

■ Questions posed to PNM, UNC:

Lotto agents want answers on NLCB

WHAT are your plans for increasing the revenue stream of the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) and on improving working conditions and alleviating the stress and problems facing agents?

As the general election looms, these are the questions the Online Gaming Agents Association of Trinidad and Tobago (OGAATT) want both the People's National Movement (PNM) and United National Congress (UNC) to answer.

The OGAATT represents over 1,200 Lotto agents nationwide.

In a letter to the Editor, OGAATT president Dean Persad said: 'We have done numerous e-mails, media releases, articles, interviews, and protests. We have written countless times to the former Prime Minister and former minister of finance. We have done the same with the present board and management. All falling on deaf ears, with no resolution to any of our concerns. We feel, unfortunately, that this is the season for getting attention and/ or results.'

The Association offered the following suggestions, ideas, and concerns for both major parties to take into consideration which will be beneficial to the NLCB, the country and the agents: 1) The immediate investigation into some agents' claim of malfunctioning machines. This must be done in collaboration with the affected agents without fear of victimisation and suppression of machines as presently exist.

2) The immediate reactivation of machines, in consultation with the affected agents. This action will result in additional revenue to the NLCB to the tune of \$900,000 per week. This is just using the figures of the present chairman, in the public domain, of 36 agency suppressed. Each agent brings in a weekly minimum of \$25K, after expenses, for the NLCB. This is an average loss of revenue of \$45 million annually.

3) The immediate removal, or cessation of unnecessary and unwarranted litigation, which is costing NLCB millions of much needed dollars, without any benefits to NLCB, whatsoever.

4) The removal of arbitrary interests charges on 'alleged' indebtedness, and charges associated with night safe deposits.

5) Conduct a forensic audit. 6) Seriously consider agents having the option of over the counter deposits reopened.

7) An increase of agents commission to 12%. The last agents commission increase was in 2007.

8) An agents conference at the earliest possible time. This will give agents the forum and opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions.

9) A consideration of a higher remuneration for bill payments, and removing some of the existing high risk payments, such as court pay and containerised payments.

10) The immediate removal of the present board in favour of one that is respectful, considerate, and au courant with what is happening on the ground. One that listens.

11) The filling of vacancies of key positions for the proper operations of NLCB. This must also be done by placing competent, (not necessarily academically qualified), personal in these positions.

12) A look into the direction of illegals.

13) Consultation with our Association on all matters, policies, plans and procedures affecting agents.

14) A member of our executive to be on any Board at NLCB, and Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearings.