



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Social Development and Family Services**



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

**Priority: HIGH**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Minister Cox and Commissioner of Police meet to discuss Fraud**

Port of Spain--- Just mere days after her contribution to the Mid Term Review, where she highlighted several instances of fraudulent activity against older persons, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator The Honourable Donna Cox met with Commissioner of Police, Gary Griffith in an attempt to mitigate and treat with such activities which occur from time to time at the Ministry. Also present at the meeting were ACP Corbett of the White Collar Crime Department, Senior Superintendent Groome, Head of the Fraud Squad Division, both of the TTPS; as well as other Ministry representatives.

The meeting follows a previous discussion with the Supermarket's Association on the issue of the cashing of Senior Citizens' Pension Cheques at supermarkets, as well as the issuing of fake cheques and the blatant use of fake identification cards by perpetrators. With the current implementation of Phase II of the Covid Social Support Relief Measures, the meeting was also an opportune time to establish mechanisms for early detection of fraud, in order to safeguard the public purse, during these financially, challenging times.

The following data was shared in terms of investigations undertaken by the TTPS thus far:

- 2019: six (6) reports, involving six (6) victims, amounting to the sum of \$24,000;
- 2020: Sixteen (16) reports, involving 58 victims, amounting to the sum of \$712,03.00;
- 2021 (to 16<sup>th</sup> June): Seven (7) reports, involving 170 victims, amounting to the sum of \$431,300.00.

Among the other items discussed at the meeting included:

- Outstanding matters related to Food Card and Flood Relief, which are currently being investigated by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS);
- Procedures and arrangements for reporting on matters of fraud;
- The establishment of an Investigations Unit at the Ministry;
- A collaborative approach between both the Ministry and the TTPS to treat with Elder Abuse in all its forms; and
- Measures to mitigate and manage fraudulent activities related to those living abroad and receiving state funds under false pretences.

In response, Commissioner Griffith expressed his commitment to working closely with the Ministry and offered pertinent advice in order to eradicate the cases of fraud plaguing the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. According to the Commissioner:” I am quite happy to be included at this point in any discussion related to fraudulent behaviour and I pledge the services of the TTPS to work closely with the Ministry. I will therefore do my part to work with the Ministry in treating with this very important issue”. The Commissioner indicated that a follow up meeting is scheduled to take place with other departments of the TTPS in order to address some of the other issues raised in the meeting.

According to the Minister, the Ministry remains committed to working closely with all stakeholders to ensure that no one is left behind, and those who are found guilty of fraud will face the brunt of the law.

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In Keen Discussion: Senator The Hon Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services meets with Commissioner of Police Gary Griffith and his team at the TTPS to discuss fraud



In photo: L-R: Senior Superintendent Groome, Commissioner Gary Griffith, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox and ACP Corbett, following a meeting held to discuss fraud

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