

# CROSSTALK

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**THE MACES:**  
THE SYMBOLS OF PARLIAMENT'S AUTHORITY

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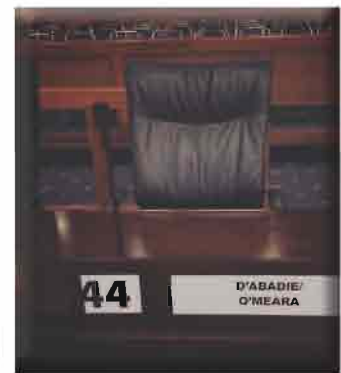
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# THE PARLIAMENT'S MACES

*By Lorraine Berahzer &  
Danielle Williams*



The Trinidad and Tobago Parliament is steeped in rich history that embeds almost every symbol, rule and procedure. Two beautiful pieces of that history take shape in the form of the Parliament Maces.

Originally used as a weapon by a royal bodyguard to defend the King, the mace has now become a symbol of the power the Marshal of the Parliament holds. It also symbolises the authority and privileges of the House. It is interesting to note that this metal staff, which is held over the right shoulder of the Marshal when he escorts the Presiding Officer in and out of the Chamber at the beginning and end of each sitting of the respective House, originated in the 13th century. After some years the mace proved to be too heavy to be used as a weapon and so began its transformation from being a weapon to being a ceremonial artefact.

Parliamentary practice dictates that if the mace is not present in the Chamber then the sitting of the House or Senate cannot take place. The Marshal, or a person performing the role in his absence, is the only one authorised to handle the mace. Anything contrary is viewed as wilful disobedience to the rules of the House.

During the 1300s to 1400s the mace gradually evolved by being decorated and adorned with precious metals and became known as the civic mace.

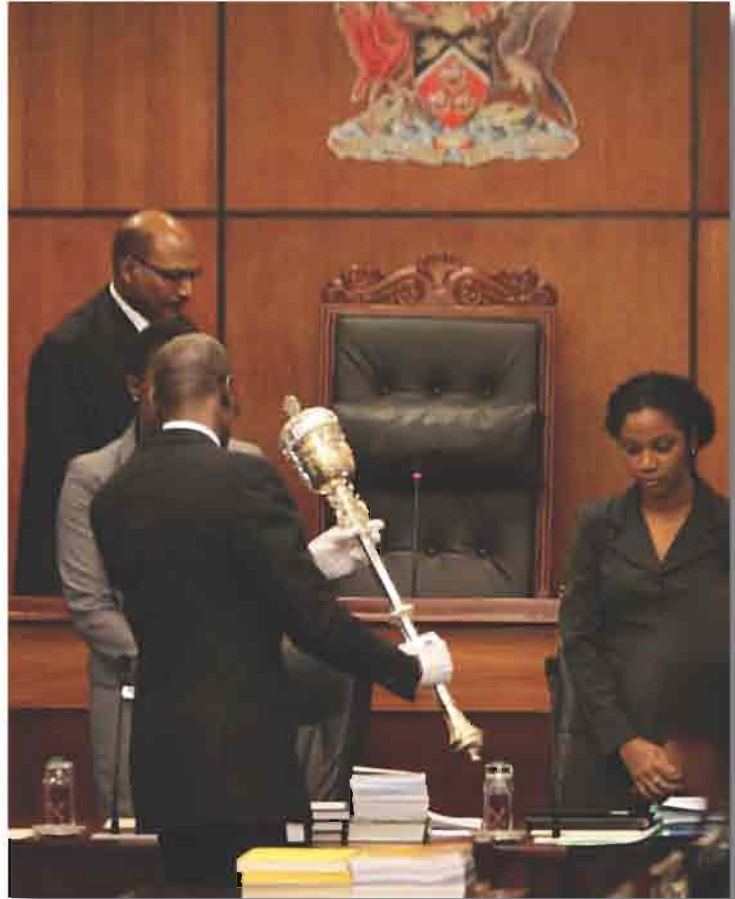
During the 1300s to 1400s the mace gradually evolved by being decorated and adorned with precious metals and became known as the civic mace. In the Parliament, while the uses and functions of the maces may be the same, they are both individually styled.

The Mace of the House of Representatives, crafted in 1899 by Silversmith Messrs Garrett of England, is silver gilt and has a two-dimensional silver carving of the Coat-of-Arms to the top. Its head is ornamented with carved motifs depicting the landing of Christopher Columbus.

Although it was donated to the Legislative Council, when Trinidad and Tobago achieved Independence in 1962 it found its place in the House of Representatives. This made room for the creation of a second Mace for the Senate. While it may not bear the same historical significance of its silver counterpart, the relevance of the Senate mace is undeniable.

Loosely patterned around the Tanzanian Mace, the mace of the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is crafted in gold and features two copies of the Coat-of-Arms, a three dimensional figurine at the top and an engraving of the national emblem on its knop. Four round panels along the stem of the mace depict the oil industry, the sugar industry, the cocoa industry and the symbol of the manufacturer's association.

At the top of the base of the Shaft there appears the National Flower, the Chaconia and another popular flower, the Anthurium Lily. The Fleuron or end of the Mace is in the shape of a cocoa pod.

