

# **Movement for Social Justice**

**21 Visions for the 21st Century**



**Challenging the Status Quo –  
*Real Change to Benefit and Empower  
Every Citizen***

**Policy Positions – DRAFT (PART I)**

**July 2014**

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# I Introduction - *Working Together to Transform T&T*

## Objectives of the MSJ's Policy

The Movement for Social Justice's (MSJ) **vision to transform Trinidad and Tobago** calls on our nation's citizens and communities to discharge their individual and collective duties in seeking responsible governance, prudent economic management of our nation's resources, efficiency in our institutions and accountability of our office holders. Our unwavering commitment to social justice where the rights of each citizen are promoted forms a cornerstone in our policies.

We believe that through collaborative action of the populace and a coordinated vision and leadership, a better quality of life with access to sustainable nation-building opportunities would be achievable for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. **The MSJ's policy document is therefore based on three poles: People, Process and Institutions.** Our analysis points to some of the major obstacles to transparent, accountable, fair and equitable governance being: institutions created in the colonial era which are in need of significant reform; a culture of "passing the buck" and of leaders and those in positions of authority not taking responsibility for their actions; a process of decision making that does not foster inclusion; and a political culture where party and individual interests trump the national interest and the well-being of all. In this environment, corruption thrives, we consistently underperform economically, and waste opportunities for sustainable development.

In the MSJ, we are committed to ensuring that our nation is one in which **social justice** prevails and citizens' rights are not only constitutionally enshrined but actively protected. As we work together to develop our nation, **the role each citizen plays is indispensable to the process.** For our Party, it is only when social justice is achieved in the country could we make major strides towards development. To achieve our vision to transform Trinidad and Tobago, we aim to pursue development based on the policy positions outlined herein. The issues included in this draft of our Policy Document are as follows:

- 1. Governance and Constitutional Reform**
- 2. The Relationship between Tobago and Trinidad**
- 3. Economy**
- 4. Energy**
- 5. Education**
- 6. Crime and National Security**
- 7. Youth**
- 8. Labour and Social Security**
- 9. Local Government**

The MSJ's policy positions on the following issues will be presented in the second instalment of our Draft Policy Document.

- 1. Agriculture**
- 2. Culture**
- 3. Entrepreneurship**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Infrastructure and Transport**
- 7. International Relations/Foreign Affairs**
- 8. National Instrument – Pan**
- 9. Sport**
- 10. Science and Technology**
- 11. Tourism**
- 12. Water and the Environment**

These positions provide the basis for the implementation of a new plan of action for governing Trinidad and Tobago and its people regardless of race, religion, gender, age, geographical location, sector, or party affiliation. We have identified our Party's position on the many issues and itemized key actions, which in our view must be undertaken in order to build a nation where social justice prevails. The positions presented here are a Draft and we will engage in a process

of dialogue and discussion to receive comments and suggestions from citizens. This process would include cottage meetings in communities across the country as well as meetings with various interest groups. Following this process, our MSJ policies would then reflect the views of the wider population. We look forward to engage with our citizens and receiving your feedback on these policy positions as we seek to *challenge the staus quo and bring about real change to benefit and empower every citizen.*

To achieve transformation of the collective (our nation), there is a singular **overarching need to influence change in our attitudes and culture.** So important is this that the very first section in this policy document addresses the need for changing attitudes and culture as this will underpin how successful we can be in implementing these policy proposals.

We also believe that a cross-cutting issue for all policies is gender analysis. This will be rolled out in Part II of our Policy Document.

## II Changing Our Culture and Attitudes to Bring About Real Change in our Nation

The possibility of transforming Trinidad and Tobago in the way outlined in this document is dependent on the extent to which the political culture of the country and the attitudes of all citizens towards nation building is changed. We are using “culture” in the broad sense of culture being a way of life rather than its other definition as performing arts.

As we developed this Policy Document we recognised that the fundamental challenge was not simply to articulate what changes we propose, since over the years so many good proposals have been made by many good people, but rather how we can move from ideas to reality. This is because there is a status quo which is very resistant to change. This status quo is at all levels of society. Thus, sections of the society do not wish their positions of power or influence to be interfered with. Others, whose real interests would benefit from real change seem unable to shake off the old political culture where ethnicity drives their choice come election day, even though their “ethnic party” does nothing to improve their lives. . How, therefore, do we create a change in culture using the culture which itself seems resistant to change? The context under which this has to be done was perhaps best articulated by Lloyd Best when he asked – “how can a culture escape from itself?” **In other words, it is a fundamental transformation of culture which is crucial if we are to be successful in building a nation where there is social justice and equity for all citizens.**

The evidence of the importance of culture comes from several sources. The Kaisonian David Rudder expressed it succinctly when he sang “how we vote is not how we party”. Trinidad and Tobago’s historical experience as a nation and the everyday engagement, one with the other regardless of ethnicity, of the majority of the population is a glaring contradiction to the polarisation which characterises the electoral politics. This contradiction means that with our “winner take all” political system whereby the ruling party has access to all the “spoils” and resources of the state and the loser has none, the parties continuously seek to divide the

population, even to the point of appointing only “loyal” persons to positions in the state bureaucracy. This means that at any one time the government tries to manage the affairs of state with less than half the population. This is a sure recipe for failure and we see the results around us every day. We therefore have to find the way to bring the politics into line with those unpolarised norms which characterise everyday life. The culture of the politics must change and we must move from “tolerance” to active engagement and solidarity as we collectively build a nation.

At another level, we need to address the attitude that many citizens demonstrate of not taking responsibility. This is manifest in so many familiar ways – from throwing garbage into watercourses only to quarrel with the “authorities” when the same floods them out; to the dependency syndrome encouraged by politicians and citizens alike that results in the culture of “de government” will provide everything. We practice indiscipline on our roads, are not good at providing customer friendly service, break the lines when queuing up and construct buildings without planning approvals. We also contribute to the culture of anything goes and “all are corrupt” by behaviours that range from not charging/paying VAT when the businessperson says – “you want a receipt?”; or giving the tout money to get processed quickly at the Licensing Office or using a contact “on the inside” to speed up routine government services; or worse, are prepared to pay the 10, 20 or 40% “commission” on government contracts. This lack of taking responsibility is equally evident in constantly passing the buck up the chain of authority; as it is in the maximum leadership political culture of “Cabinet or the PM must decide” everything; or in the attitude of our educated and more privileged elites who constantly complain about the country’s problems but who are not prepared to be identified with any public issue far less involved in the political arena in any form.

While appearing to be an idealistic goal, the change in culture is not impossible as we have many examples of the true capacities of our people. It is easily arguable that the population is not inherently lawless. We are all aware of what happens when “Trinis” visit or live abroad. The ability to adapt to the norms of another country and obey their laws means that the apparent culture of lawlessness and indiscipline can also change. Further, there are persons whose work ethic and productivity is questioned at the work place but this same individual would practice in

a panyard till the wee hours of the morning, night after night, to get the notes just right. There are other examples where the productivity in the workplace is also a contradiction of the native genius of the people. The MSJ offers the view that the culture of productivity can also change, once the conditions change from one of just doing a “wuk” to being an integral part of producing something of value that also enhances the individual’s identity and self-worth. While the list is almost endless it is perhaps sufficient to identify only one more example.

The cut and thrust of professional development is dominated by a culture of individualism; individualism which ignores the village’s contribution to the individual’s success as well as the long traditions of community which is inherently Trinbagonian. This individualism too can change and change it must if we are to harness the collective potential of our people. In fact the various communities spread across the length and breadth of Colonial Trinidad and Tobago thrived on the efforts of the collective and there are remnants of these efforts still existing today. This is the origin of the “sousou”, “len’ hand” and the cooperative.

For any society to achieve transformation it must address those elements of daily life which can frustrate progress in the new direction. For example, a key objective in attaining sustainable development is ensuring that the country has food sovereignty. However the increased production of local food is also dependent on our tastes, literally. If our palettes are not inclined to local food then simply increasing local food production will not automatically result in increased consumption of locally produced goods. In fact, increased supply of food with low demand could lead to a glut and lower prices, which would then force farmers to cut back production taking us back to square one. This question of taste is not limited to food but to consumption in general. The issue of local content and “local is good” must be addressed in terms of our value systems. In this regard, there is the need for all sections of society to see themselves in the images portrayed daily in the media, since such imagery is an important factor in developing healthy attitudes about our identity as a people and strengthening self-confidence in our abilities.

As difficult as this task may seem, however, it is noteworthy that there are many positive aspects of life in our society. What is needed is to build institutional strength around these positive

developments. For example, playing music in an orchestra helps to develop discipline and while individual skills are necessary, these only achieve results in the context of the overall performance of the entire orchestra. The steel band thus can be an excellent institution to contribute to changing attitudes. The self-reliance and community involvement and pride that are hallmarks of many steel bands are other positives. Similarly, the very many examples of excellence at the level of community effort – local fund raisers, cultural and sporting clubs and activities, faith based and NGO interventions to assist those in need – all have to be supported and developed, not co-opted or supplanted by government or party.

The cultural shifts which are required are inextricably linked to the institutions of the country and that most important body of work which guides relations of power, the Constitution. Therefore the MSJ is proposing that very specific interventions will facilitate shifts in the culture as the institutions which promote varying cultures will themselves be transformed. There are three key areas of intervention. The first is the reorganisation of the relations of power so that as many citizens as possible are directly involved in decision making and therefore feel that they are equal owners of the country. The second is to renew, through practice, the commitment to the tenets of the Preamble of the 1976 Republican Constitution and the third is that the MSJ Government must treat citizens with unprecedented respect.

**While the MSJ makes very concrete proposals for constitutional reform, we are aware that these changes will only have a real impact if there is a change in the behaviour of the people as well.** The best law is only good if it is obeyed and enforced. The best structured organisation is only as good as its people. Even an improved constitution by itself will not fundamentally change the status quo. The reorganisation of power within the society is key to breaking the culture of politics of exclusion, alienation and division. The Preamble to the 1976 Republican Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago sets out noble aspirations which seek to create an environment where each citizen can realise his or her true potential and by extension contribute to national development. That section says in part that we the people “*respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that...there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;*” The fact that our politics has been dominated by nepotism and cronyism has denied citizens’ rights which are enshrined in the Constitution.

This is compounded by the surfacing of numerous allegations of unqualified and incompetent party supporters being given prominent appointments. This will also address the culture of productivity. If people believe that their contribution is important then they take the responsibility a lot more seriously.

We also believe that an ongoing programme of information and education is necessary so that all citizens can have a better appreciation of our history; the religion and cultural expressions of the many different groups who “arrived” and of those who are our first people; the way in which our economic and political systems work; and all that is necessary for us to have an understanding of who we are and where we are in the global landscape. The role of informing and educating is one of the key responsibilities of political parties. But this has been sadly neglected by the traditional parties in Trinidad and Tobago, which is one reason why the political culture is in need of change. The MSJ is committed to doing all that we can to bring about change through our own efforts at political education. Real change must start with a “Revolution of the Mind!”

## III Governance and Constitutional Reform – *Transforming the Relations of Power*

### *Overview:*

- The process of constitutional reform
- Reform institutions established by the constitution
- Revise and update our system of governance
- Political party funding and campaign finance legislation
- Mixed system of representation
- Election process of the Prime Minister and President
- Public Service Reform
- Justice System Reform
- Self-determination for Tobago
- Regulation of the Public Procurement Process

### *Historical Context and Relevance of our Institutions*

Our institutions established through the Constitution were designed in the context of a colonial society. These institutions did not have as one of its objectives promoting equity or an inclusive society. Neither was it based on participatory democracy or giving people a sense of ownership, but rather to maintain the old colonial status quo. We believe that in changing our institutions from being agencies which preserve the colonial society, to progressive bodies which foster equity, the entrenched relations of power within our country will be transformed. This transformation would therefore break the trend which now prevails, where those who wield political, economic and social power, abuse and misuse their offices to promote their own interests, at the expense of the national interest. Accordingly, transforming the relations of power would create a movement away from a system of maximum leadership to one of maximum participation.

**Given that the MSJ is the only national political party which seeks to genuinely represent the interests of each and every citizen, and not simply the interests of a select group of people, that we are not beholden to anyone and in particular those who benefit from the status quo, we are the only party which can take up the challenge to change the existing relations of power.** The MSJ is thus the only party which can genuinely pursue the national interest, and therefore truly reflect and represent the interest of the ordinary person. The challenge of transforming relations of power is not, and is not likely to become, an objective of other parties, as they stand to continue to benefit from the existing imbalanced power relations and will therefore seek to maintain the status quo. We believe that only when this status quo is broken that the objectives and expressed will of our Constitution would be achieved and everyone in our nation could meaningfully progress, rather than the interests of a select few. The MSJ, given its foundation in the cause of ordinary people, is ultimately best suited to break the status quo, bring about balanced relations of power and redress the injustices which our citizens face, i.e. bring about social justice.

### ***Governance Reforms and the Transformation of Relations of Power***

It is important to appreciate the distinction between governance and government. While governance relates to the process of decision making, government refers to those in control at a given time – those making the decisions and shaping policy (i.e. the ruling party). Accordingly, governance is interwoven with the relations of power between policy makers and decision makers on the one hand, and the wider citizenry on the other hand. The multiple arms of the State are the channels through which the governance process is given life.

As we all expect of democratic systems, governments can, and do change. However, the state and its institutions remain constant. Therefore, unless our institutions are reformed, the governance process remains unchanged irrespective of which party wields political office in government. Consequently changing the system is crucial, whilst merely changing a government is not and will not be sufficient to bring about a transformation in the relations of power. It is only when the relations of power are transformed, that the injustices plaguing our society could be adequately redressed, allowing for the national interest to be pursued and not only the narrow

interests of those in power. As the national interest is pursued, there would be greater opportunities for all to enjoy an improved standard of living.

Our National Constitution establishes the framework of rules, principles and laws, for managing our nation's affairs, and we believe that this framework must be one that fulfils the objective of social justice as expressed in the Preamble to the Constitution. The Constitution confers specific powers and limitations in the exercise of such power, in order to protect the freedoms and interests of all citizens, and those entrusted with this responsibility, on the nation's behalf, must be guided by the principles established in the Constitution. Adhering to these principles would ensure that the decisions made and actions undertaken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and those in charge of all the institutions and agencies of the state would deliver the maximum possible benefit for all citizens in a fair and equitable manner. Therefore, for the MSJ a comprehensive process of Constitutional Reform is a critical component in ensuring that the appropriate framework and mechanisms are established to consolidate a system of participatory governance that promotes equity and social justice.

#### *Guiding Principles for Governance*

- **Place power in the hands of citizens** – Changing the relations of power so that greater power would reside with the wider population as opposed to being concentrated in the hands of those in government. Such a shift will involve greater participation of our people in the decision making process. No longer would our participation in the governance process be limited to voting once every five years in a general election and once every three years in a local government election.
- **Redress the balance of power so that there is a more equitable distribution of resources in the country** – Ensure the relations of power are more balanced and that the relevant checks on that power are in place, so that all decisions of the government are fair, equitable and non-discriminatory.
- **Transparency and Accountability** – Establish and enforce systems to ensure that the decision making process is transparent and information made available to all citizens; and elected officials, as well as those employed in state agencies are held accountable for their

decisions. Furthermore, we recognize that having a well regulated public procurement process is key to ensuring that transparency and accountability prevail in governance.

- **Morality in Public Affairs** – Ensure that those who are charged with the responsibility of governing our country must conduct public affairs in the best interest of the national community and not for private gain or self-interest and/or the benefit of friends and relatives.
- **Each citizen has a critical role**–Recognize that all citizens - elected officials, persons who are employed in state institutions, as well as the wider population - have an indispensable role in the process of governance. As such, each of us must accept and fulfil our responsibility and not shirk or ‘pass the buck’ to someone else.

### ***Specific Areas of Reform – What needs to be done***

1. Constitutional Reform
2. Participatory Governance
3. Public Service Reform
4. Justice System Reform
5. Address Corruption and White Collar Crime
6. Self-determination for the people of Tobago

#### ***1. Constitutional Reform – What must this involve?***

##### ***The Process of Constitution Reform***

A Secretariat must be established to implement this process. The steps towards constitutional reform would include firstly a process of public education geared towards informing the public about the existing Constitution as well as the different options available for a new Constitution. This would be followed by a process of engagement with the citizenry. Coming out of this dialogue with the public a Draft Constitution would be produced. Further public dialogue must then take place around this draft. Ultimately, public approval of this final draft would be sought through a national referendum.

*The Elements of Constitution Reform<sup>1</sup>*

**Reforming our Institutions** - Since key institutions of the State are established by the Constitution, and as pointed out earlier these institutions are in need of reform, constitutional reform must include the reform of these institutions. These institutions include:

- The Elections and Boundaries Commission
- The Parliament
- The Executive, i.e. the Cabinet, Prime Minister and the President
- The Service Commissions (Judicial and Legal, Police, Public Service, Teaching)
- The Judiciary
- The Integrity Commission
- The Office of the Ombudsman

There are two issues that are outside of the above institutions that must also be addressed, these are: i) Political Party Funding and Campaign Finance Reform and ii) The Bill of Rights

**Political Party Funding and Campaign Finance Reform** - The process of constitutional reform must also include the reforming of political parties, in particular the implementation of Political Party Funding and Campaign Finance Legislation. This reform has become absolutely necessary given that political financiers have caused our electoral process to be subverted, and therefore our democracy to become distorted. Our politicians are not driven by the demands of the populace, but rather have as their main objective in most cases, to respond to the calls of those who contribute to their party's coffers – and so deforming the democracy. This legislation should identify an upper limit for party spending on political campaigns. Additionally, provisions should be made for a specific amount of public funds to be made available for political parties. In this way the need for private party financiers could be reduced, and ultimately eliminated. The distortions which have resulted from private party financing could therefore be eliminated. Private funding from external organisations or groups could be allowed, but within a specified limit, such as 5 per cent of the total amount of expenditure allowed for individual candidates.

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<sup>1</sup> The proposals put forward in this sub-section reflect some of the ideas presented by the Constitution Reform Forum (CRF) of Trinidad and Tobago.

Parties must be required to identify these external bodies, including the names of their principals. In the case of donations from companies, a company donating more than TT\$500,000 to any one party would not be able to bid for contracts from a Government of which the said party is a part for at least one year following this donation. Diaspora contributions should also be allowed from individuals as well as companies, within the same limit.

Furthermore, it is recognized that political parties receive a significant amount of financial contributions ‘*off the record*’. This form of financing should be banned and all contributions must be in the books in order to promote greater transparency within our political parties and as a result, in the governance process altogether. Also, in an effort to promote greater transparency and stronger democratic practices within political parties and across our national institutions, parties must be required to comply with certain requirements which would include: - being officially registered, this registration would require political parties to submit the names of ALL officers and the constitution and bye laws of the party; presenting annual audited financial statements; and holding regular elections, the results of which are to be reported.

In the United Kingdom the *Political parties, elections and referendums Act, 2000* provides a framework for the regulation of party financing and can serve as a model for local campaign finance legislation. With respect to party financiers, this UK legislation specifies that political parties can only receive contributions from particular organisations and/or individuals which have been appropriately registered – these are referred to as “*permissible donors*.” This is a specific element which should be adopted locally. In addition, local legislation to regulate party financing ought to include the following elements: the recognition of political parties within the Constitution; implementation of limits on campaign expenditure for political parties (and not only for individual candidates as exists at present); and ensuring the regulation of political parties through an appropriate oversight body.

**Expanding the Bill of Rights** - A constitution’s Bill of Rights identifies those basic rights which each citizen must enjoy. The existing Bill of Rights should be expanded to ensure that each citizen is guaranteed those human rights which would allow one to attain a decent standard of living, given that the existing Bill is somewhat limited. There are several international examples

upon which this expanded Bill could be modelled. For instance in the Constitution of Bolivia, water is enshrined as a human right, guaranteeing each citizen of that country access to a supply of water – which we would all agree is indeed a basic human right. Additionally, the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution includes one of the widest listing of basic human rights – equal protection of all citizens is provided for, regardless of race, gender, religion, political opinion or sexual orientation. A Trinidad and Tobago Bill of Rights patterned after the South African example would therefore guarantee our citizens a wide set of basic human rights.

### **The Elections and Boundary Commission: Effective Management of the Electoral Process -**

A country's Constitution must include provisions which allow for the effective management of the electoral process. Key amongst these would be:

- Ensuring that the body charged with overseeing the election process (at present, the Elections and Boundaries Commission) operates in an independent and transparent manner. This can be achieved by putting in place specific requirements for the composition of the Commission which would ensure balance and accountability. In the first instance, as is the case in Jamaica, the Commission could be comprised of an independent chair; a representative from each political party represented in the Parliament; and thirdly by a set number of professionals from relevant fields. Alternatively, Commission members can continue to be chosen as presently occurs, save for an additional component to include, an oversight committee comprising representatives of civil society. The Commission would be required not only to report to the Parliament but also to the oversight committee.
- Ensuring that the voters list is kept updated at all times. Maintaining an accurate electoral list can be achieved by cross-referencing various data sources such as the registry of deaths and births, the licensing authority, the immigration division, as well as .billing data from utility companies. Updating the electoral list in a timely manner cannot be achieved by relying on a single source - National ID card information - as presently exists.
- Ensuring that when necessary, adjustments to the electoral boundaries are carried out in a transparent manner. The process to change constituency boundaries must not be seen as giving any particular party an advantage over other parties and must be done by consensus.

## Reforming the Parliament

The House of Representatives - The National Constitution must provide for **a system of representation which would promote popular participation, transparency and accountability within governance**. Generally, representation is via the Parliament. The core functions of a Parliament are representing constituents' views and interests; the passing of laws; and acting as a check and balance on the Executive.

