



Ministry of
Public Administration

Address by the

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Minister of Public Administration

50th Anniversary of the Public Service Awards Ceremony
“From Gold to Diamond”
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Tonight in the lustre of the fairy lights; in the warm glow of satisfaction that comes from having achieved fifty years of progress and success; in the reflected glory of those who helped to chart the nation's course since Independence; and in the understanding that even though our work has already begun, we will still need to take a quantum leap into the future, I ask you to visualize with me; I ask you to peer into the crystal ball of the future, through the mists of time and see:

- A Trinidad and Tobago in which the public service has been transformed so that all the services it delivers are of the highest possible quality and meet the most demanding standards of excellence.
- A Trinidad and Tobago in which citizens can stay at home and use computers or cellular phones or, at worst, will not have to venture far from their homes to access every service the Government has to offer.
- A Trinidad and Tobago, where every citizen enjoys the highest possible quality of service, regardless of race, creed, gender or geography.
- A public service that is willing to walk the extra mile to ensure that its clients are satisfied and the ease of doing business is improved.
- A Government that is putting the resources in place so that the citizen is the be-all and end-all, the hub and the wheel, the corona and periphera of the public service universe. ***This is the Diamond Standard of service.***

Following the example and mandate of our Prime Minister, the Honourable Kamla Persad – Bissessar, we put service to the people at the pinnacle of all that we do. We already have a government that sees the value of integration as opposed to disintegration; of unity in diversity; of mutual support and shared services; of cooperation and collaboration among Ministries of Government. The integration of public services has already started through service charters and improved service delivery. Now we are ready to take it to the highest levels, from Gold to Diamond.

Ladies and Gentlemen, last week I led a team on a study visit to Canada to review that country's service delivery programmes. This visit validated the initiatives that we have already put in place or are developing. These include Service Charters, integrated government agencies and Ministries, and our "no wrong door" approach allowing you the citizen to go to any public service department and regardless of where it is located access the full range of government services. We found out that we are on the right track in emphasizing "outfitting" or improving the physical accommodation for public officers and their clientele, and investing heavily in our people, systems and processes. Our emphasis on Service Charters helps departments to define and deliver service of the highest standards. Tonight you have seen seven

departments which excelled in service delivery. This is just a start. Even though public service transformation is a work in progress, we are already seeing the progress and the benefits that our country, our public servants and our citizens can derive from it.

Our goal is to facilitate and not dictate. We are here to help other Ministries to help themselves and one another. The Government alone, the Ministry of Public Administration alone, no entity in this country can single-handedly transform the public sector. We are all in this together and, as the honourable Prime Minister has said, the population is demanding results instead of a constant stream of reviews and recommendations without implementation. Madam Prime Minister we welcome your focus on achievement. Your direct involvement and support will be key success factors especially as they would inevitably lead to the integration of the public services, the most important yardstick for measuring public service transformation.

As we looked ahead to our diamond jubilee, we took stock of where we are and where we want to be. I have already given you a vision of what we call the ideal state. But what is the real state of our transformation process? Where are we now in 2012?

The current shape of our public service is the classic pyramid of the British model that we inherited. There is a small group of managers at the top, a large group of technical and administrative staff in the middle and a huge group of clerical and general staff at the bottom. It is a system mired in a hierarchy that is unsuitable for a service-oriented, citizen-centric society. It lacks flexibility and adaptability. It can be slow and unwieldy. Worse, the problems of structure are compounded by rules, laws and procedures that bury it in bureaucracy, stifle its creativity and strangle it in red tape.

We heeded the cries of our public officers clamoring for greater empowerment, for a professional public service, for opportunities for creativity, innovativeness, more autonomy and most important a place for knowledge workers in a modern Public Administration. This is why the diamond journey is achieving the diamond shape that will be the new architecture of the public service. The intention is to improve accountability and transparency by creating professional streams for administrative functions and introducing new professional streams that are vital to the transformation process and for creating a 21st Century Public Service. The Management Support Office currently being classified will provide multi-skilled, technology-oriented and citizen centered support staff at the bottom of the diamond.