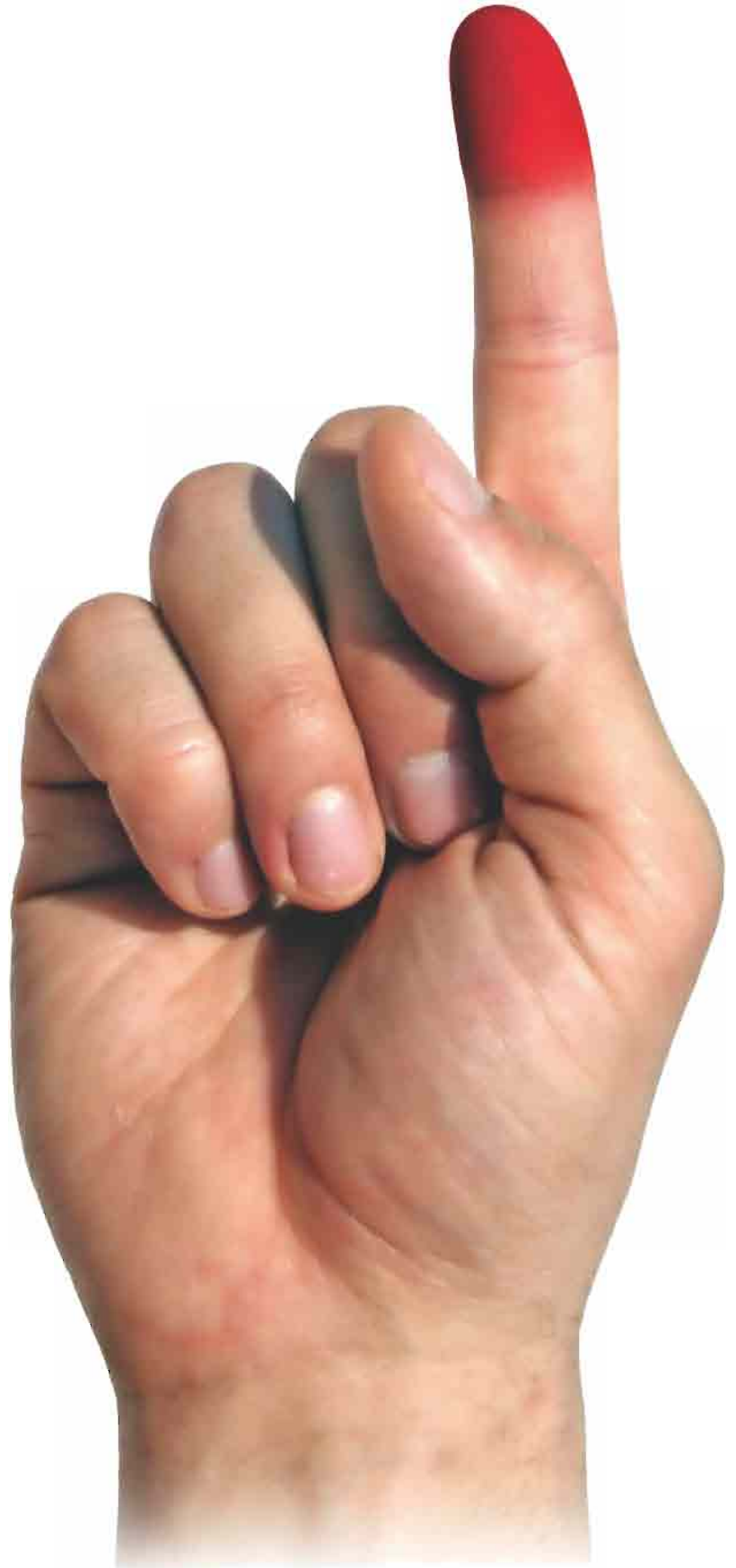


Today the mace is used in many Parliaments across the world and bears much significance as it did in the olden days. While the Marshals, Speakers of the House and Presidents of the Senate may change, the symbol of that authority, the sign that Parliament is in Session, remains the same.

# THE ELECTION PROCESS

*By Atiba Wiltshire*

At any time between now and September 17th a date will be announced for general elections and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are over the age of eighteen (18) will be called upon to exercise their civic duty and vote for the political party which, in their view, would best lead this nation for the next five years. Sensing the inevitability of having to be on the political hustings once again, the major political parties have already begun screening candidates to represent them in the forty one (41) constituencies throughout our twin-island state. As such, we at CrossTalk wanted to inform our readers (some of whom may themselves be considering running for political office) of the processes that come into play in running for elections, participating in the election process through voting and the role the Parliament plays during this period.



**How the process begins:**

The Prime Minister advises the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago of the date on which the General Election is to be held.

Once the date for the general election is announced, a Writ of Election is issued under the seal of the President. The Writ of Election is addressed to each Returning Officer and fixes the date for the nomination of candidates (Nomination Day) and the date on which the poll will be held (Election Day).

Election Day must be held no more than twenty one (21) days after Nomination Day. For example, if Nomination Day is June 1st then Election Day must be held by June 22nd.

**For the Candidate:**

Any person who wishes to be a candidate for an election must first be nominated by at least six (6) registered voters in that constituency, meaning that their names must appear on the list of voters in the constituency for which the candidate is seeking nomination. An election candidate can only be nominated in one constituency.

Candidacy hopefuls for an electoral district must fill out the respective nomination papers which they can collect and return to the Returning Officer (the person who has overall responsibility for the conduct of the election) on or before Nomination Day. There are forty one (41) returning officers, each of whom has an office in his respective constituency in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is advisable for prospective candidates to return their nomination papers at least seven days before Nomination Day. This is because a preliminary examination of filed papers is conducted on the seventh day prior to Nomination Day.

On Nomination Day all nomination papers are examined by the Returning Officer and, once they are valid and a deposit is paid (\$5,000 due on Nomination Day for General Elections and \$2,000 for Local Government Elections), the nominee is declared an election candidate for the respective constituency.

The Representation of the People Act Chap 2:01 explains in detail the processes that must be followed in the run-up to an election and also contains copies of all official documents issued during an election, including copies of Nomination Papers and the Writ of Elections issued by the President of the Republic.

**For the Voter:**

Prior to Election Day, each registered voter should receive a poll card in the mail. The poll card would contain, among other things, the address of the voter's polling station. If he or she does not receive a poll card before Election Day, one will be prepared for him or her at the respective polling station and the Elections and Boundaries Commission can be contacted via their hotlines at 627-1516 or 627-0745 to find out the address of the polling station. On Election Day voters need to present their photo ID (whether National ID or Driver's License) when they go to the polling station. In the event that more than one polling station is located on the same compound, an Information Officer will be on hand to direct them to their polling station.

