



St. Lucia Housing Corporation to start projects for Monchy, Anse La Raye and Canaries

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Seven months after it was established through a merger of the former St Lucia Housing Authority (SLHA) and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), the St Lucia National Housing Corporation (NHC) is gearing up to give low-income housing development a big push.

Working closely with the Housing Section of the Ministry of Physical Planning, Environment and Housing – the housing

108 lots at Hewanorra Orchard

“Irrespective of the per capita income of a country, the sector that always seems to have a difficulty in obtaining adequate and affordable shelter is the low and lower middle income groups,” says NHC chairman, Cromwell Goodridge. “I am confident that the new NHC is well poised to take up this challenge.” At Black Bay, Vieux Fort, not far from where the former HUDC carried out the Hewanorra Orchard

as is the case at Black Bay, the number could also increase depending on consumer demand.

Projects for Anse La Raye and Canaries.

Other projects, currently at the planning stage, are earmarked for Anse la Raye and Canaries on the west coast.

“Government is buying land at Anse la Raye and Canaries to assist with the



New houses under construction at the Beausejour development, for low income earners. The cricket ground in the background.

policy-making arm of Government —, the NHC is preparing to launch a new round of multi-million-dollar projects in the north, south and west of the island over the coming year.

These projects, along with various other initiatives being implemented by the Government of St. Lucia, are aimed at giving a significant boost to opportunities for low income St Lucians to either acquire a home or piece of land on which to build.

Households with a monthly income of \$2,500 or less are considered by Government as low income.

development a few years ago, work will commence next year on developing an additional 22.5 acres of land to put some 108 fully serviced lots on the market. The NHC's plan includes building homes on at least 35 lots.

“We build houses according to the demand,” explains NHC Managing Director Joseph Alexander. “If the demand is there, we definitely will build more houses.”

Next year work will start at Monchy, to make another 160 lots available to prospective homeowners. The NHC will build at least 40 homes in this venture but,

Shelter Development Project with monies got from the CDB (Caribbean Development Bank),” Alexander says.

It's this massive project, partly financed by Government, that's providing the impetus for the its low income housing development thrust. This includes the proposed Monchy development as well as another development already underway at Cresslands, Soufriere, where the NHC is building 95 homes on an 18 acre site.

“The NHC is directly responsible for implementing the Shelter Development Project under which the Government is to

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EDITORIAL

KUDOS TO OUR LEGISLATORS

Every government must meet certain basic prerequisites if it's to promote development and satisfy the aspirations of citizens for a better life in any country.

Everybody agrees on the need to make a substantial investment in developing the national infrastructure. Governments must ensure, among other things, that there are good roads, schools, proper port facilities, efficient internal and external communications, and a workforce with the necessary skills to drive the business of national development.

What's generally overlooked, however, is the need for the country to also have sound and relevant laws to guide the interactions between the various actors engaged in national development. Government and investors, employers and workers, lenders and borrowers, buyers and sellers in the marketplace.

Since the advent in 1997 of the current administration, there has been a sweeping revision of the laws of St Lucia, as part of a broad-based effort to modernize St Lucian society. Parliament has passed a record 150 new laws, touching just about every sphere of activity and, most importantly, helping to position St Lucia to confidently take on many of the challenges brought on globalization and other external influences.

St Lucia has undergone fundamental changes in the last 30 years. To give but one example, the island has moved from a colony of Great Britain, to associate statehood, to being a full sovereign state today. Regrettably, many of St Lucia's laws did not keep pace with such changes. As a result, many laws designed for a different era were still in force until recently.

The hard hard-working teams at the the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Ministry responsible for Justice, have rendered yeoman service to St Lucia. For this they deserve the nation's highest commendations and also for making St Lucia a model law-making country that's highly respected in the Caribbean and beyond.



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A fresh news package
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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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NHC Managing Director, Joseph Alexander, explains an aspect of the Beausejour project. In the background is the new cricket stadium

invest approximately \$38 million to provide houses and lots for disadvantaged St Lucians," Goodridge explains.

"This is to be achieved through the provision of serviced lots, shelter homes, small loans for home improvement and the programme which is called PROUD," he adds. PROUD is a project under which persons who have been squatting on Crown lands, are getting an opportunity to purchase the spot on which they live.

95 homes in Cresslands

The 95 homes going up at Cresslands are primarily for residents of Coin de l'Anse/ Barons Drive who have to relocate to make way for the multi-million-dollar South Bay tourism project. This project, the largest-ever commercial investment in Soufriere, includes the construction of a 120-room four-star hotel, a condominium complex, a marina and quay.

The proposed housing developments are set to come on stream as two major projects being undertaken by the NHC at Beausejour, Gros Islet and La Toc, Castries enter the wind-down stage.

Phase two of the Beausejour development, catering mainly to low income earners, is about 70 per cent complete, the NHC estimates. Twenty two houses have been constructed so far, with another 12 to go. The 43-acre project is putting 162 lots, including those occupied by houses, on the market.