How we get there is the challenge. We believe that our approach must be characterized by a change in perspective – a fundamental difference in how we and our citizens perceive the public service. What we did is restate the obvious. The Public Service is a business. Our approach is to treat the Public Service as a business whose business is to provide the best service possible to all our citizens, now and in the future.

It is our duty to improve our competitiveness, reduce actual costs, lower opportunity costs and ensure that our citizens, businesses and investors, can get the best possible service in the shortest possible time, at the lowest possible cost and at the highest possible quality. The new architecture is the vehicle that will facilitate the implementation of performance-informed budgeting.

Three elements will converge as we accelerate the transformation process. The first is identifying and marketing the benefits and opportunities for citizens and public officers alike. This will deal with the “what’s in it for me” or self-interest issues. There will be benefits, opportunities and advantages for all. Our new architecture will allow us to exploit and unleash the full potential of our ICTs and “e-gov”. This

is the second element. These technologies can increasingly deliver services to citizens in their homes in the most rural of communities and can make transformation a reality.

The third, and perhaps the most important, is the need for integration of public services within the public sector. Public services are most effective when they work together in an integrated manner. Our e-government platform allows for clustering. The big national outcomes, the overarching national goals – better quality of life, greater economic performance, increased competitiveness, better health, less corruption, improved ease of doing business, access to public goods and services- can only be achieved in partnership. Integrated services allow us to realize shared services among government ministries and agencies and making more efficient and effective use of taxpayers’ dollars. We already have one such pilot between the MPA and the Ministry of Communications.

Secondly, it will facilitate the one-stop shop and the *no wrong door* approach making all public services easier to access and use either from your mobile or home computer or at the most not too far from your doorsteps. We can now integrate existing services and even include the capacity to incorporate future services using the available and emerging technologies that drive e-Governance mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen, several of the public servants honoured here tonight were responsible for the first wave of transformation of the public service. They transformed the Colonial Civil Service to the National Public Service of Trinidad and Tobago.

If it was done successfully once, it can be done again just as successfully or, now that we know what it takes, even more successfully and even more comprehensively. If we choose to learn from the past and use it as a guide to the future, the transformation can take place in less time and with less dislocation. In 1962, the present was precarious and the future unmapped. The learning curve was steep but the native genius of our people and the many administrative giants who led the way brought us to where we are today, and for this I thank all of you gathered here to be justly recognized and rewarded for your outstanding service to our country.

Let me also congratulate those who participated in the Excellence in Service Delivery Awards programme and who have shown that the Diamond standard is not only achievable but it is also already accessible, available and evident in some sections of our public service. The key to the future is to make it a way of life for public servants and citizens alike.

There are going to be some exciting times ahead. Next year, we will expand the service delivery competition by introducing an annual, service-wide, Certification Programme open to those agencies now involved in the Charter Mandate. This will lead to the development of more services capable of satisfying the most exacting standards of quality and achieving the highest levels of excellence. A major criterion will be customer feedback. To win the award your clients must be extremely satisfied with your service.

The new architecture demands the reform of our fragmented HR system. We want the HR departments to be able to manage the selection, appointment and promotion of staff within their Ministries. While I thank the contributors to this “Diamond” concept, the SHRM Council, the Public Service Commission, the Personnel Department and PMCD for their help so far, they will all now have to reinvent themselves and go beyond the present BETA version towards a better version – the 2.0 version. The legislative changes envisaged will transform their roles, remits and responsibilities to one of increased oversight and compliance with recruitment selection and appointment processes that are merit and results value based ensuring that staffing plans meet stated outcomes while delegating greater authority to public service managers. We are institutionalizing competency-based management systems and will allow public service managers to have direct control over all their resources. Of course, with greater responsibility will come greater accountability.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a brave new world awaits us. We are on the threshold of transformation and at the doorstep of opportunities limited only by our imaginations and ambitions. Let us together begin this second stage of the journey tonight. As we make the momentous move from Gold to Diamond, let us give thanks to the fifty gems of public service we recognized and rewarded here tonight, and the many more waiting to add their light and lustre in the years ahead.

I thank you.