**TSTT KEY TO TRINIDAD & TOBAGO’S TECH TRANSFORMATION**

**It has ‘gone beyond just being a telecommunications company’, says Robert Le Hunte**

Imagine being able to renew your driver’s license online, or better yet, being able to use the internet to get your first driver’s permit. Many who have gone through the Wrightson Road experience of driver’s permit certification would describe it as long, drawn-out and mentally tiring. Moving that process online would be big step in removing one of Trinidad and Tobago’s biggest bureaucratic headaches. And it’s just a start. Long lines at the bank at monthend could and probably would also be a thing of the past.

‘Caribbean FutureScape’; a meeting and exposition held by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) from April 29 to May 1, is looking to give a push to efforts by Caribbean countries to digitally connect and transform the region. TSTT, the country’s largest and most advanced communications provider, stands poised to be at the heart of this transformation. T&T and other Caribbean countries are being spurred by the example of Estonia, a small “former Soviet Union” Baltic state, that has moved many of the functions of citizen/government interaction online.

At a meeting of Caricom leaders in St Kitts in February, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley met with Es­ton­ian Pres­i­dent Ker­sti Kalju­laid, to look at ways in which T&T could follow Estonia’s example of e-government. This week’s Port of Spain meeting, which coincides with the 30th anniversary of the CTU, takes a similar tack.

Expanding afterwards on his keynote, Minister of Public Utilities Robert Le Hunte said that TSTT is being made more modern and agile, to lead T&T’s walk into the digital future, as a key part of the government’s Five-Year Vision (to 2023**)** for the total technological transformation of the country.

“TSTT has gone beyond just being a telecommunications company”, said Le Hunte.

“They are putting themselves in a position to be agile, to be able to provide the infrastructure and resources for citizens to be able to go to that next level. So TSTT has a very critical role”.

Is TSTT the driver of transformational tech change?

“Yes”, said Le Hunte simply.

Earlier, TSTT’s General Manager Enterprise Services, Ian Galt echoed the theme of TSTT sitting at the heart of national tech transformation and innovation. One of the company’s major platforms is e-tender, a procurement tool developed by and proprietary to TSTT. It is tech innovation driven, but Galt says that its applicability extends way beyond telecommunications. TSTT sells it as part of what’s known in tech as SaaS – Software as a Service – which is bought by companies, as a license, through the payment of subscription fees.

“We’ve had some very good uptake internationally on it”, Galt said, “and we’ve made savings of over 20% (in procurement costs)”.

E-tender has 3,000 registered users from over 129 countries.

In his presentation earlier, Galt pointed out the ways in which CTU’s digital mission aligned with TSTT’s in scope, scale and ambition. TSTT’s mission is nothing less than to be the one of the most advanced networks of its kind globally.

TSTT’s expansion in the next couple of years will see cloud computing and the Internet of Things becoming big. Cloud is the migration of data from devices to remote servers, for access anywhere and anytime on different devices in different parts of the world. It’s like having your hard drive in the sky, and being able to retrieve its contents anywhere, without having it anchored to any one device or memory/storage media.

The Internet of Things is the digitally joined-up lifestyle – for example, remotely setting your home’s AC or oven roast to be in a perfect state of readiness when you get home from work. Global tech giants such and Google and Apple are working hard to join up our digital experience, so that it seems natural and intuitive. TSTT wants to take the lead here.

“I think that’s enough to keep us busy for the next couple of years”, Galt deadpanned.

The CTU meeting brought together CARICOM ICT Ministers, as well and tech and telecommunications professionals from the region and further abroad.

CTU Secretary General Bernadette Lewis said that the time for the region to go fully digital is now. The companies that actively participated in the meeting include Facebook, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and ECLAC; a United Nations region development agency for Latin America and the Caribbean.