



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**THE HONOURABLE MAXIE CUFFIE, MP**

**MINISTER OF  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNICATION**

**HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REFORM WORKSHOP**

**February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017**

**National Academy for the Performing Arts**

Salutations:

The Honourable, the Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Ivor Archie  
Ms. Maureen Manchouk, Chairman of the Public Service  
Commission

Dr. Fazal Ali, Chairman of the Teaching Service Commission

Dr. Maria Therese-Gomes, Chairman of the Police Service  
Commission

Ms Wynne Young, Consultant, Institute of Public  
Administration, Canada

Dr Lois Parkes, Regional Project Manager, Caribbean  
Leadership Programme

Representatives of Deloitte LLP

Mrs. Sandra Jones, Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister  
and Head of the Public Service

Mrs Joan Mendez, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of  
Public Administration and Communications

Ms. Anastasius Creed, Director of Personnel Administration,  
**Service Commissions Department**

Mr Beresford Riley, Chief Personnel Officer

Other Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments

Deputy Permanent Secretaries

HR Directors

Representatives of the Public Services Association and the  
National Union of Government and Federated Workers

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an absolute delight for me to share this morning with you, as the results of our gathering could portend a new paradigm in the growth and development of the local public service. Today's workshop, hosted by the internationally renowned Deloitte LLP, as they conclude their institutional strengthening review of the Service Commissions, is as timely as it is relevant, as the Government seeks to re-engineer and re-energize a public service that has long languished for lack of resources, proper and deliberate planning, and leadership that knows what it wants and how to get it.

Today then, is a watershed day for us, as it invites and expects, that with the cadre and calibre of persons gathered here, working together, setting aside differences and focusing on a common direction, there must emerge a functional and efficient system sufficiently harmonized so as to modernize our Human Resource Management approaches and ensure that the public service is ready for the next generation of public servants.

The truth is, ladies and gentlemen, we serve a public today that is more diverse than before. They are more educated, with more complex needs and higher expectations of government, in an operating environment that is also becoming more dynamic.

To meet these and other new challenges, the Public Service must enhance its effectiveness, public value, citizen-centric service delivery, policy design and public engagement. But just as critically, public officers need to be steeped in the right set of values that will underpin the responsibilities we have to the citizens we serve, and provide a basis for us in Government, to make the difficult and complex decisions we sometimes have to make in order to serve the common good.

There is no doubt that a defective public service makes for an ineffective government, and vice versa.

You have the commitment of this Administration that we will do all that is necessary from our end to ensure that, notwithstanding the present straitened economic circumstances, the public service is properly resourced, adequately housed, and sufficiently motivated to provide a level of service that is second to none.

According to the final report submitted by Deloitte LLP, the state of Service Commissions Department and of the broader Human Resource Management system in the GORTT is well known. Several studies undertaken over many years have all called for fundamental change. The Deloitte-IPAC team has reviewed past reports and interviewed SCD staff, clients and stakeholders to identify what is working well and those changes that are necessary to generate a renewed pride in their capacity to contribute to GORTT national strategies and enhanced client service across the public sector.

The evidence is no longer anecdotal. The empirical data says to us that change, fundamental change, is imperative if we are to satisfy the ever-changing needs of our citizenry.

Good government requires good people. This has always been true, but its importance to the national community has probably never been more critical than it is today. Seldom, if ever, have the world's governments confronted a more daunting set of challenges that affect every nation, regardless of geographic location, political system, social structure or level of development.

Powerful forces -- globalization, economic competition that cuts across national borders, social and political upheavals, technological change, threats of terrorism, and a rapidly changing labor market -- place enormous burdens on governments. The success of any government to respond effectively to these challenges is dictated largely by its ability to recruit and retain a talented workforce.

This challenge is coupled with the need for new skills, attitudes and behaviors among public officials at all levels in order to respond effectively to the increasing complexity and number of demands placed on governments.

It is not surprising then that the core competencies for the public sector of the 21st century differ in many ways from the past.