If a voter's name is on the list of Electors and they have a valid ID card, he or she would be asked to join the green line for voting at the polling station. If not or if that individual is physically handicapped or visually impaired, they would be asked to join the red line. Each voter would be asked to sign their poll card in front of the Poll

THE ELECTION PROCESS





Clerk. The Deputy Presiding Officer would then examine the voter's fingers and, if there is no evidence of electoral ink stains, the voter would receive a ballot paper. The ballot paper should be marked and folded, with the use of a guidance ballot, to display the initials of the Deputy Presiding Officer and the Polling Station Number.

From there each voter would proceed to the voting booth and vote for the candidate of his or her choice by placing an 'X' to the right of their candidate's symbol. When the voter comes out of the voting booth the Deputy Presiding Officer would instruct him or her on how to fold their ballot and they will be instructed to proceed to the officer in charge of the ballot box.

Next the voter will be instructed to dip their right index finger into the electoral ink before placing their ballot into the ballot box.

Congrats! The voting process is complete!

#### **For the Politician:**

When the Prime Minister decides the date on which General Elections will be held he or she would then ad-

vised the President of the date that Parliament should be dissolved and the date on which the poll will be taken. According to Section 69:1 of the Constitution "A general election of members of the House of

Representatives shall be held at such time within three months after every dissolution of Parliament as the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, shall appoint." This means that the Prime Minister has to ensure that Election Day comes no later than 3 months after Parliament is dissolved.

The leader of the political party which, at the end of a general election, commands the majority of seats or the support of the majority of the elected Members of Parliament from among the forty one (41) constituencies is the person who becomes the Prime Minister. Additionally, the Prime Minister continues to serve until a new Prime Minister is sworn in, while Ministers vacate office when a new Prime Minister is sworn in; the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House continue in those roles until the new Parliament sits.

And what if a matter of na-

tional emergency should arise between the date that Parliament is dissolved and the date of election in which the involvement of the Parliament would be needed? Well, according to Section 68:4 of the Constitution, if such a situation, on the advice of the Prime Minister should arise, "the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, may summon the two Houses of the preceding Parliament". In such a case, Members of the preceding Parliament would act in the portfolios which they previously held.

Every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago needs to understand how significant it is for all to exercise their civic duty.

**For more information on the election process go to the Elections and Boundaries Commission website at [www.ebctt.com](http://www.ebctt.com)**

**You can also visit the Parliament's Youtube page to view a live action/animated feature titled iCount which also explains the election process. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38-zlbbH0\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38-zlbbH0_I)**

# The Constituency Office & Representation:

*D'Abadie/O'Meara*

By Dwayne Haynes



The constituency of D'Abadie/O'Meara was developed in part due to a population boom and industrial developments along the east/west corridor of Trinidad, circa 1999, and onwards. The Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) Report of 2004 recommended that the electoral boundaries be increased from thirty-four (34) to thirty-nine (39) seats in Trinidad, with no alterations to the two (2) existing seats in Tobago. That figure has since been increased to 41 seats overall.

According to the EBC's report, the constituency boundaries of Arouca North and Arouca South would be separated and, based on its calculations, three constituencies along the east/west corridor came into being, namely Arouca/Maloney, Lopinot/Bon Air West and D'Abadie/O'Meara. The creation of these seats transformed the electoral landscape with the addition of new polling divisions. These polling divisions are the areas in which members of the constituency cast their votes for a representative.

The hallmark of democracy is appropriate representation for the people and by the people. To effectively manage a

seat, the elected Member of Parliament who represents his/her constituency must have an official base in their electoral area, this base is often called a constituency office. This office is a direct line of communication between the community and their elected representative. In the simplest of terms, the constituency office is a conduit and binding force between the representative and the people. According to Peter MacLeod in the Canadian Parliamentary Review (2006) "...the constituency office stands alone as a kind of local infrastructure for encounter, recognition and engagement, connecting citizen to representative, and citizen to state."

Each member of the Parliament while performing his/her tasks as a representative of the constituency is entitled to an office within his constituency and to organize the activities of that office as the MP sees fit. The Office of the Parliament is responsible for providing guidance on the procedures and policies for the operations of constituency offices as may be recommended by the House Committee and approved by the Speaker of the House, (and pays the salaries of constitu-

ency office staff). The Clerk of the House as Accounting Officer is responsible for ensuring accountability of the funds expended, in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Act .

Since the general elections of 2007, the constituency of D'Abadie/O'Meara has had two (2) parliamentary representatives. Mrs. Karen Nunez Tesheira, an attorney-at-law and Senior Tutor at the Hugh Wooding Law School in St. Augustine, Trinidad, was the People's National Movement (PNM) representative. Following the May 24, 2010 general elections, the constituency chose Mr. Anil Roberts, Congress of the People (COP) representative and renowned swimming coach. Through the efforts of Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira and Mr. Roberts together with the energies of their dedicated staff, they were able to execute a number of projects and programmes in the D'Abadie/O'Meara constituency. These representatives have been praised for their constituency relations work which has helped mobilize citizen participation in public affairs and matters that directly impact their lives. To date, the constituency of D'Abadie/O'Meara is an eclectic mixture of suburban life, industrial





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**D'ABADIE/  
O'MEARA**

and manufacturing prowess and a thriving campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

However, the political forecast can be inclement and in early 2014, Mr. Roberts resigned as a Member of Parliament for the constituency of D'Abadie/O'Meara and as Minister of Sport. This severely impacted the needs of the community and the constituency of some 27,000 plus residents as specific needs and special projects have been

stymied. In order to continue the efficient and effective representation of the constituents, the Congress of the People appointed the caretaker representative Ms. Patricia Metivier to carry on the ever-essential function of representation to constituents of the area.

