

Opening Remarks
by
Parliament Secretary Ms. Nicole Olivierre
for
La Brea Community Meeting

28 February 2018

- Senator the Honourable Franklin Khan, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries
- The Honourable Edmund Dillon, Minister of National Security and MP for Point Fortin
- Other members of Cabinet :
 - Senator the Honourable Robert Le Hunte, Minister of Public Utilities
 - Senator the Honourable Paula Gopie Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry
 - Senator the Honourable Clarence Rambharat, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries
- Members of Parliament:
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- His Worship the Mayor of Point Fortin Abdon Mason, and other members of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation
- Mayors and Chairmen of Regional Corporations
- Councilor for Brighton Vessigny Gerald Debisette and other Representatives of the Siparia Regional Corporation: Councilor Christine Neptune, Councilor Arlene Ramdeo, Councilor Maurice Alexander, Alderman Christopher Encinas and Alderman Alston Cadore
- Representatives of our major stakeholders in the energy sector

- Most importantly residents of La Brea and environs, my constituents,
- Members of the media
- Our national audience, listening on the radio, or viewing this telecast

A pleasant good evening Trinidad and Tobago. It is my pleasure to welcome you to “La Brea – Energy is your business”. For those of you who have journeyed from all parts of Trinidad and Tobago to be with us this evening I warmly welcome you to the heart of the south west, the birthplace of our nation’s oil industry.

This evening Ladies and Gentlemen we will be taking a close look at our energy sector and our government’s plans for further industrial development. We have chosen La Brea to host this meeting because La Brea is at the centre of our industrialization efforts and the **people** of La Brea have a great role to play in determining the success of these efforts.

Today ladies and gentlemen, La Brea stands poised for take-off. **We** know that God has blessed us with many treasures... natural features that are unique and valuable. We are rich in hydrocarbon resources; the first oil well was drilled in La Brea in 1857, and the first oil shipment from Trinidad was on a tanker from our Brighton Port in 1910.

Among our treasures we can boast about our world renowned pitch lake, our lovely beaches, and we are here at one of them and most importantly for our industrial development, our natural deep water harbor. La Brea has features that make us the envy of many other areas and we therefore need to capitalize on this. In order to get what we want... we have to make use of what we have... and La Brea has been richly blessed.

Despite our many blessings, for far too long, La Brea has just missed out on attaining the level of industrial development that is expected for an area so rich in resources. We have made some advancements, most notably the establishment of Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago and previous PNM administrations creation of the LABIDCO Estate and later the Union Estate.

Today we have all the factors in place to make this an industrial powerhouse. With the pending completion of the Point Fortin highway we will have the road access. We have the natural deep water port at Brighton, surplus electricity generation from TGU and the 56 inch natural gas cross island pipeline. WASA is currently laying a 24 inch diameter pipeline to bring additional water to Union Estate. We have everything to take us on this journey towards our industrial development.

This PNM government, led by our Prime Minister Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, has declared that this constituency, La Brea, will be the spear head of our thrust in our national development policy. Industrialization is our weapon of choice to secure the future, and La Brea is the tip of that spear.

So it is no accident that we have chosen La Brea to commence this national discussion about our future. Our feature speaker, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Senator the Honourable Franklyn Khan will tonight speak about the opportunities coming to La Brea – investments that will redound to the benefit of the entire constituency and the whole of Trinidad and Tobago.

To understand our vision for La Brea, we can look to Point Lisas as an example of what is possible. In the same manner the rural towns of Couva and California have blossomed from obscurity to leaders of industry and commerce, so too can our villages blossom... from Aripero to Guapo, Quarry Village to Erin, Salazar Trace, Lot Ten and Parrylands. This evening is about you and how you can benefit from embracing this development thrust.

The direct benefit to our community is clear. Let us take our most recent major project – the Juniper platform. From 2014 to 2017, Trinidad Offshore Fabricators Limited (TOFCO) employed at peak 377 persons from La Brea and environs. They also engaged 9 subcontractors from La Brea.

- Direct salary payments to residents of La Brea and environs totaled \$86.14 million dollars.
- Money spent on local contractors: Equipment rental \$12.8 M
- Trucking contracts \$4.1 M
- Employee expenses for food within the community \$9.4 M

That ladies and gentlemen is the amount of money spent within the community by one company on one project - \$112.5 Million dollars. And that does not include the impact of the circulation of that money within the community.

How much was earned by the groceries, the bars, the hairdressers, fruit vendors, NGOs looking for money to sponsor an event – schools hosting their sports day, back to school book drive – everyone benefits from that money circulating in the community.

We were all greatly disappointed by the loss of Angelin, not just to La Brea, but to Trinidad and Tobago. Angelin is a smaller platform than Juniper but you have an idea the kind of value we lost when Angelin was sent to Mexico. Minister Khan and I recently paid a visit to the Mexican fabrication yard where the Angelin platform is being built. Apart from the size, it's a much larger land area, there is nothing they are doing there that we couldn't do here in La Brea.

In fact, as Member of Parliament for La Brea, I was pleased to meet guys from my constituency working at that yard in Mexico. So it's not about our lack of skill – it's about our attitude as a community.