Demand – 2200 units per year

The La Toc project, overlooking the Millennium Highway, is aimed at the middle income market. Involving the development of 13.5 acres to produce 25 lots, the project is about 80-85 per cent complete. The NHC is selling the lots and is not building any houses in this project, reflecting its policy regarding middle income developments.

Current government estimates put annual demand for new housing in St Lucia at 2,200 units. In the past two decades, however, just an average 1,125 units were added to the housing stock each year, with a considerable amount resulting from unregulated housing construction.

"I think that what we are doing is the beginning," says Goodridge. "We are hoping that by the end of the next three or four years, we could make a dent to housing in St Lucia."

Government, however, isn't only relying on the NHC to meet the growing demand for affordable quality housing for low income households. It's also exploring the possibility of partnerships with private developers.

Tax concessions for Private Developers

The framework for such relationships is currently being worked out. At present, private developers undertaking low income housing projects qualify for various tax concessions under the Government's Low Income Housing Programme.



NHC chairman Cromwell

The same initiative offers an incentive package for low income earners who decide to build on their own. The concessions include a waiver of import duties and consumption taxes on specific quantities and types of building materials.

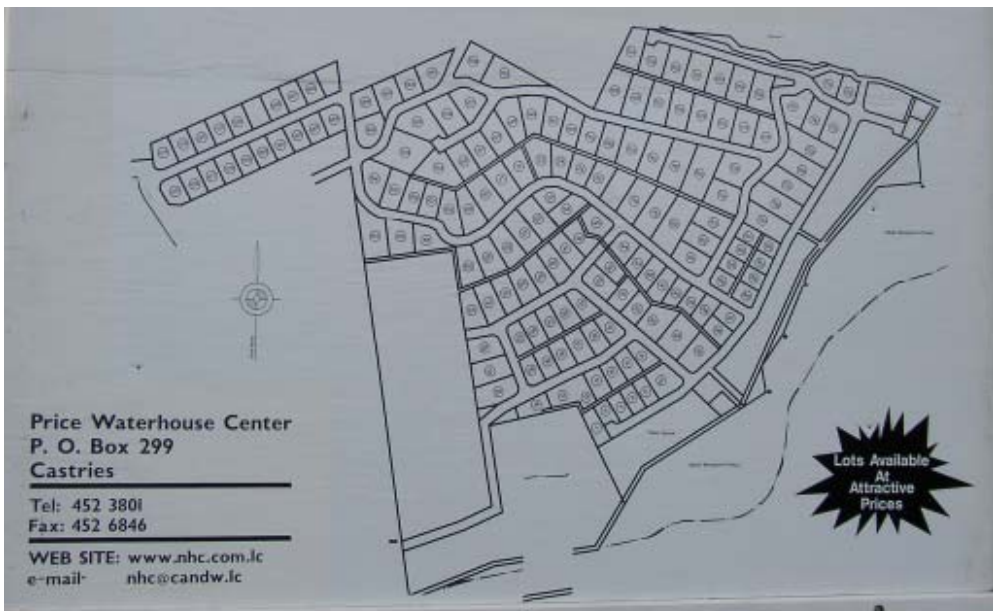
Over the next four years, the Anthony Government plans to implement a number of policy and legislative initiatives in support of its housing thrust. They include the formal adoption of a National Housing Policy as well as a National Land Policy which will provide guidelines for the efficient use of lands, especially in relation to housing.



One of the completed houses at the Beausejour development.



The NHC is providing fully serviced lots in all of its projects



Phase two of the Beausejour development, catering mainly to low income earners, is about 70 per cent complete.

MANAGING PROPERTY TAXES

What is new about Property Taxes?

Property Taxes have been in existence in St. Lucia for decades. In fact, some of the legislation can be traced back as far as the late 1940's. The legislation that governs the management of Property Tax is called the Land & House Tax Ordinance Chapter 217.

Since the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) has been given the responsibility for the overall management of Property Taxes, a number of new measures have been implemented to improve its administration and make the tax more taxpayer-friendly. The measures include:

1. Appointment of the Towns and Village Councils as collectors

The Councils are usually located in strategic areas in the various communities, this facilitates the taxpayers in areas where the IRD does not have an office. Property owners have been informed that they can continue to pay at the respective Council in their area or any office of the IRD.

2. New property classifications

The classification, tax rates and basis of assessment are:

Classification	Basis of assessment	Tax rate
Commercial	Open market value	1/4%
Residential	Annual rental value	5%

Commercial Property: Any property used predominantly for commercial purposes by the owner, but does not include rental property used primarily for residential purposes. Includes hotels, guest-houses, supermarkets, to name a few.

Residential Property: Any property used predominantly for dwelling purposes.

Combination Property: means property used both as residential and commercial property. (Persons with properties have both commercial and residential uses should contact the Inland Revenue Department)



Gathering up-to-date reliable information to value residential properties



Officials discuss the procedures and information with property owners



Discussions are held with all persons in the household.

