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MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2025 FISCAL
APPROPRIATION BILL**

“Steadfast and Resolute: Forging Pathways to Prosperity”

Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
SECTION 1	3
MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK.....	3
SECTION 2.....	7
MANUFACTURING	7
TRADE AGREEMENTS	12
SECTION 3.....	15
DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT OF THE STEELPAN	15
SECTION 4.....	17
SUPPORTING SMEs.....	17
SECTION 5.....	20
INFLATION AND FOOD PRICES	20
INFLATION	20
FOOD INFLATION	21
NEW PRODUCTS.....	24
WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO HELP CONSUMERS?	25
CET IMPLEMENTATION.....	25
VAT REDUCTIONS ON BASIC FOOD ITEMS	26
SECTION 4.....	28
TRADE AND INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE	28
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING	28
SECTION 5.....	29
INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE	29
EXPANSION OF THE RETAIL AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR	29

INTRODUCTION

- I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the **2025 Fiscal Appropriation Bill - Steadfast and Resolute: Forging Pathways to Prosperity**.
- I must express gratitude to our Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, for his exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to our country's progress and development.
- Allow me to also commend my colleague, the Honorable Minister of Finance for the excellent delivery of this comprehensive and impactful fiscal package. His leadership over the past decade has been instrumental in guiding Trinidad and Tobago towards sustained economic recovery, even amidst global economic challenges.

SECTION 1

MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Overall GDP Growth (ENERGY and NON ENERGY)

3 Consecutive years of growth

- 2022 - TT\$150.3 billion - 1.5 percent growth
- 2023 - TT\$152.3 billion - 1.3 percent growth
- 2024 - TT\$155.3 billion - 1.9 percent projected growth

GDP (NON - ENERGY excluding petrochemicals)

- 2022 - TT\$102.8 billion - expanded by 5.8 percent
- 2023 - TT\$105.5 billion - expanded by 2.5 percent
- 2024 - TT\$107.9 billion - projected to expand by 2.4 percent
- **The fact is the non-energy sector has grown**
- **2015 - 61 billion (GDP at constant prices)**
- **2024 -107 billion (GDP at constant prices)**
- **75% GROWTH - THIS IS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF DIVERSIFICATION**

Major contributors to Total GDP

The major contributors to the non-energy sector output include:

- 1) Trade and Repairs
- 2) Financial and Insurance Activities
- 3) Manufacturing

1. TRADE AND REPAIRS

- 2023 - 37 billion – contributing to 24.3 percent
- 2024 - 38.1 billion – contributing 24.6 percent (projected)
- 2015 - 28.7 billion – a 32% growth

- Trade and Repairs includes all the distribution, wholesale and retail in the economy.

2. FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE ACTIVITIES

- **2023 - TT\$9.8 billion** contributing **6.5 percent**
- **2024 - TT\$10.1 billion** - contributing by **6.5 percent (projected)**
- Financial services are the lifeblood of the economy
- A burgeoning financial sector means that businesses are growing.

3. MANUFACTURING

EXCLUDING petroleum and chemical products

- **2023 - TT\$9.9 billion** contributing **6.5 percent**
- **2024 - TT\$10.6 billion** – contributing **6.8 percent.** (projected)
- **28 percent higher** than 2015. (TT\$8.3 billion)

Manufacturing Sub- Sectors

Food, beverages and tobacco products

- **2023 - TT\$7.2 billion**
- **2024 - TT\$7.9 billion** projected to increase by **9.1 percent**
- **60 percent higher** than 2015 (TT\$4.9 billion)

Other Manufactured products

- Textiles, clothing, leather, wood, paper and printing etc.
- **2023 - TT\$2.6 billion**
- **2024 - TT\$2.7 billion** expected to expand by **3 percent**

Domestic Production

- The growth highlighted above **is further validated by the Index of Domestic Production (DPI).**
- This index measures **the changes in the volume of production over time in various industries of the economy** and shows whether there are increase or decreases in output.
- From **2015 to 2023:**
- **Assembly Type and Related Products** increased **2,000 percent**
- **Food Processing** increased by **583 percent**
- **Drink and Tobacco** increasing by **172 percent**
- **Chemicals** increased by **28 percent**

- We want to thank the private sector for being confident enough to reinvest into the economy.

- **Just in 2024 alone - 82 reinvestments - 1.25 billion - 837 jobs**

- These businesses are reinvesting **because they have confidence in the economy** - Under the PNM Government, businesses always do well.

- This Government has created an enabling environment through:
 - The Forex Facility at Exim Bank
 - Numerous Grants and Incentives
 - Trade Missions / Trade Agreements
 - Implementation of new e-services to facilitate businesses
 - Development of Industrial parks
 - Apprenticeship programs to prepare persons for the work place

- Further manufacturing will be encouraged through the new SEZ Authority which is now in place and will offer an incentive for new manufacturing activity

SECTION 2

MANUFACTURING

2015 VS 2023

- In the year **2015**, non-energy manufacturing exports was **TT\$15.2 billion**
- **In 2016** non- energy manufacturing exports fell to **TT\$9.6 billion** (close to TT\$ 6 billion) primarily due to the closure of the Arcelor Mittal Steel Plant.
- **However, between the period 2016-2023, non - energy manufacturing exports grew by 3.7 billion (9.6 billion-13.3 billion)**

Specific Non-Energy manufacturing subsectors

Subsector	% Increase	2015	2023	Top Products
1. Food and Beverage	49 percent	2.1 billion	3.2 billion	Cereals (increase by TT\$191 million) Aromatic bitters (increase by TT\$254 million) Non-alcoholic beverage (increase by TT\$188 million)
2. Paper and Paper Related	70 percent	442 million	752 million	Toilet paper Tissue
3. Other Chemical Products	33 percent	387 million	514 million	Detergents Liquid bleaches
4. Plastic and Rubber Products	73 percent	307 million	531 million	Plastic bottles PVC pipes

5. Glass and Glass Products	222 percent	51 million	165 million	Glass bottles
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GEOGRAPHIC GROWTH

Regional – CARICOM

1. Non-energy manufacturing exports to CARICOM recorded the largest growth in value amongst all other trading groups between 2015 and 2023.

	Percentage Increase	Value Increase	2015 Value	2023 Value
CARICOM	47 percent	TT\$ 1.7 billion	TT\$3.6 billion	TT\$5.3 billion

International

	Percentage Increase	Value Increase	2015 Value	2023 Value
a. ASIA	283 percent	TT\$ 859 million	TT\$303 million	TT\$1.16 billion
b. OCEANIA	55 percent	TT\$15.7 million	TT\$28.8 million	TT\$44.5 million

Other Top Non-Energy Manufacturing Export Destinations showing significant Increases over the period 2015 to 2023

Export Destination	Percentage Increase	Value Increase	2015 Value	2023 Value
GRENADA	58 %	TT\$ 153 million	TT\$267 million	TT\$420 million

GERMANY	201 %	TT\$ 106 million	TT\$52 million	TT\$158 million
ST. LUCIA	42 %	TT\$ 96 million	TT\$228 million	TT\$324 million

TRADE MISSIONS

- It should be known that trade is dynamic with other players entering the market and therefore we must keep on top of our exports to retain our market share and level of competitiveness.
- **2015 - 2024 - seventy-one (71) trade missions and trade shows** conducted generating hundreds of export leads.
- **In Fiscal 2024:**

Trade Shows (5)	Trade Missions (14)
Cuba (2) China Panama Brazil	Guyana (3) Barbados Antigua & Barbuda Belize Ghana Bahamas Curacao/Aruba Suriname Jamaica Canada Inward buyers' missions (2)

- These trade missions have led to a boost in exports in several countries, for example:

Export Destination	Percentage Increase	Value Increase	2015 Value	2023 Value
JAMAICA	41 %	TT\$ 0.4 billion	TT\$ 0.9 billion	TT\$ 1.3 billion
GUYANA	100 %	TT\$ 0.7 billion	TT\$ 0.7 billion	TT\$ 1.4 billion

- In addition: significant leads were developed in the **recent Ghana and Canada Missions:**

GHANA

- New opportunities which were created as a result of the trade mission include:
 - **Lazuri Apparel** (apparel manufacturer in Barataria) is currently sourcing raw materials from Ghana as input into the company's manufacturing process;
 - **Unqueue** (ICT service provider) has secured approvals for the use of its software across Ghana, Benin, Togo, Liberia and Sierra Leone through a licensing agreement.
 - **Bermudez Biscuit Company Ltd** and **KC Confectionery Ltd** are advanced in entering the market;
 - **EcoWash** has secured a major deal with Japan Motors to supply car wash devices. Japan Motors are dealers for Toyota, Nissan, and other brands collaborating in four countries in West Africa, including Ghana.

