

\$3,500 limit to cash cheques at Supermarkets

The Public is advised that Legal Notices Nos. 125 and 126, made by the Minister of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS), under section 10 of the Senior Citizens' Pension Act, Chap. 32:02 and section 16 of the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03, the Senior Citizens' Pension (Amendment) Regulations and the Public Assistance (Amendment) Regulation, 2024, were

published on 18th July, 2024. These Regulations were amended to limit the encashment of all Public Assistance Grant and Senior Citizens' Pension cheques exceeding the value of \$3,500.00 at supermarkets, groceries and shops throughout Trinidad and Tobago with effect from 18th July, 2024.

This measure seeks to deter fraudulent activities, mitigate risks and reduce financial losses

to the Treasury.

The Public is asked to note that grant cheques exceeding the sum of \$3,500.00 must be encashed at banks or other approved financial institutions, since they are legally bound to utilise stringent verification measures to ensure the validity of cheques and beneficiaries before payment. Recipients who access these grants via the "Direct Deposit" system will not be

affected by this measure.

The Ministry has indicated that these amendments to the Regulations seek to ensure that allocated funds are efficiently and effectively administered to whom they are intended, namely the poor and vulnerable. The

Ministry assures that every step is being taken to ensure that Public Assistance Grant and Senior Citizens' Pension reach those households that are truly in need, aligning with its commitment to helping, empowering and transforming lives.

Minister Cox, Port of Spain Mayor and key stakeholders meet to tackle street dwelling frontally



Minister Cox (left) converses with Mayor of Port of Spain, His Worship Alderman Chinua Alleyne (right).

“The issue of street dwelling in Port of Spain and environs must be dealt with in a firm and serious manner through a collaborative and unified effort to yield effective results.” This is the view of Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox.

Minister Cox made the statement during a meeting with Port of Spain Mayor, His Worship Alderman Chinua Alleyne on Wednesday 17th July, 2024 held at the Ministry's Head Office in Port of Spain. Officials from the Port of Spain City Corporation, North West Regional Health Authority's Mental Health Unit, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Public Health Division and staff from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) were also in attendance.

During the meeting, Minister Cox emphasised that street dwelling is a significant issue

requiring urgent attention. She lamented that although staff of the Ministry's Social Displacement Unit monitor street dwelling in the capital city, they are unable to take the necessary action as they cannot move them involuntarily. She further indicated that Field Officers have persuaded some street dwellers to voluntarily relocate from the streets through referrals to Shelters, CCP and other social programmes.

Minister Cox also indicated that the Ministry is working on legislation that will provide the authority required to effectively address this issue, and hopes that it will be enacted by the time the new assessment centre for street dwellers is opened. Mayor Alleyne acknowledged that the ongoing issue is indeed concerning and expressed his readiness to collaborate with the Ministry and other stakeholders to create an enabling environment, thereby making the capital city attractive to in-

vestors, visitors, and the general public. The Mayor shared with the Minister some initiatives by the Corporation that assists in the alleviation of some issues including a daily street washing programme between 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. He mentioned that the Corporation is seeking to further expand this initiative and high on the agenda to mitigate the issue is the urgent need to secure a temporary location in the city to serve as a common area for street dwellers. Such a location would provide access to showers and toilet facilities, thereby contributing to cleaner streets.

Minister Cox praised the commitment of all parties and reiterated her commitment and mandate to the establishment of a comprehensive system to addressing the issue of street dwelling in the city and nationwide, and immediately convened a meeting with the team and their technical personnel for 24th July, 2024.

Minister Cox receives Courtesy Call from Brazilian Ambassador

Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox received a courtesy call from Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna, Brazilian Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago on Tuesday 16th July, 2024, at the Ministry's Head Office on St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain. The meeting focused on ways in which both the Ministry and the Embassy can collaborate to improve the social services offered to citizens in Trinidad and Tobago.

Minister Cox and Ambassador Teofilo de Luna, discussed social programmes and services in Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago, discovering that similar initiatives adopted and implemented exists in both countries. Similar to the Ministry's Senior Citizens' Pension, Disability and Public Assistance Grants in Trinidad and Tobago, older persons, persons with disabilities and those who live below the poverty line in Brazil, receive cash transfers under a programme known as the Cash Benefit Programme.

The Minister also shared with Ambassador Teofilo de Luna some of the Ministry's ongoing and upcoming projects, including the National Register for Vulnerable Persons, which is intended be a cutting-edge computerised database used to collect, store, and process vital information on vulnerable persons across Trinidad and Tobago. She also informed the Ambassador of the Ministry's upcoming plans to establish three transitional facilities, as well as a therapeutic centre, all aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable persons.

Her Excellency Teofilo de Luna indicated that she was quite pleased to learn about the Ministry's various programmes and services, and looks forward to maintaining an excellent working relationship with the Ministry. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to proactively exploring opportunities to help, empower and transform lives, and to ensure that no one is left behind.



Minister Cox (left) presents a token of appreciation to Her Excellency Maria Elisa Teofilo de Luna (right), Brazilian Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.