



Ref: RIC: 2023/004

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023

For Immediate Release

### **RIC Statement on Incidents at its Chaguanas Consultation**

The RIC was forced to end one of its consultations held at Centre Point Mall, Chaguanas for residents of central Trinidad yesterday (Wednesday) because of unruly behaviour of some of the attendees.

The consultation began at approximately the advertised time of 5 pm. As is the norm, the RIC intended to continue the sessions beyond the advertised two-hour time period, to accommodate all persons wishing to participate. Sadly, yesterday's meeting had to be abruptly ended at approximately 7:15 pm, when there were still members of the audience waiting in line.

The RIC's decision to end the session was prompted by the behaviour of some attendees who were disrupting the proceedings and confronting persons at the head table including RIC officials - Mrs. Dawn Callender, Chairman, and Mr Glenn Khan, Executive Director. This behaviour began when a member of the audience interrupted the presentations, by using a device in his possession to play music loudly. It continued with threats to light flammable liquids in the auditorium, and further escalated to the dragging of a replica coffin throughout the venue.

The RIC Chariman was left no choice but to end the meeting as she feared for the safety of the Commission's staff and all persons in the room. The RIC's Chairman, board members, executives and staff members had to be escorted from the room under the protection of officers from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). The RIC stands firm in its belief in democracy and in having a fair, equitable and transparent consultation process. However, the Commission will neither be intimidated nor will it allow these sessions to descend into disorder, chaos and unsafe conditions.

The RIC supports all citizens' rights to share their views. However, the Commission strongly condemns the disruptive, inappropriate and threatening behaviour exhibited by the persons attending the consultation and the unprofessional behaviour of elected officials in attendance. When persons behave in a disruptive manner, it deprives other attendees of their opportunity to be heard.

The RIC remains determined to complete the public consultations as mandated by its constitutionally determined roles and its officials will not be intimidated by anyone. The RIC is dedicated to effectively and efficiently engaging with stakeholders on the T&TEC Price

Review and hereby wishes to assure members of the public that additional steps, such as substantially reinforcing the presence of Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), will be taken to ensuring their safety.

The RIC sincerely thanks the officers of the TTPS for their prompt and outstanding service in ensuring the safety of its officials, staff and all persons in the room.

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