



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

# *Annual Christmas Banquet and Awards*

CHAGUANAS CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

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GREETINGS

DELIVERED BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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3 DECEMBER 2016

SIGNATURE HALL, LONGDENVILLE, CHAGUANAS

Good evening.

It is indeed a pleasure to join you once again for your Annual Christmas Dinner and Awards Ceremony. The work of the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce continues to be a positive force for economic and social development in Central Trinidad, and by extension, an integral factor in overall national development.

The Chamber's annual Christmas Dinner and Awards Ceremony, indicates the Chamber's commitment to its members and the community, as well as the ongoing entrepreneurial spirit and commercial vibrancy in the central region. We have noted the Chamber's recognition of the need to adjust and meet the requirements of its community, given the present economic realities. We applaud you on your several initiatives, one of which was the introduction of the Discount Card earlier this year.

This year, by any measure, has truly been a challenging one. However, the Government has been working assiduously to create solutions now and in the medium- and long-term. And our success will depend on us continuing to work together.

Today's awardees comprise businesses from all sectors – Banking and Insurance; Information and Communication Technologies; Marketing and Distribution, as well as Manufacturing. Therefore it is imperative that government create and institute initiatives that reflect this diversity of businesses.

By example

- Our participation in this year's Havana International Fair (October/November 2016) in Cuba of close to 100 business people from 39 local companies resulted in significant leads and valuable contacts and a greater appreciation of what it requires to do business with Cuba. I am certain there will be continued interest in developing this as one of our major markets.
- The successful trade missions conducted to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France under the Fit4Europe initiative was a solid start to penetrating the EU Market. I understand that meaningful outputs resulted from these missions in the form of: the appointment of distributors, interest in immediate orders from the participating companies, packaging and labelling upgrades, identification of strategic partners in animation and co-creation initiatives in the creative sector, among many others.
- The extremely effective Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation (TTBizLink) managed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry currently hosts 47 transactional e-services which are utilized by 4,000 companies and over 7,000 users per month. The Government has recently executed a US\$25 Million loan with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to expand and strengthen this facility to have greater positive impact on the ease of doing business.
- In addition, the Ministry is pursuing the development of specific policies and programmes such as the National Services Policy, the Special Economic Zones Policy and the National Export Strategy, all geared towards attracting investment—both local and foreign—and creating an enabling environment for more competitive businesses and greater exports.

I would like to reaffirm the Government's commitment to reshaping our economy and provide hope and confidence for the future. I call on the membership of this Chamber to join with the Government to create a business environment that will result in sustainable growth and diversification of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. I am confident that the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce will continue to be an important partner in forging this new path as we enter 2017.

It is said that “The secret of success is constancy of purpose.” So while our immediate purpose may be to maximize profits and minimize costs, let us reflect on our other purposes as employers, supervisors, mentors, institutions and providers.

As we approach the Christmas season, this is a time in which we must consider the well-being of our families, our employees, our friends, neighbours and strangers, and all those in our communities. Let us all take time to reflect on our purpose. More than merely customers, we must appreciate the fact that the success of our businesses depend on the success and strength of others with whom we share this space.

In closing, I once more congratulate the Chamber on its excellent work, and take this opportunity to thank your outgoing President Mr Richie Sookhai on his diligent and astute leadership and at all times charming personality over the past three years. I am confident that you will be leaving the Chamber in a good place as you hand over the baton to your successor to continue the strategic work of the Chamber. We look forward to our continued successful relationship working together.

May I wish you, your membership and their families the best for the Christmas season, and a successful, safe and prosperous New Year (2017).

I thank you.