wide to come and do business with the THA for Tobago.

**e. Long-Term Borrowing**

- 6.10 Madame Presiding Officer, the last Executive Council raised \$164.2M via bond financing to support expenditure in the development programme most of which was used for electioneering to no avail. Although there is an option to raise an additional \$135.8M, given the current level of inherited liabilities Assembly, this Administration has chosen to exercise some fiscal restraint and not incur additional debt at this point in time.
- 6.11 Madam Presiding Officer, I now bring the curtain down on this presentation.

**7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 Madam Presiding Officer, in this my maiden Budget Statement, I have attempted with the utmost frankness to bring to the attention of this House, Tobagonians and by extension the national community the fundamental problems and challenges confronting us in our attempts to make Tobago ***Smarter, Greener, more Autonomous***. The policies we propose to pursue in Fiscal 2023 are informed by the socio-economic realities that are confronting us, and which require this new Administration to steer clear of the deceptively easy path taken by the last Administration and to select the options that will ensure that we move towards becoming ***the greatest little island on the planet***.
- 7.2 Madam Presiding Officer, the mission requires commitment; commitment of a high order by the Tobago Government, the Central Government, and the people. It necessitates a critical fusion of the social and economic measures with the individual efforts of the entire population. There must be real total buy-in at all levels of the society in respect of the fundamental need to perform, and to raise output through hard work, discipline, innovation and a resolve to eliminate corruption and waste of every kind from the public service operations of the THA.
- 7.3 If as Tobagonians we are prepared to take on these challenges, I can think of no task which would be beyond our united capabilities. Madam Presiding Officer, only we can **“Fix Tobago”**.
- 7.4 As I close, I wish to share with you my discovery in a text written by Tobagonian scholar Susan Craig-James. In her research on the Formation of

Society in Tobago, 1763-1838, under the subsection on the Resistance to Enslavement, she quotes the eyewitness account of Ninian Jefferys, a British seaman, in explaining the indomitable spirit of the Tobagonian. She reports that the majority of the enslaved were marked with whips, which signalled the people's refusal to remain conquered. She told the anecdotes of rebellions all over the island, but the one most apt to close this presentation today is that of a rebellion in Betsy's Hope.

- 7.5 The Estate was torched and the rebels fled to the hills of Charlotteville. However, 8 were caught and brought back for punishment. The eyewitness account was that none among the 8 whimpered or murmured. There was no fear of the oppressors. One of the 8, a man called Chubb, who reportedly rolled up his sleeves and placed his hand on the table to be cut off. After it was cut off, he refused to allow them to drag him to the gallows. Instead, he chose to get up and walk himself to the gallows.
- 7.6 Then there was another named Sampson that hung for an unbelievable 7 days before dying. Imagine being hanged and refusing to die for 7 days straight.
- 7.7 Why am I sharing these gruesome stories from a time so far gone? I am telling them because I want to remind this nation of the Tobago spirit. On December 6, that spirit once thought dead, was awakened among our population. It is a spirit that never yields to a disadvantage. It is one where we'd rather die on our feet than on our knees. It is one where no amount of blows can beat out our dream for freedom. It is one where we are proud even unto death. It is in our DNA to desire to be autonomous. That is who we are.
- 7.8 Today, we are thankfully not enslaved in chains and we are not being dismembered limb by limb. But we do endure a no-lessor evil in our political disenfranchisement – one that every Tobago political representative since James Biggart, at least the genuine ones, has fought for. Let this my first budget statement remind the nation that Tobago will not stop agitating for the correction of an inherited colonial misarrangement. The Tobago spirit does not give up easily. We do not waver from that which is our right. I am not Chubb; I am not Sampson, and I am not from Betsy Hope. I am Farley from Speyside, but so long as God and the people desire that I lead them, I will do so without fear and I will do all in my power to direct this Executive and the THA towards






the fulfilment of the Tobago dream -- ***Towards a smarter, greener, more autonomous Tobago.***

7.9 Madam Presiding Officer, with that, I ask that these fiscal measures as presented for fiscal 2023 be debated and accepted.

7.10 Thank you.

7.11 I beg to move.



-  Victor E. Bruce Financial Complex  
6-10 Post Office Street, Scarborough, Tobago
-  Telephone: 639-4412 (PBX available)
-  [information@tha.gov.tt](mailto:information@tha.gov.tt)
-  <http://finance.tha.gov.tt>
-  Tobago House of Assembly