3. Declaration by commercial property owners of the value of their property:

Not only does this expedite the assessment process, but it removes the previously "somewhat" arbitrary nature of some of the assessments. The Property owner uses the services of a technically trained person to determine the property value and submit the return or declaration to the IRD. The property owner is required to make this declaration once every five years. The cost of the valuation as well as the tax paid are fully tax deductible in the year paid.

The Department has commenced an exercise to value all residential properties. The exercise is an information gathering one, and so a team from the IRD will visit every residential property island wide. Currently work is ongoing on a small scale in the rural areas of Gros-Islet. It is expected that the "grander scale project" will commence in 2003. Property owners are asked to make available their documents of title (e.g. Deeds), for verification of information and proper registration.

Some relief is available to property owners from payment of property taxes. These are granted upon application and if the property owner qualifies.

4. Pensioners exemptions

These are available to persons whose sole source of income is a pension from the National Insurance Corporation. To qualify, the property must be used exclusively as accommodation for pensioner and family. Households with a total annual income of less than \$6000 are entitled to relief. New commercial buildings completed after April 1st 2001 are entitled to relief for three years. Property owners who became first time homeowners after 1st April, 2001 are also entitled to relief for three years. The relief is based on the mortgage value of their property.

The income tax deduction for mortgage interest is now tied to the payment of property taxes. Anyone who fails to pay any property tax payable, shall not be entitled to the deduction for mortgage interest. Thus property owners are asked to ensure that their status is up to date.

For further information, please contact the Department at telephone numbers : 468-4706/4745 or e-mail: ird_property@candw.lc

Water Sector Reform Project...

The Government of St. Lucia (GOSL) has received funding from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)/International Development Association (IDA), and intends to utilise part of these resources for the Water Sector Reform Project. The funds will be used to pay for consultancy services, which will help to clarify and strengthen the water sector environmental and water resource management framework.

The main objectives of the proposed consultancy are:

- To help clarify the appropriate enabling environmental and water resource management framework for the private operator(s) to deliver sustainable water supply and sewerage services;
- To integrate water supply needs with environmental management so as to promote the long-term sustainability of the water supply and sewerage sector.

The Government of St. Lucia is inviting consultants and consulting firms to apply for this assignment which will include work on:

- The guidelines and processes for the environmental licensing and impact assessment of water and sewerage projects.
- An environmental and audit of WASCO's operations.
- Review and updating of the watershed management plan to provide detailed baseline data on water resources. The baseline data will serve as a critical planning tool for the Water and Sewerage Company Inc. (WASCO) or any other operator (s), as well as form the basis for granting licenses for new abstraction sites and the expansion of existing abstraction sites and effluent discharge sites.

More funds to expand water supply and improve watershed management.

The audit will also seek to address the environmental issues to be faced by the private sector operator(s) before significant investments are made. It is expected that the consultancy will last about 20 weeks.

Interested consultants must provide information indicating their qualification and capacity to perform the services, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff.

The final selection will be made in accordance with procedures set out in the World Bank Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers.

Additional information is available from the Project Management Unit of the Technical Assistance Water Sector Reform Project, located at the offices of WASCO in L'Anse Road. Tel: (758) 4582267. Fax: (758) 4526844. Email: pmu@candw.lc

Expressions of interest must be delivered no later than November 29th 2002 to:

Project Management Unit
Project Co-ordinator
Technical Assistance Water Sector Reform Project
Water and Sewerage Company Head Office
L'Anse Road
P.O. Box 1481
Castries
ST.LUCIA

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Government supports farmers engaged in sustainable farming practices, and projects which address the impact of changes in the environment.

During the past five years, officials of the Ministry responsible for Agriculture have attempted to prepare farmers for the impact of Global Environmental Change (GEC). Permanent Secretary in The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Dr. James Flecher, outlined the challenges posed by the impact of GEC during a presentation to a regional workshop in St. Lucia October 17 - 19th 2002. The workshop addressed issues related to Caribbean food systems and brought together expertise from CARICOM, ECLAC, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries in St. Lucia. The following is an edited version of the address presented by Dr. Fletcher.

The issue of Food Systems is one with which we, as a Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, are very familiar. The Mission Statement of our Ministry is "To develop the agricultural sector to ensure increased production of quality food and other commodities through environmentally sustainable management practices, for the benefit of the entire population". In that statement, we recognize the nexus between our food production systems and the environment, and the need to ensure that the food system is environmentally sustainable.

Unfortunately, we do not always practice what we preach, and perhaps the greatest paradox can be found in the fact that the sector which relies so heavily on the integrity of our natural resources to produce an output, is also the one that poses one of the more serious threats to these resources and the environment.

It is impossible to speak of agriculture and food in St. Lucia and not make mention of the banana industry. This industry for over two decades almost single-handedly underpinned the national economy and provided the substrate on which rural

communities fed, were nourished and thrived.

However, the advent of globalization and trade liberalization has ushered in new realities with which both the banana industry and the national economy have had difficulty addressing. And these realities are extremely pertinent to today's meeting.

