



Media Release

SAFEGUARDING THE CONSUMERS' INTEREST

November 03, 2022:- The role of the Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) is to improve the quality of life of citizens by protecting consumer rights in accordance with relevant legislation and by promoting consumer awareness and assertiveness. The Division comprises two (2) units: the Consumer Protection Services Unit (CPSU) and the Research Unit (RU). In Fiscal 2022, the Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) continued its efforts in safeguarding consumer interests in Trinidad and Tobago through the receipt, investigation and resolution of consumers' complaints and inquiries, the monitoring and publication of prices, the conduct of lectures and virtual outreach initiatives and the conduct of consumer research.

Over the period October 2021 - September 2022, **the CAD received three thousand two hundred and seventy seven (3277) enquiries from Facebook, emails and telephone calls. The CAD also received seven hundred and fifty-two (752) complaints and successfully resolved six hundred and fifty-seven (657) consumer cases; a resolution rate of 87.4%. Consumer redress, valued at \$2,063,710 was obtained through various forms; mainly full and partial refunds, exchanges, repairs and credit notes.**

The CAD conducted two (2) Adverse Trade Practices Order (ATPO) exercises in the months of November 2021 and June 2022 to determine whether businesses were in compliance with the ATPO 2000. The Adverse Trade Practices Order 2000 (ATPO) makes it an offence for anyone in the course of a business to engage in certain trade practices, which adversely affect the economic interests of consumers within Trinidad and Tobago. **The Order specifically prohibits the display and publication of statements, whether on business premises, advertisements or receipt books, the terms "No refund", "No exchange" and "No refund on sale items."** Non-compliance is a criminal offence punishable on summary conviction with fines ranging from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 and

imprisonment from four months to two years. **The CAD visited one thousand, five hundred and fifty-seven (1,557) stores in malls and major areas of commerce** where **one hundred and twenty (120) businesses (8%)** were found to be in breach. Store owners in contravention of the ATPO were issued warnings accordingly, given copies of the Order and revisited to ensure compliance.

As part of its consumer awareness and education function, an active Facebook platform was maintained. **The page gained 3,171 new subscribers/followers and maintained an overall reach of 289,000 persons.** In January 2022, a Facebook Live Talk Series was launched. This is a monthly live talk show that addresses various consumer topics and answers questions in real time. The Live Talk Series has been a major draw and has aided in increasing the platform's outreach while further empowering consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions. **Topics covered in the Live Talk Series included the role of the CAD, Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, the Adverse Trade Practices Order 2000, Combatting Illicit Trade in Trinidad and Tobago, eating well on a budget and applying "smart" shopping habits to help with budgeting and saving money to meet the current economic challenges.** Simultaneously, the CAD engaged in the conduct of various research topics that provided content and relevant consumer tips during the indicated period. The areas of focus ranged from adjusting consumer purchasing behaviours amidst the COVID-19 pandemic to identifying new vs refurbished electronic equipment.

On a monthly and quarterly basis, the Division conducts a number of price monitoring exercises in supermarkets, hardware establishments, and poultry depots. **For the period October 2021 - September 2022, twelve (12) Supermarket Retail Price Surveys were conducted and twelve (12) Publications and Bulletins were produced as well as a special Christmas Survey on items frequently purchased during the Christmas season; (4) Quarterly Hardware Retail Price Surveys were conducted and reports produced; and twelve (12) Poultry Price Publications and Bulletins were generated.** These surveys are integral to the monitoring of price trends, informed policy-making and consumers' comparative shopping.

The Division remains committed to safeguarding consumer interests as outlined in the Consumer Protection and Safety Act (1985) and the National Consumer Policy (2018-2023).

Persons desirous of lodging a complaint or making an enquiry can contact the CAD by calling the toll-free hotline at 800-4CPS (4277), emailing the CAD at consumeraffairs@gov.tt, or sending a private inbox message through the CAD's Facebook platform: Consumer Affairs Division T&T.

END