



**CAMILLE ROBINSON-REGIS, MP**  
**MINISTER OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**  
**FEATURE ADDRESS**

**LAUNCH OF EMA'S**  
**RECYCLABLE SOLID WASTE COLLECTION PROJECT:**  
**"iCARE"**

**Scarlet Ibis Conference Room**

**Central Bank**

**Eric Williams Plaza**

**Port of Spain**

**January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

SALUTATIONS:

- Mrs. Nadra Nathai-Gyan, Chairman of the Environmental Management Authority
- Other members of the EMA Board
- Mr. Nigel Romano, Chief Executive Officer of the EMA
- Mr. Dale Cozier, Senior Project Manager
- Other specially invited guests
- Distinguished ladies and gentlemen
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

It is always a joy when, in the midst of the Carnival season, while others are threatening to mash up d' savannah stage that forms part of the Soca Kingdom, we can still gather on an occasion like this to remind ourselves of the importance of paying attention to one aspect of the season that impacts on us very seriously: the proper disposal of our waste produce.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an argument that possesses some degree of currency that we in particular, and the world in general, live in a throw-away culture. When our consumption habits are examined with a degree of rigour, the conclusion is inescapable. There are many of us who would throw away an item of clothing rather than repair it; would discard a broken appliance rather than have it repaired; would happily discard our plastic bags and bottles rather than reuse or recycle them. If the burgeoning sizes of our landfills in Claxton Bay, the Beetham Estate and Guanapo represent any yardstick by which we could measure ourselves, then we do seem to possess the propensity to discard and thrown away rather than maintain and reuse.

It is said that annually, the world generates 1.5 billion tonnes of solid waste. This is expected to increase to 2.2 billion by the year 2025. The thirty (30) developed Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are responsible for 44% of that waste and in the USA alone, the average person is said to throw away their body weight in rubbish every month.

Data on the waste entering the country's landfills indicate that a significant amount of recyclable materials is being disposed. According to the Final

Report of the Trinidad Solid Waste Management Program Waste Characterization and Centroid Study (2010), the main household waste streams consist of organic material (27.15%), plastics (19.17%), paper (18.77%) and glass (10.15%). However, since there is no segregation of waste in households, these recyclable wastes are destined for our landfills located in Claxton Bay, Guanapo and Beetham, which are all reaching their capacity. The removal of recyclable materials through a structured waste recovery programme can therefore increase the life of our landfills.

One significant contributor to the amount of waste heading to the landfill is beverage containers, used particularly in the packaging of food and drinks. Improper disposal of beverage containers impact negatively both on the economy and the environment, and this is especially the case with plastic and expanded polystyrene containers as, given their non-biodegradable nature, such impact is lasting.

It is that simple fact, ladies and gentlemen that significantly increases the importance of today's event. The fact is, we simply cannot continue this way, unless we wish to find ourselves, the authors of our demise, drowning in more ways than one, in our own mountains of refuse.

Today's launch of the second phase of the "iCARE" project forms a critical part of the Government's thrust to engender a recycling culture in Trinidad and Tobago. You would recall that the genesis of this project lies in the EMA's receipt of sponsorship from the Green Fund to execute the Recyclable Solid Waste Collection project which commenced in 2015. This comprehensive project established collection sites for recyclable solid waste

such as plastic bottles, glass bottles, drink cartons and aluminium cans, in an effort to reduce the opportunities for them to be indiscriminately dumped into the environment, and therefore minimize the subsequent pollution and ultimately the flooding associated with improper waste disposal.

This project, undertaken by the EMA in conjunction with SWMCOL and the various Regional Corporations, is an important first step in the infrastructural and logistical preparation of the country for the passage of EMA's Waste Rules and other relevant legislation with respect to a deposit and refund system for beverage containers.

During Phase One of the project, the EMA established 80 collection sites throughout Trinidad from which some 370,000 bags of recyclables were collected and transported to the SWMCOL-managed Forres Park and Sea Lots sites for storage, in the absence of functioning Collection Depots.

I am advised by the EMA that in this Second Phase of the project, three (3) Collection Depots have been established at NAMDEVCO, Forres Park and Guanapo, and will be managed by SWMCOL for one year in the first instance, to sort and process the collected recyclables. Several new collection sites, namely in Government institutions as well as primary and secondary schools, have been added to the existing sites to cover a larger geographic spread and a much bigger population. Additionally, the Ministry of Public Utilities has joined the growing list of partners, to implement recycling programmes through its Public Sector Recycling Programme.

Public education of this extremely important project is critical to its success, and so the EMA is also set to embark on a progressive public awareness campaign that will incorporate existing laws such as the Litter Act and impending subsidiary legislation such as the Waste Rules. The purpose of this public education is to foster the change in attitude so desperately needed that would tear us away from the throw-away culture to one that results in proper waste handling practices, the end result of which is a reduction in illegal dumping, improper waste disposal, vector borne diseases, and the unsightly aesthetics associated with illegal dumping.

