



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



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A message from Senator the Honourable Donna Cox- International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Port-of-Spain --- Each year on December 3rd, the global community observes the *International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPwD)*. This annual observation seeks to increase public awareness about the abilities, capabilities and accomplishments of persons with disabilities. Moreover, this observation makes the point that disabilities do not define our citizens, but rather entitles them to the same rights and privileges of their non-disabled counterparts.

Not surprisingly, this year's theme is ***“Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world.”*** This theme aligns very well with our own National Policy for Persons with Disabilities which emphasizes the Ministry's commitment to ensure equality and equity in the provision and development of plans and services to all persons with disabilities, so that they too can continue to lead fulfilling and industrious lives.

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to have grave repercussions on the lives of many, including persons with disabilities. Many of them have been forced to stay at home for much lengthier periods, many students with disabilities have experienced even greater difficulty in continuing their education, and those who live in residential facilities have faced the added pain of separation from their loved ones.

Discrimination too, continues to be present at various levels of society, feeding as it does on prejudice, ignorance and a culture that finds it hard to appreciate the inestimable value of each person.

Through its Disability Affairs Unit, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will continue to provide sensitization training and advocacy for public officers, the private sector, media, community-based and non-governmental organizations, as well as members of the public in support of the community of persons with disabilities.

The Microsite for Persons with Disabilities, as well as the recently launched Client Registration Card by the Blind Welfare Association are evidence enough of this Government's responses and intentions related to awareness, accessibility, participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in everyday life. Additionally, the Disability Assistance Grant for adults and minors form a critical part of the Ministry's mandate to help, empower and transform lives, and ensure that no one is left behind.

As Trinidad and Tobago continues to forge ahead with the implementation of policies and plans for a more inclusive, disciplined and productive society, I extend best wishes to the community of persons with disabilities. I salute and recognize the significant contributions you have made to the social, political, and economic spheres of national development, and encourage you, beyond today, to continue to stake your claim for an equal place in our society.

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