



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Social Development and Family Services**



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Thursday, 5 November 2020

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Priority: HIGH**

#### **MINISTER COX AND CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER MEET TO DISCUSS SOCIAL SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES**

Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox continued her thrust of improving the social sector through the creation of synergies and technical cooperation when she met with His Excellency Kumar Gupta, High Commissioner of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago at the Ministry's Head Office yesterday. The meeting forms part of the Minister's ongoing efforts to secure technical assistance with local and international partners that correspond with the Ministry's mandate and areas of priority. Also present at the meeting were Acting Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, Ms Sheila Seecharan and Adviser to the Minister, Ms Miriam Jacobs.

Among items discussed were the need to identify solutions and actions to adequately and effectively improve the social sector including:

- exploring the well-reputed Canadian Model of Social Welfare to identify some of its best practices;
- the implementation of a whole-of-government approach to social services;
- support to facilitate the role and functioning of families from point of entry to exit;
- an Integrated Community First Responder model to adequately assist family members during times of crisis with psycho-social support from within the community;
- strategies and tools to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the social delivery system;
- Systems and models to transition persons off social welfare into self-sufficiency.

Minister Cox also took the opportunity to share some of the areas highlighted in her 2020/2021 budget presentation such as a focus on parenting, providing support to grandparents who are taking care of their grandchildren and plans to implement the Integrated Social Enterprise Management System (ISEMS), which will digitize and significantly improve service delivery to the vulnerable.

Commissioner Gupta stated that some of the programmes highlighted by Minister Cox are aligned to his Government's agenda and he agreed to pursue these areas of mutual interest. He also indicated his Government's interest in increasing its engagement with the Caribbean and shared his administration's support for gender-related matters and community mental health, especially as a consequence of the Covid19 Pandemic. He also indicated his agreement with Minister Cox's concern for legislation and policies under the Division of Ageing in particular, the operations of senior citizens' homes.

Following the meeting both parties agreed to undertake ongoing discussions for greater collaboration. On a lighter note, they both spoke briefly about their stints as Diplomats in New York City; Minister Cox's previous visits to Canada; and their connections to cricket. High Commissioner Gupta expressed his desire for sports diplomacy to be considered as a viable vehicle for mutual cooperation and engagement.



*Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox and His Excellency Kumar Gupta, High Commissioner of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago discuss social sector opportunities. Also present was Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ms Sheila Seecharan.*



*The New Normal - Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox greets His Excellency Kumar Gupta, High Commissioner of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago.*

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