



Universal Health Care (UHC)
- page 2



Governor General's response
- page 3



Protecting our citizens and visitors
- pages 4 & 5



Hurricane preparedness - Still a
priority - page 6



140 eye surgeries on Saint Lucians pa-
tients in Cuba almost complete - page 7

NEW BUS FARES

A FAIR DEAL FOR EVERYONE

Minister for Commu-
cations, Works, Transport
and Public Utilities, Hon.
Felix Finisterre has de-
scribed the recommendations on new
bus fares as a fair deal for everyone. Ad-
dressing news reporters at a press con-
ference on Thursday September 22nd,
at the Government Information Service,
Mr. Finisterre said that Government met
its commitment to conclude a review of
the requests from local minibus drivers
and publish new bus fares in the official
gazette on September 23rd 2005.

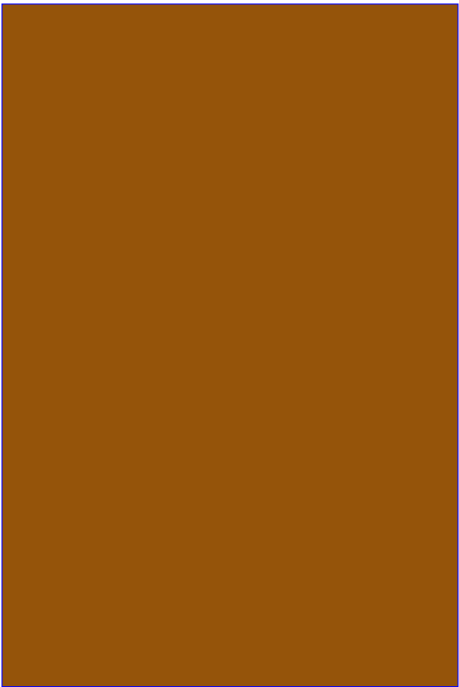
The Minister announced that the in-
creases will range from twenty five cents
for short routes to one dollar for the long
routes. Hr added that his Ministry will con-
tinue to work with the minibus associations
to address outstanding issues related to the
quality of service and the enforcement of
the new recommendations from the Road
Transport Board.

The following the full report of the Road
Transport Board with the main recommen-
dations for the increase in bus fares.

Background

The current fare structure used by the
Route Associations was legislated in 1996
(Motor Vehicle & Road Traffic (Amend-
ment) Regulations SI 10 of 1996). In the
intervening period, no new bus fares were
authorized; however, two significant de-
velopments are noteworthy.

Firstly, in November 1998, there was a
negotiated agreement between the Govern-
ment of St. Lucia and the National Council
on Public Transportation. The said agree-
ment incorporated five (5) basic elements
namely: (i) Consumption Tax Concession
of \$0.75 per gallon for up to 500,000 gal-



lons of gasoline purchased by the Coop-
erative membership; (ii) No new Route
Bands would be issued in the next (3) three
years; (iii) Concession to Minibus Opera-
tors to sell their Route rights; (iv) No new
passenger fares for the next 4.5 years as of
November 1998; (v) A reduction of 10%
consumption Tax in respect of vehicle re-
placement purchased through the Coopera-
tive

Secondly, there was an “unsanctioned”
agreement among the Route Associations/
National Council on Public Transportation
to increase bus fares without the legislative
authority. This resulted in: (1) arbitrary
fares being applied to newly developed

areas/routes, and (2) school children
in the Castries area for example, being
charged a minimum bus fare of one dol-
lar despite Section 70 (2) of the Motor
Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations
1995 (SI No. 20 of 1995). This section
provides as follows:

“Notwithstanding paragraph (1) the
maximum fare chargeable by a driver
or conductor of a public service ve-
hicle other than a taxi in respect of- (a)
children under fifteen years and wear-
ing school uniforms; and (b) under ten
years of age, shall be half the fare for the
routes specified in the Third Schedule.”

The Board/Committee is unshake-
able in its support for Section 70 (2) of
the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic
Regulations 1995 (SI No. 20 of 1995)
and it was against that background that
the proposal by NCOPT/Route Associa-
tions to lower the age threshold from 15
years to 11 years was rejected.

Introduction

Pursuant to Sections 48 (7) and (8) of
The Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act
of 2003, the St. Lucia Road Transport
Board appointed a Committee of five (5)
persons to conduct review of a proposal
submitted by the National Council on
Public Transportation for Bus Fare in-
creases. The Committee comprised the
following: (1) Mr. Errol Charles – Chair-
man, St. Lucia Road Transport Board;
(2) Dr Augustin Charles – Deputy Per-
manent Secretary (Ag.), MCWT&PU;
(3) Mr. Sylvester Sonson - Representa-
tive, Ministry of Finance (4) Mr. Renee
Williams - Representative, AG Cham-
bers; (5) Mrs. Annette Augustin - Chief
Transport Officer (Ag.)

