

Third Session of the Twelfth Republican Parliament

SEVENTEENTH

REPORT
FROM

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

EXAMINATION
OF

The Management and Operations of the Secondary
Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company
Limited (SRRIC).

Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street Port of Spain
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Public Administration and Appropriations Committee

The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) is established by Standing Order 102 and 92 of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively. The Committee is mandated to consider and report to Parliament on:

- (a) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;*
- (b) *the budgetary expenditure of Government agencies as it occurs and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and*
- (c) *the administration of Government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.*

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The current staff members serving the Committee are:

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Ms. Hema Bhagalloo	Assistant Secretary
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Ms. Rachel Nunes	Researcher
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Publication

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**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**



Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Chairman



Dr. Lackram Bodo
Vice-Chairman



Mr. Wade Mark
Member



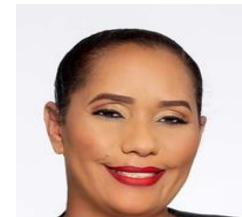
Mr. Randall Mitchell
Member



Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy
Member



Mr. Hassel Bacchus
Member



Ms. Lisa Morris-Julian
Member



Mr. Symon de Nobriga
Member



Dr. Sharda Patasar
Member



Mr. Laurence Hislop
Member

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the Public Administrations and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) for the Twelfth Parliament contains the details of the Committee's examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited (SRRIC).

The Committee, in undertaking this examination, employed two (2) mechanisms:

- i. Written Submissions; and
- ii. Public Hearing.

The Committee requested written submissions from the Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT) and the SRRIC and thereafter focused on a review and analysis of the written submissions. Subsequently, the Committee conducted a Public Hearing with the following stakeholders on June 14, 2023:

- i. MOWT; and
- ii. SRRIC.

The approach adopted by the Committee took into account:

- i. Issues identified in the submissions received; and
- ii. Reports in the media.

The Committee made recommendations related to the issues identified. Observations and recommendations are presented in **Chapter 3**.

1. INTRODUCTION

THE COMMITTEE

The PAAC of the Twelfth Republican Parliament was established by the revised Standing Orders to:

- examine the current public expenditure, thereby capturing the full budget cycle by providing Parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the budget; and
- conduct a real-time examination of the expenditure of Ministries and Departments (M&D).

Change in Membership

1. In the Twelfth Parliament, the Members of the Committee were appointed by resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate at sittings held on Friday November 9, 2020 and Tuesday November 17, 2020 respectively.
2. Senator Clarence Rambharat's seat in the Senate was declared vacant on March 16, 2022 as such he ceased to be a Member of the Committee.
3. Senator Yokymma Bethelmy's seat in the Senate was declared vacant on March 16, 2022 as such she ceased to be a Member of the Committee.
4. By resolution of the House of Representatives at a sitting held on June 14, 2022, Mr. Symon de Nobriga, MP was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Mr. Stephen Mc Clashie, MP.
5. By resolution of the Senate at a sitting held on June 14, 2022, Senator Laurence Hislop was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Senator Yokymma Bethelmy and Senator Randall Mitchell in lieu of Senator Clarence Rambharat.
6. Senator Amrita Deonarine ceased being a Member of the Committee on September 11, 2023.
7. By resolution of the Senate at a sitting held on October 24, 2023, Senator Dr. Sharda Patasar was appointed a Member of the Committee in lieu of Senator Amrita Deonarine.

Chairman & Vice-Chairman

By virtue of S.O. 109(6) and 99(6) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively, the Chairman of the Committee is the Speaker and at its First Meeting held on November 25, 2020, Dr. Lackram Bodoë was elected as the Vice-Chairman.

Quorum

Additionally, in order to exercise the powers granted to it by the House, the Committee was required by the Standing Orders to have a quorum. A quorum of three (3) Members, inclusive of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, with representatives from both Houses, was agreed to by the Committee at its First Meeting.

2. METHODOLOGY

Determination of the Committee's Work Programme

At an in-camera meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday, November 02, 2022, the Committee agreed to conduct an examination into the management and operations of the SRRIC.

Review of Documents

The Committee deliberated and decided on an examination in public based on the content of the:

- i. Written Submissions received; and
- ii. Media reports

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines the steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outline the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC for its examination into the management and operations of the SRRIC.

- i. Identification of the entity to be examined;
- ii. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal;
- iii. Request for written responses were sent to the SRRIC and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government¹ (MRDLG) on **March 03, 2023**. Responses were received from the MRDLG on **March 05, 2023** and from the SRRIC on **April 04, 2023**.
- iv. Preparation of an Issues Paper which identified and summarised matters of concern in the responses provided;
- v. Based on the recommendations and the issues identified, the Committee agreed to have a Public Hearing. The MOWT² and SRRIC were invited to attend and provide evidence on **June 14, 2023**;
- vi. Following the Public Hearing, a request for further details was sent to the MOWT, SRRIC, Trinidad & Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) and Office of Procurement Regulation (OPR) on **June 23, 2023**. The responses were received on **July 07, 2023, July 10, 2023, June 29, 2023** and **June 30, 2023** respectively;

¹ The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government was the Line Ministry of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited at the time.

² The Ministry of Works and Transport became the line Ministry of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited with effect from March 3, 2023.

- vii. Report on the Committee’s findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry;
- viii. Request for Ministerial Responses.
- ix. Review responses; and
- x. Engage in follow-up.

3. ISSUES, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Autonomy of SRRIC

i. The Roles of SRRIC, PURE, the MOWT and MRDLG in road repair and rehabilitation
Cabinet Minute No.418 of March 3, 2022, states that "the mandate of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited (SRRIC) is to:

- develop the existing infrastructure of secondary roads, focusing on road repair, rehabilitation and upgrade works throughout Trinidad;
- enhance road capacity, improve existing road infrastructure; and
- ensure consistent road accessibility and connectivity throughout the country".

With effect from March, 13, 2023, SRRIC was transferred from the MRDLG to the MOWT. Section 2.2.5 of the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual (SEPMM), the MRDLG became SRRIC's client³. The MRDLG's written submission dated March 5, 2023, stated that the MRDLG as SRRIC's client would conduct visits to project sites during and on completion to ensure that the projects were satisfactorily completed within project scope and estimated costs/contracted sum. SRRIC's written submission dated April 4, 2023 stated that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between SRRIC and the MOWT that would allow the MOWT's Programme for Upgrading Roads Efficiency Unit (PURE) to provide construction management services to SRRIC. The MOWT stated by letter dated July 7, 2023, that to avoid duplication with the MOWT's programme of works of projects and the overall budgetary costing, the MOWT reviews SRRIC's list of approved projects prior to the list of approved projects being submitted to SRRIC.

ii. The Overlap of PURE and SRRIC's Operational Purviews

The MOWT's website stated that "The PURE Unit began as a short to medium term solution to address distressed roads and has since evolved into an entity responsible for Project Management initiatives that promote healthy roads across the country. Through systematic rehabilitation and the upgrade and expansion of road infrastructure elements, PURE works to

³ "A client Ministry is one other than a Line Ministry on behalf of which a State Enterprise executes projects and/or programmes. The relationship between the State Enterprise and the Client Ministry is one that is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and customer expectations. All the participants are required to collaborate and communicate to resolve problems and enhance effective delivery of service by State Enterprises."

ensure that roads remain safe and functional for all users.” One of the six working categories aligned to the PURE Unit's strategic objectives is ‘Improving Existing Road Infrastructure’ The MOWT’s website further stated that this would be achieved “Through the implementation of a strategic road rehabilitation programme, it is anticipated that at least 80% of the Ministry’s road network will be upgraded to provide optimal service. Simultaneously, the upgrade of local government and orphaned roads will ensure consistent road connectivity throughout the nation.” In determining SRRIC’s operational zones, SRRIC used the boundaries of the 14 Corporations, as opposed to the operational zones (historical county boundaries) used by the MOWT/ PURE Unit. Section 3 of the Highways Act classifies and defines the various types of roads in Trinidad and Tobago. These include main roads, special roads, local roads, street development roads, and secondary roads. Section 3 (1) of the Highways Act also gives the MOWT the authority to reclassify or add a new road to any classification.

The MOWT indicated that based on the MOWT’s records, 22.1% of the roads that constitute Trinidad and Tobago’s Road network fall under the MOWT (main roads, highways and some secondary roads), 18.3% falls under the MALF (agricultural access roads), 16.5% under the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and 43.1% under the MRDLG (local and secondary roads). The MOWT indicated that the 43.1% of the national road network under the MRDLG would now be under the operational purview of SRRIC i.e. local roads, street development roads, and secondary roads. However, written submission from SRRIC dated April 4, 2023, indicated that 80% of the nation’s roadways were under SRRIC’s purview thereby indicating that an overlap now existed.

This lack of clarity over which roads are listed as a secondary road per Section 3 of the Highways Act was one of the challenges identified by SRRIC. Consequently, this issue gave rise to the MOWT needing to review the list of roads for repairs collated by the MRDLG prior to the list being sent to SRRIC. The Committee inquired into the need for the MOWT to review the list of roads for repair. The MOWT stated that the MOWT’s review entails removing roads under the jurisdiction of the MOWT from the list of roads for road repair received from the MRDLG and adding them to the Road Construction/Major Road Rehabilitation Programme executed by the PURE Unit.

iii. The Process of Project Selection

SRRIC does not approve any requests for road repairs. Based on SRRIC's workflow process, the MOWT approves all requests and then forward the approved work programme/s for SRRIC's execution. The MOWT indicated that it adopted the same procedure that was utilised by the MRDLG whereby:

- a. A Local Government Councillor submits a prioritised list of roads for repairs to their Municipal Corporation based on their observations of the state of major secondary roads in their respective burgesses.
- b. The 14 Municipal Corporations collate, review, and submit a list of proposed road repairs to the MRDLG.
- c. The MRDLG in turn, collates and reviews all 14 lists and create a single priority listing for submission to the MOWT, where the list would be reviewed for duplication against the MOWT's own programme of works.
- d. Lastly, the list is submitted to SRRIC, where the SRRIC would undertake the scope of works and budgetary calculations prior to sending out submissions for tender.

SRRIC indicated that, as SRRIC matures as a state enterprise, SRRIC's aim would be to review and manage requests directly from the 14 Municipal Corporations. SRRIC added that a documented process would be implemented to ensure an equitable distribution along the lines of spending and projects in the 14 Corporations to prevent geographical discrimination.

Observation:

- **The Committee notes that clarity was needed to determine which government agency was responsible for each road that constitutes the national road network.**

Recommendations:

- **The MRDLG should submit a collated list of roads for repair directly to SRRIC given that the MRDLG was the "client ministry" according to Section 2.2.5 of the SEPMM.**
- **The MOWT should conduct a national road classification exercise to clearly define and classify each road that constitutes the national road network. A status update on the implementation of this initiative should be submitted to the Parliament by January 29, 2024,**

- The MOWT should submit a status update to the Parliament by January 29, 2024, on what the technical sharing of competencies and resources between PURE and SRRIC would entail.
- The MOWT should a report to the Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the actions to be taken to ensure there was no operational overlap between SRRIC and the MOWT's PURE Unit.
- The MOWT should submit an update to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the guidelines that would be implemented to ensure SRRIC's autonomy was maintained with specific reference to the limited interference of the MOWT in the approval process of SRRIC's list of roads for repair.
- The MRDLG and MOWT should submit a report to Parliament by January 29, 2024, outlining each Ministry's process of collating and reviewing proposed lists of road works, and the considerations made when determining an order of priority prior to transferring the final approved list of road repairs to SRRIC.
- The SRRIC should submit a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024, on the development and implementation of a documented process to ensure an equitable distribution along the lines of spending and projects across the 14 Municipal Corporations to prevent geographical discrimination.

2. Challenges in the execution of planned works

At the Public Hearing on June 14, 2023, SRRIC stated:

- Of the initial \$100 million received from the Ministry of Finance (MOF) upon SRRIC's incorporation on March 3, 2022, \$87,101,237.27 was unutilized, while an additional \$100 million was held by the MOWT.
- Approximately \$10.6 million was spent on nine projects completed to date.
- For the rest of fiscal 2023, SRRIC had approximately \$190 million to spend on an estimated 300 road repair and rehabilitation projects.
- Out of the 300 projects, 190 of those projects were at the tendering stage.

Based on the additional information received on July 10, 2023, SRRIC provided the following list of potential challenges that may be encountered whilst executing the scheduled roads repairs:

- The length of time it takes for the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) and the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) to complete and address issues on planned worksites.
- The inaccessibility of sites to conduct works (i.e. landslips, drains, and walls) on private property.
- Adverse weather conditions (i.e. rainfall and flooding).
- Conducting site visits and safe operations within high-security risk neighborhoods.
- The safety and security of contractor personnel and equipment within high-security risk neighborhoods.
- The limited pool of pre-qualified small and medium contractors in the Office of Procurement Regulation (OPR) Depository to evenly distribute Invitations to Tender for road repair works throughout Trinidad.
- Attempts by the MOWT to "merge the staff" SRRIC into PURE.
- Lack of clarity from MOWT or MRDLG as to which roads are explicitly listed as secondary roads as per the Highways Act. (80% or 43.1%)
- The flow of work programme from MRDLG to MOWT to SRRIC. It would be more efficient for MRDLG to pass on the same directly to SRRIC since MRDLG was the "client ministry" according to Section 2.2.5 of the State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual (SEPMM).
- The lack of coordination between various Ministries and road repair/ paving entities (PURE, SRRIC, Rural Development Company of Trinidad & Tobago (RDC), Municipal Corporations). This duplication of effort wastes man-hours and financial resources (scoping projects and preparation of the award of contracts).
- The MOU between SRRIC and various state enterprises and ministries (i.e. the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO), Trinidad & Tobago Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and WASA, MRDLG).

Recommendation:

- **SRRIC should submit to Parliament by January 29, 2024, a status update on the improvements made or strategies put in place to address the potential challenges**

which may impede SRRIC’s operations and the impact made on the operational efficiency and effectiveness of SRRIC.

3. The Lack of prequalified contractors on the OPR’s Procurement Depository

Section 26(1) of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act provides that

“The Office shall establish a database, to be known as “the Procurement Depository”, to which suppliers or contractors can submit information with respect to, among other things, their qualifications and experience”

One of the major challenges SRRIC faced was the limited pool of pre-qualified small and medium contractors in the Procurement Depository of the Office of Procurement Regulation (OPR) to evenly distribute invitations to tender for road repair works throughout Trinidad.

The selection process for contractors by SRRIC involves the following criteria:

- i. The size, type, project and location of prospective projects;
- ii. Contractors' prequalification status with the OPR Depository;
- iii. Technical competencies;
- iv. Prior experience; and
- v. Contractor location.

These criteria ensured that contractors met regulatory requirements and standards. Selected contractors with the necessary skills and expertise for the project were invited to tender. At the public hearing, SRRIC indicated that only eighty (80) contractors were currently registered in the OPR’s Depository to provide road repair and rehabilitation, of which a few were small or medium-sized contractors. Based on the additional information provided by SRRIC dated July 10, 2023, it was indicated that the number of contractors pre-qualified to do work with SRRIC listed on the OPR’s Depository had increased to 109.

SRRIC stated that ideally there should be a larger pool of 200-300 pre-qualified contractors, as this would ensure equitable distribution of invitations for tendering by small, medium, and large contractors as deemed appropriate, allowing for a diversified rotation based on project size, complexity, job location, contractor location and project type. SRRIC officials stated that they were actively encouraging registration with the OPR Depository by:

- i. conducting tailored contractor training seminars with contractors;
 - ii. contacting contractors via phone call to emphasize the benefits of being pre-qualified;
- and

- iii. sending out notices via email to contractors on May 03 and 16, 2023 informing contractors of their requirement to register with the OPR's Procurement Depository when submitting bids for public projects.

SRRIC also held a seminar on January 28, 2023, in collaboration with the MRDLG and Trinidad and Tobago Contractors Association (TTCA), which focused on quality standards and best practices in the industry. SRRIC indicated that there was a positive response from the contractor community as a significant number of participants attended. With a limited pool of pre-qualified contractors, SRRIC permitted the award of contracts to contractors outside of their operational zones until such zones have enough pre-qualified contractors to adequately service them.

Recommendations:

- **The SRRIC, in collaboration with the OPR, MRDLG and TTCA should commence a pre-qualification campaign that targets small and medium sized contractors. The pre-qualification campaign should focus on informing contractors on:**
 - **why they need to be prequalified;**
 - **the benefits of being pre-qualified; and**
 - **what needs to be done to complete the pre-qualification process.**

SRRIC should report to Parliament on the implementation of this initiative by January 29, 2024; and

- **SRRIC should provide a status update on the number of small, medium and large sized contractors on the OPR's Depository as at September 30, 2023 to Parliament by January 29, 2024**

4. Memorandum of Understanding between SRRIC and WASA

Section 65 (1) of the Highways Act states that "Undertakers executing any work which involves the breaking up or opening of any highway or tunneling or boring under it, shall carry on and complete the works with all reasonable dispatch, and shall reinstate and make good the street after completion of the works." As such, entities such as WASA have the legal responsibility to restore all roads that were damaged because of pipeline repairs. At the Public hearing, the MOWT highlighted that the existing relationship between WASA and the MOWT, as follows:

- when the MOWT fixes a roadway and a WASA pipeline was present, the MOWT takes the responsibility of moving the pipe and incurs all liabilities.

- When WASA fixes a pipeline and the roadway is damaged to gain access to the said pipeline, WASA takes on the legal liability associated with that road's restoration for six (6) months before transferring liability back to the body under whose purview the road falls.