Ladies and gentlemen, this exercise in which we are engaged today is not a product of happenstance, but rather the clear, cogent and compelling vision articulated for Trinidad and Tobago by this Government in our Vision 2030 National Strategic Plan. The fifth pillar of Vision 2030 speaks to a decision to place the environment at the centre of national development.

There is an intergenerational responsibility placed on our collective shoulders to ensure that the generations to come would benefit from the decisions we make today. Through this project we intend to encourage further reduction in the environmental impact of packaging, by encouraging the use of more sortable and recyclable packaging.

I am confident that despite the conventional wisdom which suggests that companies and organizations have no incentive to lengthen the life cycle of their products and in so doing reduce the potential revenue derived from selling new goods, increasing numbers of companies are thinking of how to reduce consumer waste.

I have seen, for example, in a growing number of local food establishments, a concerted effort to use more recyclable materials to sell their food to consumers. This can only auger well for us and the environment as we seek to move away from the use of Styrofoam products. Similarly, in a growing number of supermarkets and groceries, consumers are being urged to purchase and reuse their bags, and in so doing reduce the amount of plastic bags previously used. I have no doubt, and happily so, that this is partly driven by the rising price of raw materials and metals, and partly due to both consumers and companies becoming more aware of the need to protect our environment. The current shortage in the availability of foreign exchange, must be factored into the equation as well, as manufacturers begin to exercise greater prudence in the use of their limited resources.

As Trinbagonian consumers become more environmentally conscious, I am convinced we will begin to pay more attention to sustainability when choosing what products to buy and from whom, as opposed to only price and performance. By offering services which will help expand the longevity of their products, and remove the burden of recycling entirely on their customers, companies are now promising greater quality and durability to consumers, and receiving the reputational gains for being environmentally friendly.

It is this partnership between supplier and consumer, between government and public, born not only out of necessity, but certainly out of a desire for self-preservation that must be the hallmark of our environmental thrust. There is a balance that is unquestionably necessary between a country's drive

towards economic and infrastructural progress and the need to protect and preserve our environment. This need for balance assumes even greater importance when the facts of our small geographic size and island status are factored into the equation.

Development of our transport infrastructure, for example, designed as it is to connect our disparate communities, provide easier access to modern amenities like schools, hospitals, ports and otherwise, is critical if we are to continue to grow the national economy. Such development makes possible the creation of employment and commercial opportunities in communities impacted by the development which, hitherto, were non-existent, or existing on such a small scale as to render negligible its impact.

This need for balance is often ignored by those, on the one hand, who would wish to preserve in perpetuity and without blemish, the sanctity of our environment, and on the other who see progress only in terms of dollars and cents. It is into this maelstrom that the EMA, as the only legitimate authority to pontificate on the wise and proper use of the environment, offers its counsel and guidance through its many rules and applicable legislation.

Today, even as we launch the Second Phase of the EMA's 'iCARE project, which seeks to clean up the environment, we are faced with an escalation in the noise surrounding major projects on both the north coast and the eastern region of Trinidad and Tobago. As matters are still awaiting judicial pronouncement, I am not at liberty to offer unrestrained comment, so I merely urge all parties concerned to put aside whatever parochial interests they might possess, and simply put Trinbago first.

I make a special appeal today to our school children in particular, to seriously embrace this project, as you will be the ultimate beneficiaries. If we inculcate from now, a culture that embraces the philosophy of reduce, reuse, and recycle, then instead of every generation blaming the one before, they will thank us then for the decisions we make today. Students in both our primary and secondary schools are neither too young nor too naïve to understand the great benefits to be derived from adopting a more environmentally conscious approach to life, and I urge them so to do.

Similarly, I wish to encourage all of us adults, particularly those of us who work in government ministries or state organizations to embrace this culture as well. Make use of the ergonomically designed iCARE bins that will be strategically placed for your use. Do all within your power to reduce the amount of waste you generate, and whatever is generated, help us to recycle them for other uses.

I wish to take this opportunity as well to encourage all NGOs and CBOs to make as much use of the Green Fund as possible, so as to ensure that it is used for that which it was intended, the protection, preservation and conservation of the local environment. One such NGO that has benefitted tremendously from its association with the Green Fund is Plastikeep, which has received funding to the tune of approximately \$10.7 million over the period 2010-2015, and deserves to be commended for their own contribution to the elimination of the problem of indiscriminate waste disposal.

The Green Fund, which is funded by taxpayers, will continue to be available to NGOs such as these, not only to carry out their operations, but equally

important, to build their own internal capacity and align their operations with the national effort by collaborating meaningfully with such agencies as the EMA, SWMCOL and in this case, the Ministry of Planning and Development.

On behalf of the Ministry of Planning and Development, and the wider Government, I wish to publicly commend the EMA for its sterling efforts in bringing this project to its current state. I pray God's richest blessings and offer my best wishes to all who will participate in making it the tremendous success, I know it can and will be.