Work on the upgrade of Port Castries to meet international standards

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2007 AND BEYOND

ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE PHILIP J. PIERRE AG. PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, TOURISM, INVESTMENT & CONSUMER AFFAIRS AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ORGANIZATION OF SAINT LUCIA (BOOST) ON SEPTEMBER 20TH 2005

Let me first thank members of the Commercial Opportunity Sector Team (COST) soon to be transformed into the Business Opportunities Organisation of St. Lucia (BOOST) for inviting me to make the feature address at this ceremony. While I am honoured to be given such an opportunity, I am pleasantly surprised, since it is a well-established fact that business people are not usually very impressed by interventions by Government or politicians in what they deem as their forte i.e. business as exemplified by the statement "Government cannot run a business". Having said so, I will not attempt to lecture such an August body but share some brief ideas with you as to what I believe are the available opportunities for business and investment.

Please allow me this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ernest Hilaire and staff for the work done so far, in making St. Lucia World Cup ready. I have been informed by Mr. Don Lorcabie that in many aspects St. Lucia is in an advanced state of readiness and among countries in the "blue" group. I am sure that this speaks volumes to the commitment of Ernest, his staff and various sector teams.

I also want to emphasize that the opportunities created by Government through an enabling environment, whether legislation or otherwise is merely an inducement for investment. People planning to invest whether through borrowing or savings, should take all the necessary precautions and perform their own analysis using well established international business and risk analysis tools. The preparation of proper business plans is another important detail which should not be overlooked. Let it not be said that Government was the cause of any failed business venture.

World Cup 2007 is one of the biggest world sporting events and is expected to attract more than twenty thousand people to St. Lucia for the actual weeks of the games and thousands more before and after the main event. The Government of St. Lucia has invested over \$50 million to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and support facilities are in place for the event.

An obvious need is accommodation and food for the visitors. By now you



Hon. Philip J. Pierre
Minister for Commerce, Tourism,
Investment and Consumer Affairs

must be aware of the incentives offered in the accommodation sector and the soon to be announced Bed and Breakfast Incentives. While the former offers incentives to construct fifty rooms and above, the latter will deal with individuals desirous of adding rooms to their existing houses to accommodate guests. It must be noted that this is an international event and all accommodation must be at a world class standard.

World Cup 2007 presents a unique opportunity since it will essentially bring the customer to St. Lucia for a pre-established period of time. The main purpose of the visit will be to watch cricket. However, cricket will take place for a few hours per day and the challenge will be to find activity, food and shelter for the people who will be in the island for the after cricket period.

Let me sound a word of caution - we are aware of the stringent copyright and ambush marketing regulations. However, we must find ways and means of making the event work to our economic benefit in spite of these laws.

Cricket is the main event but we can find opportunities to make St. Lucia the "Events" capital for the teams and visitors. We all know the teams scheduled to play in St. Lucia and also the home base for the English teams. There are numerous opportunities in culture, music, drama, food, entertainment, art etc. for visitors from the visiting countries.

We can, for example, organise an "English" night or nights in different parts of the island and tailor events for the visitors. Numerous opportunities exist for all types of business activity. In essence, I am suggesting that appropriate events or activities present excellent business opportunities.

I said earlier that World Cup Cricket is about people in search of cricket and activities. We have dealt with accommodation and events. Let us deal with what is obvious - food. Providing adequate food and water for the thousands of visitors while at the same time ensuring that our normal population is satisfied can present a sea of opportunity. The logistics involved in the timely distribution and the provision of adequate supplies and the assurance that the consumer is satisfied with the quality and choices available are some of the areas of opportunity. I will not attempt to go into any great detail, but a simple example will illustrate what is possible. During St. Lucia Jazz 2005, I was having dinner at a restaurant in Rodney Bay. I witnessed in the time I spent there more than thirty five (35) people were turned away. The restaurant could not cope with the demand.

memories in various forms. Without compromising copyright and patent issues, a variety of souvenirs depicting St. Lucia can be manufactured in many forms. Apart from the regular T-shirt there is room for niche marketing in specialised garments. We can give new meaning to our national dress or even explore the making of garments from local raw materials as is practiced in other parts of the world.

There will also be a demand for local condiments, sauces and jams and sweets. Health style type products like massage oils, soaps and creams can be offered as memoirs.

A number of souvenir items can be made from local materials. New meaning can be given to "post consumer waste utilisation". Why can't we produce a paper bag from old newspapers depicting St. Lucia? It may be the ideal opportunity for some meaningful investment in the handicraft industry.

Then there is the area of training necessary for the service providers who must be of world class standard. What immediately comes to mind is food preparation and handling, paramedical and emergency training, first aid, babysitting, wellness services e.g.



.....Chairman Dr. James Fletcher, Dr. Ali Barker of South Africa and
CWCSL CEO Mr. Earnest Hilaire

Think about the scenario for World Cup. There will be the need for mobile canteens, disposable utensils, facilities for garbage collection, disposable tents, chairs, tables, cutlery, to mention a few. You will note that I have not dealt with the actual food and water. We can say with a degree of certainty that goods and services surrounding food distribution and preparation can present viable business opportunities.

We live in a technologically driven age. The need for information and the ability to receive and disseminate information is almost a basic human need. Visitors to St. Lucia during, before and even after will need access to the internet, telephones and other services. Business can invest in internet cafes of various types, possibly mobile ones, web hosting and maintenance, community access facilities through cable modems, E-commerce, portals, search engines and systems that can connect service providers to potential customers. All these opportunities can provide viable business options.

