



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF FINANCE

For immediate release

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MEDIA RELEASE

UNPROFESSIONAL AND FALSE REPORTING BY THE TRINIDAD GUARDIAN ON STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE ON THE EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Colm Imbert, MP, has observed with deep disappointment the inaccurate, misleading and downright dangerous reporting and commentary by the Trinidad Guardian Newspaper on Statements that he made on Monday in Parliament on the budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Health.

In the Standing Committee Meeting of the House of Representatives on Monday, June 3, 2024, the Minister of Finance noted that an increase in the budgetary allocation of \$495 million, or half a billion dollars, was being proposed for the Ministry of Health in the Mid-Year Review.

This substantial increase in the Ministry of Health's budget for 2024 will bring the total allocated for public health care in Trinidad in fiscal 2024 to almost \$8 billion (\$7.9 billion). In commenting on the increased spending on health, the Minister said that we have as a country to look at value for money because the amount spent by the Government on health care has increased exponentially over the years, from \$1 billion when he was the Minister of Health 22 years ago to the present day expenditure, which is now EIGHT (8) times as much as it was in 2002, although Government revenue has certainly not increased by 8 times over that same period. In fact, Government revenues have only increased by less than 4 times over the same period.

In commenting on the huge sum of money spent on public health care in Trinidad and Tobago, and the need to ensure value for money, the Minister of Finance was very careful to say that the expenditure by Government on free medication was important and that we MUST spend the

increased allocation on free medication. At no time, did the Minister say or even imply that he was contemplating a cut in the allocation for Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP), in fact the opposite is true. The Minister NEVER said what the Guardian has alleged and insinuated. The video of the Standing Finance Committee is freely available on the Parliament for all to see and yet the Trinidad Guardian with full access to a recorded public statement still got it wrong.

Despite this fact, and the Minister's clear statement of intent to increase expenditure on healthcare in 2024, the Guardian Newspaper has fabricated a fake storyline, and invited commentary from health care practitioners, economists, retired persons and the general public on their false allegation that the Minister intends to cut spending on CDAP. The Guardian has also disingenuously published a number of letters to the Editor attacking the Minister of Finance based on their own fake storyline.

This is both reprehensible and irresponsible, and the economists and other professional person who offered opinion without reviewing the source information and commented irrationally on this untruthful story, which has been fabricated and spread by the Guardian Newspaper, should by now know better than to simply speak out of turn on a distorted and misleading media report without first checking the true facts.

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The Honourable Colm Imbert M.P.
Minister of Finance