CANADA

- **RHS and United Bearings** already receiving orders;
- **SACHA Cosmetics and Bricha Limited** are already conducting follow-up meetings on strong leads; and
- **New Wave Marketing Limited** secured new raw material supplies.

TRADE AGREEMENTS

Trinidad and Tobago and Chile Partial Scope Trade Agreement

- The Fifth Round of Trinidad and Tobago and Chile negotiations towards a Partial Scope Trade Agreement was held in December 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago and virtually in 2024. The Technical Negotiations for the Agreement was **completed** in May 2024.
- This TT- Chile Trade Agreement, when signed, will provide **opportunities for our exporters to access a market size of 19.2 million persons**. Additionally, **the Agreement will include approximately 500 products** across a range of sectors namely representing food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, articles of plastic, articles of wood, articles of paper, clothing, articles of glass, articles of iron and steel, aluminum articles and equipment.

Trinidad and Tobago and Curaçao Partial Scope Trade Agreement

- The Curaçao market presents significant opportunities for our exporters. It is against this background that negotiations for a Partial Scope Trade Agreement between Curaçao and Trinidad and Tobago **commenced in July 2024**.
- Curaçao has an approximate population of 150,000, with a nominal GDP of US\$ 3.08 billion (2022), and a GDP per capita of US\$ 20,501.
- Notwithstanding its relatively small population, Curaçao has a strong tourism sector, allowing Trinidad and Tobago to access a market of over 1.3 million visitors annually.

- Trinidad and Tobago's total non-energy manufacturing exports to **CURAÇAO** expanded by 23% or approximately **TT\$5.1 million** moving from approximately **TT\$21.8 million in 2015** to an estimated **TT\$26.9 million** in 2023.
- There is potential to displace imported products into Curaçao such as processed meats including poultry as that country currently imports over 90% of poultry, detergents and soaps, jams and jellies, biscuits, condiments, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, vegetable products, canned foods and construction materials.
- The investment potential of Curaçao is also recognised by local companies. Recently Agostini Ltd. acquired 2 pharmaceutical and personal care production companies in that country and a third in Aruba.
- In terms of movement of people and goods, on November 24, 2023, Trinidad and Tobago formalized an Air Services Agreement with Curaçao. As a result, Caribbean Airlines now operates two non-stop flights weekly between the two islands and as trade grows, the frequency of flights may increase.
- On September 20, 2024, a new maritime shipping route was launched to enhance the transportation of goods between the two countries, with the inaugural shipment successfully dispatched to Curaçao. The first shipment saw over 19 containers being exported to Curaçao and the second sailing is already fully booked with approximately 35 containers.

- This route will also facilitate the movement of goods to Bonaire and Aruba, both of which experience significant tourist traffic, attracting approximately 2 million visitors annually within the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao).

SECTION 3

DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT OF THE STEELPAN

The Manufacture and Export of Steelpans and Accessories

- While those in the opposition have a problem with the steelpan, the country recognizes the steelpan-our *national instrument*, as a unique product that has immense potential for stimulating economic activity, generating revenue and boosting exports.
- We are continuing to pursue a holistic approach to developing the Steelpan Manufacturing industry through various targeted initiatives, some of which are already generating significant benefits. *We are focusing extensively on enhancing the **quality of our product** and the **skills of our professionals**.*
- For example, since the introduction of the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility in 2020 the exports of steelband instruments have increased by **44 per cent** from TT\$ 1.8 million (during the 4-year period prior to the launch of the Facility) to TT\$ 2.6 million (over the 4-year period since the launch of the Facility), which is a clear indication of the success of the Grant in stimulating exports. We expect this trend to continue as we continue to build the industry.

Chroming of Steelpans

- Currently, the two (2) most popular ways in which finished steelpans are prepared *are either through powder coating or chroming*. Chromed pans significantly enhance the visual appearance and acoustics of the instrument, while providing a protective barrier against corrosion.

