

Imbert: Train One, Dragon will not collapse economy

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FINANCE Minister Colm Imbert says a fall off of 100 million cubic feet by BPTT and a delay in the Dragon gas field will not collapse the economy.

He was winding up debate late on Monday night, on a motion to adopt the Standing Finance Committee for the supplementation of appropriation for fiscal 2019 report, hours after he presented the mid-year budget review in Parliament. He was responding to concerns expressed by BPTT on its ability to provide natural gas for Atlantic LNG Train One.

He said this country has grown from 3.3 billion standard cubic feet in 2017 to 3.6 billion in 2018

and now to 3.8 billion in 2019. "There is continuous growth and momentum in the production of natural gas and that is what is driving our economy."

He added one would think the commentators would know this and would do the maths. He reported BPTT has plugged and abandoned one well and another well was producing lower than expected - 50 or 75 million standard cubic feet compared to 100 million - but it was still commercially viable. He said it was his understanding the well will be brought into production in the next couple months.

Imbert said BPTT has just pressed the "pause button" because of the disappointing results

from the two wells. He also noted a change of leadership at the company with an accountant (Claire Fitzpatrick) who would have to rely on technocrats. He said there may be technical or commercial reasons for the decision by BPTT and pointed to the negotiation of the new contract for Train One.

"It is certainly not a calamity. Absolutely not." He said there are other companies operating in TT including BHP Billiton, EOG and Shell, which is the majority shareholder in Train One. He added if BP does not agree with the terms of the Train One contract the gas can go to other trains or new or current industries.

"The gas not going to rotten. It not going to evaporate. It will be

there." Imbert said BP is the largest natural gas producer in TT with half of four billion cubic feet of production. He added, however, with BP there may be a fall off in gas production in 2020 of maybe 100 million cubic feet per day which is less than five per cent of national production.

"And that is certainly not going to collapse the economy and cause any major damaging effect on Government revenues and the growth momentum that is apparent in our economy."

He also said Dragon gas from Venezuela represented 200 million cubic feet or five per cent of national production. He stressed there will be no calamity if Dragon is delayed for a year or two.