Liberalisation and Bananas

The erosion of the preferential market for Windward Island bananas in the UK has resulted directly in a loss of foreign exchange earnings for these islands. In the case of St. Lucia, revenue from the industry has declined from an amount of \$184.8 million in 1992 to \$43.17 million in 2001. For the Windward Islands as a whole, the figure is equally dramatic - \$376.20 million in 1992 to \$102.52 M in 2001. While this has implications for the entire economy, it impacts significantly on the food security status of the country, given our high dependence on imported food, which is derived mainly from extra-regional sources.

Trade liberalization has also made our markets more porous to cheap food imports, thereby making it even more difficult for our domestic food systems to compete. To get a vivid demonstration of the impact on a national economy of a decline in the foreign exchange earnings from a traditional export crop one has to look no further than our sister island of Dominica.

Even without trade liberalization, however, our food systems are under threat. The very commodity that has catalyzed the development of rural communities and the growth of national economies has eroded the base on which it has grown.

In order to increase the production of bananas to meet the demands of the external market, we have cleared forested

areas, planted on steep slopes, cultivated in or near watersheds, contributed to pesticide runoff into our water courses, and overworked lands to the extent that the nutrient status of these lands is lower than what it was a decade ago.

If we now superimpose on the previously mentioned factors the issue of global environmental change and the profound impact that it can have on our food systems, then we begin to understand the enormity of the situation.



Hotels and resorts built near the shore can be easily affected by rising sea levels.

In 1994, St. Lucia's banana production dropped by 30,000 tonnes, the result of a one-in-100 year water event known as Tropical Storm Debbie. Last year, our banana production dropped by 36,000 tonnes to its lowest value in 22 years, the result of our worst drought in 40 years. Therefore, in the short space of 8 years we have experienced extreme weather phenomena that have had dramatic impacts on our food systems. Coincidence or a trend? Or to use the vernacular of the subject: Greenhouse Signal or the Background Noise of natural climate variability?

Temperature and Sea Level Rise

Measurement records indicate a warming of 0.3 to 0.6°C in global average temperature since 1860. The year 2001 was the 23rd consecutive year that the global mean temperature was above the 1961-1990 average, it was the second hottest in the historical record, and 9 of the 10 warmest years since 1860 have occurred since 1990. The hottest year ever was 1998, followed by 2001, 1997, 1995 and 1990. Since 1976, global temperatures have risen three times faster than the warming that occurred over the 20th Century as a whole.

Mean sea level has risen by 10 to 25 cm and mountain glaciers have retreated. Models predict that sea levels will rise another 15 to 95 cm by the year 2100, which is two to five times faster than the rise experienced over the past 100 years. A sea level rise of 100 cm will cause Egypt to lose 1% of its land, the Netherlands 6%, and Bangladesh 17.5%.

It is little wonder that the Government of Tuvalu, situated in the Pacific, and predicted as one of the first countries to disappear from rising sea levels, is considering taking legal action against the industrialized nations of the world for their contribution to global warming.

Impacts on the Caribbean

If we are to accept, then, that GEC is indeed a reality, what can we expect to happen in the Caribbean as a result of these changes?

To answer that question, let us first look quickly at the features of our Caribbean nations.

- To begin with the obvious – they are all, with the exception of Guyana, island nations. However, ironically, Guyana is perhaps currently the one most threatened by inundation.
- Most of the populations are concentrated in the coastal areas, as are the major economic activities, with tourism being the most important of these.
- All of the islands are vulnerable to one form or the other of natural phenomena or hazards including hurricanes, droughts, and volcanic activity.
- Almost all of the economies are stressed thereby constraining the capacity of the national Governments to respond to emergency or disaster situations.
- The natural resources of all of the islands, some obviously more so than others, are under severe strain from human activity, such as agriculture, human settlements, tourism and industry.

Coastal Resources

On the issue of Mangroves, which are so important for our coastal fishery and for the



A banana farm damaged after a windstorm.



Mangroves are essential for food security but rapidly disappearing

Sediment trapping and erosion protecting characteristics, it is noted that they can be adversely affected if the sedimentation rate exceeds the rate of sea level rise. If this occurs, a sequence of events may be unleashed, including mangrove zone migration inland and seaward margin erosion. Additionally, sea level rise will increase the salinity in mangrove swamps, and may also result in death of the mangroves. Sea levels are not the only factor that can impact on mangroves. Elevated water temperatures, excessive precipitation, decreased rainfall or increased evaporation can all affect the integrity of mangroves.

Coral reefs are also sensitive to climate change. A variety of factors such as higher temperatures, reduced salinity, and sedimentation can cause bleaching and death of corals.

Economic and Social Impact.

An increase in sea levels will cause flooding in low-lying areas, and here in St. Lucia this is an area of concern for the fishing village of Dennery, which just a few weeks ago suffered the effects of storm surges associated with the passage of tropical Storm Lili, prompting the Prime Minister to call on his Physical Development Ministry to engage in discussions with the relevant agencies to develop a long-term solution to this problem.

Most of our hotel plant is situated on the coastline, and the hotel infrastructure will be among the first to suffer. Also, saline intrusion into agricultural lands will impact on the productivity of these lands. Studies demonstrate that saline water can intrude many kilometers inland, and in islands such as ours where over half the population resides within two kilometers of the coast and most of our economic activity is concentrated within this narrow confine, the results should be obvious.