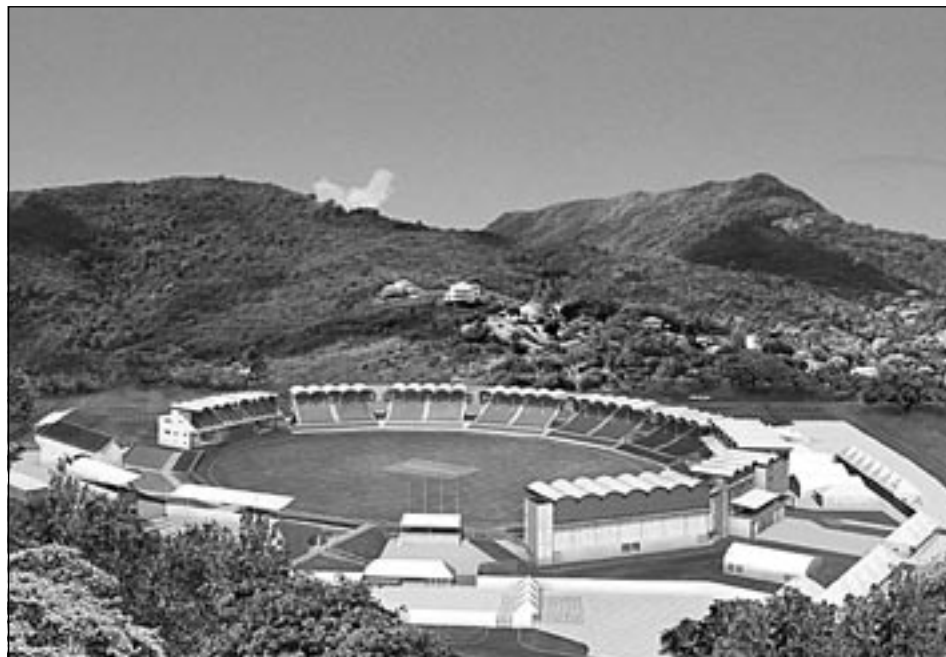
Visitors and spectators to such an historic event will always seek to preserve

massaging and others like hairdressing etc. Then there is the task of communicating to businesses how they can work together and network so as to maximise benefits. The need for security training and personal protection for our VIP guests are all important if we want to make our visitors secure.

Transportation to the island and inland transportation can be challenging but also offers opportunity. How can we mobilize our transport providers to continue their daily routines but at the same time transport our visitors to destinations that they request.

The need for training for people working at the various ports of entry will be critical to the success of the event.

The legacy effect is arguably one of the most important benefits that can be derived from World Cup 2007. Why can't we decide as a country to plant flowers all over the island so that our visitors can be exposed to the glory of a clean and beautiful country expressing the splendor of its fauna and floral beauty?



The future of Beausejour

Continued on page 5

Plantation on Cotton Bay Prepares to open in April 2006

Developers of the Plantation on Cotton Bay Resort, currently under construction, are confident that business will start by Easter of 2006. The property which is the newest addition to Sun-swept Resorts is nearing final stages of construction. It will be complete with 74 luxury suites, townhouses and villas—five star restaurants, spa and golf course.

The Plantation on Cotton Bay in the first major resort on the east coast of Saint Lucia and according to Sunswept Resorts Director of Marketing Michael Bryant, it will be suitable for travellers searching for comfort and extravagance rather than cost.

“The resort is going to be looking to employing at least 180 people of all different areas of resort’s business including spa, kitchen, restaurant, house-keeping, maintenance and so on. This is a five star resort and there is a lot of training to be done. The General Manager, Kevin Snaggs, will be looking to starting those programmes very shortly to get ready for the next few months,” Bryant said.

Minister for Tourism Honourable Phillip J Pierre who joined the resort’s management team in a tour of the Cas-en-Bas development on Thursday 15th September 2005 expressed satisfaction with progress of work thus far and says the development is part of St. Lucia’s thrust to get to 7000 rooms by 2007.

“I am pleased the investors have shown confidence in the economy of St. Lucia, confidence in our tourism



Hon. Philip J. Pierre with officials

industry, the confidence in the stability of the St. Lucia Government and the Confidence in the St. Lucian People. As you know St. Lucia is renowned for the hospitality of its people and by these investors spending these millions of dollars is testimony to that confidence,” Minister Pierre said.

Chairman of the Saint Lucia Tourist Board Costello Michel says the Plantation on Cotton Bay will be an upscale resort, which will attract tourists with spending power to the island. Sun-swept Resorts incorporates the Plantation on Cotton Bay resort, the Jalousie Plantation Resort, the Body Holiday-Le Sport and the Rendezvous Hotel.



Plantation on Cotton Bay under construction



The first major resort on the East Coast

Construction of the EC\$27 million Mental Hospital to Start in November 2005

The governments of Saint Lucia and China on Monday September 19th 2005 signed the contract for the construction of the new mental hospital. Hon. Damian Greaves Minister of Health, Family Affairs and Gender Relations who witnessed the signing says the EC\$27 million facility is just one component of the ministry’s overall plan to transform the island’s health system.