Ms. Metivier comes with experience in the political arena and was the immediate past Deputy Mayor of the Arima Borough Corporation which includes parts of the

D'Abadie/O'Meara constituency. While Ms. Metivier is no stranger to this constituency, she is charged with working closely with the electorate to ensure their needs and concerns are promptly addressed with the best results. While the constituency is not represented at the Parliamentary level, issues impacting D'Abadie/O'Meara can be addressed through line ministers and their respective ministries.



# A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE **RED HOUSE** *and National History*

By Dwayne Haynes

*The Red House Restoration Project has certainly had its complement of impediments and setbacks. However, the most exciting of them was the discovery of human remains and cultural artefacts during the seismic retrofitting phase of the project. These discoveries have added to the buzz in the cultural and archaeological community of Trinidad and Tobago as they will be new additions to the historical record.*

The finds at the Red House boast a total of six (6) complete skeletons, forty-nine (49) incomplete skeletons, and several coins, including the valuable United States Gold Lustre Coin. Through the various testing methods of carbon dating and DNA analysis (which assessed mitochondrial haplogroups) at the Merriwether Ancient DNA and Forensic Lab including Beta Analytic Inc., it was revealed that the Red House site was occupied by pre-colonial native groups centuries before the original Red House building in 1844. The chronology, AD 450, can be tied specifically to the Saladoid People. Further tests confirmed linkages to the pre-colonial groups such as the Arauquinoid indigenes (locally referred to as Guayabitoid) and Mayoid indigenous groups. Dr. Basil Reid of U.W.I. wrote that the Saladoids were the first Amerindian potters, farmers and villagers to arrive in Trinidad and Tobago in 250 BC and, by 600 AD, had settled extensively in both islands.

With these discoveries, there is a greater need for protection and management in line with international best practices of historical artefacts. The need for protection led to the Cabinet commissioned "Red House Historical Cultural Heritage Team". The team comprises members from a number of stakeholder groups such as the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, the Red House Project Consultants and the Trinidad and Tobago Amerindian and First People Communities. One of the Committee's major achievements was to recognize the rights of the first people under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and allowing the first people to hold religious ceremonies on the grounds of the Red House. The Committee has also agreed, that all the remains should be interred on the grounds of the Red House with an appropriate signage indicating the significance of the area. It is imminent that dialogues with these groups continue for mutual benefit and the good of the common heritage and rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.



In addition, The Office of the Parliament has signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Central Florida. This agreement has facilitated further examination and tests on the skeletons and bones found at the Red House by Dr. John Schult, Forensic Anthropologist, in January 2015. In addition, Dr. Basil A. Reid, the lead archaeologist on this project, has developed a network of specialists in various disciplines to develop a Red House 3D Archaeological Geodatabase (GIS). This database houses all information related to the discoveries at the Red House.

While there is much elation surrounding these developments, in reflecting on this nation's commitment to preservation of our national heritage, there is much to be expected. Since 1972 Trinidad and Tobago has signed a number of conventions, with a view to actively engage in cultural protection and preservation namely:

- The convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and ratified (2005);
- The convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001) and ratified (2010);
- The Conventions for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) was signed and ratified (2010); and
- The Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (2005) and ratified on the (2010).

Through these conventions the necessary skills and knowledge can be harnessed to ensure that national treasures can be restored and protected. However, looking upon the Magnificent Seven, one wonders about their dispelled bravura. It is no secret that there is need for the protection and restoration of national history.

Moving forward the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago must take a leading role with the construction and efficient maintenance of a Parliamentary Museum. While the idea will not be a novelty in the Commonwealth, it will surely be the most reliable and feasible option to safeguard the Red

House artefacts. Through UNESCO and the National Commission for UNESCO, strategic links can be established with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Caribbean Capacity Building Programme (CCBP), skilled expertise and training can be provided to ensure that the foundation and continuity of heritage protection and conservation is managed and developed. In future, the museum can be a medium where the principles of the Parliament's Outreach Initiatives, parliamentary history and by extension, national history can be taught and learned at the seat of the legislature.





*Visits by delegations from:*

**THE PARLIAMENTS OF  
BERMUDA,  
THE UNITED KINGDOM &  
CANADA**

*By Melissa Griffith*

Throughout the year, the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago plays host to various Parliamentary Delegations from across the Caribbean region and the wider world. During the periods January to March 2015, the Parliament was honoured with the presence of several Parliamentary delegations from the United Kingdom, Bermudan and Canadian legislatures.

The period of January 25th, 2015 to February 1st, 2015 saw the Parliament entertaining delegates from the Bermudan Parliament led by the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Kenneth Howard Randolph Horton who was joined by:

1. Mr. Walter Brown, JP, MP – Shadow Minister of Immigration and External Affairs;
2. Mr. N. H. Cole Simons, JP, MP – Government Whip;
3. Ms. Lovitta Foggo, JP, MP – Opposition Whip;
4. Ms. Susan Jackson, JP, MP;
5. Mrs. Shernette Wolfe – Clerk to the Legislature.

Notably, all three delegations began their first day at the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament with a courtesy call on the Presiding Officers. On arrival at the Parliament, they were greeted by Mr. Brian Caesar, Marshal of the Parliament, and escorted to the Diplomatic Room on Level 2 at the Parliament. During the courtesy call they met with the Speaker of the House, Hon. Wade Mark, MP, and the newly appointed President of the Senate, Sen. the Hon. Raziah Ahmed (who replaced Mr. Timothy Hamel-Smith). During the courtesy call, they held discussions with the Presiding Officers which concluded with an exchange of gifts and the signing of the visitor's book.

