



Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Minister of Tourism

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MINISTER OF TOURISM RESPONDS TO PHONE QUERY

PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD (May 16, 2017) - I wish to respond to a story in the Daily Express on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 under the headline "Shamfa's \$59,000 phone bill" which quoted comments made in the Senate by temporary UNC Senator, Christlyn Moore.

I attended the Caribbean Tourism Organization's Caribbean Travel Marketplace in the Bahamas in my capacity as Minister of Tourism during the period January 29 to February 3, 2017. At the time of the trip, the Ministry was dealing with several issues which required my attention and therefore necessitated that I remain accessible. During this period, as is common while travelling on official government business, my mobile telephone was placed on roaming. However, at every reasonable opportunity, I also made use of the Wi-Fi facility where it was available.

However, when presented with the TSTT bill which covered the period in question, I was surprised and concerned as the charges appeared to be abnormally high. I requested that the Ministry launch an immediate investigation with TSTT, which is **still** ongoing. The charges being examined are as follows:

- Call usage - \$1,111.06
- Roaming Data usage - \$50,616.61 and
- Value added tax - \$6,562.13.

TSTT also indicated that the company had no control over the charges imposed by regional and international carriers and explained that this would apply to roaming rates incurred while in the Bahamas.

Notwithstanding, I wish to give the assurance that there was no abuse of the telephone facility afforded to me as a Government Minister. I sought then, and continue now to exercise fiscal prudence in all undertakings, especially in the conduct of affairs of the Ministry of Tourism.