However, local Steelpan manufacturers are severely impacted by the absence of a quality chrome plating facility domestically.

- Presently, many steelpan manufacturers are required to send their pans abroad to have them chromed, then re-imported into the country which incurs a **20%** customs-duty applicable to imported or finished pans. After chroming, the re-imported steelpans then have to be re-tuned prior to its use or sale.
- This process is both costly and uncompetitive and to address the issue of chroming of steelpans locally the Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, expanded the Steelpan Grant in 2023 to include chroming. Thus far, at least **one large-scale chroming company, located in El Socorro**, has benefitted from the Facility to boost our capacity in chroming.
- We have been assured that the quality of chroming that will soon be available is on par with international standards (ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018) and redound to a reduction in the overall cost of manufacturing pans.

SECTION 4

SUPPORTING SMEs

- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), by their sheer number, distribution and diversity, are fundamental to forging our pathway to prosperity. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) estimates that 20,000 SMEs are operating in Trinidad and Tobago, which accounts for 85% of all registered businesses. The sector employs approximately 200,000 persons and contributes roughly 30% of the nation's GDP.
- SMEs, however, have unique challenges. This Government understands this and has created tailor-made policies and programmes that focus on 3 critical areas:
 - **Access to Finance**
 - **Capacity Building, and**
 - **Market Access**
- As it relates to **Access to Finance**, we have the:
 - *Guaranteed Loan Programme*, to assist firms weather the challenges following the Pandemic.
 - *Long Term Loan Guarantee Scheme*, in partnership with the banking sector.
 - *Low-cost financing through the EXIMBANK's Catalytic Fund*, in partnership with the Development Bank of Latin America, CAF.
 - *Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Project*, for SMEs in the tourism sector.

- *VAT refunds, as well as an increase of the VAT registration threshold.*
 - *Grant Fund Facility, which provides matching contributions for those seeking to expand production.*
 - *Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility, which helps develop the production of our national instrument.*
 - *Research and Development Facility, which targets innovative ideas*
 - *Exemption of Corporation Tax for approved small companies for a specific period.*
 - *Micro and Small Business grant under the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service*
 - *Numerous Grants under the National Entrepreneurship Development Co. (NEDCO)*
- In the area of **Capacity Building**, there are the:
 - *Apprenticeship Programmes* focused on the Manufacturing, Woodworking and Yachting/Marine industries, in collaboration with the MIC Institute of Technology.
 - *School to Work Apprenticeship Allowance*, which encourages businesses to hire new graduates.
 - *National SheTrades Hub*, which focuses on women-owned and run businesses.
 - *ScaleUp Trinidad and Tobago*, together with the Unit Trust Cooperation.
 - *SME Mentorship Programme*, in collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange and the Central Bank.

- *Numerous Business related programmes under the National Entrepreneurship Development Co. (NEDCO)*
 - *High quality training programmes under exporTT, which will now continue under the new Trade and Investment Promotion Agency.*
 - *Several initiatives under the Export Booster Initiative that aid in international certification, product development and labelling, among others.*
- To boost **Market Access**, SMEs have available to them:
 - *Other programmes under the Export Booster Initiative, that promote exports including the strengthening of market intelligence and in-market promotion.*
 - *Gateway to Trade Programme, which helps SMEs in specific service industries.*
 - *New Bilateral Agreements with countries within and outside the region.*
 - *Several Trade Missions across the region to help local producers and service providers enter new markets.*

SECTION 5

INFLATION AND FOOD PRICES

INFLATION

- In **July 2024**, the inflation rate stood at **0.3 percent**.
- **Significantly lower** than the
 - **8.5 percent** in **2014**; and
 - **5.5 percent** recorded in **2015**

Under the previous administration.

- Trinidad and Tobago`s Inflation Rate is Significantly below the rates recorded amongst some of our trading partners.