The Bermudan delegation then made their way to Tower C, located at the Waterfront Centre in Port-of-Spain, and held discussions with the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, MP, on multilateral issues which affect the Caribbean region. Visits were also held with senior members of staff at the Office of the Parliament particularly Mrs. Jacqueline Sampson-Meiguel, Clerk of the House, and Mrs. Nataki Atiba-Dilchan, Clerk of the Senate. Following a tour of the is-



*From left to right (front row) are: Sen. Betty Unger, Conservative Party of Canada, Sen. Leo Housakos, Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate, Sen. Pena Merchant, Independent Senator, Sen. David M. Wells, Conservative Party of Canada and High Commissioner for Canada to Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Gérard Latulippe. From left to right (back row) are: Independent Senators, Sen. Grant Mitchell and Sen. Anne C. Cools.*

land of Tobago, the delegation departed on Sunday February 1st, 2015.

The period February 1st to the 7th, 2015 saw the Parliamentary Delegation from the United Kingdom on our shores. This seven-member delegation, led by Mr. Mark Simmonds, MP, Leader of the Delegation and Member of Parliament for Boston and Skegness (Conservative) also included:

1. Ms. Diane Abbott, MP – Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Labour);
2. Mr. Andrew Rosindell, MP – Member of Parliament for Romford (Conservative);
3. Baroness Scott of Needham Market – Member of the House of Lords (Liberal Democrat);
4. Baroness Howells of St David's, OBE – Member of the House of Lords (Labour);
5. Baroness Stern, CBE – Member of the House of Lords (Crossbencher);
6. Mr. Matthew Salik – Delegation Secretary Americas, Caribbean and Europe Programme Manager, CPA UK.

Not only were courtesy calls paid on the Presiding Officers but the delegation also met with the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, SC, ORTT, Opposition Leader, Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, MP, as well as

the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly and Secretary of Planning, Public Administration, Information, State Lands and Energy Matters, Hon. Orville D. London.

With several key state officials identified to hold discussions, the delegation embarked on several meetings with the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, the Attorney General, The Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and the Minister of Education. The delegation also visited several key organisations including the Environmental Management Authority, the Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Services, British Gas Trinidad and Tobago, the University of the West Indies, CARIRI, the Coalition of Women's Rights and Witness and Victim Support Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, United Way and the University of the West Indies for Invest Trinidad and Tobago.

During the period of March 14th to 18th 2015, a seven-member delegation from the Parliament of Canada led by Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate, Sen. Leo Housakos were guests of the Executive Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. However, from March 16th to 17th they met with several state officials, including courtesy calls on the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Presiding Officers and an impromptu visit by the Minister of Legal Affairs and Minister of Justice, Hon. Prakash Ramadhar, MP, as well as the Leader of the Opposition.

After a quick lunch, meetings continued with the Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, Sen. the Hon. Vasant Bharath as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Winston Dookeran, MP.

Additionally the delegates met with the Honourable Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Justice Ivor Archie on areas of National Security as well as the Executive Director of the National Operations Centre, Mr. Garvin Heerah. The delegates were shown various aspects of the day-to-day operations while at the National Operations Centre and given a tour of the worksite area.

As they continued with discussions on national security, they visited the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier General Anthony W.J. Phillips-Spencer. Following the conclusion of this meeting, the delegates made their way back to the Parliament just in time to view the 21st Sitting of the Senate as well as to hold a final meeting with the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sen. the Hon. Kevin Ramnarine.

A closing function was held by the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at Tiki Village located at the Kapok Hotel. Among the attendees were the President of the Senate, Sen. the Hon. Raziah Ahmed, the Speaker of the House, Hon. Wade Mark, MP, Independent Senator, Anthony Vieira, Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant, Ms. Donna Cox, MP, and Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, Mr. Chandresh Sharma, MP, as well as other specially invited guests and staff of the Office of the Parliament.

Before leaving, the UK, Bermudan and Canadian Parliamentarians praised the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago for the hospitality shown and expressed a sense of gratitude for the deepening of ties.



*UK Delegation Photo*

*From left to right are: Mr. Matthew Salik – Delegation Secretary Americas, Caribbean and Europe Programme Manager, CPA UK, Mr. Andrew Rosindell, MP – Member of Parliament for Romford (Conservative), Mr. Mark Simmonds, MP, Leader of the Delegation and Member of Parliament for Boston and Skegness (Conservative), Mr. Kelvin Charles, Presiding Officer of the Tobago House of Assembly, Assemblyman Claudia Groome-Duke, Member for Black Rock/ Whim/Spring Garden & Secretary of Health and Social Services, Baroness Howells of St David's, OBE – Member of the House of Lords (Labour), Ms. Diane Abbott, MP – Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Labour) and Baroness Scott of Needham Market – Member of the House of Lords (Liberal Democrat).*

# Our Region, Our Parliaments

St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
and Guyana

By **Melissa Griffith**



"About 90 percent of the world's nearly 200 sovereign states have national legislatures or parliaments. With the spread of democracy and the rise of multiparty political systems, these bodies are playing larger roles in government. Increasingly, legislatures and their members perform four important functions of governance; making policies and laws, representing citizens, overseeing the executive and recruiting future leaders." (Manning and Stapenhurst, 2002). While this may be true, no one can underestimate the role of Parliaments in promoting democracy in society such as the Parliaments of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana.

## St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Before the arrival of the Europeans and Africans in the 16th century, various Amerindian groups passed through or settled in St. Vincent and the Grenadines including the Ciboney, Arawak and Carib peoples. By the time Christopher Columbus passed near St. Vincent and the Grenadines on his fourth voyage in 1502, the Caribs had occupied the island after displacing the Arawaks a few centuries earlier. While the English were the first to lay claim to St. Vincent in 1627, the French, centred on the island of Martinique, would be the first European settlers on the island when they established their first colony at Barrouallie on the Leeward island of St. Vincent in 1719.

