

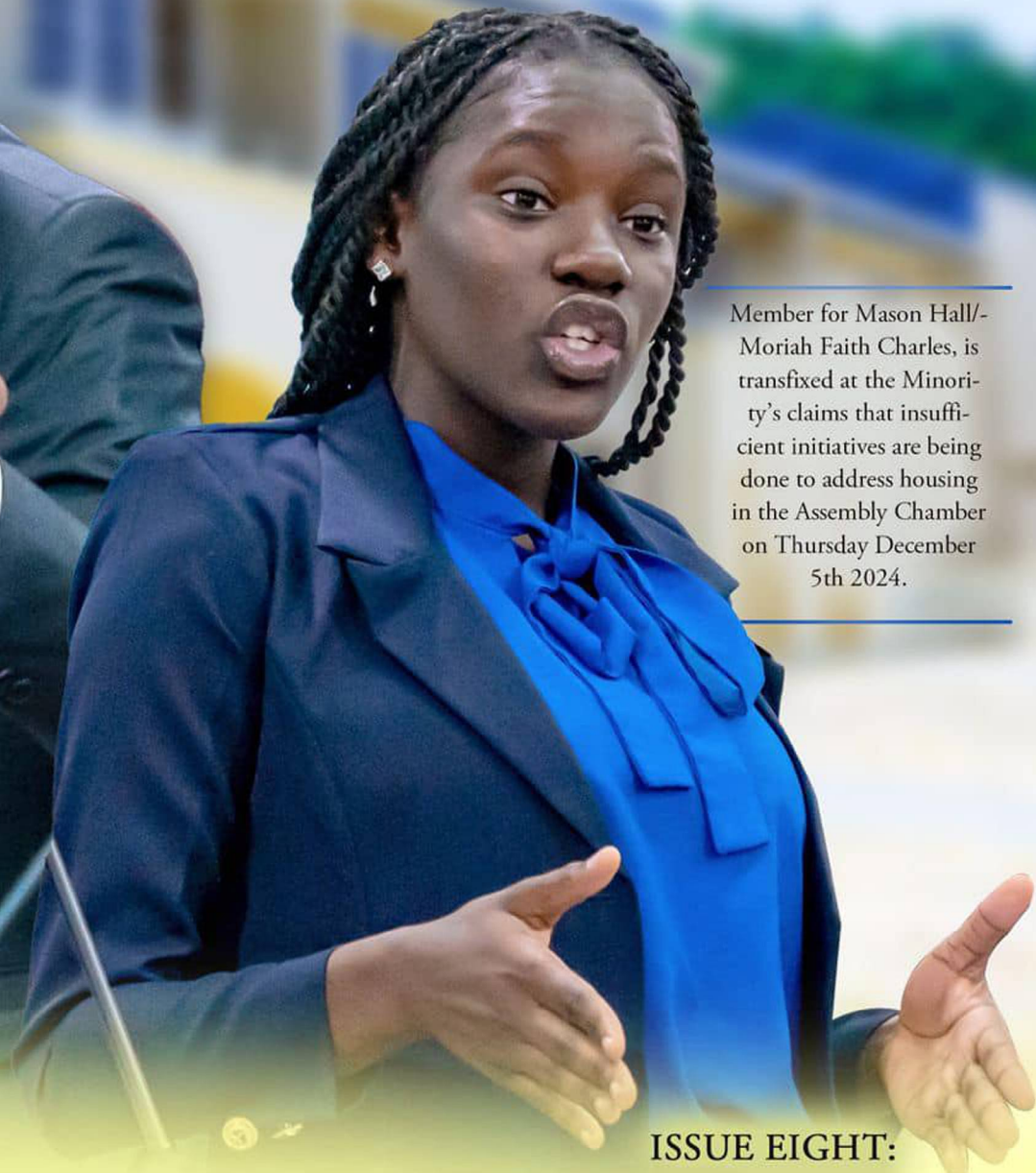
LEGISLATURE IN FOCUS!



Igniting Youth Voices: Does The **HOUSING CRISIS** AFFECT YOU(TH) ???



Member for Mt. St. George/ Goodwood, Aryn Gray cusps his right fist while elaborating on a salient point in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Member for Mason Hall/-Moriah Faith Charles, is transfixed at the Minority's claims that insufficient initiatives are being done to address housing in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.

