



ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-
BACHAN

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST
MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

AT A SEMINAR FOR

RECIPIENTS OF GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2011

HOSTED BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

25th OCTOBER 2011

HILTON TRINIDAD, PORT OF SPAIN



Ministry of
Public Administration

- Madame Chairperson
- Ms. Gillian Macintyre, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration,
- Ms. Prabha Maraj Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration.
- Mr. Richard Madray, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration.
- Ms Angela Gervais, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education
- Ms. Georgina Terry Life Coach, Business Consultant and Facilitator of the Seminar for Recipients of Government Scholarships
- Proud Parents and Guardians
- Our 2011 Recipients of Scholarships from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- Our dear friends in the media fraternity
- Ladies and gentlemen

I must begin by congratulating each and every one of our scholars here today who have displayed the value of dedication, focus, commitment and hard work! In so doing, I also recognize and congratulate the parents and Teachers who worked with our scholars to guide them, nurture them and ensure their success.

I think it is fitting that you all give yourselves a hearty round of applause.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministries of Public Administration and Education, has this year awarded 348 scholarships in various disciplines.

These awards were made in line with the fact that education is one of the key pillars for sustainable economic growth and development and the creation of the knowledge-intensive economy.

As you by now know, pillar five of the seven pillars for sustainable development in the National Development Policy of the Government of the People's Partnership aims to create "*A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy – Building on the Native Genius of Our People.*"

In an emerging economy such as ours, the need for a robust programme of continuous training and skills development is essential to sustainability and progressive growth.

And it is through scholarship awards to deserving students that the Government works to expose our people, our human capital, to higher education in areas where our needs for growth and development can best be served.

Therefore, you as scholars represent what your Government holds as hope for the future progress of our nation. The time will come when responsibility for steering our nation will rest on your

shoulders and through measures such as these; we try to prepare you for what is ahead.

This is by no means a statement that must make you feel daunted, rather you should see it as your country making a place for you and the contribution you will make for Trinidad and Tobago to take its place as a fully emerged, developed nation in the years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will have learnt from an early age one of the most important lessons in life: even in adversity, the goals you set your mind to can be achieved through focus, diligence, commitment, sacrifice and determination.

And it has not escaped us that the journey you are now embarking upon may come with a degree of anxiety. As you move on to further studies you will face new challenges –

- leaving home and going off to University;
- life as a student pursuing tertiary level education, quite different from secondary school;

- developing your personal brand and individuality;
- expanding and building your circle of relationships;
- understanding the connection between the individual, life and career;
- building practical skills such as time management; personal space management;
- choosing the right courses and research options;

We also understand that the world of work you will be entering will be far different from the one we entered years ago, and will be far more competitive for you.

It is in recognizing the challenges you will face, because we have been there and we know the trepidation you may at times feel, or the feeling of being unsure of which direction to take that this seminar was organized for you students.

The seminar later this morning focuses on equipping you with the knowledge and skills necessary for taking hold of the

coming challenges and coping with the transition to life as a student engaged in tertiary level education.

And I want to tell you that it is not simply challenges you will face. In the months and years to come, there will be a great amount of growth as you experience new friends, new environments, new methods of learning, new social settings and indeed, as the adult in you emerges. The experience will be a great and memorable one and I urge you to treasure every moment of it.

Every step you take shapes you as an individual and prepares you for your life journey, including the negative experiences. I urge you to value those negative experiences and learn from them. As the author Iyanla Vanzant says in her book, *'there is value in the valley'*.

It is also very important to bring your role as the future change-makers and directors of our economy into context. A key role of

Government is to be the catalyst for economic growth, helping our country to achieve its true potential, simultaneously providing opportunities for its citizens to achieve their true potential.

As the Minister of Public Administration, I therefore make certain key commitments to you. On behalf of your Government, I commit:

- to provide the best service to you while you are on scholarship;
- to facilitate your further studies, where possible and
- to ensure that the obligation of the State is fulfilled by finding appropriate placements for you when you complete your award.

I am committed to ensuring that all of you are provided with the highest quality of service that meet your specific needs from our Ministry and by extension the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division (SATD) while you are on your award.

It is for this reason that I am able to announce enhancements to the service that will ensure that your needs are met with minimal frustration.