From 1763 until Independence, St. Vincent passed through various stages of colonial status under the British. In 1776, a Representative Assembly was authorised, followed by a Crown Colony government which was installed in 1877, then a Legislative Council

in 1925 ending with the granting of universal adult suffrage in 1951. During this period, the British made several unsuccessful attempts to affiliate St. Vincent and the Grenadines with other Windward Islands in order to govern the region through a unified administration, quite notably the West Indies Federation which was short lived as it ended in 1962. However, St. Vincent and the Grenadines was granted associate statehood status on October 27th, 1969 giving it complete control over its internal affairs. Following a referendum in 1979, St. Vincent and the Grenadines became the last of the Windward Islands to gain independence which is celebrated every year on 27th October.

The Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is modelled on that of the British Parliament. However, whereas Britain has two Houses of Parliament: the House of Commons and the House of Lords, which together with the Queen, make up the Parliament, the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is comprised of the House of Assembly and the Governor-General. Essentially, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is described as a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, bearing the title Queen of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines". Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth II does not reside in the islands and is represented in the country by the Governor General. The Office of the Governor General has mostly ceremonial functions including the opening of the islands' House of Assembly and the appointment of various government officials.

The legislative arm of government is the House of Assembly of St. Vincent and the



Grenadines which is described as unicameral in nature. At present the House of Assembly consists of a total of twenty-three (23) members including fifteen (15) elected members representing single-member constituencies, six (6) appointed Senators, the Attorney-General and the Speaker of the House. The membership of the House may vary, as is the case now, in that the Attorney-General, who is a Public Servant, and the Speaker of the House, may be elected from outside of the House. Nonetheless, they are always regarded as members of the House.

Following the general elections held on 13th December, 2010, the United Labour Party (ULP) led by the incumbent Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Hon. Ralph Everard Gonzalves, MP was once again re-elected to serve the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Gonzalves has been serving in this capacity as Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines since 2001, becoming the first Prime Minister from the newly constructed United Labour Party (ULP), following a merger of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party and the Movement of National Unity. He has however served as a Member of Parliament for the constituency of North Central Windward since 1994.

Section 30 of the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines provides for the appointment of a Speaker. He is elected by the majority party in the House of Assembly in consultation with the Opposition, when the House first meets after a General Election and before it proceeds to the dispatch of any other business. The present Speaker of the House, is the Hon. Hendrick Alexander who is currently the longest serving Speaker to be elected in the House of Assembly. The Speaker is not an elected Member, nor is he a Senator. Neither the Speaker of the House nor the Deputy Speaker can be a Minister of Government.

### Guyana

The Parliament of Guyana was created by the 1966 Constitution of Guyana, embodied in the Schedule of the Guyana Independence Order, made pursuant to the Guyana Inde-

pendence Act, 1966 which was passed on 12th May, 1966 but came into force on 26th May, 1966. On this same day, the Guyana Parliament held its first sitting of the National Assembly. While the law enacting Guyana's Parliament came into force on 26th May, 1966, it would be misleading to conclude that Guyana's Parliamentary system was created at Independence.

In 1831 the three Colonies of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice were united and the Colony of British Guiana was formed. From the years 1831 to 1928 the Law Making Body of British Guiana was the Court of Policy which consisted of the Governor, seven official members and eight elected members. The Governor presided in the Court of Policy as its President. However this was short lived as in 1928 a new Constitution was introduced and British Guiana became a British Crown Colony. As such a Legislative Council was established and replaced the Dutch created Court of Policy. In 1953 a new Constitution was promulgated and a bicameral legislature, consisting of a State Council which comprised of nine members and a House of Assembly comprising of a Speaker, three ex officio Members and twenty four Elected Members was introduced. Under this new Constitution, the Speaker was appointed by the governor, a new and separate Department called the Office of the Legislature, was established with a Clerk of the Legislature as its head as well as a Ministerial system of Government and universal adult suffrage were introduced.

The Legislature that came into effect in May, 1953 was short-lived as five (5) months later, the British suspended the Constitution and an Interim Government was established by the British Guiana (Constitutional) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953. This Legislative Council consisting of a Speaker, three ex-officio Members and not more than twenty four nominated members was created by this Order on the 22nd December, 1953. The Speaker, who was not an ex-officio member or nominated member of the Legislative Council, was appointed by the Governor. In 1956 the British Guiana (Constitutional) (Temporary

Provisions) Order in Council was amended. The Legislative Council appointed under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council was dissolved with effect from 29th June, 1957.

In 1957 general elections were held and the PPP Jaganite under the leadership of Dr. Cheddi Jagan won the elections. A second Legislative Council constituted under the (British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Orders in Council 1953 and 1956 was appointed. However, this Legislative Council now consisted of the Speaker, three ex-officio members, fourteen elected members and eleven nominated members.

In 1961 a new Constitution was established and a bicameral legislature consisting of a Legislative Assembly and a Senate was created. The Senate consisted of thirteen members, who were appointed by the Governor. Of the thirteen members, eight were appointed by the Governor in accordance with the advice of the Premier, three were appointed by the Governor acting in consultation with such persons as, in his discretion, he considered could have spoken for the political points of view of groups represented in the Legislative Assembly by members constituting the minority, and two were appointed by the Governor acting in his discretion.

The Legislative Assembly consisted of thirty five (35) members elected under the electoral system of "First Past the Post". Elections were held in May 1961 and the Peoples Progressive Party won 21 of the 35 seats in the Legislative Assembly. A Council of Ministers consisting of a Premier and nine other Ministers was also created. The Council of Ministers had general direction and control of the country and was collectively responsible to the Legislature. The Council of Ministers and the Premier were all members of the Legislative Assembly. The Premier was appointed by the Governor as a Member of the Legislative Assembly who was best able to command the confidence of a majority of members of the Legislative Assembly. Dr. Cheddi Jagan was appointed Guyana's first Premier on the 6th of October, 1961.