There are different ways in which the Parliament could be comprised. For ease of reference we identify the following three forms:

- i) Constituency representation, i.e. where MPs are elected to represent a single constituency on the 'first-past-the-post' basis (this is what currently exists in Trinidad and Tobago).
- ii) Proportional Representation (PR) – Under a system of pure PR each party has a list of candidates in order of priority, the maximum number of names that a party can have on a list is equal to the number of seats in the Parliament. The number of seats that a party gets is in proportion to the number of votes it obtains (that is, people do not vote for candidates, but only for the party). For example, if the Parliament has forty seats and a party got 50 per cent of the votes cast, it would obtain 50 per cent of the seats, i.e. 20 seats.
- iii) A Mixed System made up of elements of both 'first-past-the-post' and PR. Under this mixed system a specific number of MPs (e.g. 60 per cent) would be elected through the first-past-the-post system as representatives of constituencies. The remainder of seats in the Lower House (40 per cent) would then be distributed via PR, based on the total number of votes cast for each party. For instance, under the current system where there are 41 constituencies, this would represent 60 per cent of the Lower House. Therefore, in addition there would also be 27 seats (40 per cent) which would be occupied by MPs elected via the PR system, based on the total number of votes attained by the respective parties.

In our view, the current system of 'first-past-the-post' - whereby the candidate who has secured the majority of votes in a constituency will become the MP and the party with the most MPs

becomes the ruling party - does not achieve the objective of representing the views and interests of constituents and acting as a check and balance on the Executive. The system of proportional representation (PR) is often put forward as an alternative which would be more representative. However, the pattern of voting along ethnic lines is likely to be reinforced by a pure system of proportional representation, since under a pure PR system the total number of votes obtained by a party as a proportion of the total votes cast determines the number of representatives which a party obtains and this would encourage parties to consolidate their ethnic base as a means of securing guaranteed seats.

In our specific situation, therefore we propose that a mixed system should be put in place for the election of MPs to the Lower House. We further propose that it be weighted 60 per cent of MPs elected by ‘first-past-the-post’ and 40 per cent by PR (as per the example above).

The Role of MPs - The PR elected MPs who belong to the ruling party would be the primary source for appointing Cabinet Ministers. Those PR elected MPs who belong to the opposition or some other minority party would carry out the non-constituency duties of MPs such as serving on Parliamentary oversight committees. This would also have the added advantage of allowing the elected MPs to have more time to dedicate to constituency work, allowing for more effective representation. A party would be eligible to be allocated seats via PR as long as it was able to secure at least 5 per cent of the total votes cast nationally.

In our view this combination of first-past-the-post and PR allows for a wider range of interests, and not just the interests of the traditional political parties to be represented in the Parliament – thereby allowing for more effective representation. Additionally, with such a mixed system the weaknesses of each individual system could be minimised.

Reforming the system of representation in the ways described above is but one step to ensuring that popular participation, transparency and accountability are promoted. Another key component would be **improving the efficiency of elected constituency MPs** to ensure that constituents’ concerns are addressed. This can be achieved by having MPs work much more closely with local government bodies. Specifically, MPs should meet regularly with these bodies

in order to be appraised of the concerns of the constituents. Additionally, MPs should serve as ex-officio members of local government bodies and attend council meetings at least once monthly. Furthermore, MPs should serve on a full-time basis.

The Senate -In the Senate, in addition to government and opposition senators we propose that there should also be a certain number of senators from bona fide civic organisations – once again promoting wider and more effective parliamentary representation. These organisations would include business chambers, trade unions, farmers’ organisations, religious, youth and women’s groups, amongst others. In our view the role of the Upper House is to provide checks and balances with respect to the work of the Lower House, where party interests dominate. These checks and balances would be achieved through the presence of civic organisations in the Upper House. Furthermore, this would allow for the voice, and therefore interests of the people to be directly heard in the Parliament through the representatives of these organisations. With representatives of civil society forming part of the Senate, the national interest could be more effectively voiced in the Parliament, as opposed to having only party positions and interests being put forward. This wider representation in the Parliament would see all major interests being represented and pursued. In this context, real politics will take place, as politics is the pursuance of interests. This would of course represent a new process and no longer would politics and representation be only a contest of power between political parties. Instead, both government and opposition would have to persuade interest groups on the basis of policy and interest groups would be correspondingly in a position to influence and change policy. In this way, the Parliament would be able to work more meaningfully towards finding solutions for the numerous challenges with which our country grapples.

With respect to the balance of seats for government, opposition and civic organisations in the Senate, this is such a critical component that we do not wish to propose the specific balance, but would allow for this particular issue to be discussed and debated.

## Parliamentary Committees

### i) Oversight Committees of Parliament

Ensuring that Parliament – both Lower and Upper Houses – are spaces where people’s interests are effectively represented is absolutely critical in the governance process, and is a primary objective of the Parliament. Oversight Committees of Parliament are also critical to ensuring that the Parliament provides true representation. These committees include: Public Accounts Enterprises Committee; Municipal Corporations, Statutory Authorities and Service Commissions Committee (with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Services Commission) and a Committee to oversee Public Procurement. At present many MPs who have constituency responsibilities, as well as Ministerial portfolios also sit on these committees. This is an obvious case of overstretched resources and therefore the work of these Committees is often diluted and does not receive the focus and attention it requires. The oversight component of the work of the Parliament is therefore weakened.

We therefore propose that, those MPs appointed via PR who do not belong to the ruling party should serve on these committees. Given that they have been appointed via PR and do not represent constituencies, the problem of overstretched resources described above would be reduced, strengthening the very important oversight function of the Parliament. We have put forward that MPs in the lower house should serve on a full-time basis, Senators would also serve full-time.

### ii) Parliamentary Policy Committees

Furthermore, the establishment of Parliamentary Policy Committees, which are provided for in the Standing Orders of Parliament, but are not functional, should be effected. Standing Committees of Parliament should be set up for key national areas such as National Security, Foreign Affairs and Energy. These Committees would contribute to the process of developing national policy in these areas and assess and monitor the progress of policy implementation.

## The Executive

### i) The Prime Minister

In this mixed system of representation, the **Prime Minister would be elected directly** and simultaneously with the election of MPs to the Lower House. Under the current system, the Prime Ministerial candidates are the leaders of political parties contesting the election, who themselves contest seats and therefore are voted in as MPs, but are not directly voted in as Prime Minister. We put forward, that Prime Ministerial candidates should not contest seats, recalling that the job of a constituency MP will now be full-time, but that citizens would now cast a vote directly for Prime Minister, at the same time that votes are being cast for MPs. This confers an advantage for citizens to have a more active voice in determining the country's leader, and given that the Prime Minister would not be saddled with constituency obligations, neither the work of the constituency nor the nation's business is neglected. In addition to voters casting two votes (one for the Prime Minister and one for their MP), we further propose that there be **fixed dates for elections and also a term limit of two, five year terms** for the Prime Minister.

### ii) The President

Another important component of our local governance structure is the **President**. It is vitally important to have within this structure a position which is not directly involved in the politics on a daily basis. This person can then be an independent voice on behalf of the wider population, standing above partisan politics and sectoral interests. This is especially important in times of crisis, particularly given that these crises are often brought about by the very politicians. The President would be elected by the Electoral College (made up of both the Upper and Lower Houses). Given the new composition of the Parliament, as explained above, the election of the President by the Electoral College would now be fairer and more balanced as the process would no longer be unfairly influenced by the ruling party, which under the current arrangements has the majority in the Parliament.

### iii) Further Proposals:

- As stated above, those MPs in the Lower House who are elected via PR, belonging to the ruling party would be the main source for the appointment of Ministers to the **Cabinet**. A

limited number of Cabinet Ministers could also be chosen from amongst Government Senators.

- The **right to recall MPs and the holding of referenda** on national issues must be put in place. MPs would face a recall vote in circumstances where a petition requesting same has been circulated, having been signed by at least 20 per cent of the electors in the given constituency. Referenda are especially important as they allow the voice of the population to be heard on issues of fundamental national importance and facilitate broader participation in the governance process by citizens, given that at present our involvement is limited to voting once every five years in general elections and once every three years for local government representatives.

## ***2. Participatory Governance***

*“Whereas the people of Trinidad and Tobago.... have asserted their belief in a democratic society in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of the national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority.”*

***- Preamble of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago***

The role of citizens in the governance process is crucial. **While every individual cannot be in government every individual must be facilitated to participate in the governance process.** We can rebuild that sense of community by facilitating good governance structures at the level of Local Government. The capacity of our citizens must be recognized and opportunities for the people to participate and engage in governance must be afforded to them.

Through an enhanced process of localized engagement of all stakeholders, including private sector and civil society the developmental objectives for the community can be met in a way which exceeds the capacity of one sector attempting the task on its own. The key in this entire process is for persons to be involved at every stage of governance from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. In our view having a strong **local government** is

absolutely critical to facilitating the participation of the wider population in the governance process. It is at this level that citizens must be able to voice their concerns and through the local government structure these concerns would be consequently treated with by the relevant authorities. For the MSJ, facilitating participatory governance through local government is so fundamental that the specific policy actions have been elaborated in a separate section. Additionally, Local Government must be enshrined in the National Constitution. Further details on our proposals on Local Government are to be found in this specific section.

### ***3. Public Service Reform – Ensuring the delivery of quality public services to all citizens***

The provision of public goods and services is an integral function of government. These are wide ranging and include health services; education; the provision of documents such as National Identification cards, Driver's Licenses, Passports etc.; tax collection, amongst many other services. Public service is the implementation arm of the government, putting into effect the policies developed by the government's executive arm (the elected officials). For this to be done effectively there must be a well-trained, highly motivated, customer driven and effective public service which recognizes fully their role in delivering services to citizens. **This requires a major shift in the culture of the public service.** At present, the local public service falls very short of the above and this is in part due to the fact that the service was originally designed to serve the old colonial state and this original form has never been significantly altered. As a result, we have a public service which is not appropriately shaped to meet the needs of a modern Trinidad and Tobago. The reform required across the public service must include the following:

- To ensure that the delivery of public services is not influenced by partisan politics - employment within the service must be done by an independent body and not by politicians and/or by persons working on their behalf. Public servants must be insulated from party politics, regardless of the party in power. We therefore believe that the Service Commissions (Public, Teaching, Police) ought to be retained and appointed by the President after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and other such persons as he/she thinks necessary (this is the current process). However the role of these Service Commissions needs to be altered in so far as day to day human resource management

is concerned since existing arrangements for promotions and disciplinary matters take far too long. We therefore propose that a system similar to that which now exists for the Police Service could be introduced in the Public and Teaching Services. Thus in a Ministry the Permanent Secretary and Human Resource Officers could be responsible for promotions and disciplinary matters while the Service Commission serves as an Appeals Tribunal for an aggrieved worker. Further, promotions and or appointments to senior positions (Heads of Departments/Divisions, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Permanent Secretaries) would remain the sole purview of the Service Commission; in the case of the Teaching Service, it would be Principals, Vice Principals and Deans.

- The establishment of special purpose companies, which has effectively become a parallel public service, is not the answer to improving efficiency in the service. The functions carried out by these companies must be returned to the public service and the employees incorporated into the public sector. **In this regard, we further put forward that employment in the public service should be on a permanent basis, and NOT on contract,** except in certain cases which may require immediate short-term intervention. Having public sector workers employed on a permanent basis would allow for a greater degree of continuity across the public service, and this in turn would contribute towards greater efficiency.
- Corruption in the public sector must be eliminated. There is a strong public perception that there are several key areas within the public service where corruption is rampant, or that the potential for corruption is very high. These include the Customs, Inland Revenue, Immigration and Licensing Divisions. These areas must be reformed urgently to wipe out existing corruption. The use of technology on a much wider scale in these areas is likely to reduce corruption as corrupt practices are often carried out by users of these services in an effort to avoid bureaucracy. Therefore, as technology is put into effect more widely and public service efficiency is improved, bureaucratic obstacles would be removed, thereby reducing, at least in part the incentive for corruption. A genuine process of reform must be pursued at every level of the public service. We believe that this can be done within the existing Public Service and **not** by establishing semi private sector agencies such as the

Revenue Authority, for example. In addition, there should be strong, independent investigative units within these Divisions so that wrong doing can be tracked and punished.

- The process by which human resources are managed within the public service is key to improving efficiency within the service. There must be a clear management model with greater authority residing with line managers within the service. Improving human resource management in the public service must include the development of relevant and adequate organisational structures for each Ministry. Also related to public service human resource management is the remuneration of public officers. There needs to be a new approach to remuneration of state employee so that well trained and highly skilled persons could be attracted to these jobs, in turn strengthening the service. Essential to this is a thorough job evaluation process. A more effective management of the public service would lead to a more effective delivery of public services.
- Essential to improve productivity and efficiency is the provision of modern and safe working conditions to accommodate both employees and members of the public who are accessing the service.
- The review and streamlining of Public Service Regulations and work practices and procedures in order to bring these in line with the demands of a modern society.
- Also key to having a more effective delivery of public services is ensuring that Ministers do not get involved directly in the operations of the Ministry, but that this role is carried out by the Permanent Secretary and other relevant senior Ministry officials.
- Furthermore, the level of efficiency of the public service is adversely affected by duplication of effort, unclear lines of responsibility and splitting up of skilled human resources as a result of having a) too many Government Ministries and b) Government Ministries and/or Departments/Divisions of a Ministry operating as separate silos. One example of this is when citizens get ‘run around from office to office or Ministry to Ministry to have a road repaired or a watercourse cleaned only to be informed that it is the responsibility of some other

Ministry. There would therefore be significant advantages of limiting the size of the Cabinet and consequently of Ministries. In this regard, we propose a significantly reduced number of Government Ministries which would include the following:

1. Agriculture, Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs
2. Attorney General and Legal Affairs
3. Culture and Creative Arts
4. Education
5. Energy
6. Finance
7. Foreign Affairs
8. Labour and Social Security
9. Local Government, Housing and Sustainable Communities
10. Planning and National Development
11. Public Administration
12. Public Utilities and the Environment
13. Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
14. National Security
15. Social Development
16. Trade, Industry and Tourism
17. Works and Infrastructure and Transport
18. Youth, Gender and Sport

Bureaucracy can be further reduced by changing the culture of decision making. For a start the number of decisions to be made by the Cabinet (e.g. through Cabinet Notes) should be reduced, thus empowering line Ministers to make decisions consistent with Government policy. Secondly, the management of Ministries has to be such that lower levels within the structures are given decision making authority.

#### ***4. Justice System Reform***

A strong justice system is another critical element of an effective system of governance. Over the last fifteen or more years a culture of impunity has developed where law breaking (from traffic offences to murder and inclusive of misbehaviour in public offices) goes unpunished. This is because the justice system – from the police to the courts – has failed to have persons who have committed offences charged, brought before the courts and convicted. Furthermore, in some cases where persons have been brought before the courts the process has been unduly lengthy, to the point where justice delayed has become justice denied. This culture of impunity if left unchecked will result in anarchy and barbarism as no one would be held to any standards or to upholding the law. It cannot be business as usual and therefore the status quo must be changed. In this regard, the MSJ therefore proposes the following:

- **The Judiciary must be both independent and also seen to be independent.** Equally important is the need for the Judiciary to dispense justice fairly and equitably to all citizens, regardless of the social situation of the citizen. The Magistracy, in particular, needs to be transformed from its present state to a court that treats every citizen with respect, dignity and fairness. This requires the necessary administrative and physical changes such as: modern recording systems, proper case management systems, the introduction of mediation, the timely conclusion of matters, a conducive physical environment, and appropriate sentencing including non-custodial sentences.
- The Rules of Court governing the processes in the Supreme Court need to be amended so as to ensure proper case management and the timely conclusion of all matters – both civil and criminal. Additionally, an effective Legal Aid system is required to ensure a level playing field for all persons. At present those who can afford the best lawyers are at an advantage. Further, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions must be adequately staffed with capable lawyers so as to ensure that all matters are prosecuted effectively (and especially in a timely manner). The system must be reformed so as to send a clear message against deviant behaviour.

- The abolition of preliminary enquiries/hearings for indictable offences - This would facilitate a reduction of the existing backlog within the system and therefore allow for matters to be treated speedily.
- Introduction of a system of plea-bargaining.
- Prison Reform – Not only should the inner working of the court system be improved, but in order to ensure that the judicial system is one which promotes true justice, this reform must be holistic in nature addressing all aspects of the justice system, in particular the prisons. Our prisons must be spaces where those found guilty of crimes are reformed and have the opportunity to become citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to society. We therefore propose: community service as sentencing; an intensified education and training programme for inmates; physical and administrative changes to the remand system. These are further detailed in the Crime section. Criminal Trials - Do all trials have to be jury trials? This is a critical issue which must be debated and discussed nationally, for us to determine which approach best suits our local situation.
- Use of technology to obtain evidence – This must be more widely implemented. An effective use of technology can lead to evidence being found more readily, allowing for a greater number of convictions. Such a use of technology would include CCTV footage, as well as DNA and other forensic evidence. Where necessary, Rules of Evidence have to be amended and/or laws amended and fully implemented. Specifically, the Forensic Sciences Centre must be urgently upgraded and fully resourced and there must be training for police officers in Evidence Gathering and Forensic Analysis.
- Strengthening the justice system to combat ‘white collar crime’. The institutions which are tasked with combating this category of crime must be strengthened, as the rates of detection and conviction rates of ‘white collar’ offences are less than desirable. Such institutions include the office of the DPP as well as the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). The FIU must be properly resourced so that matters can be effectively investigated and convictions made.

- The MSJ’s position is that the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) must be fully established as the final Court of Appeal in both civil and criminal jurisdictions. However, since the final Court of Appeal is established by the Constitution consistent with our position on the reform process, this issue would require public debate and a referendum.
- Greater implementation of existing legislation – In certain cases, legislation to effectively treat with certain issues already exists, however the problems persist because the legislation is not implemented and enforced. For example, legislation related to human trafficking, littering, noise pollution, and the use of mobile phones while driving – urgently needs to be enforced. A good place to start this enforcement would be in the area of traffic violations through the use of CCTV cameras that can identify violators and have them ticketed automatically through a vehicle registration/licence recognition system.

### ***5. Address Corruption and White Collar Crime***

#### **Strong Regulation of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Process**

Comprehensive public procurement legislation which provides for a strong regulator is necessary to achieve an improved Public Procurement Process which is fair, transparent and reduces the possibility of corrupt practices and ensures that wrong-doers are punished. A single legislative framework for the expenditure of public money<sup>2</sup> must therefore be put in place and the existing Central Tenders Board (CTB) abolished. This is vital in ensuring that taxpayers receive ‘value for money’.

We note that there is now a Public Procurement Bill before the Parliament which contains many, but not all, of the key elements for the establishment of a strong regulatory framework. It provides for the establishment through the Regulator of a common process and standard set of rules for procurement which would apply across the board, i.e. to all government ministries, agencies, statutory authorities and state enterprises. These rules would be subject to parliamentary approval and therefore have the effect of law. One role of this Regulator is to

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<sup>2</sup>I.E. taxes, all revenue and expenditure by Central Government; all expenditure and revenue of Statutory Authorities, agencies and state enterprises, inclusive of borrowings of all of these bodies; government to government arrangements; and arrangements with private and public international organizations.

ensure that all involved in public procurement comply fully with the established rules and regulations. Furthermore, the Regulator would have the power to investigate possible breaches. To ensure that transparency and accountability prevail and that public procurement is effectively regulated this position of Regulator must not be politically appointed, but appointed by the President, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader.

While, correctly, the current Bill specifies that the Regulator reports to the Parliament and not to a Minister, given how our Parliament is composed, this may not necessarily lead to the transparency that is required. Thus, one provision of the Bill requires the Regulator to report to the Speaker of the House the outcomes of any investigation in which there is possible wrongdoing and the Speaker must then convene a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to consider the Report. This could result in either a matter becoming politicised or tarnish any criminal investigations/legal proceedings. In our proposals for Parliamentary oversight we make the case for a permanent Joint Select Committee on Public Procurement to which the Regulator would be accountable. Furthermore, the proposals of the joint civil society grouping that has been engaged in public advocacy for public procurement legislation that there should be established a civil society watchdog committee would be given effect by our Parliamentary Joint Select Committee since our Senate would have civil society representatives as a matter of right. In the absence of such reform of the Parliament, we propose the establishment of a Civil Society Watchdog Committee which would be advisory to the Regulator.

We will await the final form of the Bill to address additional concerns, however, it is clear that Bill before the Parliament has failed to take into consideration the weaknesses in the Jamaican legislation which has been in effect for a number of years and which the former Regulator (known in the Jamaican law as the Contractor General) made known to both politicians and civil society in Trinidad and Tobago. We therefore put forward the following:

1. The Regulator must have the power to halt work which is being carried out under a contract which is suspected to be corrupt, or where the approved procurement processes have been breached. At present the Contractor General in Jamaica does not have this power and can only make referrals and/or recommendations.

2. Strong anti-corruption structures to support the role of the Regulator must be implemented.
3. The debarment/decertification of contractors who have been found to be in breach of the procurement regulations.
4. The Office of the Regulator should, by law, have an established working relationship with the DPP, Integrity Commission, FIU, Board of Inland Revenue, Customs and other similar bodies.

There are two crucial weaknesses in the system, however. The first is that mere investigative power can lead to many reports of suspicious procurement transactions, but little or no prosecutions. Unless there is a well-trained, highly specialised police unit that has the capacity to investigate all serious fraud including possible corrupt public procurement arrangements, the law will be a toothless bulldog. Secondly, the law is deficient with respect to the disposal of public assets. Thus, vitally important sales of state owned lands or licences to exploit our hydrocarbon resources or the teak forests, for example, are not covered by the legislation that is now before the Parliament. It is bad law to include the procedures by which the sale of obsolete or unworkable equipment is to be disposed of, while extremely valuable property can be given away to friends and family, or effectively privatised in fire sale arrangements that are corrupt.