Agriculture will be affected in myriad ways by environmental change. There may be changes in evapotranspiration and consequently in soil water content, which may present as water deficit conditions for plants. There may also develop salinity problems in soils if drainage systems are not adequate or irrigation systems sub-optimal.

And, elevated temperatures may present problems for livestock, through an increase in incidence of disease. Moreover, the profiles of insects and disease pathogens should be expected to change with environmental change,

posing additional challenges for food systems.

All of these will cause changes in the economic, social, environmental and political landscapes of our Caribbean islands, for which we must prepare and devise strategies to mitigate the problems, where possible, and adapt to the changes, where inevitable.

Common Sense Solutions

What then can and should we do to ensure that our food systems are able to cope with the challenges brought on by global environmental change?

We have two options. The first set of options is perhaps best summarized in a section on "How to Survive Global Warming", taken out of a book called *Stupid White Men* by Michael Moore (HarperCollins, 2001). Mr. Moore suggests the following six actions:

1. Identify common household objects that could serve as flotation devices once the ice caps melt. Give special attention to items made of synthetic materials, which tend to be extremely waterproof.
2. Don't forget to look outside, too – these water-proof chairs with built-in cup holders will float just as well in the ocean as in your backyard pool.
3. Examine topographical maps of your area to determine the highest elevation; map out the quickest route there. Hold escape drills.
4. Invest in Ziploc bags and those yellow waterproof cameras.
5. Contact your local YMCA about swimming lessons. Take lessons. Now. Pay special attention to instructions for treating water.
6. Change your vacation plans from Florida to Montana.

Or, we can take some sensible measures, and in outlining some of these, I will highlight the initiatives that are currently in train in our Ministry that lend support.

Land Use Planning.

We can implement proper land use planning policies, that clearly define the agro-ecological zones within which certain crops

should be cultivated and livestock reared, and the forested and watershed areas that should be protected from human activity. In our Ministry, we have, with the use of GIS technology, clearly defined the zones that are best suited for the production of various crops, and we have used the banana industry as the starting point for this re-orientation of land use. Henceforth, support will be given only to farms that fall within the agro-ecological zones demarcated as best suited for banana production, and cultivation outside of these areas is being actively discouraged.

Additionally, with the help of the FAO, we are developing a Land Use policy that will provide guidance to the Government on this most critical issue.

We must strengthen and strictly monitor our building codes, including possibly enacting regulations against new coastal developments, to ensure that commercial and housing developments, do not further imperil our fragile ecosystems.

We must implement integrated water resource management and coastal zone management strategies to protect the integrity of these vital resources. In St. Lucia we have, within the past two years, commissioned two units to address these issues, but we are aware that the fight is an uphill one. In any event, a critical element of the management strategies involves co-management approaches, and we have had positive experiences in this area, as demonstrated by the Talvan Water Resource Users Group and the Soufriere and Canaries Anse La Raye Marine Management Areas.

Community Resource Management

We must practice better soil and water conservation measures, together with implementing controls on animal stocking and promoting better grazing techniques.

Reforestation and better forest management strategies must be adopted. There has been significant work within our Ministry in re-forestation of critical watersheds and of riverbank stabilization exercises, but work must intensify in these areas.



Plant propagation can become a source of income and a response to deforestation

Agronomic practices must be improved, and farmers discouraged from engaging in activities that destroy the environment. Fortunately, the adoption of the Good Agricultural Practice standard by the marketplace is providing the economic stimulus that will compel farmers to adopt more environmentally-friendly practices, and the premium market prices currently being paid for Organic and Fair Trade products are another pull in the right direction.

In some instances, cultivars and animal blood lines may have to be selected that will give us a greater chance of adapting to the changes brought on by GEC. This may call for radical changes in food production systems, and will undoubtedly result in an increased cost to the producer.

One of the gases contributing to global warming is methane, which is a direct by-product of livestock production systems. Any move to reduce methane emissions will require the use of new feed mixtures, but again, will come at some cost to the food system. While on a global scale we are relatively minor contributors to the livestock methane output, we must be cognizant of the fact that often global solutions are dictated down to developing countries that are victims, rather than agents, of the problem.

Taking Responsibility

The ultimate solution will involve getting the commitment of all concerned, from the policy maker down to the producer and consumer, in taking decisive action. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development formulated 'a global agenda for change' and articulated that agenda in a publication entitled "Our Common Future". To quote from that publication, it was meant to serve "notice that the time has come for a marriage of economy and ecology, so that governments and their people can take responsibility not just for the environmental damage, but for the policies that cause the damage. Some of these policies threaten the survival of the human race. They can be changed. But we must act now." That was 15 years ago. We are still grappling with getting these policies changed, so Mr. Moore's options for dealing with Global Environmental Change may not be as ludicrous and facetious as they sound.

MODERNISING OUR LAWS

Over 150 new pieces of legislation introduced in the last five years.

