



## **WELCOME REMARKS**

**By**

**THE HON. MAXIE CUFFIE, MP**

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNICATION**

# **OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE GOVERNMENT CAMPUS PLAZA**

**GCP AUDITORIUM**

**Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

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## **SALUTATIONS**

- Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- His Worship the Mayor of Port of Spain, Alderman Joel Martinez
- The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives
- My Fellow Cabinet Colleagues
- The Honourable Kamla Persad Bissessar, Leader of the Opposition
- Government and Opposition Senators and MPs
- Permanent Secretaries
- Heads of Government Departments
- Mr. Noel Garcia, Chairman of the Board of UDECOTT,
- Chairman of Statutory Boards and Authorities
- Executive management and staff of UDeCOTT
- Captains of Industries – the Heads of various Business Chambers
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Ladies and gentlemen it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the latest installment in the resurgence and revitalization of the capital city of Port of Spain. The long awaited formal opening of the Government Plaza is a significant event in the history of Port of Spain and of Trinidad and Tobago.

I think you will agree with me that the buildings that encompass this Plaza add a much needed sheen to downtown Port of Spain, and when coupled with the recently opened Ministry of Education Tower located a short distance way, and the Brian Lara Stadium to be unveiled later this week, good things are beginning to happen in Trinidad and Tobago. The vision is being realized.

This Plaza has five (5) buildings and a central plaza, located on 1,154,000 sq ft (107,200 m<sup>2</sup>) of land. It was constructed for use by:

- The Customs and Excise Division of the Ministry of Finance
- The Board of Inland Revenue and the associated Archive Building of the Ministry of Finance
- The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs
- The Immigration Department, of the Ministry of National Security; and

The multi-storey car park opposite, now known as the Parkade, which can accommodate 1,600 vehicles.

The Plaza is also outfitted with retail shops, a public outdoor/performance area, and an auditorium and restaurant.

The only building yet to be handed over and occupied is the Board of Inland Revenue's 23-story tower, and there is every expectation that this process will be completed by the end of June, 2017.

When fully occupied, the entire Plaza will house 3,291 public servants in state-of-the-art offices, and in so doing, drastically reduce the number of public officers working in unsuitable workspaces that frequently invited the scrutiny of both the Occupation Safety and Health Department and the representative Trades Unions.

The significance of this occasion, extends beyond the formal opening of these buildings. The greater significance lies in the Government's ability to effect much-needed savings to the national treasury as a result of us moving into buildings bought and paid, by the tax-payers of Trinidad and Tobago.

The construction of this Plaza was born out of the recognition that for decades, neither the quality nor the quantity of Government properties designated for public officers had improved.

The end result of that was an astronomical bill for rental of privately owned properties confronting the Government on a monthly basis.

Through these buildings you, the tax-paying public, stand to save approximately 18.3 million dollars annually in rental accommodation.

As the line Minister entrusted with responsibility for the public service, I have heard the litany of complaints from public sector workers, citizens who require the services they provide, the unions representing the employees, and even those who provide other contracted services to the public sector offices.

The common thread running through all these complaints, is the low level of customer service delivered because of appalling office accommodation, and received in buildings that are less than visitor-friendly.

The delivery of excellent customer service begins first and foremost with the employees who deliver the service. It was imperative for us as a Government therefore, to provide public officers and indeed, the wider citizenry, with safe, comfortable, modern, and clean accommodation, that was conducive to productivity, while simultaneously adhering to all health and safety guidelines.

I am extremely cognizant, however, that just as clothes alone do not make the man, so too, buildings alone do not automatically lead to improved morale and increased productivity. The Government has done its part, and now those who occupy and those who utilize the services offered in these buildings must do their own.

I am sure that all of us here today will agree that we live in a time of rapid change -- change that is often not predictable, and not always positive. The best way to manage change, whether positive or negative, is to anticipate it and prepare for it. We have been preparing for the modernization of the public service for a long time. A lot has been done to change our IT infrastructure, our policies and procedures. Today, by opening this Campus Plaza, we take another step further along that road of modernization.

On behalf of all of us at the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications then, I congratulate UDECOTT and all others responsible for these buildings, from conception to completion, and I invite all of you to enjoy the improved delivery of public service that I feel confident will be one of the outcomes of working in these pleasant surroundings.

I thank you.