The MOWT further stated that the Utilities Unit under the MOWT's Highways Division engages WASA on a consistent basis because WASA is supposed to notify the MOWT before initiating non-emergency work under a major roadway.

SRRIC added that, given the public's dissatisfaction with the speed with which WASA restores worksites after the creation of potholes at former leak sites, SRRIC planned to enter into an MOU with WASA that would allow WASA to meet the Regulated Industries Commission's (RIC) standard of road restoration within seven (7) days, with the work being completed by SRRIC. However, the proposed MOU was abandoned when SRRIC was realigned to the MOWT with effect from March 03, 2023. It was now the legal obligation for all road repairs to be conducted by the entity that damaged the road initially.

Recommendation:

- **SRRIC should continue the pursuit of an MOU with WASA in the interest of finding a workable solution to address road restoration after WASA pipeline leaks and provide a status update on this initiative to the Parliament by January 29, 2024.**

5. Quality Control and Quality Assurance of SRRIC Projects

To ensure quality control, SRRIC employed five (5) engineers, and five (5) technicians to conduct quality control assessments aided by third-party service providers when necessary. Quality Assurance will be conducted by SRRIC technicians via on-site project supervision, sampling, and testing at predetermined intervals to ensure the quality of work meets the required standard. A retention fee of 5% of the total contract value, as well as an enforcement period covering six (6) months where the costs of any remedial works were borne by the contractor.

Following SRRIC's discussions with WASA regarding the establishment of the MOU to have SRRIC restore WASA road sites, SRRIC purchased Geographic Information System (GIS) software similar to what WASA utilised. SRRIC stated that by synergising with WASA's GIS, WASA and SRRIC would be able better coordinate WASA's pipe laying and SRRIC's road repair activities. SRRIC also indicated that the software would allow SRRIC to pinpoint and track all

past, present, and future road repairs as well as store any relevant data relating to any specific completed repair job. SRRIC added that, given that SRRIC's role would primarily be as project manager when multiple projects were being undertaken simultaneously, SRRIC needs to reinforce its quality control and assurance capacity by retaining the services of more engineers and technicians.

Recommendations:

- **SRRIC should develop quality control and quality assurance standard operating procedures for SRRIC's engineers and technicians so that standardised checklists and guidelines exist for different type of road repair/rehabilitation techniques based on land topography and soil composition. The SRRIC should report to Parliament on the implementation of this initiative by January 29, 2024.**
- **SRRIC should submit a status update on the recruitment of engineers and technicians to Parliament by January 29, 2024, given that SRRIC expects its workload to increase when more contractors become prequalified, and more contracts will be awarded.**

6. The Absence of an Internal Audit Unit and a Strategic Plan

At the time of the public hearing, officials from SRRIC stated that there were open vacancies for one (1) Internal Audit Manager position and one (1) Internal Auditor position. SRRIC intends to develop that capacity by hiring a consultant registered with the OPR's Depository to conduct interviews for the two vacant positions. Following that engagement, SRRIC would invite applications for the open positions of Internal Audit Manager and Internal Auditor.

In SRRIC's written submission dated April 4, 2023, it was stated that a team consisting of members of the Board and management was in the process of developing a strategic plan. At the public hearing held on June 14, 2023, officials from SRRIC stated that four (4) consultants registered on the OPR's Depository were invited to submit proposals for the development of a Strategic Plan.

Recommendation:

- **SRRIC should provide a status update and associated timelines to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on:**

- **the recruitment of an Internal Audit Manager and Internal Auditor; and**
- **the award of the contract to develop SRRIC's Strategic Plan.**

7. SRRIC's Communication and Marketing Strategy

As part of SRRIC's focus on maintaining a lean organisation, SRRIC's public communications strategies will be outsourced. SRRIC indicated that this was the preferred option. However, the process of engaging communication strategists had not begun as the types of communication channels used were yet to be determined.

Recommendation:

- **SRRIC should provide a status update to Parliament by January 29, 2024 on the engagement of the communication strategist;**
- **SRRIC should provide an update and associate timeline on the development of the SRRIC's communication strategy and channels.**

8. Creation of National Standards for Road Design and Road Repairs.

Trinidad and Tobago's road network is managed by multiple state agencies with each agency responsible for a different classification of road. However, there need to be some level of standardisation when it comes to road construction and road repair, whereby each classification of road should have the same level of infrastructure and other related characteristics nationwide. Written submission received from the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) dated June 29, 2023 stated that, there were no National standards for road design and repair. Based on the Standards Act No.18 of 1997, the TTBS could issue voluntary standards for the areas of highway and road design, construction and maintenance. The MOWT and MRDLG have the primary responsibility for regulating and carrying out the construction and maintenance of roadways.

As such, the TTBS was not in a position to issue compulsory standards. However, the TTBS further indicated that for a voluntary standard to have effect, there needs to be a regulator. The regulator will have to create regulations which will mandate that contractors, the relevant Ministries and other agencies/organisations use these standards within an enforcement system to ensure inspection, testing and appropriate penalties. The relevant Ministries will have to submit a request to the TTBS to develop the relevant voluntary National Standards.

Furthermore, the TTBS indicated that a collaborative arrangement would be required with these key Ministries and Regional Corporations to ensure that voluntary standards were actively being observed to ensure quality of design, construction and maintenance in the various projects being undertaken. This would align with Theme 3 – Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation of Trinidad and Tobago’s National Development Strategy (Vision 2030)⁴. Vision 2030 states that:

“Efficient and resilient infrastructure enables global trade, powers businesses, connects workers to their jobs, creates new opportunities for struggling communities, and reduces the vulnerability of an unpredictable natural environment. Holistically, investment in infrastructure, with emphasis on transportation and public utilities built to internationally accepted standards, has the potential to impact positively on the level of national development and ultimately the well-being of citizens”

Observation:

- **The Committee notes that the relevance of having common road design, construction and repair standards as referenced in Vision 2030.**

Recommendations:

- **The MOWT and MRDLG should engage the TTBS for the development of national standards for road design, construction, and repair and report to Parliament on the execution of this initiative by January 29, 2024.**
- **The MOWT and MRDLG should collaborate on the development of an enforcement system to ensure road design, construction and repair works conducted by contractors adhere to existing standards and report to Parliament on the execution of this initiative by January 29, 2024.**

⁴National Development Strategy: Vision 2030 Page:48
<https://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Vision%202030-%20The%20National%20Development%20Strategy%20of%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%202016-2030.pdf>

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Committee's examination of the SRRIC, the Committee noted SRRIC's drive towards improving the travelling public's negative perceptions of the country's roadways and the toll placed on vehicle owners traversing roads inundated with potholes.

During the Third Session of the Twelfth Parliament, the PAAC conducted an examination into the management and operations of SRRIC. Several areas of concern and areas for improvement were identified and a number of recommendations were highlighted to address these issues.

The Committee is of the view that the adoption of its proposed recommendations would contribute towards SRRIC's mandate of to developing the existing infrastructure of secondary roads, focusing on road repair, rehabilitation and upgrade works throughout Trinidad, to enhance road capacity, improve existing road infrastructure and ensure consistent road accessibility and connectivity throughout the country.

This Committee respectfully submits this Report for the consideration of the Parliament.

Sgd.

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George

Chairman

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Dr. Lackram Bodoë

Vice-Chairman

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Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian

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Mr. Randall Mitchell

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Sgd.

Mr. Wade Mark

Member

APPENDIX I

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry Process outlines steps to be taken by the Committee when conducting an inquiry into an entity or issue. The following steps outlines the Inquiry process followed by the PAAC:

1. Identification of entity to be examined;
2. Preparation of Inquiry Proposal for the selected entity. The Inquiry Proposal outlines:
 - Description
 - Background;
 - Overview of Expenditure
 - Rationale/Objective of Inquiry; and
 - Proposed Questions.
3. Consideration and approval of Inquiry Proposals by the Committee and when approved, questions are forwarded to the entity for written responses;
4. Issue of requests for written comment from the public are made via Parliament's website, social media accounts, newspaper and advertisements;
5. Preparation of an Issues Paper by the Secretariat for the Committee's consideration, based on written responses received from the entities. The Issues Paper identifies and summarises any matters of concern in the responses provided by the entity or received from stakeholders and the general public;
6. Review of the responses provided and the Issues Paper by the Committee;
7. Conduct of a site visit to obtain a first-hand perspective of the implementation of a project (optional);
8. Determination of the need for a Public Hearing based on the analysis of written submissions and the site visit (if required). If there is need for a public hearing, the relevant witnesses will be invited to attend and provide evidence. There is usually no need to examine the entity in public if the Committee believes the issues have little public interest or the Committee believes that the written responses provided are sufficient and no further explanation is necessary.
9. Issue of written request to the entity for further details should the Committee require any additional information after the public hearing.
10. Report Committee's findings and recommendations to Parliament upon conclusion of the inquiry.
11. Engage in follow-up.

APPENDIX II

Minutes of Meetings

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
THIRD SESSION, TWELFTH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY JUNE 14, 2023 AT 1:32 P.M.

Present were:

Mrs. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George	-	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	-	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Laurence Hislop	-	Member
Mr. Randall Mitchell	-	Member
Mr. Hassel Bacchus	-	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	-	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	-	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	-	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	-	Graduate Research Assistant

Excused were:

Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian	-	Member
Ms Amrita Deonarine	-	Member

Absent was:

Mr. Symon de Nobriga	-	Member
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COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 At 1:32 p.m., the Chairman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. Ms Amrita Deonarine and Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian were excused from the meeting.

EXAMINATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

- 2.1 The Committee examined the Minutes of the Fifteenth (15th) Meeting held on May 17, 2023.
- 2.2 There being no further omissions or corrections, the Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Mr. Laurence Hislop and seconded by Mr. Wade Mark.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

- 3.1 With reference to item 4.1, page 1: the Chairman informed Members that the Committee's Twelfth Report on the examination into the Accessibility and Availability of Diagnostic Imaging Services at Public Health Institutions in Trinidad with specific reference to Regional Health Authorities under the purview of the Ministry of Health was laid in the House of Representatives on May 24, 2023 and the Senate on May 31, 2023.
- 3.2 With reference to item 5.2, page 2: the Chairman suggested the following possible dates for a site-visit to the Diego Martin Community Swimming Pool and the North Eastern Regional Multipurpose Sport Facility (Sangre Grande):
 - Thursday June 22nd, 2023;
 - Monday June 26th, 2023; and
 - Monday July 10th, 2023.

A discussion ensued. The Secretariat was directed to sought Member's availability for the site visit on Thursday June 22, 2023 or Monday June 26, 2023.

- 3.3 With reference to item 10.2, page 6: The Chairman informed Members that questions for additional information were sent to the following stakeholders on June 01, 2023 with a deadline of June 16, 2023:
 - Ministry of Planning and Development;
 - Ministry of Health;
 - Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
 - Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries;
 - Ministry of Trade and Industry; and
 - Office of the Prime Minister – Gender and Child Affairs.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chairman invited discussions on the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the Third Session. A discussion ensued.
- 4.2 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 2:27 p.m., to be reconvened in public.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSION: AN EXAMINATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE SECONDARY ROAD REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT COMPANY LIMITED (ALIGNED WITH SDGS 9 AND 11)

- 5.1 The Chairman reminded Members that the purpose of this meeting was to conduct an examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited (aligned with SDGs 9 and 11).
- 5.2 The Chairman invited Members to review the Issues Paper with possible questions on the examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited (aligned with SDGs 9 and 11).
- 5.3 Members discussed the issues of concern and the general approach to be taken during the public hearing.

SUSPENSION

- 6.1 There being no further business for discussion *in camera*, the Chairman suspended the meeting at 2:27 p.m., to reconvene in public.

AN EXAMINATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS OF THE SECONDARY ROAD REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT COMPANY LIMITED (ALIGNED WITH SDGS 9 AND 11)

- 7.1 The Chairman called the public meeting to order at 2:40 p.m.
- 7.2 The following officials joined the meeting.

Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited

Mr. Antonio Ross	-	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Herbert George	-	Chairman
Mr. Curlan Guiseppi	-	Finance Manager

Ministry of Works and Transport

Mrs. Sonia Francis-Yearwood	-	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Srisati Seeram	-	Senior Economist (Ag.)

7.3 The Chairman welcomed the officials, members of the media and the public.

7.4 The Chairman outlined the mandate of the Committee and the purpose of the public hearing. Introductions were exchanged.

Key Issues Discussed:

1. The transition of SRRIC from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government (MRDLG) to the MOWT;
2. The operational mandate of SRRIC and Programme For Upgrading Roads Efficiency (PURE);
3. The human resource capacity of SRRIC;
4. The cost incurred by the company to date;
5. The expected cost to be incurred on an annual basis;
6. The hindrances faced given the contractor regulations imposed by the Office of the Procurement Regulator (OPR);
7. The status of the sum of \$100Mn spent by the company thus far;
8. The number of projects undertaken by SRRIC;
9. The status of the nine projects completed by SRRIC;

10. The status of the work programme for road repairs taken by the MRDLG and the MOWT;
11. The possible duplication of road works by the SRRIC and PURE Unit of the MOWT;
12. The need for the separation of functions and duties of SRRIC;
13. The number of projects to be completed by SRRIC with the allocation of \$180MN;
14. The key challenges faced by SRRIC regarding small and medium sized contractors and the need to increase the number of small and medium size contractors;
15. The ways in which the OPR has affected the availability of contractors;
16. The definition of a “Secondary Road”;
17. The status of the entity who has responsibility for agricultural access roads;
18. The relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and SRRIC;
19. The Memorandum of Understanding between SRRIC and the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA);
20. The status of the utilities unit at the MOWT;
21. The training sessions provided by SRRIC for contractors;
22. The quality control practices to be implemented by SRRIC;
23. The possible adoption of technology to advance the operational efficiency of SRRIC;
24. The status of the internal audit function and Unit of SRRIC;
25. The status of the SRRIC’s strategic plan;
26. The status of the SRRIC’s revised organisational structure;
27. The reasons for the positions no longer being pursued;
28. The autonomy of the SRRIC;
29. The status of the development of a draft work plan for SRRIC;
30. The effects and implication of overweight trucks on the roadways;
31. The transference of knowledge of the engineering of roads to other stakeholders to ensure uniformity in works completed;
32. The status of SRRIC’s public relations strategy;
33. The status of the regional and international standard for road repairs;
34. The plans to conduct an assessment of the nation’s roads; and
35. The percentage of road repairs that fall under SRRIC.

Please see the verbatim notes for the detailed oral submission by the witnesses.

7.5 The Chairman thanked the officials for attending and they were excused.

SUSPENSION

8.1 At 5:50 p.m., the Chairman suspended the public meeting to resume in camera for a post-hearing discussion with Members only.

RESUMPTION

9.1 At 5:54 p.m., the Chairman resumed the meeting in camera.

POST-HEARING DISCUSSION

10.1 The Chairman sought Members' views on the public hearing. A discussion ensued.

10.2 The Committee agreed that additional questions would be sent to the stakeholders present, Office of the Procurement Regulator and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

10.3 The Chairman informed Members that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday June 28, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. when the Committee will commence an examination of the National Carnival Commission's management of Carnival 2023 and a follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations made in the Twenty-Seventh Report of the Public Accounts Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

11.1 The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned to **Wednesday June 28, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.**

11.2 The adjournment was taken at 6:26 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

June 14, 2023

Additional Information Requested

Provide the following in writing:

- i. The mandate of SRRIC;
- ii. The operational zones Trinidad has been divided into (illustrated on a map);
- iii. The average cost of road repairs locally compared to the regional and international cost of road repairs;
- iv. Whether any study was conducted on the cost to rectify roads.
 - State the cost of the repair annually;
 - State the cost incurred for loss of productivity.
- v. A comprehensive list of the potential challenges SRRIC may encounter in the execution of its planned works;
- vi. The list of positions that are no longer being considered, and the reasons and justification for the change;
- vii. The name of the contractors that completed the nine (9) projects under SRRIC and the tendering process used for the selection of these contractors.

General Questions

Based on Response to Question 7: on Page 8

1. What gaps currently exist between requests for road maintenance and the company's ability to deliver relief?
2. State how each gap will be addressed.
3. How many contractors have been engaged from each zone thus far?
4. What is the process for the selection of contractors by SRRIC?
 - i. Were there prequalification criteria involved?
5. Will there be contract opportunities for contractors of all sizes?
 - i. If yes, how will the SRRIC ensure the awarding of contracts will not be dominated by a select few of its contractors?
 - ii. How will the SRRIC increase the number of small and medium size contractors? Provide supporting documents.
 - iii. Will a contractor based in one zone be permitted to operate in other zones?

Based on Response to Question 7: on Page 8

1. Who are the SRRIC's current stakeholders and the respective role of each?
2. What communication strategies and channels will be utilised to ensure stakeholders are kept abreast of their roles and responsibilities on road repair, rehabilitation and upgrade of existing infrastructure process and service provision?
3. What resource availability issues have been experienced by the SRRIC since its June 17, 2022, incorporation?
 - i. What are the potential implications of these issues?
 - ii. What measures will be taken to rectify these issues?

Based on Response to Question 8a: on Page 9

1. Will an overall assessment be conducted on the 80% of the nation's roads now under the purview of the SRRIC to determine what state of deplorability they are in and where the priority areas should be?
2. Why are case by case assessments done opposed to an overall assessment which would have helped determine a priority listing of roads that require immediate and urgent attention?