Government leads the way in law reform in the Caribbean.

When the average person assesses the level of a country's development, it's usually the quality of the physical infrastructure - roads, schools, houses, ports, factories, hospitals and the like - which tends to factor most in the equation.

People hardly ever consider the law even though it guides every facet of a country's life. The reason is quite obvious. While modern infrastructure can transform a country in a way that has a striking visual impact on the average person, the work of the law doesn't attract such attention.

Over the last five years, the Labour administration has been carrying out a sweeping revision of St. Lucia's laws. It's part of a crucial campaign to modernize key aspects of St. Lucian society, especially the economy to cope with changes resulting from globalisation and other external influences.



Hon. Petrus Compton
Attorney General and Minister
responsible for Justice has been leading a
team of hardworking legal professionals
in this modernisation process

"If you do not have a proper legal infrastructure, you cannot attract investment, you cannot make progress, you cannot even survive as a community," says Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Senator Petrus Compton, the man spearheading the legal reform exercise.

150 new pieces of legislation

Since 1997, the Parliament of St. Lucia has put on the statute books over 150 new pieces of legislation. It's certainly a record for St. Lucia and perhaps the entire English-speaking Caribbean. The new laws affect virtually every aspect of life in St. Lucia and correct long-standing deficiencies in a number of cases. For example, workers' rights.

Senator Compton says the achievement is largely due to the untiring work of the small staff of "dedicated civil servants" in the Attorney-General's Chambers. Thanks to their efforts, St. Lucia today has "about the soundest, the most positive and well constructed legal framework for investment and development in the Caribbean", he says.

Among the body of new laws passed to enhance St. Lucia's international competitiveness as a place to do business and to stimulate economic activity in general are the Micro and Small Business Enterprise Act, the Development Agencies Act, the Special Development Areas, and the Agricultural Credit Act.



Workers in the public and private sector will find additional protection under new laws.

Encouraging Investment.

There's also the National Development Corporation Act designed to reinvigorate and give new focus to the island's main investment promotion agency which for years was not delivering satisfactory results. And there's the Physical Planning and Development Act, going into effect next year, that's aimed at removing annoying bureaucratic red tape and speeding up planning decisions on business proposals from investors.

"These pieces of legislation put a platform for people to invest whether they be small business people in St. Lucia or big investors from overseas," the AG explains. "When they come in, they can look at the law and see that as a businessman, I can get this benefit here."

Not so long ago, it was often an uphill struggle for trade unions to gain recognition from employers to represent workers. Not so anymore since the passage of the Registration, Status and Recognition of Trade Unions and Employers Organisations Act.

"Nowadays, our unions are laughing. They are able to get the recognition they were

denied in the past because there's a solid law that lays down proper rules for how those things take place," says the AG. "We have very difficulties now."

Commitment to Workers

The rights of St. Lucian workers, especially those at the bottom, were also enhanced through the passage of the Minimum Wage Act. And when the new Labour Code clears existing hurdles in discussions with employers and eventually takes its place on the statute books, workers can expect an even better deal.

"We have also been seeking to protect (St. Lucians) from the professions," says Compton. "One of the things that you heard

Health Services Complaints Act

There's also the Health Services Complaints Act allowing complaints to be made by patients against doctors, dentists and other health care professionals. And from January next year, the Police Complaints Act will for the first time give aggrieved civilians a formal mechanism to have cases of abuse by police officers independently investigated and dealt with.

An issue which will soon engage the attention of the legal draughtsmen in the AG's Chambers is legislation to govern the relationship between landlords and tenants. "We have to put order in that sector," says Compton. "We have to put justice for the landlord and justice for the tenant."

The incumbent administration's commitment to transparency, accountability and fighting corruption in government is reflected in the original 1997 Integrity Act which was amended and strengthened earlier this year with the passage of Integrity in Public Life Act. The law lays down strict guidelines for the conduct of elected officials and senior public officers.

As for the maintenance of law and order and ensuring that St. Lucia remains a safe place for everyone, the administration's commitment is reflected in the new Criminal Code, which addresses several complex contemporary crime-related issues and toughens penalties in several areas.

Curbing indiscipline on the roads.

Government is addressing the worrying level of indiscipline and recklessness seen daily on the island's roads through the new Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act passed recently in Parliament. Going by initial public reaction to the severity of some penalties, it seems this law will serve as an effective deterrent and hopefully will lead to a drastic improvement in the behaviour of some road users.

In the last four years, thousands of poor St. Lucians have experienced an improvement in their quality of life through the work of the Poverty Reduction Fund. The PRF was established through an act of parliament. Another law supporting social reengineering established the National Housing Corporation (NHC) whose mandate is to increase opportunities for low income St. Lucians to acquire their own home.

"St. Lucia's profile as a law making has risen so sharply that now we are a model law making country for the rest of the region," says Compton. "We are in a position in the region where people are calling (to ask) 'Do you have a law on so and so. Send us a copy. We need to take a look at it'."



Police on the scene of a traffic accident in Castries. New laws will also influence traffic management.

