

SENATE

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]



LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan and Sen. Foster Cummings who are both out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, O.R.T.T., S.C.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS
AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C.,
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the
Armed Forces.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T. S.C.

President.

TO: MS. AYANNA LEEBA LEWIS

WHEREAS Senator the Hon. Franklin Khan is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me

by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, AYANNA LEEBA LEWIS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 30th January, 2018 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Khan.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 26th day of January, 2018.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS
AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C.,
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed
Forces.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T. S.C.
President.

TO: MR. NDALE YOUNG

WHEREAS Senator Foster Cummings is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, NDALE YOUNG, to be temporarily a member of the

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Senate, with effect from 30th January, 2018 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Foster Cummings.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 30th day of January, 2018.”

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Ayanna Leeba Lewis took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Ndale Young took and subscribed the Affirmation of Allegiance as required by law.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENT OF)

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

“January 29, 2018

Sen. the Hon. Christine Kangaloo
President of the Senate
Office of the President of the Senate
Level 2, Tower D
International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear President of the Senate,

Establishment of Joint Select Committee

At a sitting held on Friday January 26, 2018 the House of Representatives agreed to the following resolutions:

1) “Resolved:

That in accordance with Standing Order 64(1)(c), the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, 2018 be referred to a Joint Select Committee to be established for its consideration and report by March 31, 2018”

2) “Resolved:

That, subject to the concurrence of the Senate on the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, 2018, the following six (6) Members be appointed to serve with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, 2018:

Mr. Faris Al-Rawi, MP

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP

Ms. Marlene Mc Donald, MP

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, MP

Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP

Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP

I respectfully request that the Senate be informed of these decisions at the earliest convenience please.

Respectfully,

Bridgid Mary Annisette-George

Speaker”

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre Management Company Limited for the year

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2. ended September 30, 2017. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Allyson West)*]
3. Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Heritage and Stabilisation Fund for the year ended September 30, 2017. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
4. Annual Report of First Citizens Investment Services Limited and its Subsidiaries for the financial year ended September 30, 2017. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
(Presentation)**

**Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory
Authorities (including the THA)**

Public Service Commission

The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I have the honour to present the following report:

Seventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA), Third Session (2017/2018), Eleventh Parliament, on an inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Public Service Commission.

URGENT QUESTIONS

**Hasely Crawford Stadium/Jean Pierre Complex
(Hosting of Carnival Activities)**

Sen. H.R. Ian Roach: Thank you, Madam President. To the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs: Can the Minister justify the recent closure of the Hasely Crawford Stadium and the Jean Pierre Complex for the hosting of Carnival

activities given that athletes are at present preparing for major regional and international track and field competitions in 2018?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, I rise to answer this question on behalf of the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. Madam President, around this time every year the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has to take a decision to balance between the income-earning potential of these sporting facilities and the need for athletes to utilize facilities for training. In the case of the athletes who are currently training for competitions in 2018, the Ministry has available for those athletes, the Mannie Ramjohn Stadium in south and the Larry Gomes Stadium in the east, and even though it is under some repairs, the Jean Pierre Sports Complex is available where possible. Madam President, as happened last year, on the Thursday following Carnival, these facilities would be available for the athletes to continue their training. It is a temporary dislocation, but it is meant to take advantage of the income-earning potential of these facilities during the Carnival period. Thank you.

Sen. Roach: Madam President, can I have a follow-up question?

Madam President: Sure.

Sen. Roach: Minister, could you please tell us whether or not the income that you have derived in the past justifies continuing to make that option of giving Carnival the opportunity, however short it may be, over the preference of athletes training?

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Well, Madam President, in the perfect world we would like to keep the facilities completely in use by the athletes, but, again, in the context of maintaining these facilities we believe that if we take the opportunity to earn the income with some dislocation in terms of location to the athletes then it is an opportunity to continue to keep these facilities operational throughout the year.

Sen. Roach: Madam President, with the greatest respect to my colleague, he has not answered the question I asked, you know. I asked whether or not the income that has been derived in the past justifies the continuation of making that selection of activities over the athletes being able to use the facility.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, the fact that it has been done before, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is doing it this year, suggests that there is some justification on the part of that Ministry. Thank you.

Madam President: Next question, Sen. Hosein.

**Protection of Prison Officers
(Steps taken by Government)**

Sen. Saddam Hosein: Thank you, Madam President. To the Minister of National Security: Having regard to the recent killing of a prison officer, what steps are being taken by the Government to protect and safeguard the lives of prison officers?

Madam President: The Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon): Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, allow me, first of all, to offer deepest condolences on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on the death of prison officer Davendra Boodram to his family, and, of course, the wider prisons family. Madam President, the Ministry of National Security continues to take measures to treat with attacks on prison officers. As a matter of fact, only last evening the Minister of National Security met with the Prison Officers Association, together with the Commissioner of Prisons and the Commissioner of Police to explore additional initiatives.

To date, Madam President, we are looking at legal framework to treat with people who commit offences against, not only prison officers, but members of the protective services and the defence and security services. Additionally, we have

adopted an inter-agency approach, utilizing all the agencies of national security to bring to bear on issues pertinent to prison officers and, in fact, the wider defence and protective members.

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen.

Sen. Ramdeen: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, through you to the hon. Minister of National Security, could the hon. Minister of National Security tell this Senate what counselling has been provided to the wife, Asha Boodram, the wife of Davendra Boodram who has passed away, and his two daughters since last week Friday by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon: Madam President, I in fact visited the home of Davendra Boodram last evening, had a discussion with his wife and his relatives, and, in fact, counselling was provided, and continues to be provided to his family, immediate family, his wife and his children.

Madam President: Sen. Ameen.

Sen. Ameen: A follow-up question. Minister, having regard to the nature of the killing, is there any consideration for this family, or the family of any protective officers who lost their lives in the line of duty to receive compensation from the State?

Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon: Madam President, we have provided that facility to members of the defence and protective service, including prison officers in the past, and once it merits as the law can condition so to do, that will be done.

Madam President: Next question, Sen. Mark.

**Plum Road, Manzanilla
(Electricity for Residents)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Thank you, Madam President. To the hon. Minister of Public Utilities: Given the recent plea for electricity by residents of Plum Road,

Manzanilla, can the Minister inform the Senate of the urgent steps being taken to deliver this service to the community?

Madam President: The Minister of Public Utilities.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, my apologies. I seek your indulgence, the Minister of Public Utilities is almost here, and I am asking if it is possible for us to move to question number 5, and then return to questions numbers 3 and 4 on his arrival.

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, I have no problem with that, but I hope that my colleague would agree that when the Minister comes, he would get the support of the House, through you, to allow us to pursue these two questions. Would that be agreeable to you, Sir?

Assent indicated.

Sen. Mark: Okay, thank you.

Madam President: Next question, Sen. Richards.

**Nation's Prisons
(Use of Signal Jammers)**

Sen. Paul Richards: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, colleagues. Through you, Madam President, to the Minister of National Security: In light of the recent killing of a prison officer, can the Minister indicate if signal jammers are in active use at the nation's prisons?

Madam President: The Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon): Madam President, the jammers are in active use at the prisons.

Madam President: Sen. Richards, supplemental.

Sen. Richards: Thank you, Madam President. In light of this answer, can the

Minister indicate the levels of success that these jammers have been able to achieve in the interest of the safety of officers who have been allegedly the subject, and also members of the public and victims of the alleged hits called from within the prison walls?

Madam President: Just a second, Sen. Richards, repeat that supplemental question, please.

Sen. Richards: Sorry, I will. Thank you. I am obliged, Madam President. Can the Minister indicate the levels of success of these jammers in light of the allegations—

Madam President: Okay, so, yes, so let me just stop it at level of success of the jammers. Minister of National Security.

Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the prisons have had some successes with respect to jammers to the effect where they have seized several cell phones within the prison system. So they have achieved some level of successes; however, there is always room for improvement, and they continue to work assiduously to, as far as possible, eradicate or remove all cell phones from the prison system. It is an ongoing battle, Madam President, but the prison officers are continuing that battle.

Madam President: Sen. Richards, any more?

Sen. Richards: Yes, Madam President. Can the Minister indicate if the jammer technology has been looked at in terms of the evolution of the types of correspondence we are seeing globally from within the prison walls causing harm to officers and others?

Madam President: Sen. Richards, that question does not arise.

Hon. Senators, we have one more minute for Urgent Questions, but I understand agreement has been reached, so that when the Minister of Public

Utilities arrives the answers to two questions posed will be provided, all right?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Madam President: Acting Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, the Government would answer the four questions for oral answer on notice. Madam President, regrettably, the Government seeks a deferral of the written response, the submission of the written response to Question No. 13 to the Minister of Public Administration and Communications. Madam President, the Government acknowledges that the answer is overdue, but the nature of the question has required extensive research throughout the various Ministries to be able to put together a comprehensive response to the six-part question, and we are asking for a further opportunity to submit the written response.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister indicate what is the time frame that he is seeking, because they did set a time, an extension, if you would recall, for two weeks some time ago. So could he advise us, Madam President?

Madam President: Minister.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, the Government will work with a 14-day time frame in order to submit the written response.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, I am willing to agree, but I just want to advise the hon. Minister, failing to deliver, I will be asking the hon. President to invoke Standing Order 27(16) if I do not get it in 14 days. Madam, okay?

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Dead Fish in La Brea (Investigation into)

19. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

In light of reports at the end of September 2017 of dead fish being

discovered in La Brea, can the Minister state whether this matter is being investigated to determine the source of the problem?

Madam President: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I am advised by the Environmental Management Authority, the EMA, that it received a report on September 24, 2017, which was Republic Day, on the presence of dead fishes at Carrot Shed Beach in La Brea. A site visit was conducted the same day by the EMA and the report of varying species, varying sizes of dead fish was confirmed. Due to the decomposition, only two samples could be retrieved and taken to the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries for analysis to be conducted. The analysis identified no remarkable cause of death. Further, Madam President, tissues have been harvested for further testing as deemed appropriate by the EMA and the Institute of Marine Affairs, and based on that further testing, both agencies have reported that the presence of the fish is consistent with dumping. Thank you.

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Yes, Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, in light of the answer given by the hon. Minister, could the hon. Minister indicate to us what steps or measures would be taken to address dumping that apparently seems to be the source of the problem affecting dead fishes in that part of the country? What efforts or steps are being taken?

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, the main steps involve educating the fisherfolk and the operators of these vessels. The fact is that it is difficult to police all the vessels, and this dumping takes place because the operators of the various vessels are very selective on the fish that they want to take

to the market and they dump out into the ocean those that they do not wish to take to the market, and some of it end up on the beaches, and the response to that is to educate both the owners, the operators, and the other people involved in the industry.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister indicate whether his Ministry has taken steps, or is about to take steps to design a programme aimed at educating the fisherfolk in this particular field or area, Madam President?

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, that is training and education, those are ongoing activities of the Ministry, and very soon the Government expects to bring to the Parliament new legislation relating to the fishing sector. I look forward to the support of my friends on the other side when this legislation is brought. Thank you.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, could the hon. Minister indicate, since the discovery of all these dead fishes, could the hon. Minister indicate how many programmes of training and education have been conducted by his Ministry to enhance the knowledge and understanding of fisherfolk as it relates to dumping? How many programmes, Madam President, would have been conducted since then? Could the hon. Minister share with us?

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, I want to say, several, but I do not think that is a number. I am not seized of the information at this time, but I could certainly get the information and share it with my friend.

Sen. Mark: Could the hon. Minister indicate to us, Madam President, a time frame when he would be able to supply that information to the Senate?

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Madam President, I will submit the information to the Senate by Friday. I believe it is Friday, the 2nd of February, 2018. Thank you.

TSTT
(Non-renewal of Contracts)

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20. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

In light of the public commitment given to the Trade Union Federations by the Prime Minister that there would be a moratorium on retrenchment for the rest of 2017, can the Minister explain the decision of TSTT to not renew the contracts of approximately one hundred workers upon the expiration of said contracts on October 31, 2017?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte): Madam President, in light of the public comments given, TSTT has contractual relationships with various third-party service providers agencies to supply supplemental human resource support to the company on an as-need basis. In keeping with these contractual arrangements, TSTT is currently engaged in discussion with these agencies to determine the nature and extent of the supplemental human resource support required to meet the needs in the future having regard to the strategic direction of the company. The workers in question are employees of the agencies, and TSTT's negotiations with the agencies are ongoing.

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, through you, given the ongoing discussions as it relates to the strategic direction of TSTT, can the hon. Minister share with this House whether workers on contract with those agencies would be retrenched, or their contracts not renewed prior to the discussions being concluded? Could you provide us with some clarity on this matter, Sir?

Madam President: The Minister of Public Utilities.

Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte: Madam President, let me start by also apologizing for not apologizing even before, for being late, so I apologize. As I said, TSTT at this point—I mean, I just recently looked at a report from the Public Accounts

Committee, which you, I think, you were the chairman, or part of, and it talked about TSTT needed to look at its operating cost, and especially its whole cost on salaries, wages and contract labour, and the advice coming out of that committee was, actually, that serious work be done on looking at that. The company, in keeping with that advice, has been looking and setting up strategic directions, and, as I said, in specific response to your question, these negotiations are continuing with these agencies as the company attempts to take the advice that was given at the Public Accounts Committee to look at their costs, and they are going to look at it, and a final determination would be met between discussions with the agencies and with the company in a very short order.

2.00 p.m.

Sen. Mark: Well, I am not the Chairman or member of the Public Accounts Committee. I am the Chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, do you have a supplemental question?

Sen. Mark: Yes, Ma'am. I just wanted to correct the record.

Can I ask my hon. colleague and friend—my direct question to him, Madam President, was whether workers who have been contracted by these agencies are being retrenched or their contracts not being renewed, given the ongoing discussions, or would the discussions have to be concluded before those workers' contracts are ended? Could you clarify for us?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, you just asked the Minister that question and he provided an answer, so do you have a second supplemental question?

Sen. Mark: Madam President, may I ask directly now to the hon. Minister, whether he is aware, based on his response, that contract workers employed by these particular agencies have been retrenched or their contracts have not been renewed, even in the face of ongoing discussions? Are you aware of this, Sir?

Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte: Madam President, I am aware that there are ongoing discussions between TSTT and the agencies regarding the services of the agencies. When these discussions are concluded, a final determination based on those discussions—other decisions would have to be taken. But I am aware that there are discussions ongoing between TSTT's management and the agencies who are the employers of those workers.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether the Government is of the view that there is need for a forensic audit into this whole arrangement in which workers are being placed on the breadline because of what is being perceived as incestuous relations involving top management of TSTT, and that decision to close down those outlets? [*Desk thumping*] Would you want to share with us whether you would want to pursue a forensic audit into this whole—
[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, that question does not arise.

Sen. Mark: It does not arise?

Madam President: No, and you have one more supplemental question that you can ask.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, can the Minister offer this House any guarantees as it relates to workers whose contracts have expired and they have now been sent home, or not renewed even in the face of ongoing discussion? Can he give this Parliament the undertaking that no worker will be sent home, even though their contract would have expired whilst these very critical talks are taking place on the strategic direction that the company should take with their agencies? Could you provide us with some guarantees on that?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, that question also does not arise.

Sen. Mark: Does not arise?

Madam President: No.

Sen. Mark: Have I exhausted—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: You have. So can we move on to the next question, Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Thank you, Madam President. My hon. friend is here.

**Coastal Dumping of Oil Waste
(Measures to Curb)**

31. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Planning and Development:

What steps are being taken by the Government to curb the dumping of oil waste along our coastline?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):

Thank you very kindly, Madam President, and thank you very kindly Sen. Mark for this question.

The illegal dumping of oil waste along the coastline of Trinidad and Tobago where a number of incidents of this nature have occurred is cause for concern. Whether deliberate or accidental, the impacts of oil or oily waste pollution can have deleterious effects extending beyond damage to the natural environment, adversely impacting economic activity amongst sectors such as fishing, yachting, recreation and tourism. It is in this regard the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through its agencies are working toward the improvement of both response time for incidences as well as preventative and mitigation plans.

In treating with the issue, a proactive, coordinated approach is required whereby multiple entities, including State and non-state actors must work closely together to establish mechanisms to seamlessly execute the required activities related to early detection, emergency response, rehabilitation and punitive action for offending parties when such incidents occur, to minimize accidental spillage of such substances.

In this regard, the Institute of Marine Affairs, an agency under the Ministry of Planning and Development, has already begun implementation of an initiative specifically related to early detection. The IMA, in collaboration with Microsoft, Fujitsu Caribbean, Digicel and the fishing community of Claxton Bay and environs, installed a water quality monitoring buoy about a mile and a half off the coast of the Claxton Bay Fishing Depot at Claxton Bay.

The water quality monitoring buoy launched as a proof of concept on October 25, 2017, is an initiative using state-of-the-art technology aimed at addressing marine pollution and other environmental matters in the Gulf of Paria. It is equipped with underwater sensors positioned to provide real-time data and critical insight into levels of pollution and other changes in the marine environment, that can better inform stakeholders about environmental incidents such as previously untraceable oil spills and inexplicable fish kills.

In instances where hydrocarbons are discharged into the marine environment and where a responsible party cannot be immediately identified, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has the power to activate its national oil spill contingency plan and initiate measures for containment, recovery and rehabilitation of affected areas.

Given that oil spills in the marine environment are time sensitive in nature with impacts becoming more pervasive when not initially contained, several Ministries and agencies have been collaborating in an effort to provide response time and improve the response time for such occurrences. Discussions have been held with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and other parties to the response effort, namely the EMA, the IMA, the ODPM and the Maritime Services Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, with a view to strengthening and improving the response rate to oil marine spill incidents and improving

coordinating efforts, from the initial notification to implementation of the plan.

One factor currently being considered is the establishment of an Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management specifically to streamline all communications related to oil spill incidents, ensuring that timely and accurate information is received and disseminated.

There is also, Madam President, at the onset of notification of incidents from the general public, special interest groups and other state entities, including, but not limited to, the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, that have an active 24-hour presence in the coastal areas of interest. The EMA initiates its emergency response at the investigations unit immediately following notification.

Madam President: Minister, your time is up.

Sen. Mark: Thank you very much for that comprehensive response. Madam President, through you, can the hon. Minister identify for this Senate the other State actors who are involved in this effort at dealing with the illegal dumping of oil and waste in our waters? Apart from what you have mentioned, that is the Institute of Marine Affairs, could you identify the other State actors involved?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: As I said, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the Environmental Management Authority, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management are the main actors who are involved in this effort.

Thank you, Madam President.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, the hon. Minister did make mention of the establishment of a special ODPM unit to deal with oil spills. Can the hon. Minister indicate to this House, is there a time frame that the hon. Minister has in mind to effect this measure in establishing this particular unit?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam President, at this time the Ministry of National Security, which is the oversight Ministry for the ODPM, is exploring the use of

new technologies for monitoring and tracking oil spills, and this is the use of high frequency radar systems which could provide a real-time tool to improve response time and overall effectiveness as it relates to spill response.

This is the type of mechanism that is used by the US Coast Guard and that was used in the Exxon oil spill. The only issue is that this response mechanism is quite costly and so, the ODPM, through the Ministry of National Security, has been examining this particular response mechanism because it is very effective. And so whilst we work on that, I cannot give an exact time when it will start, but the examination is taking place. Discussions are quite far along, and I am anticipating that within six months, if you ask me the question again, I should be able to give you a better time.

Thank you, Ma'am.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, may I also ask the hon. Minister whether there are any specific laws to deal with those lawbreakers, and the appropriate sanctions effected by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to, at least, dissuade those elements from illegally dumping oil and other waste into our waters? Are there any laws or do you believe that the sanctions need to be increased, Madam President? Can you share with us?

Madam President: So are there any laws, one question; do you believe the sanctions, second question.

Sen. Mark: No, just that are there any laws at this time to deal with this issue.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to indicate that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is the key Ministry that deals with these issues, but the Maritime Services Division is also part of this mechanism, and the coast guard.

Recently, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago approved the framework

within which the response to the illegal dumping and accidental dumping will occur. In addition to that, the EMA has the ability to fine perpetrators once they are found. In addition to that, the IMA has the mechanism for what we call “oil spill fingerprinting” and the IMA uses that mechanism to determine who may be the culprits when an oil spill takes place.

Madam President: One more, Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, can I ask my hon. colleague whether the Government has been able to provide a cost assessment in terms of the moneys that we have to put out as a nation to clean up these illegal oil waste and dumping that takes place? Have we been able to have an estimated cost to the country for what has happened thus far? Do you have any estimated cost you may wish to share with us?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I do not really wish to share it with you, but I will.

Sen. Mark, as I said, the Cabinet is in the process of determining a mechanism for being able to do that. But you would recall during the last administration when there was an oil spill at Petrotrin, the EMA was able to fine Petrotrin \$20 million for the cost of the spill and the clean-up and so on. So the EMA has a mechanism, but the Cabinet is putting in place, using these various agencies, a mechanism and a framework so that we are able to actually quantify what the effect is and be able to recover from the agencies or the perpetrators, once we know who the perpetrators are.

But I am very willing to return if Sen. Mark would like to ask me further questions, because I am always very happy to be in the Senate and I thank Sen. Mark, and usually Sen. Richards asks me questions also, so I will be happy to return at any time.

Thank you, Madam President.

**DPP's Office
(Non-Utilization of 2nd Floor)**

46. Sen. Saddam Hosein asked the hon. Attorney General:

Can the Attorney General indicate the reason why the 2nd floor of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Port of Spain, is not being utilized?

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Madam President, the second floor of the Office of the DPP is in fact being utilized. As to half of the floor which is designated as a courtroom area, that half is being used to conduct court training for internal legal staff throughout the year, and as to the other half of the floor, to house the staff of the Procurement Unit along with the attendant storage facilities as well as the human resources staff assigned to that office.

Sen. Hosein: Can the hon. Attorney General indicate which procurement unit you are referring to?

Hon. F Al-Rawi: The Procurement Unit of the Office of the DPP. As the hon. Senator would be aware, the procurement legislation is in effect in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Government sent out an instruction that every Ministry, state enterprise, et cetera, is to be comprised of entities including procurement units to operationalize the law, as a consequence of which, throughout the public service in Trinidad and Tobago and the statutory authorities, procurement units exist in Ministries and events.

Sen. Hosein: Can the hon. Attorney General please indicate if any steps are being taken by the Government to address the shortage of office spaces at the north office, the DPP's Office?

Madam President: Sen. Hosein, that question does not arise. Next question?

Madam President: Could we revert to the earlier business on the Order Paper, "Urgent Questions". Sen. Mark.

URGENT QUESTIONS**Plum Road, Manzanilla
(Electricity for Residents)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Given the recent plea for electricity by residents of Plum Road, Manzanilla, can the Minister inform the Senate of the urgent steps being taken to deliver this service to the community?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte): Madam President, with respect to the provision of electricity to residents in keeping with T&TEC's standard policy, a survey is undertaken and based on findings, a design is done and the customer is notified in writing of the costs. In the case of Plum Road, Manzanilla, the residents were advised by letter dated the 21st of November, 2016, of their capital contribution for providing the service of \$189,658.66 plus VAT. The customers can request financial assistance from the Ministry of Public Utilities via the Electrification Programme. Funding is provided subject to budgetary constraints.

The Ministry has not received any request for financial assistance under the Electrification Programme from the residents of Plum Road, Manzanilla.

Sen. Mark: Could the hon. Minister indicate to this House whether a survey has been conducted to determine the requirements of the community in question? Has T&TEC conducted a survey?

Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte: Yes, Madam President, and I see you look puzzled, because I remember I said in my answer that T&TEC did a survey and they actually did a budget which was sent by letter to the residents dated the 21st of November, 2016, of the capital contribution which would have been—I repeat, \$189,658.66 plus VAT. So a survey was done and a capital cost was presented to them.

Sen. Mark: Could the hon. Minister explain to this House why citizens of this

Republic have to pay \$140,000 to receive an entitlement which they pay for at the end of the day? Why is that necessary? Could you explain to us why that is necessary?

Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte: Again, when citizens require electrification that goes beyond the present scope of the grid, the procedure requires a capital cost by T&TEC to provide that electricity. T&TEC has to look at that capital cost and determine, again, how many residents are going to be impacted, what is the cost associated with that, and it is standard practice in T&TEC that that particular cost is then passed on to the residents of the particular area.

Now, the residents have the option to apply to the Ministry, as I said before, under the Electrification Programme, for some degree of assistance, but that is the standard procedure that is in place at T&TEC, for T&TEC providing electricity services to people outside of the grid because it requires a certain amount of capital expenditure to do so.

Madam President: No, no more; you used up the two supplementals.

**Sou Sou Lands, Penal
(Provision of Potable Water)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Madam President, to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities: Can the Minister state what urgent measures are being implemented to ensure the provision of a potable water supply to residents of Sou Sou Lands, Penal?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte): Madam President, and again I do apologize to the House for not being here at the time when this was on the agenda.

The Sou Sou Lands area receives a pipe-borne water supply from the Penal Water Treatment Plant. At present there is a shortfall in production at that plant of 200 gallons, as three wells are not functional. It is estimated that these wells would be back in operation within two weeks from today.

The area can also receive a supplemental supply from the Teak Village booster, however, the situation requires some electrical upgrade work to maximize the pumping capacity. The Authority is currently in discussions with T&TEC, and this matter is expected to be resolved within one week.

The area generally receives a scheduled pipe-borne water supply (PBWS), Saturday into Sunday. The recently missed schedule was caused by the direct shutdown of the desalination plant operations. The last PBWS received due to this shut down was January 23rd to Monday 29 January, 2018.

Under the existing conditions, with Desalcott back to normal production, the next scheduled supply will be Saturday the 3rd of February, 2018. An improved supply will be seen when the wells return to service at the Teak Village booster and electrical upgrade work is completed by T&TEC. It is also my understanding that truck-borne water was delivered to the area over the weekend.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, can the Minister indicate to this House further if he is aware that residents of the community identified have been without potable water for several weeks?

Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte: Madam President, based on the information that I have available, as I read in my statement, the last pipe-borne water received as a result of the shutdown was on the 26th to Monday 29th of January, 2018. So that I am not aware that they have not been able to receive water for several weeks. I know we had a shutdown of the desal plant which was advertised in the newspapers and affected areas were also advertised, of which this was one of them. As a result of that, they missed their regular schedule of water and they did not get for a particular period. So I gave the last time. I am also aware that over the weekend truck-borne water was delivered to the area. So that is the information that is presently in my possession.

Sen. Mark: Well, given the challenges identified by the hon. Minister, could you indicate to this House that once these challenges have been overcome, you can guarantee this House and the residents of that community of a regular supply of water seven days a week, 24 hours? Could you tell us?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, that has been covered by the Minister in his reply before, so I will not allow that question.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**Nation's Prisons
(Government's Failure to Properly Administer)**

Sen. Saddam Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam President. I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the Senate today under Standing Order 16 for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, the failure of the Government to properly manage and administer our nation's prisons, resulting in the safety and security of prison officers and their families being compromised, as well as that of inmates.

The matter is definite because it pertains specifically to the manner in which our nation's prisons are presently administered and managed. It is definite because it concerns the very real and certain risk to the lives of prison officers and other officers of the protective services. It is definite because it contains the specific risk to the safety and security of all inmates in our nation's prisons as a result of these events.

The matter is urgent because if this situation is not managed and contained in a proper manner, it could lead to a further deterioration in the relations between prison officers and inmates. The matter is urgent because threats have been made to the lives of prison officers as a result of what transpired in the prison last Tuesday.

The matter is of public importance because prison officers are now fearful for their lives, and as a result are withholding their services from the nation's prisons which would lead to the entire safety and security of our nation's prisons being compromised.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have considered the Motion of the Senator and I am not satisfied that this matter as presented qualifies under the Standing Order.

Hon. Senators, you will note however that certain urgent questions were allowed dealing with the subject matter.

2.30 p.m.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, having regard to the correspondence from the Speaker of the House in relation to the establishment of a Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Bill, 2018, I beg to move that the Senate concur with the House of Representatives in the establishment of the Committee and the following six Senators be appointed to serve:

Mr. Clarence Rambharat

Mr. Nigel De Freitas

Mr. Foster Cummings

Mr. Saddam Hosein

Miss Sophia Chote SC

Mr. Stephen Creese

Question put and agreed to.

**DENTAL PROFESSION
(AMENDMENT TO THE SCHEDULE) ORDER, 2017**

UNREVISED

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is provided by section 5A of the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) that the Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any University, College or other Institution;

And whereas it is provided by the said section 5A of the Act that every Order made under this section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament;

And whereas the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017 was made by the Minister under section 5A of the Act on the 10th day of November, 2017;

And whereas it is expedient to approve the said Order:

Be it resolved that the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017 be approved.

Madam President, it is a great honour to be here in the place I once occupied and I wish all my colleagues opposite a very Happy New Year. We are here to continue the path of doing the people’s business by way of continuing the process of amending the Schedule to the Dental Profession Act which started on Friday, January 12th in the other place. Today, it is an absolute privilege and honour to be here as once again we the Government of Trinidad and Tobago under our Prime Minister, the hon. Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley demonstrates Government’s commitment to the health agenda. And I must thank the hon. Prime Minister for he has, together with myself, championed every single major initiative for the past 24 months or so that came to the Cabinet including this amendment. But more

Dental Profession (Amendment to
Schedule Order, 2017) (cont'd)
Hon. T. Deyalsingh (cont'd)

specifically, Madam President—

Sen. Obika: No wonder.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sorry? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Sen. Obika, please.

Sen. Obika: My apologies.

Madam President: Continue, Minister of Health.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: My God. Madam President, but more specifically we are here to fulfil a manifesto promise which spoke about improvements to our primary health initiative and to improve primary health and to decrease inequities in our health care system.

Madam President, just by way of explanation, I think one needs to put the dental services in the country under the perspective of the RHA system. The RHA Act, No. 5 of 1994, created a system of devolution of responsibility from the Ministry of Health to these bodies called regional health authorities for the provision of goods and services. It was thought at the time that this was the way to go, and for better or for worse we have done that.

In Trinidad and Tobago under the Act we have five RHAs, one in Tobago and four in Trinidad and Tobago. However, Madam President, that devolution of the delivery of goods and services was not a complete and absolute devolution because the Ministry of Health retained under its direct control 20 services not devolved to the RHAs and these services are what we call vertical services.

Some of the vertical services that members of the population and colleagues opposite would know about will be things like the Hansen's Unit, blood banking, and insect vector control. Dental services is also one of the 20 services retained as what we call vertical services under the Ministry of Health and has not been

devolved to the RHAs. So I just want to explain to the population what that means. The issue facing us, Madam President, is that under the Dental Act of 1980 there has only been one amendment to the schedule in 1990. So the schedule was amended in 1990 to include the University of the West Indies, TTO. Trinidad and Tobago for UN purposes and international purposes is referred to as TTO. So the University of the West Indies, TTO Dental School, was by amendment, included in the schedule in 1980. So that is the issue. That created a particular mischief and the mischief that we want to resolve is the mischief today, that since that amendment in 1999, the University of the West Indies has now added a second dental school to its campuses and that is to the Mona Campus, the Medical Sciences Faculty.

So now, under the aegis of the University of the West Indies, you have two dental schools, one at St. Augustine, which was added on to the schedule via amendment in 1990, and now we are here today to continue the process started on Friday, January 12th to add a second dental school, that in Mona, Jamaica.

Madam President, as I read out the Motion it spoke to, that the amendment could only be made after consultation with the Dental Council. I am to report to the Senate that by letter September 19, 2016, we did, in fact, consult with the dental association, the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago, and by letter dated September 19, 2016, signed by its president Dr. Anil Seerattan, they did indicate their misgivings about having Mona, Jamaica added to the schedule, and I think for completeness I need to read into the record the pertinent parts of the letter.

To hon. Minister:

Our decision to not grant the Mona School of Dentistry automatic registration at this time is based on the following factors:

Factor one, in the schedule of accredited institutions of the Dental Profession Act, the list is divided by countries and the UWI Dental School falls under Trinidad and Tobago.

That is now being addressed today. So their first objection that the schedule does not make reference to Mona, Jamaica will be corrected today, so that mischief will, in fact, be corrected.

Their second objection goes like this:

The Dental Council have some degree of oversight over the School of Dentistry, St. Augustine, as the Minister of Health, in collaboration with the Dental Council, can review the curriculum every five years and make recommendations thereon. The Dental Act provides no such provision for the School of Dentistry, Mona.

Apart from these, there are other things to consider. As far as we know, the programmes of the two faculties may be different. We have no idea of the curriculum, staff or facilities at Mona. There are two UWI representatives from the School of Dentistry, St. Augustine, that sit on the Council and this offers some degree of collaboration between the two.

But it goes on to make this rather interesting statement:

Also at this time, the Council is reconsidering whether we should have a schedule at all.

So even though we are here to amend the schedule to address their first concern, they were now stating in the letter that they are even considering whether they need to have a schedule at all.

...and we plan to raise to you when we present our legislative changes shortly.

Dental Profession (Amendment to
Schedule Order, 2017) (cont'd)
Hon. T. Deyalsingh (cont'd)

2018.01.30

So the first objection, the first concern that Mona is not included in the schedule will be fixed today. The second one about review of curriculum and so on, I will now deal with substantially. [*Crosstalk*] Sure.

Sen. Ramdeen: I thank you, Minister, for giving way. Minister, I just want to make a short interruption which is, I just want to get the dates because from my hearing of your contribution, the dates of your letter to the council and the date of the reply, I just have both of them at 19 September, 2016.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Sen. Ramdeen: Thank you.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: So, we would have had discussions with them on a particular date. They would have written to me on September 19, 2016. Okay?

Sen. Ramdeen: Thank you.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: You are welcome. So, Madam President, I will now deal in a very substantive way with the second area of concern by the dental council and that has to do with curriculum.

Madam President, the issue of accreditation of either curricula or facilities or faculties is not one of individual dental councils, but rather by something called the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions which includes dentistry.

There is this agreement from 2003, I believe, which was signed off by 13 Heads of Caricom. The then Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning, would have signed on for the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the 13th day of November, 2003. And I have a copy of the document here which speaks to the establishment of a Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions.

This accreditation body is lovingly known as CAAM-HP. CAAM-HP is the local regional body that accredits curricula, facilities and faculties. But CAAM-HP does not act on its own. I need to read into the record the following:

The Caribbean Accreditation Authority Education in Medicine and other Health Professions called CAAM-HP was evaluated by a team of experts from the World Federation for Medical Education and the foundation of advancement of international medical education and research, and they were granted recognition for a 10-year term with certain follow-up actions.

This is the regional body that accredits all medical and allied health care delivery curricula, facilities and faculties. So this is the countries' and regions' comfort that these programmes adhere to a certain quality levels and they could be assured of that.

Such a recognition by the WFME attests to the credibility of the policies and procedures of the CAAM-HP to assure the quality of medical education in the programmes and medical schools that it accredits.

So whether the curricula may be different or not, CAAM-HP has accredited both UWI St. Augustine School of Dentistry and the School of Dentistry located at Mona, Jamaica, but each school has two different levels of accreditation which I will come to soon.

To further comfort the public through you, Madam President, and my colleagues opposite, that the accreditation is beyond reproach, I need to also put on the record a letter from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago dated January 18, 2018. And, Madam President, I hate to ask you, but for the records I need to read into the record the entire letter.

Dear Minister Deyalsingh,

Recognition of Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Educating in
Medicine and other Health Professions

On behalf of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, I am pleased to advise of the recognition of the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions, CAAM-HP.

CAAM-HP is the legally constituted body established in the 2003 under the aegis of the Caribbean Community Caricom, and is empowered to determine and prescribe standards and to accredit medical, dental, veterinary and other health-related professional education programmes.

CAAM-HP is the only, only, recognized external quality-assurance agency established in the Caribbean to accredit medical, veterinary and other health-related professional education programmes and has to date reviewed more than 20 institutions across the Caribbean including the University of the West Indies campuses in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica.

The Act, that is, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, advises that any medical school established in the Caribbean must be accredited by CAAM-HP to be recognized by the Act.

The Act further advises that prospective students desirous of pursuing a medical degree at an institution in Trinidad and Tobago or across the Caribbean should ensure that the medical school has been accredited by CAAM-HP.

The Act further advises that any institution, local or foreign planning to offer medical, veterinary, dental or any other professional health-related programme in Trinidad and Tobago should also seek accreditation from CAAM-HP in addition to seeking registration and or accreditation status with the Accreditation Council of

Trinidad and Tobago.

That is further guarantee that CAAM-HP is the only body in the Caribbean to accredit dental schools, not the Dental Council, not the Medical Council, not the Ministry of Health, not an RHA, it is CAAM-HP. And I think I have put on the paper, on the *Hansard*, enough evidence that CAAM-HP in the Caribbean is not only accredited further by the world governing bodies, but the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago fully recognizes CAAM-HP as the only accreditation body for medical, veterinary and dental services in Trinidad and Tobago.

Further, Madam President, as promised, I will now say and put on the record what is the accreditation status of both Mona, Jamaica and UWI St. Augustine as determined by CAAM-HP.

The last accreditation done in July 2017 of both facilities, a mere six or seven or eight months ago, that July 2017 determination of the School of Dentistry in St. Augustine, that particular campus, that particular school got accreditation on probation which was extended for the period 2016 to 2018, accreditation on probation. Why? Because they had found certain weaknesses in critical areas. And all of this that I am putting on the record is on the CAAM-HP website. What was the accreditation status for the Mona Campus, Jamaica? At the same date, July 27th determination, the UWI School of Dentistry in Mona Campus, Jamaica got accreditation with conditions for 2017—2019 which meant there were deficiencies or weaknesses in non-critical areas.

So, UWI, St. Augustine, there were deficiencies in critical areas; Mona, Jamaica, deficiencies in non-critical areas. So that needs to be put on the table, and the meaning for that and what that means is particularly clear.

Madam President, I will now like to give this honourable House, through you, and to my colleagues opposite as I seek their support, a tour of the dental landscape in Trinidad and Tobago to further give the reasons why we need this amendment to put Mona Campus, Jamaica on the schedule.

Madam President, as of now there are 425 registered dentists in Trinidad and Tobago, 425, which gives you a ratio of one dentist for approximately 3,212 persons, but there are a lot of inequities and inequalities in the provision of dental services and I will say why.

The provision of dental services, like medical services, like law, like any of the other professions, professionals tend to practise in communities or areas where there is a certain catchment area of people. So what happens with dental is that you get a lot of dentists, even though you have 425 registered dentists, a lot of dentists practising in cities and towns. But what about the rural areas? And that is where the inequities come in.

People in rural areas who now do not have easy access to a dentist and, Madam President, let me say this. Most of us here, I am sure that all 31 of us here will have a dentist on our phone listing or will know a dentist or will have a family member who is a dentist or will have a medical plan or will have a dental plan. I am sure all 31 of us here. I am sure that I am just speaking aloud here, after child bearing pain, dental pain is probably the type of pain [*Laughter*] that will—yes. [*Interruption*] I assume, well after the pain of child birth, possibly dental pain is one of those pains that will drive you to absolute distraction that you want to cut off your head to get rid of this pain. But what about the 31 of us who have our dentist on speed dial and can access a dentist? What about the poor person in the rural areas, who, (a) do not have the money or (b) do not know someone and they

need to access that dental care. And that that is the inequities that we have noticed, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but globally.

So, you have 425 dentists, but you know what is scary, Madam President? The number of dentists working in the public sector is 28 for a population of over a million people, because some people have access to private care. Madam President, that is untenable. And you know what the scarier part is? That 28 persons working in the public sector as dentists, that number has remained static all the same for 20 years from 1998/1997 to now, we have not been able to move that figure from 28. If you needed any further proof of the inequities, and people depend on the public health sector for their dental care. We cannot allow this to continue and that is one of the reasons we want to amend the schedule so those students studying in Jamaica can come in here and get their licence and start to practise.

Madam President, I hope that one figure alone is enough to drive us to consider this amendment seriously, because we estimate in the public sector you have 35,800 patients under the care of one dentist in the public sector. Could you imagine that? One dentist, one of those 28 dentists is responsible for the oral care of 35,800, so we need to do something about that ratio. And I am here today to appeal to my colleagues opposite, the six UNC Senators and the colleagues on the Independent Bench. As the debate unfolds, I will listen to your contributions and hopefully address any concerns that you may have.

Madam President, the 10-year manpower plan that the Ministry of Health undertook shows that we needed to fill 67 vacancies. We currently have 28 people, but the 10-year manpower plan calls for 135 dentists in the public sector. So 28 from 135, if my math is correct, I think we need 67 people to fill those

vacancies. So it is critical, it is absolutely critical that we bring our students studying in Mona, Jamaica down to Trinidad to have them registered. Let us break down these barriers that keep those scholars out there. There is no rational reason for having them come down here to do a second qualifying exam.

I have put on the table that CAAM-HP accredits curricula, faculty and facilities. I have also put on the table that CAAM-HP has said unequivocally that UWI, St. Augustine will be accredited, but they have some concern in critical areas, but in Mona, Jamaica the concerns are in non-critical areas. Madam President, we can and should do better by our rural community and by our people generally.

Madam President, addressing the issue of oral care and oral health is not only about a winning smile or white teeth or getting rid of a toothache or doing a root canal. In researching for this debate, globally it may surprise you, Madam President, if I told you that dental disease is probably the number one non-communicable disease in the world. You have often heard me speak about diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, but the research will tell you that possibly the number one non-communicable disease has to come from dental disease, tooth decay.

Madam President, children especially with poor oral health suffer from growth problems because they cannot chew, they cannot masticate food therefore, they cannot get the nutrients out. Poor oral health is also associated with high socioeconomic disadvantages, and let me expand on that point.

Madam President, you have heard me talk about inequities. All the research will tell you, and there is an excellent book that I recommend to anyone doing research into health. There is a book called *The Health Gap* written by Sir Michael

Marmot, he was down here recently, last week for a PAHO conference dealing with this issue of health inequities, and it will tell you that people of lower socioeconomic groups carry a disproportionately large burden of poor health. People at the lower levels of our socioeconomic groupings. And this is borne out by all the research into maternal mortality, into cardiovascular disease, into diabetes, into stroke and poor oral health feeds directly into cardiovascular disease and mental health issues.

3.00 p.m.

Madam President, when one has poor oral hygiene and poor periodontal habits it can lead to severe bone loss of the jaws. Your teeth become slack, you are unable to chew, you cannot sleep, so your general health deteriorates rapidly. But, Madam President, it may surprise you to know that there is a strong link between oral hygiene, and cardiovascular disease, and stroke, and heart attacks, and let me explain. In preparing for this debate I had the medical experts validate what I am about to say. The bacteria that live in your mouth, around your teeth, when they become so abundant they have this habit of getting into your blood stream and can actually cause the build-up of plaque in your coronary arteries. Yes, Sen. Hosein, you look shocked. I can see your face. Thank you for listening. You are a gentleman. Keep it up.

Madam President: Senator!

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Keep it up, learn from the best.

Madam President: Minister!

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Yes, thank you. [*Laughter*] So, Madam President, people with poor oral hygiene actually predispose themselves to heart attacks, because those bacteria cause plaques, plaque gets into your coronary arteries and causes

stroke and heart attack. There is also a link between those same bacteria clogging up the arteries that go to your brain, and there is now a link between oral care and dementia, vascular dementia where the vessels to your brain become clogged.

So, this measure I am asking this honourable House today to look at, and hopefully get your approval, is not only about dentists. Is not only about dentists. It is about a person's overall health. There is another link which some may find amusing, but which is real now, the link between poor oral health and respiratory infections. But, there is also a link between poor oral health and those same bacteria which cause plaque in your coronary arteries, they also cause build up and blockages in the arteries that feed the penis, and therefore—I see Sen. Mahabir cringing in fear. [*Laughter*] So what happens, is that there is a very strong correlation between that and erectile dysfunction. So, I hope this House can rise to the occasion today—[*Laughter*] no pun intended—to look seriously at this measure as we try to strengthen our primary health-care response.

Madam President, with the few minutes I have left I want to talk about the Government's other new dental initiatives, because the initiative is not only about more dentists. You must have plans, you must have policies. One of our policies to talk about dental care and oral care is founded on our non-communicable diseases plan, and part of that was the absolute ban of the sale of sugary drinks in schools, something which has grasped the world community, the Caribbean community, and we and Trinidad and Tobago have been highly commended for taking that step. [*Desk thumping*] Because banning sugary drinks and soft drinks, and fruit juices with extra sugar is not only about health care and oral health care, it is about childhood obesity, it is about preventing the next generation of obese children from becoming diabetics. Right? Yes, and I am reminded I did make

enemies with that. Because when you challenge a status quo you are going to get push back. Not everyone is on board with that plan. Let me tell you, the push back to me was absolutely tremendous, but this Government stood firm and we would reap the rewards of that plan. [*Desk thumping*] And I make no apologies for it.

Another initiative under this Government, is the first time we would have a national draft of a national oral health-care policy for the first time. That draft is in the final stages. We will also have regulations to govern the use of ionizing radiation in dentistry, because every dental office has an X-ray machine or whatever. We are going to be installing new dental X-ray facilities in Carenage, Petit Valley, St. James. We are going to also, very soon, be doing that in Maraval, George Street, Couva and Siparia. So, we are trying to touch all four corners of Trinidad and Tobago. And if you look at some of the areas, Siparia, Carenage. These are the areas I am talking about that need a stepped up dental response. We also have tenders out for new X-ray machines for Toco and Cumuto. So, no part of Trinidad and Tobago that needs these types of services is going to be left out. And very soon we are going to restart the oral surgery services in both San Fernando and Port of Spain with some returning doctors.

So, Madam President, I think I have put enough evidence on the table to one, allay the fears of the Dental Council, that one, your first objection was Mona was not on the schedule. This amendment would take care of that. Their second concern was to the robustness of the curricula. And let me say, it is not for the Dental Council to accredit a school; it is for CAAM-HP to accredit a school. The same way the Medical Council does not accredit a medical faculty. It is for CAAM-HP—and I have put enough evidence that CAAM-HP is also accredited by

world governing bodies. I have read into the record the letter from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, recognizing CAAM-HP as the only accreditation body.