Developing an effective, competent and forward looking public service as well as strong but lean State institutions is one of the greatest challenges nations around the world face today.

It is particularly crucial in developing countries, like ours, as good governance is one of the most important factors, if not the most important factor, for the success of any development effort. How the public sector is structured therefore, how it operates and the role it performs within a country plays an important part in economic and social progress. In particular, the quality of its leadership has a great impact on the quality of service offered, which in turn affects the pace and progress of development.

In the past twenty years a number of national and international forces have contributed to significantly changing the role of the state, which has resulted in the need for new skills, attitudes and behaviours among public officials at all levels.

In fact, the core competencies for the public sector of the 21st century differ in many ways from the past, especially as the demands placed on public servants, in terms of skills, knowledge and competency, are rapidly increasing and becoming more complex. Even as we continue to grapple with these old challenges, new ones crop up daily which must also be addressed with urgency, as these too, have the capacity to either cripple or convert the public service.

The country's human resources capacity then, is critical to the quality of public administration, hence the absolute necessity of ensuring that today's workshop is more than just a meeting of heads.

In this room, now, is gathered the best and the brightest that the public service of Trinidad and Tobago has to offer, and I am confident, that the long sought after answers to the critical questions plaguing the public service can be found amongst you. The answers, my friend, must come from within.

As we seek to strengthen the management of human capital in the public sector, it is also imperative that we revisit the core values and principles as outlined in the legislation governing the public service, examine the relevance of the current human resources management institutional framework, review recruitment and promotion strategies and incentives, and institutionalize workforce planning, among other initiatives.

The country's Service Commissions have not been gifted with immunity from the piercing gaze of public scrutiny, nor have they been spared the travails of limited resources, inadequate staffing, and shifting political priorities.

The review undertaken by Deloitte will certainly propel us forward on the road to the reform of these institutions which became a hallmark of our democracy, since the attainment of our political independence some 54 years ago.

The infant birthed then is now grown, but the many questions that swirl around their effectiveness, their timeliness, the antiquity of their systems and approaches, all wrapped up in the issue of continuing relevance, have caused many to wonder about their level of maturity.

The harsh reality is that many of our systems that got us to where we are, will not help us to get to where we want to be, should they continue to be mired in the stasis and quagmire of their present circumstances. We just can't go on this way.

The task of righting the ship can only be done by those entrusted with its leadership, hence the reason for the careful selection of those attending this two-day workshop. Leadership in the public service is fundamental to developing a strong culture of values in any organization. Leaders who embody organizational values have a huge positive impact on whether the rest of the organization lives out those values. In other words, we need to lead by example.

As organizational role models, the actions of leaders, your actions, send a more powerful message about acceptable behaviours than any published policies or statements. Conversely, leaders who demonstrate behaviours that run counter to espoused values breed cynicism, resentment, alienation and may even encourage staff to follow suit, to the detriment of the public service.

While the commitment by top management to articulate values and endorse policies and programmes throughout the public service is vital, leaders and managers at all levels must also “walk the talk” to model exemplary conduct and practices aligned to values, and to encourage these in their staff.

While this often means recognizing or rewarding activity that is consistent with values, it also means that you must be ready to challenge behaviours and actions that are not aligned to values, with clear processes in place to do this firmly, fairly and transparently.

Let me be clear, this is not about beefing up the strength of your disciplinary committees and tribunals only. Certainly, there is a place for that. But moral suasion and the consistent, unbiased adherence to and application of the clearly articulated policies and procedures which you are entrusted to uphold, will also advance your cause much further than the convening of disciplinary hearings.

I await with great anticipation the results of today's proceedings.

I look forward to the challenges that it will place on me as the Minister with responsibility for the Public Service, but I give you the assurance that together, we will make this work. This opportunity to change the face, fate and fortune of the Public Service is not likely to come our way again. Let us seize it with both hands, and commit ourselves both to the process and to the outcome.

I thank you for your attention, and wish you all best wishes for a productive undertaking. May God bless our nation.