CDC TENANTS OWE \$3M

The St. Lucia National Housing Corporation (NHC) is grappling with a huge problem: getting almost 200 tenants in the old and new CDC units and its La Clery properties to pay up over \$3 million in rent arrears.

It's an issue the NHC inherited at its inception seven months ago following a merger of its two predecessors - the St. Lucia Housing Authority and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC).

"As of the end of August, we had \$3.2 million in outstanding arrears which we are doing our utmost to collect," Managing Director Joseph Alexander disclosed during a recent Constitution Park - Inside Government programme on Radio St. Lucia.

The NHC was established to boost government's capacity to meet the growing need of low-income persons for adequate housing. The NHC does so primarily through the sale of housing lots and homes - a programme it is accelerating.

"Since we have taken over in March, we've been writing to the delinquent tenants and we have also instituted legal action. At this point in time, we have about 117 matters outstanding before the courts," said Alexander.

"We will endeavour to work with the tenants because quite a few of them are unable to make the payments at one go," he went on. "They are invited to come in, sit with us and work out a payment plan."

A few years back NHC tenants benefited from a sizable reduction in their monthly rent - a decision taken by the administration of Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony to give tenants a little breathing space where their personal finances were concerned.

Old structures to be demolished

Meanwhile, the NHC is moving tenants out of Blocks CS and GS in the old CDC because these 50-year-old buildings have been deemed structurally unsound. The NHC is using vacant units elsewhere in the old CDC and on Darling Road to provide



One of the CDC apartment blocks earmarked for replacement. Engineers have advised that these buildings are no longer safe.

Renting out the units in the Castries and La Clay housing estates is the other side of the NHC's business.

According to Alexander, there are 520 tenants currently renting from the NHC: 198 in the new Darling Road estate, 264 in the old CDC buildings in central Castries, 32 in the La Clery estate, and 32 in the so-called Bachelor's Quarters.

Hampering NHC's ability to pay

"Out of these, there are 241 in arrears," the NHC's chief executive disclosed. "Arrears means not having paid their rent in three months. "In other words, 46 per cent of our current tenants are behind on their rentals," he pointed out.

The problem is particularly hampering the NHC's ability to service a \$28.7 million loan its predecessors took from the National Insurance Corporation to build the Darling Road estate, commonly referred to as the new CDC.

alternative accommodation for those who have to move. "As far back as 1975, the government of the day had invited consultants to prepare a report on these buildings and a number of reports have been commissioned and all have recommended that the buildings were unsafe and that the tenants should be asked to vacate," NHC chairman Cromwell Goodridge disclosed.

The decision to vacate the two buildings was taken following a recent study done by the Housing Section of the Ministry of Physical Planning, Environment and Housing

"We believe that the safety of our people is very important. From an economic point of view, it makes sense to take these buildings down and the decision has been taken," Goodridge said during the same RSL programme.

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More Title Deeds for St. Lucians Another PROUD Project

Residents of the communities of Resinard and Pays Perdu in Babonneau were on hand Thursday, October 17, 2002 as officials from the Ministry of Physical Planning and Development undertook a ground breaking ceremony signalling the construction of roads and drains and the installation of pipe borne water and electricity under phases one and two of the latest project initiated by the Programme for the Rationalization of Unplanned Development (PROUD).

Ministry personnel indicated that the establishment of these amenities would serve as a further encouragement to getting residents to pay for the land. Under the programme, households in the area are being given the opportunity to own the land which they currently occupy. Parliamentary Representative for the area, Hon. Felix Finnisterre has urged residents to take advantage of what he called "a once in a lifetime offer." The scourge of squatter settlements he pointed out was not unique to the city of Castries but was affecting rural communities as well.

"Poverty is not only the absence of money, it is also the absence of basic amenities, electricity for your children to study at nights, roads so that you can walk properly instead of having to traverse over muddy tracks. This Government has long recognized that people need secure, clean and healthy surroundings, hence the establishment of a shelter development project under which PROUD falls. Today it is congratulations as this phase of the programme is the most visible example of the programmes success to date," said Finnisterre. The PROUD project, which began in April of 2000, continues to expand its reach. The unit is preparing a

rationalization plan for areas in Vieux Fort with boundary surveys scheduled to begin in November 2002 for the areas of La Croix/Laborie, Playe Village, Sarrot and Bexon. The sale of land to residents at heavily subsidised prices has commenced in Desbarras, Pays Perdu, La Ressource and Ravine Poisson.

Minister for Physical Development, Hon. Ignatius Jean explained that while other world governments were reducing funding in human settlements, the present administration has seen the need to create organized, planned and sustained human development. According to him, "at every level of society without exception, persons must be provided with a level of existence which can be a catapult to further self-growth and development."

Over the life of the PROUD initiative, Government would have spent well over \$6six million in twelve communities across the country. Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Kenny Anthony has praised the concept, describing it as yet another attempt at empowering St. Lucians.