The SATD has embarked on an automated management information system known as the Scholarships and Advanced Training Information System (SATIS), which will enable us to provide a more reliable, efficient and quicker service to you, our Scholars.

This system will enable you to communicate with the Scholarships Division electronically as all transactions will be conducted in this manner. You will now be able to submit documents online, as well as apply and accept scholarships online and make requests through our web portal.

You will also be able to monitor your own progress and in one year, a new module will be added that will allow you to monitor your own disbursements of allowances.

In addition, new applicants will be able to monitor the progress of their application for a scholarship from the start of the process, to the award.

We are committed to ensuring that all possible opportunities for further growth and development are available to you. Indeed, through feedback mechanisms, you will also have the freedom to advise and update us on emerging opportunities which we may want to explore.

Many of you may already be thinking of pursuing post graduate studies upon completion of your first degree. I want to tell you and give you the solemn assurance that through the Post Graduate First Class Honours scholarships, the Government of the People's Partnership will enable you to study up to your PhD in areas of study important to our national development and diversification policies.

Those of you who may not immediately go on to post graduate studies are assured that upon completion of your scholarships you will be provided with employment opportunities commensurate with your qualifications. The Scholarships Division is obligated to find a placement opportunity in the workplace, when you complete your studies.

However, as I make these commitments to you, you must also be mindful of your obligations to the Government and people of this nation. As scholars you are duty bound to:

- continue striving for excellence academically, as you are required to maintain your GPA's to sustain your scholarships;
- ensure that your transcripts are submitted to the Scholarships Division on time as neglecting to do so can affect the payment of your allowances; and
- keep in contact with the Scholarships Division and seek the advice of your Scholar Support Officers before you:

change programmes of study; embark on summer courses or immersion programmes.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will be signing an agreement which legally binds you to fulfil certain requirements. **Your obligation is two-fold, both legal and moral.** I urge you to take this obligation seriously.

The State has strengthened its mechanisms to monitor and treat with scholars who have defaulted on their agreements. In addition, it is necessary for you to keep in mind that our country is depending on you to further its development goals.

You must ensure that the skills, knowledge and experience gained will be used to build the human resource talent of our country so that Trinidad and Tobago will become the ideal place in which to live and work.

Some of you will remember the times when the Government would have granted only thirty-five scholarships or even less. Today, out of a recognition of the booming academic and sporting talents of our young people, the number of scholarships has grown to over three hundred.

And **you** are the ones who have emerged to take hold of the opportunities granted by these scholarships.

Having been rewarded for attaining excellence, you now have a duty as scholars to ensure that you learn all that you can so that you can make your contributions our nation's future.

I encourage you to not only learn the theories that will be presented during your programmes of study, but to question those theories and consider how your knowledge can be adapted to the development of our country.

As scholarship awardees, you will be furthering your education at academic institutions locally, regionally and internationally.

Having already gotten a sound holistic education in Trinidad and Tobago, I want to urge the ones who will be going abroad that you will be doing so as Ambassadors of our country and it is your responsibility to keep the flag of your nation flying high not only in academics but also in sports, culture and most important the rich heritage of our beloved nation, Trinidad and Tobago.

I encourage parents here today to support your children's studies and careers, and nurture a sense of service and belonging to Trinidad and Tobago in their hearts and minds. Sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago depends on all of us.

On your return and with your placement into the workplace, you will no doubt find that work is filled both with its rewards,

and its challenges. It will be up to you to identify the challenges, work through them and find your path to success. In addition, you may wish to see yourselves as Mentors, so that you can put your training and experience to work for the benefit of other students, other communities and the nation as a whole.

As the Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar stated recently, a critical programme that must be implemented if we are to save our nation and our nation's youths is a mentorship programme. Today, I challenge you all to begin your mentorship on your return to keep the continuous cycle of supported learning and excellence going.

I take this opportunity to wish you great success with your studies and happiness in this new stage of your lives and I look forward to our future interactions.

As I conclude, I encourage you all to go bravely as you continue to climb the ladder of academia and focus on your goals and ambitions without distraction. You will in the end succeed.

Also, in the spirit of Divali, which we celebrate tomorrow, I say to you my dear scholars, to the parents and Teachers who are here and to all in our nation, may the light of knowledge, wisdom and prosperity continue to shine upon all of you. Thank you all.