

CIBC FIRSTCARIBBEAN IN TT DONATES VITAL EQUIPMENT IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Tobago gets PCR Machine, tests to begin next week

Port of Spain, Trinidad, 14 May 2020 - The Ministry of Health recently received a vital piece of technology which will greatly aid in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, a GeneXpert IV 2 Sites Laptop Testing Instrument.

The machine, which was purchased with funds donated by CIBC FirstCaribbean, is a rapid-test machine which uses the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing method, which is 99.9% accurate for testing of the COVID-19 disease. The equipment consists of the testing instrument, a computer, and preloaded software for running tests and viewing the results. A number of test-kits were also donated.

The support from the bank came through its charitable arm, the FirstCaribbean International ComTrust Foundation. The Foundation, which covers funding in countries across CIBC FirstCaribbean's regional footprint, donated a total of US\$250,000 toward the purchase of testing kits.

The contribution of US\$25,000 was allocated to the Trinidad and Tobago market and was used to purchase this hi-tech point-of-care PCR machine, purchased from CSM Medical Supplies Inc in Guyana. The PCR machine has been allocated for testing in Tobago, and will be located at the Scarborough General Hospital.

The placement of this machine at Scarborough General Hospital is part of the Ministry's national decentralized testing strategy that will allow testing across the regional health authorities for faster confirmation of suspected COVID-19 cases. It will also facilitate earlier treatment and identification of contacts.

"As we continue to battle this dreaded virus in Trinidad and Tobago, we felt it was vital that we assist the public health system with the vital and life-saving work that they are engaged in daily," said Anthony Seeraj, managing director of CIBC FirstCaribbean in Trinidad. "Our objective is to ensure we are able to help provide more in the arsenal against the spread of the disease."

Early identification, through testing, of persons with flu-like symptoms, is one of the public health mechanisms by which community transmission and spread can be controlled through isolation and treatment. Although Trinidad and Tobago has been fortunate in its numbers, and the country is now in the first phase of re-opening the economy, it does not mean vigilance for the virus has reduced, Seeraj added.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Senior Health Systems Adviser Stewart Smith, expressed gratitude and appreciation for the bank's support. "With this timely donation CIBC FirstCaribbean has significantly contributed to strengthening the health system's national testing response in Tobago," Smith said.

"With the COVID-19 testing now available at the Scarborough General Hospital, there is no longer the need to transport patients' samples to Trinidad to be tested at CARPHA (Caribbean Public Health Agency), thereby significantly reducing diagnosis and treatment time." He added, "installation, commissioning, calibration, and user-training were expected to take place this week, with hospital testing scheduled to commence early next week."

Chief Executive Officer of the regional bank and Chair of the ComTrust foundation, Colette Delaney thanked the region's "public health leadership, medical professionals and frontline workers and others involved in the essential work of keeping our communities safe and functioning during this very difficult time."

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