Based on Response to Question 9: on Page 9

1. Will the MOU between WASA and the SRRIC mean that all road restorative works on WASA pipe fixing sites will be completed by the SRRIC and not WASA itself or contractors hired by WASA?

Based on Response to Question 10: on Page 9

1. When will the public expect to see the SRRIC fully operational to address some of their concerns over the deplorable state of roads they are subjected to daily?

Based on Response to Question 2: on Page 12

1. Who developed the three guiding documents the SRRIC is currently using?
2. How was each developed and the cost incurred?

Based on Response to Question 2: on Page 12

1. From what point during the company's existence will historical KPIs be used?
2. What will be the benchmarks to be used to compare each of the KPIs listed?

Based on Response to Question 3: on Page 12

1. How will the Predictive KPIs be tracked?

Based on Response to Question 5: on Page 12

1. Who will be monitoring and evaluating the KPI to ensure informed decisions are being made?
2. What is the timeline for the implementation of the specific plans and measurable outcomes to assess performance, investment strategies and decision making?

Risk Management

Based on Response to Question 1: on Page 13

1. Since the company's incorporation, what are some of the risks identified during the strategic planning of the company's operational activities?

Human Resources

Based on Response to Question 4: Pages 16

1. What training exercises were planned to be used with the \$105,000 allocation for fiscal 2023?
2. Has any training been conducted to date?

Based on Response to Question 9: Page 19

1. What will be the SRRIC's process of approving requests for road repairs?
2. What transparency mechanisms will be implemented to ensure the fair and equal processing of road repair requests?

Based on Response to Question 13: Page 19

1. What oversight mechanisms have been implemented to ensure the 6-week timeframe from request receipt to work commencement is the realised maximum standard?

Ministry of Works and Transport

Provide the following in writing:

- i. A breakdown of the list of road in need of repair submitted to the Ministry for the 41 constituencies;

- ii. The average cost of road repairs locally compared to the regional and international cost of road repairs;
- iii. A list of the 365 projects currently under the Programme for Upgrading Roads Efficiency Unit (P.U.R.E.); and
- iv. State how the classification of roads, biways, highways and secondary roads are determined.

Based on Response to Question 10: Page 19

1. What approval criteria has the MOWT decided upon to use when selecting successful requests?

APPENDIX III

Verbatim

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HELD (IN PUBLIC) IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, GROUND FLOOR, CABILDO PARLIAMENTARY COMPLEX, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF SPAIN, ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2023, AT 2.40 P.M.

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Mr. Laurence Hislop	Member
Mr. Hassel Bacchus	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Mr. Randall Mitchell	Member
Ms. Hema Bhagaloo	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Rachel Nunes	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian	Member
Ms. Amrita Deonarine	Member
Mr. Symon de Nobriga	Member

MINISTRY OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT

Mrs. Sonia Francis-Yearwood	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Srisati Seeram	Senior Economist (Ag.)

SECONDARY ROAD REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT COMPANY LIMITED

Mr. Herbert George	Chairman
Mr. Antonio Ross	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Curlan Guiseppi	Finance Manager

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon and welcome to the officials of the Ministry of Works and Transport and Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited. I am Bridgid Annisette-George and I am the Chairman of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and today we are about to embark on an examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited and these are aligned to sustainable development goal nine and sustainable development goal 11.

The Committee on Public Administration and Appropriations (PAAC) has the mandate to consider and report to the House on:

- (a) the budgetary expenditure of government agencies to ensure that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval;

- (b) the budgetary expenditure of government agencies as it occurs, and keeps Parliament informed of how the budget allocation is being implemented; and
- (c) the administration of government agencies to determine hindrances to their efficiency and to make recommendations to the Government for improvement of public administration.

The purpose of this meeting is to conduct an examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited. The role of the Committee is to assist the stakeholders in achieving the efficient delivery of services, while ensuring that expenditures embarked upon in accordance with parliamentary approval to determine the challenges being faced and possible solutions to these challenges and to make recommendations for improvement of public administration. The meeting is being held in public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's Channel 11 and Radio 105.5FM, and the Parliament's YouTube channel *Parlview*. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's topic via email, parl101@tpparliament.org, [facebook.com/tpparliament](https://www.facebook.com/tpparliament) and Twitter [@tpparliament](https://twitter.com/tpparliament). I will now invite the members of the PAAC to introduce themselves and I will start on my extreme right.

Introductions made.

Madam Chairman: Thank you and I will now invite our representatives to introduce themselves. I will start with the Ministry of Works and Transport. PS, I will invite you and you will introduce your team and then we will go on to the Chairman of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation Improvement Company Limited and his team.

Introductions made.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much and PS I think we will start with you. I invite you to make a brief opening statement if you so wish.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Thank you. Good afternoon again, Chairman and members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee and colleagues from the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited and members of the listening and viewing public.

SRRIC was assigned to the portfolio of the Ministry of Works and Transport with effect from March 03, 2023 and since that time the Ministry has been collaborating with SRRIC to, one, ensure that a company is compliant with the relative legislative and administrative requirements; to ensure that the company is adequately resourced to effectively implement its mandate; and assist with obtaining the necessary statutory approvals pertinent to the administration of the company and development of its programme.

To this end, the Ministry has availed SRRIC of its range of technical and advisory capabilities with the aim of facilitating its approach to continuous maintenance and upgrade of the national road network. We thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's

examination into the management and operations of SRRIC and commit to answering your questions to the best of our collective knowledge. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much PS, and I invite either the Chairman or the CEO of SRRIC to make a brief opening statement.

Mr. Ross: Thank you. A pleasant good afternoon Madam Chairman of the Public Accounts and Appropriation Committee, committee members, invited persons and the listening and viewing public. I would like to thank this Committee for the opportunity to be here and would like to place on record the following statement. I will be brief, three minute-ish.

We at the Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited, understand the plight and empathize with our fellow citizens when it comes to the state of our nation's secondary roads, namely the numerous potholes and badly worn surfaces, and as a result, we take our mandate very seriously. I was appointed CEO of this start-up company known as the Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited approximately six months ago. During the first three months under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, we recruited three managers, a corp. sec., and three engineers while bringing eight projects to fruition. After being moved to the Ministry of Works on the 3rd of March, we had to reset in a small space before commencing the build-out of the office space which we moved into actually just this week. We currently have 19 employees with the need to recruit an additional five of which four are management positions, at which point we will be well placed to deliver our mandate with our full complement of 25 employees.

The current cost of the build-out, which consists of people, office space, and equipment is about \$2.4 million. It is not \$100 million as been reported last week after the JSC on Land and Physical Infrastructure. With the recruitment of the Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company full complement of 24 employees, the annual personnel costs will be \$6.6 million. As of today, the 14th of June, as I sit here, of the initial \$100 million received from the Ministry of Finance, we have a bank balance of \$87,101,237.27 as well as, an additional \$100 million held at the Ministry of Works.

We have spent to date approximately \$10.6 million on nine projects completed to date. For the rest of 2023, we will have a total of approximately \$180 million to spend on 300 plus road repair and rehabilitation projects, of which 190 are ready to go out for tender to bring relief to the citizens of Trinidad Tobago directly and in their immediate neighbourhoods.

In closing, I would like to make the following very brief plug for the OPR. The Public Procurement and Disposal of Property Act, proclaimed on April 26th, meant that contractors had to be approved in the procurement depository to be invited to tender for road repair and rehabilitation work by the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited. They are currently 80 contractors registered in the procurement depository to provide road repair and rehabilitation, of which just a handful are either small or medium-sized contractors. I would therefore take this opportunity to encourage all contractors to log on to www.oprtt.org and

complete the process to become an approved provider of road repair and rehabilitation services to entities such as the Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company.

We, at the Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited, look forward to providing meaningful responses to this Committee. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, CEO and I want to say your brief opening statement, according to you, I use brief after you, certainly put certain things into the context for us. Okay, so that jumping off of that, I am just going to ask a few questions and then pass it on to my committee. You said I think it is only this week you moved into your own place. Is that the Uriah Butler Highway, Valsayn North, address?

Mr. Ross: Madam Chairman, yes, that is correct.

Madam Chairman: And that is exactly where?

Mr. Ross: Apparently, Madam Chair, it is a property that was once used to house the French company that was working on the interchange. So if you drive towards the Grand Bazaar flyover and you will veer left, and you make the roundabout at Mount Hope, and you head back south, and you are splitting as if you are going back east, it is on the right-hand side in a flat one storey building obliquely opposite Nestle.

Madam Chairman: Well, I think those directions really locate us in the right place. [*Laughter*] Okay, all right so, in terms of this I think you said that you have done eight projects since your recruitment in the last six months, right? Could you identify to us what those eight projects are?

Mr. Ross: Those projects are nine projects, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Nine? Okay nine.

Mr. Ross: Yes.

Madam Chairman: You know, there was a discrepancy—initially you said eight and then you ended up saying nine in another part, but okay, let us go with nine.

Mr. Ross: Madam Chair, those nine projects are: One project in Phoenix Park; another throughout Port of Spain, road restoration works; one in Mckai in Belmont; one in Brasso Venado; one in Fondes Amandes in St. Ann's; another on Corinth Road and Corinth Link Road in San Fernando; another in Palo Seco; one in Cumberland Hill; and Gaston—the recent one that may have missed me, myself is Gaston Street in Chaguanas, that was completed just within the last week or so.

Madam Chairman: All right and Gaston Street would make it nine?

Mr. Ross: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you. All right, so in terms of these nine projects, could you tell us how they were selected? How they were prioritized? Having regard to the fact that I think it is well known that the MPs would have been asked, prior to the company being transferred on the 3rd of March to the Ministry of Works and Transport, they would have been asked, when it was under Rural Development and Local Government, to submit their requests.

So could you tell us—give us an idea of how these nine were selected, whether the requests formed the basis for the nine? Or any of the requests?

Mr. Ross: Madam Chair, I want to point out, since we are already on this topic, the slight difference between the process while we will at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government versus at the Ministry of Works and Transport. The only difference in the process—so let me walk through the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government process first. My understanding is all the requests come through the regional corps. It goes through to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and then it got handed over to us—we incidentally were in the same building as them just a stone's throw away—walking distance, really. So we got the list from the Ministry of Local Government. As it stands now that we are under the Ministry of Works and Transport the same list, this is my understanding, would come from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, go to the Ministry of Works and Transport, at which point it would be collated and sent to us, at which point we will go ahead and scope and take all the measurements prior to submission for tender.

Madam Chairman: Just explain to us what collated means. Because I would expect, because from your mandate, we understand that you are secondary roads. I guess, when a member of the public, anybody, sends in a request to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and it may be a highway, it maybe anything, that then goes to the Ministry of Works and Transport, what does the collation involve? So give us an idea of how that works so that you know what falls under you, what goes somewhere else?

Mr. Ross: Madam Chair, if I may, I would like to pass the response to this question to the PS of the Ministry of Works?

Madam Chairman: PS.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, Madam Chair. As the CEO would have indicated, the projects would come from the Local Government, the regional bodies, and one would take it that it would come with some measure of priority because they would have identified what is critical for their areas. It would go to the Rural Development and Local Government line Ministry, that is their line Ministry, and then it would come to the Ministry of Works and Transport. In relation to—I hope I am picking up what you are asking. In relation to the then—taking it across to SRRIC, of course, the Ministry would review the listing that is provided and if there are any projects that are under the remit of the Ministry in terms of the type of roadway, we would then take that project and place it onto our programme. Other than that, it would go to the company.

Madam Chairman: And PS, I think you are best placed to explain this too. How does PURE fit into this? PURE is only highways or PURE is also highways and local roads?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, so PURE's mandate covers all roads. PURE is under the Ministry of Works and Transport and as such there would be a certain focus. However, in the past, PURE would seek to do work based on need and the resources that we have, yes.

Madam Chairman: So, is there a—does there exist a sort of overlap or duplication between PURE and secondary roads? So I understand PURE is wider but it, in being wider, it takes in even SRRIC, right? Who determines where that—so overlap might be the wrong word, but I will use your overlap. Who determines where that ends? Has that been determined or is it something to be fleshed out, if you could assist us with that?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Okay. So, as we said, the projects would be coming from Local Government, yes. Invariably, it would be determined at the Ministry level, because PURE would have already had a programme of works that has been identified, we have some 350 projects banked already, if not more, and we do not necessarily see it as an overlap, but we see it as added capacity under SRRIC. We are at the Ministry level, what we are trying to do is to provide any assistance that we can to SRRIC from a technical standpoint to ensure that we utilize resources properly, but at the same time ensure that there is no overlap. And in some instances, one can actually state that because the two entities are in the same area, there is less opportunity for overlap.

Madam Chairman: So it means that in 350, I think projects that PURE has some might be local roads, so that remains there. That is correct? And then moving forward, there may be a greater separation then with respect to what goes to SRRIC. IAs my understanding correct?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So, just to be clear, when I say 350, I meant projects that we already have identified, scoped, we have the drawings for, et cetera, Not that that is the complement of projects under the Ministry. But yes, but on the second half of the question, yes, it does not—The overlap that we may be looking at, does not seem to present itself at this time, because these are projects that are emanating from the Local Government, the regional corporations, which may not have been identified, but if it is, as you rightfully said, if it is that the listing comes and there is a project that is already identified under PURE and we already have the documents ready and prepared, we would undertake based on where the resource is available.

Madam Chairman: Right. So thank you. I have some further questions but I know my committee is just burning to get some clarification. So, I will invite members. I see Dr. Bodoë, the Vice-Chair, has a question or some questions he would like to ask. Dr. Bodoë?

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, and if I may direct this to Mr. Ross, the CEO. You mentioned that you have \$180 million which will be remaining unavailable for the rest of financial 2023 and that you have 300-plus road repair and 190 ready for tender. So my question would be, how prepared is the company in terms of being able to execute that mandate with the remaining funds for the year? Can you give us an idea of the challenges that you might face with just a few months remaining in the financial year?

Mr. Ross: Through you Chair. Thank you for the question member. You are right. As indicated, based on the amount of funds we have balanced, which is the majority of the funds that was given to us, most of it has not yet been spent. We will be able to do, by my calculation, because these are secondary roads, these are projects in neighbourhoods, this is some patching, a

lot of potholes, a lot of small projects, not massive projects. So, 300 is my estimate as to how many projects can be done. In terms of getting these projects done the biggest challenge—and that is why I brought up the OPR.

The biggest challenge is how many contractors are currently in the system. At 80 contractors for the entire Trinidad, that is not a lot of contractors. If you look and you put some projects in Port of Spain, you do not have a big basket. Of that basket it is also then separated into small, medium and large and then it is separated between who has access to asphalt and who does not. So, honestly, that is in fact the biggest challenge. If tomorrow we were so inclined to hire the last five remaining persons that we need to run the operation at its maximum capacity and efficiency, we are able to immediately go out and put out tenders. The question is, when we go into the OPR, if we look and let us say, let us take Moruga, and we want to put out some smaller contracts in Moruga, how many small contractors are in the system? That is the biggest challenge.

Dr. Bodoë: So, if I may just follow-up on the issue of asphalt, because obviously, that is an important ingredient of the road repairs, CEO, and you said, there are some challenges. Can you explain the reason for the challenges and what is being done to try and, you know, improve the situation?

Mr. Ross: Through you Chair. Member, asphalt is not a challenge, and I do not believe I indicated that in what I said. I hope I am not misinterpreting.

Dr. Bodoë: Sorry, you said some contractors may have difficulty accessing asphalt. Maybe you want to explain.

Mr. Ross: Well, asphalt in itself, as you well know, and all the members here know, is very, very critical to the operations. But in terms of difficulty, we have I believe 22 asphalt operators in the country and either way you take it, because we have open market capitalism here, any small contractor could go to their usual source, which will be another big contractor and purchase at whatever price. From a competitive perspective, maybe it would be less competitive but in the case of road rehabilitation and improvement works, you may find, for example, if it is a small contract, a lot of it may be concrete works and when we talk about road rehabilitation, it also includes drainage and box drains. I mean, a lot of people do not like box drains because it gets its own bad name but that is part of road rehabilitation, in the prevention of flooding and damaging the roads at a faster rate. So challenge wise, I do not think it is going to be a problem for small or medium contractors, they will just price it accordingly and they may win some lose some, but it is all open market.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair, if I may, just with one question further question. If I can direct this to Madam Permanent Secretary. You know, as an MP, there are always issues about which roads belong to who and so on, right, in terms of who should be approached to fix the roads. Would you be able to provide a classification from the Ministry's point of view as to how you classify your roads, highways, secondary roads and how you define those roads?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, member we can provide that and we will provide it in writing.

Dr. Bodoë: Are you are you able to give us some sense of what we are talking about? I know it might be something technical.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: That is okay. So if you actually look at section 3 of the Highways Act, it seeks to classify roads in terms of main roads, special roads, secondary roads and local roads and based on section 3 we have within the Act, there is actually a listing of roads that exist that identify which fall into which classification.

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: There is the ability of the highway authority, who is the Minister of Works and Transport, to move a road from one classification to another, and or to adopt roads as well and that is based on the—where the road is, the population density, and what the road is utilized for.