INFLATION RATE

Country	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (July)
Jamaica	3.9	5.2	5.9	10.3	6.5	7
India	4.8	6.2	5.5	6.7	5.4	4.6
Guyana	2.1	1.2	3.3	6.5	4.5	2.8
Belize	0.2	0.1	3.2	6.3	4.4	3.1
Barbados	1.6	0.5	1.5	5.0	5.0	3.9
Antigua and Barbuda	1.4	1.1	1.6	7.5	5.1	2.6
Ghana	7.1	9.9	10.0	31.7	37.5	22.3
Canada	1.9	0.7	3.4	6.8	3.9	2.6
USA	1.8	1.2	4.7	8.0	4.1	2.9
Trinidad and Tobago	1.0	0.6	2.1	5.8	4.6	0.3

Source: IMF; CSO for T&T

FOOD INFLATION

- In July 2024, food Inflation was **1.4 percent**
- Trinidad and Tobago`s Food inflation is significantly below the rates recorded amongst some of our trading partners.

FOOD INFLATION RATE - JULY

Country	July-2019	July-2020	July-2021	July-2022	July-2023	July-2024
Jamaica	7.8	n.a	4.6	12.6	11.2	3.5
India	2.3	9.2	3.9	6.7	11.5	5.4
Guyana	7.9	1.8	16.9	7.3	3.2	6.7
Belize	1.2	1.0	4.6	8.0	12.3	5.7
Barbados	4.1	-1.1	1.6	8.5	5.0	n.a
Ghana	6.6	13.7	9.5	32.3	55.0	21.5
Canada	3.8	2.2	1.7	9.2	7.8	2.7
USA	1.8	4.1	3.4	10.9	4.9	2.2
Trinidad and Tobago	1.5	2.3	4.9	10.3	8.6	1.4

Source: *National statistical offices*

- **The poor performance by the UNC was characterised by a 71 percent increase in food prices from 2010 to 2015.**
- **Bear in mind, that back in 2015 there was no war, no pandemic and no supply chain disruptions, it was a time of plenty where oil prices were above 100 dollars a barrel and yet still the UNC Government did nothing to advance agriculture and food production in Trinidad and Tobago or significantly boost manufacturing.**

- Trinidad and Tobago remains **vulnerable to external economic shocks**, such as the ongoing strike by the International Longshoremen’s Association at U.S. East and Gulf Coast ports.
- This disruption has halted the flow of essential goods—ranging from foodstuffs to industrial inputs—posing risks to our supply chains and potentially leading to shortages and price increases locally.
- **Recently, there has been a heightened discourse from the other Side, surrounding our nation’s food import bill.**
- **The most important proxy to evaluate the food import bill is the reduction in the volume on food imports.**

Decreases in the Imported Quantities of Selected Food Items
(2015 vs 2023)

Commodity	2015 (kgs)	2023 (kgs)	% Decline
Beverages	53 million	31 million	41%
Meat and Meat Preparations	52 million	41 million	21%
Fruits and Vegetables	140 million	130 million	7%
Dairy Products and Eggs	39 million	31 million	6%

Source: Central Statistical Office

- It is evident that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have been buying more locally and also growing their own food.

- **The decline in the volume of imported goods, coupled with the consistent rise in local food manufacturing is clear evidence of the** shift towards buying locally and producing food in Trinidad and Tobago
- This highlights a positive trend in food sustainability.

NEW PRODUCTS

- One of these new products is **locally made Ghee** from the company **Farm Fresh Dairy Products** which is currently sold in **95 per cent** of all puja stores. We are going to help this company expand so that we can have a local substitute available. I encourage all citizens to buy local this Divali.
- Existing businesses such as **Arawak** are now manufacturing **locally made chicken nuggets** from real chicken breast meat and is a supplier to large franchises such as KFC, Popeye's, Churches. A prime example of import substitution.
- Innovative businesses such as **Ifarms** have utilized vertical farming to produce a **new product varieties such as pink, yellow, pearl and oyster mushrooms and other mixed greens which we traditionally import, including arugula**. Through the Moruga Agro-processing plant commissioned under this PNM Government, ifarmTT is now able to utilize this facility to expand and grow their business for export.
- **Half-moon vegan ice-cream** made from local products and inputs.
- **It really is a pity that you all did not attend the Agri-Expo 2024 to witness first hand and support the innovation and creativity of people and our local businesses.**

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO HELP CONSUMERS?

CET IMPLEMENTATION

- Even in a period of declining revenues, since 2015, every year the government has gotten a suspension of the CET on a number of **basic food items** including **canned corn beef, sardines and tuna cheddar cheese, canned tuna, black tea, canned sardines and pharmaceuticals** with revenue forgone of over **TT\$1.1 billion**, making these goods cheaper and providing savings to all consumers.