“I said and let me reiterate; this physical structure, the new mental health facility is part of the new thrust in mental health reform in the Ministry of Health. Coupled with this is the whole strategic plan for the ministry of health of which mental health is a significant part,” the Health Minister added.

According to the Minister the many employment opportunities for Saint Lucian nationals has been underscored, and, “this will have a positive multiplier effect on the local economy.” He added that the excavation works are now in

progress on the Millennium Highway site to facilitate construction scheduled to commence towards the latter part of November this year.

As far as the construction time table is concerned, the Chinese Ambassador says it is his government’s intention to hand over the project on schedule. “I sincerely hope that St. Lucia will finish the ground level work on time, and on China’s side we will start the hospital project as soon as possible. So let us work together hand in hand and complete the psychiatric hospital project completely and beautifully,” he said.

Construction of the mental hospital will be jointly undertaken by St. Lucians and the Chinese Foreign Economic Construction Group, Anhui, and is earmarked for completion in the first quarter of 2007.

The contract was signed by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health Mr. Fedalis Williams, on behalf of the government of St. Lucia, and the Chinese Ambassador His Excellency Gu Haming.



Saint Lucian and Chinese officials confirm the agreement

ROAD NOTICES

Notice 1 - “Road Closure”

“The Maintenance Unit of the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities is in the process of constructing a box culvert near the CSA Centre in Sans Soucis. In an effort to facilitate the works, the intersection near CES to the Sans Soucis Round About will be closed to the motoring public from September 26th through to October 30th, 2005.”

Notice 2 - “Removal of Trailers”

“Major road works on the Castries Basin Road Network and the East Coast Highway will commence shortly. The works will begin from the intersection of Manoel Street and Hospital Road in Castries to the Praslin Bridge in Micoud. Due to the impending works the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities is urging owners of trailers and heavy vehicles parked on road shoulders within the Castries Basin from the intersection of Manoel Street and Hospital Road to Cul De Sac and from Cul De Sac to Praslin to remove those trailers and heavy vehicles.”

A World Free From Hunger, Poverty A

Address by Senator the Hon. Petrus Compton, Minister for External Affairs and Civil Aviation to the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations

Five years ago the Heads of State and Government of our United Nations convened in this very chamber to reaffirm their faith in this organisation and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

Concerned as they were about the de-humanizing conditions which constituted the reality of over one billion of the world's citizens, they resolved to create at the national and global levels, an environment conducive to development and the elimination of poverty. In support of this overall objective, they took great care to identify a set of priority goals and targets, the Millennium Development Goals, which they pledged to meet by the year 2015.

Five years ago we ushered in a new millennium and translated the optimism, goodwill, and promise which it bore into a declaration of faith in this organisation and in each other; ours was a statement of hope for the future of mankind.

So how have we fared since then, Co-Chairs? How much of the promise have we, and in particular, the over one billion of the world's dispossessed been able to realise?

Much has happened since then however, to inflict the deepest wounds on our psyche, to change the world, and to distract us from the task which we



Hon. Senator Petrus Compton, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation

This is not to deny that there has been progress in the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals in some countries. Indeed there has been some success, but too much is yet to be achieved. Saint Lucia remains concerned that the development partnership to which developed and developing countries committed themselves is far

great sadness that the reasons for our concerns still persist.

We remain concerned that the global community of nations can at different times, depending on the rubric under which it convenes, promote philosophies or actions that are sharply contradictory.

We remain concerned that within this chamber, the nations of the world can promote with so much enthusiasm, their determination to work toward achieving a world free of hunger, poverty and disease, at the same time that the strong and powerful are working steadfastly in other chambers which have the effect of increasing the marginalisation, and destroying the limited opportunities for survival, of the small, the disadvantaged, and the weak.

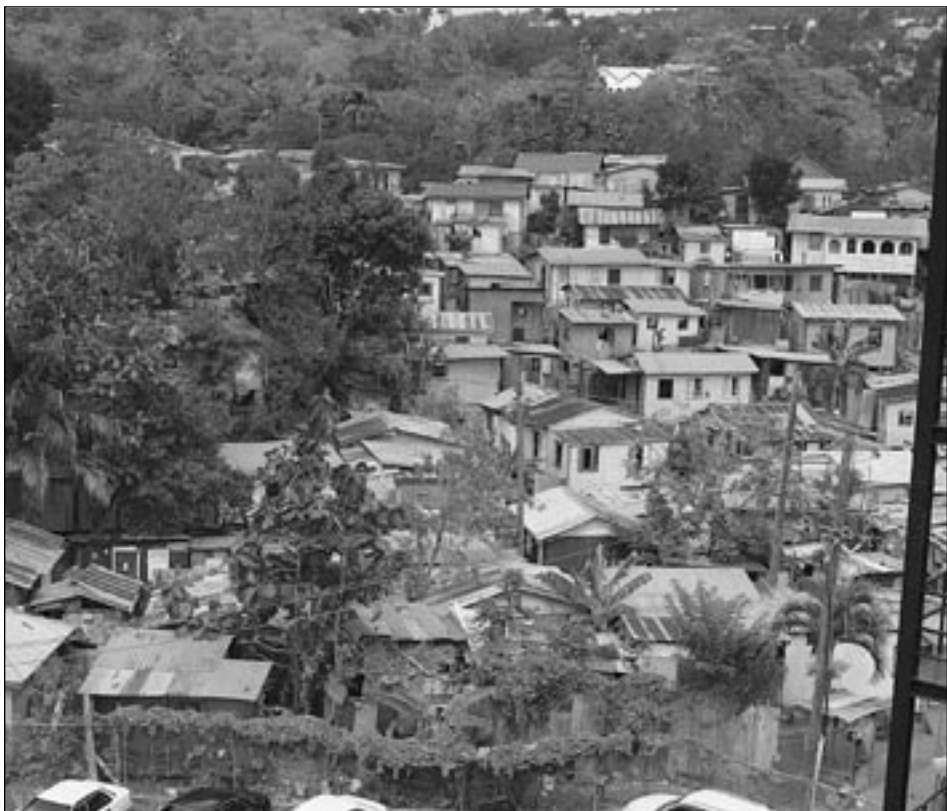
We remain concerned that even today, fellow member countries of our