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So that is it, that is the overarching way in which it is done and we do have a listing, which as I said, we can provide you.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure, thank you. And my second question would be, you mentioned that PURE has 350 projects on hand and through you, Madam Chair, if I can ask whether you can provide the Committee with a list of those projects?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, member, I think, yes, I was going to say we provided it already in another place, but we can provide it. Sure.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So I just wanted to follow up on that PS. In terms of I know you undertook to provide the listing of the roads and I just wanted to ensure that we getting in that, the 80 per cent. If you can identify to us, what are the 80 per cent that falls under SRRIC.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So in relation to the 80 per cent, I did see we did submit a document that indicated 80 per cent. There is a bit of a variation in terms of that figure. I believe we took the 80 per cent to mean all roads outside of main roads and highways, which is actually around 22 per cent. But I would not quibble for 2 per cent. But the rest are not necessarily identified only as secondary roads, they are identified under as agricultural roads. Let us see. We have them under Ministry of well as local government roads, and as agricultural roads; that is how we would normally define it. So we have under Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and the THA. Yes, so that is how we necessarily—we have it broken down and I can provide that to you as well.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so outside of what is defined as a highway, when it comes to SRRIC's mandate, it will be all the other roads, meaning, agriculture roads, et cetera, or no?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Well, I see the CEO is chomping at the bit at this point in time. *[Laughter]* I guess it does show his eagerness with the position that he holds and I do not want to hold him back I will answer after he does to you.

Madam Chairman: CEO.

Mr. Ross: Madam Chairman, if I may, we also took a look at the Highways Act, and we tried to simplify the definition, especially so that the layman could understand what exactly is a secondary road. And what we came up with as a secondary road is any road that is secondary to the main road excluding agriculture access roads. So the simplicity of that definition would essentially rule out highways has been secondary roads, rule out the main road as being a secondary road and rule out the agriculture access road. Everything else generally is a secondary road.

Madam Chairman: Right. So according to you, the agricultural access roads would not fall under you. Right.

Mr. Ross: That is correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and while you are at that I cannot find it exactly where in your submission. But there was a statement where you all had said that for you all, you would want to say, to make a category of tertiary roads. Right. If you could just explain that to me. In the meantime, I will look to see if I put my eyes on the particular page.

Mr. Ross: Oh, Madam Chair, yes, please delete that from that submission. When we looked at it, what we were quibbling internally about was some of these secondary roads are like sub to secondary roads so we tried to figure out if it was more from where a layman would say if it was a tertiary road so yes, we actually modified that response.

Madam Chairman: All right. So there is an admission then that in law there is nothing as a tertiary road? Right.

Mr. Ross: That is correct Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: And regardless of how secondary a secondary road is it is a secondary road except from your perspective an agricultural road. Right. We know highways and main roads. Okay. Now, what I want to ask the PS, does that line up with your definition? Because “ah not sure”.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: It is when you take away the issue of tertiary roads and secondary roads and I am not too sure the last one you said, yes, it will line up and it would put the percentage of roads and that can be covered by SRRIC, around 43 per cent.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair, just for me to understand within housing developments, the roads and the box drains, you all have responsibility for that as well? *[Pause]* Okay, Madam Chair, that sometimes persons within housing developments even a Tobago employee would reach out to me and they could never figure out who is responsible for their particular issue. So—

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So, if I may, so the answer—the strict answer would be no, until they hand it over to either, the corporation or another entity.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so just answer this, who would be the other entity and that would give us an idea of the stakeholders we are hearing you all talking about in the particular example.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: It would be the corporation.

Madam Chairman: It would be the corporation.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Right. Thanks. CEO, I think you wanted to answer something, explain anything further?

Mr. Ross: That is fine, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Sure. Thank you. All right, member Mark.

Mr. Mark: And thank you, and welcome again. Mr. Ross, which organization or company would be responsible for agricultural access roads?

Mr. Ross: The corporation.

Mr. Mark: Is it the corporation, the regional corporations?

Mr. Ross: Oh sorry, Agriculture.

Mr. Mark: Or it is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries?

Mr. Ross: Through you Chair, member yes, it is the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Mark: And is there a working relationship between your company and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries in addressing and in ensuring well any activity—because I do not believe, I may be incorrect on this, but in terms of capacity, I do not know to what extent the Ministry of Agriculture has the capacity that you probably are now seeking to develop to address agricultural access roads. So that is why I ask the question, if there is any relationship between your company and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, in terms of agriculture access roads?

Mr. Ross: As I indicated member at the top of the conversation, all our directives and roads to be worked on comes directly from the Ministry of Works and Transport. So there is no coordination or communication between us and any other party.

Mr. Mark: You see, this is a conundrum, Madam Chair, that we are facing. But before I deal with the conundrum, may I ask another question? Could you tell this Committee what is the total number of roads that your company has received from the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government that would have been submitted by all 41 elected representatives in the Parliament? What is the total number and do you have a breakdown of each constituency in terms of the number of roads at the secondary level for repairs? And, what priority has been given to those submissions as it relates to repairing roads in those constituencies, 41? Do we have information on that?

Mr. Ross: Member, through your Chair. Again, I will point out the process that we are using. Everything comes through the regional corp., to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local

Government, and gets handed over to the Ministry of Works and Transport and all I see is a list from the Ministry of Works and Transport. In terms of prioritization, I am unaware of what the exact process is by those two other entities.

Mr. Mark: Here comes the conundrum. Here comes the conundrum. Madam Chair, that is a recipe for—I want to be very careful with my language. It is a recipe for some degree of uncertainty and unpredictability. Now, the Ministry of Works and Transport has something called PURE, which is a unit of the Ministry. So I can understand, Madam Chair, that the Ministry can determine which roads PURE deals with. But when it comes to the company, which is an independent, natural personality, under law, I—

Mr. Mitchell: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Mark: —well personality, right, you understand what I am saying?

Mr. Mitchell: Okay, okay.

Mr. Mark: I am no lawyer, I am a bush lawyer. Okay, you are the real lawyer so I will look for guidance. So Madam Chair, I am asking the question, how can the Ministry of Works and Transport direct an independent company under law that has—and look I have it here, in the Cabinet Note, I have the Cabinet Note, and the Cabinet Note outlines the mandate of this company. But all it says is that it will be under the purview of the Ministry. I did not see anywhere in this mandate, Madam Chair, where the Ministry has the authority to determine the number of roads and where these roads are going to be repaired. You see that could lead to geographical discrimination in quotation, and I am not casting aspersions. But you have just said Mr. Ross that your company is really a conduit. You are there as an independent company and you are taking—all the directions are coming from the Ministry, and there is where a number of constituencies in this country, whether it is on the red side, or the yellow side can experience real challenges. Madam Chair, I need your guidance on this matter. I need your guidance.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark, you have made a lovely statement and I think you should give either PS, or the CEO, an opportunity to respond to how roads— I think the CEO made it clear he does not know how roads are prioritized, so maybe you would like to see whether the PS can shed some light on that.

Mr. Mark: Yes, thank you, I will ask the distinguished PS to share with us, you know, how these things are determined? How are they prioritized? Who in your Ministry determines that? And under what authority under law that is done when you have an independent company under law that is responsible, given the mandate that we have before us. So could you share with this Committee, so we will understand what is going on?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Thank you member Mark. I will attempt to see if I can provide some clarity. So as you indicated this company was formed to, and I like the word that the Chairman tends to use add bandwidth, to implementation of road projects, and it was formed under originally the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. And the mechanism that was utilized by that Ministry was that the corporations, which serve the entirety of Trinidad,

would identify, based on their knowledge of their areas, the roads that would have priority that require—to be undertaken. That prioritization would then be submitted by each corporation to its head office, which would be the Rural Development and Local Government and there, the documentation would be then collated once again, prioritization, and submitted for the company for implementation.

On the company coming under the remit of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Ministry of Works and Transport, given the fact that its mandate spoke the secondary roads, did not seek to change the process that would be utilized. Same corporation would identify those areas that are most requiring of road upgrade, they would submit it to Rural Development and Local Government, line core Ministry, and then they would submit it to the Ministry of Works and Transport. At the Ministry of Works and Transport, as I indicated to the Chairman before, we would ensure that there is no duplication between the work that is being proposed through the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, and the work that is be undertaken by the Ministry of Works and Transport to its district offices, as well as PURE as well as—it has other agencies under it, which meaning like our Bridges, Landslips and Traffic Management Unit, et cetera. And that is the process that we inherited, and that we have tried to utilize to ensure that, one, the corporations which suppose—have an understanding of what is required, that they continue to do what they have to do, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government gives its input, and we make sure that there is no duplication before it is once again passed on to the company.

Mr. Mark: [*Inaudible*] —involve through the Chair, I did not complete my line of questioning. May I ask whether you can supply Mr. Ross, and the Permanent Secretary, may I ask whether you can supply in writing to this Committee a breakdown of all the submissions that were made by the various constituencies, the 41, and if we can get from you, given the limitation of resources, because you do have limitations, you only have \$187 million still to spend and there are I am sure hundreds of roads to be repaired in the country, secondary roads. So could you supply us in writing:

1. The number of roads that have been submitted by each constituency, the 41 of them;
2. How many-, the Ministry, given the \$187 million that you have to spend, have been prioritized in each constituency?
3. Could you also provide us with a time frame for the actual repairs to those roads, that has been determined based on a submission made by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, via the corporations that were submitted. And also, as I said, by the MPs, in conjunction I would imagine. How many of them would be completed within the time frame that you all have set, so that at least we here, at the level of the Committee would have an appreciation of what you have set, what you intend to complete, when you will be completing them and, of course, what additional resources you may require to deal with some of these matters that you obviously have to deal with?

So, I would welcome for instance, if that could be put in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark, sorry to cut you. I just want us to back up a bit. I think, for me, my understanding is that fiscal 2023.

Mr. Mark: Right.

Madam Chairman: The CEO estimates there are 300 projects that they could do with the money.

Mr. Mark: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I think that is my understanding.

Mr. Mark: Right.

Madam Chairman: I think if I understand the CEO well, SRRIC is not actually doing the work. They have to retain contractors.

Mr. Mark: Right.

Madam Chairman: So while they are scoping and whatever other processes they do, they have the capacity and the funding to do 300 until they get responses to the tenders, and he pointed out the contractor deficiencies that exist, they cannot say that the 300 that they have the capacity to put out there would be taken up, because he explained that they are only 80 in the depository and of the 80 not all of them are small and medium.

Mr. Mark: Right.

Madam Chairman: And the works I guess they have identified based on their allocation left and I guess to get the best spread. That is my understanding all he said. They do not have 80 to even execute 300 they have funding for. Right. So I think it would be difficult for the CEO to tell us, and I am not going to ask him to tell us time frame, because until they go there, and that is why he made the plea to the small and medium sized people, hey, comply with the procurement legislation. Because if you do not, I might have projects, but it is not a project that a big contractor will take. Right. So I have 300 projects and money for it but only 20 small and medium size qualify. And okay, yes, I might be able—he did not say that—but yes, I might be able to give the 20—the 300. But they are not going to be able to do it in an effective timeline as if I had 300 or 200. So, I think that is my understanding of the discussion that far. So while I will allow the—

Mr. Mark: I understand.

Madam Chairman: —requests for the number of roads that were submitted by people per constituency, I think the three and four are things we cannot ask the CEO for at this stage.

Mr. Mark: I may ask one final question before I turn over to the Chair, again. May I ask, Madam Chairman, through you to Mr. Ross and to the PS—I understand the point that you have made and Mr. Ross. What is being done or what do you suggest could be done by our Committee, and by your Ministry and company, to encourage contractors, small, medium and large to get on to the depository as the honourable Chair said, because there is in fact, a major gap between the 300 projects that you have identified and only 80 contractors and we do not know, based on what you have said, what percentage would be small and medium and large in terms of submission. So I just wanted to ask, because it is a very pertinent question in the context of the modern legislation

that was recently proclaimed. So, could you share with us in any way how you believe it could be done, and what role we can play as a committee in encouraging these contractors to get registered into this depository under the procurement legislation in T&T? So that is something Madam Chair, I would like to ask.

Madam Chairman: But, while I think it is some something of interest, I also think that is an unfair question for the CEO, based on the mandate, that might be a good question to ask the procurement regulator who we do not have here. But I think that is a bit and the CEO may want to proffer things, but I think that is pie in the sky. His mandate is to develop roads, secondary roads, infrastructure and road rehabilitation. The business of the procurement regulator is not as business save and except that he has to comply with that legislation to be able to do tenders. So that may be a question that we may want to, as you know, member, we do send out additional questions, that may be a question that you may want to ask the Committee to send elsewhere to put into this. I do not think it is a question for the Chief Executive Officer. I would not put any sort of probative value to his response, if he even ventured to give me one.

Okay, member Mark, you have anything else?

Mr. Mark: No I pause.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is to the PS. PS, I could be wrong but I think I am very sensitive and have this acute ability to sense where there is a little bit of conflict. And I am noticing a little bit in your body language between the parties—not in a bad way—and I will tell you where I am going.

Now, you in your opening statements, you indicated something that came to me as a big surprise. I did not know that the PURE unit was responsible for the entire road network in Trinidad. I thought that the Ministry of Works and Transport, through PURE, was responsible for the highways, the main roads and some secondary roads, and in fact, we have that here when we examine the Cabinet Note. So the information before us is that 9,000 kilometres—our road network is 9,000 kilometers in length. The Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for the maintenance and upgrade of highways, main roads and some secondary roads, which is 2,135 kilometres. The legal responsibility for the maintenance of the remainder of the road network, almost 7,000 kilometres, falls under regional corporations as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and other institutions. So, if we look at the other roads, that amounts to approximately 77 per cent, but if we make deductions for the THA roads, those roads that they are responsible for, and Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries through EMBD—Sen. Mark says he is not sure I am also not sure if they still manage the agricultural road network—let us say it is approximately 70 per cent for secondary roads. So, I am seeing an issue where there needs to be a review where the PURE unit under the Ministry of Works and Transport, their mandate and the Secondary Roads Company's mandate— Because the Secondary Roads mandate was born out of a specific problem and the problem was that the secondary roads in

Trinidad had deteriorated for many reasons. The inability of the corporations to manage them due to the funding that they receive, as well as the competence, and it was really causing—as well as poor construction methods and it really caused serious consternation to the travelling public.

So, how is it now where the Secondary Roads Company is under the Ministry of Works and Transport that you all are now—how are you all going to now separate the strategic imperatives and separate the mandate so that the Secondary Roads Company is able to, as approved by Cabinet, achieve their mandate?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: I am trying to distil the questions member, but I will start. If I may—

Mr. Mitchell: No, let me distil it.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: No, but if I may I just need to just clarify one statement you made—

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: —upfront. You indicated and Chairman, not meaning to—you indicated at my statement was that PURE, was responsible for all the roads in Trinidad. I do not believe that would have been my statement, I would have said that PURE has the capacity, or has the remit to undertake any type of road. PURE stands for the Programme for Upgrading Road Efficiency and the Note that created PURE gave it a little bit of a wider mandate than strictly highways and main road. And over its period of operation it has, where possible, based on its resources under taken more than highways and main roads. So in case what my statement prior in any way gave you a different impression, I just wanted to clarify that and apologize if it did. Yes, yes, member.

Mr. Mitchell: So, I am taking what you said in your statement, that PURE was responsible for the road network. But you have clarified yourself, but when you when you made the statement, I went to the website immediately and I checked and on your website under PURE, it gives the impression that you are responsible for the road network. Now be that as it may, because this is a new construct, a new company—when you bring these different elements under one Ministry, you are going to find, and what I may be sensing that PURE would like to jealously guard its mandate to repair the road network. This new body also would like to achieve its mandate as set out by Cabinet. Having regard to your website, having regard to the mandate given to this new company by Cabinet, how are you now going to separate whose mandate is what to achieve the infrastructural upgrades and efficiency that we all want to see in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So, member, going back to your identification of the different road types, where as you rightly said 22.1 per cent is under main roads and highways at this time, 18.3 per cent approximately is under Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries based on agricultural access roads, 16.5 per cent is THA and we have identified 43.1 per cent as under the Ministry—

Mr. Mitchell: Secondary.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: —well, under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and secondary.

Now, as we may have stated earlier, we really see that with the placing of the Secondary Roads Company under the Ministry of Works and Transport, it can actually be utilized in terms of a better coordinating effort to make sure that there is no duplication and also to make sure that resources are best utilized and resources meaning, technical capacity and systems that may have been developed, yes, that could now be put to the company's disposal. So I am not clear.

I will try and loosen up my body language a little bit more because, sorry, as we speak under the Ministry of Works and Transport, what we are seeking to do is to see how best we can assimilate the company that we have been given to oversee, to make sure as I indicated in my opening remarks, that they are properly set up, that they follow legislative requirements, and that anywhere that we have resources that we can assist the company in terms of their development and how they build-out that we do so. So for instance, as the CEO would have indicated, they are now in new accommodation, it is a Ministry of Works and Transport, building. In the same way, any other type of resource that we can harness to have them develop, that is what we do. Because at the end of the day, we understand that the intention is to bring the road network of Trinidad to a standard that is acceptable to the entire country and as much resources that can be placed, we are willing to so, accept and work with, member.

Madam Chairman: Member Bodoë.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I just want to direct this question to the CEO, and it is regarding in your submission the memorandum of understanding is currently being concluded between SRRIC and WASA which will allow WASA to meet their regulatory industry commission's standard of progress to reach within seven days with the work being completed by the SRRIC. So two questions. One is, has this MOU being completed? And the second would be if the answer is yes, would the company, the SRRIC be responsible for completing all restorative work following WASA Repairs?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question member. Through your Chair, the MOU that we were attempting to put together as you will note, at the time when this these questions came to us we were kind of in between moving from Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to the Ministry of Works and Transport. At the time, we were seriously looking into an MOU, which is just a framework where we would discuss and figure out stuff, right, where we were observing that there was some degree of difficulty being fostered upon the public, whenever roads were repaired, well, whenever leaks were repaired and the time it took to get those roads repaired.

3.40 p.m.

