

Mr President,

The Leader of Opposition Business, Senator Golding, posed some questions to me at the 20th May and 1st July 2016 sittings of the Senate concerning the issue of free movement in the Caribbean Community. He was interested specifically in the number of Jamaican nationals who were granted entry into Trinidad and Tobago in 2015, and the number of nationals from that country who were granted entry into Jamaica in the same year. I apologise for the delay in reverting to the Senate with the requested information but we had to confer with the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica in order to provide precise figures.

Mr President,

I am pleased to answer Senator Golding's questions, and to provide some helpful context as well. Based on information received from the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, 16,826 Jamaican nationals were granted entry into Trinidad and Tobago in 2015. With respect to the flow of Trinidad and Tobago nationals into Jamaica, according to our Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA), 12,875 were granted entry into Jamaica in the same year.

Mr President, the data tells us a few things – including that relative to the size of its population, a greater percentage of nationals from Trinidad and Tobago (0.9%) entered Jamaica in 2015, than Jamaican nationals (0.57%) who entered Trinidad and Tobago in the same year. (Jamaica - 2.95 million as compared to Trinidad at 1.35 million).

When looking at the cases of denial of entry between the two countries however, there is a significantly higher rate of denials by Trinidad and Tobago. While only two 2 nationals from Trinidad and Tobago were denied entry into Jamaica in 2015, one of whom was denied on a recommendation by the Ministry of Health, 320 Jamaica nationals were denied entry into Trinidad and Tobago in 2015, and 228^{up to June} 230 2016.

I had earlier projected that based on the number of denials recorded at the beginning of 2016, there could be a denial rate of between 3-5% for 2016. This was because during January to March 2016, there was a sharp increase in the level of denials compared to the level of denials in first quarter of 2015. Thankfully, this may not be the case. I am very happy to report that since our bilateral intervention, the level of denials trended down for April to June although they remained higher than the same period in 2015. It is now expected that if the denials continue at current levels, we may observe a denial rate of approximately 2 % in 2016.

We remain concerned about the comparatively high number of denials and the treatment of Jamaican nationals at the relevant port of entry. We are however heartened by some steps taken so far and our bilateral consultations with Trinidad and Tobago therefore will continue, including during our meetings with PM Rowley when he visits Jamaica next week.

Sen. The Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade