



**CHAIRMAN’S OPENING REMARKS: T&T
FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR – CREATING
THE FUTURE WE WANT**

DELIVERED BY NIRAD TEWARIE, CEO TTCSI 12.03.10

Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. Ewart Williams,

Mr. , President of TTCSI

Mr. Brian Moore, President of the Credit Union League

Mr. Dennis Evans, President of the Bankers Association

Board Members of TTCSI,

Colleagues at the Head Table,

Presenters at today’s event,

Officials of Government Ministries,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning and welcome to this seminar on the financial services sector in Trinidad and Tobago which is being put on



jointly by TTCSI and Business Trinidad and Tobago in part through the sponsorship of Guardian Life and Trinre.

We have titled this session: Creating the Future We Want because we at TTCSI want to stimulate the private sector – the people who actually engage in business activity – not just those who simply talk about it – to further define and articulate the kind of financial sector which the various stakeholders in the sector want to develop.

Before I get into the meat of the session, I know some of you may be unfamiliar with the TTCSI. So, in case you were wondering, The Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI) is an umbrella, non-governmental, business support organization which was established to encourage the growth and development of the services sector.



In particular TTCSI: assists service providers to identify and exploit market opportunities; lobbies government and international agencies on behalf of services providers; develops capacity among local services providers; assists in the development of standards and certification to facilitate access into foreign markets; ensures that member interests are represented in trade negotiations.

We are also the local body responsible for issuing CARICOM Service Provider Certificates. Our membership includes associations in the fields of financial services, hospitality, education, construction, ICT, midwifery, cultural industries, customs brokerage, human resource management, and pest management.

With regards to this session, the spark was ignited back in November of 2009 when Larry, the TTCSI President, asked a senior official of one of the local banks to tell him what the local



banking sector would like to have as outcomes of the ongoing negotiations for a Trade Agreement with Canada. The spontaneous response from the banker was, “well you first have to define the nature of the sector which you want to create”.

At first I was appalled. Here we were, once again, putting the cart before the horse. We are negotiating an agreement with a country whose main interest in the region is in financial services and we – collectively – were unprepared. Something had to be done.

Later, in January 2010, Richard Lewis invited me to be on the editorial board of Business Trinidad and Tobago 2010 and in discussing a possible article on the financial services sector, it was my turn to ask – what will we say? What’s our point? So, this conference was conceived to start answering those questions and here we are.



Hopefully, this will be the first in a series which will stimulate deeper and more meaningful dialogue on the development and the future of the sector.

This is not just a discussion for technical people in the various companies or sub sectors or ministries, this is a discussion for everyone. The structure of a country's financial sector impacts all other sectors and the nature of business activity, to a large extent.

If access to capital is limited and there is no place for risk-taking then creativity and innovation will be stifled. However, if the opposite is true and a situation is created where, in essence, anything is permissible and oversight is lax, well, the result has been evident over the last couple of years.



But instead of making statements, I want to ask some questions which I hope some of the panelists will answer:

- 1) How do we create a financial system which encourages creativity and innovation – and therefore risk-taking – without allowing recklessness?
- 2) Does the buy over of RBTT by RBC, when taken in the context of presence of Scotia Bank, Bank of Baroda, First Caribbean and others merit some articulation on the part of the government and the local industry on the right mix of foreign versus local participation in the financial sector – including Insurance?
- 3) As a follow on, has RBC committed to participation in the TT –IFC. If not, should there be policies which would commit large financial institutions which enter this market to the TT- IFC if their presence will be beneficial or is such thinking regressive?



- 4) What incentives should be put in place to support local financial institutions and allow them to have a chance of going global?
- 5) Is it realistic to even be thinking of exporting financial services and if so, under what conditions?

I am by no means an expert in this sector, so I have no answers.

What I do know is that it is incumbent upon us all to realize that the Government of T&T and indeed those in the CARICOM have embraced free trade.

While trade in this sector has been going on for decades, the inclusion of a services chapter in the Economic Partnership Agreement which CARIFORUM signed with Europe and the almost certain inclusion of a similar chapter in the Canada negotiations, means that we all have to become more involved in policy and trade discussions.



It isn't enough to leave it to the consultants and the under-resourced committees. It isn't enough to complain about the public service – they are trying. We, the private sector, those who will be affected, those who will benefit or lose, need to get up and get involved. It may take some time to learn the trade jargon and process but inaction and ignorance are not options.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my hope that these few words will stimulate some thought and provoke some answers during this morning's session. In keeping with the title of the event, let me end these brief remarks with a cliché: if we don't know where we want to go, we will never get there. Hopefully our discussion here today will help to better define our collective vision.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the President of the TTCSI, Mr. [Name] to the podium to deliver Welcome Remarks.