And for the most part when one of the public passes over a bad spot six months after it was a WASA leak repaired, they do not say WASA, what they might say is the regional corporation. So we were trying to overcome that situation. And in so doing when we came over to the new Ministry we actually abandoned that project in itself. At the same time though, I do

see that there are a lot of benefits and synergies in working with WASA save and except for the legal requirement for WASA to do the repairs whenever they dig the road up, or whenever they do a repair. They are legally obligated to do the road repairs as well.

So, I still believe there is some opportunity for that. To look at it as an MOU and to get into a serious position to assist in quickly alleviating the bad roads after those leaks are repaired. But that is something that is not given within the Cabinet mandate for number one, and because we are operating under the current Ministry they need to give us some guidance as to whether they would like us to pursue that. But from my perspective, I believe that is something that should be pursued, save and except for the legal authority of WASA to repair those roads back to how it was before any leak incident had occurred.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you CEO. If I may invite the PS with your permission, Madam Chair, to perhaps, shed some light on where we could go with this. Because at the end of the day, the mandate of both the Ministry of Works and Transport and this new company is really to provide better roads for the public. And, CEO, you said it causes some measure of difficulty for the public when these roads are dug up and not repaired. But I want to say to you, that is not really some measure of discomfort, it is a lot of discomfort. Because many of these, you know, WASA sites, remain unrepaired for long periods of time creating not only discomfort but danger to the public.

So Madam PS, I do not know if you want to give your take on this as to where perhaps the Ministry of Works and Transport is looking at. Because at the end of the day—and again maybe you can clarify, Madam PS, regardless of who damages the road it will be the mandate and the responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Transport to ensure that the roads are safe for the public to use.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, member. So just as you said just for some clarification, now there is difference between—and the CEO mentioned it—the legal requirement and the issue of safety of the roadway. So under section 65 of the Highways Act, it provides under one, two, three, four, there are four particular specific articles here, which says that if you are undertaking:

“...any work which involves the breaking...or opening of any highway...”—that—“...it, shall...”—be—“...reinstated and made good the street after completion of the works...”

And it goes on to state in terms of time and what happens if the person does not undertake. And this feeds right back into the WASA responsibility in terms of fixing the road when a leak is fixed or there is some type of road work.

Now, of very importance is the issue of if WASA fixes a line and then you come and fix the road, there is then a certain transference of liability in terms of what is fixed by WASA. So there is a need to be very careful in terms of ensuring that WASA goes into a roadway to fix a road, WASA does the repair. When the Ministry goes in to a roadway to fix the roadway and there is a WASA pipe there, the Ministry takes on the responsibility of moving the pipe. It pays for moving the pipe it does all that is required in terms of moving the pipe and it takes on that liability. When WASA goes and fix a pipe based on something that has happened under the roadway then they take on that liability and one just has to be careful, it is outlined in law, as to

the steps that supposed to be taken. That is one.

Two, under this Ministry we also have a unit within our Highways Division called the Utilities Unit, that unit seeks to engage WASA on a consistent basis because WASA is supposed to identify to the Ministry every time it is going to do any work under the roadway, unless it is emergency works.

Yes. So we have—I may even go one step further. The Ministry also identifies for WASA all of its programme of works for the year and if we are going to be doing work on an ad hoc basis, we also identify to WASA. So there is a system, there is a legislative underpinning to how the interaction should go.

We have also undertaken to enter discussions with WASA in years gone by in terms of trying to tighten how we fulfil what the law says, and we are in continuous discussion on that.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam PS.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: And we have provided that type of information to the company.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. I mean while that is obviously a good explanation it is all very clear in the law and so on, you know again, it remains to those who use the road that this is surely not a satisfactory situation. Is there anything else from the Ministry of Works and Transport's point of view that you envisage, perhaps you can throw in a suggestion here to this Committee, in terms of getting this coordination a bit tighter, because certainly roads are not repaired within the seven-day time frame as stipulated by the RIC conditions.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: So member, we already have it legislated. It is to be enforced and I would image if the Committee puts as one of its recommendations the constant urging or setting up of some external team to seek to ensure that it is undertaken. That may be one way of going.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, PS.

Madam Chairman: Member Hislop.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you Madam Chair. I just want to drop back a little bit. I am concerned be about the quality of the work. And in the submission, it says that there is a—you want to seek to narrow the gap between request and delivery, but we have a challenge with available contractors. So the question—one of the questions I want pose coming out of that is, how do you—what is plan to treat with the shortfall in contractors? Now, it says that the contractors are used based on the zones, and you prefer to use contractors within the zones that they are located so that it reduces mobilization time and maximizes the use of resources in each zone, which I am in favour of because if you treat with contractors within the community there is a spin-off effect in the community, economic activity and so on.

So how do you plan to treat with the shortfall you have with the contractors in relation to your desire to deliver in a more timely manner? Because if you have is it 80 contractors you said that are on the system, if you are in an area that does not have a contractor who is registered, what is plan? Would you bring in a contractor from outside that zone to complete the work?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question member. Through you, Chair. Ideally, the ideal situation

is having sufficient contractors where you have small, medium, large, in almost every area of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the ideal situation, but most parts of Trinidad and Tobago, especially the southern part of Trinidad and Tobago, cannot wait on an ideal situation like that.

So as it stands, as long as we get a list of contractors—sorry not contractors, but works to be completed from the Ministry and it trickles down to us, we will go ahead and invite people to tender, and it may be a job in Moruga and we might have to pull a Princes Town contractor, or a Rio Claro contractor, or as we expand that it might be a San Fernando contractor. But at the same time most of the larger and medium contractors have the capacity to go anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago to get work done. And at the end of the day we would have to deviate from what is the ideal situation and effectively deal with the pleas of the communities in Trinidad and Tobago and deal with it from that perspective instead and just get the work done.

Mr. Hislop: I want to commend you for that CEO; because I think what should be placed paramount is seeing about the needs of the constituencies, of the members, of the driving public. Because we all in this room, would have to drive on the same bad roads. Now you treated with the training of contractors. So the two questions I have is, was the training mandatory? And how many contractors did you have that participated in the training?

Mr. Ross: Thanks for your question, member. It was a one-day training, but it was also at the same time a sensitization session so that those who may not have been aware that there was this Secondary Road Rehabilitation Improvement Company would have been aware that is contractors, and especially small contractors. We had a participation of about 200. The intent at the time was every quarter to do another session in a different part of Trinidad and Tobago. But again, that is also under the auspices of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Since then we have not done any, but at the same time, we are in the situation of the OPR only having 80 contractors in it. So until that hurdle gets crossed there is no amount of sensitization session for small contractors to look towards the Secondary Roads Company and to make sure they are registered. They still will have to go get registered with the OPR and that I believe should be the most important priority ahead of us engaging with small contractors at this time. Prior to the April 26 passage of the legislation, it was all well and good. But since then I believe the focus should be getting to that OPR, having them registered so we can go in the system, see them and invite them to partake in the tendering process.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you CEO. Chairman, I got the impression that the training was to strengthen the construction practices of the contractors. That is what I thought the training was about. But I gather that is not what your first session was about, your first session. So is there a plan by the company to engage contractors in good construction practice sessions, and then what are the oversight and checks and balances that are in place to make sure that projects are completed as tendered? Because we know we have a reputation in the country where contractors do work, or we give out contracts to contractors, the work is not done to standard and then we have a situation that we pay out money and then within a year, within six months, we have road slippage,

we have sinking. So share with the committee and the listening public.

Mr. Ross: Thank you for the follow up member. As a matter of fact you are correct, that the purpose of that session was some measure of training in good practice with concrete and asphalt and specifically we were kind of focusing on the whole idea that if we were to deploy hundreds of contractors closer to their home base, we would be able to get much smaller jobs done like potholes.

The issue with potholes is, I mean, as a member of the driving public and travelling public, it is really a scourge in the nation and the idea of bringing in these small contractors who would have no problem doing six or seven potholes within two/three streets of the neighbourhood as a contractor, that would be a small contractor: It is not something that would be attractive to a big contractor from San Fernando to go do 10 potholes on three streets far from his home base. So you are correct. It was fostering the good practices to the smaller contractors as to what would constitute a good patching of a pothole versus patching a pothole today and in one month it is totally obliterated.

In terms of quality control and quality assurance, within the current set up that we have at the Secondary Roads Company, we have at least five engineers currently employed, and five technicians. The purpose of the technician is, for example, we recently did the Gaston Street project. The purpose of the technicians is to be there during the entire process at the different steps of the process and ensure that there is quality control and assurance, including of the type of materials being used, the sampling, the testing, they are sending it to the lab. In terms of the actual methodology that is being employed, ensuring that the methodology is as per the contract, and that is how you actually get good quality roads. And basically, we are doing all we could to ensure we get quality for the resources that we are putting out, and to ensure that the life of the road would be longer than the usual, or the minimal expectation that we have grown accustomed to expecting.

Mr. Hislop: Madam Chair, one final follow-up. In terms of your checks and balances, what is there in place with a contractor? Is there a retention when you do the contract? Is the contractor responsible within a time frame for if the works that were completed were not done to the standard that you would have set out?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for the question again, member. Yes, there is a retention of 5 per cent of the total contract value, as well as I think the issue is enforcement. I am not sure and I mean, under the Secondary Roads Company, me having come from a different environment that had nothing to do with road paving, in different environments it goes by what they are accustomed to, and I believe it is an issue of enforcement. So if we are to enforce that six months or whatever time period, then I think that we would be able to get slightly better responses. But as it stands, from the projects we have done so far we have seen nothing that would give us pause thus far.

I am also aware that there is a certain amount of evaluation and scoring that is done where if a contractor does a job and it is not satisfactory in terms of being reinvited to tender, that would play upon that process in that evaluation.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Bacchus, thank you for being so patient. I think after you we would have completed the full circle.

Mr. Bacchus: The full rounds.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Bacchus: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon again. Couple things, it is interesting that you are running quite a lean organization. And you said if you get to the point you want to get is 25 of you. But when you look at the mandate that you have been given it seems quite large. I think part of the confusion that happens in the general public space and other places is when you are responsible for and I mean, it says it in this thing, the development of existing infrastructure of the road repairs, rehabilitation, upgrade of road works and thing. People get around to the thinking that you have this army of people who go out with backhoes, trucks, excavators, and so on and fix it. On a very high level just that we put a full context around this area, what exactly it is that you are doing in the context of your mandate?

Mr. Ross: Thank you very much for that question, member. Through you, Chair. It has to be looked at in the context of project management.

Mr. Bacchus: Okay.

Mr. Ross: So there are no more words I could add to that. It is really project management, which then if you look at it from that perspective you can see why you could run a lean operation. To be honest, the most important part of it, to go back to what—the member Hislop’s point of view, is the quality control and quality assurance part is where the bulk of the personnel would actually come from. If you invest more in that portion of the job or in that portion of the employee base, you could easily increase your bandwidth, do not increase the management and the other structures, but increase the engineering and the technician aspect of the jobs. But at the end of the day, it really is project management.

Mr. Bacchus: I want to thank you for that and I think many people would have been educated based on that answer. It is really important that we set that context so we know where you are. There has been significant conversation surrounding the impact of the proclamation of the procurement legislation and what you had before. And even in your answer to member Hislop you did mention that prior to that things were different. Is it that prior to that the multitude, the amount of contractors across the definitions that you have, small, medium, and large, was sufficient or big enough that you would have been able to get to that number that you mentioned earlier in terms of your mandate and the expenditure that you think you could have accomplished?

Mr. Ross: The short answer member is yes. However, at the same time, I do not want to listening public to get a negative view of the presence of the procurement legislation and the procurement depository. It is really a good thing but it is really for the contractors to sign on to it. And I know I got protection earlier from Madam Chair, but something has to be done to increase that

uptake of these contractors registering in the system. I mean, there is nothing else I could add to that except they got to go to *www.opr.org* and get this thing done.

Mr. Bacchus: The OPR should pay you a fee for advertisement.

Lastly, at least for this round, I sit in another place with another job specifically dealing with technology, and in your submission one of the things that I noticed, we were talking about what systems and processes were in place relative to data and information sharing and so on, specifically within the context of road rehabilitation. And the answer that came about was primarily focused on the WASA thing with GIS and so on. And you have already explained where that WASA thing is going. Where are we with that and how is the implementation or the adoption of technology going to help you in where you are going and us in general?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for that again, member. So this two—well, it is all GIS software but there are two key differences between what was done before and what we are doing. So the normal general public would see an engineer rolling a wheel along a road. The difference now will be a handheld, which we have, he would click from where he is standing and he would walk from there to another point and he would click again and that would give him his measurement.

How that ties in is that now he would come back to the office, plug that device into a computer and it would basically outline every single measuring point that he did, street name, distance, even if he is going to do the width of the street he can also use that same device. What it does as well it helps to manage the projects that were completed because you can go on the map of Trinidad and see the projects after you have completed them. At the same time how we tie that back to the WASA MOU.

As a matter of fact, the first interaction I had with anything with ArcGIS it has always been in my head, it is in your head but you do not know that it exists, is in the MOU discussion with WASA they spoke about this software. And they demonstrated the use of this software where they can go on the software and see which lines they intend to change out, when they intend to change it, where there is a leak, what is the status of that leak, the rate at which they are repairing leaks, how many days old that leak is, how many days old that repair is. And that same type of technology can be used in the road paving space. And basically in almost any space where there is distance measurement and locating the items where you have thousands of, in the case of another place where I come from, you got well heads, you can sit on a map of Trinidad in an office and see where they are, understand the status, and put notes around that sort of stuff.

So to tie back to another question, I am not certain if you were the one who asked it or if it was the member Hislop, about how long these repairs last? You can do a repair, put it on a GIS map, and go back and see when that repair was done. So in any road evaluation you can go and see well but wait a minute this was done by contractor's name, this is the works that was done, and this is when it was done. And you could use that as an alarm system to tell you that he gave you a six month warranty and we are in month four. Or the warranty period has been completed and the work has been done satisfactorily.

So in terms of the use of technology and GIS software, the first introduction came via that WASA discussion and I believe it is an extremely powerful tool that can be used in this space.

Mr. Bacchus: Madam Permanent Secretary, I assume that the Ministry is also adopting and utilizing technology in the pursuit of what it is doing similar to and will get similar benefits to those—*[Inaudible]*

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes, member. Actually, the Ministry has been working with IDB on a number of these same technologies that they would have rolled out at WASA. It is working with the Ministry. We have something called “Pavimentaros” that we are working with as we speak, which will give you the—it will give the road condition survey, it will give you the sighting et cetera. We also have another programme similar to what is being spoken by Mr. Ross, in terms where all our engineers will be going out with handheld devices. I will talk to him after because they do not have to come back in, they get it one time. So we are doing the same thing and I guess that is why we will now have synergies, further synergies. Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you Madam Chair, I wanted to ask about the internal audit function at the company. That is a very important function. I want to know what is the status of your internal audit unit.

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, member. As it stands, that unit is not yet currently working. However, as of I think yesterday we sent out requests for—again this is where the OPR comes in.

In order to hire persons we have to now get a competent company that is already registered under the OPR. So we got through that hurdle already and now we are going to be sending out invitations. Well they would be undertaking the invitations for those to apply for open positions and that is one of those positions, which is for an internal auditor as well as an—sorry an internal audit manager and an auditor.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The time line?

Mr. Ross: Well, I would say five weeks and I will tell you why. Because even when you interview someone for a job and if they are currently employed, they still would have to give their employer sometimes four weeks’ notice, one month. So between sending out advertisement, getting them to come in, filtering through the system, conducting the interviews, that could easily be three weeks, four weeks, and then a further four weeks when they giving their notice if we accept one of those candidates.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Madam Chair, my other question is, in reviewing your response to the Committee, a question was asked about the strategic plan and you noted that members of the board were working on it. I want to know if there is any change in terms of the status since you submitted this on the 04th of April.

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, member. Again, similar situation, we have four

contractors that we selected. So we going to send out requests for proposals and the members of the board will not be working on that. We will actually be using a professional organization who have done strat plans before, and they will be getting together us and working on that strat plan.

So again, that invitation would probably go out next week and I am not certain what that time frame is going to be but yes, it is in progress, because according to the SEPMM it is really those two items that we have outstanding, which is the audit function and the strat plan.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you.

Mr. Ross: Thank you, member.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark, and then member Mitchell.

Mr. Mark: Mr. Ross. Mr. Mitchell, Mitchell, Randal could you just lean back, thank you. Mr. Ross, can I ask on behalf of this Committee, or to supply this Committee with the current expenditure of this company thus far? What has been the expenditure level or the value thus far? I know you are just about six to seven months old, but how much money this company has spent thus far? Is it about \$13 million?

Mr. Ross: Through you Chair, thank you for your question, member. In the opening statement, I indicated that the exact bank balance of the \$100 million that was received is \$87,101,237.27. So one could easily calculate from that that where maximum spend on this company is in the vicinity of \$12.9 million.

Mr. Mark: And that is for the first \$100 million? What about the second \$100 million?

Mr. Ross: It is still at the Ministry of Works and Transport. It has not been received by the company, member.

Mr. Mark: Okay. I will come to that just now. But let me just ask, you see why the member Webster-Roy raised this question about the internal audit function. Because I am very happy to note, although I am disappointed, that it is taking a bit longer than usual. But it is good to know that you are going to have your internal audit manager, and auditor, on board within the next five weeks because you have spent thus far as you said around \$13 million. Okay. And that is rising. So I am sure that this Committee and the Chairman in particular, would look forward to you reporting to this Committee within the next five weeks that you have your internal audit function up and running. That is the first thing I want to emphasize and I would like you to at least provide our committee within that period.

