

Remarks for
Start of Training for Municipal Police

Former Marabella South Secondary School

Tuesday 7th August, 2018

10:00 a.m.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.

On behalf of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, I am extremely happy to see our new recruits here, bright and eager to begin their training. As a government, we have been pushing to get to this point, so that we can begin the phased expansion of our Municipal Police Service to 100 officers in each Corporation, and 200 in our Capital City, Port of Spain. This expansion is one of the pillars of Local Government Reform, and this new batch of recruits will bring us a step closer to delivering this aspect of Reform to the people of Trinidad.

You should be very proud of yourselves, to have reached this point. The 205 of you beginning training today topped the merit list out of a total of 6,295 applicants – that's 4,390 who applied through the Public Service Commission in February 2017, and 1,905 who applied through the Statutory Authority Service Commission in January 2018. So I extend enthusiastic congratulations to you.

The SASC which is in charge of hiring for the two cities and the Boroughs of Arima and Point Fortin, also promoted 45 officers yesterday, to various ranks from Superintendent to Corporal. So congratulations are in order for those officers as well.

I encourage all the new candidates to put your best foot forward as you enter into your training. You are now on a path, not to just a job, but to a lifelong career. A career that requires you to be of high morals and values. To operate above reproach, and with compassion. You must be exemplars in your region, borough or city.

I encourage you to be kind to those who seek your guidance and look to you for safety. All of us, as Trinidadians, are troubled by the news of crime and corruption in our country. We can see that these are not isolated incidents but an endemic problem that we have been facing for many years. *This* government has taken a community approach to dealing with the scourge of crime. The Ministry of National Security recently launched the National Crime Prevention Programme which is an inter-agency, collaborative, community-driven approach to improve citizen safety and security.

We also recently appointed a new Commissioner of Police – Mr. Gary Griffith – and I believe he is the right man for this job. I welcome him to this position and look forward to meeting with him when he assumes office, so we can discuss how the Municipal Police Service will deepen its cooperation with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to take a sustained and cohesive stand against crime in this country.

You, as Municipal Police Constables will become pivotal in making the NCPP and all collaborative programmes a success, as you will often be the first and closest responders. You will be highly visible, doing your foot and vehicular patrols, and we expect that you will build a close relationship with the communities you are charged with defending.

Because ultimately, if we build and rebuild the relationships and the trust between communities and the Municipal Police Service, that helps us to solve the crime problem. People need to know that they have somewhere to turn.

I want you to recognize that addressing the crime problem is not just about making arrests. It is about going into communities that have been forgotten for too long, and becoming youth mentors, treating the single parents with compassion, and approaching elders with respect, empathy and consideration.

As employees within the Municipal Corporations, we want you to be beacons of good, to stand up against corruption that prevents people from benefitting from the services of local government. You all will have heard reports in the news about fraudulent activities and impropriety in Sangre Grande, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Chaguanas, and San Juan/Laventille.

We must take a stand against these activities, and we expect that you as new Municipal Police Constables, will safeguard the public from these “supposed” victimless crimes. Misappropriation of public funds at any level, prevents development that can benefit the people. So these crimes are not in fact,

victimless. They hamper the service delivery of the Corporations, and your role in the development of this country, is to eradicate this type of crime at the local government level.

I appeal to the Mayors, Chairmen, Councils and CEOs to work with your Municipal Police to ensure that these incidents are reported and thoroughly investigated; so we can stand up for what is right, and discourage those who are tempted to follow an immoral path.

We cannot fight the scourge of crime with *just* the TTPS, or *just* the Municipal Police. It takes all of us standing up for what is right. It takes inter-agency cooperation, and intra-community involvement. So I urge you as you begin your training to keep that in mind. Remember that you must work with the community and for the community. Only together can we improve citizen safety and security across this country.

As a Municipal Police officer, you will — at some times— be called upon to do unimaginable feats. Though you might never believe so, or think of yourselves in such a light, but you will be heroes in your own right, and be asked, or duty-bound to perform deeds that few will ever understand, appreciate, or even be able to perform themselves. You have entered an elite group of people, for which few are called.

This is a noble calling that you have chosen, to become the guardians of our communities and the purveyors of citizen safety. Do not approach this undertaking lightly. Serve your community with the pride, humanity and professionalism becoming of an officer of the law.

May God Bless our new recruits for the courage you have displayed by offering yourselves for this service, and may He guide you through your training. We look forward to your success and graduation come December.

And may God bless our beloved nation, Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.