So, Madam President, at this point in time, I am quite looking forward to hearing contributions from my hon. colleagues. Any questions that you may have, hopefully I could address them in the wrap up. I will hope I can get approval, and, Madam President, with those few words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Sen. Anita Haynes: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to join in this debate on the Dental Profession Order, 2017. I listened very carefully to the Minister's presentation here today as he sought our support in this Motion, and one thing stuck out to me from the onset and it is his discussion on equity and equitable access to—in this case he focused on dental care, but it was in the wider context of health care. And in putting those concerns to us, the Minister did not tell me how this Dental Profession Order, 2017, would address this inequitable access.

So what we have is the list of vacancies and the number of dentists. But once this Order is approved because, I mean, I do not see any fundamental issues with it. I just do not see how it is going to address the concerns that the Minister listed. For example, if you let the returning nationals from the Mona campus come back to Trinidad, what is the guarantee that they will work in the public sector? I do not know, and I assume the Minister will let me know, well what the guarantees are. Yes, we will have more dentists, but will we have more public sector dentists? And that was my first concern from the points that he raised.

Then the Minister went on to talk about, you know, his real concern for rural areas and addressing their needs, and making health care equitable. Now, I am

from a rural community in south Trinidad, and I can tell you there are a lot of health care concerns. A lot. Including access to, well, health care opening hours. So the opening hours of the health centres are one of the major concerns of rural communities. Because if you live outside of the metropolitan area, getting to and from a health-care facility is a real problem. And as the Minister was talking about it, I just got the sense that he was out of touch with the needs of the rural communities that he spoke of. Because, yes, oral health care is important, but so is looking at the wait time for a life-saving surgery to people who cannot afford it.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Madam President, 46(1), this is about dental care, not about life- saving surgeries. I was careful to stay within the four corners of the amendment.

[Madam President motions to Sen. A. Haynes to sit]

Madam President: May I just remind Members that when one Member is invoking a Standing Order, the other Member will sit.

Sen. Haynes, I am going to allow you a little leeway, but this debate is a very narrow one. You can make your comments but I would ask you to move on and—

Sen. A. Haynes: Yeah. *[Desk thumping]*

Madam President: Yeah.

Sen. A. Haynes: I understand where your objection lies, but the point that I was making is in the list of priorities in terms of access to health care where rural communities are concerned. Oral care may fall a little lower on their priority list than it may on your priority list, and so that is where I was going; including things like CDAP drugs. And the reason I raise this was because in December—well, in November, we had a number of public meetings, that is the United National

Congress, and we were in communities like Naparima and Siparia, and a number of communities around the country, and a lot of people came up to me with long lists of concerns, and I just assume the Minister would want to hear those concerns because they are the rural communities and you are talking about equitable access, and these things are important. So, the information that I had I was sharing with you, that these are their concerns as listed in these public meetings that we had.

And I understand when the Minister spoke about looking at this Order and removing barriers and increasing the numbers of dentists in the country, but I just do not see how it is going to address a number of the concerns that the population actually has. The Minister also took the opportunity to read into the record the correspondence between the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Health. Now, in preparation for this debate I also received some information from the Dental Council, so that they were looking and they wanted to have some of the things that they were concerned about, raised as well. The Minister did put some of it on the record, but I also have some things that I would like to place on the record in terms of equity in the argument.

The Dental Council was not looking specifically at the accreditation, but they are as a professional organization, looking at the reputation of dentists in Trinidad and Tobago. So the reputation of their professional service. This is not something that is unheard of or unusual. Most professional services have governing bodies that regulate their professional services and I think that is an important point, because regulation in health services and in professional services is critical, and not something that we should just simply do away with. So, in a correspondence from the Dental Council, to the students at the Mona campus, and I will just like your permission to read part of this into the record. They listed that—

Madam President: You have to provide the date.

Sen. A. Haynes: Yes. So, it is dated Friday, May 06, 2016, and part of it reads that—they were looking at this, why students needed to take a test when they came back here, and so they said:

While both dental schools form a part of the University of the West Indies, they are in fact separate.

And under section 46 of the Dental Profession Act, the Dental Council in collaboration with the Minister of Health has an opportunity to review the Trinidad and Tobago dental school's curriculum and training programme and make any recommendations accordingly. The same does not apply in respect for the Jamaican dental school. The Jamaican dental school cannot be properly access until the first set of graduates has been evaluated. You are the first set of graduates and much may fall on you to be able to demonstrate that you have the sufficient requisite knowledge and skill to practise dentistry effectively, and hence the need for an examination. Our counterpart Dental Councils in Jamaica and Barbados also require foreigners and returning nationals to sit an exam before registration.

I think when we are having this conversation, and if you focus on accreditation it is one thing, but if you focus on quality control in the profession that is another thing entirely. So, yes, the school may be accredited and the accreditation is accepted, but what the Dental Council may be looking at, and the Minister may want to address, they are doing their due diligence as in providing a check on the quality of dentists that we have in Trinidad and Tobago. Even if you are talking about equity of access and equity in oral care, you do want that the service being provided is of the highest standard. This is not the case where more

may necessarily be better, but that you are constantly checking the quality of the service provided. The Dental Profession Act listed under section 12 that:

“The functions of the Council shall be—

- (a) to determine and keep under review the professional qualifications and experience required of an applicant for registration or enrolment except applicants entitled to registration under section 5(1)(a);”

You see, what they are doing, is performing their function as listed under the Dental Profession Act, which is to simply maintain standards within the professional service. This is done globally. There are dental associations and dental examination boards across the globe that maintain checks within their nation’s borders on who is allowed to be a practising dentist. And in seeking to address concerns and issues of who has access to health care, we should not subject that to looking at—so what I am saying is that you should not say we need to have more dentists so we would allow students from Mona to come here without any requisite checks and balances.

Further to that, the Minister made mention of the fact that the Act was amended in 1999. My concern here as well is, so in the review of this schedule of schools to allow dentists to practise here without the examination, why are we coming to do one institution at a time? Well, I do not know, and the Minister can tell me. If we look broadly at where students were coming from, the schools that they attended, returning nationals and then did we make an assessment that this is where we would get the most value? Again, this is nothing to do specifically with Mona, but the question is, if we are going to make the changes, could we not make a comprehensive change to the schedule? And the Minister would advise meas

to—

We also noted that the Dental Council sent out proposed improvements to legislation and matters arising, and this went to—and in this document, and this one is not dated. But it is dated the same as the October 16th, because it was in a package: “Under the legislation dentistry is regarded as a profession...”

Madam President: Who is that addressed to?

Sen. A. Haynes: This was addressed to the Ministry of Health.

“Under the legislation dentistry is regarded as a profession...an occupation that requires extensive training and the study and mastery of specialised knowledge. The essence of a ‘profession’ is that it assumes certain responsibilities for the competence of its members, and that it deliberately prohibits certain kinds of conduct on the ground that, though it may be profitable to the individual, they are calculated to bring the profession into disrepute or may otherwise be inimical to its interests. Professional status implies: the provision of services affecting the health, well-being and safety of society; emotional detachment, rigorous academic background; certification or licensing; and personal accountability to both the state and professional performance standards.”

So, again, I use this to make the point that the Dental Council, I do not think is specifically looking at whether or not the Mona institute is suitably accredited. What they are looking at is whether or not persons coming to be registered dentists in Trinidad and Tobago are suitably qualified and would bring to the profession the standards that they are meant to uphold as per section 12 of the Dental Profession Act. And those, in my respectful view, are two separate conversations; while they may be linked, they are not the same conversation.

In addition, the Minister said that he—sorry, the Minister said that he addressed the concerns of the Dental Council, so what I am proposing is that perhaps he may have misunderstood the concern of the Dental Council and it was not so much accreditation as it was professional standards.

I also have in my possession, the National Dental Examination Board of Canada as well as in the UK. They all list these tips for international students or returning—persons who studied abroad to return to practise in the dentistry profession. And, from my research, I have seen that for the most part this examination, or proof of, or quality assurance within the service is something that is generally standard, and not necessarily a barrier that cannot be surpassed. It is a quality assurance mechanism. So, while I understand the need to move forward with a public health agenda, I just do not see that it should be done at the expense of quality controls and proper checks and balances.

So that if the Minister can also tell me, from his research and his data, was this examination a real barrier? Would you have gone through all of the years of study and then at the point of having to take an exam to be registered, you give up and switch professions? Really, I am not sure what would the option be, that you do not return to Trinidad to practise. Because if you go abroad, if you have to go to the United States, each State requires different—well, they have different checks to become a practising dentist in each state. Similarly, there would be issues of work permit, et cetera. So, I do not see that that would be a more viable option than coming home, taking the exam and practising here. And so I do not have the data to say otherwise, but I am sure the Minister would be able to tell me.

The other concern I had, is when looking holistically at oral health care, the Dental Council made a number of suggestions for improvements for the

legislation, including things like the setting up of an advisory council, including things like widening powers for the Dental Council in terms of their role and function, and the need for disciplinary proceeding and regulation, as a way to further keep the profession in check and to keep the standards high. And so my question is: In the list of priorities, how did the Minister arise at this one being the most important; that the thrust for change should come from this particular section? And again, I know that you would say that the numbers, that we need to have more people on the ground, but I just do not believe that more people are coming back here to practise in the private sector, and so—in the public sector. Thank you.

The Dental Council—and so I would also—this is the same document that I am reading from. They invited the Minister to make regulations under section 45, prescribing disciplinary proceeding and regulation. The Dental Council intends to appoint a dental enrolment committee, as mandated, so they were in discussions for some of these things. And they were hoping that the advisory council would be established, and that the Minister should benefit from the advice on matters relating to the administration of the Act in relation to dental auxiliaries, and in particular the classification of offices and grades of dental nurses required for the scope and contents of the programme, training to be followed by student dental nurses.

And so all of these things were suggested, but we have an order to approve one school on to the schedule. And so my concern is that this is almost like a search for a quick win or achievement so that we say, okay, we approved this, so look at what we have done. We have improved the number of dentists we will have in Trinidad and Tobago by X. And what would be the real impact of what we

are doing? What is the real impact on all the communities, rural or otherwise, on what we are being asked to do? So even when you paint this picture of equitable access and you are doing things for the poor people, and persons who ordinarily will not have a dentist on speed dial, et cetera, how will our actions here today redound on those people in a real way? And once we get through this exercise, I hope that the Minister would be able to say, okay, you have these concerns, we will put the appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems in place, so that we can say if our actions have the desired impact in terms of equity and access to the delivery of health care. Because it is all well and good to say that we can do these things, and there is this ten-year manpower plan, and we have all these big plans and we have all these activities, and action items, but tell us how these things that you are doing, the activities that you are pursuing are actually affecting the daily lives of the persons that you intended.

Because if we do this, we get the extra hundred and how many other dentists and they do not deliver on equitable access, because they are in the private sector and they stay within the communities, then are we really improving the lives of citizens which I am sure we are all here to do? And, I think as we are thinking about that, I know a number of young professionals who would like to work in the public service, but the conditions within the public service, across professions are not necessarily ideal, because most times we are coming in on contract. So if you are a dental student or otherwise and you are coming in on contract you have no employment stability, and things like that are also barriers to persons practising within the public sector. The conditions within the public sector, the contracts mechanism within the public sector, the lack of employment stability, these things prevent young professionals from saying this is a viable employment option. And

so, that is something that we should also look at.

Because while you can depend on patriotism, and you can depend on some persons saying, well, this is my opportunity to give back, some of us would like to maybe get a loan and you do not get those things when you are on contract—mortgages and so. So, there are a lot of dentists and young doctors, and young professionals across the board who just simply do not have access to the quality of life you think that you would expect having gone these years of education, et cetera. So, I think that is something that the Minister could look at when thinking about how to improve equity in public health-care access.

And I just want to make the point that we are completely on board with equitable access in health care. We would like to see real results. We would like to see real systems put in place. So, therefore, anything that can help persons in rural communities be able to attain a better quality of life, of which health care is a major part, we would be on board with. And so while this Order is a step in a direction, we would like to see more being done. We would like to see a more comprehensive effort. We would like to see health care move into this century, because I do not think it has. We would like to see improvements in the health-care facilities. So even if you are a dentist in the facilities that we have now, but it is in the wider scope of health-care delivery; you can have persons, but if the system is not corrected then we are not really moving forward and the mischief that the Minister is seeking to correct would not actually be corrected.

And so with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

3.30 p.m.

Sen. H. R. Ian Roach: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me this opportunity to contribute in this debate. Madam President, first

of all let me say that I am most surprised that the hon. Minister of Health would have gone into so many other areas tangential to what I consider to be the main issue of this debate. Because to me, if I could just read what the Motion is about. It says:

“Whereas it is provided by Section 5A of the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54 (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Act’) that the Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any University, College or other Institution;
And whereas it is provided by the said Section 5A of the Act that every Order made under this section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament;
And whereas the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017 was made by the Minister under section 5A of the Act on the 10th day of November, 2017;
And whereas it is expedient to approve the said Order;
Be it resolved that the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017 be approved.”

Madam President, with the greatest of respect to all who have spoken thus far, I have been following this short debate in the other place as well. I have also been approached by, I guess a member of the Dental Council, I believe the counsel for the council, the legal counsel, that is. I believe that Sen. Haynes, in her contribution, the materials which she read from, I also probably was provided with similar material.

As a result of that, I had a good read and I also had engaged the gentleman, the attorney representing the council in dealing with the issues that were of concern

to them to have it ventilated on their behalf in Parliament, as Sen. Haynes has just sought to have done. And I immediately took some issues, I understood the concerns and I took some issues with the breadth of the concerns being levied at the particular order that was—the Motion that was being brought before here. The Motion here is something that is provided for under the Act which is just to simply add or subtract an institution as the case may be.

Now, all have been discussing about the oral hygiene and the complement of the number of dentists and so forth. It is, probably yes, germane, but not at this point in time. To me, it can be best placed in some other occasion where that is being dealt with. But for the purposes of our deliberation, this is very, to me, microscopic in focus. It deals with simply, whether or not what is required by the Act, the Minister is attending to according to the prescription of the Act. The Act empowers him under section 5A to consult with the Dental Council in seeking to add or subtract institutions as the case may be.

In this instance, he is seeking to add an institution, albeit, an institution of the University of the West Indies. And from what I understand in my discussions and further reading is that when this amendment was done, the Dental School of Trinidad and Tobago, University of the West Indies, came into existence after the university charter and so forth, it was in 1999. I think that was when the amendment was done and the Mona Dental School was not in existence. It could have been, I do not know, for the lack of foresight, or misunderstanding the legal draftsmen or draftswomen as the case may have been, in specifying in the section, section 5A, university, and outlining St. Augustine Campus, right, St. Augustine, and making Trinidad and Tobago recognized. Had they just left the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus Dental School coming into existence, one in

Barbados, once it is under the University of the West Indies, we would not be in here dealing with this issue here. As simple as that, we would not have been here.

So there is a legal term which is used, what we called the ejusdem generis rule which is applicable here and because of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was stated in it, it meant that the council could not on its own, without seeking an amendment, incorporate or give registration, allow accreditation to the Mona Dental students or dental school because they were restricted by the group. There was Trinidad and Tobago, St. Augustine. So had that not been there, it was just the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus would have just been added, it would have just been the University of the West Indies.

Now, the issue concerning the quality concerns, whether or not it is qualitative from the Dental Council in Trinidad and Tobago concerning the curricula of Mona, it is something that is common place in the University of the West Indies. Having been a member, having been a student of the University of the West Indies for two different disciplines for a period of seven years there, one of which was law, the Mona Campus, the Hugh Wooding Law School and the Norman Manley Law School, I do not think that the curricula is identical. But once we are accredited, once we go through the exam processes and we pass our exams as the case may be, you are permitted to practise law in any of these jurisdictions without having to take any further examinations.

If I wanted to go to the United States, at one time was my ambition to practise there, you would be permitted to practise law in America once you did the Bar exams. There was a minimum qualification, you had to come from a Commonwealth jurisdiction. That is the first thing. You have to come from a Commonwealth jurisdiction and the exam you do basically has to do with

procedure and constitutional law. Those little differences: civil and criminal procedure and constitutional law. It is something that is commonplace in the institutions in the same jurisdiction and therefore there is no abnormality with the curricula being different in Mona, slightly or however it is, from that which is obtained in Trinidad. And therefore, to me, the concern that really suppose to be pointed at this is whether or not it is justified in adding Mona Dental School to the Schedule at this point in time.

Now, the Dental Council in Trinidad and Tobago, as Sen. Haynes said, what they were interested in saying here, why not use this opportunity to either abolish the whole Schedule and have one exam as the case may be. So anybody who is coming into the jurisdiction from wherever you are, you have a board exam to do, like you would do in the United States, and you will get your clearance once you are able to pass that and be certified as having satisfied the substantive quality training to be a dentist as the case may be. And to me that is what this debate was supposed to have covered, solely, as opposed to whether or not it is being used to remedy the shortage of dentists in Trinidad and Tobago, whether we have 425 generally and just 28 in the public service.

As Sen. Haynes said, I do agree, allowing more dentists to come in does not necessarily, be it Trinidadians or not, they are going to go into the public service. There is much more to deal with that and to me that conversation could be had in different circumstances and therefore, I mean on the face of it, given what is prescribed by the Dental Profession Act of 29:54, to me if I am satisfied that the Minister has consulted with the Dental Council, the section does not even provide to say that there must be agreement or non-agreement. He just has to consult and has he consulted, has he fulfilled the mandates, the dictates of the provision? And

to me, it seems that that has been done because I have not heard anybody take the issue that any consultation was not held. So if that is the case then he has satisfied it and there is no problem in giving assistance in this Order being approved.

The concerns of the quality to the extent that he spoke about I think it is the regional body, CAAM-HP? What I understand, CAAM-HP has been a regional body which to me is in keeping with the whole basis of what the University of the West Indies and all these regional institutions were established as a regional body. You have this higher body, we do it in CXC, we do it in CAPE and so forth. So this is just dealing with the tertiary education institutions in the medical field and therefore, if this has been agreed by 13 Caricom Governments at the highest level to sign this as a regional policy and a regional document, that will certainly check on the quality and certify the qualifications of the dentists and medical doctors and so forth in the area, then I do not see the problem, I really cannot see the problem.

I do not see why the debate has to veer into many of the areas that even the Minister himself has brought upon himself in this debate. To me, are we taking issue with the fact that CAAM-HP is not a credible institution, it is not a credible body to certify, to accredit the institution? And I also understand there is a difference, because there is a difference in accreditation of programmes as opposed to accreditation of institutions. The institutions are accredited by their local or their domestic institutions. I think we have the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Jamaica will have their Jamaica Accredited Council that deals with the institution as opposed to the programme.

So, Madam President, if these things have been addressed on a regional level and accepted by the Government and has become part and parcel of our policy, I do not see the concerns, the significance at this point in time questioning whether

or not Mona students, be it Jamaicans, or Trinidadians returning or not, ought to—there is some sort of difficulty concerning their qualifications. I think in keeping with the whole purpose of the University of the West Indies, I think that to me, what the Minister has laid out concerning those bodies, to me satisfy the criteria, and I have no problem at all with it.

In dealing with whether or not the regulations and so should be dealt with, again as I said, that could be dealt with in a more comprehensive way, in another situation. I mean, there is dialogue between the Minister and the Dental Council. I guess he will have discussion with other areas in the medical field, the doctors, different health providers and boards and councilors be set up to help monitor and have oversight over the quality of professionalisms released to the public. And therefore, I do not see the merit in detaining this Senate, you know, in any long debate concerning what is really at stake. The simple thing at stake here is whether or not, to me the consultation was done, whether or not the students coming from Mona Campus have been properly matriculated according to the criteria's set and being able to sustain the review of the accrediting council. And if that has been done, then there is no problem in the Minister getting my approval in passing this Order for affirmation.

As I said, you know, I have made some notes here but I really do not want to go into it because to me they are just really not on point, whether or not you have sufficient people to go in rural areas or not, to me that does not arise in this area here. This—whether or not is affirmed or not has nothing to do with that. Whether or not—what to me may be more germane is that in admitting the Mona Dental School students to be able to practise dentistry without a further examination is that one engages in considering whether or not at this point in time,

it is necessary to look at the entire Schedule as was suggested by Sen. Haynes, which is what is the concern of the council and do away with it altogether and just harmonize things. And there is one, you have the University of the West Indies, once you go to the University of the West Indies like a law student, you attend to the university, wherever in the West Indies and you pass your exams, either in Mona or Hugh Wooding you are admitted to practise. Anybody else coming in from abroad, be it Trinidadian or non-Trinidadian, once you practise law in Trinidad and Tobago has to go through law school, either in UWI or the campuses and deal with their six months' programme or whatever examination needs to be in order to be admitted in the practice.

I think the same thing is what is being sought to be done here or what ought to be done, because I want to believe the reason that that provision in section 5 was placed in the Dental Profession Act at the time it was done, was hopefully you have schools that will keep coming up. I mean, life is dynamic and you want to have to be able to have access or your countrymen or your citizens to be able to have access to the best quality education available wherever at that point in time. And at such time where applications are made by top universities as the case may be, I think the Minister should be able to review that on whatever proper basis and be able to admit these people to practise, be able to have access to these institutions.

So, Madam President, as you see, right now I am struggling to squeeze out, out of this limited focus that I see where this is concerned, right. So with that, I mean, I guess there is no other question, I do not even want to ask the Minister a question, because to me he has addressed the questions more than is necessary in the particular circumstances. And with that, Madam President, I thank you. [*Desk*

thumping]

Sen. Ronald Huggins: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, when we remove all the lush leather chairs, the fancy titles, the nice suits, the eloquent speech, at the end of the day, we are all here to use everything in our power to serve the people we represent. And as parliamentarians, when we debate on these Motions or Bills, really and truly it affects the lives of citizens in one way or the other. This particular amendment to the Schedule in the Dental Profession Act, it affects the lives of citizens, it affects the lives of students, persons wanting to come into the profession as well as those who are desperately in need of this dental health care, especially in the public service, in this public sector, Madam President.

Just to give some context, how we got here. I mean, in the early colonial days, Madam President, the profession, the dental profession, dental health care on the whole was almost nonexistent and involved more rudimentary work, you know, limited to things like tooth extraction under very poor septic conditions. Most of the rural areas had unqualified practitioners, or as they termed them “quacks”, and that was what persons had to resort to, and we have come a long way since then. We had it so mixed up that even extracting teeth and replacing them at one point was seen as a sign of prosperity, believe it or not. I mean, V.S. Naipaul captured it in his story, “*My Aunt’s Gold Teeth*” where he said she had 16 of them, had married early; married well and shortly after her marriage she exchanged her perfectly sound teeth for gold, to announce that her husband was a man of substance.

Madam President, this UWI School of Dentistry, they opened their doors in 1989 as the only dental school in the English-speaking Caribbean at the time, the only

one. And at the time, the first cohort, they trained about 18 persons, 16 of which were Trinidadians; they had one from Jamaica, one from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but today after this School of Dentistry has been established and running we are still faced with a critical problem that has affected our citizens and that is the level of dental practitioners, personnel, that we have in the system, whether public or private. If we would just turn to the World Health Organization statistics and the report, I mean, they are saying that 93 per cent of their members, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member of course, have less than one dentistry personnel per hundred thousand.

The fact is, the hon. Minister Health could come to this Senate and, as for section 5A, show that he consulted with the Dental Council and ask for this affirmative resolution. But he sought to put it in context, he sought to make it known that there is a reason why he is pursuing this Motion. I am really concerned about how, what we do here affects the end user. How it affects people at the end of the day. And just looking at the figures here, Madam President, we have 47 dental clinics in this country, 47, but we have 28 dentists serving them. We can talk about all the reasons why we may want to object to what is being placed before us, but I “doh” see it necessary to raise the argument of the quality of the programme in Mona, Jamaica Campus as opposed to Trinidad and Tobago. CAAM-HP, the information is there, the both programmes are accredited, Madam President.

So let us bring it home now. The waiting time for appointments continue to be long and when we speak of the reference that the hon. Minister made to the pregnancy pain, we know that waiting to receive dental attention can be a very painful process. It is something that no one here would want to subject anyone to,

but currently at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the waiting period is three to six months. Persons are currently being referred for appointments in 2019. And therefore, it is only with a great sense of responsibility that I commend the hon. Minister of Health for bringing this Motion here and seeking to be proactive in that regard.

Now, this Act was passed on the 10th of April, 1980, amended in 1999 and of course, the Jamaica School of Dentistry came on stream in 2000 which was right after. We also see in the whole drive to be proactive this Motion coming before us and the other initiatives that the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health—I mean, he mentioned the banning and removal of the soft drinks from the schools and I personally bear witness to how this would have immediately started to transform the lives of the children in those schools, because unsupervised they consume those soft drinks sometimes three times a day and, of course, the sugar affects the tooth, erodes the enamel and causes the cavities. So apart from the initiative to address the whole diabetes concern, it also addresses this health concern where dental health is concerned.

Now, in my humble opinion, Madam President, the Motion is very simple. The Minister is here before us with an amendment to the Schedule and is provided for in section 5A. The process of course requires an affirmative resolution of Parliament, hence the reason why we are here, but the reality is that both programmes are accredited, both programmes are similar, both institutions have their local and international accreditations, both dentistry schools are under the same university, different locations and both need to be included in the Schedule. Now, I heard one concern being raised about the guarantee that persons would get into the public sector to work.

Now, this Motion here allows for Mona to be added to the Schedule and it increases the pool that would be available to access freely, the public health-care system, the public dental-care system in Trinidad and Tobago as well as the private system. But the argument about persons being on contract and cannot get mortgages and loans and, I mean, I have friends who are in the dental profession and most of them would have gone into their own private practice, which even takes a longer time for persons to qualify for those facilities that the Senator raised. So I think by what we are doing here really opens up the entire system to get more of what we desperately need in terms of dental practitioners and therefore I would like to stand in full support of this Motion and I see it as a further demonstration of the commitment of the Government to health care for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. And while we are seeking to improve the lives of these citizens and be able to afford that much needed dental care, I think there are decisions that have to be made especially when in leadership and especially when the buck stops with you.

Now, I can give a personal experience because I grew up in a family with eight persons: parents, six boys. And that access to dental health care in rural areas is real and it is not just real for families like mine, but for the tens of thousands of families who are in the same position and may not be able to access those facilities.

So, Madam President, I would like to say that I stand in full support of this Motion and I anticipate and hope that those on the Opposition Bench as well as the Independent Senators will also see the merit in this Motion. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

4.00 p.m.

Sen. Wade Mark: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President. Madam

President, I rise to make my contribution to this Motion in which the Senate is being asked to approve the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017. Unlike my colleagues who have spoken before me, both Sen. Roach and my good friend, Sen. Huggins, I want to differ. I do not want to say this is a very simple and straightforward matter. [*Desk thumping*] This is not a simple and straightforward matter. And I want to correct my colleague, the programme in Mona at the dental school is not the same programme at the Medical Dental School at the University of the West Indies. And I also want to say, a student or a dentist, leaving Trinidad and Tobago, graduating and doing a one-year probation internship, and wishing to go to Barbados, has to take an exam in Barbados before he or she can practise dentistry in Barbados. Similarly, if you leave here and you go to Jamaica with your degree in dentistry, you have to take an exam before you can practise in Jamaica. That is my information. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong. That is the information I have. So to come and tell us, Sen. Huggins, that the programmes are the same, is not correct.

Like Sen. Huggins, I, too, am concerned about the public interest. Who will safeguard and protect the public's interest? [*Desk thumping*] That is what I want to know. I have a concern about that. Who is going to ensure that standards are upheld? Who? CAAM-HP? I want to deal with CAAM-HP because a lot of fundamental conceptual differences and errors at the same time are being perpetuated here. And even though Sen. Roach talked about the institutional difference from a school, Madam President, or a body like CAAM-HP that is responsible for accreditation in terms of programming and programmes, I want to quote from the 2017 Report of the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions known as CAAM-HP, dated

July 2017. And I want to quote for you. On page 1 they talk about the scope of CAAM-HP's responsibility, and I want to read it for the record because if you do not understand these things, sometimes a little knowledge is a very dangerous thing. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, hear what it says on page 1 on the scope of CAAM-HP's responsibility. I quote:

“The CAAM-HP accredits medical, dental, veterinary and degree nursing education”—and other professions—“programmes of the schools located in the participating countries of CARICOM.”

It goes on, Madam President:

“Additionally, CAAM-HP assesses education programmes for the purpose of accreditation, of schools”—in the Caribbean or—“in Caribbean countries outside the CARICOM framework on request.”

It goes on to say that:

“CAAM-HP, on request, represents governments and accredited schools before extra-regional authorities on the status/quality of their education programmes.”

Hear what they do not do, Madam President. Hear what they do not do. So we have to be very clear in our minds what they do not do, and that is why the Dental Council is very important to ensure standards, because CAAM-HP does not do certain things. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, hear what they do not do, and I am quoting from the Report, eh, Madam President. This is page 2:

“CAAM-HP does not have responsibility for the registration of institutions

to legally operate in countries. This is a function of the country's accreditation body/mechanism. CAAM-HP may advise governments on the quality of the education programmes of schools that operate or are applying to operate in their countries on request."

Listen to this one, Madam President:

"CAAM-HP does not register or license medical or other health professionals. This authority lies with the governments and their relevant Councils or Boards. However, CAAM-HP in its accreditation decisions, may recommend when graduates of accredited schools should be asked to sit the Caribbean Association of Medical Councils...regional examination or its equivalents."

So, Madam President, what this is saying, in essence, is that there is a role for CAAM-HP and there is a role for the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what this is emphasizing here.

And I also want to let you know that when it comes to the question of this Motion, let us deal exactly with what this Motion is attempting to do. This Motion's main purpose is to facilitate or allow the automatic registration of students once they have obtained the University of the West Indies Dental School of Mona, Jamaica's diploma. Once they have obtained their diploma from the Dental School of Mona, Jamaica, what we are being asked to do is to add that school as a pre-approved school and those students can enter Trinidad and Tobago and set up shop without the Dental Council having any role. That is what this is

about. And the question that has to be asked—professionals have self-regulating bodies. The lawyers or attorneys-at-law have the Law Association and the Law Association governs, and they register, and they keep your status as a lawyer under constant review. For example, if you do not pay your fees to the Law Association, you cannot practise. The Attorney General cannot tell you, you cannot practise here. It is the Law Association that has that power. Similarly, you have the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a professional body and they govern doctors, medical professionals. That is a self-regulating body, and so, too, the Dental Council. They regulate dentists and those who are pursuing that kind of profession.

So what we are doing is saying to the Dental Council—you see this Act, Madam President? I think that we must follow not only the spirit but the letter of this piece of legislation. [*Desk thumping*] Because eventually, what will happen if we continue how we are going? The Dental Council will become a ghost; they will become obsolete at the end of the day, because, we, as legislators are being asked to use section 5A(1) in order, as my friend, Sen. Roach said, to consult, and once you consult and I disagree with you, I use my majority in the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] I use my majority in Parliament to bypass the Dental Council of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. How can that be fair? How can we justify that in a civilized society?

And that is what the Government is doing. The Government is using its majority in order to subvert, undermine and really get rid [*Desk thumping*] of the

efficacy and the effectiveness of this body called the Dental Council. That is what they are doing. And the Government has the majority. They can do whatever they will at the end of the day, but we also have a duty to examine how this measure will impact on standards in our country. I think someone said—my colleague who spoke on our Bench, Sen. Anita Haynes, made reference to section 46 of the Act. And I want to read section 46 of the Act. This is not in the Act of Jamaica. Hear what this says:

“The Minister shall within two years of the commencement of the Dental Profession (Amendment) Act, 1998 and at least once every five years thereafter, review, in collaboration with the Council the curriculum and training programme of the University of the West Indies Faculty of Medical Sciences Dental School and make recommendations thereon to the Council of the University of the West Indies.”

That is in section 46 of the Act. You cannot find this provision in the Dental Council Act of Jamaica. So it is not the same. It is not the same, Madam President. So do not come here and indicate things that are not accurate or correct. We must be concerned. I go to section 12 of the functions of the Council:

“(a) to determine and keep under review the professional qualifications and experience required of an applicant for registration or enrolment except applicants entitled to registration under section 5(1)(a);”

You understand, Madam President? So everyone agrees that there is a lack of harmonization. We have a Schedule attached to this Act with almost, I would say,

over 100 schools and most of them are from the United States, second from Canada, third from the United Kingdom. All of these dentists can enter the Republic of T&T pre-approved, set up shop and then examine your mouth, which I understand the Minister—I want to correct your records, eh. No human being, Minister, has 36 teeth. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell you that. I have 32. So I want you to correct the record “becor” you are on TV telling the whole world that every human being has 36 teeth.

Sen. Rambharat: You are a special human, we know.

Sen. W. Mark: No, no, no. I am not a—maybe somebody “else special”. I only have 32. So I just wanted to correct him, because it is wrong to go on television and tell children in the schools of our country that each child, and each adult, and each human being’s mouth has 36 teeth. That is true. So I just want to correct that.

Madam President, let me go on further to tell you—to show you the importance of the Dental Council. The Dental Council under 12(d) states:

“to publish for general information...”

Madam President: Sen, Mark.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, Ma’am?

Madam President: I have to make an intervention here. The debate—what is before us is not about all of the powers of the Dental Council. You can make a reference, as we have done, but your contribution cannot be focusing on the Dental Council and its powers. That is ancillary to the debate. Could you, therefore, heed

what I am saying and adjust your presentation accordingly, Sen. Mark?

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, if I may advise, I have a Motion that talks about the Dental Profession Act. That is what this Motion is about, and I am referring to the Dental Profession Act. I cannot speak to a Motion—[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please. I am sure, absolutely confident, that you are not disobeying something that I am asking you to take into account. I am sure of that. So I ask you now to adjust your contribution and make it more relevant to what is before us. Thank you very much, Sen. Mark. You may continue.

Sen. W. Mark: So, Madam President, we are dealing with a Motion that is asking us to approve an Order to allow persons who practice, or who have graduated from the School of Dentistry in Mona, to come to our country and have automatic registration. That is what this is about. And I am arguing that we cannot, in all conscience, deal with a matter like this without understanding the implications of such a decision of our Parliament. This is why we are being asked to approve it. We are being asked to approve a measure that will have implications for the citizenry of this country, and the only body that is charged with the responsibility under the Dental Profession Act to deal with qualifications and to sustain standards in this country, is, in fact, the Dental Council. That is the only body, Madam President.

So what we are advising is that there is need for the Minister to explain to this Parliament why it is, with this pre-approved action that is being proposed, why it is that same activity does not apply to other dentists who are coming from other

countries of the world, whose schools are not in the Schedule? Why it is, Madam President, as I said, if you have passed your Dentistry Professional Diploma and you want to practise in another jurisdiction, you have to take an exam? But what we are being asked to do is to approve a Motion that would give automatic registration to students from Trinidad and Tobago who are studying in Mona, Jamaica. They can enter our Republic and set up shop overnight without doing any examination or any exams. And I am asking, is that in the national interest? Is that in the public interest? Or do we need to pause for a cause and ask the Minister to reconsider this measure that he has brought here?

That is the point I am making. Because I think it is wrong for anyone, from anywhere, to come into this country and just set up shop because that particular school has been given the green light as a pre-approved school because it is placed under what is called, Madam President, this Schedule in the law that we have before us called the Dental Professions Act. And if you go to the Schedule, as I said, you will see a list of dental schools that are pre-approved.

So I would ask the hon. Minister when he is closing or concluding, why it is a decision has not been taken, according to what the Dental Council advised? Why do we not just remove all these dental schools? Because you are discriminating. Some persons who practise outside of this list, they have to take an exam, and those who are under this list, they can come in automatically. Is that the proper approach? Is that the proper way that we want to practise and to allow our citizens to be engaged in that kind of profession?

Madam President, I do not know if you can recall, prior to 1998, citizens who went to that Dental School at the University here, the medical faculty, they had to take an exam and many of them failed that exam, so much so, that they came to the Government then, and the Government called in PAHO and PAHO came to the Republic of T&T and they provided some guidance and guidelines to the Government at that time. And they said, “You know what? Someone who is graduating from that Dental School at the University, give them a year internship—one year probation internship programme. And having gone through that year of internship probationary period, upon your completion of that exercise, you can then practise dentistry in our country.”

Madam President, I want to tell you something. We have a lot of quacks and invalids practising in this country, you know. And many citizens will tell you when they go to some of these quacks and invalids, they have a cold, they tell them, “No, you don’t have a cold, you know. You have a fever.” Or, “You have a headache”, and they prescribe all— Now, I am saying, Madam President, something is happening in our country and as a legislator, my responsibility and duty is not to pass legislation willy-nilly because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago comes here and says they want us to approve it. My responsibility is to be eternally vigilant and do everything in my power to protect the public interest. [*Desk thumping*] That is my responsibility, Madam President. And unless the Government can provide you, hon. Madam President, and this Senate with persuasive and convincing arguments as to why we must now only include the

Dental School of Mona, Jamaica as part of our Schedule and thereby automatically exclude those returning nationals from taking any exams. Madam President, you have to convince me a lot more. It cannot be just so. It cannot be easily done that way.

Madam President, someone read for you earlier—I think it was my colleague again, Sen. Anita Haynes—if you are a dentist, Madam President, and you want to go to England, or you want to go to the United States—any of their states—you dare not enter and set up shop. They will lock you up. You cannot do that in the United States. That is a breach of their law. You have to do an exam and you have to pass that exam and get a licence in order to practice dentistry in the United States, and in the United Kingdom, in Canada.

Madam President, why are we watering down the brandy? Why are we lowering the standards? Why are we allowing people to come through the cracks? And whilst the Minister—I hear him. He wants more dentists into the system. He says there are only 28 dentists in the public health system out of 425. But you know what? Two years from today's date the Dental School at the University of the West Indies will celebrate 30 years of existence. [*Desk thumping*] Thirty years, Madam President. And I want to tell Sen. Huggins, the Dental School of Mona did not start in 2006. It started in 2008 and their first graduation took place in 2010. We are 28 years old as a Dental School in Trinidad and Tobago, and that must count for something. It must count for something. We cannot whimsically, capriciously and arbitrarily just allow anybody to walk in our Dental School and

just get away without the relevant entry requirements or qualifications.

So I—on our side, we do have some concerns, we do have some reservations about some of the efforts that are being made here by the Government to introduce measures that we believe that the Government needs to give some more thought to and not to move in this kind of arbitrary and loose manner. I also want to strongly advise the hon. Minister of Health that what we should be seeking to do is to convince our colleagues within the University of the West Indies family, whether it be Cave Hill, Barbados, whether it be Mona, Jamaica, or the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, that they should be working towards a common, harmonious programme of training in terms of the accreditation programmes that CAAM-HP is supposed to be executing, and not to have one programme with a different set of arrangements for Jamaica.

Madam President, I am told—and again the hon. Minister can correct me if I am wrong. I am told that when you graduate as a student in Jamaica from its Dental School, you cannot graduate and practise in Jamaica upon your graduation. You have to sit an examination set by an American school that is based in Jamaica before you can practise dentistry in Jamaica. There is an American approved school in Jamaica that you must enter upon graduation. In order to qualify you have to pass that exam and qualify in order to practise dentistry in Jamaica. So even Jamaicans who study at the Mona school in Jamaica, they cannot just walk into the Jamaican society and practise dentistry just so. There are steps; there are guidelines that they must follow otherwise every one of us will be in trouble if you

let loose this arrangement that we have in this country.

Madam President, I have a long contribution to make. I think it is 4.30. I will pause, with your permission, so we can have tea. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, you have utilized 31 minutes. You have nine more minutes.

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you very much.

Madam President: At this stage, hon. Senators, we will suspend and we will return at 5.00p.m. So this sitting is suspended until 5.00p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT in *the Chair*]

Sen. W. Mark: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. So, Mr. Vice-President, I know I only have nine more minutes and I would not want to use up all my nine minutes of original speaking time, I think. I think it is nine minutes of original speaking time if I am not mistaken, Sir, but I would not want to go beyond that, Sir.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: There is no extension there.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, I know. Mr. Vice-President, I think that we would all agree, and the hon. Minister would agree with me, that we have to balance the rights and interests of everyone. We are not, as the alternative Government, opposed to students, Madam—Mr. Vice-President, I beg your pardon—who would have graduated out of the dental school out of Mona, Jamaica, to practise their profession. We would like them to come and practise their profession, and enter, as the hon. Minister said, the public health system so we can get more dentists in

the system to service the needs of the population. I think PAHO statistics said—and Minister you could correct me if I am wrong—there should be one dentist for every 2,500 citizens of any country. That is the average that they have used, and I think the hon. Minister said that we are way over 3,000 per dentist in our country. It might even be more than that. If you are talking about 28 dentists in the public sector and 425 in total, and we are talking about 1.4 million people, we are talking about many more than that 1,300 and something.

So, Mr. Vice-President, we are submitting that we have to protect the interests of those students who have studied for five years and they have graduated, and they have now become theoretically for all intents and purposes, dentists, but we also have to safeguard the interests of the general public to ensure that those persons who have graduated are able to enter the system under certain quality assurance as well as certain standards that have been outlined in the legislation under the Dental Profession Act which the council is responsible for administering. So we want to balance the interests of all. We want to ensure that the citizenry have access in the rural communities of our country to dental services because as you know, dental service or dentistry is a component of the whole health-care system in any country, and the Minister outlined the importance of dental health care in terms of oral hygiene, et cetera, and the link between that and non-communicable diseases in many countries including ours.

So, we understand and recognize its importance, that is, dentistry as a profession. But, Mr. Vice-President, I cannot but emphasize the importance of ensuring that whatever we do, we safeguard the standards that people are able to adhere to. I think it is going to be wrong and I do not think that is the intention of the Minister. The Minister cannot be telling us that these schools must just be pre-

approved, and when people land here from Jamaica they must just set up shop. I do not think the Minister is saying that. The Minister must be concerned about these students who are now dentists being able to practise and be given some sort kind of exam. If not an exam, I think as I said, if I am not wrong, the dental school at UWI medical faculty; at the university, the dental school section, my understanding is that there is an internship programme of one year when someone becomes a dentist, before that person can gain registration and, Mr. Vice-President, may I advise you that there are two levels of registration. You get a temporary registration, and during that registration period, you practise as an intern for one year and after that year you get permanent registration and, therefore, you can now go and be employed either as a private dentist or you can get into the public sector.

So all in all, we would like to give support to the measure that is before this honourable House and Senate, Sir, but we would like the hon. Minister to provide us with some assurance that he is not going to open the floodgates and allow people to enter without the necessary checks and balances to safeguard the national interest. That is what we are concerned about, and that is why, Mr. Vice-President, we are so strong on this matter. We do not, as some of our colleagues believe, it is a simple and straightforward matter. It is not a simple and straightforward matter. It is very complex, it is very challenging, and we need to ensure that whatever we do we cross the t's properly, we dot the i's, as I said at the end of the day, we want our students who are dentists to come into the system and practise.

We want them to be guided by standards set by the Dental Council, we want the public interest to be safeguarded and protected, and, Mr. Vice-President, if these thing can be provided to us by the hon. Minister in his winding up— As I said in principle, we have no objection hon. Minister to the Motion in principle, we

have problems with the process in which people enter the system and if we do not have the relevant checks and balances we will injure the public's interest, and that is why we would like to express these reservations about the Motion before us today and we call on the Minister in his winding up to provide some clarity, give us some sunshine, provide some rays of hope as it relates to why we must support this Motion if there are not the necessary and sufficient checks and balances to safeguard the public interest so that at all times, the citizens must come first in this particular area of our activity.

I wish to thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mahabir.

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Mr. Vice-President, the Motion before is relatively simple and straightforward. The problem the hon. Minister of Health wishes to address is a deep-seated one, that is, dental health care in Trinidad and Tobago with a limited number of dentists in total and an even smaller amount from what was indicated some 28 in the employ of the public service. Dental care is expensive, and as the Minister rightly indicated, dental health is a matter that we as the country must now focus on. In a joint select committee of which I have the honour of being Chairman, we were looking at mental health, and now I think we ought to be looking at dental health as well as an important component of our health architecture in Trinidad and Tobago.

I will speak to the Motion, but first let me say and let me give full support to the Government and to the hon. Minister of Health on the policy stance he has taken on sugary drinks in schools which, of course, will contribute in no small way to reducing the incidence of diabetes and teenage obesity in Trinidad and Tobago. The Act itself, I took on opportunity to review the Act while I am looking at the

particular section that the Minister wishes to amend, the list of schools, and in order to further improve dental health in Trinidad and Tobago I would recommend to the Ministry of Health, through the Minister, of course, to section 35 of the Dental Profession Act where it says:

“(1) A dental nurse is qualified to treat children only and such treatment shall be carried out in facilities or services operated or conducted by Government or under the direct or indirect supervision of a dentist in private clinics.”

My first experience, Mr. Vice-President, with dental care was with a dental practitioner visiting the primary school that I attended, which is Cunupia Government Primary, and there a dental nurse was able to perform routine extractions on the children of the school. That was somewhere in the 60's. It had to be somewhere in the late 60's, and I do not know if the Ministry of Health has this particular roving clinic which goes from primary school to primary school where the dental nurses simply look at children, introduce them to dental care, give some lessons on dental hygiene, and so we start the process in that way. The Act does in fact make provision for nurses treating children, and while there are different definitions of the child in various Acts in Trinidad and Tobago, I fully support the definition in the Dental Profession Act where a child is deemed to be under 12 years of age, because at that age we have a type of teeth which would be removed,— these are milk teeth and then we will get our permanent teeth. So really, the Act says the dental nurses will be able to treat children.

I also had a look and since we are looking at the public interest, at section 33 of the Dental Profession Act—and we are, Mr. Vice-President, focusing on protecting the public interest and we would want to get really the most qualified

dentist, and I am coming to the essence and where the debate seems to be. You see, the Act says that we have:

“A dental auxiliary who practises dentistry other than as a prescribed in relation to the class of dental auxiliary...”

Section 33 refers to one of these dental technicians who is performing dental work for which he is not authorized to perform and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$5,000 and to imprisonment for six months. I am of the view that certainly the consultations between the Dental Council and the Minister should have at least resulted in a recommendation for an increase of this fine because I think it is really injurious to the public interest if we have someone who is not qualified to practise full-fledged dentistry and is performing the functions, and maybe even advertising himself as such, to only be faced with a fine of \$5,000, particularly, Mr. Vice-President, where not so long ago in the traffic Bill we said someone who is driving having had his driver's licence suspended; he may be driving not under the influence of anything, but he is caught, he has a fine of \$10,000. So I think we need to be looking at the Act itself and see to what extent, to protect the public interest, we can amend section 33 to really make portraying oneself as a dentist, if you are a dental technician, a more serious crime and a heavier fine. That is, of course, policy for the Ministry of Health.

But, Mr. Vice-President, I come to the Motion itself and if I were to refer to 5(1) of the Act, it says that:

“A person is entitled to be registered to practise dentistry on making application therefor where he—

(a) is the holder of a diploma from a University, College or other Institution referred to in the Schedule;”

The Act is very clear. He is the holder of certification from any of the institutions referred to in the Schedule. There is a Schedule and under 5A(1) it says clearly, without any doubt:

“The Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting...from any University, College or other Institution.”

So, the Minister is really performing a function given to him clearly by the Act for him to discharge. So I do not see any issue at all with the Motion before us. The problem I have and the Minister in piloting his Motion indicating that the Act itself is subject to review and that there will be consultations on revising the Act.

I want to lend credence to something that was mentioned by my colleague, Sen. Roach. The architecture of this law for me is very surprising. It has in the Schedule a list of dental schools by country. We mentioned Trinidad and Tobago, we mentioned the United States of America, we mentioned Canada, we mentioned the United Kingdom, and that is it. What about dental schools in Brazil? I will come to that. What about the University of Otago, New Zealand or the University of Adelaide in Australia? We have no school from Europe. Why this geographic bias towards the North Atlantic only? Apart from the United Kingdom, we have no school in Germany. And just as an aside, Mr. Vice-President, if a young scholar were to ask me what should be his focus if he wishes to be a world-class dentist—focus of study—should it be biology, physics or chemistry, I will tell him none of the above. I would say if you want to be a world-class dentist study Swedish. See if you have a facility in language and study the language of Sweden. I am coming to that. But I have a problem with the architecture of the law and really, the concern is, why only the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom

and Trinidad and Tobago?

Well, as an academic myself, I looked at some of the schools listed under the United States of America. Many of them are good schools, but I saw two schools in the Schedule, one is Oral Roberts University. It is still on the Schedule, and one of the provisions of the Act is for the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago to advise the Minister to delete schools or add schools. Oral Roberts University and Emory University are both schools in the Schedule, but Oral Roberts University dental school closed in 1986, and Emory University dental school closed in 1990. These are from the background checks that I have made, so that if someone were to tell me that they graduated from Oral Roberts University or Emory University in 2015, I will not register them although the Schedule says they must be registered to practise dentistry.

I would think that the Dental Council would have gone through the list of all the schools and it would have deleted schools where the dentistry programme is no longer in existence, or where dentistry is no longer offered, because if Oral Roberts graduated its last batch in 1986, its youngest dentist would be around age 60, close to retirement age and, therefore, we need to look at this particular list and determine whether we in fact need to clean up the list here.

But the concern I have again is with the architecture of the law and with focusing on geography, because you see if someone, a young student, were to come to Trinidad and Tobago, he presents his certificate and he says he is from the University of Hong Kong, University of Hong Kong is not on the list. I will mention with your leave, Mr. Vice-President, because I am going somewhere, five universities. The Tokyo Medical and Dental University, it is not on the list. He or she will have to undertake a board certification exam by the Dental Council of

Trinidad and Tobago. What about the Karolinska Institute in Sweden? It is not on the list, but someone will have to undertake a board certificate exam in Trinidad. The Academic Centre for Dentistry in Holland, ACTA; the Catholic University of Leuven from Belgium, KU Leuven; the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. What do these names have in common? Well, according to the QS World University Rankings of dentals schools, there are two rankings. It used to be the QS and the Times together. QS and Times parted company a few years ago and they have different methodologies on how they rank schools with respect to the criteria with respect to global acceptance.

The University of Hong Kong is ranked number one in the world according to the QS based upon professors' research, students, but it is not on our list. The Tokyo Medical and Dental University ranked number three, not on our list. The Karolinska Institute, Sweden—I mentioned Sweden before—number seven on the list in the world with respect to the pioneering work they have done in dental sciences. Academic Centre for Dentistry in Holland, ACTA, ranked number eight in the world. The Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, ninth in the world, not on our list. University of Gothenburg, Sweden, ranked number 10. Amongst the top 10, I see two universities in Sweden, University of Gothenburg, number 10, and the Karolinska Institute number seven. For a small country like Sweden to produce two institutes in the top 10 in the world means that they are taking dental care very seriously in Sweden. I also did not see in our list, though I saw the University of Puerto Rico in the list here.

In our list we have not considered the University of Havana. The University of Havana was founded in 1721, one of the oldest universities in our hemisphere and we have not been looking at that institute. So someone from the University of

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Havana which has a long established medical and dental school will have to undertake the particular exam, yet we have institutes here— So of the top 10 universities I saw only three on our list, one is Harvard Medical School, the University of Michigan and a university in London, one of the London colleges of dentistry, and we have had something like seven of them not in our list. Where am I going, Mr. Vice-President?

I think according to the law the hon. Minister of Health is well within the powers granted with him in the law to seek to add this particular extra school to the Schedule, but I think what we need to do—and he did raise it as he piloted his Motion—we need to ask ourselves, given globalization now—you see when this Act was first proposed in 1980 the world was a very closed place. We did not see Europe, we did not see Asia, we did not see Australia and New Zealand, we did not see India. The University of São Paulo is ranked number 19 in the world, but once you have a facility in Portuguese many of our students should be considering some of those top ranked schools for training, as opposed to only the closed world of the United States, Canada, England, Trinidad and Tobago as it was in 1980.

So many years later, 30-something years later, the world has become globalized, we have become much more capable in language. We have made strides at the University of the West Indies in language training. A range of languages is now offered at the CLL Institute, I think it is called, for language training, and that once students in Trinidad and Tobago have a passion for the field I think we should now open the world to them. We should amend this particular Dental Profession Act, eliminate the Schedule. I am all for eliminating the Schedule and I am in total support with the recommendation of Sen. Roach, that let us eliminate the Schedule which has a list of schools by geography, by country,

and let us now open up the certification process towards the excellent work that is being done globally. It would be great if some of our students getting national scholarships can seek from the Ministry of Education to attend the University of Hong Kong.

For some reason, the University of Hong Kong is ranked number one and has been in the top five for the longest while. They are doing outstanding work and I suspect the training there is English. Hong Kong, I do not know what it is now. The University of Hong Kong may very well train in English, but the Swedish institutes, the Dutch institutes, the Brazilian institutes, and those in Australia and India, et cetera, I think if we could remove the Schedule all together, open up training because ultimately this is what we want, and I think this is what the Minister of Health would like, the best dental care, the best dental practitioners, and affordable dental care and universal dental care, and in that scenario let us encourage our young students if they have the capability and the language skills, look at some of those other schools so that there can be a cross-fertilization of skills.

It would be in my mind, Mr. Vice-President, wonderful if some of our students were trained in Sweden, were trained in Belgium or Holland, and they can come and interact in conferences with some of the scholars who are trained in the more traditional areas of North America. That will do wonders for members of the Dental Council itself because we will then obtain information and insights that we would not normally have from a range of outstanding countries, in outstanding institutions across the world. I think we need to be looking at the hemisphere itself to recruit some of our dentists. True we can grow some of our dentists at the University of the West Indies and I am all in support of the training offered by the

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University of the West Indies. I must show my hand, I was a former academic at the University of the West Indies and if I may say so myself, the training we offer is excellent training. Well, when I was there. I cannot speak for now.

But really, the University of the West Indies is our institution and the Minister, of course, simply seeks to amend a lacuna in the law so that we can add the Jamaica school to our Schedule. But really, should we not get rid of the Schedule now given that the top 10 schools, seven of them are outside our list? Should we, Mr. Vice-President—and this is a recommendation as we go forward with dental care in Trinidad and Tobago; this is left entirely for the Minister and policy in the Ministry of Health—not have the Dental Council then look at various schools, decide which of the schools, based upon the programmes of which they have some familiarity, should be exempt from the Trinidad and Tobago examination of the Dental Council, and then when there are question marks, subject some of those scholars to the examination before they can practise in Trinidad and Tobago?

5.30 p.m.

In a world of freer information, we ought to know someone, say from Karolinska Institute, may be exempt from any examination that is ranked number seven in the world. We would think that if she has—based upon the recommendations of professors there on the performance of our scholars there, you can say, “Well, I do not think he or she needs to go through the exam, we have really professional contact”—the Catholic University of Leuven, University of Gothenburg.

So that there are instances where the Dental Council may say, “We will waive the examination” and in other situations, there are instances where they say,

“We enforce the examination”, and so we open the pool to a wide range of scholars and we should not at all exempt Cuba, the University of Havana, from our list, let us look at them.

And the Minister is more capable than most in knowing that the pharmaceutical sector of Cuba is ranked very highly in terms of the kinds of pharmaceuticals they produce and we want to encourage him to look at the pharmaceuticals there, see whether, in fact, they can be accepted by Caricom and use them, they would be cheaper. But really, let us look at the training offered in places close to home, expand the geography, and if we do that, I think we are going to go a long way in ensuring that dental care in Trinidad and Tobago is not for the fortunate few. A simple cleaning of your gums and so on can easily cost you \$1,000 at a dentist, the poor persons cannot afford that. We need to really make dental care much more accessible and readily available.

I think the Minister of Health may consider using the nurse practitioners for the school programme but really, getting much more dentists, certainly from Cuba, I think you can look at getting dentists from Cuba to get the registration in Trinidad and Tobago so we will be able to offer dental care facilities, not only at our major hospitals. I see no reason why our health centres cannot be equipped with some such basic dental facilities so that in the outlying area—in the Tocos and in the Morugas and so on—you can find people going into the health centre on a particular day of the month knowing that a dentist, assisted by a nurse practitioner, will be there to do dental checks, basic cleaning, and if there is anything more to be done, they refer them to the centres at Mount Hope and Port of Spain.

But I think that if we decentralize—and I am with the Minister on this. If we decentralize, we do need more practitioners. The practitioners that we have,

perhaps, are not adequate. There are ways to supplement the pool and what I see, according to the amendment, the Motion offered by the Minister, will add some but I think if we were to look across the Caribbean, Latin America, across the world, we will do much better than if we confine ourselves to the four or five areas we have in the Schedule.

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you and I support the hon. Minister with this Motion. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President: Minister of Health.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I looked around, nobody rose.

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Hosein.

Hon. Deyalsingh: No problem. Go ahead, no problem.

Sen. Saddam Hosein: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Mr. Vice-President, I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to contribute to this debate. When we look at this Order that was brought to this Senate by the hon. Minister of Health in order to include dental students from the University of the West Indies, Mona, to be registered as practising dentists in Trinidad and Tobago, we see that there is a disparity between the training programmes between the two universities, and this was announced by the speakers before. But I just want to make note of one part of the training that I think is very important, and we must take note of this. In the Mona campus, I have been told and I looked at the programmes, the programme schedule that they have online, and the students there, they complete the four-year—it is a five-year programme, and four of the years, they do more theoretical studies, and it is only in the last year, they do one year of clinical studies. Whereas the position in Trinidad and Tobago, in Mount Hope, the students here, they perform three years of clinical studies out of the five years and

an additional one-year internship before they become registered as dentists.

Now, the dental school in Mona, it is a very young school, it is fairly young having been established in about 2010, eight years ago, and around 2015 was the first batch of dentists that this school has produced. So by now, they have about three batches of dentists. So one thing I did not hear the Minister, in his contribution, address is the volume or the amount of students that graduate from the Mona school and over that three-year period, how many of them would have come to Trinidad for admission to practise. And Sen. Roach, he mentioned that attorneys-at-law in the Caribbean who would be subject to the CLE, the Council of Legal Education. Right? That is the regional body that governs the three law schools, that is the Eugene Dupuch Law School in the Bahamas, the Norman Manley in Jamaica and the Hugh Wooding Law School right here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, the difference between that and what we are faced with here is that the Dental Councils of Jamaica and Trinidad are different whereas the Council of Legal Education, they are one body that governs the three law schools and when exams are being set, there is a harmonization because all exams are being approved by this regional body, and with respect to the dentists, there is no one body that approves the exams in Jamaica and in Trinidad for there to be any harmonization. So that is one point I would like to make.

Now, the second point is that of the registration of a dentist. Now, in Trinidad and Tobago, as I said earlier, under section 5(1)(a) of the Act, after completing the five-year study at the Mount Hope Campus, the students are required to undergo temporary registration and thereafter, they complete one year of clinical internship and then they are registered by the Dental Council. Now, in

Jamaica, there is no provision for this one-year internship. As soon as the students graduate from the Mona Campus, they write the exam and then they become registered as dentists in Jamaica. I do not know if the Minister has any information with respect to that—[*Interruption*]*—yes, and how that works in Jamaica. So that, we can, again, see that we need to synchronize the training and the way in which dentists are registered because on the one hand, you cannot have to write an exam in Jamaica and then come in Trinidad and you do not.*

Now, this in itself, the Order, it tries to correct that mistake of the inequity that students currently, as it stands, they have to come to Trinidad— who graduated from Mona—and write an exam before they are registered. Now, it is the position that once this Order is passed today in this Senate that a student who graduates from Mona and comes to Trinidad, they have automatic entry to register as a dentist whereas a student who graduates from Mona still has to undergo that one-year internship before he is registered. So is it that now the Jamaican—I do not want to say “Jamaicans”. Is it that the graduates from the Jamaican school, they will only be required to undergo five years of schooling to become registered as dentists and that students in Trinidad will now have to undergo six, which is the five years at the Mount Hope and a one-year internship? So is it that we are now creating another inequity for the students who graduate from Mount Hope?

And with respect to the schools that are on the Schedule, the position on this is that the Dental Council is the body responsible for the registration of dentists in Trinidad and Tobago for them to operate and practise here. Why do we not give the Dental Council the autonomy to decide on the schools that they would like to accredit on their list and remove that power from the Minister? Because it will— right now, we are picking up a lot of parliamentary time in order for the Minister to

bring certain orders here and as Sen. Mahabir would have said, that the Schedule itself needs cleaning up because there are certain schools that no longer offer dentistry in their curriculum and then there are other schools that we should have included. So, should we remove the power from the Minister and give it solely to the Dental Council? So that is one of the concerns that I have.

Now, when we look at what the policy behind this Order is, is that basically what the Minister has articulated is that he wants there to be more dentists in Trinidad and Tobago. Now, the problem that can happen here now is that, for example, we have dentists coming from all over the world setting up shop right here in Trinidad; all they do is write the exam. Now, it can, in fact, alleviate the shortage but is the public service ready to hire all of these additional dentists? Are we in a position to do so? Because to my knowledge, there are hundreds of doctors who have graduated, who are home right now and not being offered contracts and they are at the stage of house officers having undergone their internship period. And when we look at dentists who practise in Trinidad who are unregistered, the fine is just \$5,000. Therefore, we will see that there are more and more dentists popping up and all they are liable to is \$5,000. So can we revisit also the fine for persons who practise who are unregistered?

And we also see that when we have a growing number of dentists, there will be a greater demand for auxiliary staff and under the Act, dental auxiliary is defined as:

“...dental assistant, dental hygienist, dental nurse...”—and—“dental technician;”

There are four categories. Now, these persons, once they are qualified by the Dental Council, they are on a roll but they are not on a register unlike the dentists.

The dentists are on a roll and then you have a register of dentists. So I am asking why we do not create a similar like as dentists to put them on a register so therefore, on a constant basis, we can monitor who are these registered technicians and nurses. Because far too often, we see a lot of persons who claim they are technicians setting up shop and making teeth, making dentures, gold caps; and we need to regulate this. We need to clamp down on these instances. [*Interruption*] And yes, increase the fine because the fine for these unregistered dental auxiliary, [*Crosstalk*] it is increasing. Now, I do not know if the Minister is following but as I said earlier, if we increase the dental staff by hiring more dentists, obviously we will have to increase the auxiliary staff.

Now, when we look at the age of this Act, it was a 1980 Act. Technology has changed, we are in a modern time now. Therefore, there are further reforms that need to be legislated here.

Mr. Vice-President: Senator, I want you to rein in your contribution in relation specifically to the Motion at hand which speaks to adding a school to the Schedule. So could you bring it in very tightly because what you are doing now is you are actually going into the Act itself and I have heard the points that you have made before. So if you can bring it into the school and the fact that the Minister has actually made an Order to bring this into the Schedule, and I keep it tight.

Sen. S. Hosein: I am guided, please, Mr. Vice-President. Now, with the students who graduate from Mona and they come to practise here in Trinidad, because of the disparity in the programme and the difference in the training that they would have received in the both institutions, now the standards that may have been applicable at the Mount Hope or taught here, we do not know if it falls lower than the standard of Mona or if it is higher. Now, this would bring rise to certain

instances of malpractice in certain instances so therefore, we would now see that the Dental Council, as a body, will have to be responsible for treating with matters of this in terms of disciplining dentists, in terms of misconduct and malpractice, and this will be borne out of the training that these persons would have received at the institutions.

So I am asking, and the Dental Council has requested, and I think the Minister has the correspondence, that the powers be widened for their disciplinary action in terms of—they only have three which are censure, suspension and removal from the rolls. So they are asking for ADR, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and also for the power to grant restitution. And in this instance, I would like to say that we need to create that harmonization of the both programmes in order to alleviate so that we can escape problems such as these. And we on this side, we are not opposed to bringing in professionals and causing them to be registered in Trinidad and Tobago because I think that we have the capacity, we have the creativity to do great. And we would support this Motion but the Minister needs to take note of the concerns that the Opposition has.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Melissa Ramkissoon: Thank you, Mr Vice-President. It is quite late in the evening so a lot has been said about this Motion. It is a challenge now to bring something a little bit different and new. But as this is the first time I am standing to address this Chamber for the year 2018, I just want to extend to you, Mr. Vice-President, to all Senators, to the viewing public, I wish you all the best for 2018, a lot of good health, strength and prosperity throughout the year.

So, Mr. Vice-President, we are here to talk about the Motion that was piloted by the Minister of Health and it was based on an Order that was made on the 10th of

November, 2017. Now, the Minister did open up the debate a little bit by bringing in the relationship to the RHA Act, as well as the letter from the council, as well as a letter from the Accreditation Division. So it is a little bit more than what we expected than what was before us or sent prior to preparation for today's debate.

So when I initially read the Motion, I thought okay, we want to add another university to the list or to the Schedule that exists in the present Dental Profession Act. Okay, that seems very—a simple clause that gives that power to the Minister to bring that here today for us to review and also accept and go through this debate.

And I went to the website for the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a very informative website. It actually had a list of all the registered dentists of Trinidad and Tobago and the number I saw was 476. I know the Minister gave another number so I could be corrected, but that was the number I saw as of yesterday. The list shared that we have 476 to a population of 1.4, so that says about 2,900 persons to one dentist. But this is not always how it goes because dentists are not assigned to a particular group of people but it is where they decide to practise, which has come up before and the Minister even brought up the case of rural areas.

And to touch on that, I just wanted to bring forward a very interesting paper that was written in 2007 and it was the development of dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago. I do have an excerpt of this which is “An Historical Overview of Dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago”. And it shared that, in the past, in 1957, we only had 85 dentists; in 1962, we only had 93; it went down in 1968 to 62; 1972 to 55, so you understand the need for dentists at that time because we did not have.

The area that this document went into was talking about dentists who are practising in Trinidad and Tobago without registration, which I thought the

Minister was going to raise when he addressed the area of rural development and it actually referred to a term, “quacks” is the problem. And it even gave a statistic to say that up to 200 or so continue to practise and it said:

“...a mixed bag of untrained folk practitioners, dental technicians, people with some element of dental clinical training but without any qualifications, and those with dental qualifications unrecognized by the Dental Council. They still appear to be popular with many people from the lower socioeconomic groups who view them as the ‘poor man’s dentist’.”

So I thought that was the point that we were trying to highlight with the rural development or the areas that are not city or town to have these persons who are practising without being registered or accredited or blessed by the Dental Council.

What I found interesting is that this particular Schedule spoke to address or to bring in Mona or students who have studied at Mona, Jamaica, the University of the West Indies; and I also learnt that there are 28 dentists. For the last 20 years, we have had 28 dentists. We are trying to fill a gap by bringing in another school or more students to fill a gap for a structure that has not been confirmed. That is what I got from the piloting. So I am not sure if I am wrong in this assumption and I would like the Minister, if I am wrong, please correct me. Because it seems to me that there is a structure to be implemented for 128 dentists or X number and we are only at 28 dentists for the public sector which are facilitating a million people and we have about 61 or so plus positions to be filled. And my initial thought after reading the Motion, reading the Act, is—So, what about the 86 universities on the list?—because one from Trinidad and Tobago, 60 from the United States, 20 from Canada and we have—

Mr. Vice-President: Senator, I do not want you to, as much as that has happened

prior, two things are happening here. One, you are getting to a point of repetition of points that have been made before, specific to the list and schools that are, one, not on the list or even any other schools on the list. We are dealing with one particular school that is going to be added to the list so I want you to move forward from that point in relation to any other schools on the list and schools that are not existing on the list.

Sen. M. Ramkissoon: Mr. Vice-President, my point is not to add schools or the schools—my point was really to say and it was actually to tie in with Sen. Haynes' point that she made earlier in relation to existing dentists who are registered who do not have jobs because, for example—so that was the point of referring to the list that has the 87 recognized schools because we have 476 students—or sorry, registered dentists. So, let me see if I could put it across a different way.

For example, I live in La Romain, there is a new building now opened and the dentist there happens to be a friend of the family. He is younger than I and he now opened his practice. So I asked him how come, at such a young age, you are entering into private practice, you are going to be practising as a private paid dentist and he said because he cannot find a job on the outside so he has to take a loan to now build his own clientele because it is not like he came out of school with a clientele to facilitate. So, I am not sure what is happening right now in the Ministry or in the dental practitioners or the council but I do not want us to leave with the thinking that there is shortage because there are persons who are there with the qualifications who can fill the gaps if vacancies do exist. Okay? Right.

So my other point is related to the council letter which was dated the 19th of September, 2016, and that will tie the section 5A of the Act which says that:

“The Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council...”

And my interpretation of that, if anyone is writing this into the Bill or as legislators ourselves, if we write “with consultation”, we would expect the Minister to consult, yes, but also to take our advice because we are not asking anybody to be on this Dental Council, we are asking persons, according to section 5, to be candidates for election as chairman or vice-chairman shall have at least five years standing as practising dentists. So we cannot be in the Dental Council, you need to be an experienced dentist—practicing dentist to be on the Council. So the advice holds some merit or some weight.

So I hear the point that—the Schedule I listed, that was the first point. The second point that was raised by the Minister while he is piloting is that a review of the curriculum every five years for UWI but not for Mona. I support his argument with this because if you look at the list of schools, different schools have different curriculums and different requirements. For example, some of the schools have seven-year programmes and they are considered as registered dentists, like ours is five years, Mona is five. So I support his point on that, we do not have to fault them on the review of the curriculum because other schools have different programmes, different lengths of studies and different requirements to be listed and they have passed the test because they have been accredited by the American council.

So the third point was the consequential need for the list of Schedules and there was—as you said, many other Senators have raised the disparity in the listing. So my question, Mr. Vice-President, or my concern is after we have heard the council’s objections in 2016, we are in 2018, has the council rewritten the Minister and said this is their new position given the light of what had happened in the other place debate or have they relooked at it considering that they have

reviewed or relooked at Mona curriculum and said, okay, well we have more information now, we have heard from the CAAM-HP, which is the Caribbean Accreditation Authority in Medical and Health Profession? So we have heard from them, we hear it is accredited, okay, we now have a new position. Did they do that?

Because, Mr. Vice-President, we are legislators and we take guidance from professionals. If you want a professional opinion on the engineering of this building, I will gladly give it to you as a registered engineer in the board of engineering of Trinidad and Tobago. But I will not go into the Dental Council and give them advice on things that are not my core responsibility. So that is why I would have liked to hear from the Minister to hear what is their new position, if they have a new position because the law clearly states that with consultation from the Dental Council. All right?

So we, as the legislators or we in the Senate, should really take advice, yes from the Minister but after hearing the consultation that was given to the Minister and the way forward, and this would also ease our minds, Mr. Vice-President, when we are supporting this Motion, we would say, okay, yes, the professionals had blessed it and we can then support it with ease.

Mr. Vice-President, this is truly an Act that many have found some loopholes in. I would like to tell the Minister, through you, that I see some merit in having a list of schools in the law and the only reason is because they would have gone through with a fine-tooth comb why they have picked these particular schools. When you open it up, you allow every and everyone to come to practise here and we already have a provision to allow any and every person to be given an opportunity where they will have to pass examinations and go through our review

committee before giving them—I think they have to go through a temporary registration to allow them to practise for a certain amount of time which then the Dental Council will do a review and make sure that okay, yes, you are who you say you are.

6.00 p.m.

So, I would not say there is no merit to the list of schedules. Someone has gone through these particular schools. I would also recommend that they go through the schools, because when I was doing my own research there were errors with it.

[Mr. Vice-President rises]

Mr. Vice-President, so let me finish. So I am saying, thank you. And with those few words, I thank you. *[Desk thumping]*

The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I rise in support of this Motion that has been tabled by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health, Terrence Deyalsingh.

Mr. Vice-President, before I make my short, not so short, but short, contribution, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my profoundest congratulations to the first female President-elect of this country, Paula-Mae Weekes *[Desk thumping]* Like so many other women in this country, I am delighted that she has agreed to give public service in this regard, and we warmly welcome her to the imminent Presidency of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to thank you for allowing me to join this debate. I must admit, I do not think that there is much argument with respect to this amendment, not from the speakers that I have heard so far.

Mr. Vice-President, what lies before us here is very simple, but I just want to go back to a point that was made, I think, by Dr. Mahabir when he commented on the powers, no, it was Sen. Roach, when he commented on the powers of the Minister. The Minister has the power, we all agree, to add or to remove from the Act. The Dental Council acts on behalf of the Minister of Health. And once the Minister of Health consults with the Dental Council, that is what the law requires. The law does not state that the Minister of Health must obtain the approval and/or agreement of the Dental Council. And it reminds me of a lesson that I learnt many, many, years ago in my former incarnation. That time I was not president; I was an officer of the PSA, and I learnt that lesson from a former Prime Minister of this country, Basdeo Panday.

At the time the President of the PSA had a dinner, a Christmas dinner, and former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday was himself the leader of the sugar union, and we were engaged, a group of us around him, in a very interesting conversation and he turned towards what consultation is. And he said very simply: "Listen, consultation is, I am the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister calls me and says: Leader of the Opposition, I intend to move a glass from the left-hand side to the right-hand side, what do you say?" And he says, "I object." And the Prime Minister would say: "Thank you very much" and proceeds to move the glass from left to right. What he pointed out, and I have never forgotten that lesson: Consultation does not mean agreement. And that is a very relevant point in this regard.

I sat here and I interpreted the information that was shared, that the Dental Council has somehow attempted to lobby Members of the Independent Benches, Members of the Opposition Benches. You know, I have a serious problem with

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that because the Dental Council is there to carry out the instructions of the hon. Minister, instituting policy on behalf of the Government. And, therefore, I am quite sure that the Minister of Health consulted with the Dental Council. And in that context, it is the intention to make this situation better for our citizens and also those of Caricom. And I will present my case to you and to this House, Mr. Vice-President.

This amendment seeks to make one change to the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54. What it seeks to do is to add the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Dental School at Mona Campus, Jamaica to the current Schedule of the Act. This one addition, Mr. Vice-President, would allow graduates from UWI, Mona Campus to automatically register to practise dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago after the successful completion of a one-year period of vocational training without the need to write an additional exam. So that the point that was made earlier that there is no internship period, that is a wrong perception that has developed.

Mr. Vice-President, it is difficult for me to fathom any reason for opposition to this amendment. Quite simply, the Dental Profession Act was created in 1980. In 1999, it was amended to include the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Dental School at St. Augustine, Mount Hope Campus. At that time, this was the only dental school within the ambit of the University of the West Indies. Since then, the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus has established a dental school which is internationally accredited, Mr. Vice-President. This is no fly-by-night dental school that has been opened in Jamaica. It follows logically then, Mr. Vice-President, that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago would seek to include the campus in the Schedule of the

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Dental Profession Act, allowing the graduates to register and so practise in Trinidad and Tobago.

I listened to my colleagues in the Lower House, Mr. Vice-President, and even here, some of my colleagues, and I must say that I felt such pain for those persons dependent on the public health system for their dental services at present. My colleagues mentioned that there are only 28 dentists in the public sector. As a mother, I am concerned that there are people in rural areas who do not have adequate access to dental services as 28 persons, Mr. Vice-President, all of us here in this Chamber would agree you can only stretch 28 persons only so far. It is heart-wrenching to hear that the wait time for dental services in the public health system can range from three to six months, a direct result of the fact that there are roughly 35,800 patients and only 28 dentists in the public sector.

One has only to think of a toothache, Mr. Vice-President. Imagine that dull ache and sometimes sharp throb. Imagine having to wait three to six months to be able to have the tooth looked at. I dare say, Mr. Vice-President, that you nor I would wait that length of time. Instead, all of us in this Chamber here would seek out a private dentist and address the issue forthwith. As I look around this Chamber I know that most of us will do so.

But you see, Mr. Vice-President, we are privileged to have the means to do so. But there are people in our society who just do not have those means. They just do not have them; so many families, where paying for a private dentist would mean that they could not afford basic necessities. Must we, therefore, Mr. Vice-President, continue to relegate these persons, our citizens, to a three- or six-month time wait? I think not, Mr. Vice-President. That is why I support the inclusion of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in the Schedule of

the Dental Profession Act.

Mr. Vice-President, the current situation may also be worsened at present by the economic conditions, the economic climate that exists in Trinidad and Tobago. Because you see, while the Government has been pushing forward and working towards economic growth, in recent times a number of citizens have been made to face some significant lifestyle changes. A number of these citizens may now find themselves relying on the public health system for dental services for the first time in their collective lives; a public health system that still only has 28 dentists. These citizens and their needs are at the forefront of my thoughts as I support this amendment, knowing that whatever small increase in the number of available dental professionals, which may result from the inclusion of UWI, Mona Campus, will be one more chance to those most vulnerable persons to access the services they need within a reasonable time frame.

But you know, Mr. Vice-President, more than anything else, we must understand what our citizens in this country, what they undergo when they go to UWI, Mona Campus, Jamaica to study dentistry. I just want to quote, Mr. Vice-President, if you would permit me, a letter dated the 1st of March, 2017, addressed to my honourable colleague from Warren Straker and this is what he had to say, and I quote:

Non-integration of the Graduates from Doctor of Dental Surgery Programme at UWI, Mona Campus for full registration under the Dental Professional Act, 16 of 1980 and into the vocational training programme of the School of Dentistry, UWI, St. Augustine Campus, and he says:

I am Warren D Straker, Student No. 620043762, a 2017 final year student of the Doctor of Dental Surgery programme of the University of the West

Dental Profession (Amendment to
Schedule Order, 2017) (cont'd)
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Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Dental School, Mona Campus, Jamaica.
Not a foreign university, Mr. Vice-President, the University of the West Indies.

It has been brought to my attention that the 2015 and 2016 DDS Trinidadian graduates from the said Mona Campus have not been afforded the opportunity for temporary registration under Trinidad and Tobago Dental Profession Act because the UWI, Mona Campus is not among the universities, colleges or institutions listed in the Schedule to the Dental Profession Act, 16 of 1980, Chap. 29:54, amended by Act 31 of 1998.

Understandably, as Mona DDS started in 2010, with its first graduate in 2015, this situation has negatively impacted on the seamless inclusion of Mona graduates into UWI, St. Augustine.

And he went on to quote various aspects of the Act. And this is what he had to say further.

Graduates from UWI, Mona Campus, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Doctor of Dental Surgery are considered unsuitable for full registration and are required to pass the board examination. However, these graduates from Trinidad and Tobago, University of the West Indies Medical Sciences, who have successfully completed a one-year vocational training will be eligible for full registration.

Then he appealed to the Minister of Health to share with him efforts that were being pursued. He ended his letter by saying:

A moment that should be celebrated both by me, my cohorts and my country, lies in uncertainty. Our country has invested thousands of dollars in much needed human capital development through GATE, and we on the other hand, hard work, dedication and commitment to now, at the end of

their course of study, plus the vocational training, not to be accepted in Trinidad and Tobago.

And the young man who is soon to be called Dr. Warren Straker therefore appealed to the hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Vice-President, what are the implications of this amendment? The implications are that persons such as Warren Straker, who graduated from the Dental School at UWI, Mona Campus, will be automatically allowed to register to practise dentistry without the need to write an additional examination.

In Jamaica, I understand, I am advised, that they are required to pass the Jamaica board exam. Then they are eligible to work in Barbados, the Bahamas and in Jamaica. These graduates, Mr. Vice-President, they are our citizens. They are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. They are also our Caricom brothers and sisters. Why then would we not want to remove this unnecessary barrier that prevents our children and our Caricom brothers and sisters from offering their services? How can it be possible to justify the inclusion of over 50 dental schools in the United States of America, 10 from Canada, and 17 from the United Kingdom, yet deny the inclusion of our own University of the West Indies, Mona Campus? It makes no sense, Mr. Vice-President. Charity begins at home. Let us support our own. Let us support our region.

Mr. Vice-President, I know that during difficult times questions can be raised about foreigners coming into this country and taking the jobs of locals. But as the esteemed Minister of Health stated, there is need for 137 dentists in the public health sector. There are currently 28, and there have been 28 for the past 20 years, Mr. Vice-President. This means that there are vacancies. There are places for these professionals to occupy; places for which no locals are contesting.

In addition, Mr. Vice-President, if those dentists come to Trinidad and Tobago and open, even if they do not go into the public sector and they open private practices, they will then generate employment for other workers, such as receptionists. If you go to a dentist privately, there is a receptionist to take your name, take the different information, dental assistants, maintenance professionals and other related jobs. In this way, we are presented with something of a win/win situation here, where the professionals either provide a public service or generate employment in the private sector. And that is why, Mr. Vice-President, I sincerely do not believe that there is any question here.

There is no reason for opposition to this amendment. This simple amendment only aims to increase the pool of dentists available to practise in Trinidad and Tobago, while affording our citizens the right after studying in Jamaica to practise what they learnt over the years. If utilized effectively, this situation will ultimately allow for greater coverage and access to dental services across the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am, therefore, convinced that all of the contributions will simply state their support of the amendment and the belief that the barrier to UWI, Mona Campus graduates should be removed.

In conclusion, Mr. Vice-President, as I have said before, the Motion before this Senate is a very simple one. The proposed amendment is a logical, necessary progression from the establishment of a sound internationally accredited dental school at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. To continue to exclude this campus, Mr. Vice-President, from the Schedule of recognized universities in the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54, would only serve as a signal that Trinidad and Tobago does not have confidence in the institution and our own regional

tertiary education system.

This Government, the Government that Dr. Keith Rowley leads, chooses to show its support for the University of the West Indies and so move to include the UWI, Mona Campus Dental School into the Schedule of the Act.

Mr. Vice-President, I believe that this amendment is a critical step forward and will assist in improving the access of dental services throughout the country as well as likely resulting in an increase in employment opportunities where the professionals establish private practice.

Finally, Mr. Vice-President, I therefore reiterate my unswerving support for this amendment and to commend my honourable colleague, the Minister of Health, Terrence Deyalsingh, for bringing this critical Motion to amend the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54, and I thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on this Motion. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Gerald Ramdeen: Mr. Vice-President, good evening and thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate that seeks to approve an Order that was presented by the hon. Minister of Health. I hope, Mr. Vice-President, in my contribution this evening, to focus on one very narrow issue that may assist the Members of this Senate in determining whether they support the approval of the Order that was presented.

I wish to make one general point about the Motion and the Order, Mr. Vice-President, and then go directly to my contribution, with respect to the particulars of the Order.

Mr. Vice-President, the Minister of Health, Mr. Deyalsingh, is one of those Members of Parliament that always seeks to provide the greatest amount of information that he can, in his capacity as the Minister of Health. And I want to

say that in preparing for this debate, and I will get down to exactly why I say so, I want to say that I do not make any criticism at all directed at the Minister of Health but it is a difficult position, Mr. Vice-President, to be asked, pursuant to the Dental Profession Act, to determine whether this Order that was made by the Minister ought to get the affirmative resolution of the Parliament, when what you have provided as the subject of the debate, is one page, which contains only the Order. And we have had many occasions recently, when we have passed legislation, where we, as a matter of course, insert a clause in the legislation for an affirmative or a negative resolution for that legislation, when things have to be done. And may I suggest, from where I sit in the Opposition, that when Orders of this nature come before the Parliament, whether it be the Lower House or whether it be the Senate, that the Members who are asked to debate and to approve or to vote on this matter be provided with the material that is necessary to make an informed decision as to whether we give our support to a Motion like this.

Because from where I sit, Mr. Vice-President, I do not think there is anybody in the Government, the Opposition or even the Independent Bench that would seek to not give its approval to any Motion or any matter that would improve the health care system in our country. And I am sure when Minister Deyalsingh was sitting on this side of the Bench, I am sure that that position would have been the same. Because all citizens of this country, Mr. Vice-President, understand the importance of health care to the entire citizenry of this country. Health care, education and national security are, perhaps, the three most important aspects of governance and critical aspects of governance that the Government faces today.

And, therefore, I just think when we have a Motion like this—many of the

speakers that have gone before, have said this is a very simple matter; it is just a simple matter of approving the Order.

If I can get down now directly to the legislation so that I can drill down into the one matter that I want to deal with, but before I do that, Mr. Vice-President, please allow me the latitude to just refute one matter that the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development dealt with in her contribution, respectfully. And that is, the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development said that, and I have it written here—if I misquote the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development I would happily give way—that the Dental Council, its role is to carry out the policy of the Government and the Minister. And happily, Mr. Vice-President, the functions of the Dental Council are laid out at section 12 of the Dental Profession Act, and just to, I would like to put it this way, correct that statement. The functions of the Council, pursuant to the Act, Mr. Vice-President, shall be, and they are set out there statutorily:

- “(a) to determine and keep under review the professional qualifications and experience required of an applicant for registration or enrolment except applicants entitled to registration under section 5(1)(a);
- (b) to register dentists and enroll dental auxiliaries;
- (c) to regulate the training of persons enrolled as dental auxiliaries;
- (d) to publish for general information a list of universities, colleges or other institutions the diplomas of which are recognised by the Council;
- (e) to appoint a Board of Examiners for the purpose of conducting examinations required by this Act to be conducted;
- (f) to define the dental work which any class of dental auxiliary may

undertake and the conditions, if any, under which a dental auxiliary may undertake such work;

- (g) to ensure the maintenance of proper standards of professional conduct by dentists and dental auxiliaries;
- (h) to hold inquiries into allegations of improper or unprofessional conduct by dentists and dental auxiliaries and to discipline those found guilty.”

And when one looks carefully, Mr. Vice-President, with the most generous interpretation to the powers that are conferred or the functions that are defined by section 12 of the Act, there is absolutely no room for an interpretation that the powers of the Dental Council is to carry out the policy of the Government and the Minister. And I know that the hon. Minister will agree with that.

Now, the Dental Profession Act at section 5A which we are asked and from which the Minister derives his powers to present the Order that has been made, if I can read, Mr. Vice-President, 5A(1):

“5A. (1) The Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any University, College or other Institution.”

Now, Mr. Vice-President, it is a very, very dangerous thing for anyone to seek to give advice outside of the qualification which they have and I would render that advice to every one; that it is a very dangerous thing to do that. Because, the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development said she had a discussion or was party to a discussion by a former Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday about what is the meaning of consultation and respectfully, Mr. Vice-President, that is the issue that I particularly want to drill down into this

evening. Because there is a presumption that when Parliament legislates, Parliament legislates with an intention.

And if the Parliament, when they passed the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54, did not have some intention behind circumscribing the powers of the Minister by the duty to consult with the Dental Council, then one would expect that the Minister could do as he pleases. The Minister can take out and add to the Schedule. But there is a specific provision in section 5A(1) that places a statutory duty upon the Minister to consult with the Council; “after consultation with the Council” are the exact words that are said.

And, Mr. Vice-President, it is very important, when we debate an Order of this nature, to understand for all of us who are asked to vote on this at the end of the debate, what does consultation mean, in these circumstances where you have legislation that imposes a statutory duty to consult.

And respectfully, Mr. Vice-President that is not a duty that one can simply cast aside. [*Desk thumping*] Or one can simply say that at the end of the day, it is much more and respectfully I would say to the Minister, it is much more than simply writing a letter to the Dental Council and thinking that that is a discharge of the statutory duty to consult.

6.30 p.m.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: That is your interpretation.

Sen. G. Ramdeen: Well, Mr. Vice-President, I am happy that there are those who think that that is my interpretation. That is why I always come prepared. So let me start down with the interpretation that one alleges is Ramdeen’s interpretation.

Mr. Vice-President, let me quote from the leading text on public law, because I did not write this. So, let me start. Consultation, and the duty to consult

is one that has been defined very clearly by the case law, not Ramdeen. And let me tell you where the duty to consult, it is a duty—the duty to consult that is imposed by legislation, let me tell you what that duty mandates the decision maker to do.

The duty to consult started with a decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v Brent London Borough Council*, a very celebrated decision ex parte Gunning and this a decision of the English Court of Appeal, where their arrived and what they call the Gunning Principles about consultation, and from that case let me tell you what consultation means. I did not decide this case, this was decided by another judge, Judge Hodgson, sitting in the Queen's Bench Division, 1985. The quotation in 1985, LGR 168 and these principles were derived and they have been followed by the English Court of Appeal up to now in 2018, from 1985, and they have been crystalized over time. But, let me go right to what is means:

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

- “(1) consultation is undertaken at a time when the relevant proposal is still at a formative stage;
- (2) adequate information is provided to the consultees to enable them properly to respond to the consultation exercise;
- (3) consultees are afforded adequate time in which to respond; and
- (4) the decision-maker gives conscientious consideration to consultees' responses.”

And if I can say through you, Madam President, to the hon. Minister of Health, why is it important for us to understand first of all what the duty to consult entails, and why it is important for us to understand and make sure that the Minister of Health gets it right, in the discharge of that duty under the Act, section

5(1)(a). It is because there are third parties that are going to be directly affected if this Order is approved. So that the Dental Council has an interest in the discharge of their functions under the Dental Profession Act to monitor the members of their profession. And there are persons who are practising dentists, who are registered now who will also be affected by the decision to allow other persons to be registered if this Order is approved.

So that we must get it right because if the Minister is allowed to get it wrong, the decision that would flow out of this Order being approved can be subject to challenge in the courts. And you see I made the point at the very beginning that it is important for us to be provided with the information so that as parliamentarians, sitting here making law, we can make an informed decision at the end of the day that is in the best interest of the legislation that we pass that is what our duty here is to do.

Our duty here is not to simply approve what is brought by the Government for those on the Government side and simply oppose on the Opposition side. We have a duty to get it right and the only way that we can get it right, is if we start off by understanding what it is to get it right. [*Desk thumping*]

So we have said, and it is not very often that I disagree with my friend Sen. Roach, but it is very clear as to what the duty to consult means. The hon. Minister tells us that he wrote to the Dental Council on September 19th of 2016.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I never said that, they replied.

Sen. G. Ramdeen: They replied, all right, let me apologize. I asked what were the dates for the specific purpose of knowing when the conversations took place with the Dental Council, and when the Dental Council replied.

So I cannot even—I am being asked to approve this Order. But, I do not

know if the Minister of Health spoke to the Dental Council in September 2015. I know that they replied on September 19, 2016, but I do not know when any proposals were sent to them. So, I should be in a position, Madam President, as a Member of Parliament being asked to approve this Order to at least be told what took place.

How can I ever responsibly discharge my duty, to support or to not support this Order if I simply do not know what took place and it is not my duty to find out what took place because what took place, takes place between the Minister, the hon. Minister and the Dental Council. I am not the Minister, and I do not sit on the Dental Council, and I am not a dentist.

I am a Member of Parliament simply trying to discharge my duty. And respectfully, Madam President, this is an Order that is being brought by the hon. Minister. The duty rests at the feet of the Minister to inform all of us, not only the Members of the Government, the Members of the Opposition and the Members of the Independent Bench, to tell us what took place. We have a right to know because at the end of the day we take responsibility for what transpires here.

So let us get down to the nitty-gritty of consultation. When considering what is required in a particular case. The courts are likely to have regard to a number of factors as to determining whether consultation was properly discharged or not.

So one of the first things that one must understand, as to whether the duty to consult has been discharged, is whether consultation was done at the time when this proposal was in a formative stage. Well, we do not know when the proposal was made to begin with. So we cannot start answering the question, of whether the Minister in the discharge of his function to consult—which the case law, not

Ramdeen, says that you must do while in a formative stage. Well, we just do not know.

So, I do not know anyone sitting here this afternoon could properly discharge their function when we have a right to know when the consultation took place. In law, it must take place when the policy is in a formative stage. And the reason behind that, Madam President, is simple. In order for you to have proper consultation, the Public Authority, in this case being the Minister of Health, must be in a position to have an open mind when the consultation is taking place.