Revenue Foregone resulting from suspensions of the CET on Basic Foods and Pharmaceuticals

Year	Basic Foods (TT\$)	Pharmaceuticals (TT\$)
2016	16,987,518	108,046,229
2017	24,974,856	116,577,167
2018	25,925,845	125,783,343
2019	28,404,158	120,125,261
2020	25,815,636	123,160,223
2021	25,823,625	125,381,044
2022	29,541,543	134,950,258
2023	26,656,855	125,598,362
Total	204,130,036	979,621,887

Source: Calculated by MTI utilising CSO Trade Data

- In addition, under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the **Consumer Affairs Division** conducts, **on a monthly and quarterly basis, a number of price monitoring exercises in various sectors; namely, supermarket, hardware, pharmaceuticals and poultry to prevent price gouging and keep consumers well informed.**

VAT REDUCTIONS ON BASIC FOOD ITEMS

- We have also implemented VAT reduction on basic food items.
- In 2016 and further on November 1, 2021 the Government expanded the list of basic food items that are exempt from Value Added Tax (VAT) to include the following: Vegetable/Soya Bean Oil; Olive Oil; Coconut Oil; Canola Oil; Ghee; Peanut Butter; Black Pepper and Other Spices; Family Cereal; Kid's Cereals; Hot Cereal Oats; Milk Substitute; Condensed Milk; Instant Coffee, Ground Coffee; Steel Cut Oats, Black Tea; Green Tea; Orange Juice; Apple Juice; Still Water (bottled water); Seasoned Meat; Sausages, Canned or Otherwise Packaged; Canned Tuna; Canned Mackerel; Canned Peas; Canned Beans; Canned Corn; Canned Mixed Vegetables; Mayonnaise; Ketchup; Roti Skin; Soup (packaged); Geera; Soya Chunks; Soya Minced; Ground Dhal; Cheese Slices; Table Butter; Pigtail; Ham Slices; Turkey Slices; Chicken Lunchmeats; Bologna; Fresh Juice; Biscuits and Crackers.
- While on this topic, I want to clarify the misinformation in the public domain where those on the other side claim that they removed the VAT on **“seven thousand” food products**. The “seven thousand does not refer to individual food items, but rather Supermarket Units or SKUs which include variations in flavour, packaging, size and brand of a limited range of products. If we take for example juices, they are counting each variation in size of packaging, each flavor and each brand separately, yet it is still ONE product - Juice. **They continue to hoodwink the population.**

- The VAT exempt list is principally designed to support the poor and the vulnerable in society. It was not meant to buffer those with greater purchasing power. As a result, this Government sort to bring the VAT exempt list back to its original moorings by removing luxury food items such as dates, artichokes and maraschino cherries.
- This Government remains committed to enhancing agricultural productivity in Trinidad and Tobago through initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. My colleagues will bring to you these deliverables during their respective contributions.

SECTION 4

TRADE AND INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

- This Government has significantly transformed the trade and investment landscape since 2015 and continues to do so, delivering improvements far beyond the previous administration.

- Under institutional strengthening, we have operationalized:
 - the Trade and Investment Promotion Agency;
 - Commercial Officers and Attaches in key markets;
 - Special Economic Zones Authority;
 - continue to strengthen the regulatory framework for the scrap metal industry;
 - enhanced e-services under TTBizLink;
 - a new e-commerce Strategy; and,
 - A new National Trade Strategy.

SECTION 5

INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

- The Government continues to **forge pathways to prosperity** through investments: **reinvestments and new investments**, both being equally important to the development of our business landscape.
- Investment activity in the economy continues to be strong particularly in the non-energy sector.

EXPANSION OF THE RETAIL AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR

- **Let me tell you about another sector that is surging with activity.**
- As I mentioned earlier, in 2023, the **Trade and Repairs sector benefitted from a surge in retail activity, increased consumer spending and enhanced service offerings** and the evidence of this is clear through the numerous investments AND also through consumer demand and their purchasing power.
- In the last ten years, throughout the country NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST, we have seen the opening of several entertainment venues, restaurants, shopping plazas and food truck spots.
- **In the NORTH we have:**
 - **Garden Park** – This is an express food hub which recently opened in Aranguetz. This Park includes **7** food outlets.