The politics of Guyana takes place in the

framework of a representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Guyana is the head of government and of a multi-party system. Consequently, this means that the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana must delegate and present a leader from a slate of candidates who will become the President if that party receives the largest number of votes. A person who serves as President has the capacity to dissolve the Parliament, however the Constitution does not provide any mechanism for Parliament to replace the President during his or her term of office, except in case of mental incapacity or gross constitutional violations. Guyana is also known as a member state of the Commonwealth of Nations and has the distinction of being known as well as the only South American nation in which English is the official language.

The results of the 2011 General Elections showed the incumbent People's Progressive Party winning 48.6% of the total votes, ushering in a fifth consecutive term in government. The PPP obtained a total of 32 of the 65 seats in the National Assembly while the combined opposition parties won the majority of seats, resulting in the first minority government in Guyanese history. For the opposition, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) received 26 seats with 40.8% of the total vote, the Alliance for Change (AFC) won 7 seats with 10.3% and the United Force won 0.3% of the vote.

The APNU and AFC joined forces for the national election of 11th May, 2015 and won the majority of seats in the Parliament taking 33 of the 65 seats. Following the opposition coalition's victory, Opposition Leader Mr. David A. Granger was sworn in as the President on 16th May, 2015.

**Sources:**

<http://parliament.gov.gy/>

[http://www.assembly.gov.vc/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=41](http://www.assembly.gov.vc/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=41)

# PARLIAMENT'S SCHOOL OUTREACH

*By Melissa Griffith*



'Information and knowledge are essential elements of an effective democracy'. Unless the public are informed about what parliaments are doing they cannot influence the institution; and unless they can influence the institution they cannot hold it and their elected members fully to account". (Parliaments and Public Engagement: Innovation and Good Practice from Around the World, Dr. Ruth Fox, pg. 7). As such, Parliament Outreach programmes are just one of the ways that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can be educated about the role they play in influencing the "Seat of Democracy" in our nation.

"How can the public be assured that comments are taken into account seriously by the Parliament?"

"In order to become a Parliamentarian, are there any specific requirements that are needed?"

"If a member does not obey the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, what would happen to them?"

"How effective is the law enforcement system?"

What do all these questions have in common? At one point or another, these questions were asked by students to the panel during the Parliament Schools Outreach programme, which is currently in its fifth session. Between the period January to May 2015, the Parliament has scheduled visits which would see us interacting with students from over twenty secondary schools across Trinidad and Tobago.



This fifth session of the Parliament Schools Outreach programme began in the southland, in the city of San Fernando. The venue chosen for this outreach was the San Fernando City Hall, where students from Naparima College, Presentation College and the Open Bible High School attended and interacted with the former President of the Senate, Sen. the Hon. Timothy Hamel Smith, Dr. Brinsley Samaroo, Resource Person, and Mr. Julien Ogilvie, Procedural Clerk at the Office of the Parliament. In delivering the feature presentation entitled "The New Standing Orders: Encouraging Transparency and Accountability" the former President of the Senate stressed that, in terms of the Parliament, transparency can take

several forms such as making the proceedings of the House and Senate open to the public. Mr. Hamel-Smith stated that, thanks to modern technology, it is now possible for the public to view the proceedings on their television in the comfort of your home, or listen to it on their radio while they drive, or stream it via the Internet from anywhere in the world. Avinash Ragoonanansingh, a student of Naparima College, praised Mr. Hamel-Smith for a presentation which he found very informative. Avinash then enquired on whether there are any specific requirements to be a Member of Parliament in the Senate or in the House of Representatives. In response, Mr. Julien Ogilvie, Procedural Clerk at the Office of the Parliament indicated that "according to the Constitution, the only requirement is that the prospective Member of Parliament, with respect to the House of Representatives, ought to be elected to the House of Representatives and should be at least 18 years of age. On the other hand, the requirements for the Senate are that an individual must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and should be twenty-five years of age or upwards".

The Parliament then made its way to the North Eastern District for a Schools Outreach on Thursday January 29th, 2015. Held at the



Arima North Secondary School students of Arima North, Arima Central and Malabar Secondary Schools were in attendance and came face-to-face with the Speaker of the House, Hon. Wade Mark, MP, Mrs. Jacqueline Phillip-Stoute, Parliamentary Clerk II of the Office of the Parliament and Dr. Maukesh Basdeo, Resource Person and a Parliamentary Delegation from Bermuda which was lead by Hon. K. H. Randolph Horton, Speaker of the Bermuda House of Assembly. Speaking on 'The Role of the Parliament in the promotion of Democracy', Mr. Mark pointed out that the Parliament embodies democracy and is the main institution through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and where issues of national importance are debated. He quickly noted, however, that modern parliaments must be representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective. The students definitely came prepared with several questions for the panel. One of these questions came from Sasha Lane of Arima North Secondary who asked what the consequences would be if a Member of Parliament did not obey the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Mark approached this question in two ways and explained that a Member of Parliament operates both in the Parliament as well as in the society. With regard to their operations within the Parliament, they are given a certain level of privilege that is freedom of speech which no other member of the public can enjoy unless they become a Parliamentarian. However, if a member breaches the rules of engagement i.e. the Standing Orders, they would be referred to the Privileges Committee and can be suspended or otherwise reprimanded. On the other hand, if the Member of Parliament should break a law, that Member would be dealt with by the police.

The Parliament Schools Outreach Programme continued with visits at the Office



of the Parliament on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, the Speaker addressed the students of Barataria North and Barataria South Secondary Schools and St. George's College on the topic "The Process of Law-Making". Later on the newly appointed President of the Senate, Sen. the Hon. Raziah Ahmed delivered her presentation on the role of the Presiding Officer to students from Belmont Boys' Secondary and Belmont Secondary School who were in attendance on Thursday April 26th, 2015.