### **Financial Intelligence Unit**

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is another critical component in the struggle against white collar crime and money laundering. It is very obvious that our current FIU is not succeeding in stopping either money laundering or serious fraud. Thus, in its last Report to the Parliament the FIU reported the following:

- In 2012/13 there were 514 reports to the FIU of Suspicious Transactions or Activities, an increase of 110% over the previous year
- The value of these Suspicious Transactions and Activities amounted to \$283 million
- In 2011/12 the value of similar Reports amounted to \$638 million and between 2010 and 2013 the total value of the Reports was a staggering \$1.7 billion
- In addition to the \$283 million Reported Suspicious Transactions or Activities in 2012/13, there were 29 attempted Transactions/Activities that were not processed and these amounted to a huge \$1.12 billion!

- In 2012/13 the FIU investigated the Reports and this yielded some 128 Intelligence Reports of which 96 were referred to Law Enforcement Agencies (Police, BIR, Customs, etc.). There was no information related to any prosecution or conviction arising out of these

The FIU has therefore become, like so many of our other institutions a ‘toothless bulldog’. Its Reports point to massive fraud and money laundering but nobody is ever made to pay for their crimes. This is primarily due to legislative, institutional weaknesses and the lack of political will and/or the compromising of key persons in positions of major responsibility.

We propose the following:

- Amendment of the FIU Act to shift the nature of the FIU from that of an administrative type body to an independent investigative type body. This will empower the FIU analysts to move from simply reporting on suspicious activities and transactions to finding out precisely what type of activities or transactions are taking place
- Establishment of a Single Co-ordinated Unit comprising of representatives of the FIU, BIR, Customs, Integrity Commission and Police, with the DPP’s office giving relevant advice with respect to prosecutions
- Focus on the use of the Proceeds of Crime Act to freeze and/or seize assets (both local and foreign) of persons/firms engaged in suspicious activities/transactions. It is easier to hurt those who are engaged in money laundering, corruption and fraud by getting court judgments to seize assets than to prosecute them for criminal offences, given that the burden of proof is more onerous in the latter proceedings. Once persons are publicly seen to be paying for white collar crimes it would have a major impact on the general lawlessness in the country including violent crime. Where necessary the legislation in this regard will be strengthened. This requires political will.
- Making full use of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties between Trinidad and Tobago and other countries and the provisions of the (international) Financial Action Task Force to ensure that that suspicious cross border activities or transactions also result in prosecutions here or abroad.

- Strengthening of the capacity of the BIR and Customs so that these crucial bodies can use their power to identify firms/individuals who cannot justify their assets when compared with declared income streams. These persons should not be simply charged with Customs and/or tax evasion, but instead the Proceeds of Crime Act should be used to freeze/seize assets.

### **Whistle Blower Legislation**

For a full assault against white collar crime there needs to be appropriate “whistle-blower” legislation that provides for certain protection for persons who give evidence, provide information about wrong doing to the law enforcement agencies. Unless such legislation is passed, the Public Procurement legislation, the FIU, Integrity in Public Life and Party Finance laws will be on the statute books but result in few, if any legal proceedings being started and concluded against anyone – especially if that person is wealthy and holds a position of wealth or power – who is engaged in white collar crime.

At the same time, all persons employed in the law enforcement agencies as well as key persons in government revenue collection agencies (BIR, Customs, Licensing) should be subject to very stringent background checks prior to employment; lie detector tests and routine investigations of their incomes and assets. Effective internal audit systems as well as anti-corruption units (internal affairs) need to be established in these agencies. In other words, we need “guards to guard the guards”.

### **Board Governance**

It must also be noted that corporate governance within state enterprises has a major role to play with respect to fair and corruption free public procurement. Key in this regard is the appointment of state boards. When competent persons are appointed through a transparent process, as opposed to political appointments which currently takes place, the operation of these entities, including procurement is more likely to be efficient. We put forward that professional organisations, trade unions and civil society should be invited to nominate persons from their membership to sit on these boards, thereby ensuring that these positions are filled by skilled individuals from the relevant fields as well as by representatives of important stakeholder groups.

These persons are likely to articulate policy from the position of their respective group, rather than making decisions based on party loyalty. This method of appointment would ensure that as Ministers and/or Governments change, policy positions remain consistent, thus providing stability and a long-term approach to the planning and viability of these enterprises. A Government's policy position with respect to these enterprises could be given effect by representation from Senior Public Servants.

***6. The Relationship between Tobago and Trinidad - Self Determination for Tobago***

An effective and fair system of governance can only be truly attained when the best interest of the people of both Trinidad and Tobago are promoted and defended. The MSJ declares that the people of Tobago have the right of self-determination. In this regard there needs to be an appropriate arrangement to govern the political and economic relationship between the two islands. In recognition of this principle, we have addressed the issue of the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad in a separate section of our Policy Document.

## IV The Relationship between Tobago and Trinidad

### Overview

- Implement reforms to the Constitution to provide greater autonomy for Tobago
- The reform process must include public consultation in both Tobago and Trinidad
- Develop and implement a strategy to achieve sustainable economic development in Tobago
- Improve the education system in Tobago, particularly at the primary and secondary levels in order to increase educational opportunities and thus professional opportunities for Tobagonians

### Historical Context

Over the past four decades discussion and debate has been taking place on the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad. The passing of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Act in 1980 was formal recognition that Tobago needed to be treated differently to a Local Government Body. There is a historical reason for this – Tobago previously was completely separate from Trinidad and therefore had its own historical experience. Tobago was colonized and developed into a plantation before Trinidad and therefore had a longer and different colonial history.

In fact Tobago was seen by European powers as a prize territory and in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century actually saw more than 30 changes in which colonial power controlled the island. Of course the English, French, Dutch and even Courlanders (Latvians) saw profit from sugar and cotton and the strategic location of Tobago as being sufficiently important to fight battles to win control of it. From the late 1600's slavery became significant in Tobago and this has meant that Tobago's population is similar to that of the rest of the Eastern Caribbean islands in that it is primarily African, compared to Trinidad's which had a short period of slavery and therefore a labour shortage after Emancipation, leading to the importation of indentured labour, mainly from India.

During British colonial rule, Tobago was linked administratively to Grenada up to 1889. In 1889 Tobago then became administratively linked to Trinidad. Additionally, Tobago (specifically, the then planter class) also had its own House of Assembly – 1768 to 1874 - and thus a mechanism for political expression of that class, if not self-determination for that island. This was further buttressed by the *Metayage* system by which the traditional plantation owner did not have the estates worked by wage labour but instead had farmers working the land and giving half of the produce to the landlord. In this system therefore the relationship between the landowning class and the labouring class was not the same as in Trinidad and the *Metayage* system resulted in the labouring class having a more vested interest in the plantation and in the island. Given that Tobago was developed as a plantation and slave society for a considerably longer period than Trinidad a tradition and culture of *being Tobagonian* was developed. This is in stark contrast to Trinidad where the history of emigration into Trinidad has meant that far fewer people can trace their local roots further back than three or four generations. This history has led to Tobago having a strong culture of self-sustenance and a distinct Tobago identity.

The issue of the Trinidad-Tobago relationship arose when Tobago became administratively linked to Tobago by the British, some 125 years ago. Since 1889 when Tobago first became annexed to Trinidad, the relationship between both islands has always been characterised by tensions. Given that Tobago became annexed to Trinidad during a period when Tobago was economically weak, Tobago was economically dependent on Trinidad. This economic dependence clashed strongly with Tobago's inherent culture of self-sustenance, thus creating tensions. Being annexed to Trinidad also led to conflicts due to the question of where power lay, and who had control over decision making. Debates from the 1890's about the policies to be implemented sounded little different to today's conflicts between the Central Government and the THA. Post independence, the colonial power relations has not been changed. This explains the constant battles between the THA and Central Government over "turf". In essence, the establishment of the THA in 1980 and the strengthening of the THA with the replacement of the 1980 Act by the THA 1996 Act and subsequent further amendments have not fundamentally altered the relations of power especially since Tobago is as dependent on Trinidad for finance today as it was in 1889.

## **Guiding Principles**

- Mutual respect of the different cultural and historical experiences of each island
- Recognition of the right to self-determination of Tobagonians
- Restoration of independent and sustainable economic activity

## **Priority Strategic Areas**

### ***Developing Sustainable Economic Activity***

A strategy for the generation of self-sustaining economic activity must be urgently developed and implemented. This would include the tourism sector but must not be limited to this. The food production (agriculture and fishing) sector would be one important pillar for sustainability in Tobago. Not only primary agricultural activity but also downstream activity in this sector including agro-processing, in particular in niche commodities such as cocoa and coffee.

### ***Greater Political Autonomy for Tobago***

Over the last decade there have been a number of efforts at Constitutional Reform with respect to the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago. The MSJ is not about to re-invent the wheel in this regard and would respect the consensus position of Tobagonians on this issue.

We recognise that critical amongst these reforms must be:

- Amending the Constitution to grant the THA Executive and Legislative power for governmental areas of responsibility as listed under the Fifth Schedule of the THA Act.
- Ensuring that the necessary amendments to all current laws are effected to make them consistent with the reformed constitutional relationship between Tobago and Trinidad.

Furthermore, the consensus arrived at in Tobago must also be understood by and have the support of Trinidadians, i.e. there must be a mechanism by which the inputs of Trinidadians are also incorporated.

***Greater Equity of Educational and Professional Opportunities***

Historically, there has been significant inequity between the educational and therefore professional opportunities available to Tobagonians in Tobago. This has served to restrict Tobago's development potential. Key for sustainable development in Tobago would be improving the education system, in particular at the primary and secondary level so that Tobagonians would have greater access to educational opportunities therefore facilitating greater human capital development, a critical element for future development.

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## V Economy

### *Overview:*

- Economic activity that promotes sustainable jobs and a decent standard of living
- Enhanced global competitiveness and greater productive capacity
- Transformed relations of economic power
- Sustainable economic diversification: local sectors, innovation and R&D
- National Planning Process: citizens’ participation in managing our patrimony
- Establishment of a National Development Fund
- Full implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)
- Transformed URP and CEPEP Programmes

### **Objectives of the MSJ Economic Policy Framework**

We present our policy framework for managing the economy, together with some detailed strategies. Other strategies will be incorporated in due course.

MSJ declares our adherence to the national objective for the economy as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago:

*“We the people of Trinidad and Tobago respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good...”*

**MSJ also recognizes that the T&T economy is a mixed economy with both a state sector and a private sector – this is a model which we will maintain.**

In this context, we offer the following **Guiding Principles** with respect to the management of the national economy:

- Effect policies to ensure that our nation’s abundant resources are utilized to **provide every citizen with an opportunity to earn a decent living** and gain access to adequate food and nutrition, shelter, educational opportunities, health care, facilities for recreation and other basic necessities of life.
- Utilize the revenue generated from our natural resources not only to provide today’s citizens with a high quality of health, education, and other essential services but also save sufficiently to ensure that future generations are also able to benefit from our national patrimony, i.e. **saving and investing today to promote intergenerational equity**. Encourage investment that would lead to an expanded productive capacity (our ability to produce more and varied goods and services), especially in the *onshore* (non-energy) sector, rather than investment that leads to greater consumption of imported goods and services.
- Establish the necessary policies to promote both **productivity** and **competitiveness** as key elements of all areas of economic activity. Increased productivity and competitiveness would lead to **greater productive capacity** – this would be our focus as opposed to building greater consumption capacity.
- **Persons occupying positions within the government** - elected as well as appointed - must **manage our national resources as the trustees of these resources, acting on behalf of the population and in the national interest**, i.e. NOT as the owners of this wealth for private and/or political gain.
- Foster and facilitate economic activity which would promote opportunities for **decent jobs and sustainable employment**. This is key as sustainable jobs would allow citizens to attain a decent standard of living. As living standards improve, i.e. as our citizens enjoy greater access to health, education and also recreation, our population would be able to enjoy a better quality of life collectively and our nation would therefore experience a higher level of economic development.
- Encourage and develop **entrepreneurship** especially firms that do not depend primarily on access to foreign exchange to survive (i.e. they use local inputs and locally developed technology).

- **Transform the relations of economic power** so that power is not controlled by a few - be it international corporations, a local economic elite or a few Government Ministers. Economic power must be in the hands of the populace by affording them opportunities to be engaged in the decision making process such as: the national budget process; and participation at the level of firms through development of ownership and entrepreneurship or mechanisms like Board representation and Works Councils.

### **The Local Economic Context – *Defining the Problem***

There are three fundamental historical features of our economy which contribute to our not being able to attain sustainable development and generate decent jobs for all citizens. The first major feature is the dependence of the economy on the local energy sector. In spite of many different efforts in the past (including Industrialisation by Invitation; the Point Lisas model of monetising our Natural Gas by producing other primary products for export), the dependence of the economy on the energy sector has not changed. Traditionally, the local energy sector has been the largest source of our nation’s revenue, as illustrated in the table below.

**Percentage Contribution of Petroleum Industry to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Contribution of Energy Sector to GDP</b>
2004	38.7
2005	46.0
2006	47.0
2007	45.0
2008	49.1
2009	35.8
2010	35.7
2011	46.8
2012	43.7
2013	42.9

*Source:* Review of the Economy(2008, 2010, 2013)

Continued dependence on this single sector is not sustainable or desirable. Oil and gas are non-renewable resources and therefore these industries have a limited life-span. As our history has shown with the oil boom of the 1970s, followed by the painful recession of the 1980s and early 1990s it is not prudent to concentrate our national revenue generation efforts on a single sector. As lessons from the past illustrate, when there is a decline in the energy sector, the entire economy is negatively impacted. This places the local economy in a very vulnerable position and is a major stumbling block with respect to the attainment of sustainable economic growth and development. Based on the above analysis, a viable path towards sustainable **economic diversification** must be urgently prioritized. This process of diversification would be geared towards *the creation of a new internal dynamic*. This new dynamic would be created through investments in sectors that lead to sustainable growth across the economy regardless of the performance of the local energy sector. Economic diversification must be seen as much more than the development of other sectors in the T&T economy – this process must in fact seek to **transform** the local economy i.e. more than economic diversification, a process of **economic transformation** is required.

A second failure is that the energy sector is not naturally linked to the rest of the economy since this sector provides very few jobs; many of its inputs come from outside Trinidad and Tobago; and the majority of the output is exported. As a result, there is a disconnect between the energy (offshore) sector and the rest of the economy (onshore sector). The main bridge between the offshore and onshore sector has been the Government through tax revenue and, as our experience has shown, this bridge has not led to the creation of sectors that are self-sustaining, i.e. sectors which could survive and grow without the significant inflows from the energy sector. If for example, our foreign exchange earnings fell drastically due to lower oil prices, local retailers of imported goods would not be able to purchase these foreign goods.

The third main feature is that the local financial sector has not been able to direct savings into investment that would increase the productive capacity and be sustainable. Thus we have the strange reality of very low or even negative economic growth at the same time that the financial sector has billions of dollars which are lying idle (known in economic terms as excess liquidity).

One consequence of this is that those with capital export it to other countries (capital flight). This has two negative impacts – there is pressure on our foreign exchange rate and other countries, not us, benefit from our savings.

These three features are some of the characteristics of a traditional *plantation economy* such as ours. This is the status quo and it needs to be changed. Any policy which continues ‘business as usual’ will not lead to a truly diversified and sustainable economy.

## **Strategies for Sustainable Growth and Development**

### ***Achieving Economic Diversification***

An enabling environment must be created (with the appropriate incentives and infrastructure for instance) to ensure all other sectors of the local economy are viable and are able to contribute meaningfully towards our nation’s revenue and towards the generation of sustainable employment. Ensuring that activity in these different sectors is spread across the value chain and not concentrated in the export of raw materials as has been our legacy in the past. Additionally, a process of changing culture and tastes to inculcate local values and tastes must accompany economic diversification in order to drive local demand for the products of these alternative sectors.

- **The local *manufacturing and export sector*** must be further developed and strengthened. The local manufacturing sector must be supported to allow it to produce goods with which our citizens could comfortably satisfy their needs, and which Trinidad and Tobago could also sell on the international market thereby contributing to the generation of net foreign exchange earnings.
- There is significant potential in the market for ***cultural products*** as our innate creative imagination and rich history give us a natural comparative advantage in this area. There is tremendous possibility for a strong sector to be developed around the production of unique products (e.g. calypso and steel-pan) which emerge from our cultural imagination, and it is likely to be very lucrative. Trinidad and Tobago should have year round programmes of high

class concerts – steelpan, choral, Indian classical and popular music, drum festivals, parang, dance – all genres; and all the combinations of these. Where appropriate these concerts will be linked to national festivals – carnival, Ramleela, Tobago Heritage Week etc. We are the only place in the world where, for example, one can hear a choir perform classical operatic music accompanied by an orchestra of traditional and steel drum instruments. These performances should be so organized that musicians and artistes are properly remunerated: decent jobs can thus be created on a sustainable basis for many hundreds, indeed thousands of mostly, young persons. From this base, many will perform internationally as well.

Another area for such initiatives would link our culture and creative imagination to certain manufactured goods which have as their essential inputs in the productive process, domestic agriculture and our local food. All of the activities along the value chain (production, marketing, distributing etc.) could all be undertaken by small and micro-enterprises, thus generating decent incomes for large numbers of people. Gourmet food items, such as jams and similar indigenous products, which could be sold at premium prices in niche markets abroad, are examples of this kind of product which are derived from and promote our local culture and have as their base, local raw materials, thereby facilitating several linkages throughout the local economy.

Additionally, so as to promote local film making and broadcasting, the existing CNMG should be converted to a Public Broadcasting Corporation with a clear mandate to purchase local and regional films, in a manner similar to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Working with the T&T Film Company, support can thus be provided to an entire industry could be developed around film production, broadcasting etc. Additionally, **local content on radio stations should be mandatory**, thereby securing a market for local artistes and thus aiding in allowing those involved in this industry to lead a sustainable livelihood and also promoting our own local culture and increasing the export potential of these products. Financial incentives for the establishment of a world class recording studio (similar to the Caribbean Sound Basin) would be offered, thus attracting collaboration between international and local artistes. These proposals would serve to stimulate the film and music industries. Given that there are many entrepreneurs within these sectors including musicians, studio

technicians etc. this sector has tremendous potential, but what is lacking, and therefore must be established is a strong base market for these persons. Furthermore, by stimulating activity within this sector, once again opportunities for further linkages would be developed, and particularly within the sector of small and micro-enterprises - a sector which has tremendous potential, once the appropriate incentives are in place, to be an important driver within the local economy.

Another sector where emphasis should be placed is the fashion industry. Not only should efforts be made to support local designers but also the production of local fabrics. There is potential for a thriving and sustainable industry to be developed around Sea Island cotton within the region. Once both of these aspects are addressed the local and regional fashion industry would be well placed for development, both in terms of design and material.

- ***Agriculture*** must be developed - this is a critical sector to our economy and the strength of the local agricultural sector is inextricably linked to national food security and also the health and nutrition of our citizens. As this sector is strengthened through the implementation of the appropriate policies, the local supply of agricultural products would increase and we could therefore reduce our levels of food imports, which was estimated at \$TT4 billion in 2013. This would allow us to limit our foreign exchange outflows. Additionally, as the local agricultural sector is developed, opportunities for sustainable employment within this sector would be created, allowing our farmers to be able to sustain themselves and their families from income earned through agriculture. Key to fostering a strong agricultural sector would be ensuring that there is sufficient allocation of land for agricultural purposes. Additionally, a shift in our tastes and culture towards local products is also required for this sector to be able to grow successfully. The National School Feeding Programme is a vital agency through which this process could be carried out to instil local tastes in our children.

**The local agricultural sector is a critical priority to the MSJ, and our specific policies for this sector are thus presented in a separate section.**

- We must also improve the local *tourism sector*, taking full advantage of our nation's natural resources and cultural richness to make this sector into a key economic driver. Policies to promote local tourism should include the following elements:

- Encouraging culturally sensitive, community based, small scale, environmentally sustainable tourism which maximises local inputs. One particular aspect of this would be focusing on local food within the tourism sector. Such an approach would have other positive impacts, for example increasing demand for local agricultural products.
- It is appreciated that to a significant extent, Trinidad attracts business tourists. This existing base can be increased if links are made between this business tourism market and leisure tourism, both in Trinidad and Tobago, so that persons coming to Trinidad for business would have incentives to stay on for leisure purposes. The restoration of East Port-of-Spain into a Heritage City, similar to what exists in several other countries in the region such as Old Havana in Cuba, Old Cartagena in Colombia or Old San Juan in Puerto Rico. Such a site would include attractions such as the barrack yard, calypso tents, pan tuners and others which were typical of that place and era. This *Heritage City* would serve to generate increased levels of tourism. It must be noted that this would create a niche market since the attractions that would be available here would be unique to Trinidad and Tobago and to this specific site. This would bring with it the obvious benefit of income generation, and also foreign exchange inflows, given that it relates to the tourism industry. It is clear that we have a major competitive advantage in this sector which has not been maximised. Thus, within the Heritage City would be available local food, drinks as well as CDs of local music, handcrafted steel pans for purchase in addition to live shows. Thousands of jobs could thus be created. In addition to being an added attraction for business tourism, Port-of-Spain would be enhanced as a cruise ship destination and our Carnival will offer other attractions.

Additionally, the process of establishing such a community would create jobs in the construction sector. Furthermore, the people of this community must be directly involved in this process, allowing them to have a real sense of ownership. Several important social benefits can also be derived. For example, as jobs are created and an increased sense of community spirit emerges and very importantly, as jobs are created

it is likely that crime levels in such a community would decrease. The benefits of such an impact are invaluable especially given that the community of East Port-of-Spain is currently considered to be an area with many social problems and a crime ‘hot spot’.

- The late Dr. Pat Bishop conceived of “Triniland” – our own variant of “Disneyland”. However, our Triniland would provide visitors with a one location experience of our local foods, music, dance, film and other entertainment, fashion as well as activities that are more generic to international theme parks. A specific location was identified for this project – Chacachacare Island – which would also encourage cruise ship visitors. This project would be explored as a priority.

To complement the growth of the above sectors there must be a process of changing our culture and tastes so as to inculcate local values and tastes. Only with such a process can local demand for the above sectors be guaranteed thus ensuring the long term success of these sectors.

The process of economic diversification which is necessary in our country must not be limited to these above mentioned sectors. All other sectors within the economy must be adequately developed so that these sectors could become viable and contribute revenues to the local economy. In our view, such sectors would include:

- **Forestry and the wood industry:** these resources should be monetised in an environmentally sustainable manner. The teak sector should be specifically targeted as this sector is very valuable. This means re-establishing proper management and regulatory processes for our forests and the teak plantations in particular as well as effective controlling of logging and of saw-mills. Emphasis would be placed on developing entrepreneurs around furniture building and other high value hand crafted products, using local teak as an input; while the export of raw teak would be prohibited.
- **Maritime sector:** to include activities such as ship building and repair, dry docking; off-shore oil platform construction, retro-fitting and repair; so that T&T could eventually develop into a centre for shipping. The existing local steel industry provides a good

foundation for such activity. This sector requires highly skilled fabricators, welders, fitters and workers in other trades, thus providing sustainable employment. There is also a link between the maritime sector and the shipping sector as teak is used extensively in pleasure crafts.

- **Steel-pan industry:** in our view, the steel-pan industry is critical to the local economy. There is tremendous potential for this to be a thriving economic sector, which has not yet been fully realised. **Given the importance of the steel-pan industry for Trinidad and Tobago, these proposals are put forward in a separate section.**
- **Education sector:** Transforming the area of St. Augustine/Curepe into a *University City*. There is tremendous potential for this given that the foundation exists for it with a number of institutions already present in this area (UWI, Cipriani College, and private institutions). The strategic focus here is that Trinidad and Tobago must become an international centre for specialised research: in culture (steelpan, calypso, chutney); of our renowned scholars (CLR James, Eric Williams, Rudranath Capildeo, VS Naipaul, Sam Selvon, Earl Lovelace, George Padmore amongst others). Further development must include the creation of an internal transport hub, additional hospitality facilities as well as places of historical interest, museums and other centres of learning and creativity. Such a project has significant potential for job creation across several levels – semi-skilled through to highly-skilled. Locations outside of St. Augustine that are of historical importance (for example: Fyzabad and labour; the East Port of Spain Heritage City) need to be also developed with facilities of Museums and Parks. Trinidad must become a year round destination for researchers and visitors seeking a unique learning experience. This will also have tremendous value for our own citizens, particularly children and young people as it will facilitate their knowing our history and thus strengthen identity and a sense of nation.

While economic diversification is imperative, given the heavy dependence of the local economy on the energy sector which in turn leads to economic vulnerability and volatility, the energy sector still has an important role to play in the local economy. As a result, **this process of economic diversification must NOT be undertaken at the expense of the energy sector**, but

rather both must be pursued simultaneously. The local energy is still important to our economy – it could still make a very significant contribution to the country and must be allowed to do so. These resources must be developed to allow for maximum benefit by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, **the energy sector has a role to play in supporting the process of economic diversification** - revenue from this sector must be used, in part to finance the much needed process of economic diversification – resources from the offshore (energy) sector must be used to transform the onshore sector. The channel through which revenues from the offshore sector would be directed to the development of the onshore sector is the tax system. It is therefore imperative that we maximise the existing streams of tax revenue from the energy sector (see Energy section for details on this issue.) Additionally, diversification within the local energy sector – the development of a wider range of downstream products, for example – must also be pursued.

As diversification is undertaken, it must be ensured that a group of vibrant and sustainable sectors emerge. It ought not to be the case that only a single alternative sector is developed, as this would mean that economy would remain dependent on a single sector as its main source of revenue, having merely displaced the dominant role of the energy sector. Such an approach would not lead to sustainable growth or development and must be avoided. These diversification efforts must be geared towards ensuring that over time the offshore (energy) sector is no longer the dominant sector but that the onshore sector emerges as the dominant sector in the local economy.

Furthermore, to ensure that this process of economic diversification generates meaningful and sustainable results it must be based on **innovation**, as we seek to develop a series of goods and services which are unique and therefore different from what already exists on the market. In order to create innovative products a process of **research and development** must be pursued. These two elements are critical to ensuring that the sectors which are developed in the process of economic diversification are centred on competitive products. It is only through R&D that innovative products could be developed. Such products are likely to be highly competitive, from which strong, revenue generating and profitable sectors would be able to flourish, thereby steering the local economy towards a path of sustainable diversification and in turn long term

growth and development. Our universities - University of Trinidad and Tobago and University of the West Indies - must be the centres for this R&D activity. We further propose that tax breaks be implemented to incentivise R&D, (see section on Increasing Tax Revenue.).

### ***National Planning - Citizen Participation in Economic Decision-Making***

A clearly defined process of National Planning is required to ensure that the nation's economy is managed in a manner to allow for maximum benefit to be derived for all citizens. This process of national planning should be broad based and participatory allowing for the involvement of the citizenry in policy making and the management of our patrimony. As established in the section on Governance, citizen participation is essential for the MSJ. This is especially important in the context of the national economy because each citizen is an economic actor in his/her own right, and therefore must have an opportunity to participate in decision making process around issues related to the economy. Engaging citizens in the process of economic decision making should also include greater participation of workers in decision making at their workplaces. Their direct involvement in the production process allows workers to acquire a unique knowledge and insight into this process. This knowledge is extremely valuable and channels must be developed for this insight to be shared and taken advantage of. Such channels could include ensuring that workers are represented at the level of the firm's Board, as well as setting up Work Councils – these Councils would serve as a formal channel for the expression of workers' views (this proposal is further developed in the Labour section.)

Beyond ensuring popular participation in the National Budget process, public engagement in economic decision making must also include our citizens being involved in the broader process of national planning. Such involvement, in addition to allowing for a wider range of ideas to be brought to the table would see the national interest being better reflected. Additionally, this could lead to increased public **ownership** of the policy decisions being made, and in turn greater commitment to fulfilling the objectives identified in such a plan.

The plan for national development must be holistic, linking together in a common strategy our national objectives in both the economic and social spheres. The annual National Budget itself must be located within this national development plan and the Budgeting process should be such that civil society in particular and the citizenry generally can participate actively in its

preparation. For example, budget proposals should be debated by way of prior open discussion and debate in communities and workplaces, and with civil society organizations. If a National Plan is developed in this manner, “national unity” will come to mean something real, tangible and beneficial for all citizens.

MSJ also advocates the strategy of developing “Industrial Policies”. Having a clearly outlined framework to guide the development of various sectors within the economy, as laid out within an Industrial Policy ensures that all the sectors of the economy are focused, while at the same time avoiding either duplication of effort and resources. Additionally, Industrial Policy enables all citizens to have a clear vision of what the country has to achieve and what is required for those goals to be realized. It will assist in ensuring that our economic activity is organized in an environmentally sustainable manner and that the activity is located in geographic areas such that the benefits are distributed equitably throughout the society. The development and implementation of such policies must be brought about through a process of collaboration by all sectors including business, government, labour and the education and research sectors..

The participation of our citizens in the process of decision making would facilitate the building of national consensus, which in turn would translate into increased confidence in the economy. As is well known, confidence is central to increasing savings and investment in the domestic economy, which in turn leads to increased economic activity and in particular, job creation. This specific strategy is central for transforming the relations of power – one of the *guiding principles* of our economic policy.

## **Addressing Key Economic Indicators**

### ***Government Revenue and the Fiscal Balance***

- ***Improving National Tax Collection***

Taxes represent the largest source of revenue for any government. In Trinidad and Tobago a very significant proportion of taxes go uncollected. According to some estimates uncollected tax revenue may amount to as much as TT\$15 billion per year, from the non-oil sectors.

The revenue collection process and the relevant agencies (Customs and Excise Division and the Board of Inland Revenue) must be made more efficient, so that all revenues which are due to the government are paid in. Our approach to **improving the efficiency of tax collection** would not be one where the existing agencies are shut down and new structures established. Such an approach is wasteful and itself inefficient. Reforming tax collection must be undertaken through a holistic approach and utilizing existing technologies in this area. Furthermore, firms which appear to have high turnovers but have not been paying in taxes must be investigated. Internal investigative units must also be established with the Customs and Excise Division and the Board of Inland Revenue (BIR). This reform process is also connected to a wider process of public service reform as well as policies for addressing white collar crime, for which our proposals have been outlined in the Governance section. Within the process of improving tax collection, priority must be placed on ensuring compliance and establishing mechanisms for the prosecution of those who fail to pay in their taxes.

With specific respect to **Petroleum Taxes**, tax audits by the BIR on energy companies must be done in a timely manner. At present this process is delayed (by six months according some estimates). These audit delays often result in an underpayment of taxes to the Government. Additionally, an existing loophole related to CARICOM Tax Treaty Parity which leads to tax evasion/avoidance must be addressed. The withholding tax for the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago is 5 per cent, but because of the CARICOM Treaty, companies domiciled in Barbados, St. Lucia and other member countries use tax treatment mechanisms to avoid paying their full tax burdens in T&T. The result is that our country suffers great losses. A further tax loophole exists in relation to signature, production, training and other bonuses and other one-off payments. These payments were designed by the Ministry of Energy to add extra revenue to the state coffers. In the past, these were valued as non-taxable for the purposes of evaluating competing bids. The BIR has since ruled that under the existing laws, these bonuses were tax recoverable but, instead of adjusting the law to correct this misalignment between intent and outcome, the Government has continued to pay for its bonuses, by virtue of returning them to the payers via expenditure write-offs. These can amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.

As tax collection is improved, in accordance with the above recommendations, the Government's tax revenue will increase. In turn, the need for borrowing and ultimately the level of national debt would decrease and more resources would be available for national development.

### *Other Fiscal Measures*

**1. Corporate Tax** - The current rate of corporate tax, 25 per cent, should be reviewed. The intention behind previous decisions to reduce the tax rate was to stimulate increased spending by increasing net income, occasioned by a reduced rate. However, this has not proven to be effective, and therefore warrants review. We therefore put forward that a tax rate of 30 per cent (the rate from 2003 to 2005) should be levied on businesses above a certain size. However, should the business invest in defined areas which would contribute towards sustainable growth and development, tax credits could be earned to reduce the rate to the current level of 25 per cent. The investment areas by which a business could earn such tax credits would include: - education and training (including re-training of workers), research and development, job creation and export promotion (or other such foreign exchange earning activity).

**2. Budgeted Oil Price and the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (HSF)** - Relatively lower budgeted oil and gas prices should be set when developing the National Budget. This would allow for greater contributions to be made to the HSF, given that all of the revenues received in excess of the budgeted price go into the HSF.

**3. Old Age Pension** – Given the improved collection of taxes which would occur as a result of the previous proposals, resources could also be made available to be paid into a separate Old Age Pension Fund. This fund would be administered in a manner similar to the National Insurance Fund, so that after a given period the fund would become self-sustaining, thereby relieving this expenditure from recurrent government expenditure.

**4. Expenditure Side: Fuel Subsidy** - In our view it would not be prudent to remove the fuel subsidy. However, efforts should be made to address the severe losses which currently take place through the diesel racket, which is estimated to be between TT\$1.5 and TT\$2 billion annually. This would significantly decrease the total amount of the subsidy. Effective audit systems and monitoring of diesel bunkering activity should be aggressively monitored. Prosecution of the “big fish” in the racket is essential to the stopping of this billion dollar theft from citizens.

Additionally, further savings on the fuel subsidy could be attained by significantly improving the public transportation system, so that there would be a reduced need for the use of private transport, therefore decreasing the demand for fuel. The implementation of such a policy would also produce other benefits, such as reduced road congestion, which in turn would have a positive influence on productivity levels. **In our view, developing and implementing a comprehensive transportation policy is extremely critical for the national development process and as a result our policy proposals on this issue are detailed in a separate section.** Furthermore, reductions in the fuel subsidy could be attained through promoting the extensive use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), starting with Government agencies.

**5. Promoting a Culture of Savings** - Encourage citizens to save through by extending tax credits for saving with credit unions and mutual funds. The MSJ views the credit union sector in particular and the co-operative sector generally as being extremely important as institutions that not only promote thrift and savings, but also provide real benefits to working people and persons with relatively lower incomes. The philosophy of the co-operative sector is one of economic and social solidarity. This must be encouraged to counter the rampant, negative impacts of individualism. As a matter of policy, therefore, we would ensure that:

- (a) Co-operatives are encouraged both at the level of consumer organisations, in housing and in community entrepreneurship (see our proposals for CEPEP, URP, agriculture)
- (b) The right balance is struck with respect to the regulatory framework for credit unions in particular. We acknowledge that the greater sophistication of the financial sector coupled with the need for transparency and accountability – to members as well as agencies such as the FIU) require much improved regulatory arrangements that that which are being overseen by the Commissioner of Co-operatives. However, we do not believe that more effective regulation should result in the primary oversight of credit unions being located outside of the Office of the Commissioner of Co-operatives, nor should credit unions be made to function with the philosophy of banks.

### ***Exchange Rate and the Balance of Payments (BOP)***

**1. Limiting the Outflow and Increasing the Inflow of Foreign Exchange** - In order to limit the outflow of foreign exchange, an appropriate framework should be developed and implemented to increase confidence in the local economy, to make local investment

opportunities attractive to both local and foreign investors. For at least the past 10 years there have been significant outflows of foreign exchange, most likely the result of capital flight. In this regard, making local investment attractive is critical. In addition to ensuring an attractive investment climate, the development of creative financial instruments would also assist in attracting both local and foreign investment. This is particularly important given that at present the rate of return on savings instruments is not relatively attractive. As a matter of policy we would ensure a stable regime by which the allocation of foreign currency takes place in the financial sector. The largest allocations would be to established commercial banks based on their long term average net demand for foreign exchange; with the remainder being allocated firstly to other non- bank financial institutions and the remainder by auction amongst all institutions. In this way supply can meet demand with any shortfall being immediately picked up by the Central Bank. This is in recognition that the exchange rate is the most important price for an economy such as Trinidad and Tobago which is highly sensitive to and dependent on imports and exports.

- 2. Increasing and Diversifying Export Earnings** - This is critical in order to avoid a situation where a fall in oil price would have a severe negative impact on our balance of payments BOP and on the exchange rate. With more diversified exports, the negative effects on the local economy of a fall in the international oil price could be mitigated to a significant extent by earnings from other exports, i.e. the local economy would be cushioned against the negative effects of a fall in oil prices. See section on Economic Diversification for our proposals on diversifying export revenue.
- 3. Decreasing the Food Import Bill** - Reducing food imports in particular should be a specific priority. Such a policy action could translate into a number of positive spin-off effects – in addition to reducing our foreign exchange outflows, the local agricultural sector would be strengthened, in turn producing a series of linkages between different sectors the local economy. Additionally, the level of local food sovereignty could be significantly improved.
- 4. Promoting International Trade for Mutual Benefits** - Global trade is undoubtedly of critical importance. However, regulating this trade to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago obtains net gains, both in monetary and non-monetary terms is also of critical importance. Our trading relations must be based on the principles of Fair Trade. Specific importance must be placed on ensuring that consumers are made aware of the need to support local industries

and that local firms recognize that they must produce the highest quality goods and services. To facilitate increased participation of our local manufactures in trade there must be a building up of our regulatory capacity. To this end we propose that the Division of Chemistry, Food and Drug be merged with the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards; the Anti-Dumping Unit within the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment must also be strengthened. Both the TTBS and the Anti-Dumping Unit must be given considerably improved resources so that they act as very protectors of both our consumers and our producers. In the international trade arena, post the World Trade Organisation (WTO), countries use standards and other non-tariff barriers to protect their markets and consumers. We should not lag any further behind than we already are. At the same time we must ensure that all our trade negotiations are conducted from the standpoint of Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom's self-interest and not to facilitate the agenda of larger countries who really seek the interests of their firms. Reviews of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union and careful consideration to WTO rounds of negotiations will be a priority. Additionally, more support is required for our small businesses and self-employed entrepreneurs.

Attention must also be placed on strengthening regional trade, geared towards boosting the regional economy. We must work towards the full implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) as well as pursuing avenues of integration and cooperation which would promote growth and development of our Caribbean economies. Furthermore, we support complete free movement of labour, as provided for by the CSME. This is one way in which CARICOM countries which have a trade deficit with Trinidad and Tobago can rebalance their BOP. Furthermore, as opposed to focusing trade efforts on traditional markets of the North, in our view there is tremendous trade potential in the neighbouring countries of Central and South America which ought to be maximised, while expanding the trade in services with many countries in Africa.

### ***Price Levels and the Inflation Rate***

Those tasked with managing the local economy must strive towards maintaining a relatively stable price level. One element in achieving this would be increasing productivity. The objective

of increasing productivity must not only be to increase output but also to expand the productive base of the economy. (*Refer to our discussion on productivity under the Labour and Social Security Section*). There also needs to be a tri-partite discussion on prices, wages and profits, so that a fair and equitable approach can be taken on this issue.

With respect to food price inflation and other key consumables, e.g. construction and building material, as well as pharmaceutical and health care products, the Prices Council would be mandated to publish ‘fair prices’ on these items. This authority would determine the fair price for all basic goods by totalling the cost price, transport costs, and other related costs. This fair price would then be published and consumers would thereby be made aware of said *fair price*. It is intended that this mechanism would serve to discourage consumers from purchasing products priced above the established *fair price* through moral and economic suasion. It is through this means that consumers in the market place, and also the state (in its role as purchaser/consumer) would influence producers, wholesalers and retailers to reduce the prices of their products, thereby reducing inflationary pressures. This would be the means whereby this mechanism would serve to reduce inflationary pressures since the function of the Fair Prices Council would be to identify and publish the fair price of selected products, and **not** to implement price controls. This proposal seeks to take the current process of publishing the prices for given products at a number of locations a step further by making consumers aware of the *fair price* of basic goods. Such a process would serve to reduce the levels of unfair pricing in which some unscrupulous business people engage.

### ***Eliminating Corruption***

It is a fact that corruption deprives the country of a significant amount of national revenue, Through corruption, monies which should be used for public expenditure are diverted to private individuals.. Furthermore, corruption increases the cost of doing business, making T&T less competitive. In some cases, corruption deters investors, (both potential and existing) who are not prepared to engage in corrupt practices. **Our anti-corruption plan has been outlined in the Governance section.**

### *Mobilising Domestic Resources*

At present, there is significant excess liquidity in the local financial system. This excess liquidity (estimated to be TT\$6.5 billion, in May 2013) represents funds that could be channelled towards activities to stimulate economic growth. The establishment of a **National Development Fund** would create a pool of resources available for injection into the local economy. The excess liquidity in the system is evidence that there are substantial resources available for investment in this fund. The National Development Fund would be established by an Act of Parliament and governed by a broad based body comprised of stakeholders including civil society representatives. In this way, national consensus on the allocation of resources from this fund would be attained consistent with our strategy of citizen participation in economic decision making. Investors for this fund could be drawn from institutional investors (e.g. pension funds, NIB and mutual funds), individual citizens and firms, as well as the diaspora community. Infrastructure projects at the community level e.g. roads and drainage would be amongst the type of projects which could be financed from this fund, as indicated in the Local Government section; as well as investments in strategic sectors and key development projects (e.g. the East Port-of-Spain Heritage City).

Additionally, moves should be made to have large international energy companies with operations in Trinidad and Tobago listed on the local stock exchange. This would allow for a greater proportion of the wealth generated in T&T by the companies to remain here. A set of policy guidelines to regulate these investments should be established making specific provisions, such as the proportion of these shares which would be allocated to institutional investors. Policies will be effected to encourage local privately owned firms to raise capital through “going public” and listing on the Stock Exchange.

We do not agree with proposals to divest, privatise existing state enterprises whether by way of Initial Public Offers (IPO’s) of shares, listing on the Stock Exchange, or by direct sale to third party firms, unless these state firms have absolutely no strategic value. However, we do propose the closure of the special purpose state enterprises which were set up as parallel operations to the public service.

### ***Promoting Local Content***

Consistent with our strategic objectives of generating sustainable development through creating an internal dynamic within the economy, is our policy on Local Content. We have already identified some areas for local content:

- Creative Industries – Music, film, fashion, food
- Forestry products
- Marine industry – fabricating off shore platforms, ship building
- Agriculture and food sovereignty
- Tourism using local inputs

In addition, we are of the very strong view that there should be a clear determination that the following sectors have maximum local content:

- Construction sector
- Energy – upstream, downstream and services
- Manufacturing

The MSJ will work with the Local Content Chamber, the Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Sector, the Energy Chamber, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, the Artists Coalition of Trinidad and Tobago, the labour movement and farmers’ organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that all government policies and projects are consistent with maximising local content. In addition our focus on changing the culture to one of “local is best” will stimulate demand for local items.

### ***The Diaspora***

The MSJ views Trinidad and Tobago not just as a geographical space but as a cultural and psychological space. This definition therefore means that the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora is very much an integral part of our nation. Many of us know this to be true from our own experiences – from our family members who live abroad, to our children who go away to study and then stay because there are few opportunities for them to utilise their skills here, to our visits to major cities abroad where we can find manifestations of our culture and way of life (roti shops, bakeries, carnivals).

One of the realities is that many more persons who have benefited from tertiary level or professional training at our expense (whether family or taxpayers) live and work outside of Trinidad and Tobago than within our geographical boundaries. This massive “brain drain” contributes to our lack of sustainable development as we often don’t have the human resources to tackle all the development challenges which we face. In addition to the very significant human resources that reside abroad, there are substantial opportunities for economic activities between the home and abroad communities. Thus, there can be a franchise of “Roti Huts” or “McDoubles” (an idea first mooted by Lloyd Best) throughout the major cities of the world, which name and products are owned by Brand T&T but which outlets are owned, operated and run by T&T nationals who live in those cities. This is but one example of many ways in which we can maximise our expanded economic space. Other details will be elaborated on in our final Policy Document.

Central to the involvement of the Diaspora in the process of nation building will be our policy of inclusion in decision making. We do not see our Diaspora community as simply being persons to “run something” be it contributions to finance political parties or to send remittances back home to needy family members or to contribute charity items to hospitals. As much as these may be necessary and important, for the MSJ the real value of the Diaspora community is their long term, ongoing involvement in nation building – through investments in the National Development Fund, by way of working either for short or longer periods in the home country, by creating economic opportunities in the communities and countries in which they now live; and by ideas to solving our collective problems.

## VI Energy

### Overview:

- Maximise the production of oil and gas
- Maximise revenue collection from the energy sector
- Increase mid and down-stream activity in the energy sector
- Utilise energy windfalls for investment in other areas of economic activity to develop a well diversified economy
- Improve physical infrastructure in the oil sector
- Promote investment by state energy companies in low risk assets overseas
- Upgrade refinery operations
- Pursue the lucrative bunkering market
- Maximise the natural gas value chain
- Promote local content and local participation in the energy sector
- Strengthen the institutional arrangements within the local energy sector
- Promote conservation and the use of renewable energy

### The Context

The local energy sector has been and continues to be the most important sector in the local economy. Thus it has historically directly contributed more than 40% of our national income (GDP). If one was to add the services supplied to the energy sector and other indirect beneficiaries, this sector contributes well over half of the country's wealth. To this must be added the fact that more than 80% of our foreign exchange and 50% of government revenue is generated by the energy sector and that our economic growth is generally stimulated by this sector we have a good appreciation of its importance.

The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago often take for granted our wealth that is generated from our hydrocarbon resources. It is only when things are not good in the energy sector that we sit up and take notice. One of the characteristics of the energy sector is that its fortunes are cyclical. There are periods when prices for oil, natural gas and commodities produced from these hydrocarbons

are high on the international markets. At other times prices fall dramatically to relatively low levels. Given the size of our hydrocarbon sector we are a small player in the international markets and therefore do not have any influence on prices. Another characteristic of the sector is that hydrocarbons are a depleting resource and therefore it requires considerable amounts of investment to continuously find new deposits of oil and gas and then to produce them. It also takes constant effort to keep production from existing oil and gas wells stable as, over time, the deposits in these wells become exhausted. Without new production fields and consistent work on existing wells, oil and gas production will fall.

When either prices or production falls significantly our economy is therefore adversely affected as we then have less economic activity; lower government revenue resulting in government cutting back on expenditure; and foreign exchange becomes scarce. This has happened to us in the past. Thus, for those old enough to remember, after a prolonged increase in both prices and production between 1973 and 1980 which resulted in tremendous growth (the 1970's oil boom), we had an economic crisis as the economy declined for thirteen long years from 1981 to 1994. We then had another boom (largely driven by very significant increases in natural gas production) from 1995 to 2008. From 2008 to 2013 we have had a mini-crisis which has not been as drastic only because of two factors. Firstly, the drop in prices following the international financial crash of 2008 was for a fairly short period and secondly, the decline in oil production which the country has experienced has been offset by relatively high and stable oil prices. However, at present the economy remains relatively stagnant due to the continuing decline in oil production.

It is also important for us to understand precisely how the wealth from the energy sector accrues to the country. The primary mechanism for the sector to contribute to the national economy is via the payment of taxes to the government. As explained in the section on the economy, the taxes are paid to the Central Bank in US \$ and the Bank then provides the government with the equivalent amount in TT \$. These means that the quantum of revenues received by the government as well as how the government spends these tax dollars therefore become crucial to the attainment of national development objectives.

Furthermore, there are several very important state enterprises in the energy sector: the Petroleum Company of T&T (Petrotrin); the National Gas Company (NGC) and its subsidiaries – the National Energy Company (NEC) and more recently Phoenix Park Gas Processors; and the National Petroleum Marketing Company (NP). These companies contribute to both production of oil and refined products (Petrotrin); and the distribution sector (NP); while NGC is a facilitator of gas supplies from producers to many of the main downstream producers. The state companies are also key to the attainment of national development objectives.

Thirdly, given that we only produce some products downstream of the actual crude oil or natural gas that is produced, and that more and more wealth is generated along the value chain of products, we do not benefit fully from our national patrimony. This is exacerbated by the fact that today a very considerable amount of our natural gas production is controlled by multinational companies.

Four major lessons emerge from the country's reliance on the energy sector. These are:

- We need to urgently transform the economy so that it is no longer dependent on the energy sector: we have addressed this in the section on The Economy
- We need to ensure that we maintain production from the energy sector at an optimum level, which level must see gas supply meeting current demand and oil production increased to above 100,000 barrels per day; maintain an efficient refinery that has a product range which is profitable and for which markets are readily available. These levels of production will provide a stable floor of earnings.
- We need to maximise the share of the wealth that is generated from the production of our depleting hydrocarbon resources that is available to Trinidad and Tobago – this means both ensuring that all potential revenue is obtained and collected by the government and that we benefit from being involved in activities along the value chain, rather than simply being a producer of primary products, which fetch the lowest price in the international markets.
- We need to utilise the wealth from the energy sector wisely by saving windfalls and investing in activities that will create future streams of income when the energy sector no longer is able to contribute significantly to our economic well being: we have addressed this in the section on The Economy.

## Key Objectives

To ensure that maximum benefits are derived from this sector a national energy policy must have the following as its key **objectives**:

1. Sustaining revenue inflows at an optimal level
2. Ensuring security of supply

Given that our energy sector dates back more than one hundred years, there are a number of strengths and weaknesses which must be taken into account as we develop a national energy policy.

1. **Strengths** do exist which must be capitalized upon in order to ensure that the nation obtains the maximum benefits possible from these resources. These strengths include:
  - The extensive industrial infrastructure (plants and pipelines) which are in place;
  - A highly skilled and experienced labour force within the energy sector;
  - Significant proven gas reserves;
  - Our having pioneered a model for the monetisation of natural gas leading to our becoming the largest exporter of methanol and ammonia in the world; and
  - Our having developed expertise in heavy oil production.
2. **Weaknesses** related to this sector include the following:
  - Being the dominant sector in the local economy has created a culture of dependence which has led to complacency by policy makers and citizens alike (known in economic terms as Dutch Disease, whereby we simply happily live off the economic rents from oil and gas with little concern for what will happen after oil).
  - While the current infrastructure is extensive, to a significant extent these assets are ageing, especially in the oil industry;
  - New reservoirs of oil are likely to be either in deep water horizons which have a lower chance of success and a high cost of exploration and production; or are heavy oils (on land and offshore Trinmar) that would require investment in new pipelines and exploration and production.

- Proven gas supplies have been substantially contracted to existing downstream users with consequent lock-ins with respect to price etc.
- Existing reserves would be considered mature and thus maintaining or increasing production requires significant investment (Enhanced Oil Recovery techniques)
- Significant weakness of national institutional capacity (e.g. Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, Board of Inland Revenue, Environmental Management Authority).

The proposals described within this section are geared towards overcoming the challenges which these weaknesses represent and capitalise on the inherent strengths so that our nation and its people could derive the maximum benefits possible from its energy resources. Policies which would promote corporate governance, accountability and transparency would underpin the proposals presented below. These proposals should also be implemented in conjunction with a more efficient use of energy at the national level, to ensure that our existing resources are not depleted rapidly.

### **Key Areas for Policy Action**

#### ***Increase the Production of Oil and Gas***

- The amount of remaining reserves must be identified. These resources should then be extracted and monetised through a combination of state and private investment.
- Increase land-based production through the state company, Petrotrin. This land-based crude is heavy-oil and is known to exist in large volumes. Petrotrin requires special tax incentives to explore for and produce this oil as well as to have increased production from existing fields through secondary and enhanced oil recovery techniques. This must be undertaken in a safe and sustainable manner. We do not agree with the strategy of the widespread use of farm-out and lease-out arrangements.
- Trinmar's infrastructure needs a major capital injection and Petrotrin should be given a special tax incentive to facilitate this (the short-term loss in tax revenue would be more than recovered in the medium to long term through higher oil production, hence higher taxes and larger dividends from higher profits of this state owned company).

- Further activity in the upstream sector should be pursued. Rather than trying to find large fields in the deep water horizon using very generous tax incentives (which results in significant loss of tax revenue without any guarantee of future streams of revenue if no gas is found or produced), we should be seeking to produce from smaller gas fields that do not have the burden of big contract volumes or expensive infrastructure. In addition we should pursue the mechanism of utilising improved data quality and other marketing strategies to attract investment in the deep water horizons.
- A policy of investing overseas in low risk global assets should be adopted by all state companies in the energy sector, as the National Gas Company (NGC) has begun to do. This would ensure that we have access to oil and gas fields outside of Trinidad and Tobago in which we have equity participation and thus supplies of crude and natural gas. There should be a satisfactory completion of the negotiations for the cross-border gas fields between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.
- As oil and gas production is expanded, mechanisms must be set up to monitor and adjust the tax policies related to these activities to ensure the efficient extraction of resources.

#### ***Stabilize the Oil Refinery Sector***

- Upgrade refinery operations to facilitate the production of higher value fuels using residue products. At present, 33 per cent of each barrel of oil is sold at a large loss as a result of this inability to convert residue products to products which fetch higher prices.
- In addition to the above, in order to increase revenues from refinery activity, premium markets for refinery products should be explored and identified.
- Pursuit of the lucrative bunkering market by Petrotrin which would necessitate the purchase of new vessels and an aggressive marketing strategy.
- Mechanisms must be implemented to ensure that all new projects are undertaken within the specified timeframe and budget. If this is achieved, significant savings would be derived.
- Existing refinery projects must be urgently brought to completion as the cost and time overruns are resulting in Petrotrin's lifeblood being haemorrhaged. We do not agree with the widespread use of contracting out general maintenance work as well as major plant overhaul as these have resulted in shoddy work, cost overruns, health and safety violations and other expensive inefficiencies.

- In order to obtain savings on the cost of production sources of lower priced feedstock and options for lower cost financing must be pursued (including exploring the possibility of refining on behalf of PDVSA crude for a processing fee).
- Reviewing the possibility of using Point Fortin as terminalling operation.
- Urgent review of critical asset infrastructure integrity (e.g. pipelines from tank farm to jetty and berth; and process plants such as the Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit).

### ***Maximise the Natural Gas Value Chain***

- The contractual and marketing arrangements within the LNG sector need to be immediately re-examined in order to ensure that the revenues coming to Trinidad and Tobago are being optimized, given the current dynamics within the gas industry. The MSJ is of the view that the existing contractual arrangements are resulting in the huge loss of revenue and foreign exchange to Trinidad and Tobago as a significant part of our gas sales are based on pricing close to or linked to the North American Spot Price (Henry Hub), which is the lowest globally. If we are correct we have been losing billions of US dollars per year. Contracts need to be tightened to ensure that as a country we do not pay a buyer of LNG to take our gas (no sensible consumer of any product would expect the seller to pay the consumer to take the product).
- Mechanisms must be developed and established to ensure that there is greater State participation across the entire natural gas value chain. In this regard we would oppose the divestment of Phoenix Park Gas processors, which is now 100% owned by NGC. We equally oppose any sale or divestment of the state's ownership through CL Financial of the major methanol, ammonia and AUM plants. Furthermore, we need to explore the options of ownership of shipping, terminals for re-gasification of LNG and natural gas pipelines.
- Initiatives must be undertaken to gain greater equity participation in the companies within the energy and petrochemical sectors. Through such initiatives, a larger share of the wealth generated can remain in local hands(see for example our proposal for having foreign energy companies listed on the local stock exchange)
- New forms of international cooperation should be developed within the petrochemical sector, with particular emphasis on downstream activities. This would include cooperation in areas such as technology and research.

***Maximise Local Content and Local Participation in the Energy Sector***

- Local investment and ownership in energy projects across the value chain must be increased. The National Gas Company (NGC) can be a vehicle for such investment.
- In order to ensure that the maximum number possible of nationals are employed within the local energy sector work permit requirements must be reviewed so that foreigners are only brought in where there are clearly defined and justified shortages of specialist skills.
- Mechanisms should be developed for the provision of financial support for local ventures into the energy sector in order to incentivise, and thus promote increased local participation in this sector. Construction projects in the energy sector should be undertaken on a first refusal basis by local firms. Furthermore, where a foreign firm gets a major contract there should be specific requirements for local content as a condition of the contract. Tax incentives should be used to (a) enable local firms to increase their capacity and ability to engage in major and highly technical work in the energy sector and (b) encourage the energy companies to use local firms to undertake non-traditional projects e.g. building oil platforms, manufacturing pipes. In addition, incentives described in (a) and (b) above should encourage local firms to develop dynamic technology (which is for example the development of computer software to run process plants; designing and developing the engineering for process plants, platforms and other equipment).
- Getting more local companies (including Petrotrin and NGC) involved in services and in the downstream value chain to offer their services overseas – making inroads into Guyana, Suriname, Belize, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba, Brazil and Sub-Saharan Africa. This requires the integrated efforts of the Ministries of Energy, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Finance.

***Strengthening the National Institutional Capacity***

- In the sub-section *Improving National Tax Collection* under the Economy we identified major areas of tax avoidance/evasion and other tax loopholes which are being exploited by the multi-national energy companies and which are costing the country billions of dollars in tax revenue annually. Institutional strengthening (amendments to legislation; reformed regulations; and improved human resource capacity in the MEEA and the BIR) would be urgently pursued in order to optimize our revenue.

- We also identified the diesel racket as being another huge loss to the country and strengthening capacity to detect, prosecute and impose penalties is a priority.
- The Petroleum Pricing Committee must be reformed and also needs to function actively. This body has a key role to play in ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago receives fair prices for its energy resources, i.e. that these are not being undersold.
- Review all critical energy legislation including ensuring that tax policies are established so that the wealth generated accrues to Trinidad and Tobago in a fair and equitable manner. This is premised on our understanding that our hydrocarbon resources are our national patrimony. Given that all our electricity is generated from natural gas we should also view gas as a public good.
- Given the strategic importance of Petrotrin, NGC and NP (and their subsidiaries) we will pay special attention to the: (a) governance arrangements; (b) management structure; and (c) employer-employee relationships, including industrial relations; to ensure that these state enterprises are managed and operated efficiently, staffed with the appropriate quantity and quality of human resources, directed by a strategic focus on national policy objectives and are not subjected to political interference (our specific proposals on corporate governance in state enterprises have been articulated in the Governance section).
- The adherence to the principles of transparency are especially important in this sector. The Trinidad and Tobago Extractive Industries Initiative will be encouraged and facilitated so that information can be disseminated to the public on the tax and other relevant transactions between the Government and firms.
- As described in the Section on Governance, we will operationalise the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament on the Energy Sector as both watchdog and input to policy development.

### **Energy Conservation**

We must be ever mindful of the fact that our hydrocarbon resources are non-renewable and will eventually be depleted. We must also be conscious of the impact of fossil fuels on the environment and specifically on global warming. In this regard, the MSJ will pursue a vigorous policy of conservation, which we elaborate in other sections of our Policy Documents.

## VII Education

*“Wisdom is learning all we can, but having the humility to realize that we don’t know it all.” (Stephen Covey)*

### *Overview*

- The education system must develop critical thinkers and innovators who are capable of solving our social, cultural and economic problems, while contributing to a continuation of the system which has produced them
- Sports, culture, the arts must enjoy the same respect and support as that given to the academic curriculum
- The Education system must prepare individuals through a learning process that will lead them to a diet of creative and critical thinking, collaborative decision making, problem solution and action, ready to take on the uncertainties of a future unknown to all.
- Our Education must prepare our youth to govern.
- There needs to be an overhaul of the Curriculum at every level of the Education system
- Student Development Centres/Homework Centres should be set up in every community for the purpose of assisting those students who may require additional instruction to comprehend the syllabus and who may need other forms of assistance to achieve their goals
- There must be intense and consistent professional training, retraining and development for all of our teachers, inclusive of those who lecture at the tertiary level institutions: this will not involve those who focus primarily on research at these institutions
- The SEA examinations should be abolished and a more appropriate and less stressful method of assessment should be established for moving students from one level to the other

## Historical Context

A society's perspective on education changes as its perspective on its overall development, primarily economic, changes. However, in its turn, education in its dynamic form tends to exert profound influence and changes on the economic sub-structure which would have given rise to in the first instance. Its influence extends to all the other systems of the superstructure.

**It is in this context of the economic determinant of the society that Colonial education, having at first been deemed unnecessary for the slaves on the plantations, was subsequently allowed to exist in Trinidad and Tobago, primarily to serve the interests of the colonizer, that is, to facilitate the smooth and uninterrupted exploitation of the human and material resources of the colony.** While there are many to this day who still laud what they see as the benefits of colonial education, there is no doubt that colonial education brought with it, as well, many destructive effects, some of which haunt us to this day, creating distortions and misgivings within the society, especially among the youth.

Coming out of Colonialism into Independence, Education became an obsession within the broader society, especially among the middle classes and to a great extent within the working class. This obsession continues to this present time. **Education is still viewed as a necessity and a way of escaping the cycle of poverty by many in the society.**

In its earliest manifestation, the education system was organized to prepare the children of the well to do and some few from the middle class to govern in the interest of the colonizer, ensuring that in the process the not so well- to- do were kept in their place, which was perceived to be at the bottom of the “social ladder”. **The school curriculum and staff, particularly from the high school level onwards, were established on the basis of the existing stratification in the society. This existing stratification, in turn, gave rise to the concept of “prestige” schools,** most of which were founded by the major religious groupings of the society. With this elite group of students, the teacher was only required to know his/her subject matter well enough and drill this information deep enough into the minds of the passive students so that they could regurgitate this information whenever called upon. **He who could do this best in his exams, was labelled as “bright” or “brilliant”. To this day, this has remained a distinguishing**

**feature of our education system**, as more and more within our society have long endorsed the myth that that type of education is the magic weapon to open all doors, particularly the door to hefty earnings and unbridled consumption of material goods and services.

Accompanying this thinking is the notion that the school is the only place where an education, narrowly defined as academics, can be obtained. Note the excitement and subsequent grand announcement surrounding those students who receive the highest marks in the SEA and CXC examinations, promoted most vigorously by the media and the very teachers and parents within the society. The same distinguishing feature continues at the tertiary level as well.

Both myths referred to above have proven to be just that-myths. **No longer does an education in Trinidad and Tobago (high school/college/university) guarantee jobs, far more hefty earnings and material goods and services as many graduates of UWI and other tertiary institutions would testify.** Misalignment between the education offered and the demands of the economy or the national development needs is primarily responsible for this. Is it any wonder that we are witnessing increasing numbers of our citizens applying for jobs which they think they can perform without the required qualifications while forging or making false claims of possessing those qualifications?

Increasingly too, many in the society have begun to question the effectiveness and relevance of the education received in many of our schools and tertiary institutions. It is for this reason that there is an insistence from many quarters for radical transformation of what is being taught and how it is being taught at all levels of the educational institutions. It is for this reason that experiential learning and prior learning assessment are beginning to be appreciated and utilized in tertiary institutions in the country. It is also for this reason that the theory of multiple intelligences, with its emphasis on different learning abilities, skills and learning styles, has been embraced by many educational theorists and educators and applied by policy makers throughout the world. The Movement for Social Justice strongly advocates in favour of these changes.

On the other hand, over the years our education system has focused primarily on access. **As greater access to education became a governmental focus, the school system underwent a**

**significant change with the introduction of the Junior and Senior Secondary schools and the concomitant introduction of the shift system for students at the high school level.** Unfortunately however, while these changes gave access to greater numbers of our youth, they also had some significant deleterious effects, exposing all of the internal contradictions of the education system- contradictions which have led to conflict and, in some cases, disintegration of the very system itself. This was and still is, to some extent, evident in the **tensions between students and teachers, teachers and administrators, teachers and the government, and between students and students.**

**The Junior Secondary Schools, in particular, were viewed and treated by many as mere holding “pens” for our youths who were considered as academically challenged and fit only to be channelled into the then “disgraced” technical-vocational (tech-voc) areas, which many students, parents and teachers mistakenly viewed as inferior education when compared to what obtained in the grammar schools. Many of the teachers who found themselves in these schools behaved as though they were mere custodians, waiting for better to come their way.**

Willing to settle for higher wages and better working conditions, these teachers have supported their union in so far as the union was viewed as a means to meet the economic or class needs of teachers as workers. However, the public perception is that the more teachers have gained as workers, the less they have felt inclined to expose the bankruptcy of the education system and to make fundamental proposals for its reorganization. Following in the footsteps of thousands of teachers in the Western world, our teachers, for the most part, have made and continue to make the dangerous mistake of confusing their role as a special kind of worker engaged in the process of developing the minds of our youth with the role of production workers engaged in the process of producing material goods.

### **Redefining our Education**

While many of us are dazzled by the multiplicity of disciplines, subject matters and technology that have become the focus of today’s education, **we have failed to realize how resistant to**

**fundamental and meaningful change the education system of Trinidad and Tobago has remained.**

Accordingly, our education **must** be redefined so that it could be made more responsive and accountable to the people whom it is supposed to serve, and this includes both the specially challenged and gifted. It is for this reason that the MSJ posits the following as the desired **objectives of the Education System:**

- 1. To develop the individual holistically and to his/her fullest potential**
- 11. To prepare students to participate within and contribute meaningfully to the welfare of our society**
- 111. To ensure adequate training facilities and materials**
- IV. To produce the type of person who can be an essential contributor to the quality of life, a vibrant economy and the nation**
- V. To offer a system of lifelong learning for all citizens and nationals**
- V1. To assist in the relevant training of our students and in the progressive shaping of their thinking, values, dreams, hopes and perceptions of the world and of life.**
- V11. To develop critical thinkers and innovators who are capable of developing solutions for our social, cultural and economic problems and contribute to a continuation of the system which has produced them**

As we seek to redefine our education within the context of the above objectives, **we must, at the same time, through a change in culture seek to repress the rampant philosophy of individualism which has pervaded the society and which has become the bedrock of our educational system.** According to this philosophy, as it is practised in what is perhaps the most individualistic country of the world-America-, “the ambitious individual of average or above-average ability from the lower and middle classes is constantly encouraged to climb up the social ladder out of his social class and community.” This fuelled the expectation that those who climbed this ladder to the satisfaction of the dominant class or the political elite, would be rewarded with promotion and advancement into the higher social standing of the society with the result, thereby gaining access to all of the material trappings of the society.

### **Redefining the role of the Teacher**

Success in such a school system described above requires the students to focus on his teacher. The teacher becomes the fountain of wisdom who feeds the truth to his students who in turn feeds this (“the correct answers”) back to the teacher. The more “correct answers” the student regurgitates through rote learning, the brighter he/she is considered to be, and the greater the reward from the teacher and the parents as the Establishment prepares the student to succeed outside of the school environment. **Our Education system must move our students away from thinking that success constitutes cramming for examinations based on structured and unchangeable syllabi.**

The teacher today must see his/her role in the education process very differently. Given **the ease with which anyone can gather information in this digital age, the model of the teachers as a “fountain of knowledge” becomes outdated. The teacher becomes merely a facilitator in this process moving students critically towards national, regional and global awareness, while creating opportunities for those students to speak and be heard in their communities, and to create, organize and assess what they have gathered from both their classroom and their community. This means that our teachers must be trained and retrained in a fundamental way.** They must also **receive** continuous professional development, assessing, as they go along, their successes and their challenges with their students. The method of selection and the requirements thereof for those who are to be entrusted with the teaching of our students must be scrupulously revised. Finally, our teachers must be treated as professionals beginning with the appropriate compensation package befitting their status.

Our teachers must be properly prepared to deal with the problems of students in the contemporary environment and as such, must be afforded regular training opportunities to develop the necessary skills for classroom management and dealing with difficult student behaviour. This will not be found in the current teacher curriculum offered at our universities.

As our education system exists today, **large numbers of our youth see no relationship between the type of education offered them and their daily lives in their community or the problems of the today’s world which affect them so intimately.** The learning, in terms of

content and style, dished out by their teachers standing at the front of the classroom appears static and monotonous compared to what they see and hear on the electronic media and what they experience in their daily life. Ultimately, surrounded on all sides by commercials urging them to consume limitlessly, many of them reject the education offered to them and even the notion that somehow this would bring them fulfilment. And thus those who reject that concept of education roam the streets restlessly, potential victims of organized crime with its focus on guns and drugs. They also become potential hustlers against their own community. **This reality reinforces the need for education to go beyond the realm of the structured classroom and for the development of a system of teacher training and of assessment to identify the skills they may have acquired outside of that classroom. The Caribbean Vocational Qualifications(CVQ), properly utilized, is a step in the right direction in this latter issue.**

A critical component of teacher retraining is the provision of tools to empower them to teach our students with different individual learning styles and needs. Howard Gardner's in his pivotal book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, posits the notion that there are at least seven human intelligences, but only two of these- the "verbal/linguistic" Intelligence and the "logical/mathematical" intelligence have been widely utilized in our traditional pedagogy. The teachers' ability to utilize the other intelligences could result in the creation of a richer culture as we recognize, according to Margaret Meade, "*the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.*" This aptly expresses the sentiments of our national anthem.

Our teachers in conjunction with other relevant professional staff must be specifically trained to effectively and creatively serve the needs of our students who are mentally, physically and emotionally challenged; and we are told that these categories constitute somewhere in the vicinity of thirty percent(30%) of our student population. In fact, there needs to be an entire system of service to these students. Let us not at the same time, forget that special training is also needed for specially gifted students, whom we are in the habit of merely characterizing as "bright", without acknowledging that many of these, if not handled properly and professionally, can forever be lost to our society through early and extended bouts of frustration, boredom and disillusionment.

### **Education and School Management**

Teachers are not the only ones who need extensive and regular training to produce the type of education which could achieve the aforementioned objectives. The present method of determining who is promoted to Principal and Vice Principal of what is essentially an organizational operation leaves much to be desired. Having performed only as a teacher for many years should not automatically form part of the criteria that qualify one to manage a school in all of its complexity. While seniority may count in some circumstances, it can hardly be the primary qualification for management. The education system must develop the wherewithal to train those teachers who wish to be promoted into management, so that they can better manage and cope with these new more challenging duties.

Any attempt to redefine our education policy must factor in all the challenges and issues encountered by students, teachers and administrators within this current system. Education policies and practices must result in eradicating the enormous disparity in accessibility and quality, in broadening the range of “intelligences”, skills, abilities and learning styles, in adequate financial provision for all categories of students and in students' results and involvement in the educational processes. **Sports, culture, the arts must enjoy the same respect and support as that given to the academic curriculum.** To regard these as being extra-curricular activities is to devalue their critical role in the overall development of the individual and the society. Moreover, **East, West, North, South and Central and Tobago must have equal access to this quality education.**

The Education system must move our students away from thinking that success constitutes cramming for examinations based on structured and unchangeable syllabi to embracing the full range of human skills and abilities, involving the “intelligences” referred to above, allowing each child to learn in a manner which brings out his/her strengths and abilities, by catering to the individual differences of individual students, inclusive of the specially challenged and specially gifted.

**The Education system must prepare individuals through a learning process that will lead them to a diet of creative and critical thinking, collaborative decision making, problem solution and action, ready to take on the uncertainties of a future unknown to all.**

**A New System of Education is Necessary**

We need a system of Education which is relevant, responsive and accountable to the society. In this new system, the purpose of Education must be clearly defined. **Our education must be based on a philosophy of history, our history and the history of the world in which we live.** For this reason, our youth must begin to understand the history of their society at the earliest age possible. Students must be taught their history from kindergarten through elementary, high school and college and university and other educational institutions in the country. Moreover, **this history must be positioned within the regional and global contexts.** At every level, Caribbean history must become compulsory for our students to encourage patriotism and a pride in their country and region, and also to motivate them to excel both at the national and regional level.

***Our Education must prepare our youth to govern.*** For the most part, governance throughout the Caribbean is a serious problem. Those who govern lack the wherewithal to govern properly. We need future leadership that would be effective and just. Our societies are constantly in crisis mode. Our youth must be given the concrete opportunities to change the actual conditions of their life and to bring about a society which is “fair” and “just”.

***Our education must not restrict our students to one particular set of skills.*** Our students must be exposed to the full range of learning skills and abilities, without having any declared as superior to the other. Thus there can be no notion of art, music and athletics being extra-curricular activities, reserved only for those who cannot achieve within the academic setting. The full range of “intelligences” must be utilized with our students.

***Our Education must include productive activity.*** Our Education system must combine work with study at all levels. **Theory and Practice, Thought and Action should be fundamental to the Education system.** The Apprenticeship and Internship systems are therefore critical here.

The MSJ proposes the following **specific policies and/or practices** to promote the above and advance a framework for a new system of education:

- There needs to be an **overhaul of the Curriculum** at every level of the Education system consistent with the objectives laid out above. This must involve Curriculum for the varied types of students discussed above, inclusive of those with special needs.
- The Academic and Technical curricula must form only one aspect of the school offerings. At every level, what some educationists refer to as the “hidden curriculum” must be presented to students, but not in any “hidden” manner. This “hidden” curriculum should **teach students values, principles, the importance of rational thinking, conflict management, collectivism.**
- **All the skills and abilities must enjoy the same degree of importance within the curriculum,** so that all students, regardless of their emphasis will feel that they have something worthy to contribute to the society. Equal opportunity for all of our students should be the mantra.
- The curriculum should reflect the values and aspirations of the ordinary man and woman of the society. Here **the role of labour must not be glossed over,** but must be properly analysed for its contribution to the development of the society as a whole. The curriculum should seek to destroy the class bias of our present education system.
- **Special emphasis to be placed on innovation, science and technology** to provide impetus and direction to the economy.
- **More practical courses** within college and university programmes to **provide students with hands-on experience** and to better prepare them for a competitive job market.
- There must be a **reemphasis on the teaching of languages** within the education system. In addition to the traditional languages of Spanish and French, students must be introduced to the languages of commerce within the modern world.
- **Student Development Centres/Homework Centres** should be set up in every community for the purpose of assisting those students who may require additional instruction to comprehend the syllabus and who may need other forms of assistance to achieve their goals
- Neighbourhood schools have an obligation to accept any student who lives in their zone.

- There must **be in every community a system of pre-school/kindergarten/early childhood education** designed specifically to nurture and promote our children's social-emotional wellbeing, and their mental, language, and literary skills.
- **Schools should become the centre of their communities, offering extended services to both their students and their communities.** As such, schools must be accessible to the community whenever possible.
- A system of **zoning** should be established in the case of public primary and secondary schools. The notion of inequity must be rooted out at the level of the schools.
- **Special out of school arrangements must be made for suspended and difficult students,** without depriving them of the opportunity to learn.
- **Special provisions,** both physical and technical, should be made **for differently-abled individuals** at every level of the education system.
- Education system should follow a **policy of integration** so that **students with special needs could attend regular classes and receive assistance.**
- **Extensive consultation** with all sectors of the society **to determine the content and direction of the education system:** The Union, the PTA, the psychologists, counsellors etc.
- Our education must be **based on a philosophy of history.** For this reason, our youth must begin to understand the history of their society at the earliest age possible. Students must be taught their history from kindergarten through elementary, high schools and colleges and universities and other educational institutions in the country. At every level, Caribbean history must become compulsory for our students.
- Our **teachers must be treated as professionals** and enjoy all of the benefits appropriate for their profession.
- There must be **intense and consistent professional training, retraining and development for all of our teachers,** inclusive of those who lecture at the tertiary level institutions: this will not involve those who focus primarily on research at these institutions.
- No teacher must go into the classroom to teach if he/she is not trained, unless accompanied by a trained colleague or master teacher. There needs to be a fundamental change in the approach to teaching and learning at the primary and secondary levels. Class and behavioural management must be a central part of the training.

- There must be a system of **School Management** training as well for those who are placed in charge of the schools.
- A **robust system of career and counsel guidance** needs to be set up, particularly at the high school level.
- Excessive government control over government assisted tertiary institutions should be decreased.
- Support for a National and a Regional/CARICOM Commission on tertiary education to facilitate, among other things, the movement of relevant skills within the region.
- The tertiary institutions should more clearly differentiate from each other in their specializations and strengths so as to provide the appropriate diversity of skills for the job market.
- The SEA examinations should be abolished and a more appropriate and less stressful method of assessment should be established for moving students from one level to the other.
- Emphasis must be placed on the informal processes of learning and preparation, such as adult education, experiential learning and on the job training.
- A greater emphasis should be placed on Adult education. In this respect, there ought to be greater government assistance for the Adult Literacy Tutors Association(ALTA) as they continue to bring tangible benefits to adults who may, for one reason or another, missed the opportunity to develop their literacy, both written and spoken.

MSJ strongly advocates that Faculty at tertiary institutions throughout the country should collaborate and form their own association whereby they can discuss the issues which affect them and develop a platform for progressive change in the educational system, particularly at the tertiary level.

### **Education and the Future**

As we continue into the twenty-first century, the whole system of education will continue to undergo tremendous transformation, as Science and Technology take hold of our lives at every turn. At all levels of the education system, teachers will need to use the appropriate technology to explain systems, principles and processes. If our teachers are to prepare their charges to survive within their national and global spaces, they themselves will need to become very

familiar with the basic tools of Science and Technology as they guide their students through the processes of critical thinking and problem solving. Familiarity with the Internet and the other tools of Distance Learning must become a priority for those who manage the education system so that no student is allowed to fall by the wayside by virtue of where they may reside.

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## VIII Crime and National Security

### *Overview:*

- Revise and strengthen our institutions: Police System, Justice System, Penal System
- Restore trust in our protective services: Safety in communities and personal safety
- Legislation to address the drug trade, procurement, and party and campaign financing
- Curb prevalence of domestic violence and violence against children
- Address violence in schools

### **Introduction**

*There can be no peace without justice.* This mantra of the 1960s civil rights movement can ring through for any society the world over, including ours. **It is the view of the MSJ that the issue of crime is not only an issue of national security, but also a fundamental issue of national development.** The developmental model which has been pursued in our country has led to an inequitable and discriminatory society. This contributes significantly to the high levels of crime which we now experience.

This course of development which we associate with modern societies brings with it stark contradictions. Although many have experienced improved living standards and that the country has had periods of phenomenal economic growth over the last 20 years, this improvement however has widened the gap between rich and poor. This has led to a heightened sense of deprivation among those who are marginalised within the society. This in turn has resulted in these marginalised groups seeking and finding their own remedies to correct injustices. This view is articulated in the 2012 Caribbean Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

*“The changes in post-independence environments have coincided to impact the region’s security landscape. This includes the economic consequences of structural adjustment*

*programmes in several countries. In addition, the region has been affected by the violence associated with and emerging from political competition, growth in the drug trade and more recently gang-related violence.”*

The extent to which our institutions have been unable to mitigate the social problems of the population is an indictment on our state of development, as demonstrated by the spiralling increase in criminal activity. According to the official figures of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) the murder toll for the year 2000 was 118. In 2013 this figure stood at 407, having peaked at 550 in 2008. It is clear to us in the MSJ that our institutions have been found wanting, as they have proven time and time again to be unable to provide an adequate remedy to the increased and transformed nature of today’s crime situation.

It is not the simply the condition of poverty in itself which can lead to crime, but rather poverty as a result of several interventions which have created a condition of hopelessness in these communities. This is evident in the negative transformation of many communities after the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s where people did not see a way out and they become consumed by hopelessness. This is compounded by an education system which has failed two or three generations of young people; as well as the dominant culture of individualism and instant gratification which directly contradicts of historical experiences of collectivism which was demonstrated by our forefathers in the face of the adversities of enslavement, indenturedship and colonialism.

While it is evident that many physical conditions have improved, the MSJ questions the extent to which we have achieved the transformation of the old *plantation* culture. It is our view that there are still too many people who do not count and as a nation we have done precious little to transform the relations of power in this society. Instead we have held firm to the dichotomy of domination and subjugation which is manifested in the general state of unhappiness of large sections of the society. In the absence of genuine hope that this situation will improve, persons engage in deviant behaviour as a sense of hopelessness and rebellion sets in.

It is our firm belief that the MSJ's commitment to Social Justice gives us a distinct advantage to effectively treat with the crime situation. Addressing the social ills requires more than 'make - work programs' and 'hand-outs'. **It is only Social Justice and not Social Work which will transform our society.** This does not mean that Social Work is not necessary, indeed it is arguable that in the absence of interventions from persons in these fields that the situation could have been much worse. The point however is best articulated by Dr Martin Luther King Jr. when he said that *"the difference between social service and social justice is that social service works to alleviate hardship while social justice aims to eradicate the root causes of that hardship."* It is through this understanding that the MSJ can be confident of the unique nature of our approach to addressing crime. If the problem is not correctly defined it is impossible to arrive at a solution that would work.

We have focused for far too long on young people as deviants, as the recently concluded Ryan report reminds us. The report identifies that "the propensity to crime resulted from certain conditions including broken and dysfunctional families, juvenile delinquency, peer rejection, failure or disruptive behaviour at school, gang membership and incarceration." While the report does allude to the education system and the shift in values of the society over the last sixty years it stops short for identifying the nature of the society as the core problem. In fact the solutions seem to attempt an approach of rehabilitation and reconditioning, to have these youth cope and adapt to these conditions of inequity of a society which is by its design unjust.

It is the view of the MSJ that these deviant youth are by-products of a society which continues to choose barbarism over civilisation. We cannot separate our developmental path from the type and character of citizen that it engenders. We must take an alternative path to build a new society. Our failure to take responsibility for our delinquent youth is exposed when we take credit for those who excel even though we have had as much direct input in that as we have had in the youth at risk. It is the very nature of our unjust society which must be transformed.

**The MSJ's approach to effectively addressing the crime problem is framed in our internal understanding of the role that relations of power plays in undermining the development of a society based on the principles of social justice as outlined in the Preamble to the**

**Constitution. It is clear that the developmental model and the organization of the institutions within our society are a function of these unbalanced relations of power. The institutions, which ought to ensure that Justice is meted out to every citizen, were in fact created to maintain imbalance i.e. the education system, the police force, the justice system and the penal system. At the heart of addressing the crime problem of Trinidad and Tobago must be a conviction to challenge the status quo head on.**

The policies of the MSJ to address the issues of crime would be under pinned by the following

**Guiding Principles:**

- Engendering a sense of safety among citizens where they live and where they work.
- Restoring the faith and trust of the citizenry in the institutions of state related to the upholding of justice i.e. the TTPS, the Judiciary and the Penal System.
- Ensuring that all are treated equally under the law.
- Creating a country where justice is not only done but also seen to be done.
- Protect the rights of every citizen as owners of the national patronage by addressing corruption.

**Objectives**

- Develop safe communities
- Address violence in schools
- Combat domestic violence
- Reduce the incidence of violence against children
- Address the unabated drug trade
- Address ‘white colour’ crime with particular emphasis on Party Funding and Campaign Financing and Procurement Legislation.
- Provide a solution to the complete breakdown of the institutions charged with upholding justice (the TTPS, the Judiciary and the Penal System).

**Feeling Safe Where You Live and Where You Work**

While it has been touted in recent times that citizens also have a responsibility to ensure their own safety, this cannot be used to rationalize the abdication by successive Governments of their

responsibility to ensure the safety of the citizens. The social contract between Government and the people includes the right to protection.

MSJ's proposals to enhance citizens' sense of security include:

1. Revamping community policing to ensure closer links with the community and established community watch groups. This would include assisting these groups with risk assessment in both planned and unplanned communities.
2. Having a national dialogue on the creation of a sexual offenders listing.
3. Regular patrols to significantly improve policing response times.
4. Promoting community based mobilisation and organisation to foster community spirit

### **Violence in Schools**

Increased incidents of violence, a few of which have led to fatalities, is a cause for much concern. The fundamental transformation of these institutions is a critical component in the mitigation of school violence. This is further elaborated in our policy on education, however, we believe that a responsible Government can make several immediate interventions to address the issue as identified below.

1. Filling the vacancies at all these schools must be an immediate priority. The lack of supervision on the compound during school hours remains too high. The Teaching Service Commission must receive the support of additional staff to effectively deal with backlogs and fill these vacancies.
2. Schools must address the lack of Guidance Counsellors within the system. Rebellion in one form or another is a major contributing factor to violence in schools. This therefore requires continuous engagement of our students by trained professionals.
3. While there must be stiff penalties for students who bring weapons and other such items to the school the approach of 'throw away the key' is counterproductive as when they are taken out of the school system they go into the larger society as dysfunctional citizens.

**Programmatic rehabilitation is essential to make them functional and productive.**

4. After school violence poses an indisputable challenge. The reorganisation of the school system to incorporate more structured non-academic activity as part of the curriculum will provide a structured environment for students even after school has ended.
5. Having students zoned would also see them being nearer to community centred initiatives such as homework centres and community clubs and organisations.

### **Domestic Violence**

Acts of violence against women and children in Trinidad and Tobago have increased in prevalence as our institutions become weaker and less relevant. Too many women have lost their lives in situations which could have been avoided. We therefore propose:

1. In cases where reports of domestic violence are reported, counselling must be ordered by the court and the terms and conditions must be similar to seeing a parole officer, especially when children are also involved.
2. The issuance of restraining orders does not guarantee safety and there must be a closer relationship between the community and the Community Police. The lack of trust and break down of communication between the citizens and the protective services means that help is sought too late.
3. Mediation services must be easily accessible by all parties and must not only require parties going to them but such officers must be able to visit the parties where they are in their own spaces.
4. Prosecution in these cases would be improved by amending the laws to allow other forms of admissible evidence beyond eye witness testimony. For example allowing sworn affidavits to be used if the eye witness is unable to attend court.
5. Safe houses and a structured mechanism for extraction must be developed through consultation with those groups who currently work in these areas, and their work must be supplemented and expanded through government support.

### **Violence Against Children**

This remains a scourge in our society. Although the necessary legislation exists and the basic framework for intervention is already in place, our children continue to suffer as a result of deficiencies in political leadership. **The MSJ would ensure that the Children's Act is**

**immediately proclaimed and that the institutions contained within are adequately funded to provide maximum benefit.**

**The MSJ proposes to review and focus on the following legislative framework to address specific deficiencies:**

**1. To address the Drug Trade: “Follow the Money Legislation”**

- a) Strengthen the FIU, BIR and Customs and Excise Division to independently investigate questionable transactions and funds whose source cannot be identified.
- b) Establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau outside of the TTPS and have this body accountable to a select committee of the Parliament.
- c) Introduction of expanded cybercrime legislation and creation of a special unit for investigation. This will have to be a combination of civilians and law officers.

**2. To address White collar crime and corruption**

- a) Proper procurement legislation which must include a strong regulator (as laid out in the Governance section).
- b) The registration of political parties thereby obliging them to produce statutory declarations of income and expenditure.
- c) Immediate introduction of Party Finance legislation which has been outlined as an independent policy.

**3. To address the TTPS**

- a) Restore authority to the Police Service Commission to appoint a Police Commissioner
- b) Strengthen the forensic investigation capacity of the police service in the short term by introducing civilians to do highly specialized scientific work and offering incentives for persons to go into forensics (e.g. the introduction of DNA testing labs in T&T).
- c) Strengthen the Police Complaints Authority to allow for independent investigation and line to DPP (where the DPP is now appointed on new terms consistent with the

- proposals in the policy positions on Governance) to allow for prosecution based on those investigations.
- d) Upgrade of training facilities to allow for training and retraining in a modern environment for law enforcement officers to be “at the top of their game” at all times.
  - e) Reorganise Community Policing, this is key to crime prevention.

#### **4. To address the Judiciary**

- a) Allow for wider range of admissible evidence to include CCTV footage, the written testimony of eye witnesses and the utilization of video conferencing for testimony to allow witness to testify from anywhere in the world.
- b) Focus on Restorative Justice: community service and parole system (current bail system places those without the resources at a major disadvantage for misdemeanours).
- c) Establish the CCJ as the final court of appeal for both civil and criminal matters (see Governance section).

#### **5. To address the Penal System**

- a) Introduction of a parole system.
- b) Transformation of facilities to reflect a genuine attempt at rehabilitation. Begin consultations with stakeholders for the relocation of the Port-Of-Spain Remand Yard and the Santa Rosa detention facility.
- c) Filling of all vacancies in the system to ensure the safety of both officers and prisoners is always a high priority.

#### **Additional interventions which are required to fully transform the identified institutions:**

- a) The expansion of the TTPS with improved forensic capacity and stronger legal framework will significantly improve the detection rate.
- b) Upgrade all Ports of entry (official and unofficial) to secure borders against traffickers.
- c) Complete overhaul of the magistrate’s court to ensure respect for all persons.

- d) Reorganization of communities through Local Government to give ownership to the people of the spaces where they live (see Local Government section).
- e) The establishment of rehabilitation facilities/hostels to meet the needs of a wide cross section of persons who need these services ( eg. orphans who reach the age of 18, ex-prisoners and homeless)
- f) Introduction of skills training and rehabilitation at the prison to mitigate recidivism.

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## IX Youth Development

### *Overview:*

- Re-engineer the Division of Youth and expand existing services
- Professionalization of Youth Work
- Relevant, modern and inclusive skills training
- Multipartite Partnering: student council, faculty, parents, community and Ministry
- Establish a National Youth Assembly to oversee Youth Policy
- Youth and Migration

### **Introduction**

According to a UNICEF 2006 report on Social Policy and Youth in the Caribbean, forgone productivity due to unemployment of youth is as high as 7% of GDP in this region. Estimated economic cost of youth crime ranges from 1% of GDP (Jamaica) to 11% (St. Lucia). Forgone economic output due to AIDS deaths in 2000 was 0.2% of GDP in Barbados. The net social economic cost over the lifetime of one cohort of adolescent mothers ranges from US\$1.6 million in Guyana to US\$38 million in Jamaica. Not to mention the fact that the World Bank has rated the region as having the highest murder rate per hundred thousand in the world.

The number of reported cases of physical abuse of children in their homes, communities, schools and other institutions caring for children and the number of crimes committed by children against other children, is increasing. According to records from the Police Department, murder rates have increased from 7.6 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2002 to 30.7 in 2005. Between January and April 2007, 51 persons were murdered. Domestic violence is the second major cause of murder, followed by robbery (17%); rape, incest and sexual assault stood at 12% of all reported crimes.

There has been an upsurge in criminal activity and general violence over the last five years and this is linked to the increased number of children and young people involved in criminal and violent activities and gang membership, often involving drugs (including sale and trafficking).

Despite the great risk of death or injury and the lesser risk of detection, the sale and distribution of narcotics within the country has not slowed. According to the Ministry of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago, there are an estimated 66 known gangs with more than 500 members including minors (2009), established in structured networks with suppliers, distributors, couriers, retailers, and enforcers. Some of these gangs now engage in kidnapping, with ransom demands. Some are also involved in the trafficking of heroin and cocaine. **Our youth are in crisis and without strategic intervention, the situation will worsen and negative influences will continue to deepen their grasp on our youth. We are at a critical point in our nation's course; change is not simply a choice, it is absolutely necessary if we are to continue to develop as a nation.**

The MSJ recognizes that young people are important social actors within our society who possess the skills and abilities to shape their own environment. As such the MSJ proposes to create a policy which seeks to engage young people at all levels of our society, in order to promote and realize the principles of *inclusion and equity* of all young people from different socio-economic back grounds.

**Our Youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but it is also imperative for them to be engaged as competent partners today.** Youth excellence in many spheres of society is marred by the actions of many of our young persons who are also involved in a number of anti-social behaviours, often triggered by deficient policies or exclusionary practices. These youth may feel socially excluded from our society and engaged in behaviour considered to be anti- social behaviour (CARICOM Commission on Youth).

***What solutions does the MSJ offer?***

Our framework seeks to establish how the MSJ will partner with young people in order to promote and achieve *social inclusion*.

1. **Re-engineer the Division of Youth** and make it more relevant and accessible to all young people. We aim to expand the services of this division to include counselling, shelter services/safe house and transitional homes (some of our young people are more prone to

engage in anti-social behaviour owing to turbulent personal contexts). If the Division of youth was to provide a space so that these young people would be fortified to resist the negative elements in our society, it may go a long way in curbing the rise in youth crime.

2. **Make Youth Mainstreaming a reality** i.e. giving youth an opportunity to be part of the decision making processes. Young people should be accommodated and involved in the decision making process, including the legislative arm. Mainstreaming youths by placing them on state boards, on interview panels where persons such as the director of youth division are to be selected or when new teachers are being selected (it must be noted that many studies show that the real experts (the students) most times do a better job at interviews for the selection of new teacher as they are usually ask the questions that are most relevant to the job. Youth mainstreaming ought to be reflected in all sectors of society, from regional corporations to Ministerial functions.
3. **Professionalization of Youth Work** - the modern Youth Worker needs to become certified as they are charged with the responsibility for guiding and caring for one of our most important resources which is our human resource. No longer can we accept persons who do not understand the dynamics of youth writing policy and are allowed to determine society's parameters for the engagement of its youth. It is also important to improve the outreach of these new certified Youth Workers and improve access so that they can reach more young people in communities. Accountability of this new cadre of Youth Workers is paramount to the process.
4. **Appropriate Skills Training** –Skills training is another facet in which the youth demographic can be targeted. Whilst traditional skills (such as mechanics, dress-making, woodwork, etc.) training offered by Youth Camps are important, it does not represent the spectrum of youth interests. We live in a technological age and our young people are very much interested in developing skills in other areas such as filming, lighting, computer repairs and music recording. These opportunities should be offered by Youth camps in order to attract more young people with varied interests.

5. **Promote a culture of career driven rather than work driven youth.** One of the main issues which affect our youth in current status quo has to do with viable employment. The failure of successive administrations to adequately link national development policies to educational policies has left many youth qualified for jobs which do not exist or for which the market is saturated. The deficiencies in the education system also mean that many young people find themselves unemployable and are then subjected to all forms of exploitation. We must engender a sense of belonging in our youth so that they can see skill development as more than getting a job but as their way of contributing to national development. This requires clearly articulated Government policy to guide this process.
6. It is also important to **facilitate community based partnering** within the existing school system to provide external support for domestic gaps. The fact is that many of today's youth entering secondary level education come from unhealthy, dysfunctional homes where addiction, abuse including neglect, and criminal activity are dominant factors in their daily lives. They are not nurtured and properly or cared for during childhood. Therefore they often fall to the way side because abuse and addiction have taken precedence. The foundation they were given to build their lives upon is tainted and weak. These youth are already on a path to self-destruction because the seeds of abuse, addiction, and criminal behaviour have been firmly planted. This reality typically affects their ability to learn and they often exit the education system lacking the necessary skills and social support required to become productive adults in our society; they become part of a vicious cycle. The MSJ is focused on assisting young people to recognize positive alternatives and solutions that will place them on a path to success. Our framework seeks to engage the student body as the main partner, while working in conjunction with the faculty, the administration, the parents, the community and the Ministry of Education. Through the MSJ's policies, we propose to respond to the needs of our Youth in the following channels:
- Train teachers and students to effectively interact and communicate with each other and the community.
  - Individual Counselling and teacher/peer support that:

- Discourages gang involvement and criminal activity to ensure youths' safety and well being
  - Addresses issues like teenage sex, teenage pregnancy, and other at risk behaviour
  - Encourages youth not to use alcohol or other substances a form of escape and problem solving
  - The development of a parent/teacher association and a Student Council to:
    - Address issues such as: low attendance and high dropout rate
    - Create education, tutoring, and literacy programs
    - Conduct workshops with individual and group activities that promote safety and a healthy respect for the environment
    - Respond to parent concerns and create a community outreach program that includes activities that foster community spirit
    - Develop a recreation program that includes, sports art, music, and other positive recreational activities
7. Create a **National Youth Assembly** which would comprise different youth interest groups, and function in the way of a quasi-parliament, overseeing youth policy and development issues.
8. **Youth and Migration** - The MSJ is of the view that development cannot be achieved or sustained without everyone's inclusion. Meaningful youth participation has been critical to ensuring social cohesion in many cultures. However, many of our young citizens, even tertiary graduates often feel obliged to migrate in search of opportunities because they are unable to self-actualize in Trinidad and Tobago, and this continues to have damaging effects on family life and social stability.

Even young migrants who come to our country are confronted with issues of abuse, exploitation and discrimination because of lack of policy/legislation to protect them and to manage migration, including effective border management against exploiters, traffickers etc. Though migrants are often regarded with disdain, it is to be noted that migrants bring new skills to the country which facilitates the transfer of knowledge and innovative practices.

They also contribute to the economies of the destination countries through work and taxes and to their countries of origin through remittances. They help to fill labour market shortages and to develop transnational networks, all of which this country can benefit from. The MSJ therefore proposes a co-development approach to migration as opposed to a security focused approach to migration.

The MSJ in this regard proposes that one must identify several areas of importance to address the challenges posed by youth migration. Firstly the MSJ reaffirms its commitment to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) especially as it relates to the free movement of labour. We must ensure that a rigid campaign is developed so that all stakeholders including our youth are not only aware of the existence of such movement but that they are provided with both the skill and the environment to take advantage of it.

# X Labour and Social Security

**Overview:**

- Labour should not be exploited
- Comprehensive reform of labour legislation
- Strong and coherent policy on migrant labour
- Promote job creation, decent living standards and labour conditions
- Workplace retirement planning
- Strengthen capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro-Enterprise Development

**Historical Context**

One of the sad realities of Trinidad and Tobago is that the vast majority of citizens, young and old, have little or no appreciation of the role of labour in our country's development. This is because history is not taught in a way that would inform us of the centrality of labour to the process of development. Firstly, the history of Trinidad and Tobago is about how the people who now inhabit these islands came to be here. Following the European arrival and virtual genocide of the indigenous people, the Europeans who established plantations in Tobago required labour. Slaves from Africa were brought to Tobago for that specific purpose – to work. In Trinidad, given the very late development of plantations, the Cedula of Population by the Spanish saw planters who were Roman Catholic coming to Trinidad from the French colonies in the Caribbean (Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe). The planters received land in proportion to the number of slaves which they brought. Thus the shortage of labour resulted in the arrival of African slaves and “French Creoles”. Given that the period of slavery in Trinidad was relatively short, following Emancipation there was again a shortage of labour on the plantations. The planter class then implemented the system of indentureship and through this we had indentured labourers arriving from China, Madeira (Portugal) and primarily from India. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the development of the oil industry saw workers coming from other islands –

Grenada and St. Vincent primarily. Police officers were recruited from Barbados as were other skilled workers for the sugar industry.

**In summary, the population in Trinidad and Tobago can all trace their roots back to arrivals that were due to the need for labour.** Furthermore, as different from other societies in Trinidad and Tobago (and the Caribbean), the social group that fought for democracy and to humanise the new space in which they now lived, was the working people. From the slave revolts that forced the end of slavery to the strikes of the 1930's, it was the mass movement of those who laboured that won democratic freedoms. Indeed, the far reaching agenda of the early West Indian labour movement set out the objectives for social, economic and political reforms that laid the basis for modern Caribbean society. As Nobel Prize winner Sir Arthur Lewis stated *“Important as have been the results on the trade union front, on the political front nothing short of a revolution has occurred...Governments have already been forced to adopt all sorts of measures to meet the grievances of the workers – land settlement, fixing minimum wages, expenditure on public works and slum clearance, old age pensions, workmen’s compensation. This is indeed a revolution, for hitherto West Indian Governments have not regarded measures of this sort as of primary importance. But even more important than all of this is the fact that the working classes have become organised politically, and that their interests have been forced into the foreground. It is mainly on the development of this united labour movement that future progress in the West Indies depends”*

At the same time, ordinary working people have been in the forefront of the process of humanising a landscape scarred by slavery and indenture. Out of this process has come our unique cultural expressions – in music (steelpan, calypso, chutney, folk dances, parang); in food (from roti and doubles to corn soup and pelau, curry crab and dumpling), and so much more.

Furthermore, throughout the post-Independence period, the progressive labour movement has sought to defend those democratic rights and freedoms and made proposals for progressive change in our country. It is recognised by all enlightened countries that the existence of a vibrant labour movement is an important contributor to a more equitable and just society. In the Scandanavian countries, for example, which have a very high standard of living and quality of life, there is a strong labour movement and tri-partite processes of engagement between

employers, trade unions and government. However, in Trinidad and Tobago there have been on the one hand interventions by the state such as the Industrial Stabilisation Act (1965) and its successor Industrial Relations Act (1972) – both of which were passed into law during public states of emergency – which resulted in a weakening of the strength of trade unions. Indeed, in a famous Court of Appeal Judgment on the constitutionality of the ISA, then Chief Justice Sir Hugh Wooding stated that “the pendulum had swung too far in favour of labour and the law was necessary to restore balance”. On the other hand the absence of intervention has meant that most labour legislation is extremely outdated. Given the process of globalisation which has been characterised by growing income inequality, less secure employment arrangements and the tendency for a concentration of capital, the existing legislative framework gives working people very little protection. The pendulum has now swung too far in favour of capital and balance needs to be restored.

### **Objective**

***“There should be an adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity”***

***- Trinidad and Tobago Constitution***

As stated in the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution, it is the primary objective of the MSJ’s labour policy to pursue and achieve this vision of labour in our nation.

Decent work is an objective of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and is illustrative of a progressive society. A connected aspect is the way in which citizens view labour, and the intrinsic value and purpose of work. In the MSJ, we believe that persons ought to view work as the means through which each of us can make our contribution in fulfilment of the national vision. Therefore the ‘plantation culture’ of viewing work as a task or even a burden must be deconstructed. In its stead, we ought to value work as an avenue for self-actualisation and an expression of our ideas, talents and ability into a valuable output, the benefits of which are equitably shared.

## Strategies

The implementation of the following key strategies form a robust platform through which opportunities for **sustainable employment** and attaining a **decent standard of living** can be delivered.

- ***Comprehensive reform of the Industrial Relations Act. Over the past two decades there have been numerous tri-partite discussions on amending the IRA. The MSJ as a matter of urgency would implement major reforms*** which would include the following elements:
  - i) **All workers must be recognized as Workers** - The term “worker” should be amended to include drivers, domestic workers, and other categories of workers. In this regard, the ILO Convention C189 2011 which Trinidad and Tobago has voted for but has not yet been ratified and put into effect, must be enforced to ensure the rights of this group of workers are preserved.
  - ii) **Remove the severe limitations on the right to strike** - it should be noted that in Barbados there are no limitations on the right to strike.
  - iii) **Prevent the Decertification of Trade Unions** – In recognition of the important role of trade unions in protecting, and defending workers’ rights, there is a need to excise from the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) the provision which allows an employer to seek decertification of trade unions. The ability of trade unions to carry out their critical functions must not be threatened. It must be noted that in the existing IRA there is no corresponding penalty of decertifying or delisting an employer.
  - iv) **Facilitate Workers’ Right to Join a Trade Union of Their Choice** – *This is a fundamental right which must be protected.* A limit of three (3) months needs to be implemented for the determination of recognition claims which are made to the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board. The present process is counter-productive. We propose that the current requirement of fifty-one percent (51%) of workers in a bargaining unit to be members for eight consecutive weeks for that union to obtain recognition by the Recognition Board, should be amended to twenty percent (20%), followed by a simple balloting process. In this way the law would

- allow workers to join a trade union of their choice, since the present system causes delays of many months and opens workers to intimidation and victimisation. Facilitating a worker's right to join a trade union of their choice also enables the right of trade unions to engage in collective bargaining.. The present law restricts trade unions from representing more than one category of essential industry workers. This means that workers in one essential industry cannot be represented by a trade union that already represents a category of essential industry workers. This violates ILO Conventions and also denies workers the right to join a trade union of their choice.
- v) **Allow the merger of Trade Unions – In our present context, if two *unions represent workers in what is classified as* essential industries, these unions are not allowed to merge. On the other hand, capital i.e. companies are able to merge quite easily, so that Trade Unions are instead placed at a comparative disadvantage. The amended legislation should therefore provide for mergers of trade unions without any hindrance.**
- vi) **Appointment of Judges to the Industrial Court-** The appointment of Judges by an independent body, as occurs in the case of High Court Judges, should be instituted. It is to be noted that the Industrial Court, like the Supreme Court is a Court of superior record, but Judges in the Industrial Court are subjected to short term contracts of employment and are appointed on the advice of the Cabinet. Legislative provisions regarding security of tenure, terms and conditions of employment and pensions for Judges of the Industrial Court also need to be amended. In this way Industrial Court Judges can be and seen to be independent.
- vii) **“Worker within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Act”** - Employers should not be able to use provisions related to “worker in good standing” and “worker within the meaning of the Act,” to delay or prevent trade unions from representing individual workers working in a non-unionised environment.

- *Amendments/Reform to other labour legislation:*

- i) **Reform of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, No 32/85** - This law does not provide for the payment of severance pay to workers who are faced with Company closure, such as winding up, receivership and liquidation. This must be corrected otherwise the law is meaningless. Major review of the minimum severance payable on retrenchment; requirements for full disclosure of facts by employers who propose retrenchment; an avoidance of legal loopholes in the process such as payment in lieu of 45 days' notice (currently the employer is allowed to send home workers immediately even as a trade union may be challenging the justification for retrenchment) – are other areas that require major reform.
- ii) **Amendment of the Companies Act** - Severance payments ought to be prioritised in terms of ranking of creditors. It is wrong for payments to be made to banks, shareholders, and other creditors before severance payments are made to workers. There have been many instances in Trinidad and Tobago where companies have gone bankrupt or placed in liquidation and workers with many years' service (in some cases as many as 30 years' service) have gone home without receiving a single cent in compensation.
- iii) **Repeal of Workmen's Compensation Act** –this should be replaced with a modern Employee Injury and Disability Act. There have been many drafts of replacement legislation which have undergone tri-partite discussion but have not been implemented due to lack of political will. The MSJ would ensure that best practice legislation is implemented immediately.
- iv) The **Occupational Safety and Health Act** in its current form needs to be amended. We propose a return to the provisions of the OSH Act (Act 1 of 2004) which was debated and passed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President in January 2004. We do not agree with the amendments that were effected by the OSH Act (2006) as in our view these weaken the rights of workers as well as the regulatory agencies (OSH Authority and Agency; Environmental Management Authority and T&T Bureau of Standards).

- v) **Amendments to the Supplemental Police Act** - Amend the Supplemental Police Act to provide for (non-precepted) security officers to be represented by the Estate Police Association under the Industrial Relations Act.
- vi) **Public Sector Negotiations:** We resolve to establish a free and fair process. Cabinet sub-committees charged with overseeing public sector negotiations ultimately fetter and delay the free collective bargaining process. The Boards of State Enterprises and Statutory Bodies should be free to negotiate terms and conditions of employees. Further, there should be no directive from the Cabinet or the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) to these Boards. With respect to Government employees the CPO should be free to engage in collective bargaining in the framework of public sector reform as spelt out in the earlier Governance section.
- vii) In order to ensure that the **National Minimum Wage** is established at a fair rate which would allow minimum wage earners to meet their basic needs the policy to guide the Minimum Wage Board would be that the minimum wage should be in line with a *living wage*. The Minimum Wage Board should also be free to set a sectoral minimum wage for certain sectors, above the minimum wage.

***A Strong Policy on Migrant Labour*** – The Trinidad and Tobago legislation and/or policy on migrant labour must be consistent with the existing relevant ILO conventions. In this regard, we propose the following:

- Immediate establishment of a tripartite authority to monitor and regulate migrant labour.
- Provision must be made for trade unions to easily represent migrant workers.
- Reform of the system of work permits to ensure that jobs that can be performed by nationals are not being carried out by non-CARICOM nationals.- The current loophole in the law whereby non-nationals can work without a work-permit for up to three months must be closed since the practice is that these persons leave the country after three months and then return to work for another three months. Additionally, the use of non-national labour included as a condition in Government to Government arrangements must

cease. The transfer of skills and knowledge to nationals in cases where non-nationals are employed must also be monitored and enforced. Trade union representation on the Works Permits Committee must be instituted.

- *Human trafficking* is closely related to migrant labour and we recommend the immediate implementation of legislation to effectively protect vulnerable persons impacted by such difficult situations.
- Regional migrant labour: the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) establishing the free movement of labour across the region ought to be fully implemented.

The following is further proposed to ensure that a suitable environment is created which promotes job creation, decent living standards and shifts the culture to one of mutual respect, participation in a firm's processes and the equitable sharing of benefits:

- **The discontinuation of the policy of using Contract Labour in the Public Service, Teaching Service, and State Sector** This practice generally results in job insecurity and inferior terms and condition of employment. It also potentially compromises the standard of care relating to health and safety, and has continuously proven to result in avenues for corruption, political nepotism and the hiring and firing on the basis of perceived party loyalty. (See our position on Contract Labour in the Public Service in the Public Service Reform sub-section under the Governance section.)
- **Boosting productivity** – The National Productivity Council has a key role in promoting increased productivity. This body must be tripartite in nature. Additionally, this Council must be adequately resourced and empowered to conduct the necessary studies and develop and implement the relevant policies. Furthermore, Work Place Councils should be established, starting in state enterprises and statutory bodies. It is to be noted that in Germany and Scandinavia works councils have been very effective in addressing productivity and worker participation. Such bodies would facilitate the involvement of workers in the decision making process, and allow for their direct contribution to the

process of increasing productivity. This would give workers a sense of ownership of the production process and facilitate the change in culture and attitudes.

