



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priority: **HIGH**

Minister Cox lauds Digicel Foundation's Innovation Labs

In keeping with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' (MSDFS) drive to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for persons with disabilities, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services earlier today, February 14, 2023, attended the launch of the Digicel Foundation Innovation Labs, at the Pointe-a-Pierre Special School. Joining this momentous launch were Abraham Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Digicel and Board Director of Digicel Foundation; Sheila Seecharan, Permanent Secretary of the MSDFS; Lenor Baptiste-Simmons, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education; Dr Peter Smith; and other executive officers.

Aimed at increasing accessibility to the digital world for persons with disabilities, the Innovation Lab project seeks to assist students with varying disabilities to better access and function more effectively with technology. This Lab, along with nine (9) other special schools across the country, will be equipped with computers, virtual reality headsets, smart boards and various assistive devices.

In her brief address, the Minister commended the Digicel Foundation for their dedication to investing in sustainable development programmes and building stronger, more resilient individuals, families and communities. She stated that the launch of the Innovation Labs sits well with the Government's thrust to have a digital society, where access to information and Government services is just one click away.

According to Minister Cox, "Digital transformation can catapult persons with disabilities towards greater success and help to tap into their potential and unique skill sets. Through the collective efforts of the Ministry, other public and private entities such as the Digicel Foundation, it is

anticipated that persons with disabilities, will be further empowered and that society would be equipped to provide adequate support to the community.”

As she addressed the audience, Minister Cox took the opportunity to highlight some of the Ministry’s recent advancements towards increasing accessibility. These include capacity-building workshops for organizations that provide services for persons with disabilities; sign language training for staff, public and private sector organizations; distribution of sign language posters in schools; and various sensitization sessions which seek to educate organizations that work with persons with disabilities.

In closing, the Minister stated that she is confident that the Digicel Foundation will reduce the digital divide and create avenues for quality education and enhanced standards of living for a more prosperous future. She looks forward to the future collaboration for the National Therapeutic and Resource Centre for persons with disabilities.

CEO of Digicel, Abraham Smith emphasized that society has to continue to work together to ensure that every individual, regardless of their disability, reaches their full potential. He further encouraged organizations in the Corporate world to stand up, get involved and create opportunities for the most vulnerable.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to maintaining partnerships in an effort to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported in their most critical time of need.

For more information:

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Minister Cox delivers brief remarks during the official launch of the Digicel Foundation's Innovation Labs



Momentous ribbon cutting moment- Minister Cox cuts the ribbon with Desha Clifford, Chairperson of Digicel Foundation; Abraham Smith, CEO of Digicel; and Peter Smith, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education.



Student of the Point-a-Pierre Special Schools shows his favourite computer game to Minister Cox



(l-r) Desha Clifford, Chairperson of Digicel Foundation; Abraham Smith, CEO of Digicel; Minister Cox and Peter Smith, Chief Education officer of the Ministry of Education



One of the Point-a-Pierre students testing out the virtual reality headset in the new Innovation Lab