

Padarath: Govt won't rule out privatising SWMCOL



Minister of Public Utilities Barry Padarath makes a contribution during yesterday's Standing Finance Committee session in the Parliament Chamber at the Red House, Port-of-Spain, yesterday.

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KAY-MARIE FLETCHER SENIOR REPORTER KAY-MARIE.FLETCHER@GUARDIAN.CO.TT

Public Utilities Minister Barry Padarath yesterday refused to rule out privatisation or a public-private partnership for the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL), saying the state enterprise's business model must change to reduce its burden on taxpayers.

During the Standing Finance Committee's examination of the Ministry of

Public Utilities' 2027 budgetary allocations, former Public Utilities Minister Marvin Gonzales asked whether the Government was considering privatisation or a public-private partnership in the solid waste management sector.

Padarath stopped short of committing to either option but said none had been ruled out.

"We are waiting to get the information from the RFIs. Once that comes in, we have our own thinking, but obviously we need to consult with the stakeholders, see what the proposals are, and I will not rule out any option that is available to us," he said.

Padarath said SWMCOL's business model needed to change.

Taxpayers, he argued, could not continue to finance the company while private operators benefited from its resources without providing a financial return.

"The real operational issues must impact the balance sheets, the dollars and cents of the company and it must make sense to the taxpayer that if they are being asked to carry this burden, that there must be a return and therefore we are more interested in looking at the business model of the company," he said.

"There must be a vast change in the approach to the way in which the company is structured in terms of its business model to make it profitable instead of making it a burden to taxpayers. Because there is the element of the company that allows for the company to be in a situation where they can make a profit as opposed to just purely being dependent on government subvention," he added.

Gonzales also asked whether the Government remained committed to implementing three policies developed under the previous administration: the Recycling Policy, Solid Waste Management Policy and Integrated Waste Management Policy.

Padarath said Cabinet had rescinded, in December 2025, a May 2024 decision approving a revised policy framework for the municipal solid waste management sector and SWMCOL's transformation.

He also said Cabinet agreed in July this year to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to identify opportunities for the environmentally sound processing, treatment, transportation, disposal and recovery of waste across Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government's approach, he said, would be informed by the RFI's outcome and a subsequent Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

Padarath added that the previous transformation plan had not adequately addressed SWMCOL's operational challenges.

"While there was a development of a transition plan for the transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management, a lot of the theoretical things involved in the transformation plan did not significantly address the systematic challenges that SWM- COL experiences. And therefore, the time has come where the model of SWMCOL must change," he said.

Padarath claimed that some private entrepreneurs were obtaining raw materials from SWMCOL without providing the company with a financial return.

"What I have discovered inside of SWMCOL is that you have many entrepreneurs who get their raw material from SWMCOL and there is no return to the company. And that has been left to languish for quite a while," he said.