

## **Remarks**

**Senator the Honourable Donna Cox  
Minister of Social Development and Family Services**

**Closing Session for EDTK 103 Online Learning for TVET and  
Continuing Professional Education Trainers**

**December 1, 2020**

## Salutations

- Mrs. Denise Gaspard-Richards  
Director, The University of the West Indies, Open Campus
- Mrs. Elia Grant-Fraser  
Head (Ag.) Programme Delivery Department  
Academic Programming and Delivery Division  
The University of the West Indies, Open Campus
- Mrs. Karen Rosemin  
Country Manager, The University Of The West Indies Open Campus
- Rachael Guzman-De Vlugt  
Education Extension Facilitator, Adult Education Programme  
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
- Ms. Alicia Hospedales  
Senior Government Relations and Affairs Executive, Digicel Foundation
- Various e-tutors
- All Participants from the AEP, Admin Staff, Supervisors, Trainee Supervisors and Tutors.

Good evening.

Thank you for the invitation to bring remarks on behalf of the Honourable Minister, Senator Donna Cox, the Executive and staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and to share in the exuberance of today's proceedings. It is indeed a fitting occasion for the Ministry to be able to address this forum, as we commemorate not one but two United Nations' observances this week, on the global calendar. Today as many of you would know, is *World AIDS Day*, which will be followed by *International Day of Persons with Disabilities* on Thursday. These target groups continue to be of priority to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, as we work assiduously towards the establishment of an inclusive and sustainable society for all persons.

While the world cannot deny the social and economic turmoil that COVID-19 has unleashed, we must also acknowledge the good that it has resulted in. Some of this includes greater awareness about the impact of climate change, added focus on food security, the importance of national forms of identification, as well as, the prospect of online learning for increased accessibility, inclusion and equity; particularly for the community of persons with disabilities. It is in this regard that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services responded to the opportunity to participate in this initiative with a view of ensuring that *no person is left behind* because of a lack of knowledge or competencies amongst staff and related service providers. It is a view that is also shared by the Government, as is articulated in tenets I and II of the National Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago (Vision 2030), which speak to nurturing people as our country's greatest asset and excellence in service delivery.

In keeping with this thrust, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is presently engaged in a national digitization exercise of its grants and services to ensure that all nationals of this country have access to reliable and real-time data about the Ministry and its operations. Such efforts began in earnest with the re-commissioning of its website and the opening of its first wholly-owned and operated Information Communication Technology Lab (ICT) for its Adult Education Programme in October. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has, and continues to recognise that ICT-enabled development is a critical component in the revitalization and modernisation of the social services sector and subsequently, the resilience of our people. As such, the Ministry remains

confident that much of what has been learnt over the last few months will inspire positive growth in all areas of instruction, leading to the expansion of a cadre of industrious skilled workers and globally-competitive enterprises, as the world adjusts to the *new normal*

It is therefore my sincere hope that as the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services continues to *help, empower and transform the lives of the most vulnerable amongst us*, those who are here and otherwise involved in the organisation of this training will continue to position competency-based learning as enabled by the use of ICT, as a critical tool in the fight against poverty, social injustice and inequality. Particularly in the sphere of the Ministry's *Adult Education Programme*, the Executive and staff recognise and celebrate the potency of ICT in reaching our marginalised and otherwise, stigmatised communities and consequently look forward to greater returns on our initial investments.

Before closing, I also wish to remind all participants and guests of the importance of striking a balance between the digital and physical worlds. While societies continue to experience an overwhelming surge in the popularity and necessity of electronic devices, especially in the Caribbean Region, we must not forget that *the family is still the bedrock of all societies*. As such, we must each endeavour to maintain physical and emotional connections with our loved ones, so that our future generations are grounded in compassion, integrity and respect for each other.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once more and may Almighty God continue to keep you and your families in good health and favour.

God bless!