United Nations find it necessary to engage in activities at the World Trade Organisation that are designed to deny the very weakest among us the opportunity for production and trade of our most important export commodities, undermining all efforts at achievement of the very Millennium Development Goals which we seek to promote.

Co-Chairs, in the face of such insensitivity, how can small and vulnerable banana producing countries like Saint Lucia and Dominica, or small sugar producing states like Saint Kitts and Nevis (which has been forced as of this year to discontinue the production of sugar), be expected to hold faith, confidence or hope in the declarations that are customarily issued at the end of our Summits?

Our economies may be small and vulnerable, but our citizens are real people who have the same aspirations as others everywhere, for prosperity, security and peace. They too have a right to freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom to live in dignity. These aspirations hold validity not only in this chamber, but in every other, wherever our nations may gather.

Co-Chairs, Saint Lucia is concerned that the development promise of the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations is yet to be delivered. Time is running out, and a concerted effort must be made to secure a speedy realisation of that promise. Saint Lucia believes that overseas development assistance must continue to play an important role in the development of our economies, and in this regard we urge our developed country partners to deliver on their promise of increased levels of such assistance that was made at the Monterrey Summit in March 2002. We remain convinced however, that there is greater dignity in the facilitation, promotion, and realisation of our capacity for trade. Our insistence on the right to engage in cross-border



The challenges of adequate housing

set ourselves. From the deadly terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and others since then, to the total devastation of Grenada by Hurricane Ivan, to the terrible destruction and loss of life brought on by the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26, 2004, to the most recent devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in the southern United States, countries large and small, weak and strong, have had to address various and new kinds of vulnerability, so that valuable energy and physical resources have had to be diverted away from activities geared toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

from being realized. We are heartened however by the initiatives being spearheaded by the G8 in respect of Africa, and look forward to an early translation of the commitments made by both the G8 and African Governments, into tangible benefits for the long suffering people of that continent.

Co-Chairs, five years ago at the Millennium Summit, Saint Lucia pointed to certain concerns which were contributing to a growing despair and cynicism about the future of Small Island Developing States, and the role of bodies like the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation in the shaping of that future. We say today with



Saint Lucia equipped for regional and international trade

and Disease

, International Trade s General Assembly



Liberalisation of services

trade on terms that are fair, is but one manifestation of our commitment to take primary responsibility for our own development.

Co-Chairs, we have it in our power to create a world free from hunger, poverty and disease. We have it in our power to create a world where all its citizens can live in larger freedom. The technology and the material wealth exist to allow us to do so today, more than at any other time in the history of mankind. But be assured Co-chairs that the hungry, the poor, the sick, the wretched billions of this earth are not comforted by our declarations and resolutions. The truth is, Co-Chairs, we do not need new declarations. What we really need is the political will to do what we have already resolved to do, and more! Let us rise to the real challenge and mobilise that will. This is the task before us.

Co-Chairs, I thank you.



onal trade

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITES FOR 2007 AND BEYOND

Continued from page 2

The need for printing, labeling and documentation of events both in print, audio visual, picture and other forms of capture will be in great demand both in the actual and legacy period of World Cup 2007.

I hinted earlier that Government had created the environment for the accommodation sector and by extension the construction sector. There will be need for building materials of all types. Most importantly will be the need for skilled labour of a quality than can provide for the luxury apartments and hotels that are being built. The need for training and acquiring skills in plumbing, electronics, air-conditioning, tile laying,

painting, landscaping and other related services are evident.

World Cup 2007 also presents the opportunity for networking, not only for business in St. Lucia but for the entire region. It may be the time to establish strategic linkages with firms that have the capacity to use the economies of scale that present themselves with the advent of such a large market.

Philosophically, World Cup 2007 can be the dawn of a new era for business opportunities. Praveen Sardana in his booklet “Making friends with trends - emerging business opportunities at the dawn of the 21st century notes “ ideas and trends have no passports and they certainly require no visas to cross national boundaries. Rather than fighting these, making friends with trends is an answer to de-

veloping successful enterprises of the future. He further notes that “smart people today know that they can wield more influence and make more money with a bright idea and a new business than they could by running the largest corporations in his world”. Let me suggest to you that preparation for events before, during and after World Cup can be the trend for business n the future.