"We look forward to you the people of this community embracing the efforts of the Government and seeking to gain titles to the lands you occupy. When you have your land papers, do not let people fool you and cause them to get you to sell your land to them for nothing. You should hold on to your land because when you have it, you have security for the future and for your families," said Dr. Anthony

The Resinard/Pays Perdu project, costing over half a million dollars, falls squarely in line with PROUD's mandate to regularise unplanned settlements while transferring land titles to occupants.

JOUNEN KWEYOL Celebrating language and heritage

The Cultural Development Foundation (CDF) has teamed up with the Folk Research Centre (FRC) to promote the St. Lucian Creole language and heritage. An extensive programme of activities during the month of October focused on the promotion of the St. Lucian Kweyol language. The highlight of the month-long observance, is the community celebrations of Jounen Kweyol taking place on Sunday October 27th 2002. St. Lucians also join 11 million Creole speakers worldwide in observance of International Creole Day on October 28th.

Jounen Kweol has been observed in St. Lucia since 1981. Over twenty communities throughout the island have hosted Jounen Kweyol. During these activities, over 150 persons have been honoured for their contributions to the preservation and promotion of the Creole language and culture. Many of those persons have since passed away and sadly with them some valuable traditions. Both the FRC and CDF have the monumental task of ensuring that the traditional knowledge of these persons are recorded and shared with the young people of St. Lucia.

NTN Turns One, Going on two....

The National Television Network (NTN) commenced its second year of operation on October 14th 2002, with a live outside broadcast from the Derek Walcott Square in Castries. Three hours of programming included interviews with past and present makers of television programmes, cultural features, human interest and cultural programmes from the Caribbean region.

For an entire week, NTN broadcast interviews with individuals who started television operations in Castries, Vieux-Fort and Soufriere.

When it was launched one year ago, Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony said, "NTN was born out of the need to satisfy the public hunger for more educational programmes, for more meaningful and fulfilling



Production crew and guests at the Derek Walcott Square during the live outside broadcast in observance of the first anniversary of the National Television Network

entertainment, and for more local programming in general. It is also intended to provide more accurate and timely information on the operations of public sector organizations and the achievements of the various ministries of government. The establishment of NTN signals the commitment of this government to public service broadcasting"

The comments from the public as well as public and private sector organisations indicate that NTN has done that, and more.

During the past twelve months, NTN has transformed the local television landscape. Among the innovations are daily kweyol television news, weekly kweyol discussion programmes, and a series of live studio broadcasts where parliamentarians were put "Douvan Pep La" to address issues related to governance and representation.

NTN has also broadcast live, the monthly meetings of the House of Assembly and historic events such as the opening of the Beausejour Cricket Ground and the launch of the Cultural Development Foundation. At present, NTN is the only local station broadcasting regional headline news and other special features from the Caribbean Media Corporation.

One year after its launch, Dr. Anthony, who is also Minister responsible for Information and Broadcasting, was pleased with the strides made by NTN.



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony being interviewed by the staff of the GIS

"We are providing the entire media community with what decent journalism is all about. Everybody thought the government was using NTN for propaganda purposes and it is turning out that this is not the case" He said.

NTN presents four hours of programming daily, and is rebroadcast automatically from the computer video server, which is the nerve center of the network. The programmes are produced by the staff of the Government Information Service, which has the capacity to work in most video formats.

Director of Information Service Embert Charles said that the first year was a testing period, and thanked all the staff for starting the process of reorientation, which is required to make NTN successful.

NEW FIRE STATIONS AND POLICE HEADQUARTERS Government's Commitment to Public Safety and National Security.



The newly constructed Dennery Fire Station with improved working conditions for fire officers and modern fire-fighting equipment.

Minister for Home Affairs and Gender Relations Hon. Sarah Flood Beaubrun says the two newly constructed fire stations in Dennery and Gros Islet were long over due.

Mrs. Beaubrun was among a number of government as well as private and public sector officials who accompanied Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny Anthony, on a one day tour of these public institutions.

According to the Home Affairs and Gender Relations Minister, previous visits to particularly the old Dennery Fire Station left her with a very disconcerting impression of the conditions under which the fire officers operate. However, Mrs. Beaubrun expressed her satisfaction at the level of work output coming from these officers who quite often had to operate under very difficult conditions while remaining very diligent. "They have done a very good job of work with very limited resources and poor

working conditions, so I am very happy that this government has seen it necessary and fitting to better equip the Fire Service to do it's work"

Chairman of NIPRO, Sean Matthew, who was also in the touring team, described NIPRO as the property management and development arm of the National Insurance Corporation, (NIC), having the responsibility for facilitating the construction of facilities such as fire and police stations under a financial model called a BOLT Agreement.

Matthew said, "We built, we own and at the end of fifteen years, the property is transferred over to the government in a lease transfer arrangement. So we are the company or the body which facilitates that total arrangement and we have brought on expertise to facilitate this". NIPRO Lease Transfer Arrangements with Government is for a period of fifteen years. The two fire service stations costing close to two \$2million each is expected to open by year end while the completion date for the new southern police divisional headquarters is slated for early in the new year.



On tour: Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny Anthony, police and government officials on location at the new southern divisional police headquarters in Vieux-Fort.

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