Nobody is suggesting that the Minister is bound by the person who he consults with, or has a duty to consult with that he must accept. But he must have an open mind at the time when the consultation is taking place. And respectfully, Madam President, we just cannot answer that question. [*Desk thumping*]

And it is not my view, Madam President, but the case law says, if consultation takes place only after the proposal has gone beyond the formative stage, the decision may also be liable to challenge on the grounds of premeditation. So how can any one of us discharge our responsibility to the people of this country in an absolute vacuum? Because there are one or two of the speakers who said they have information about letters passing between the Dental Council and the Minister, but we have a right to be provided with that material so that we can make an objective decision, at the end of the day, whether the decision to consult has been lawfully carried out in the particulars, in this particular case, in relation to this particular Order. And I find surprising that we will have a debate and none of us, no one here makes a fuss about the idea that we have just not been provided with the information.

Now, the second aspect of consultation that the Minister is statutorily bound

to carry out, in the particulars of section 5(1)(a) of the particular Act, in relation to this particular Order, is that the persons to be consulted must be provided with sufficient information about the proposal. Can anybody hear this debate and tell us what was the Dental Council provided with by the Minister in this particular case? Well, as far as I can say, I just do not know.

So, the second aspect of consultation—well I cannot say and I cannot give the Minister the benefit of the doubt because that is not what we are here about, giving the benefit of the doubt. We should be sure that when we say hey or nay to this Order, we know that we are confident that we are discharging our duty from an informed position, and unfortunately, yet again we cannot say that and that is no fault of our own.

The third aspect of it, Madam President, and let me just give you an example of what the case law, not Ramdeen, says that should be given to the consultees:

“The nature of the proposal; the reasons why the decision maker is putting forward the proposal including the evidential base for it and any assumptions made; any advice that the decision-maker has received in relation to the proposal; details of the approach that the decision-maker proposes to adopt when deciding whether to implement the proposal; and whether there are any realistic alternative options to the proposal.”

Now, Madam President, why is it important and critically important for us to get it right in this case? It is because for some reason, what the Minister proposes to do, or what the Minister has done subject to the affirmative resolution of the Parliament in this particular case, has been not agreed to by the Dental Council and that makes it more important for all of us to understand what is the position of the Minister. And what are the reasons that the Minister advances for bringing this

Order and what are the justifications that support the position of the Dental Council that they have advanced in the consultation process. And it is up to us as Members of Parliament asked to approve this Order, to determine one way or the other, which side of the fence we come down on.

But respectfully, Madam President, we cannot come down on any side of the fence. Because we just do not know what sits on either side of the fence. And therefore, I really am left in a state of serious bother as to well, at the end of this debate when the vote is taken, upon what basis are we going to simply say that we approve this Order? While the Minister of Health tells us about all the different international organizations that are charged with the responsibility for deciding what is the quality of health care and what is the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

Madam President, this boils down not to any of those issues. We are not asked to determine whether the bodies that assess what goes on at Mona, and what goes on in St. Augustine, what goes on in Jamaica and what goes on in Trinidad are discharging their functions. What we are asked to do, is to ensure that what we do here complies with section 5(1)(a) of the Dental Profession Act. That is what we are asked to do. And any issue that is raised outside of whether we get it right, in relation to the Minister bringing this Motion and the Minister discharging his function separately and properly under section 5(1)(a), is totally irrelevant.

It is not relevant as to whether there are Trinidadians studying in Mona, and whether we want to give them an opportunity to come back here. Who would want in their right mind to deny a Trinidadian the opportunity to come back and make a living in the country of his nationality, no one? But that is not what this is about.

What this is about, is the fact that as we speak here this afternoon, the Dental

Profession is governed by the Dental Profession Act. An Order is brought and we are asked to support that order, or to not support that order depending upon whether the Minister, in this case, the Minister of Health has properly discharged his functions. And respectfully, Madam President, from where I sit we are at a real loss to come to a determination on this.

Now the point that I made earlier, that the Minister rightfully corrected me, that he never told us, when the consultations began with the Dental Council, is a very relevant one. Because we know that the Dental Council wrote back on the 19th of September, 2016. Well one of the most important factors that one has to consider in determining whether the duty to consult has been lawful carried out is whether the consultees, that is the Dental Council, was given an adequate time to respond.

6.45 p.m.

Well, respectfully, Madam President, I cannot determine that because, again, I do not know when they were spoken to as we were told. So if they were spoken to on the 18th and they had to reply by the 19th, well I do not know if that will pass muster in this particular case. But I cannot assume that the Minister spoke to them on the 18th, the 17th, the 16th, the 15th, in 2016 and in 2015. I just do not know. And we were not told, and it is just not good enough, Madam President, to ask us for our support and not provide us with the very necessary information that we need in order to make an informed decision.

So again, when one comes to consider whether the Dental Council had enough time to respond and to air their views, well we just do not know. So, let us go again. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen, if I may interrupt you at this time. You have

spent a considerable amount of time dealing with this issue of consultation, and I think you have spoken about it in great detail. I am going to ask you now, are there any other limbs of an argument to present apart from consultation because you have spent a lot of time and articulated that point?

Sen. G. Ramdeen: Well, Madam President, my entire contribution is based on consultation, and let me just say why, because—sorry, I do not mean to question the ruling. [*Interruption*]

Madam President: I understand. I understand, but there is something in the Standing Orders called tedious repetition, and you have made the point about consultation. So that I am asking you in your contribution to move on to another point or, you know, try and bring your contribution to an end. Okay?

Sen. G. Ramdeen: I am obliged, Madam President. Madam Vice-President—sorry. I apologize. Madam President, all I wish to say to bring that point to an end, if you will allow me, is that there must be genuine and conscientious consideration of the responses that are given by the Dental Council. So with respect to the discharge of the functions as prescribed statutorily by section 5(1)(a), my respectful position is that it is very difficult to come to a position as to whether the Minister has discharged the function that is placed upon him in relation to section 5(1)(a) in bringing this Order, because I am at a loss with respect to information as to what was done and what happened with respect to the process that was engaged by the Minister in this particular case.

Madam President, the Minister indicated that one of the justifications for the bringing of this Order is the fact that there are a limited number of dental professionals in the public health care sector, but I am sure the Minister will tell us in his wrapping up—well, when one passes or if this Order is approved and we

have a free flow of persons from Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean who have attended the Mona Dental School and are now eligible to be practising dentists in our jurisdiction—well, I am yet to hear how it is that the Government proposes to ensure that these persons who are coming into our jurisdiction to practise dentistry are going to be part of the public health care sector.

Because without some limitation being placed or some mandatory requirement that these persons are required to come back and join the public health care sector, we are going to end up, as far as I see, in the same position that we have been in for the last 20 years, because it is no relief to any of us to say that for the past 20 years we have had 28 people in the public health care sector. And this Order, if it is approved, it is not going to change that position because there is no incentive by virtue of this Order that is going to give anyone or anyone is able to accept. What is different? Or what is different about someone who is qualified in Mona, Jamaica, when they come back into the public health care sector to start their profession in dentistry that is different from somebody who qualifies in St. Augustine? [*Desk thumping*] They are simply going to go into the private health care sector which is obviously more lucrative and, therefore, the entire underpinning of the Minister's justification for asking us to approve this Order, it simply disappears.

Because I would have thought that if the Minister was saying that after his consultation with the Dental Council, and in rejecting their position we are going to approve this Order, then one would have thought the most reasonable thing to do is that for those persons who are coming from the Mona Campus that they would have some type of requirement to serve in the public health care sector. Well, that is a kind of a circular argument, Madam President, and I will tell you why.

Because unless the Minister of Health amends the Dental Profession Act in the some way that can find constitutional grounding, you cannot do that because you would be discriminating against people who are similarly circumstanced.

You have two sets of people who have a similar qualification and you want one set to come back in the public health care sector. But unless the Minister of Health is prepared to tell us that he is going to make it more attractive in some way for persons to enter the public health care sector in the field of dentistry—Madam President, the Minister of Health was very descriptive in terms of telling the Parliament how bad it is in terms of dentistry and how urgent and critical it is that we need to pass this Order so that the public health care sector would be supplied with proper dentists.

But, respectfully, Madam President, the position with dentists is no different from the position with anaesthesiologists, with GPs, with people in orthopaedics. It is bad all around. We have a general problem of attracting doctors into the public health care sector. That is an inherent problem that we have had from time immemorial. So the idea of saying, well we need to do this, it is so bad in terms of dentistry, well I do not think that that is really made out on the evidence.

The other thing, Mr. Vice-President is this—sorry, I keeping saying that. I am sorry. I apologize. Madam President, the hon. Minister indicated that we have a real problem in dental care in rural communities, and indicated in piloting this Order that we really need to do this because the rural communities suffer very badly in relation to dental care. But, Madam President, I do not think anybody can deny that in the rural communities health care, in general, suffers from proper care and proper medical professionals.

But, one would have thought, Madam President, that before we get to the

issue of providing health care professionals—whether it be in dentistry or in any other field to the rural communities—the first thing you have to do is educate the people in the rural communities about the fact that they can seek dental care so they understand what it means, so they understand that they can have access to this kind of health care and it is best for them.

The fact that the Minister of Health tells us well, we have achieved a lot by cutting out sugars in schools. Well yes, that might be good, but does anybody in a rural community understand what the benefit is in doing that? Does anybody in the rural communities understand that it is proper to brush your teeth and to floss and all and go to the dentist and all of these things? The answer is simply no. Because in all of the—[*Crosstalk*] Well, you are not from a rural—well, there are people who do not understand these positions, Madam President, because they are not from those communities. I can speak of that because I go into the rural communities, and I understand the position that operates there.

At the end of the day we need as a country, and the Government, whoever sits in the seat of government, needs to take a positive role in educating all of the citizens of the country as to what is best for them in relation to health care. And one would have thought that would have been a precondition before you try to fix the system of putting more people into dental care or bringing more dentists into the jurisdiction, because it is simply like putting the cart before the horse. So—
[*Interruption*]

Madam President: Sen. Ramdeen, I really am reluctant to interrupt you, but you need to tie your contribution and to get back to the matter at hand. You have sought to the respond to some of the things the Minister has raised, but please, remember the Motion is very specific and it is very narrow. So while I have

allowed you a lot of leeway, I would ask you please to be relevant to the Motion.

Sen. G. Ramdeen: I am obliged, Madam President. Madam President, I think that as far as I can, I have discharged my duty in trying to indicate what the problem in supporting this Motion is. In summary, I do not think that we have been provided with enough information to make an informed decision as to what is required of the Minister to be discharged under the provisions of the Act has been provided to us in this particular case, unfortunately, and I do not think that this is an issue that is centred upon whether we want Trinidadians to come back here and practise as dentists.

I will support any provision that is made to better the health care sector and to provide proper health care to the citizens of this country but, at the same time, I have taken an oath as a Member of Parliament to discharge my duty in accordance with upholding the Constitution and the law, and I must hold firm to that oath first before I think about anything else, and I cannot do that on the information that has been provided to me in this particular case. I thank you.
[Desk thumping]

Sen. Stephen Creese: Thank you, Madam President. I want to begin by thanking the Minister of Health for bringing this matter to our attention and to be quite frank, I disagree somewhat with my colleague Sen. Roach on the question of the information which the Minister provided in the Preamble to this Order. And to that extent, I also disagree somewhat with Sen. Ramdeen on that question, because I think Sen. Roach was implying that all the Minister needed to do was state this in the Order, we want to have another school, Caribbean school, placed on the Schedule so that Trinidadian citizens and Caribbean persons generally could be facilitated to practise in Trinidad and Tobago, but I think the Minister was doing

that and he was doing that by way of telling us the link between proper dental hygiene, dental care, in our lives and, therefore, support for this Motion is critical if we are to improve the dental hygiene, dental care that is commonly available as opposed to what is available in the private sector.

So his reference to the fact that there are only 28 dentists in the public service, again, re-enforces the need for facilitating the increase in the number of schools. Yes, I take Dr. Mahabir's point that hitherto, there has been a North Atlantic bias in terms of the institutions that are available or that are promoted or that information about is easily shared and that bias should be addressed. So I take Dr. Mahabir's point about one of the oldest institutions I think he said was Puerto Rico as being a critical example of what this North Atlantic bias could do to us. And then the additional information about other health care issues that are linked to oral and dental hygiene has been validly part of the argument in support of advancing a Motion such as this, because those of us who are leaving here tonight are now aware, as told by the Minister of Health—who by the way is the proper person for giving us these health alerts—as told by him, that listen, diabetes which is rampant throughout Trinidad and Tobago—myself included—hypertension, strokes—another silent killer—he has brought to our attention the dental/oral link to these major diseases in Trinidad and Tobago. So I cannot support the notion that this is irrelevant to the core argument of having an additional institution available for our citizens to study dentistry and their services made available to the wider population. So I disagree with all those who find fault with his introduction of that information.

And, finally, this is the Carnival season and this is the male machismo season, so the information about the link to erectile dysfunction that he introduced

us to, I am sure will stop quite a few in their tracks tonight if rum does not stop them. So, again, I think we ought to be clear that the information the Minister introduced is par for the course that we are on.

What I have a problem with though, in terms of what has been shared, I think in that regard, perhaps the information that has not been forthcoming—because once you introduced the statistics about 28 dentists only, there is need for us to see the lack of convergence between three Ministries: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development and the Ministry of Education. Because how is it that we are running into a problem—that we are churning out these dentists at St. Augustine—yet we have to try to get dentists from Jamaica. Why? Why is that happening? Why is it that only 28 want to come into the public sector?

Is the prescription of going to Jamaican-trained dentists the answer? Because if we do not understand what the problem is then, is this the solution? Is this that he has brought to the Parliament's attention what should be before us? Are we being led astray? I say this in the context that if it is that the problem is the level of recompense, of salary, of pay, that is being offered to dentists in the public sector is the problem, then the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has a role to play in guiding the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education has a role to play as well, and I say this in the context of past and present educational policies—the whole question of GATE, the whole question of National Scholarships come under serious scrutiny, because it is at this point we have to ask ourselves, those people who access primary education—okay, universal right, secondary education—universal right—is tertiary education a universal right in our context or should there be some conditionalities? Should

there be a requirement to repay some or part of it?

When you go to a university, St. Augustine for instance, are you paying the full economic cost? If not, who is paying it and who do you owe as a result of having accessed that? That is why I am saying the other two Ministries have to come in because there has to be a relationship between you getting what is, in fact, a partial scholarship. It might not be a National Scholarship in the sense that we know National Scholarships, but it is a scholarship. It is. You are in receipt of taxpayers' funds, millions of dollars' worth of it and, therefore, there should be an obligation to repay.

So I am bringing into question here the whole concept underlying our education system, and that was the stark information that the Minister of Health and the Minister with the responsibility for Labour and Small Enterprise Development drew to our attention when they pointed to the number of people practising in the public sector as opposed to the number of people in the total dental health sector, as to the number of people being churned out by the dental school at St. Augustine, you know, in Trinidad at Mount Hope.

So, that is the relevance there and that has to be revisited because simply throwing Jamaica in the mix does not necessarily mean that these people will become available in the public sector. That is not an automatic argument. They may simply set up shop, or simply migrate elsewhere, or simply function in the private sector. So if we think we are doing this and we have solved a problem, we just open the door and we do not know what is on the other side of it.

On the question of consultation—and I would not be long on this, I could assure you, Madam President—but I wanted to address it because I was concerned although in proceeding, Sen. Ramdeen did not do what I thought at first he was

going to do, which was quote a set of legalese. And I am always weary of the tendency in our society to focus on the legalese and the legal interpretation and lose sight of the fact that law merely codifies principles, it scarcely ever invents them. So the issue here is really governance, concept of governance. But I realized after a while that Sen. Ramdeen was coming closer to that concept of governance as opposed to the legal definition of “consultation”. Because at the end of the day—and I am coming back at my good colleague Senator with responsibility for labour and her reference to a permanent labour figure of the past and the former Prime Minister—and the definition that he espoused for consultation which, in the book of good governance would be in the index of what not to do—clearly, you know these little handbooks they have in the States of how to build it or how not to do it—that would belong in the book of how not to do it.

Because you see, in this Parliament, people who watch us on the TV, listen to us on the radio or read about us in the written media, tend to come to the conclusion that we do not enrich the debate sometimes, we do not lift the standard and, at the end of the day, it is our duty to lift the standard. It is our duty to give a perspective and consultation that is not rudimentary. So I tell you: “Well, look, I am going to appoint so and so and you tell me no, do not appoint so and so” and there end it, consultation. From the perspective of governance—not the legal citations to the law books—good governance, consultation has to be more than that.

And where I think Sen. Ramdeen was right and I agree with him, that informing us and asking us to participate in a process requires that we be truly be informed. So that an address of that sort should have started with: “For X and Y reasons, I brought to the attention of Tom or whoever I am supposed to consult

with the issues and my proposal in that regard and they replied” and there be a conversation.

It is a course, at the end of the day, the responsibility and the role of the Minister to act in accordance with the legislation which is to bring to this House for the information of this House, what has transpired and what he is going forward with, but there must be information and the process must have that air of transparency and of exchange and debate. Because if we are to get our people off the path of road rage and violence, then we have to demonstrate the fruitfulness, the frugality of the exchange of ideas, of people interacting in a dynamic way, and not just about, well I have the power—“I large and I in charge.” That cannot be how we demonstrate good governance. That cannot be how we turn around the negative and violent tendencies that are engulfed in us ever so critically.

And after the process of consultation, the next step that is critical to us is the whole question of oversight, oversight in modern democracy. And it is the business of this House to exercise oversight so that when any Minister comes with any legislation, any Bill, any amendment, any Order, ours is an oversight role. So that Sen. Ramdeen was on queue in insisting that information be provided about the process so that we could exercise that oversight function, because Parliament is about oversight. Let us be clear on that. We have to act in a manner and demonstrate to the viewers and the listeners and the readers that we are carrying out an oversight function that has certain clear processes. So that the role of the Minister in that regard is clear, which brings to the question then, before we get to this point, was any attempt made to recruit Cuban dentists? We have recruited Cuban general practitioners and so on. Was any attempt made? *[Interruption]*

Madam President: Sen. Creese, I have been listening to you and I understand

your thought process, but I just want to say to talk now about Cuban dentists and efforts to recruit Cuban dentists is really out of the remit of what is before us, and I have to ask you to please narrow your contribution to what is before the House.

Sen. S. Creese: I will be guided, Madam President, which then brings me to the whole question here of—and this is the feedback that I am getting on the street—there is an underlying issue about the citation of the school as opposed to any other school. Why this particular school? And if in the context of the dental industry, the public perception—and that is why it is clear for transparency—is that there is a tendency to keep the profession small.

Now, this may be based on negatives or lack of information, but that is why it is critical to be transparent, to dispel those notions that there is no perception of a cartelization of the profession and those kinds of negative perceptions. They are creeping in the back door and it is necessary to dispel them if they are, in fact, totally unfounded. But this is some of what you are picking up on the street when, you know, you ask people what they think of this matter.

The other thing that was raised was the question—I think it was by Sen. Mark—about is this just an exercise in “majoritan” rule, and I think he was placing on the continuum, at the one end, the democratic liberal tendencies and, on the other end, a sort of abuse of the majority, you know, okay, well, I could come here and the existing Act allows me to amend the Order, and I am going through a quick ceremony.

7.15 p.m.

So I picked up in Sen. Mark’s contribution a concern that there was not a commitment to a democratic engagement to a parliamentary conversation, good, and I think that is something we need to be wary of. Again, remember, the same

youth who we condemn are viewing us, and they are viewing the extent to which we seriously engage each other as opposed to just oppose each other and looking for quick wins. So from that context we have to be careful. So I think we must be wary of appearing to exercise power sometimes a bit needlessly, and failing to engage in the conversation that should be the preamble to the decision making.

The other thing is that we need to decide in this House, in the society, generally, how we are proceeding with the liberalization of health care. Are we going to wait another five years to declare an individual school as an amendment, or are we going to take steps to deal with the dichotomy between accreditation of institutions, and the power or the authority to practise? Because it would appear that at one end of the continuum is the accreditation process and the next end is the dental board, you know, medical board arrangements. In all the various professions this turns up, good, and I am recommending to the Minister that there is need for review of that because clearly this is a lengthy process to deal with this, and it would apply to the other specialists' functions, because dentistry is really just one of them. So there is need to look again at that.

Finally, what I would like to close on is the broader issue that we need to address, and that is in terms of the provision of dental care. Are we satisfied that at this stage of our development that there is going to be just clinic days? In other words, what would this Order achieve? Are we clear on its expected outcomes? Because at the end of this exercise we should be in a position to say, well, we were attempting to get this number of dentists per this number of members of the population, and, thus far, I have not had any indication of what are the perceived outcomes. I always feel that any measure should have measurable indices. If you cannot measure it then do not attempt to do it because you would not know when it

is done. So I would hope that the Minister would indicate to us, in his closing arguments, exactly what are the statically verifiable objectives that we are going after with this measure so that we could monitor it and review it accordingly. I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Chote. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Sophia Chote SC: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to speak, and because we are a little tired—it has been a long evening—I will start on a dramatic point. There was an infamous criminal in one of the South American countries who used to say that if you are not with me it means that you are against me, and he used that to justify carrying out mass murders of men, women and children, and almost broke the back of his country. I think when we discuss a matter like this and we listen to the tone of some of the speakers, or we hear the background comments, and so on, you really wonder whether we are doing ourselves and this honourable country a service [*Desk thumping*] by treating this matter in that way. It is either you are with me on this Order or you are not with me, this is not a war. This is a simple discussion amongst adults in a Parliament, in a democracy. [*Desk thumping*]

Now having said that, I listened to the hon. Minister's reasons for wanting our approval for this Order, which he has agreed to, and, unfortunately, what the Minister is doing, is doing a very small thing when he can actually be doing something which is far more beneficial to the country as a whole instead of to some persons alone. It is quite clear to me from the fact that the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development read the letter of one of the students, Mr. Straker, who really made a pleurer du coeur in his letter, a cry from the heart to say, listen, I have studied and now I am facing a situation where I

cannot practise the profession that I really would like to practise. And I am sure that there are other persons studying in those classes with Mr. Straker who are facing the same quandary, same difficulty and, I have to say, I feel his pain, because when I started reading law in 1984, the law was changed for admissions as a lawyer. So instead of being able to be called to the Bar in England and then come down and spend a few months at Hugh Wooding and be able to practise, the law was changed to say, well, even if you did that you have to do two years at Hugh Wooding Law School.

