



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts

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A Taste of Carnival proposed for 2022

BACKGROUND

Starting in October 2021 the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts began a process of consultation with stakeholders through regular stakeholder meetings surveys, and focus groups to determine, among other things the safe reopening of the events sector and what Carnival 2022 could look like in light of event sectors in parts of North America opening up and hosting events within a set health protocol framework. The stakeholders to these meetings included, among others, the National Carnival Commission, TUCO, Pan Trinbago, Trinidad and Tobago Carnival Bands Association, representatives of the Chutney Soca fraternity, Trinidad and Tobago Promoter's Association, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, iGovtt, the Ministry of National Security, the Tobago Festivals Commission, and Corporate Trinidad and Tobago.

Following several rounds of discussions, the submission of proposals by the various stakeholders, and the receipt of survey responses to the Ministry's circulated survey instrument, most stakeholders were in agreement it would be inadvisable and irresponsible to attempt to host Carnival in the way we are accustomed to with a parade of the bands and open events in light of the ongoing pandemic. Stakeholders suggested and agreed with the hosting of limited Carnival activities and events on the condition that:

1. Carnival activities be held in pre-determined, pre-approved, safe zone type venues.
2. All participants be fully vaccinated (staff, patrons, service providers, artistes, and other cultural workers).
3. That mask wearing and other Covid 19 type precautionary measures be followed.

Subsequent to this, the Prime Minister announced on November 25, 2021 that Carnival will be held in 2022, albeit in a limited fashion.

Further consultations were held with the Carnival stakeholders and comments were requested and received from the Ministry of Health giving a better understanding of the level of vaccination, infections, and hospitalisations (actual and projected) so as to assist in determining the types of

events that were possible, particularly given the prevailing public health challenges locally and worldwide.

DECISION

In light of the decision indicated by the Honourable Prime Minister, Carnival 2022 events will be on a limited basis and fall within the current Public Health Regulations.

Carnival activities during the Carnival period in 2022 will be safe zone type activities at safe zone venues for vaccinated persons only.

These safe-zone type events will be limited to fifty per cent capacity, with controlled entry and exit points and sanitization upon entry in accordance with the Public health regulations. Events will take the form of concert type shows such as soca and calypso concerts, calypso tents, soca, calypso, extempo and chutney competitions, steelband concerts, Carnival King and Queen shows, and Carnival theatre.

Following Public Health guidance and regulations, fetes, parties and similar type events by any other name will not be allowed on account of the nature of those activities and the risk they pose to the increased spread of the Covid 19 virus. While PCR testing of patrons was considered as a form of risk mitigation, it was not deemed realistic as the cost per test per patron would be uneconomical.

All performance spaces will be made available for bookings events at very affordable rates.

TODAY'S MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Today, January 19th, another Carnival Working Group meeting was convened to determine the specific events that will be held and a calendar of events is being developed that would not run afoul of the current Public Health Regulations. Another focus of the meeting was to gauge the level of financial assistance that the NCC and other stakeholders would be required to support the planned events since the usual level of appropriation was not made in the Appropriation Act 2022.

While we understand that the wait on a firm position for hosting the festival has caused some anxiety among stakeholders, there had to be careful and measured consideration given to vaccination rates, health sector capacity and current rates of infection and mortality. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts is optimistic the cautious re-opening of the entertainment and events sector, but is also deeply concerned with the deadly effects of the Covid 19 Virus.

Senator the Honourable Randall Mitchell, Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts said, "This move represents a first step in restarting the events sector. Given the economic importance of Carnival, we felt it was necessary to consider what was possible, and what events can be had safely. We look forward to the development of a calendar of events and its subsequent marketing so that we can all have a safe taste of the Carnival that is truly a part of all of us."

Minister Mitchell continued, “While we remain committed to safely restarting the events and entertainment sector, we must consider the global scenario which is that Trinidad and Tobago like the rest of the world are in the midst of a global pandemic which continues to evolve with new variants being detected causing health organisations worldwide to quickly adapt and change strategies.”

The Ministry will continue facilitating open dialogue among the cultural stakeholders to facilitate a safe and successful return to full events.

*****End*****