I note that in your concept proposal you have craved for independence and autonomy. Mindful of this request, I end by wishing you well and imploring you to ensure that no stone is left unturned in exposing and informing people of the business opportunities possible through World Cup now and in the future.

MOBILISATION FOR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT



Clean Beaches - The goal of the campaign

The St. Lucia Solid Waste Management Authority is appealing for early community mobilisation in support of two major activities which will be hosted soon.

The Authority says it is once again relying on partners in the public and private sectors to ensure the Ant-Litter March slated for October 15th and the National Clean Up Campaign from November 4th to 6th, are both successful events.

Information and Public Education Officer Emlyn Jean says the Authority would like to especially commend the schools in the out-districts for consistent participation over the years despite having to bear the cost

of transportation to Castries.

“The St. Lucia Solid Waste Management Authority will be hosting its Annual Anti- Litter March on October 14th, 2005. This awareness activity is designed specifically for schools throughout the island. Invitations have been extended to all schools throughout the island in order to ensure persons do get an opportunity to participate.”

The Solid Waste Management Authority (SWMA) sees the annual exercise as an effective avenue to reinforce proper environmental practices in the youth.

“We do believe that just the opportunity that the children are afforded to design the slogans is a process which

makes them more aware of the how important it is to keep the environment clean. And when they do come to Castries then they are able to send that message to the people and also demonstrate that they as children are prepared to keep the place clean and they do need the support of the public.” Jean said.

The march is slated to begin at the Vigie Playing Field, Castries. From there students displaying placards will make their way to the Derek Walcott Square for a special ceremony which will be officiated by the Ministry of Education officials and persons from various environmental organisations.

Taking care after the “Miracle Plan”

Do not abandon your eye treatment

Saint Lucian medical practitioner Dr. Benet Henry has urged persons who have undergone surgery in Cuba to maintain their eye treatment to prevent post operative complications.

In a message issued through the office of the Embassy of Cuba in Saint Lucia, Dr. Henry has further advised that although their vision has been improved and eye defects surgically corrected, they should by no means abandon their medications and treatments. The information focused on the care required for the patient on their return to Saint Lucia from Cuba.

Dr. Henry said “They still need to maintain their topical antibiotics, anti-inflammatory eye-drops and in the case of discomfort, painkillers for as long as has been indicated by their physician.” The following are tips for patients and care givers:

Patients operated for cataract should remember

Avoid falling, blows to the head or face, sudden or quick movements of the head, lifting of heavy objects, forceful coughing, sneezing or bending over lower than the waist, lying on the side of the operated eye and in the case of surgeries to both eyes, patients should lie on their back; Avoid swimming for approximately 3 weeks or longer; Avoid hot environments like the kitchen; Do not touch and rub the eyes too much; facial hygiene is important; wash hands before putting drops



Victoria Hospital - Back up for after care

in the eye and after visiting the bathroom; Do not strain the eyes by focusing on direct light for very long periods of time; To go for follow-up medical visits as indicated

Glaucoma

The objective of surgery in the advanced stages is to reduce the progression of this disease. The patient needs to exercise the same care as cataract patients, in addition to regular checks of their inter ocular (eye) pressure.

Strabismus (crossed eyes)

If not treated early the surgery may

be for esthetical reasons depending on the severity of the defect. Patients should follow the same care as those indicated for cataract surgery.

Diabetic and Hypertensive Retinopathy

These patients need to keep their disease under control by taking their medications and maintaining a healthy diet and enough rest.

Pterigium

Patients need to protect their eyes against dust particles, cement, wind, excessive sunlight; sunglasses in most

cases will serve as a protective shield. Quite a number of patients have had to remain a bit longer than expected in Cuban hospitals in order to receive comprehensive treatment for other diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, allergies to medications, but they will soon be joining their families at home.

Mission Milagro or the Miracle Plan is providing surgical and medical eye care to anyone who needs such treatment.

The program was first introduced to Venezuelan patients in Cuba, and has since been extended to other Latin American and Caribbean member states. The Miracle Plan is a clear demonstration of Cuba's solidarity by seeking to assist, in whatever way possible, its fellow Caribbean neighbours, despite its own economic and political struggles.

Saint Lucia has been very fortunate to have received this opportunity for eye-care treatment on a large scale, and in particular, Saint Lucians of low income, who under normal circumstances, would not be able to afford such treatment.

According to Dr. Henry the organizers of the programme are working feverishly on possibly providing similar opportunities for the treatment of diseases such as kidney failure, cancer, HIV/AIDS in order to significantly improve the quality of life of Saint Lucians by affording them these opportunities.

OECS and USAID to Focus on Disaster Risk Reduction

Memorandum of Understanding signed between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the OECS Disaster Risk Reduction Program is expected to go a long way towards reducing the region's risk profile.

USAID Mission Director Ms. Karen Turner says since the Caribbean is well known for its vulnerability to natural disasters, the United States government believes Disaster Risk Reduction and Management are important economic considerations for the region.

Addressing officials at the signing ceremony on Tuesday, September 20th, at the Headquarters of the OECS Secretariat in Castries, Ms. Turner said central to US support for the region's Disaster Risk Reduction Program, will be a five year development strategy which is being implemented over the period 2005 to 2009.

