



Address

By

The Honourable Maxie Cuffie, MP

Minister of Public Administration and Communications

At the

Presentation of the excelGov 2016 award

To the Minister of Trade and industry

December 16th, 2016

Salutations:

My Cabinet Colleague, Senator the Honourable Paula

Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry

Permanent Secretary, Joan Mendez

DPS, Denise Duncan

Other ministry officials

Members of the media

It is truly a privilege, ladies and gentlemen, for me to present the 2016 excelGov award to the Ministry of Trade. This award recognizes the significant contribution being made to the ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago through the Single Electronic Window (SEW) for Trade and Business Facilitation. This year, Trinidad and Tobago had the distinction of sharing honours in this award with our South American counterparts, Chile, which incidentally, is on the list of countries scheduled to be visited by our Honourable Prime Minister next year, as we seek to deepen our trading links in that region.

The excelGov awards are organized by the Network of e-Government Leaders of Latin America and Caribbean (RED GEALC is the Spanish acronym), with the strong support of the Organization of American States and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB). This award recognizes the best technology-based solutions implemented by governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to enhance the quality of life of their citizens.

An award of this type, ladies and gentlemen, sends a positive signal to the regional and international community in general, and the ICT component of that community, in particular, that the country is making advances in a particular area, in this case that of e-Government.

This award follows one give by the Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) at its 2016 Biennial Conference held in Malaysia last August. The Diamond Buzz programme of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communication was given a certificate of distinction and presented with the 2016 award for excellence in innovation

The award being handed over today to the Ministry of Trade and Industry was presented at the Network of E-Government Leaders in Chile at its biennial conference two weeks ago which I had the honor to attend. The award is in the category for most improved services, and is in recognition of TTBizLink's consistent effort in developing the SEW as a trade and business facilitation tool to meet the needs of the business community.

This award certainly reinforces the view that Trinidad and Tobago is in the vanguard of E-Governance in the Caribbean Region. It should be noted as well, that this is not the first award to be won by TTBizLink, as it also won a UN Public Service Award in 2013.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Communications can be viewed as one of the key enablers of Vision 2030, given its responsibility for public service modernization, transformation and ICT development. It is the Government's firm belief that progress towards becoming a digital economy will aid the efforts underway to reduce inefficiency, diversify the economy, foster innovation and improve overall quality of life for citizens.

This is why I have since re-convened the E-Business Roundtable, a public private partnership of ICT professional which began meeting last week to formulate ways to expedite our ICT agenda in the delivery of business services.

In keeping with Vision 2030, I have also convened, since June of this year, a working group of national ICT experts to review and assess the accomplishments and challenges experienced under previous national ICT plans; and to chart a path forward that emphasizes meaningful ICT usage and uptake, and greater ICT innovation for increasing economic prosperity.

E-Government is one of the key areas to be addressed in the Plan. In keeping with this model, e-Services are gradually being brought online and policy and legislative efforts are currently underway to allow for online payments. It is hoped that the new ICT Plan will lay the road map for the transition from transactional e-Government to transformational e-Government in Trinidad and Tobago. As I'm sure you are aware, amendments to both the Data Protection Act and the Electronic Transactions Act are currently on the Government's legislative agenda, to be dealt with early in the New Year.

One of the key initiatives under the National ICT Plan is the development of an integrated suite of government services. In the same way that the SEW has made it infinitely easier for the manufacturing and business sectors to conduct their business, so too the national ICT Plan, which also envisages a national broadband rollout, is being engineered to ensure that citizens, from the comfort of their homes, in many instances, will have unlimited access to the whole suite of Government services.

TTConnect through which we now deliver 55 government services to the public online was the start of that process. This is in addition to the 46 services now delivered by the Single Electronic Window aimed primarily at the local and international business communities.

We aim to extend much, much further than that. Already, you would have seen the introduction of free WiFi services on selected PTSC routes. This service has ensured that commuters maximize their productive capacity, as far as possible, even whilst travelling.

The vision for Trinidad and Tobago then, is a future in which people-centered, government ICT transcends the boundaries of individual agencies to create a system which is holistic, synergistic and coordinated in the delivery of public services. The fact that TTBizLink has won, not just one but two awards, seems to suggest that we are on the right path.

The Government therefore intends to engage citizens as partners in developing and personalizing their digital services to ensure that the public service of the future is one which meets and anticipates the needs of the citizenry. In my view, this will require meaningful, ongoing relationships to be forged between government and citizens.

Today, as I present this award, I wish to congratulate the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and all the other agencies who would have collaborated to ensure that the SEW was operational and serving the purposes for which it was intended.

I know that this is not the last award Trinidad and Tobago will win, as we continue to work assiduously to not only bridge the digital divide, but also ensure that we create a society where information, and access to information, becomes the currency in which we trade.

I thank you, and congratulations again to the Ministry of Trade and Industry for capturing the 2016 excelGov Award.