

2nd Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration – 12th Parliament

Objective 1: To examine the trends in unemployment and job losses in the private and public sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee recommends:

The Ministry of Labour, The Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Planning and Development (CSO) should collaborate to conduct an analysis of job gains made during the Covid-19 pandemic to complement previous research done on economic diversification in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry will support and collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Planning and Development to conduct an analysis of job gains (increases in the number of persons employed).

The MTI as well as its agencies currently engage in a number of projects and activities resulting in job gains. These include:

- **Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector**

The Government continues to focus on developing the Non-energy Manufacturing sector given its pivotal role in the transformation of the economy. A key area of focus is the building of human resource capacity within the Sector as the shortage of skilled labour continues to limit its growth, development and competitiveness. The Cabinet approved this Programme, a public private partnership involving the MTI, MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT), the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTATT), in March 2022. The first cohort of 135 Trainees matriculated into the Programme in June 2022. A monthly stipend is provided as well as opportunities to be trained and employed in the manufacturing sector.

- **Investment**

InvesTT, the national investment promotion agency, continues to facilitate investors. Approximately TT\$637 Million in investments became operational in the first two quarters of Fiscal 2022 (October 2021 to March 2022). These projects created over 1,780 jobs in sectors such as Manufacturing, Business Process Outsourcing and Agro-Processing sectors, Automotive Retail, and Sports, Fitness and Recreation. Investments not yet

operational but closed between October 2021 and April 2022 in the following sectors: ICT, food and beverage, agro-processing, and logistics and distribution, will account for 1547 jobs.

Business Process Outsourcing investments have shown encouraging employment as follows:

- ✓ iQor, started with 60 employees at Tamana InTeck Park in 2015, and since then has expanded three times to two more locations, resulting in over 1,800 jobs.
- ✓ Call Center Pros invested late 2021 and commenced with a small training group of 12 recruits, with the expectation to have 200 employees in a year, and as many as 1,000 in 2025.
- ✓ Teleperformance, a French-based company that started operations in April 2022, started with a workforce of 35, with the expectation to move up to as many as 1,000.

- **Development of New Economic Spaces**

Phoenix Park Industrial Estate

The Government through Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development (eTeck) is currently developing the Phoenix Park Industrial Estate (PPIE). The PPIE comprises approximately 144 acres of developed land that will be adequately sub-divided into 78 leasable lots with all required infrastructure and services—road network, drainage system, electrical power, potable water supply, fire protection, sewer system, telecommunication, electronic security surveillance, and other relevant amenities. It targets domestic and international firms that operate in high-value and light manufacturing (including emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, electronic technology, information technology, energy-saving ecological building materials and biotechnology), as well as logistics, distribution and warehousing. As of April 2022, 92% of the labour comprises local persons-464. Upon completion of the project, it is estimated that companies at the PPIE could employ over 4000 persons.

Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park

The Government has also developed the Moruga Agro-processing and Light Industrial Park which was commissioned in July 2020. The Park has 5 factory shells and 6 land lots and the Government is focused on tenanting the Park which will provide a catalyst for the development of the agro-processing sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Factory Road Industrial Park

The Government is also developing the Factory Road Industrial Park. Upon the completion of the natural gas infrastructure in Fiscal 2022, tenants of the Park will be able to progress with their plans for construction and development, which is forecasted to inject an estimated TT \$890 Mn into the economy and create over 600 new jobs.

- **Creative Sector**

Film: During the period October 2021 and May 2022, seven (7) small international productions have been shot in Trinidad and Tobago providing employment opportunities for sixty-five (65) persons.

Fashion: FashionTT, through the Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme (VCIP) provides support, training and mentorship to one hundred and seventy (170) local designers.

The Fashion LookBook, a quarterly publication by FashionTT showcases local fashion brands. Five (5) Virtual Fashion LookBooks have been launched during the period 2021/2022. To date, 130 designers have been promoted via this medium.

- **Grants**

ExporTT reported on the Grant Fund Facility (GFF), which provides companies with financing to improve their productivity and competitiveness, create product diversification into more innovative and high-value products, and increase production that will enable increased exports. Since the establishment of the Grant Fund Facility, 23 SMEs have been approved and created over 50 permanent jobs.

Objective 3: To examine the proposed strategies of the State to stimulate job creation and employment opportunities to counteract the adverse economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee recommends:

The Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Planning and Development should collaborate on conducting an assessment of the rate of job creation during the COVID-19 pandemic; this study should commence in the current fiscal year (2021/2022).

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) will support and collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Planning and Development to assess the rate of job creation (the rate of job creation is the net change in the number of jobs created for a given period).

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- **ExporTT**

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- **Gateway to Trade**

The Gateway to Trade (G2T) programme is an Export Readiness Incubator Training Programme designed to strengthen trade promotion and foster growth in Trinidad and Tobago's Services Sector exports. The programme has facilitated the development of

forty-three (43) Export Plans and Company Profiles, which will strengthen and promote the export performance of local companies.

Objective 4: To examine the changes in the operations of the private sector to sustain business during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee recommends:

The Ministry of Trade and Industry should collaborate with the major private sector umbrella groups to develop business continuity strategies for a changing global environment and to provide buffers to global economic volatility.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry will collaborate with major private sector umbrella groups such as Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and the various Chambers of Commerce to develop business continuity strategies for a changing global environment and to provide buffers to global economic volatility.

Business Continuity Management Policy for the Public Service

On August 4, 2011, Cabinet agreed to a strategic initiative for the Establishment of a Business Continuity Management (BCM) Capacity throughout the Public Service. The Ministry of Trade and Industry was one of four pilot Ministries- Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Communications.

In 2015, the "Business Continuity Management Policy for the Public Service" (BCM Policy) was finalised. The overarching goal of the BCM Policy is to realise continued delivery of public services to citizens in the event of a unique business interruption using this organisational resiliency approach.

The specific objectives of the Policy are:

1. Ongoing mitigation, prevention and reduction of disruption in service to the public.
2. Cost effective preparedness and response for any major event that may affect its business activities.
3. Effective communication pre, during and after an incident.
4. Recovery and continuity of critical business processes at an acceptable level of operation during and after an incident.
5. Timely restoration of business system software, hardware, IT infrastructure services and data during and after an incident.
6. Accounting for staff in general, and transfer of specific staff to alternative locations to maintain critical business processes following major disruptions or disasters.

Business Continuity- TTBizLink

In addition, the MTI has a business continuity strategy through its TTBizLink system. This is done in two ways, firstly, backups of all virtual systems and data are performed regularly and stored offsite. Secondly, a disaster recovery environment is maintained which contains a full replica of the TTBizLink system. This can be brought online within half of an hour if there are any major disruptions of systems or corruption of data at the primary cloud site.