- Revisit the mandate of the **Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and strengthen its capacity to address workers' needs**. In MSJ's view the Ministry of Labour is central to the country's development because without work there is no economy and the education and training element of human resource development must be complemented by job opportunities and the right work place environment. Specific areas of the Ministry's work which must be promptly addressed include:
  - **Occupational Health and Safety Authority and Agency**: this must be a strong and independent agency which is properly resourced, funded and empowered. The regulatory function of this authority must also be more effective. There cannot be periods where the Authority (Board) is non-functional because appointments have not been made or because political considerations in appointments result in the compromising of its functioning as a strong, independent regulator. Well trained, professional staff must be employed in the Agency and the staff must be empowered to undertake investigations and other responsibilities objectively and without fear, regardless of who the employer/occupier may be.
  - **Labour Market Information Council**: The role of this multipartite committee is critical to being responsive to the labour market needs of Trinidad and Tobago. Recognising that a suitably trained labour force is vital in all spheres of economic activity, this Council should be engaged in determining the sectors which require additional workers, as well as ensuring that opportunities exist for sufficient persons to be trained in those areas. It is therefore an important mechanism to support the National Industrial Policies proposed in the Economy section are effectively fulfilled.
  - **The Conciliation Unit**: A strengthened conciliatory unit in the Ministry, respected by both employers and trade unions will enable a greater number of industrial matters to be resolved at this stage of the dispute resolution process, thereby reducing the number of matters that get referred for adjudication by the Industrial Court. The Industrial Court will therefore be able to treat with matters in a more timely and effective manner.

- ***The Labour Inspectorate:*** The Inspectorate is responsible for ensuring compliance by employers with the law, for example it advises workers on their legal rights; investigates employers who not complying with the minimum wages, maternity protection, workmen's compensation and other mandatory requirements. For the Inspectorate to be effective it must be adequately resourced and engage in public education.

## **Social Security**

- An often neglected policy area is that of social security. On the one hand it is necessary to provide for workers receiving decent pay and having safe and proper conditions of work. On the other hand, it is equally necessary to provide for retired workers and other senior citizens to live in dignity. Upon retirement, workers are entitled to a decent income.

The most important social security component is the National Insurance **pension**. The MSJ would ensure that the NIS functions in the best interest of working people who contribute to this important social security system. In order to counter the aging of our population, every effort must be made to have self-employed persons contribute to the system and that all other workers are brought into the NIS. There are too many employers who are avoiding the NIS.

The second pillar of decent retirement incomes is occupational or workplace pension plans. In this regard, employers and trade unions would be encouraged to institute contributory pension plans wherever feasible to ensure that after having made a meaningful contribution in the workplace, retirees could be able to afford a decent standard of living. There will be no harmonisation of NIS and occupational pension plans. The MSJ will review with appropriate stakeholder involvement the proposed legislative reforms for the regulation of pension plans. There are elements of the proposed legislation that are not consistent with workers and trade unions being involved in the management of pension funds which are the property of the members who contribute to the plans as their deferred income.

In retirement, persons should have also have a third *pillar of retirement income* which are individual savings and investment arrangements such as credit union savings, annuities to which they would have contributed while working. Financial advice needs to be a tri-

partite policy priority of so that all working people can take advantage of tax provisions that facilitate savings and investment as well as develop a positive attitude towards balancing current consumption with savings.

It is to be noted that pension plans and the NIS together account for the largest single source of savings in the country and therefore are a critical pool of investment funds. There is thus a valuable macro-economic benefit of developing the pension sector.

Old Age Pension (OAP): It is recognised that the three pillars of social security described above relate to those who have been workers or self-employed and who, during their working life could have made provisions (through one or more of the NIS, occupational pension plans and private savings/investments). There are many tens of thousands of persons who have not had any significant employment income (vendors whose earnings are small; small farmers and fisherfolk; housewives) or who have worked for a period of time that does not qualify them for an NIS pension. We cannot leave these senior citizens to live in poverty. The Old Age Pension is therefore a key element of social security. For this to be sustainable and provide increased benefits over time, we have proposed in the section on the Economy to establish an Old Age Pension Fund, financed by higher revenues obtained through better tax collection.

As a matter of policy, there would be established a Minimum Retirement Income (MRI) set at a figure above the poverty line. Thus no senior citizen should live on an income below the poverty line. The OAP would amount to the MRI. There would also be established a Target Retirement Income (TRI). This would be set well above the Minimum. It means that a person in receipt of an NIS pension could also receive some part of the OAP such that the NIS plus the OAP equals to the TRI. For example: TRI - \$5,000; MRI - \$3,000, poverty line \$2,500.

Person who worked and contributed to NIS	Person who did not work, No NIS Contributions
NIS pension - \$3,000	NIS - 0
OAP - \$2,000	OAP -\$3,000
Total retirement income - \$5,000	- \$3,000

In this way, equity is established:

- . No person will receive less than the poverty line income
- The worker who contributed to NIS will receive a bigger retirement income (NIS + some portion of OAP) than the person who didn't.
- If a worker also contributed to an occupational pension plan then they would get, in addition to NIS the occupational pension income. If this totalled less than the TRI they would also get some OAP to bring them up to the TRI.
- The OAP should not be more than the minimum wage since this could encourage people not to work and expect to receive a bigger income than workers. The Minimum Wage is pegged at a living wage rate and not the poverty line.
- All retirement incomes (NIS, OAP and occupational pension plans) should be indexed for inflation by way of an annual increase in pensions in payment that represented say 50-60% of the projected inflation rate with the difference made up retroactively. In the case of occupational pension plans this should be subject to actuarial confirmation of its affordability. Indexation provides some protection for retirees against inflation.
- Occupational pension plans should include proper provisions for spouse and children's benefits following the death of the member/retiree

Other elements of social security: Maintain NIS as provider of benefits such as:

- Sickness, maternity, paternity, unemployment, funeral grant
- Employment Injury (injury, disability, medical expenses, death benefit). This is to be supplementary to the benefits provided through the proposed modern Employee Injury and Disability Act
- Family Benefits

## XI The MSJ's Vision for Local Government

### *Overview*

- Local government reform
- Single Ministry: Local Government and Community Development
- Statutory allocation of resources and funding for each local government body
- Right of recall for local government Councillors
- Prioritized program of reconstruction and development
- Community participation: Corporations, CEPEP, Community Cooperatives and Village and Community Councils

Our vision for local government is rooted in our philosophy of the need for fundamental change in the relations of power. Many people are amazed that for such a small country (population of 1.3 million, the size of a city in larger countries), we are unable to come together as a people for the common purpose of building a nation. Furthermore, although we all sing the national anthem, too many voices do not believe that this country is ours. The reason for this is that after winning independence, our political leaders have been unable to develop a common or shared vision and a strategic plan to achieve that vision. Over the years, the nature of our party politics along ethnic lines has resulted in us not being united for the common purpose of building Trinidad and Tobago into a nation where we all feel secure, and where citizens could have a decent standard of living and quality of life.

**A major contributing factor is that citizens do not feel a sense of ownership of our country. Decision making is always undertaken by a few, while the majority of our citizens are only valued during political campaigns, left to feel as outsiders, excluded from a process that impacts their daily lives. The only way in which this could be changed is if power is shifted from a few to the many.** This is our philosophy. Strong local government is an important medium in which this could be achieved.

***Other Political Parties have failed, to date to Reform Local Government***

In the past thirty years numerous efforts at local government reform have been attempted by different political parties which have controlled central government at various points in our nation's history. These include:

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| i)   | White Paper of 1983  | <i>People's National Movement (PNM)</i>           |
| ii)  | Municipal Corporation Act of 1990  | <i>National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR)</i> |
|      | (The NAR was the only party to actually effect some reforms, many of them positive. However, many of these provisions were reversed by the PNM when they came into power in 1991.) |   |
| iii) | White Paper of 1999  | <i>United National Congress (UNC)</i>             |
| iv)  | White Paper of 2004  | <i>People's National Movement (PNM)</i>           |
| v)   | Green Paper of 2006  | <i>People's National Movement (PNM)</i>           |
| vi)  | Green Paper of 2008  | <i>People's National Movement</i>                 |
|      | (PNM) Document on local government reform 2013; 14 public consultations were held;   |   |
|      | White Paper of 2013  | <i>People's Partnership (PP)</i>                  |

Despite all aforementioned attempts at reform, the system of local government remains weak and has failed to function as an effective mechanism through which our citizens are able to improve their communities. The track record shows that these parties are not interested in effecting serious reform. The proposals for reform which they have proposed have not been focused on disturbing or changing the relations of power. They have instead been bent on consolidating the power of central government. **All other political parties are determined to rest power and control in the Minister's hands. That is their history and their culture of politics. The MSJ declares that the people in their communities must control power! In this way we will change the status quo.** We have thus outlined the nature of the reforms required.

***Local Government Reform – the MSJ's position***

- **The establishment of a single Ministry to facilitate local government affairs – the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development.** This Ministry will primarily function as an interface between central and local government, as well as monitor

local government bodies to ensure that they execute their duties and function within the law. This would be different from the existing arrangement where these Ministries do the work of local government and community development. Furthermore, the merging of Local Government and Community Development is pragmatic and economical, since local government is tasked with community development. Ultimately, this will reduce the number of Cabinet positions which for a nation of our size, we already have far too many Cabinet Ministers.

- **The statutory allocation of resources** – Access to funding is critical to ensuring that local government agencies are able to implement policies and projects to meet the needs of their respective communities. In order for local government to be truly empowered, the Regional, Borough and City Corporations must be appropriately resourced. The MSJ proposes that **local corporations be provided with a statutory allocation of resources, similar to the funding of the Tobago House of Assembly**. Accordingly, party politics would no longer determine the flow of resources to local government corporations and our communities. Instead they would receive a guaranteed amount of funding annually to provide for the needs of our communities. Funding for the work of local government is traditionally determined by the Ministry of Local Government often resulting in unfair distribution. The reality or the perception is that those corporations which are controlled by the party in power are favoured over those controlled by parties in opposition. As a result, resources are inequitably distributed and many communities are deprived of much needed services and facilities. **The MSJ which stands for equity believes that fairness can be best achieved if the allocation of resources for community projects is determined at the level of local government and not by central government**. With real power in the hands of local government bodies, communities would have a greater voice in determining the projects implemented in their area. Local government would therefore be better positioned to address the needs of communities and be accountable to the members of communities. As our communities grow and become places where our citizens enjoy a higher quality of life, our nation would progressively develop, since the foundation of a strong nation is built on strong communities.

- **Statutory Funding for each local government body based on the needs of our communities.** The MSJ proposes that statutory funding for local government corporations should be determined by agreed upon criteria to remove the entrenched posture of *politricks* within the system. The Central Statistical Office’s (CSO) latest Census Data can enable our communities to be mapped. Based on the number of persons living in a community and the age, income and other factors in the community, the needs of each community can be more precisely identified. For example, it can be determined that for a population of approximately 10,000 in a community, there must be a minimum requirement with respect to: the number of schools, health centres, community centres, recreation grounds and other facilities. Where a community is deficient in the minimum requirements, a statutory allocation to the local government corporation would be made to address the missing needs. Project resources would then be mobilized and financing allocated in alignment with the projects which the community has identified as necessary. No politics with the people’s needs! No games with communities! No discrimination! **The MSJ stands committed to voicing the true needs of and empowering our communities.**
- **Restructure the local government system to ensure that there is greater community participation. The MSJ believes that community empowerment can only exist if the present system of Village and Community Councils is integrated with the Corporations.** These Community Councils must themselves be empowered by being involved in all decisions about projects in their areas undertaken by the Regional, Borough and City Corporations, and should form part of the local government system. Given that these Councils would form part of the local government system, they too would have access to funds provided to the Corporations for community projects. This would allow for greater efficiency as no longer would it simply be the Councillors that are responsible for the work of local government. Through this increased participation our communities would become empowered, which in turn translates into more quality representation for our citizens.
- **The culture of local government must be changed – local government must no longer be politicised.** Starting with the Village and Community Councils we must begin to change the old culture whereby the “party group” controls the Council, and therefore discriminates in

deciding who is allowed to use the Community Centre and other facilities. Local government and especially Community Councils must allow for independent individuals with a sound track record of community work to be able to be elected to serve, without necessarily being tied to a political party. Consequently, community members would be able to become more directly involved in the operations of local government, and therefore have a greater voice with respect to their community's development.

- **Local government should be embedded in our Constitution** so that this system receives the importance it deserves. It is through local government that our communities become empowered to improve, thereby allowing our nation and its citizens to progress. Therefore, local government must be seen as an integral part of our governance system - as important as the Parliament. Elevating the status of the local government and better resourcing the arms of local government as proposed by the MSJ would allow our Corporations and Councillors to have greater authority and autonomy with respect to the delivery of services in their respective communities.
- **The terms for local government Councillors be maintained at 3 years.** We see this as sufficient time for the development and implementation of policies. In our view, a term of 3 years help to keep elected Councillors accountable, and reduces the greater the risk of politicisation of local government, given that MPs serve a 5 year term.
- **The right of recall for local government councillors must be established.** Accountability is a hallmark of MSJ's policies. Councillors must be made aware that their underperformance could result in removal from office, which should also serve to motivate them to function effectively..

### **Developing strong, sustainable communities through local government**

Having strong communities throughout our nation is fundamental to forging a better Trinidad and Tobago and building a pathway to strengthening our nation. Empowered communities also allow for all citizens to be able to enjoy an improved quality of life. Local government represents a key channel through which strong communities are created, national development is promoted

and living standards are improved. Through a more efficient system of local government we can ensure that our nation's communities become sustainable communities – hubs of thriving economic activity, which are safe and which encourage the all-round development of our citizens.

*How can this be achieved?*

- For local government bodies to become the drivers of community development, **power needs to be shifted from the central government to the local government authorities.** Entrusted with greater decision making power and direct access to resources, local government bodies could undertake projects which are more directly aligned with the demands of the community. In its present format, where policies are developed and resources allocated at the level of central government, and subsequently handed down to the local corporations, the projects implemented tend to reflect the interests of the government of the day, rather than reflect or satisfy the needs of the residents in that area.
  
- **The MSJ proposes that the existing CPEP and URP programmes be operated as community based cooperatives,** which would then form part of the local government structure. These cooperatives would play a key role in coordinating and implementing projects within our communities. Community members would be trained in construction, maintenance and other related skills, so as to become active participants in these cooperatives. A higher calibre of skills will increase opportunities to obtain decent, permanent jobs for thousands. **CEPEP will therefore be transformed from its present grass cutting and low skilled employment. FARMPEP – CEPEP in agricultural production will be implemented to increase food production.** It is envisioned that these cooperatives will undertake construction related projects such as building drains and community facilities, as well as its consequent maintenance. Co-ops enable everyone who is a member to profit from their labour, learn good business practices and develop entrepreneurship. This is a major shift from the present system of CEPEP contracts awarded to persons who have close ties with the ruling incumbent party, and the consequent avenues for nepotism, patronage, corruption and discrimination. If the community as a collective group is assuming an active role in local government projects, a sense of ownership and pride

would be fostered amongst the residents. Over time these community cooperatives would become financially self-sustaining. Our MSJ vision - sustainable communities being created through cooperative efforts, community members who can increase their skill level and obtain decent jobs and a sense of ownership of community facilities by all residents.

- **Reconstruction and Development – a major priority is the establishment and improvement of the major infrastructure within our communities** such as roads, drainage, provision of potable water, street lights etc. The MSJ views this objective as a critical priority– particularly on account of the many areas across our nation which suffer from a lack of pipe-borne (potable) water - a fundamental human right – or continuously affected by severe flooding. These problems which primarily stem from the poor state of infrastructure which exists in many communities can be solved. Improving the infrastructure in our hillside communities where drainage and roads are woefully lacking, and establishing community spaces would therefore be important priorities. Such a programme of physical improvement is one step towards strengthening our communities, thereby ensuring that each community and our nation is a better place for us all to live – a cause to which the MSJ is deeply committed. In order for this programme of infrastructural development to be implemented efficiently, a **dedicated pool of funds not controlled by the central government needs to be made available**. This would ensure that our communities receive what they need and deserve, and that there is no discrimination or lack of equity.. The National Development Fund as proposed in the Economy section is proposed as the source of funding.
- **The MSJ proposes the closure of the existing special purpose companies.** At present, companies such as the PSAEL and the Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago are doing the work of Regional Corporations. These companies result in increased costs since each company has its own bureaucracy (office space, vehicles, managers, boards etc.) resulting in systemic inefficiency. Moreover, these companies do not themselves employ workers to do projects, but instead hire contractors. This is a breeding ground for corruption and nepotism as special purposes state companies continuously award contracts to friends and family. The functions of these entities should be restored to local government agencies,

thereby strengthening our Regional Corporations and freeing resources – human and financial –for community projects. A key component of this process would be the re-professionalization of the public service and the regional corporations. The current workers within the existing special purpose companies would be absorbed into the public service and therefore there will be with no loss of jobs. This will also necessitate the appropriate pay scale for jobs in the public service.

*Fostering true representation in our communities*

**Increasing the degree of community participation is key to ensuring that the needs, interests and concerns of our citizens are addressed through local government. This – and not simply electing so called “action people” constitutes true and effective representation. Real change requires not a change in face or of party jersey in office. It demands changing the very relations of power. Only the MSJ proposes such change.**

The reform implemented in the lead up to the 2013 Local Government Election by the People’s Partnership to alter the way in which Aldermen are appointed to serve on local corporations does not lead to greater community participation, and therefore does not promote increased representation. On the contrary, this recent change, while touted as making local government more democratic, simply serves to increase the influence of political parties over local government operations. Thus, the new system puts the choice of aldermen totally in the hands of the parties, as it is the parties that nominate the aldermen. Furthermore, in this new system each party and each independent candidate must nominate the number of aldermen equivalent to the number of seats in the respective Corporations. For example, if a Corporation has nine seats, each party and each independent candidate must nominate nine Aldermen. This is ridiculous since the maximum number of Aldermen is four. Additionally, this discriminates against small political parties and independent candidates, and is therefore contrary to the notion of Local Government. The MSJ would reform this appropriately.

**However, the MSJ wishes to declare its support for the implementation of a system of proportional representation (PR) in the election of local government Councillors, as well as**

**for Members of Parliament.** As part of a comprehensive process of constitutional reform, there needs to be widespread national discussion and canvassing of views to ensure that we select the most appropriate and locally relevant form of PR. There are many different forms of PR, and given Trinidad and Tobago's tremendous diversity, we believe that if implemented appropriately, PR could foster greater democracy and more effective representation.

### **The MSJ's vision for our communities**

Strong communities are the hallmarks of a progressive nation. The MSJ's policies are focused on nurturing a productive environment for our citizens, for which basic needs must be provided. These primarily include: ensuring all communities are fully supplied with potable water; that drainage infrastructure, roads and sidewalks are at a decent standard; that the physical environment fosters positive attitudes with adequate recreation facilities and green spaces, as well as a regular garbage collection service. To achieve this objective requires the effective delivery of these services by corporations, in tandem with citizens assuming full responsibility for their actions and choices. When local government works hand in hand with individuals within the community, we will develop communities in which we can all be proud to raise our children.

**Consistent with our philosophy of accountability, and as a matter of policy, all Local Government representatives would be required to fulfil the responsibilities identified below. In order to ensure that representatives in fact fully execute their prescribed duties, a monitoring process would be effected to ensure that all representatives remain accountable. Concomitantly, the right to recall for local government representatives would also be instituted, so that councillors are firmly aware that failure to fulfil their duties would lead to their removal from office. These responsibilities are thus itemized:**

- Perform their duties by undertaking a continuous process of interaction, including meetings that are not limited to the Councillor's office or office hours, but also occur within communities on a regular basis. .
- Provide progress updates and advise about related challenges which may arise in addressing concerns.
- Organize the community to take appropriate action in their interest, when necessary.

- Create bridges by bringing together community groups. This would also serve to unite the community for the common purpose of the development of the area.
- Provide residents with a relevant stream of information through websites, social media (eg. Facebook) and newsletters, so that our communities' awareness levels increase and residents are informed. A Conscious community is an empowered community!
- Place special emphasis on youth development. This includes ensuring access to programmes for skills training (such as apprenticeship programmes), as well as homework centres for young students. We also advocate the development of strategic plans for each area, with a focus on employment creation. The creation of permanent decent jobs is essential to eliminating poverty and moving youths away from the potential to engage in criminal activity.
- Establish programmes to empower women which would address the issues of teenage pregnancy, parenting skills and developing financial independence. Young men will also be involved in programmes that give them life skills.
- Collaborate with NGOs, religious organisations and special interest groups to tackle solutions for critical social issues such as domestic violence.
- Ensure that all who are eligible for government's social programmes receive the benefits and assistance they deserve without discrimination of access. In receiving this important assistance, our people would be able to take the steps needed to rise out of poverty.
- Create safe communities and reduce the occurrence of crime by working in conjunction with the police to effect a programme of real community policing. Additionally, involve citizens in the decision making process to foster a sense of belonging.
- Support the efforts of sporting and cultural organisations, given that these are key channels through which young people develop their creative abilities, as well as develop discipline and team work.
- Ensure the adequate building and maintenance of all water courses and drains.
- Implement the proper systems of conservation and maintenance of public spaces such as cemeteries, recreation grounds. Special emphasis should be placed on providing children's play parks.