- **Food Square** – Food Square is located in Rosalina Street, Woodbrook and offers a variety of food options for customers from **16** food places.
- **139 Woodbrook Yard** – a food spot which offers options from **9** food spots.
- In the North we also have the **Ivy Steakhouse, Meena House, Elysium Bar and Lounge** and the **Seafood and Champagne Lounge**.
- **In the SOUTH we have:**
 - **Apsara South** – located in Duncan Village, San Fernando. The restaurant offers a variety of authentic Indian dishes.
 - **‘D’ Cross** - Cross Crossing in San Fernando is home to **7** popular food outlets.
 - **C3** – Plaza located in San Fernando houses over **100** stores. It also includes entertainment spots such as Movie Towne and several social restaurants. It also hosts a JTA Supermarket and at least 8 food spots.
 - **SouthPark** - SouthPark is a shopping, entertainment, and dining destination located in San Fernando. The Mall is home to **12** chain restaurants, Caribbean Cinemas, Escape the Movies, Princess Casino, Steel Restaurant and Lounge, Offside Restaurant and Sports Bar and various shopping spots.

- **In CENTRAL:**

- **Brentwood Mall** - Brentwood Mall in Central includes retail businesses, boutique stores and restaurants including **10** food establishments.
- **M6 Plaza** – The most recent opening in Chaguanas is a commercial and entertainment complex with **numerous** shopping stores and food places. It is also proposed that a Cinema would be opened at the Plaza in the future.
- **Heartland Plaza** – Heartland Plaza is located in Chaguanas, and hosts a variety entertainment, shopping and food outlets consisting of **9** businesses.
- **Dennis P Ramdhan Complex** - A new reservation and entertainment hall in Couva which was opened in February 2024 and can house up to 500 people. The complex has three floors and a rooftop area. It was designed to facilitate both corporate and social events.
- **The Port** – This Food Hub is located in Mc Bean Couva and includes **6** Food spots:
- There is also the recently opened **Food Village in Chaguanas** which houses **7** food stalls.

- **In the EAST:**

- There is the upgraded **Valpark Plaza** – which has re-emerged as a social hub in the East-West Corridor. In addition to existing establishments, there are at least **5** new restaurants and entertainment spots at this Plaza.

- **Piarco Plaza** – Located in Piarco, Piarco Plaza is home to at least **5** establishments.

- **Grande Food Hub** – This Hub, located in Sangre Grande, features a wide variety of food from **7** options.

- And in addition to these, I have not even begun to mentioned companies who have made multiple reinvestments in new **Shopping Complexes** and stores, again spread across the entire country including:
 - **Pennywise Plazas BOTH in Chaguanas and La Romain.** Apart from Pennywise Cosmetics and its Pharmacy, the Plaza in Chaguanas and La Romaine houses **21 shopping stores.**

 - **4 new Xtra Plazas** – spread across Sangre Grande, Arima, Chaguanas and Aranguez. Apart from Xtra Foods Supermarket, these Plazas include other food outlets as well.

 - **In the WEST there are 8 significant entertainment hubs which include:**
 - **Vice Night Club and Lounge** – Opened in Cipriani Boulevard.

- **Tipsy Ibis** – A restaurant and lounge opened in Ariapita Avenue.
- **Sixes Social Cricket** – Opened in One Woodbrook Place and marking the 14th global venue for Sixes. This venue adds to the existing locations in the UK and US and features five state-of-the-art batting nets that combines cricket with cutting-edge technology. It also includes a spacious restaurant and bar area. This international franchise selected Trinidad and Tobago as home to its first Caribbean location.
- In Chaguaramas, in particular, there is the **Carenage Fish Fry** venue and the **Rootsyardd** compound which serves as a hub for cultural events, live music, workshops and artesian markets, yoga sessions and drumming circles.
- In Chaguaramas there is also the family attraction **Five Islands Water and Amusement Park**.
- Ladies and gentlemen, a prospering entertainment and leisure sector is instrumental in providing employment both in the City and in rural areas. The influx of visitors to these spots encourages consumer spending and in turn businesses are incentivized to innovate their services and offer new products and experiences. This sector is burgeoning with activity.
- **AND THAT IS WHY - we will beat them in the North! We will beat them in the South! We will beat them in the East! And we will beat them in the West!**