For the last Outreach for that term, the Parliament made its way to Williamsville Secondary School where the Speaker along with the Deputy Speaker and Member of Parliament for Princes Town, Mrs. Nela Khan, MP, and other panelists addressed students from Williamsville Secondary and Princes Town Secondary Schools on the "Role of a Member of Parliament".

When the programme re-commences it will continue to deliver on its targeted objective, i.e. to build awareness of the role and importance of the Parliament among the young citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

*Go to the Parliament's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/ttparliament](http://www.facebook.com/ttparliament) for information on these episodes of the Schools Outreach which will be shown on Parliament Channel 11.*



# Within These Walls Whitehall

## Programmes on the **PARLIAMENT CHANNEL**

By Kimberly DeSouza

**T**he Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago is synonymous with *Sittings of the House of Representatives and the Senate*. Thus, when the Parliament Channel 11 or its sister medium - Parliament Radio 105.5FM - are mentioned, most people are of the opinion that both channels are only used to broadcast House Sittings, however this is not the case. In addition to parliamentary proceedings such as Committee meetings, the Parliament Channel airs a slew of other programmes that are used to educate citizens about this country's seat of democracy. While most of the features highlight the work and operations of our legislature,

the channel also contains international programming such as the United Nations' mini-documentaries. Since its launch in August 2006, the Parliament Channel 11 has remained committed to bringing the life of the Parliament into the homes of citizens. Programmes have been tailored to suit a diverse and evolving population whose needs differ from time to time.

For this reason, a host of new programmes have been added to supplement many of the existing features that are currently aired on the Parliament Channel. Here are some of them:

Although some of the programmes were produced to target a particular age-group, the content is relevant to persons of all ages.

**Democracy Challenge** - Did you know that the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago produced a quiz show that currently airs on the Parliament Channel? Filmed in 2014, Democracy Challenge sought to test competitors' knowledge of parliamentary affairs. This programme can be viewed as the ultimate 'teaching tool' since all of the questions relate to parliamentary practices adopted by our Parliament, as well as historical facts about our country's legislature and parliamentarians.

**iCount** - This edu-tainment feature offers a healthy mix of animation and real-life acting that helps to explain the process of a general election in Trinidad and Tobago. iCount also offers an accurate timeline that details the history of voting in our country. Because of its structure, the programme may be suited for a young adult audience, but the information is also useful for older adults.

**Interview Corner** - when representatives from Parliaments abroad visit or attend conferences hosted locally, they are often asked to share details about their visit. This information is edited and released as a five-minute feature on the Parliament Channel.

**National Youth Parliament (Behind the Scenes)** - Students assemble in the Parliament Chamber each year to participate in the National Youth Parliament debate which airs live on the Parliament Channel. This year, the preparation phase of the debate was transformed into a Reality TV programme, which gives viewers an inside

look into the many training and rehearsal sessions that the students undertake before the big day.

**Our Region, Our Parliaments** - This programme features the birth and history of parliaments belonging to some of our Commonwealth partner nations across the Caribbean, including Barbados, Guyana, Grenada and Jamaica.

**Parliament Apprentice** - During the August school holidays in 2013 and 2014, the Parliament opened its doors to several students who participated in various activities over a two-week tenure at the Office of the Parliament. They were put through a series of tasks that tested their knowledge on Parliament, while competing for the coveted title of 'Parliament Apprentice'. These challenges were filmed and released as a six-episode series that airs on the Parliament Channel.

**Parliament Outreach** - One of the many initiatives used to educate secondary school students about the work and functions of the Parliament is its School Outreach series. This outreach activity involves one of the Presiding Officers of Parliament visiting students at secondary schools across the country, or hosting students here at the Parliament, to present a lecture on a topic relating to this country's legislature. The entire programme, in addition to a Question and Answer segment, is filmed, edited and shown on the Parliament Channel.

**Parliamentary Personalities** - This programme gives a historical look into the lives of former parliamentarians - from their time spent in the political arena to their accomplishments following their service. Many former Presidents, Prime Ministers, Parliamentarians and Presiding Officers have already been featured, with new personalities being revealed each month.

**Parliamentary Updates** - This programme keeps viewers abreast of all the events taking place in the Parliament. These include



conferences attended by our parliamentarians, visits by representatives from other Parliaments and other parliament-related seminars.

**Red House Restoration** - when word of the discovery of bones and historical artefacts at the Red House spread throughout the country, the Parliament thought it necessary to inform the public about the details of the finds. As such, the Red House Restoration updates were produced. This programme takes viewers through the restoration and excavation phase, as the first home of the Parliament continues to be renovated.

**Role of the Presiding Officer** - as the title suggests, this programme gives an in-depth analysis into the responsibilities of each Presiding Officer of Parliament. The information is explained in a simple format, making it useful and palatable for all age groups.

**Tobago Youth Assembly** - Assembly Day celebrations in Tobago are highlighted in this feature on the second edition of the Tobago House of Assembly's Youth Assembly Debate. The spotlight is on the students who argue for and against the topic of self-governance for Tobago, and some of them were interviewed following the debate in an effort to get their feedback on

the proceedings.

**Within These Walls** - This documentary series outlines the history of several iconic buildings and landmarks located within the city of Port-of-Spain, and their impact on the local parliamentary and democratic process. The Red House, White Hall, President's House and Woodford Square are just a few of the landmarks that are featured in separate vignettes, which also include interviews with leading industry experts.

Although some of the programmes were produced to target a particular age-group, the content is relevant to persons of all ages. As one of the many educational tools used to inform the public about parliamentary affairs, the Parliament Channel will continue to broadcast new and exciting features in a timely manner. Remember, these new releases, in addition to the existing programmes, can also be viewed in their entirety on the Parliament's YouTube page - Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

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