

ADDRESS BY

MR ASHRAM DEORAJ, DIRECTOR SCHOOL SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, DR THE HONOURABLE LOVELL FRANCIS.

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SECTORAL INNOVATION MAPPING STUDY OF THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY

**(9:35 a.m. – 9.50 a.m.)
JULY 29, 2016**

**HILTON TRINIDAD AND CONFERENCE CENTRE
(BELMONT SALON)**

**Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon
Minister of Trade and Industry**

Mrs. Angela Sinaswee-Gervais

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education

Mr. Norris Herbert

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry

Representatives of the Business Community

Members of the Media

Government Officials

NIHERST Executive and Staff

Specially Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

It is indeed a pleasure to be here for this occasion – the Launch of the Sectoral Innovation Mapping (SIM) of the Animation Industry in Trinidad and Tobago. I wish to warmly congratulate the National

Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) for paving the way to undertake a research exercise of this nature. This type of research using the SIM as the research instrument is not new to the world, but indeed new to the conduct of research in Trinidad and Tobago.

Animation, I understand, is a US billion dollar industry. It is also one of the fastest growing industries globally. Traditionally, the industry is placed under the Creative Industries umbrella. In this SIM study however, Animation is identified as a strategic industry of the ICT sector. This too makes perfect sense. ICT, yes is an enabler, but for Animation, this particular industry, ICT I believe is most definitely the key driver in every aspect of this industry's growth and development.

I imagine the conduct of research of this nature is no easy task. It requires commitment (staying power), a clear focus and a thorough understanding of the research tool "the SIM" being deployed. I feel confident though that the findings of this study will inform and support my work in education. Likewise, the results will support the work of my Cabinet colleagues in providing us with the evidence to make informed decisions, develop relevant interventions e.g. the formulation of policies and if need be legislation that would impact positively on this industry's growth and development.

In light of the current state of our economy, these types of studies are needed to guide government in realizing its efforts to diversify the economic base of Trinidad and Tobago. As you would know, the current volatility in the price of oil and gas, suggests that it is not prudent to put all eggs in one basket. We need to expand the economic base for our country's survival, and in light of this, I think the conduct of this

research and the selection of non-energy industries like **Animation**, a strategic services sector, gives us in government a comprehensive understanding of viable economic alternatives to generate income and employment.

I admit, my knowledge of the operational aspects of the sector is minimal and I wish to know more. Like many, I enjoy the cartoons. I have heard of an animated “**Santana**” character, animated movies such as **Herman’s Tales**, a social commentary documentary, “We To Blame” and in my daily living, I have witnessed the youth in my family playing many interactive animated games on their computer devices. I believe the industry truly gives our creative people an opportunity to showcase their talents and equally important, showcase our Caribbean culture. I think the Animation industry has an opportunity to promote a brand or a style that is unique to Trinbagonian culture and more generally, Caribbean culture. I am sure the audience here will agree with me that Animation provides a platform to create a Caribbean identity where storylines and characters would reflect the attitudes, the values and the ideas of our Caribbean people.

This type of industry is truly ideal for unleashing the creative genius of our people. I think it was Walt Disney who said it best “animation can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive”.

As the Minister of Education, to facilitate the unleashing of the creative mind, a primary concern is whether our educational and training institutions have been providing adequate support in building capacity in the Animation industry. In general, there are ongoing discussions of whether there is indeed a mismatch of skills acquired by our graduates and those needed by industries. There is also the view that the

curriculum, particularly at the secondary level, is rigid and inflexible and not sufficiently responsive to the changing demands of the modern day workforce. Other discussions convey that much learning is really done by rote to pass exams and little effort is placed on the application of acquired knowledge to the needs of industry. My expectation is that this research study will shed light on the challenges and offer recommendations in building capacity for the Industry.

I gather the Animation Industry is in an embryonic stage of development and therefore quite small in terms of numbers. I understand there are roughly 4-5 studios in Trinidad and Tobago, which are classified as micro and small-scale firms. And in light of the industry's small size, I expect there are measures in place to absorb new graduates. Since Animation is taught at UTT, I anticipate that courses on entrepreneurship are already woven into the programme.

In addition, I believe with fewer economic opportunities at hand, our students need to develop the ability and skills to move their entrepreneurial and innovative ideas from the stage of creative concept, through the business development process to commercialization. Having said this, I see a synergy of institutions within the enabling environment to support this industry. This synergy comprises:

- My Ministry;
- The Ministry of Trade and Industry and its State Agencies such as **ExportTT** and **InvesTT**;
- The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Arts;
- The Intellectual Property Office (**IPO**) of the Ministry of Legal Affairs;

- The Ministry of Labour through its **IBIS** programme supports micro and small-scale entrepreneurs; and
- The Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries (**TTCSI**);

We holistically must be ready to offer the necessary business support services and in so doing, facilitate our students to create economic opportunities for themselves and by extension for the economy.

Interconnectedness and connectivity are synonymous with the world we live in. New technologies such as the internet, broadband, smart phones, the Internet of Things (IOT) and interface devices continue to propel us into the digital era. How, when, where we do things and work; how and what we create and in what medium; or how we communicate with each other socially and the frequency of that communication; how our children play, learn and express themselves, are all very different today. As witnessed, in industry, virtually every cross border transaction, from the movement of goods and services to the communication and collaboration of information, the exchange of learning and the transfer of knowledge, all are done in the context of a digital world.

The Animation industry is no exception. Yet, the uniqueness of this industry lies in the fact that its “raison d’etre”, evolution, survival and sustainability are now rooted in the digital world. This degree of interconnectivity and interdependence provides a vantage point and further potential for industries, such as this one, to grow not only nationally but also regionally.

For despite our very best efforts to make our industries competitive in international markets, we must be realistic in acknowledging that we

still do not have the critical mass to do so. In 2016, no Caribbean country has either the critical mass, the scale or the scope to be globally competitive. For this industry to become a global competitor, we need an integrated regional network which can only be realized through an aggregation of will, championed by an influential leader.

While National Government is the largest consumer and employer of goods and services in general, it is not the economic driver to transform this economy. **YOU** – the Animation firms, the independent industry practitioners – You are the producers who will contribute to a sustainable and viable animation industry. Our efforts in government are to support you.

Admittedly, it is not always possible to have continuous conversations with us, the Ministerial authorities and therefore we may not always be aware of your immediate issues and needs. Nevertheless, there are bridging institutions that are within your reach with the requisite expertise. One such example is NIHERST, a State Agency and an implementing arm of my Ministry – outfitted with the wherewithal to sensitize the authorities to the needs and challenges of the Animation industry; solicit animators' inputs into possible partnering arrangements; and identify challenges that other Ministries and state agencies either independently or collectively can address.

I will stop at this point. Ladies and gentlemen in closing, I want to thank NIHERST again for its efforts in tapping into this type of detailed research “the conduct of the SIM”. I look forward to the presentation on the SIM's findings. I remain committed to doing my part in building the ready to work capacity for the Animation industry and look forward

to working together with others to establish and implement a dynamic framework for these innovative industries.

I thank you.