

**WELCOME REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**OF THE POINT FORTIN SOUTH WESTERN CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY & COMMERCE.**

Good day ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Point Fortin South Western Chamber of Industry and Commerce I bid you a warm welcome, to this our First South Western Energy Symposium.

As you are aware, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is presently holding consultations regarding the development of a new Energy Policy for Trinidad & Tobago. It is therefore the intention of the Chamber to respond to the Ministry's request for feedback in the form of a balanced and objective report to include the development of the South Western Peninsula.

We commend the Ministry on this initiative, and are happy to hear of the level of transparency and willingness to listen in the area of an energy policy. There are indeed a number of experts in the field who can contribute tremendously to a successful policy.

During the recent consultation in San Fernando on January 12, the issue of the energy industry in the southwestern peninsula was raised. While these consultations were being held all over the country there appeared the risk of losing out on vital input regarding the southwestern peninsula. This chamber and its members have a vested interest in the development of this area, which has a rich history of energy and industrialization. So while we commend the Ministry on this initiative, we cannot help but note this gap in the attention paid to the South Western peninsula and that's a primary reason why we are here today.

The objective of this forum therefore is to obtain feedback from energy sector industry leaders and related stakeholders in the South Western Peninsular, to create a short list of recommendations and queries as it pertains to the National Energy Policy Consultation (NEPC) and the South West Peninsular.

Of great importance is the Union Industrial Estate, and the burning question is what part would it play in this process. Yes, there is a lot of potential for the development of the Southwest in the areas of agriculture, tourism, and other industries. And the Chamber is actively involved in developing similar approaches toward this end. But for the purpose of this first session, and given the imminent deadline for this particular consultation we must focus on energy based industries. And that focus must include the Union Industrial Estate. And with no Aluminum smelter, what are our viable options? Let's ask the hard questions, and truly deliberate.

We want to thank the National Energy Corporation (NEC) for making the effort to be here today, as they represent the project development thrust for the Union Industrial Estate and the South West Peninsula. Since recent events have kept them exceptionally busy, we understand their constraints in presenting today, as we had originally hoped. So, in its stead we have endeavored to glean from the public domain and parliamentary channel the main industries that are being contemplated for the Union Industrial Estate. NEC is of course invited to later make agreements or connections as we go along.

Some issues the SWP faces are expected to be similar to other areas of T&T's energy sector: therefore we wish to draw upon the collective experiences so that the South West can benefit from perspectives and lessons learned. All with a view to not repeating mistakes from past.

We are also happy to note that the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber and the Energy Chamber are supportive of our effort, and we look forward to continued collaboration, with the goal of continued development of the country's industries.

We have just come off the heels of a very successful energy conference, and we congratulate all on a job well done. And while the Energy Chamber may refer, to a large extent, to existing energy industries in Trinidad and Tobago, the Point Fortin South Western Chamber is endeavoring to bring focus on a future potential energy industry, whose growth pole is expected to be based in the South Western Peninsula. So today our focus is on those gas-based industries proposed. It is our sincere hope that collectively we can bring some value to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, to allow some or all of these new industries to materialize in a manner that we all benefit from.

For this national consultation to be more meaningful it must also involve an independent thrust where all reviews can be aired. That can be done in a forum such as this one, which is not being directly facilitated by the government, but of which they are aware; to permit people to speak openly and honestly in a constructive manner. It is for this reason that you may notice the absence of political appointees, Members of Parliament, or Mayors. We envision a separate session to include all the political stakeholders.

The forum has intentionally been kept small to permit an intimate and interactive session to flourish. We were also mindful of your busy schedules, and will attempt to keep to our scheduled time. This session must be something more than just another talk shop. We will therefore formulate and develop a report with recommendations to present to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs.

Although my passion is the development of the Southwest, I am neither an economist nor an expert in the field of energy. So after my presentation I would do the wise thing and adopt the role primarily as Timekeeper (and sometimes moderator), and allow the experts to do their thing.

So with my job identified, we felt it necessary to have a respected and independent energy leader be an active participant in the proceedings, to help stimulate discussion and comments from the audience. We therefore were fortunate to have Mr. Tony Paul to assist us.

Because the management of an environmental impact is critical to any new project, we asked Dr. Ahmad Khan to present a high level environment-comparison for all industries that have been proposed for Union Industrial Estate.

And because of focus on renewable energy, and interest in Photo Voltaic cell manufacture in the Union Industrial Estate and in Public Engagement, we have asked Ms. Karen DeGannes to speak on related issues.

At the end of each presentation we encourage the panel to query and challenge each other, which will also hopefully open up the audience to do the same.

At the end of the entire morning's proceedings we will try to do a wrap up and talk about next steps.

#### Housekeeping Rules

- I invite you to get up to obtain coffee, tea etc. at your leisure: no formal break because of brevity of time.
- Please state your name, organization, then your question or comment.
- Goes without saying, but please remember to be respectful to other participants.
- At the end of the entire morning's proceedings we will try to do a wrap up and talk about next steps.

In closing, therefore, remember we are all here to contribute towards ensuring that as far as possible the right decisions will be made and the correct approaches adopted, as we seek to find the right mix for our energy based industries in the Southwest. We cannot afford to make costly mistakes. We are here therefore to lend our collective support, our thoughts, our ideas, our opinions, to the government of Trinidad and Tobago through the vehicle of the National Energy Policy Consultation kindly offered by the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs.

So today let's share, query, debate, agree, disagree, and even agree to disagree; all with the common goal in mind of a successful National Energy Policy that would include the Southwest Peninsula.

Once again, welcome, and we wish you all an enjoyable and productive session.

Thank You.

Nigel Minors

President

Point Fortin South Western Chamber of Industry & Commerce