She described Disaster Risk Reduction as an integral element of economic policy planning and, most importantly, economic policy implementation.

“This particular initiative could not come at a more relevant time. After a very active hurricane season last year and an even more active season this year – and especially in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina – the importance of being better prepared for natural disasters, such as hurricanes and being proactive in reducing the risk of catastrophic loss from such disasters cannot be overemphasized.”

According to Ms. Turner “No longer should we create assets unless we simultaneously undertake actions to ensure we can preserve those assets”. She observed that “Social progress cannot be made if every few years we are in the position of merely replacing critical infrastructure and assets that have been destroyed as a result of a natural disaster.”

OECS Director General Dr. Len Ishmael co-signed the agreement and welcomed the program to the region. Dr. Ishmael says she is pleased with how quickly USAID has moved to operationalize the program, which she describes as goodwill coming at a time when the region is going through very sobering times, economically and socially.

“In fact we saw very realistically the impact of one external event, which was hurricane Ivan last year; when the economic performance of Grenada was projected to have had an economic growth of 5.4 percent last year and in fact what happened in the space of 12 hours was that it's potential for GDP was wiped out for two years,” Dr. Ishmael added.



OECS Director General Dr. Len Ishmael and Ms Karen Turner of USAID

NEW BUS FARES

A FAIR DEAL FOR EVERYONE

Continued from page 1

It was noted that the proposal highlighted three major components: The request for fare increases on most of the routes; The reduction in the age threshold for children's fare from age 15 to 11 years; The introduction of a night time fare.

As part of the review process, the committee undertook the following: (i) Consideration of route bus fares for (a) adults, and (b) children/students; (ii) Limited public investigation and consultation; and (iii) Meetings with the National Council on Public Transportation through the St. Lucia Road Transport Board.

Economic Analysis

1. In the determination of the recommended bus fares, several factors were considered. They included: (a) Vehicle operating costs namely fuel, labour, insurance, repairs and maintenance costs. During the period under review, 1996-2005, the cost of fuel and insurance increased by over 50% and 20% respec-

tively. Other operating costs also increased; however it was difficult to accurately quantify the extent of those increases. Consequently, an overall minibus operating cost index could not be calculated. In addition, no data on the average income of minibus operators was available. Hence, it was also difficult to carry out any detailed profitability analysis for the sector. Given that bus fares have remained the same for the period under review, it was determined that the increases in operating costs would have resulted in a reduction in the profit margin of minibus operators; (b) The economic impact of the increase in bus fares was also considered in the context of the inflation rate which is expected to remain at about 4 percent for the year. Growth trends within the sector and concessions from the government were also factored in.

2. The N.C.O.P.T proposal would require that age fifteen (15) be lowered to age eleven (11). The Committee rejected the proposal for the following reasons: The age of fifteen (15) specified in section 70(2)(a) of the Regulations is not an arbitrary figure but is based on the Compul-

sory School Age set out in the Education Act (No. 18 of 1977) which was in force when the Regulations were enacted. That Act defined the Compulsory School Age as between age five (5) and fifteen (15). It should be noted that section 27(1) of the Education Act (No. 41 of 1999) which is now in force retains age fifteen (15) as the maximum age for compulsory education.

Accordingly any change in the existing policy would place undue hardship on persons of compulsory school age as these persons are required to attend school. Section 70(2) of the Regulations is a deliberate policy by the Government to facilitate school attendance. The Committee therefore strongly recommends that this policy be retained.

To benefit from the half-fare, children between ages ten (10) and fifteen (15) must wear school uniform. Children ten (10) years and under will pay half the legislated fare whether in uniform or not.

Concession on \$1.00 bus fare for children

Notwithstanding, the St. Lucia Road Transport Board at its meeting of Septem-

ber 19 2005, to consider the report of the Committee acceded to a proposal from the member representing the N.C.O.P.T. and approved a \$1.00 minimum bus fare or 50% of the adult fare for children below age 15, whichever is greater.

Recommendations

It is to be noted that a number of Route Associations were granted increases in excess of what was requested/proposed. This was done in order to compensate for maintaining the current policy of children 15 years and under paying half-price. This policy is being adhered to, despite acceding to the practice of charging a minimum bus fare of \$1.00 for children.

Following from the above, the recommendations listed below were made: (i) Adult fares increase in the range of 25 cents to \$1.00 during normal operating hours, that is, 4:00 AM and 10:00 PM (ii) An additional 25% of the stipulated fare between the hours of 10:00 PM and 4:00 PM is recommended as an incentive to operators, to provide a critical service at a time when there is a low volume of commuters; (iii) A minimum fare of \$1.00 or half the adult fare, whichever is greater be applied to children.

Additional details on the fares for the respective routes throughout the island will be published in the local media on the Government of Saint Lucia website.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE (UHC)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Continued from last week's issue

The current arrangement where the NIC contributes \$3 million annually to the Consolidated Fund comes to an end when UHC starts.

17. Can't I get the same coverage for less with private insurance companies? A. It is very unlikely that you would be able to calculate a cost of your specific contributions to UHC since payment for UHC is based on a flat tax on the consumption of goods which is different from individual premiums paid for private insurance.