The other point I want to raise is this, could you tell this Committee out of the nine projects executed thus far, the names of the contractors involved and the tendering process executed, whether it was competitive, whether it was sole select? Through the Chair.

Mr. Ross: Through you, Chair, I do not have that information here in terms of the list and I am not certain Chair—I guess we can provide that in writing to the committee. The list as opposed to calling names in this room.

Mr. Mark: This is a public—we do not operate a secret society as far as I know. This is a public

matter involving public money, and it demands transparency, openness, and accountability. Anything about secrecy only the Chair has the authority to decide that.

Madam Chairman: But okay my understanding is that you do not have it here with you.

Mr. Ross: That is correct, Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Ross: I do not have it here but we can provide it in writing if that is no problem. Thanks member, thanks Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Yes. Let me continue. Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier on Madam Permanent Secretary, it may have missed you but I am going to tell you, it did not miss me. You used the word “assimilate” and I am sure if you go back to the *Hansard*, you will come across that word. My understanding of assimilate is absorption. My understanding of assimilate is to bring an organization into conformity, and this is where, Madam Chair, I have a problem. You know, capitalism is a system if you do not really have policy interventions by the Government through the State, the rich would become richer and the poor will become poorer. The big companies will become larger and the smaller ones like Eric Williams said, the sharks will consume the sardines.

I am asking the question as it relates to the Ministry of Works and Transport because Mr. Hislop made the point earlier that all of us drive on the road and we want our roads repaired. So the needs of the motoring public is very important. But I also want to say, apart from the needs of the motoring public, policy implementation and direction is critically important.

So my understanding that there is a policy within the Government to promote small and medium sized businesses so that the largesse within the State can trickle down to the small and medium sized business owners, business organizations and/or businesses. What I am seeing here, Madam Chair, is based on what we have been told so far. And given what I see I want to be very careful. I do not want to call it strangulation. I would not want to call it strangulation, but I want to say that—

Madam Chairman: I do not want to cut you in full flight but you know and I know how good you are at making nice speeches tying up things. But you know in anticipation of the question, I am not sure, so if maybe you could get a little more directly to the question then I will be you certain will not be strangulating anybody.

Mr. Mark: Well, I prefer the word “retard” rather than strangulate.

Madam Chairman: Nice word, but still though in fairness to the PS, I think the question is going to be directed to her. If maybe, we can get a little more directly to it.

Mr. Mark: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Because we may very well get lost in the very lovely waited speech.

Mr. Mark: The preamble, Madam Chair. You are so kind. So let me get to my point directly, Madam Chair. I wanted to ask the Permanent Secretary, what specific measures are being taken to allow this company to fly in accordance with the Cabinet mandate? I think this is a very

serious matter and we need to get some answers, Madam Chair, as to what is being done to allow this company to really flourish consistent with the mandate given to this company by the Cabinet. That is my issue, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Thank you member. So I took the opportunity while you were speaking to look up the word “assimilate”. It says:

Take in and understand fully
And that is basically what the Ministry—

Mr. Mark: Just repeat that for me.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Take in and understand fully.

Mr. Mark: No. That is partly. There is also a definition that I have here that talk about absorb and it talks about conformity.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: I do apologize I am using the Oxford Language Dictionary here.

Mr. Mark: Well I am using thesaurus.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Well, I am using the dictionary so—

Madam Chairman: I am so happy for the language skill and the lexicon that we have here, but I think member Mark.

Mr. Mark: I understand.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. And I think in fairness you put your question in a particular context.

Mr. Mark: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And the PS is now going to answer in a particular context.

Mr. Mark: Okay.

Madam Chairman: And you are seasoned enough here long enough to know that you might not get the answer the way you want it want be, but it is for the respondent to answer.

Mr. Mark: My apologies to the Permanent Secretary.

Dr. Bodo: And member if anyway, I apologize to you as well. But I wanted to try and work in proper because I believe the question that you ask is critical, right. Because you spoke to the question of policy and as a public officer this is what part of my role is, to implement policy. And in terms of what the Ministry has done in order to try to make this company fly, one of the first things we would have done is to seek to understand—come back to assimilate—is to seek to understand the platform upon which it has started and it is building itself. Because member, you know, that in another committee if I do not do that, there is a chairman in that committee that will make sure that they identify the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual* to me and tell me what my role is. So we have sought to ensure that the company its build out is being done on the legislative framework, and the guidance provided by Ministry of Finance in terms of its structure, in terms of its mandate it has gotten to move forward. So that is the first level of what we have done.

Secondly, we understand also that while those things are being developed and the

Chairman is working assiduously to make sure all those things happen, within the Ministry, we do have resources. We have systems that have been developed and we have said to the company, we can assist you in terms of your scoping; we can assist you in the whole suite of project management services that you require in order to make sure that you get your work done. The whole suite of quality control and quality assessment. We spoke that be before. So in the Ministry we have the capacity where when the engineer goes on site there can be testing of the asphalt to make sure it is to specification, yes? That there can be other testing done to make sure that we undertake the work in terms of what was laid out in the contract.

We also have procurement processes that we have, listing of contract, prequalified list of contractors, et cetera. And all of those things we have made available to the company in order for it to—and I use your word member, fly.

I also want to just make a little clarification that we make the statement that the Ministry has \$100 million holding for the company. There is an allocation of \$100 million; it was under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and in the mid-year review, that allocation was then placed under the Ministry. But as you know, member, an allocation is just that. It is an allocation until we have projects that are at a certain point that we can then apply for the funds from the Ministry of Finance, and that was not reached to that stage as yet.

But in terms of assisting the company to fly, we are making sure that it conforms or we are seeking to ensure it conforms to the *State Enterprises Performance Managing Manual*, we are providing at its disposal the resources within the Ministry from a technical standpoint. We have also indicated to the company in terms of the new Procurement Act the Act requires you to do certain things, it requires certain committees to be set up and it requires certain disciplines to be on that committee. Where the company does not have the discipline as yet, the Ministry has indicated that the Ministry's personnel can be utilized. This has been cleared with the Office of the Procurement Regulator and it is not only with this company that it is being done, but the other companies under the Ministry's remit. Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Member.

Mr. Mark: You just indicated I do not know if I got you correctly. You do provide human resources as well. Or did I get you wrong? Under an arrangement that you will get the approval of the Procurement Regulator to assist the company? Could you clarify that for me or did I get you wrong?

Mr. Ross: No. I indicated that so under the new Act in order for the company to continue in terms of it has to form an evaluation committee, it has to form a PDAC committee. Under the PDAC committee, in particular, there are certain specific positions, and there are one of two things that can happen. One, so where there is a need for legal under that PDAC committee, if necessary the Ministry will provide someone to sit on the committee. The OPR has also indicated that if it is the company has not formed a PDAC committee for its existing projects, that the Ministry's PDAC committee can be utilized in the interim.

Mr. Mark: Yeah. Madam Chair, you know there is something called on organogram or an organizational structure. Mr. Ross, you do have that and in terms of your organogram for your human resource needs, or warm bodies, would you have taken into account the establishment of a legal unit since you are an independent company although you take policy direction from the Ministry, that is the line Ministry, and then from the Cabinet?. So in your organizational structure, to get your company functioning, up and running, flying efficiently, would you have put in place in your organizational structure the establishment of a legal unit and when would that unit come into being?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, member. Through you, Chair. As indicated on the opening statement, we currently have 19 employees, very lean indeed. We need to fill in five more, not warm bodies because “warm bodies” is a slight bit different from people who have competency and capacity. Of the five persons, four of them are management. Of those four management, one of those is in fact the legal manager.

Mr. Mark: All right.

Mr. Ross: So in short time we will turn around and recruit those bodies now that we have the physical space that we moved into last week. Prior to last week, we were operating in two rooms and a borrowed conference room in part of that building. And as within the last two days we now have a physical space and now we can fill those spaces with competent persons to get the job done so that we could get value for money.

Mr. Mark: Finally, Madam Chair, based on your revised organizational chart or structure, what is the number you require to fill in all these areas within that chart? Is it just about 30 people? That is what you are envisioning? Because I know right now, you have 24, or 19 rather. Is it just 24 in all that would be your company?

Mr. Ross: That is correct, member.

Mr. Mark: And that would allow you to perform your project management role efficiently, effectively, delivering value for money, and accomplishing your objectives? That is what is required as far as you are concerned?

Mr. Ross: Well noted, member. That is correct.

Mr. Mark: Okay. Well we look forward to getting some positive results. Madam Chair, I will pause at this time.

Madam Chairman: Just before I call you member Mitchell. Mr. Ross, just something to clear up for us. So just to tie in from where member Mark left, originally we saw there were like 82 positions until you came and you revised them. But now you are talking about a full complement of 24. Your original revision was 30. Which are the ones that you are no longer pursuing and what caused that change?

Mr. Ross: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Because I notice also your \$7.9million has now come down to six. Right so if you could just explain that to us please? Thanks.

Mr. Ross: So thank you, Madam Chair, through you. Now I can speak to the old chart that I sent you because I do not have the old chart here, but I have the new chart.

Madam. Chairman: Oh, so there is a further revision.

Mr. Ross: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: And that is of what date?

Mr. Ross: As of I believe a month ago.

Madam Chairman: All right. So it might be more useful if you give us in writing showing your revision and the current position, okay, those changes and explanation with respect to or the justification then for those changes, okay. Because it will answer or help us understand the question that member Mark asked in terms of impact on your operational efficiencies et cetera.

Mr. Ross: Madam Chair, thanks. But I just want to add one further point. When we looked at what was originally thought out, I guess it was designed the way it is normally designed. But when we sat and we filtered through it properly, we came up with the idea of project management, lean organization, and most importantly ensuring that the bulk of the money that was given to us was spent in delivering to the people, as opposed to it being spent on fattening this calf. So that is how we came up with this very lean organization which has seven managers. Of that 24 positions you are looking at seven management. At least one person because you got to have some measure of redundancy in the event, God forbid, a manager falls ill or cannot come to work, that the company can still operate. That we needed to have sufficient clerical persons. Especially when you are doing tendering it is a lot of paper work. So it is a lot of printing making sure things are accurate and that sort of stuff.

And really and truly that is how we came about having this very lean organization, 24 persons, total cost of \$6.647 million per year in salaries.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Member Mitchell thanks for being so patient.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I too was a little curious about the word “assimilate”, but I am happy to receive that the word “assimilate” really means the technical sharing and the sharing of competence across all the bodies and the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Madam Chair, permit me to—in going through the documents to really commend the organization. In a matter of seven months, developing the policies that you have in accordance with the *State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual*, as well as your procurement policy in accordance with the new laws. And also as a resident of San Fernando in doing such good work on that current link road that was done in the matter of two nights. I really want to commend you on that, and I really checked and it was holding up really well until of course, there was a WASA leak that sprung just in front of C3 but I want to commend you on that.

Now, I want to go back to some previous questions, the question on technology and some questions that Mr. Mark raised, member Mark raised. To you, Mr. Ross, we want to clarify your operational mandate or rather, let me put it a different way, how does the company intend to

operate? How autonomous does the company intend to be? Because we are talking about technology and in the main you spoke about technology in a retrospective way, but there were public statements made about this company and how it was intended to operate, but we are hearing about the archaic system of constituency representatives giving names of streets and identifying roads and potholes and so on.

We were expectant that this company would utilize technology so that without having to be sent a request in a letter, and there are competent letter writers in the House of Representatives, but without that you all will know in a very proactive way where these potholes are, where these landslips are, through the use of technology. And, as you answer that, how does the company intend to operate now under the new local government reform construct where the corporations, I suppose, will interact with the company directly and vice versa?

Mr. Ross: Thank you very much for that question member. I want to go back a little bit to member Bacchus. I know technology is his framework, but in my mind as the CEO of this company, I want to be cautious about duplicating efforts in terms of technology. Because here you would have—in a less than ideal world you may have WASA looking at some sort of app, and then you would have the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government looking at some sort of app, when in fact, you could have a collaborative effort where there is a singular app that speaks to all the utilities and all reports going through one singular app and disseminating to the specific body responsible for it as opposed to one for water, one for electricity, one for leak, one for pothole. There must be some sort of a collaborative framework to encompass all of those requests and when it gets filtered, the bodies responsible could take their quota and deal with it accordingly.

In terms of the second part and I hope I am getting this second part right. In terms of how we coordinate with requests, in my own mind, I am not certain as to how the local government legislation would fit into what we do and what may be the eventual outcome, in terms of what would be the roles and responsibility of the current regional corporation and how does that fit into what we would be responsible for, especially since we are under the Ministry of Works and Transports and not under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

But if I were to speak to an ideal situation with the use of technology, with the use of a clear—because I did observe a specific question that came under the JSC last week that spoke to prioritization and my own observation as a person is that people's priority is whatever affects them. So if you go into Port of Spain on Picton Street the priority is whatever affects Picton Street. But there should be a process where we could look at a specific project and call it a priority. Where it gets labelled as a priority and it immediately gets attended to.

Now mind you in the current state that we are in in Trinidad especially with the types of soil types in the deep-south, and the weather conditions, et cetera, you might find that your list of priorities might be 100 or 200. But at the end of the day, we must have a process for prioritization, we must have a process by which we can get the services closer to the people using

technology, we must have a process by which we react in a more timely manner and at the same time provide quality goods and services, in this particular case service.

And this conversation kind of lends itself to starting to foster that sort of thought process and however that falls within the legislative positioning and the members who are responsible for getting it done, hopefully they can all come together and make this be a more seamless process.

Mr. Mitchell: Right, so this is why if you go back to the original question, I am asking the question you know, how autonomous does the state enterprise SRRIC intend to be?

4.40 p.m.

Now, being a part of the public sector, the way our public sector is set up, there are line reporting relationships where state enterprises are concerned. Your reporting relationship, of course, is with the Ministry of Works and Transport, but that is an issue. Prioritization is an issue. And you are speaking to process, but first there must be a policy and criteria set up as to what is priority and what is not priority. But also you have to be thinking now, how does this agency intend to interact with all the other agencies, like the local bodies, the municipalities, PURE, the Ministry of Works and Transport, WASA, et cetera, and also understanding, because you spoke about you should have everybody—you do not want to duplicate efforts. But we have a specific problem in this country where we are severely afflicted with silo operations.

Every Member with a phone knows that on Waze you can tell now where there is a traffic jam. You can tell where there are police situated, and perhaps you could even tell where there is a pothole. Because what do you call it Minister Bacchus, the type where everybody pools and everybody becomes a part of this application?

Mr. Bacchus: I think the App is crowd sourcing.

Mr. Mitchell: But what is the technical name? There is a technical name that relates to the sharing and everybody participating to make this App work, but that is what we are looking for, a proactive approach, and not where—you know member Mark has to get up in the Parliament and ask that there is some sort of—what is the word? Discrimination.

Mr. Mark: Geographical discrimination.

Mr. Mitchell: Geographical discrimination. So that is what we are looking for, and it goes with your operational mandate. That is what you have to think about and develop policies where that is concerned. So you do not have to wait on a list from the Ministry of Works and Transport, or you do not have to wait on this, or you do not have to wait on that. You all receive on a daily basis where the issues are, and you develop your draft work plans—of course to be approved by the board or by the Ministry through its policies—on an ongoing basis, so as to achieve that operational effectiveness that we desire in our roads network. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. George: Madam Chair through you, if I might just add something to that. What we had in mind is developing an algorithm that we can use to determine the priority of projects, and we

were considering things like severity of defect, community served, whether there were, you know, alternative routes to the area, things like that.

Mr. Bacchus: Density and so on.

Mr. George: Right, yes. So you put that all in—so that given our work programme, the work programme may have 50/60 jobs, you can then apply that to the programme to determine well, which is the first job that we will do and which one will be the fiftieth. So that is one aspect of it.

I also think that there is still a need for the municipal corporations to be involved in it because we have to bear in mind that there are three or so different bodies doing road repairs. The municipal corporation, well SRRIC, Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. So if we have the reports going into—I think the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government was talking about doing an open source programme so that anybody could report a defect.

It goes into a central unit, and that unit now will triage the whole thing and determine which ones of those projects will be done by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, which ones will be done by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and I suppose—well, and which ones should be sent to the Ministry of Works and Transport. It goes to the Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Works and Transport will look at it and determine which ones we will have PURE do, and what is left now will be sent to SRRIC. SRRIC gets that and uses its pre-agreed algorithm to determine how we should engage those projects, what order we should do them in, using that objective of the algorithm that we would have developed. So I think that is one way we can treat with that.

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to hear that. So it goes all the way back to policy. So the Cabinet mandate is secondary roads, so there must be a policy with respect to who is responsible for what. The Ministry of Works and Transport, you now have the Secondary Roads Company, and then you have the municipal corporations; who is responsible for what? And there can be no duplication, and you have to understand that there are silos.

Because you may appear one day on some secondary road, and the Ministry of Works and Transport—because we have seen that—not the Ministry of Works and Transport, the corporation may be there at the same time, or may come the day after. We have seen that here where a CEPEP crew will cut a particular playing field, there is a Ministry of Sport and Community Development, under a SPORTT contractor, who is supposed to cut the same playing field, and then the municipal corporation has a contract out, or their daily-paid workers supposed to cut the same playing field, and the Government paying everybody to cut this same playing field.