We have a major plant construction currently underway – the Caribbean Gas Chemicals Limited (CGCL) methanol plant. If you drive down into the Union Estate, or just go into Square Deal and look down you will see the tremendous progress. La Brea – that is opportunity developing before our eyes.

This is the biggest thing happening in Trinidad right now. There are approximately 1,100 workers on site, over 400 from the fence line communities. The project was scheduled for completion at the end of this year but right now the project is 2 months behind schedule. Why – because of protest action.

Workers shut down the job for 4 weeks. And what did they achieve – hundreds of workers drawing no salary for 4 weeks. Workers with children to feed, families to maintain. No income over the carnival period. Vendors from the community losing the opportunity to earn income. Before the strike, vendors on the site were making as much as \$5,000 per week providing breakfast and lunch to workers. During the strike all of that value disappeared.

Thankfully the strike has ended and workers are back on the job. But now we have to play “catch up” to try to recover the schedule. These delays are at great cost, and do no one any good. If we are to make up for the lost time our productivity must increase.

So I’m speaking to members of my community. The government has big plans for La Brea, which the Minister will speak about shortly. But we have to **want** it. We have to **desire** it and we have to **welcome** it. Maximizing the benefits of industrial development is not just about construction jobs and not just about jobs on the plants themselves – it is about growth for the entire community.

Greater levels of income generating activity means more opportunities for everyone – small and large businesses alike – from the parlor and the taxis to the small contractors in our community, to education in our schools.

We must not be insular when it comes to jobs in the area. If we say that jobs in La Brea must only go to the people from La Brea, then the rest of the country can say the same things and not want La Brea people to work elsewhere. **Yes** we put La Brea first but in the same way people from La Brea work in Point Lisas and Port of Spain and throughout Trinidad and Tobago, once you are a citizen of this country we cannot debar anyone from coming here to work. There is plenty for everyone, and we must ensure that we prepare ourselves for the jobs that will come in all phases of the development.

There are other **infrastructural** works taking place in the constituency. You may recall we held a sod turning ceremony for the construction of the Quarry Village community centre in August 2017. I am pleased to announce that site preparation works will be commencing shortly – as early as next week. The delay was due to design changes.

The original plans called for a single story structure but that was deemed inadequate for the community and over the past few months the architect and engineers at UDeCOTT have been working assiduously making the design changes to a 2 story building. Those designs are now complete and the contractor is expected to be given the updated site plans by the end of this week so they can mobilize on site and commence construction.

We have plans for improvement of our **pitch lake**. In 2016 the Ministry of Tourism remodeled and upgraded the La Brea Museum, and also made it accessible to the physically challenged. The next phase of upgrade involves the establishment of concession stands at the venue so we can have souvenirs on sale. Our Pitch Lake has the potential to be a first class destination and my office is working with the Ministry of Tourism and other stakeholders to enhance the overall visitor experience.

For a venue that is poorly marketed, our Pitch Lake receives hundreds of visitors monthly. In this month, February, we received over 800 visitors, locals and foreigners. Imagine the revenue we can generate if we increase that number and provide souvenir items for these visitors to purchase.

On the utilities front, we are making efforts at improving water delivery throughout the constituency. Residents in Erin would be experiencing increased availability of supply – this is due to increased production from the Carapal Water Treatment Plant.

Earlier I mentioned that WASA is constructing a new 24 inch pipeline from the South Oropouche Booster Station to the Union Estate. This will bring water from Caroni and Point Lisas into the La Brea area to increase the supply to our industrial and residential customers.

With this increased supply from the north, we will be able to back off supply from the Point Fortin Desalination Plant and redirect it to supply areas from Erin to Quarry Village. So residents from Quarry, Santa Flora, Los Bajos, Palo Seco all the way down to Erin can expect a more reliable supply when this project is completed later this year.

Also T&TEC is working towards regularizing the supply of electricity to areas such as Pangola and STOL Road.

Aripero – we will soon be coming to you to look at your recreational grounds in Silver Stream and Pond Road to see what upgrades are possible.

We have lots of activities upcoming in the constituency. This Saturday we will be launching the 2018 edition of the Palo Seco T12 Cricket Competition at the #4 Road Recreation Ground. And, thanks to the efforts of the Minister of Public Utilities and T&TEC, this year we will be playing the games under lights. So we look out for full community support and participation.

Before I close, I want to ask members of our community to come out and support our young athletes this Friday at the **Primary** schools zonal sports. La Brea Zone will be held at the Sobo Recreational Ground and Erin Zone will held at the Palo Seco Secondary School.

I'm calling on the parents and residents to come out and show our support. Co-curricular activities form an important part of their overall development and enhance their school experience. I also take this opportunity to thank the corporate sponsors who have committed to supporting these and other events.

La Brea, we have a lot to look forward to. No other community in Trinidad is as poised for take-off as we are. Yes we have experienced setbacks but the future is here. We must be ready and we must be welcoming.

If we embrace all these changes La Brea will grow from strength to strength. **We can and we will** become an economic power house in this country and in this region. The node for development is right here and I know that the people of La Brea are ready. As your MP I commit to doing all in my power to ensure that my La Brea people benefit from this growth.

Tonight ladies and gentlemen is about our future. La Brea... the future is Energy and Energy is your business.

May God bless us all. Thank you.