UHC is universal and lifelong based on your status as a resident as compared to private insurance which has a limit and based on payment of premiums.

18. What will happen to the coverage for health insurance that I already have? A. With the introduction of UHC the insurance companies will adjust their coverage to include benefits not offered by UHC. Therefore, you may continue paying for private insurance. It is your choice.

Treatment overseas

19. What will happen if I need to seek treatment overseas? A. The UHC system includes a limited package of overseas care. We are in the process of negotiating with specific countries and will provide you with more information on this later.



Dr. Stephen King
Chief Medical Officer

20. Who must pay for treatment overseas? A. UHC will cover the cost of treatment overseas only if the hospital has referred you to an overseas provider. However, if you decide to visit a specialist overseas without referral from UHC you must pay the overseas specialist and other related services.

Options

21. What options may I have to seek additional health insurance? A. If you

can afford you should continue to have private insurance coverage for medical treatment not covered by UHC.

Access

22. How does one access the system? A. Remember you can only access hospital service: (1) Through a referral from your private doctor; (2) A referral from a health center, polyclinic or district hospital; (3) If you have an emergency; (4) If you have registered; (5) If you have your UHC identification card with you.

Finance

23. How will UHC be funded? A. UHC will be funded with a fixed flat tax on the consumption of goods in St Lucia.

24. How much is the fixed tax? A. The fixed tax is a 3.5% - 4% increase to the environmental levy which is now 1%-1.5%. The name will change to health and environmental levy and will now be charged at 5%.

Please remember that basic goods such as food and clothing are exempt from this tax.

25. Will the Health and Environmental Levy fund 100% of UHC? A. No. The Health and Environmental Levy will raise about EC\$30 million. This is about 50% of the funds required for the UHC. The other 50% will be provided

by Government which would be its existing contributions to the hospitals.

Always: carry your UHC identification card in your purse or wallet; present your UHC card to the attending nurse or doctor. He or she will check the records speedily on the computer to confirm your registration; visit your practitioner, polyclinic or health centre first when you do not need urgent care; take the referral letter given to you to the hospital at which you are registered if you need further medical attention; use your medication as prescribed by the pharmacist.

Never: allow someone else to use your UHC registration card; try to change the information on your UHC card or deface it; present any false documents at a polyclinic, health centre or hospital; obtain or use medication that is not prescribed for you by a doctor; collect medication and store them for future use.

You will get: treatment for life-threatening illnesses and other illnesses; medication prescribed only by your doctor; a letter of referral to follow-up your condition with your doctor, district hospital, polyclinic or health centre when you are discharged from the hospital; an opportunity to make a complaint if you are dissatisfied with the service

Saint Lucia Well Represented at Funeral of Dame Eugenia Charles

She shaped her country's history and dictated the terms of her burial

The Prime Minister of Dominica has thanked the Government and people of St. Lucia for being represented at the September 14 funeral in Dominica of the neighbouring island's former Prime Minister Dame Eugenia Charles. Minister of Social Transformation, Culture and Local Government, Hon. Menissa Rambally, represented St. Lucia at the funeral, which took place in the village of Pointe Michel, where Dame Eugenia was born.

A wreath from the Government and people of St. Lucia was also displayed inside the church and taken to the graveside. Dominica's Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skeritt and other top Dominican government officials, members of the island's legal fraternity, as well as a host of local and overseas friends, attended the solemn ceremony.

Among Dame Eugenia's closest friends while in office were former St. Lucia Prime Minister Sir John Compton and former Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sir James "Son" Mitchell, both of whom were also at Pointe Michel to bid farewell to their departed former colleague.

Former St. Lucia Magistrate, Isabella Shillingford, also a friend of the late leader of her native isle Dominica, also attended the funeral, which was presided over by the St. Lucia-born Bishop of Roseau, the Most Reverend Gabriel Malzaire.

Following the funeral, the Dominica Prime Minister thanked Minister Rambally for attending and asked that she conveyed "the deep appreciation of the Government and people of Dominica to Acting Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre for his earlier message of condolence."



The late Dame Eugenia Charles



THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. Sept. 20th - Fri. September 24th, 2005

- Feature - Launch of Woule La Ba Cricket Competition - Wed. September 21st
- Join NTN for the latest episode in the exciting series Women West Indies - Tues. September 20th, 6:15 p.m.
- Konsit Kweyol - Electoral Department scrutineers new voter registration - Sat. September 24th
- Presentation - Highlights of the Signing Ceremony between UNDP and the Ministry of Social Transformation - Fri. September 23rd
- Presentation - The road ahead Philanthropic Spirit - CARITAS Antilles: working for the good of all - Tues. September 20th

Remember to tune in for:

- GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m.
- Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:
- Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :
- Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):
- Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).
- Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)
- Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at www.stlucia.gov.lc and then click on the NTN icon.

www.stlucia.gov.lc

Saint Lucia NATIONWIDE is published every week by the Department of Information Services.

Contact us at: The Department of Information Services, Greaham Louisy Administrative Building, The Waterfront, Castries, St. Lucia, West Indies
Tel: (758) 468 2116; Fax (758) 453 1614; E-mail: gis@candw.lc; <http://stlucia.gov.lc>