So there has to be a policy, and that is part of the first question I was asking the PS, because you have to be clear in your mandate what this company is supposed to be doing, what PURE is supposed to be doing and then you have, of course, the municipal corporations and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. So that is something to consider. But I happy to hear about the algorithm and the use of technology. The use of technology has to play a major

role, because of how lean your organization is, and I am happy for that. I am also happy for the technical sharing at the level under the umbrella of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Madam Chairman: So thank you. I just wanted to find out, to get some clarification on this. This is to the CEO. You spoke in your submission, this is question 7, on page 8, where you are talking about:

Work is being executed in all zones of Trinidad and Tobago. Contractors from each respective zone are engaged to execute the works where reasonably practical.

So what I was asking is, do you all have a separate zoning or are you using the word “zone” loosely to mean constituencies or wards or something like that?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, Madam Chair. It is more pertaining to geographical locations, and more so that is more pertinent in light of the OPR depository and the limited amount of contractors. So it is more about geographical locations.

Madam Chairman: So zones will be what, north, south, east west?

Mr. Ross: It will be more like Sangre Grande/Sangre Grande, Port of Spain/Port of Spain, that sort of a thing, not necessarily aligned to any particular existing regional corporation, boundary, et cetera.

Madam Chairman: So that needs some kind of clarification, because that will certainly cause—or let me put this way—that has potential for confusion, because we have wards, we have municipalities, which really do not all overlap, we have counties. I think all of them still exist right? We have constituencies, and now we are getting another zone. So I almost want to ask you to do a map of Trinidad and Tobago for us. Not I am almost, I am going to ask, a map of Trinidad and Tobago and input the zones. I guess because we are MPs what would be more important for us will be constituencies, than counties or corporations, that kind of thing. So that we get an idea of how these zones are superimposed upon constituencies. I think members are more concerned about constituencies.

Mr. Ross: Thanks for the question, Madam Chair. I want to point out that since this submission was sent in, a lot of work has been done, and yes, we do have a map. As a matter of fact, it is a borrowed map that we borrowed from what PURE was already using, where they already had zones. And from a project management perspective, we had people assigned to different zones. So that is the process we are using.

But it is kind of difficult, if you want to look at it from a municipal corporation perspective, to have 14 zones and 14 engineers assigned. But you know—so there will be some measure of overlapping, but you are right, it is still on the same concept of north, south, east, west, or regional corps with some measure of overlap, but it is more aligned to, in our case, how much staff we have, and how we oversee the different sections. At the same time, on the other end, it is now going to be aligned to how many contractors there are and where they are located in terms of how you tender out for work and who you invite.

Madam Chairman: So if I understand that then, it means the zoning is not complete, because if

it is also going to be aligned to contractors—

Mr. Ross: The zoning itself, Madam Chair, is complete. What I am speaking about when I refer to the contractors, is when we invite a tender, if within a particular zone, there is a limited amount of them then we may have to pull—

Madam Chairman: No, I understand that, thanks. I fully appreciate it, you made that very clear. I think the Committee really wants to see how your zones line up either with our constituencies or municipal corporations. We understand that there will be overlaps, we are accustomed to that. In a constituency sometimes we have two different municipal corporations existing there.

Mr. Ross: I will submit, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thanks. And the other thing I wanted to ask, I found this such an interesting concept, interesting yes, but not new. Somewhere in your submission, you all spoke about eventually being more reliant on yourselves in terms of charging for services. I see a little question mark on your face, so maybe I am not putting it over well, so maybe I need to go to the page. “Well like everybody was waiting to ask that question.”

Mr. Bacchus: No Chair, we are following you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so yes. Thank you very much member Bacchus. Page 13, income. In terms of changing your business model for charging for project management fees where applicable, so to reduce the burden on taxpayers, and therefore the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

My understanding is when this was prepared, you all were in a different place. Is this still on the table?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Is this still where you see your future?

Mr. Ross: No I do not, and I will tell you why. Because first of all we are dependent on Government subventions. Secondly, as a project management style organization, it is not as if we are going to take this limited liability Government-owned company and go find work for it to do. Our work is project management. Project management on behalf of a specific client, that client being the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government with their client being the regional corps, with their client being the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: So your ultimate client is the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Ross: This is correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I was just wanting to say that is why I said “interesting, but not new”, in terms of—I could think of MTS and T&TEC, in terms of when you look on their books of liabilities where their greatest debt lies. Okay, fine. So this is no longer on the cards, right?

Mr. Ross: That is correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. In terms of, I think member Webster-Roy would have asked where you all had reached with your strat plan, and where you reached with your

internal audit. I just wanted to know where you all had reached with your risk management policy, and also with your engineering unit, because I think that is your engine room. So if you could let us know that, and in terms of the existing staff, the number of engineers you have, because you just said it, that is important to overseeing your zones. So if you could let me know in terms of those two.

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your questions, Madam Chair. In terms of the engineering unit, the only thing missing to complete that engineering unit is one senior engineer who is board certified, in order to be able to sign off on some of these projects whenever they arise, and that is one position that we have to fill. That is one of the five positions that has to be filled.

Madam Chairman: So one thing. So how many you have now?

Mr. Ross: Five.

Madam Chairman: You have five, so that one will make it six?

Mr. Ross: This is correct, Madam Chair. So that answers two questions there. In terms of the risk management, it is in the exact same place as the other two items. So we are currently undertaking to get a third-party provider to help us with that particular function. So it would be risk management, the internal audit—sorry—yes, that is correct. The internal audit manager to be brought on board, and the strat plan to be done by a third party, in collaboration with a third-party service provider.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. I now have to invite member Hislop and then Dr. Bodo.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you, Chairman. This question would go out to either the CEO or the Chairman. As it relates to your mandate, being a practitioner in the field I am really concerned about the quality of the work, of the roadworks. One of the areas under the Cabinet Note was the rehabilitation and upgrade, and we know some of our secondary roads have now become main roads, as it relates to persons, citizens seeking to circumnavigate traffic on a regular basis. Not only that, you have significant traffic by large trucks.

When you are treating with—you know sometimes we talk about restoration, and all we want to do on our roads is just cut off your four inches of old asphalt, put back four inches, and then you have a situation where you have movement, because your substructure is poor, or it is aged, because your infrastructure is ageing as your country ages. And so, within a couple of months you would see these lateral cracks on your wearing layer, because your foundation is obviously aged and has been moving for some time.

So when we are treating with upgrades, in terms of the contracts, how detailed do you foresee that your work will be in terms of the rehabilitation, the upgrades of our roads? Are we going to see detailed work taking place, or is it just superficial paving? And now that you are “housed under the Ministry of Works and Transport”, what is that relationship between the works that you do and the Transport Division in terms of preventing our large trucks from using our secondary roads as the main road?

Mr. George: Through you, Chair. Thank you for the question member. Let us start with the last one first, preventing trucks from using the secondary roads. Well the Ministry of Works and Transport will have to work that out. But in our rehabilitation of our roads, we would look at—well, when we scope the job, we will be looking at not just the black top.

You can see some of the roads are so badly deteriorated that you have no base course, nothing at all. Having regard to how those roads came into being in the first place, they started off by being just traces sometimes, tracks, and after a number of years you bring in some pit run and eventually you put some black top on it. Basically, that is how some of those roads came about. I mean, I live in a fairly residential area and to this day I am living on Bates Trace. I do not understand why it cannot be a street, but it is Bates Trace. It is a trace, because that is what it was before.

So we will be looking at the whole structure of the road, because we, first of all, look at the defects, and defects are so totalled that we have to go beyond just the wearing surface and go down into that base course to see what is there, and in a number of cases there is not much, so we will have to go down into the base course. The drainage as well—drainage is non-existent, and it does not matter how good your base course and what have you will be, if there is poor drainage and water is just ponding in the road, it is not going to last very long.

With regard to the use of heavy vehicles, axle load is just one aspect, but it is the repetition as well. In some cases, unless this road is serving a quarry or something like that, the odd truck or whatever, heavy truck, concrete truck or whatever would not do as much damage to the road if the road is properly done. So we will be looking at the total picture. So that will talk to the rehabilitation aspect of our name.

So there are some—yes we have to repair potholes and things, but there are other aspects that we will be taking a deep dive into to ensure that the fix that we eventually implement will give you a result that is—I am inclined to say fit for purpose, but I am tired using that, but anyhow—fit for purpose.

Madam Chairman: So I think it is member Bodoë. Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the answers to my question may have already been provided. I just wanted to follow up on the quality of repair. I know we have a long way to go, so Mr. Ross perhaps or chairman. If we look specifically at potholes, and I mean this is an MP's worst nightmare. I could tell you the number of potholes as I enter my constituency to reach the office. So the question really in terms of the tender specifications, do you write the contract in such a way that you get a warranty on how long the repairs should last? Have we reached that point in terms of detailing for these contracts? Are you in a position to answer?

Mr. George: Through you Chair, thank you for the question member. The contracts that we write—well, before we get to contracts, the specification is what governs that and the methodology, and before a contractor is chosen, part of his submission to us will be his method statement. So we will look at how he proposes to fix, let us say, the pothole, because there are

some standard approaches that you have to take. So to the extent that he has those approaches defined in his method statement, then he will be graded higher than someone else, and eventually win the contract.

Having won the contract, then our technicians—so I think the CEO said we have about seven of them, about five or seven of them—our technicians now will have to be there to inspect the work and to ensure that what the contractor promises to do is actually done.

Going further, interim payments will be tied to our acceptance of work done. So one, the work must be inspected, two, it must be shown to be in conformance with the methodology and so on and submitted. The quality control measures must have been taken, and to the extent that that is the case, then payments are made. If not, then payments are just withheld until things are put right.

Dr. Bodoë: Understood Chairman, thank you for that answer. The other issue that concerns me, of course, we have experienced that with the heavy rainfall, is the issue of pooling of water on these roads. I am sure you would have travelled as well—Florida, for example on the highways, you can have very heavy rain and in a matter of a minute or two the road is dry. Is there some sort of technology that allows that, and are we in a position in our own situation to employ that kind of technology, or are we looking at that?

Mr. George: Through you, Chair. It is geometrics. The roads are just not graded here. You just do some blacktop, and not only that, our roads do not have—well except the highways and so—do not proper shoulders. If you look at some of our roads, secondary roads, so the blacktop is here, and the side of the road there is a mound and vegetation. So there is no way you can get a flow of water from the road surface to the surface drain on the side of the road. As a result, it ponds there and through evaporation and other mechanical means, it will dissipate, and in doing so it disrupts the asphaltic layer.

So in order to address that, when we do our work we will also be looking at the drainage of the road. You must have cross slopes to get the water off, and in a number of cases although we talk about small contractors, but they have to tool up quickly. A lot of contractors they do not have graders. Okay, they have something, they have a roller and so on, they could do a track and put down some blacktop, but you will need to grade those shoulders and slope them away from the road so that in the event of—well, not in the event, when there is rain, the water can come off the road and go safely to the ditches on the side.

Dr. Bodoë: So, Chairman, the public can assume that part of the restoration aspect of the company's work will be towards addressing these issues going forward?

Mr. George: Of course, yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Will that be correct statement?

Mr. George: It is very correct. Because, you see, we have to—the *raison d'être* for SRRIC is the fact that we are going to be doing it like that and not like how it was done before. Because, if so, then you do not need a SRRIC, but I am saying that we need a SRRIC so that we will be

taking the steps to sort of—we have to distinguish ourselves. The work that we do must be distinguishable from what existed before.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member Bacchus, your body language I anticipated you long ago. So member Bacchus and then we would have member Mitchell.

Mr. Bacchus: I see member Mitchell's skill have rubbed off on you, if it comes to the body language I see. Just to note, and again, my compliments obviously on the knowledge that you have in terms on how things work.

A big part of what I think needs to happen, and I hope that SRRIC forms part of that in combination with the Ministry of Works and Transport, is that we have to understand in greater detail what the root causes are for some of these things that we are repairing.

So we have terminology that we are using in technology that will deal with that. You have things that appear to be incidents, but they are really problems. So you fix one pothole on this road this week, two weeks later there is another one not too far from it. Two weeks later there is another one somewhere else from it, and it is probably not a design scene, there is probably a problem underlying there somewhere that you need to address.

The evaluation of the causes for the majority of the things that you have and the transmittal of that back to the relevant Ministries or agencies for that, and it is translating into something that gets to the places where the problem probably started.

We talk about pooling, and you say if a truck rolls over this road, even if it is out of speck by axle, axle load is not a problem, but on every part of the highway wherever there is a major road it is sunk, because the breaking areas for those things the loads multiply and the force is different on those parts of the road. So then an easy recommendation would be, guys when you are building these roads in the breaking zones put a different type of compaction to assume that the load will be different.

I mean, so you have to use—this cannot be an exercise in, “Oh, we fix it and then we fix it and then we fix it”. There must be an element of analysis of what the thing is. Reporting relative to what that is, and suggestions that would work their way back into what should be done to prevent it in the first case. Is any of that being done? Is any of that being contemplated, and how is it going to be done if it is being so?

Mr. George: Thank you member. Through you Madam Chair. I smiled when you asked the question, because we do have—on the properly engineered roads that we have in Trinidad, we treat those points that you have outlined separately. We use the normal bitumen to do the asphalt on the ordinary sections of the road, but around roundabouts and those traffic lights and what have you, we use TLA asphalt, and that is supposed to solve or take care of that. TLA is basically the modified bitumen used in Trinidad Lake Asphalt. There is one downside to that.

The asphalt plants in order to use TLA asphalt there is a slight jigging that must take place in the plant. Because of the mineral content of TLA, you have to change the pumps and

what have you, but I am told that it is not a big fix. I mean, many of the contractors with asphalt plants they have done that fix. So we use that bitumen to produce the asphalt for those areas to avoid that rotting and that ravelling, because it is a much stronger binding agent. So that is used there.

Now, will that happen on the secondary roads? I am not sure that I am correct, but there used to be a time when Trinidad and Tobago, the Government had about two or three asphalt plants. Do they still have it?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes.

Mr. George: It works?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Yes.

Mr. George: Or, it works, fine. I am asking that because, you see, if we have an asphalt plant, we are operating an asphalt plant, the smaller contractors can purchase asphalt from the Government to do some of these jobs, so that we can have a better control over, not just quality, but supply to the smaller contractors.

In the absence of that, they are at the mercy of the large fellas. And why would I want to sell you my asphalt to go and compete with me? You know, or I could just mark it up and sell it. So there are some structural problems there. But in answer to your question, in my longwinded way, we have asphalt to take care of that sort of eventuality at those intersections.

Mr. Bacchus: The concern I had also was about the recommendations coming out from the analyst of the root causes of the things that will be coming up. So, like I said, things that appear to be incidents, can naturally be problems. The recommendation you talked about in what is already in place for the breaking zones is one, but I am sure there are other factors, major contributing factors, not an exhaustive list of things that are contributing to the need for an existence of a SRRIC, how is that evaluation going? Is there reporting where that is concerned, and if it is, how is that being used to prevent these things from happening?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question member. Through you Chair, one of the things—and I hope I am going in the right direction—so on one particular job that we recently completed, one of the most important things we undertook is even during the scoping of the job, we recognized the need to test the actual soil on the road itself. Just as the chairman indicated, the way how these roads developed from a trace, a track and then, you know, back in the day you just go by the Abel factory and you bring some red brick and you lay it down there, and then you go, you throw some oil sand on that. So it is within coring along the road you can then pull a sample and see what was the original existing type of structure. Whether it was compacted properly, how much it has, if it is clay, especially because Trinidad itself, the Port of Spain area, when you go down into to the natural earth, it is not the same as if you go south. If you go central it is also different.

So it is within the sampling and the testing, specifically on the work that we did on the Gaston Street in Chaguanas last week, within the testing we found many reasons to even question

our own original solution, and to now look for more technological opportunities to create an improved road. As a matter of fact, we actually had a cost saving by the use of more appropriate technology specific to that roadway. We actually saved in the vicinity of over \$100,000. We actually have a report that we did at the end of the job, so that we could go back and review the type of technology that was used, where can it be used again to be able to continuously improve. So we are looking at it from the perspective of lessons learned, and continuous improvement.

Mr. Bacchus: And sharing, I would assume with your sister and brother agencies?

Mr. Ross: Yes member.

Mr. Bacchus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member Mitchell and then member Mark.

Mr. Mitchell: Just because I see Ms. Seeram there, senior economist, I am just curious. Has there been any studies done, or are you intending now to do, studies on what it would cost at today's prices, the cost to rectify the roads on an annual basis at the rate at which these roads go into disrepair. That is one, and two, the cost of that disrepair to productivity?

Ms. Seeram: Good afternoon, and thank you for your question, and through you Chair, if I may be so inclined to share some information. Within the Ministry of Works and Transport we have done studies like that. We do have information in terms of road life cycle, maintenance costs, based on best practices, international best practices. There are already recommended stages at which road authorities should intervene in terms of maintaining the structure of the roadway. So within the Ministry of Works and Transport we do have that information.

We have been in discussions with funding agencies to develop, say, a more comprehensive long-term programme for how we maintain our road assets. I would say that in terms of your specific question, while we may not be at this point in time able to quantify it, in today's currency we do have an estimated value of the road infrastructure that is under the Ministry of Works and Transport's control, and we do have an idea in terms of specific high-value projects, or critical projects, and what would be the cost to rectify those projects.

Mr. Mitchell: I am asking because I think it is important for us to know, for the citizens to know the cost of the repair, because of course citizens are all unhappy about the state of the roads, but we need to know the cost of repair. We need to also know, and if you could share with the Committee, the cost in terms of loss of productivity, I think that would be helpful for us.