ISSUE EIGHT:

03.01.25

The electrifying atmosphere, charged with palpable energy, drew eager crowds both online and in-person. Normally quiet and reserved, the Assembly Chamber brimmed with the fiery passion and unwavering commitment of Tobago's youth. Their voices resonated with conviction, each word laced with pride and purpose as they passionately defended their positions, presented sharp arguments and stood firm in their beliefs. The air hummed with intensity—every counterpoint, every impassioned plea added to a powerful atmosphere that blended youthful energy with a deep sense of civic responsibility. The Tobago Day Youth Debate (TDYD) is not just a debate; it's a dynamic celebration of the next generation's potential, where every participant left an indelible mark on the history of Tobago's democratic discourse.

WHAT IS THE TDYD?

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP?

Since 2012, the TDYD has given secondary school students across Tobago the chance to step into the shoes of Members of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) for one day, all in the spirit of Tobago Day (December 4th). The Legislature partnered with the Division of Education, Research and Technology and the Division of Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development. This year, for the first time, a Form One student, Dahliann Bruce from Scarborough Secondary School, made history as the youngest participant. **"As the youngest participant, I faced challenges engaging with older, more experienced debaters, but I persevered. Despite the nerves, it was an exciting and memorable experience that I thoroughly enjoyed."** This incredible opportunity allows students from Forms 4-6 to sharpen their leadership skills while engaging in meaningful debates on real-world issues.

NEW ADDITION, PLEASE!

Under The People's House, this year's TDYD saw an exciting new addition: the Tobago Day Youth Debate Caravan! Schools across Tobago were introduced to the importance of legislative history, democracy, and the power of youth voices in shaping the future. Students then underwent a six-week hybrid training programme, learning everything from parliamentary procedures to public speaking. On December 5th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m., the eagerly awaited Debate kicked-off in the Assembly Chamber.

The Hot Topic: Housing Solutions for Tobagonians

The Debate centred around a critical issue: low-cost housing solutions for Tobago. The minority side argued that there is an ongoing housing crisis on the island, highlighting the urgent need for action. **"Current policies fail to ensure all Tobagonians have access to safe, dignified housing. To achieve equitable access and meet SDG 11.1, we must implement better land management, develop Community Land Trusts, promote financial literacy among youth, and establish a Tobago Contractors' Registry."** -Anthurium Lewis, Assemblyman for Roxborough/Argyle.

Meanwhile, the majority countered that existing programmes and initiatives were already addressing the issue. **"Recognising the challenge of poverty, the Tobago House of Assembly launched the Tobago Housing Development Programme to help first-time homebuyers purchase homes at cost price. Buyers must be T&T citizens and Tobago residents. Additionally, the Government's Aided Self-Help Housing Programme, a high-quality affordable housing initiative, complements the Accelerated Housing Programme."** – Annamarcella Codrington, Chief Secretary and Assemblyman for Parlatuvier/L'Anse Fourmi/Speyside.

WHO IS MR. CIPRIANI?

Presiding Officer, Mr. Allon Cipriani, offered his thoughts on the debate's dynamics. **"The minority used real-life examples to clarify their arguments, making them more relatable. However, their over-reliance on statistics and articles diluted their main points and reduced audience engagement,"** he noted. On the flip side, **"The majority side made strong counterarguments, but frequent interruptions during the minority's presentations violated Standing Order 49(B)."**

TDYD: BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

At The People's House, the TDYD is more than just a debate — it's about empowering the next generation. Minority Leader, Alyssa Leacock, shared how the experience improved her research skills: **"Statistics and evidence are vital because you need to prove why this motion is essential for change or evolution for the people of T&T."** Assemblyman for Bethel/New Grange, Kaysan Abdul Wudud, reflected on how the debate inspired him to seek solutions for the challenges faced by Tobagonians: **"With my counsellors' guidance, I effectively researched and debated the motion."** -Anthurium Lewis, Assemblyman for Roxborough/Argyle, echoed these sentiments: **"Participating in the TDYD improved my public speaking, deepened my understanding of an overlooked topic, and sparked my passion for politics."**

A TOTAL DOMINION OF THE PUBLIC GALLERY...

