

POST CABINET PRESS BRIEFING SUMMARY - Thursday 9th September, 2016

The Honourable Nicole Olivierre, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, addressed the Post Cabinet Press Briefing today (Thursday 8th September, 2016) at the Office of the Prime Minister, St. Clair, Port of Spain.

During the briefing, Minister Olivierre reported on a visit to Guyana. Guyana is presently embarking on an oil and gas industry and the Minister of Energy extended technical support from Trinidad and Tobago. The President of Guyana was very receptive of the offer and even requested additional support in other areas such as education, agriculture and eco-tourism.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being drafted and a Guyanese delegation is scheduled to visit Trinidad and Tobago in November.

The Government views this move as a mutually beneficial initiative which is indicative of Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Furthermore, not only is it in fulfilment of manifesto promises, it also offers opportunities to the private sectors of both countries.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, also addressed the Post Cabinet Press Briefing today. Dr. Rowley announced that he had received the Commission of Enquiry report into Las Alturas from His Excellency Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona ORTT, SC, President of the Republic of Trinidad.

Prime Minister Rowley reiterated that, in 2014, he had responded to the then Prime Minister's concerns on the matter and also stated that he was prepared to go before the Commission. Referring to the Executive Summary of the report, Dr. Rowley emphasised that the findings of the report was not information that was unknown to the Government.

The report concluded that there were twenty-five (25) geotechnical, structural and investigative reports available to the Government on the problem at Las Alturas. This aligns with what Prime Minister Rowley indicated at the time.

The Commission also identified the cause of failure at Las Alturas to be inadequate foundations to deal with un-remedied slope instability. Furthermore, the Commission noted the failure of the project's management officials to ensure full and timely disclosure.

The Commission also found that there was insufficient evidence to indicate criminal liability on the part of Prime Minister Rowley, former Minister of Housing.

Prime Minister Rowley also revealed the cost of this enquiry, the findings of which were contained in the 25 existent reports, was \$24.5 million, a sum which was paid by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). This does not include the monies UDeCOTT and HDC would also have paid to lawyers throughout the matter.

Dr. Rowley reaffirmed that the then Government had a duty to hold the contractor liable for what was not delivered as per the contract. However, they allowed the statute of limitation to pass by and now taxpayers' monies cannot be recovered.

Prime Minister Rowley also announced that the full report will be laid in the Parliament upon its resumption tomorrow (Friday 9th September, 2016).