



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

Media Release

GOVERNMENT DEEPENS CONSULTATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO COMBAT COVID-19

26 May, 2021: The Government of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to acknowledge the significant sacrifices made by the private sector since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. The private sector remains an integral stakeholder to the Government; in particular Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) that are considered to be the backbone of the economy. The business community must be recognised for their unwavering support to the Government's measures to combat the incidence of COVID-19, namely the current Public Health Regulations, State of Emergency (SOE) and the related curfew arrangements.

The Government understands that many businesses and individuals are adversely impacted by the pandemic but the country is now faced with the difficult task of balancing the preservation of lives and livelihoods. While there is no panacea to managing this situation, we appreciate that dialogue and meaningful consultation is critical during these uncertain times.

On Wednesday 26 May, 2021, a Meeting of Government Ministers under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Honourable Stuart Young was held with representatives of various business organisations to discuss Covid-19 related business concerns. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Government to listen, engage in dialogue and understand the current challenges being experienced by the private sector. Other Ministers in attendance were Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry; Senator the Honourable Rohan Sinanan, Minister of Works and Transport; The Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Sport and Community Development and Senator the Honourable Randall Mitchell, Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts.



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The Presidents of the following organisations/associations were in attendance Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce; Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce – Tobago Division; Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association; The American Chamber of Commerce Trinidad and Tobago; Confederation of Regional Business Chambers; Downtown Owners and Merchant Association; Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago; Trinidad and Tobago Contractors' Association; Sangre Grande Chamber of Commerce and the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries.

During the consultation, the Government through Minister Young indicated that the July 04, 2021 date associated with the end of the Public Health Regulations was not rigid and if the public health environment improves, the re-opening of segments of the economy will be considered earlier. With respect to the National Vaccination Program, the private sector indicated its willingness to assist the Government in marketing the efficacy of vaccines. The Government welcomed the private sector's offer of collaboration to combat vaccine apathy within some segments of the national workforce.

Several Sectors of the business community reiterated the need for additional financial support to be provided to firms, particularly Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and the Government gave the commitment that these matters will be considered by the Minister of Finance. The various representatives were asked to make written submissions to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (which will act as the Secretariat) for consideration by the Government. It is anticipated that these meetings will be ongoing between the private sector and the Government.

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