



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minister Robinson-Regis makes appeal to Landlords

Port of Spain--- When I addressed the nation on April 8th, 2020, I made a call for unity, compassion and patience, as we go about the business of finding the most vulnerable in the country and providing them with the kind of assistance to aid them through this unprecedented period. As Minister of Social Development and Family Services, I want to express gratitude for I have witnessed extensive evidence of those tenets over the last few weeks. I indicated that we are all in this together, we must come together for the common good of each and every one-we must fight this together, if we are to evolve into a resilient people and society.

I am however saddened by some of what is being brought to my attention, both via the media and through direct contact by some persons. As the Minister of Social Development and Family Services I strongly condemn the despicable attempts by landlords to defraud the state during such a critical time for our country. These situations of attempted fraud have affected the rate at which applications for rental assistance have and continue to wait and face possible eviction as a result of these instances. On the same token I am also advised There are instances of families, some with babies, single parents and families with other vulnerabilities being evicted and are now literally left without a roof over their heads. This at a time when the nation is struggling to come to term with an enemy we are yet to fully understand. An enemy that is causing untold pain and suffering across the world. Notwithstanding the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is doing far better in the fight than most countries, we still have to be mindful of the actions that we take, we have to maintain our humanity above all else.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services continues in its attempts to work with those adversely affected by COVID-related financial challenges, to provide some relief to these persons, so that there is a return to some level of normalcy.

The processing of applications for rental assistance grants, however, continues to be interrupted by fraudulent and unscrupulous behaviour by some Landlords and persons pretending to be landlords. In the processing and verification of applications for rental assistance, the Ministry detected several instances of fraud, inclusive of:

- Applying for rental assistance to pay for commercial rental space;
- Owners of HDC property who are renting their property which is illegal;
- Landlords and former tenants are conspiring to issue false documentation to acquire state funding;
- Issuance of fraudulent rental agreements;
- Evidence of collusion with property owners;
- Persons renting spaces that were acquired for commercial purposes from the state, that they do not even own.

Given the challenges we have been experiencing with persons trying to illegally obtain rental assistance, it was necessary for the Ministry to implement a different strategy to determine the veracity of these applications.

To the landlords out there, I know you are also faced with uncertainty at this time and are also trying to come to terms with this pandemic. Families across the world, and more importantly, our families in Trinidad and Tobago are struggling. I am appealing to landlords to have patience, allow these families, in this period of uncertainty, to at least have the comfort of a place to call home. Please do not choose eviction as an option at this time.

I also wish to condemn the dastardly attempts by landlords to defraud the State during such a critical time for our country. I wish to remind the public that persons who are guilty of any of these actions will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. The Ministry will continue to pursue the fulfilment of its promise to process these claims in the shortest possible time, however we will also do our due diligence to ensure that no fraud is perpetuated upon the state. Unfortunately the rate or processing will be affected as Peter will pay for Paul.

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For more information contact:

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