So, unfortunately, in academic environments these things can happen, and they can have very serious repercussions for the students involved. The difference between my situation and Mr. Straker's, of course, is that the change of law occurred after I had begun my studies, when Mr. Straker began his study of dentistry with the existing Act in place and there being no accreditation for the Jamaican dental school in the Act. Now I think that when the hon. Minister spoke to us about CAAM-HP, and so on, I think sometimes we need to break this down, these acronyms down a little bit, because it sounds nice amongst ourselves but I am not quite sure that the people listening to us understand what these terms mean, and, very quickly, I will try to explain. This is a Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions. It came about because the Americans were saying their education department said, in the late 1970s, early 1980s, that they wanted to make sure that universities from the Caribbean met their standards. So Caricom entered into an agreement to say that we agree that we will try to meet these standards so that our students will be able to get into their schools. So that is what that accreditation is about. Let us put things where they belong, and that accreditation, with all due respect, does not really

carry us too far in our consideration of whether we should support this Order or not. [*Desk thumping*]

The irony of this is quite funny, because after Sen. Mahabir spoke and named the universities which are now top-of-the-line when it comes to the study of dentistry, I realized that the accrediting group, or the experts for CAAM-HP, are called the World Federation for Medical Education, and the top guy there is from one of the universities not listed in our Act. So there is a complete fracture or dislocation between this whole so-called accreditation process for the American schools and other courses of study. What I would respectfully suggest we do is that instead of making matters difficult, because if this Order is passed—I am not saying that I am necessarily opposed to it, it is just that I feel that, why bring it to Parliament only to do something small when you can do something much bigger and have a wider impact, and lift the level of your professional grouping in that area.

So what I am suggesting is that perhaps the Minister should consider removing the Schedule entirely, [*Desk thumping*] that way nobody could claim that they are unequally treated. Because this way, if we have this Order worded as it is, it means those people who come back to practise as dentists will now think, or the others here may think that, listen, they were treated more favourably than we were because we had to do more clinical work to be registered and they did not have to do as much, and that kind of thing. Why open up the hornet's nest? Why not make it clean, clear, upgrade your standards in one easy motion? And this is what I respectfully, through you, Madam President, ask the hon. Minister to consider, because out of the 50 top schools for dental studies in the world we have Sweden, we have all of those cited by Sen. Mahabir; we have three universities in Brazil

accredited in the top 50.

Now, let us not talk about the problem of language because we have people who speak other languages who come and practise medicine in our country, and we have Trinidad and Tobagonian citizens who speak English as their native language who go and work in other countries. So language is not an issue in the modern-day professional world, so let us put that aside. So these people, if we remove the Schedule, it means that students from these institutions may also seek registration under our Act and practise here. The point that I would like to make now is something which I only discovered last August, which is to say that many of these European universities, in Sweden and so on, their fees are actually considerably lower than what your citizens [*Desk thumping*] here would have to pay in the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom. They are much lower; in fact, in some courses they are minimal. Because these universities want to attract a global intelligensia, as I may describe it, their fees are lower and they offer some of their courses in English. So we can open up a world for our young people. Let us not legislate only for the people like Mr. Straker and those students who have studied dentistry and find themselves in this fix, let us legislate for the future of our young people by opening up this avenue of education for them so that they can come back and improve our lot in this country. And I respectfully, very respectfully, hon. Minister, through you, Madam President, ask you to consider that.

Now, on the issue of unemployment, I must say, I was a little shocked to hear that there are only 28 dentists in the public service and none has been hired for the last 20 years. Well, what about—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Deyalsingh: The number remained the same in the service.

Sen. S. Chote SC: I see. I see. Because I was just about to ask, and perhaps in your wrap up you may have an answer to it, but I was not quite clear, because I know that we have island scholarship winners who go and study dentistry and they are required to serve the State for the length of the time of their studies. So by any stretch of the imagination I think we should have more than 28, unless it is that the State has not been in a position to take up these students and hire them so they have become relieved of their contracts. I do not know what the situation is, but certainly, there is something a bit odd about there being such a small figure for dentists working in the public service.

Now, I would like us to stay away from the whole issue of what the Accreditation Council says, and so on. I know Sen. Creese says we should not get too much into legalese, but we are looking at the law, so I am sorry, through you, Madam President, to Sen. Creese, I had to look at the law. When we look at the Accreditation Act, what the Accreditation Act does is it sets out in section 2 what the accreditation board and council are entitled to do, and it describes what accreditation means, and it also sets out in the Act what the powers are. Now, I do not know why on earth the accreditation board saw it necessary to write that letter for the hon. Minister to provide to Parliament when Parliament was exercising its oversight powers, but, certainly, perhaps they need to take a second look at it, because I do not know that the Accreditation Act permits the board to issue such a letter to influence the way parliamentarians think and vote, because their interpretation of their powers, in my respectful view, is clearly wrong.

So, hon. Minister, I would also ask, and I am picking up while other Senators speak—I am picking up little dog whistles here and there, for want of a better word, you know, we are talking about Trinidad and Jamaica, and Jamaicans coming down here, and that kind of thing, and we want to keep the dental

profession to a small confined group, like a clique—

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: No, I said Caricom, not Jamaica, Caricom.

Sen. S. Chote SC: Yes, I beg your pardon. But I do not think that kind of use of language, or those comments are of any use whatever to us in the exercise of our oversight function in this matter. [*Desk thumping*] We are part of Caricom, we have long had cooperation in our education systems with campuses in Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, and elsewhere, so this whole thing about the creation of some sort of dissonance in education on this issue of the registration of dentists, I really think it is an attempt to distract from what the real issue is.

Madam President, these are my comments on this Order, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to make them. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: The Minister of Health. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam President. So, Madam President, it is now 7.30 and we have been at it for six hours, 7.34, and I want to thank all hon. Members for their very good contributions. I do not know if I will have enough time to answer every single concern, but I will start with the last Senator first.

I must say that the phrase “if you are not with me you are against me”, does not do justice to the relationship between the Ministry of Health and the Dental Council. The fact that we disagree on one matter does not mean we disagree on everything else, and I really thought that statement was a bit unbecoming, and I will say why. Our consultations with the Dental Council, as early as December 2017, we have looked at all the recommendations they are making for amendments to their Act, and we are giving them serious consideration. One that we totally agreed on is the issue of continuing medical education, continuing education. I

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supported it; they are supporting it. So the Medical Council and the Ministry of Health is in accordance—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Obika: Madam President, Standing Order 46(4), the term “unbecoming”.

Madam President: Continue, Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam President. So the Dental Council and ourselves are agreed on many things, and all the issues hon. Senators made about amendments to the Dental Profession Act have been provided to the Ministry, and a team, including the legal department, the Chief Medical Officer, and our dental persons at the Ministry and the RHA are looking at all of those things. So I want to give all Senators the assurance that every single issue that the Dental Council has proposed to us is receiving our active consideration.

I want to go to the issue of consultation that Sen. Ramdeen raised, and he raised a very important point. This issue of consultation on this particular matter has a lifespan of over two years. The consultation started since 2016 when a group of students, through the Jamaican High Commissioner in Jamaica, Fitzgerald Jeffrey, the hon. Fitzgerald Jeffrey, wrote to the Minister of Health in early 2016, a series of letters which I then passed on to the Dental Council via the Chief Medical Officer. I want to quote a letter of 28 March, 2017, addressed to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Roshan Parasram.

Thank you for forwarding this letter to the Dental Council. We have addressed this issue on several prior occasions.

So consultation was going on, on several prior occasions.

Last year—meaning 2016—we met with Professor Fletcher and Dr. Jones of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies, UWI Mona, to discuss the matter. Additionally, which means in addition to all that, in

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2016 we corresponded with the students informing them of our opinion along with the hon. Minister of Health, Terrence Deyalsingh.

So I am putting down a track that consultation started, on the words of the Dental Council, in 2016.

There is another letter of May 24, 2017. In the interim, I would have met with the Dental Council on at least two occasions. That culminated in the letter I quoted today of September 19, 2016. After September 19, 2016, I, again, with officials of the Ministry of Health met with the Dental Council in December of 2017 to alert them to the fact that we want to bring this amendment. So, the consultation was there from the genesis to the conclusion. Everybody had a chance, the consulter, the consultee had a chance to weigh in on the matters, so all consultations were had.

I want to just touch on a point that Sen. Ramkisson made. Sen. Ramkisson made the point that a dentist that she knows cannot get a position in the public health care system. Let me just put on record—and she also mentioned house officers, and I think the population needs to know this, and I am going to say this for the first time. the Minister of Health is always called upon, why I am not hiring house officers or dentists now. Do you know that we have problems with doctors and dentists who refuse to work in the rural areas? In other words, one mother went so far as to tell me—*[Interruption]*

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, in accordance with Standing Order 14(5), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until the completion of the business at hand.

Question put and agreed to.

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Madam President: Continue, Minister.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. So, Sen. Ramkissoon, through you, Madam President, there are doctors and dentists who refuse to work in Mount Hope because they live in Diego Martin. They will only accept a job if they get a job with the North-West RHA. One mother went so far as to tell me she will only allow her son, who is a house officer, to take up a position in Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, where there was a vacancy, if I give him a Priority Bus Route pass. That is true. I got another call from a mother of a house officer who was objecting that her son has to work at 1.00 a.m. in the morning. That is the job of a doctor. When you sign up, that is what you signed up for, but you cannot get them to work outside a five-mile radius of their homes. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: I am not agreeing with that.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Well, you may not agree, but that is what we are faced with. We cannot get people to work in Point Fortin because it is too far. We cannot get people to work in Sangre Grande because it is too far, and that is why you have some vacancies there. So I just wanted to put that on the table to answer some of your concerns.

On the issue of consultation again, could you imagine if a government—look at what we are faced with here today, divergent views, have a schedule, do not have a schedule, to whom does the Government listen? So we consult, we take everything into consideration, but at the end of the day the Executive has to make a decision in the best interest of the people who elected that Government to make certain decisions. There is no agreement here amongst the Independents and the

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Opposition as to whether you need a schedule or not, but we consulted, we listened, but as an elected Executive set in policy, we have to make a decision, and not all decisions are going to meet with 100 per cent approval 100 per cent of the time. But there was consultation—[*Interruption*] Yes, Sen. Roach.

Sen. Roach: Thank you, hon. Minister, for giving way.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: No problem.

Sen. Roach: I was hoping that I would get an opportunity—just to explain something as you are on the point of consultation. My esteemed colleague, Sen. Ramdeen, did speak and gave a very informative and accurate discourse about what consultation consists of, but what was missing from that, at the end to the day, which I act upon in responding to your request in support of the Order is that there is an administrative principle in law called the presumption of administrative regularity. I am not trying to take the function of the Attorney General in advising his Cabinet. And that simply means that official acts are presumed to be done properly and legally, unless it is rebutted by the person who is seeking to take objection with it by hard evidence, and this is not what was before you today, so I presume that what was done was done regularly—[*Interruption*]

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Sen. Roach:—and was done correctly.

7.45 p.m.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Madam President, on the issue of quacks—several Members raised the issue of quacks in dentistry—that is a criminal matter, should be reported to the police, should be reported to the DPP and a complaint made to the Dental Council. It was not for the Dental Council, I believe, to initiate proceedings. These are just some of the things that came out today.

Sen. Mahabir made the point about dental nurses, auxiliary nurses. As I said, all of these matters are currently before the Ministry of Health based on the recommendations made by the Dental Council. So all of these things are receiving active consideration.

On the issue of Cuba and pharmaceuticals, I think someone raised the issue, it is difficult right now to import pharmaceuticals from Cuba— because I have been looking at it—simply because they do not manufacture and package their drugs with English writing, it is only in Spanish. I have looked into that. So once we could get them to give us English packaging, we could have their drugs approved here.

Sen. Mark made a lot of heavy weather, and I think some of his language was quite graphic, allowing people to come through the cracks. You know, when we make statements in this honourable Chamber—*[Interruption]* Sorry? Can I assist you, Senator? When we make statements like that, “people coming through the cracks”, these words are carried worldwide; they will reach Caricom. Here we are in this Senate speaking about nationals of Caricom attending the region’s premier tertiary education, and we use words, the UNC use words, like “people coming through the cracks”. These are our people. We are Caribbean people studying at the University of the West Indies, a world-renowned and world-recognized institution. How can we say that? How can we say that? These words have implications for our image in Caricom.

Sen. Mark also made the point that nationals in Barbados—if we want to go Barbados we have to write an exam. So here we are, we are treating this as a zero-sum game. In other words, you blind me, I blind you; you kill me, I kill you. So just because Barbados wants an exam, to spite we must have an exam.

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Trinidad and Tobago, under this Government—and that is why we always say, the People's National Movement is a nationalistic government—a nationalistic government—and because Trinidad and Tobago—

Sen. Obika: “Dey eh sure bout dat. Dey ain sure.”

Madam President: Senator. Minister, please take your seat. Sen. Obika.

Sen. Obika: My apologies.

Madam President: No, I know you are apologizing but this is the second time I have had to speak to you. Please do not let there be a third. Okay? Continue, Minister.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: And that is why we have to re-establish our role in Caricom. We abdicated our role in Caricom as a leader in Caricom for five years. It is time we re-establish that role, and if by doing this simple amendment it paves the way for Caricom to re-look at the matter then so be it. But no, according to the UNC and Sen. Mark, because Barbados wants that, we must, for spite—so you blind me, I blind you and what you end up with is a whole society of blind people. This is not a zero-sum game. This is not nuclear warfare: I bomb you, you bomb me.

The People's National Movement is above that. We have gone way past that. We are for Caricom; we are for integration, and if this simple amendment can help us in that movement well, let us rejoice in that—let us rejoice in that.

Madam President, Sen. Mark made the other statement, he objects to students coming from Mona to operate on our mouths. What is that? The students from Mona, just like Trinidad students, will get their temporary registration. They do one year internship and on successful completion of one year internship, under the guidance of a registered dentist, they are given full licence to practise. What is wrong with that? But the fear-mongering again is just phenomenal. You know, I

thought—forget what I thought, because the Senate is a place that I came from, and I hold it in such high regard—in such high regard. It is just sad to see sometimes where it goes.

Madam President, some other points made about how do we guarantee work in the public sector. You cannot guarantee it, but you could encourage it. What the Minister of Education is trying to do is to make sure those students who access GATE funding live up to the expectations of the country which paid for them to get their education, and that is to give national service. Also, some of our national scholars are bonded and we will be seeing about that. Also, what the research has shown, the more interns you put into the public sector, the greater your chance of them remaining in the public sector.

So I cannot stand here and guarantee you that you are going to fill every single vacancy, but let us try because we did nothing for 20 years and we remained with the same 28 doctors, 28 dentists in the public health sector for 20 years, because no one tried. This is an attempt to redress that.

As it goes to the comprehensive change to the Schedule, as I said that is currently before the Ministry of Health. The Dental Council has provided us with that and we will look at that.

The issue that someone raised, I think it was Sen. Haynes, and I really enjoyed her contribution—

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: Minister, clarification; just a point of clarification, Minister.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: Thank you for giving way. The issue of 28 dentists remaining fixed for a number of years, I am just wondering whether in the Ministry of Health there are only 28 positions available for dentists or whether you have more

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positions than 28?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: There are more positions. Okay?

The issue of writing different exams for different Caribbean countries I think does not arise, because in the United States they operate a federal system just like Australia, sometimes like Canada. We do not have a federal system in Trinidad and Tobago. So I hope that clears up that.

The issue of discipline, I think Sen. Haynes you would have raised that?

Sen. Haynes: Sen. Hosein.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Sen. Hosein would have raised the issue of discipline: What is the Ministry of Health doing as far as disciplining dentists is concerned? The disciplining of any profession should primarily be that of the professional body. However, the Ministry of Health does have a role to play in guiding that. So, again, that is currently before us, but we cannot have a knee-jerk reaction to disciplinary procedures as presented to us. What we have to look at is one, constitutionality, and two, what is best practice in other dental jurisdictions and also how does that line up with disciplining in other professions. Because you do not want to have one profession disciplining in one way, another profession with similar responsibilities disciplining in another way.

So there has to be some sort of understanding and harmonization of disciplining their members. That should really be driven by the Dental Council with the advice of a policy position by the Government of the day, and that is currently before us as everything with auxiliary nurses, continuing medical education and all of these things. So, I give you the assurance, Sen. Hosein, that that is actively being looked at.

I think I am correct now, Sen. Haynes made the point about facilities, yes.

So I can assure you, as I said in my piloting, we are looking at improving the facilities at many of our health centres. And you are right, that has been neglected for years, for decades. Right? Recently we had the refurbished Rochard Douglas Health Centre where I went down to. We are refurbishing the Rio Claro Health Centre. We are putting in more dental equipment in many of our health centres: Toco, Siparia, Couva. So you are spot on. That is an area of our health care delivery which has been neglected for decades, and we are facing up to that head on. So I give you the assurance, hon. Senator, that it is high on the agenda, that is, the whole thing about primary health care, which includes our—because that is where the action is in health care.

What has happened, Sen. Haynes, over the years is that we have focused on building our tertiary institutions. So, we do all these wonderful dialysis, we do all these wonderful bypass surgeries, we do all these wonderful things, but the population and the Ministry and the RHAs have forgotten that the real health care benefits start at the primary level. So your health centres have to become an oasis in all their communities, where they go and get their basic health needs attended to, to prevent them from presenting to a secondary institution and a tertiary institution. So I give you the assurance that it is high on this Government's agenda.

I want to really thank Sen. Roach for his short but lucid intervention. I think you really hit the nail on its head as to why this Order is so simple, and you drew the analogy to the two law schools in Jamaica. I want to thank you very much Sen. Roach for doing that. But I think, Sen. Roach, through you, Madam President, we could use this as a catalyst to send a message to UWI that the whole issue of degree harmonization by the university needs to be put on the front burner. It is one university, different campuses, but it is one university.

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So this, as I said, could be part of Caribbean integration in tertiary education. Because you have law schools in Trinidad, you have law schools in Jamaica, you have a law school in Barbados. Right? I think you have one in Guyana? Bahamas? Right? So the Caricom really needs to look at this, and I think the contribution of Sen. Roach and our advocacy here today could really be a catalyst to take this towards Caribbean integration as far as tertiary education is concerned.

So, Madam President, I think I have addressed most of the issues raised by hon. colleagues. I want to thank them most sincerely starting with Sen. Haynes, Sen. Mark, Sen. Hosein, Sen. Ramdeen, Sen. Huggins, Sen. Baptiste-Primus, Sen. Roach, Sen. Ramkissoon, Sen. Chote and Sen. Creese. I think all contributions were well meaning, they elucidated several points and with those few words, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Dental Profession (Amendment to the Schedule) Order, 2017 be approved.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday 20 February, 2018, at 1.30 p.m. The Government proposes to deal with the second reading of the Bill entitled an Act to Amend the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Act, the Customs Act and the Exchange Control Act.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question on the adjournment, leave has been granted for a matter to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment

of the Senate.

**Paris Agreement
(Government's Failure to Ratify)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Thank you, Madam President. The Government needs to take climate change more seriously. [*Desk thumping*] After signing the Paris Agreement in December of 2015, Trinidad and Tobago has gone to sleep and is yet to ratify the COP21 agreement which is the next stage in the process to implement. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Hon. Senators, may I remind you that we are still sitting, and can we listen to Sen. Mark in silence, please. Sen. Mark, continue.

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you. The failure of the Government to ratify the Paris climate agreement puts our country among 21 countries out of 195 in the world who have not yet done so, representing some 15 per cent of the world's countries. Madam President, we ought to be committed to working towards global mitigation as it relates to climate change.

Every country in the Caribbean I understand, and in fact the entire Commonwealth, has already ratified the Paris climate agreement. Trinidad and Tobago is trailing Caricom, and under this Rowley-led PNM Trinidad and Tobago has surrendered its leadership role in Caricom. [*Desk thumping*] That is what Trinidad and Tobago has done.

Signatories to the agreement collectively committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to targets which are known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs. Trinidad and Tobago has committed to the unconditional reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the public transportation sector, from power generation and other segments making up the industrial sector of our Republic. But in the absence of ratification, this country, our country, remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and this is manifested through

temperature increases, changes in sea levels, increased flooding, increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes, hillside erosion and also the loss of coastal habitats.

So, Madam President, whilst we are not even part of the main Atlantic hurricane belt, our exposure has been increased because of this rapid change in the climate of the global community and this universe that we inhabit, and therefore we are now more exposed to the potential of being hit by very powerful tropical storms, as we witnessed in the recent past.

So why is Trinidad and Tobago that played a leadership role under Basdeo Panday, the former Prime Minister who has now passed on, Patrick Manning, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, why it is we have fallen behind this time? What explains every Caricom country, having ratified the Paris climate agreement, and Trinidad and Tobago has not done that up to this time? Why is that? What excuse can we offer our nation for this situation?

Madam President, because of the failure of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to ratify the Paris climate agreement, we have now been placed in the distinguished company of the following countries. We are now placed with Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Colombia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Mozambique, South Sudan, Yemen—

Sen. Le Hunte: The United States of America.

Sen. W. Mark: “Well de United States eh even get involved in dat; you know dat, so doh even mention dat.” They are not part of it, so let us not even mention the United States.

So we would like to call on the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, and I hope that he rises tonight, because sometimes he gives the impression that he is sleeping on the job. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] We call

on the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to man up, and to ratify the Paris climate agreement now. [*Desk thumping*] Wake up and ratify. Why are we as a country dilly-dallying on this matter? Why are we snoring in the mountains like Rip Van Winkle? Twenty years snoring away while the world is changing.

We want to appeal to the hon. Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, whose responsibility is to sign this agreement and to ratify the agreement now, and let us join with that sea of humanity that has taken the progressive decision to ratify that very important Paris climate agreement.

So therefore, we eagerly await the rising from the deep slumber of this Government to address this critical matter. And in closing we call on the Government on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to ratify the Paris climate agreement, and do it now. [*Desk thumping*]

I thank you very much, Madam President.

The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses):
Madam President, thank you very much for the opportunity. What an affair, what imagery.

The particularities of our economy, dependent as it is on the petroleum and petrochemical sector, are such that due care and diligence were required in the treatment of the matter of the ratification of the Paris Agreement by Trinidad and Tobago. The attendant responsibilities and potential costs involved were most present in our deliberations as a team. Scurrilous submissions here are hardly likely to advance our interest as a country.

What imagery, as I mentioned earlier, and theatrics that were offered to us. I do not support the Motion or the submission that was made a while ago presented by Sen. Mark. There is no failure here. We, as a responsible Government, have

succeeded in safeguarding the interests of our country, exercising due care and diligence before coming to a decision. Allow me, Madam President, to laud and give recognition and congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Planning and Development, staff members of that said Ministry as well as staff members of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs for their service to our country in ensuring that we stay on the right track.

We have treated with the concerns we had and are well on our way to doing what is required and what was contemplated when the Paris Agreement was signed last year, if my recall is correct. So therein lies a correction.

Sen. Mark: It was signed in December 2015, I understand. You signed it?

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Sorry, Sir.

Sen. The Hon. D. Moses: A bit of edification, education is in order here. So as I said my recall is that it was not in December 2015.

Sen. Mark: When was it?

Sen. The Hon. D. Moses: I had the privilege, Madam President, to affix my signature to the agreement on behalf of our country. Once again permit me to register my opposition to the submission, the Motion that was presented by the good Sen. Mark, and my thanks for the opportunity afforded.

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question to adjourn, allow me to wish everyone here a safe and happy Carnival.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.11 p.m.