There was another question. This probably—perhaps to the PS. I know recently there was talk about the heavy vehicles, the overweight vehicles. Could you just give us some indication what is being done, because I know that in terms of the cause and effect, a lot of blame is being placed on these very, very heavy vehicles. How is the Ministry enforcing, and whether the fines go to the Consolidated Fund, or is there some way of retaining the fines to put it back into the cost of repairing the roadway network?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Thank you, member. So under the Ministry of Works and Transport there is the Trinidad Transport Board which starts the process in terms of regulating the size of

the truck and identifying the routes that it is supposed to take. So any truck of a certain nature, once it goes under the Trinidad Transport Board and gets approved, within the truck it has where it is supposed to go and the weight, which any enforcement entity can address.

Specific to the Ministry, we have commissioned and restarted three weigh stations to date, and we have another in plan. It is at our Agua Santa site, Caroni, and planned at Wrightson Road. So direct to the Ministry, the Transport Division undertake exercises, and seeks to identify overweight trucks and do the necessary so that there can be actual prosecution to go through. In terms of the fines, the fines go to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Bacchus: So this all has to do with the axle load and the actual MTW on the trucks and so on. I was researching something fairly recently, quite unrelated, but I found that the max weights that we have for our vehicles here is quite a bit higher than it is pretty much anywhere in the region. It is something that I found strange, and maybe it is something you might want to look into, in that, it may also be the contributing factor to why the roadways do not last as long as maybe the predictability is. I think if you check what we allow for our maximum gross weight and the axle loads on our vehicles, you will find that it is a bit higher than you have pretty much almost everywhere that I have seen. So it is something that you may want to consider, as the Ministry of Works and Transport, to make recommendations where that is concerned.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: We have been looking at that member.

Mr. Bacchus: Okay.

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: We have. Well of course we are getting a lot of stakeholders who are not in agreement with us, but we have been looking at it, and we will be doing something.

Mr. Bacchus: Thank you member.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Thank you, Madam. Mr. George, welcome. At one time I thought you had taken a vow of silence, but I am glad that you did join the conversation. I am very happy to have your input. I wanted to ask you, Mr. George, you used this phrase “properly engineering roads in our country”. I think you were associating that with the highways and how you all are able to address road construction and probably maintenance.

I wanted to ask, from your own experience, how can this knowledge, this experience, this way of properly engineering our roads, be transferred to all the other segments that would be responsible for road construction in T&T, so that there can be some degree of uniformity, as far as is practically possible, re. standardization, so that whether you go on an agricultural access road or we go on a highway, or we go on a secondary road, there would be some common characteristics, based on what you are driving at as it relates to our highway? Is that possible from your own experience?

Mr. George: Thank you member, through you Chair. The short answer to that is we have to write. We have to do some work. If you go on the net and you check the US, you could get documents, DoT documents, Department of Transportation in various areas, and in there you

have a handbook, as it were, as to how you are supposed to treat with roadworks in the particular location. But we, for the most part, well, to put it kindly, we are either selfish, or to put it bluntly, we are lazy. We do not write. We do not commit those things to paper, so that people could really see what is done and to be guided by what is done and what has worked. So we have to start somewhere.

I do not know, at the other place I heard about the UWI's involvement in roadworks, and what the UWI was saying, "Well come. We have programmes. We have Master's programmes". That is just for development of an individual, but places—I am not necessarily saying the UWI, but institutions like that, you could have a final year project given to a student to sort of document what?—best practice, testing, or let us say test a set of aggregate and get that information in print, so that others will be guided by it. Until we do things like that, the knowledge that people like Mr. Ross and so have, will just perish with them. He will use it and at the end of the day, that is it.

Mr. Mark: My final question. Mr. George, my other question has to do with—we had said earlier on that there are four categories, or four agencies with different percentages associated to each of them in road repair, road construction, et cetera. So we have Agriculture playing its role. We have the Local Government playing its role. We have the Ministry of Works and Transport through the PURE unit doing its work, and of course we have Mr. Ross' Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company.

Do you know where we have reached—I know it was floated some time ago, and I think Ms. Seeram made mention of it in her contribution a short while ago—to address this issue of establishing some uniformity and some standards for the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. I know that some time ago the idea was floated that we need a national roads authority in Trinidad and Tobago, and I understood that concept to mean that there will be a centralized body, and that centralized body would be responsible for, among other things, doing what you have just identified. So that anyone, whether you are a small contractor, whether you are a medium-sized contractor or a large contractor, once you get a contract to do work on the roads in Trinidad and Tobago, there would be a common set of standards that you have to follow for you to get that contract. So there will be uniformity. So I wanted to ask you whether this idea of the establishment of a national roads authority would satisfy that particular objective. I just wanted to get your view on that.

Madam Chairman: So just one minute. I know once we are in a conversation we are always so exuberant sometimes we steer away from our mandate. Even though I allow members some latitude, I think we always have to be mindful of the mandate of the Committee and the purpose for which we have brought persons here. I really think that question is steering into the way of policy, which is really with all due respect, above Mr. George's pay grade, even though it may not be above his skill, expertise, experience, and qualification.

Mr. Mark: Well may I rephrase it? Because I just only used that concept, but let me indicate what I was driving at, Madam Chair. We know about the four areas that I have mentioned.

What I was thinking about is whether there is need for some centralized coordinating mechanism to address some of the challenges that we have identified concerning these four areas: agricultural road construction, secondary road and the rest that I have mentioned. That is what I was going at, Madam Chair, as opposed to the—I hear you member Mark, but again—and I know you never intend to be prejudicial to anyone, that is not your ilk at all. But, again, this is about an examination into the management and operations of the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited. As I said, I allowed us some leeway when we started the initial question, but I think we are going a little too far into something else.

To ask Chairman George or CEO Ross or PS Francis-Yearwood those kinds of questions, they may have ideas in their heads, as you do and I do, but I do not think they are the correct authorities to do that.

Mr. Mark: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: I mean, you yourself may be able to tell them some answers, we have the Bureau of Standards, but I do not think we should put these public officers in that kind of position.

Mr. Mark: Well I pause for a cause.

Madam Chairman: And I am sure you will get an opportunity to put something in your recommendations. Thank you so much. Member Hislop.

Mr. Hislop: Thank you, Chairman. When Mr. George spoke about the level of work that maybe required in some instances, we know that the motoring public requires instant gratification. My father used to use a phrase a lot when I was growing up called “deferred gratification”. How do we intend to get buy-in from the driving public, or the public in general, that in some instances the desire for your road restoration may not be done within the shortest possible time frame as it relates to just resurfacing, that in some instances it may take months, depending on the nature of the work that is required? What is SRRIC’s level of engagement with the community or outreach? What is your footprint in terms of your community engagement?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, member. Through you, Chair. For the most part, these secondary roads the actual time that it takes to get the job done is really way less, maybe 10 per cent of the entire time of the scope of the job. Let me explain what I mean by that. Between the local government representative, or body identifying that this particular road needs repair, and the process where it goes and it collects that data, someone writes a letter, it goes to the Ministry, it gets on the priority list, the list comes over, in this case to the Ministry of Works and Transport, and then that list eventually makes its way to the Secondary Road Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited, another process takes place.

That process starts with scoping that road. So you must have the engineers. The engineers have to go do that scope. Then they come in, they do up all their drawings, and then it goes through to the tendering procurement phase. And under the new procurement law, there is that 10-day wait period, even when you award that contractor, or when you know who you are going to award it to. All the evaluations, all the different processes, et cetera. And that is when

we look at a simple pave.

Now when you look at a landslip, that is a whole different thing altogether. One of the things we noticed is that in this entire country, and I do not think a lot of people in the general public are aware of this, unless I am mistaken, there are five or six companies who do geotechnical work—in this whole country, and of those five and six, they also generally service most of the rest of the Caribbean. So whenever you got—I mean, it is very unfortunate to be quite honest, and I come from the deeper part of south where landslips every day is part of life. It is not something that we are comfortable with, but it is one of the things that we have to deal with every day.

You repair three landslips, four more occur, but the time between studying what is the cause of the landslip from a geological perspective, a study has to be done. You cannot just go say, the solution to this landslip is to build a wall. Okay, what type of wall? What type of structure? How far down? What is it going to cost? What is the actual scope of that job to do it properly? Because you do want to throw two, three, five, 10 million behind a job that will not hold up past—this is worse than even when you do paving, where people complain about the paving job does not stand up. Imagine someone designing a solution to a landslip, spend 15 million, and it does not stand up.

I went to Moruga as a matter of fact as of, I think it was Sunday, and when you pass Craignish Village in Princes Town going down the Naparima/Mayaro Road before you get to Matilda Junction, there is this massive landslide, and I did see, I think, one of the Members got a question about it, and the number was 14 point something million dollars. That is the reality of it.

But to plan that job takes a lot of resources, and most importantly to the question from the member, a lot of time, and that time could easily encompass the entire dry season, end up in the rainy season where you cannot do the job, and all the way into next year. And during that time, because the rainy season has now occurred, a bunch of more landslips would have occurred throughout the entire length and breadth of south Trinidad. People from the north who do not really go to all over south Trinidad, probably need to take a drive one day and see what landslips look like in every single one of those major arteries into the southern part of Trinidad, between Point Fortin, Siparia, all those areas.

But time and resources—again, that is where you have another choke on resources, where five companies or six of them looking at landslips, and when you put in a request for them to study that landslip it might take four months for the result of that study to come back. Not to mention the actual process and the procurement and all of that stuff. So, I mean, yes it is a little bit more than some people make it out to be.

Mr. Hislop: Chairman, and that is why I asked the question, because I understand that. But I ask the question: How do you then get—what is your community engagement to get buy-in from the public? What is your public relations—what is your communication strategy to treat with that? So that when Dr. Bodoie writes a letter on behalf of his constituents, that they get to

understand that there is a process and they have buy-in, that when the work is done, when time is taken to do the work correctly, then you have value for money?

Mrs. Francis-Yearwood: Member I offered to take the question from Mr. Ross simply because this is an ongoing issue in the Ministry of Works and Transport. It is really a question of education and communication. We try to do it through our website. We have a programme we will be having coming out soon to the general public and, of course, we will include the fact that SRRIC is undertaking such works, and we will seek to ensure that that information is put out there.

You made a very interesting statement. That education and information is all of our responsibilities, and we all have to learn how to manage the expectation of the general public. I do not want to use another word, but we have to manage the expectation of the general public, because there is only so much we can do, and do properly, and we do need the time, as the CEO said, and not just the large projects, sometimes even the smaller one. Because the CEO referenced the Gaston Street project, boreholes are what identified what was required. Even that, to have that resource.

So I am saying all that to say it is really communication and education, because as a member of the public, I want things now. Yes, but then it is only when I am advised as to what it entails that I know. So it is our responsibility to educate and communicate, which we are trying to do on a consistent basis.

5.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, I want to ask the question another way, and this is to Mr. Ross. When asked what was your public communication strategy what we were told is one is being developed. And therefore the question is, the status and when delivery?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, Madam Chair. It is not really about being developed, but actually the beauty of how we operate in Trinidad is we do have sufficient qualified, competent persons in the business of communications. And honestly I think that the position that we have taken since then is to look to a communication strategist and have that person undertake that entire exercise as opposed to doing that in-house again. That speaks to the lean organization that we have internally and we will focus on what is our core mandate and have the competent persons and companies and others undertake those other exercises. So that will actually be something that will be—now that we have built out and we are ready to run—we will hire that competent person more on a contractual basis, or organization as the case may be.

Madam Chairman: Right. So you are talking about that will be outsourced right?

Mr. Ross: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: Have you reached anywhere in that, or that is something—because you explained to us time and time again during the session with respect to the OPR, the requirements et cetera. So have you embarked on this at all or this is something to happen?

Mr. Ross: Madam Chair, we have not embarked on that exercise. But again one of the things

that I like about this particular Committee, is the first time that I received this package, I think it was sometime in February, it actually highlighted things that I did not know. So then the bell went on and it said okay, the mere fact that these questions are being asked it has to be done. So where we are today, I am certain and I am speaking from the position of CEO that is our intent, but we do have other things that we need to consider in terms of prioritizing and getting other stuff done and put in place. But it is one of the things that is on the front burner, at the forefront of our minds which is communication strategy. And we will have that competent contract also put in place—

Madam Chairman: Okay so—

Mr. Ross:—in the near future.

Madam Chairman: Alright so, thank you. On behalf of the Committee, I will take that as compliment but just to let you know, this Committee does follow-up so—

Mr. Ross: [*Laughter*] Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman:—so, that statement of intent, we love to see fruits, okay?

And the last question I would like to ask is, with respect to—and I think the PS put me in another position, I think the 78 per cent, if my maths is correct, of roads that fall under you. What I want to know is, do you intend to do some sort of overall assessment of these roads as it is you said in the submission that would be done on a case-by-case basis. In terms of, is there a plan having identified your stock, to get some kind of baseline assessment of your stock?

Mr. Ross: Thank you for your question, Madam Chair. I would say at this time, we are merely a reactionary force. Because of the large volume of issues that exist today, we are focused on dealing with all the immediate ones that come before us. If I can look into the future, I would think that yes, we would get to that place. But right now, we currently have 200 already scoped and ready to go and because of the seasonal situation that we are between the dry season and how many new ones would crop up in the rainy season, we will continue to be reactionary until we build that capacity where we would no longer be reacting but we will now be proactive. So, at this time it is reactionary, but in the future, hopefully, we will become proactive.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Are there any more questions?

Mr. Bacchus: Just one.

Madam Chairman: Yes, member Bacchus.

Mr. Bacchus: Yeah and it stems from what was just said actually, relative to the companies that can do geotechnical surveys and so on. A comprehensive list of the challenges that SRRIC will face is something that I think we will have in the submission, of this is old stuff and I do not think we will want that. But the context I am putting around it is, typically when you look at that and you say risk, you talk about availability of asphalt and aggregate, but something like the availability of companies to provide geotechnical surveys is usually not something that you would usually find. And that speaks—so what I would like to request through you Chair, is that you put together for us a comprehensive list of the things that will pose the challenges, not just to

SRRIC but to the work that you are going to do.

And I think Chair, if we get those recommendations and we as a Committee put them into our report maybe they will get to the places where—we may get to universities where we need—that we need different things, we may get the Ministry Trade and Industry and so on, where they would encourage other companies to do that, recognizing now that there is a shortage. So that is the reason why I am asking for that. It is to help us help you directly, but specifically to help the industries that you need to have in a larger quantity to make what you have to do more efficient. So through you Chair, I would like to request that.

Madam Chairman: Member Mitchell, because we good at reading body language, one more question? Or are you through?

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Chair, I really wanted to clarify the money issue.

Madam Chairman: Which money? I think what I understood from what came from Mr. Ross and what was said by Mrs. Francis-Yearwood, and I am not sure if this is what you are asking, is that of the first \$100 million about 13 something has been spent. As far as the other \$100 million, it is an allocation but because they not as yet ready to go with any—and I might be a bit wrong in saying any project but, because they have gone with some so I guess that adds into the \$13 million. Because they are not ready with the other sums of money, no requests or releases have been made of the \$100 million. So what you are asking I would allow, if you are asking if the \$87 million from the \$13 million in the account or if that is to be released.

Mr. Mitchell: It was just to clarify, because I think you had in your submission Mr. Ross, that there was zero expenditure. But we are looking at your recurrent expenditure and that there are road work projects that are 100 per cent completed and it has project status payment, paid. So, if there was just an error in your submission and in fact?

Madam Chairman: No, I think it is timeline, timeline. Because I think Mr. Ross made it very clear that this submission came in some time ago, right? And he also—

Mr. Mitchell: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Made it clear about—

Mr. Mitchell: Okay.

Madam Chairman:—\$13 million, 12 point something but let us round it off—

Mr. Mitchell: Right, okay.

Madam Chairman:—has been spent. I thought what you were going to ask and I think that may need some clarification, that was the original \$100 million released. Yes—

Mr. Ross: That is correct, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Because you told me you had 80-something thousand dollars.

Mr. Ross: So the \$100 million was released directly into the Secondary Roads Company bank account and of that we still have \$87 million as we sit here in that bank account. The other \$100 million is the allocation that is still sitting over at the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Madam Chairman: And that was the clarification, okay?

Mr. Mitchell: No, I am just seeing April—

Madam Chairman: That was the clarification from PS Francis-Yearwood.

Mr. Mitchell: I am seeing the April 4th and I am seeing here March. So that was a little confusing, but I do think that there was an error in the submission where they indicated that no expenditure was paid so far. Yeah Mr.—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell:—Guisseppi.

Mr. Guisseppi: Through you Chair, where the discrepancy I think what is brought across is that for fiscal 2022 we received the \$100 million, so that would have been what we have in our bank account. What we have not used based on the question that was submitted, was for fiscal 2023 which is the other \$100 million that is under the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Mitchell: Right, okay. Alright, so that is the error, right.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Mr. Guisseppi, we found a way to hear your voice. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Guisseppi: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay so if there are no further questions, I would like, at this stage, to bring the public hearing to a close. I think there are a few other questions that we would send in writing and also to ensure that we are all on the same page with respect to the obligations, we would send a reminder with respect to the obligations.

So, I therefore want to thank Chairman George and I want to put it on the record no relation. CEO Ross, Mr. Guisseppi, PS Francis-Yearwood and Ms. Seeram I think for a very enlightening and hopeful conversation this evening to the members of the public and also for us as the members of the Committee. I also want to thank the members of the media who stayed with us and the members of the public who stayed with us.

I wish you all the best, we all do look forward to the great roads in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to stop every time I pass on certain roads saying “Oh God, meh car.” Right so, I thank you all and wish you all a pleasant evening. Thank you this meeting is now suspended.

5.50 p.m.: *Committee suspended.*