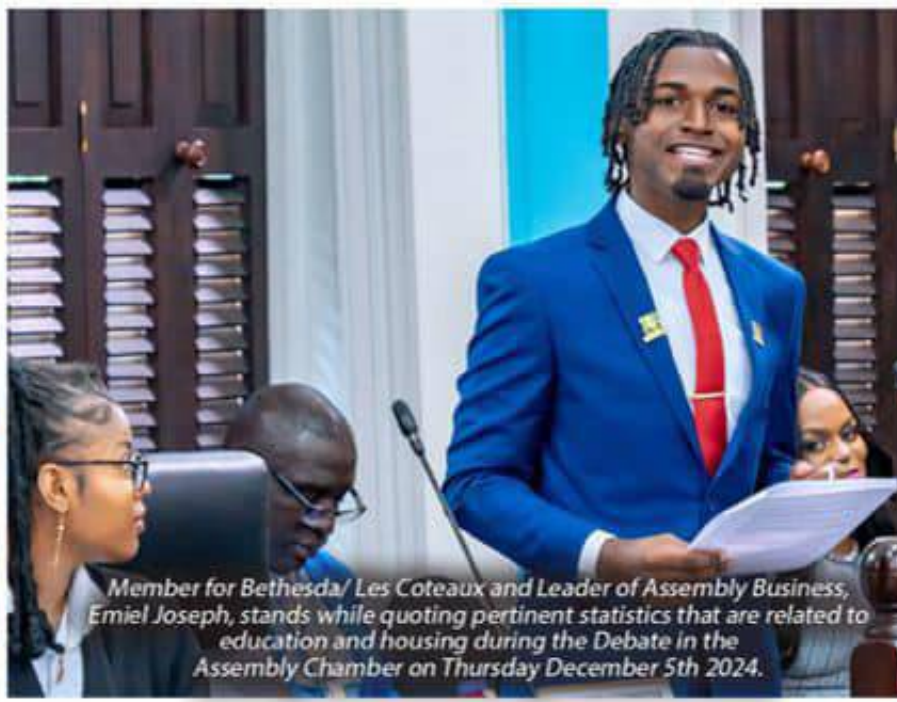
This year, The People's House took engagement to the next level! The public gallery got involved with a fun and interactive segment on legislative history. Audience members were asked three questions, and those who answered correctly received exciting household gifts, thanks to Dominion Appliances and Gift Shop. The crowd was so captivated that they started answering questions even without the prizes, showcasing just how engaged they were in the discussion!

What topic should be debated at next year's Tobago Day Youth Debate? We want to hear from YOU!

Send us your suggestions at
thaleducationoutreach@gmail.com



Member for Buccoo/Mt. Pleasant- Davisha Melville, raises her hands in disbelief at the Majority's lack of urgency in dealing with the island's housing crisis in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Member for Bethesda/ Les Coteaux and Leader of Assembly Business, Emiel Joseph, stands while quoting pertinent statistics that are related to education and housing during the Debate in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Member for Roxborough/Argyle Anthurium Lewis, points her fingers in utter dismay as the Majority proposes to utilise Chef Pro's container houses as an alternative for low-house costing in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Councillor Marsha Willington in full rebuttal-mode as she rebutted claims made by Member for Roxborough/Argyle, Anthurium Lewis during the Debate in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Member for Signal Hill/ Patience Hill, Kristen Francis pleads with the Majority to urgently deal with homelessness during her presentation in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Assemblyman and Secretary for Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development Ian Pollard, presents Debating Facilitator Ajay Alleyne, with a token at the Closing Ceremony in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



L:R-Member for Darrel Spring/Whim and Minority Leader Kelvon Morris and Minority Councillor Petal Daniel-Benoit, look on at the debaters during the Debate in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



L:R -3rd place, Anthurium Lewis of Bishop's High School, 2nd place Kristen Francis of Roxborough Secondary School and Top Debater of Bishop's High School, Kaysan Abdul Wudud who receives a cheerful welcome from his Minority teammates in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Group photo of the 2024 Tobago Day Youth Debate cohort at the Closing Ceremony in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



L:R-Jimmy Sylvester, one of the judges, from the Division of Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development, receives a token from Presiding Officer, Ms. Abby Taylor at the Closing Ceremony in the Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 5th 2024.



L:R- Assemblyman and Secretary for Settlements, Public Utilities and Rural Development Ian Pollard, presents Presiding Officer, Allon Cipriani with a token at the Closing Ceremony in the Assembly Chamber, on Thursday December 5th 2024.



Assembly Legislature
Tobago House of Assembly