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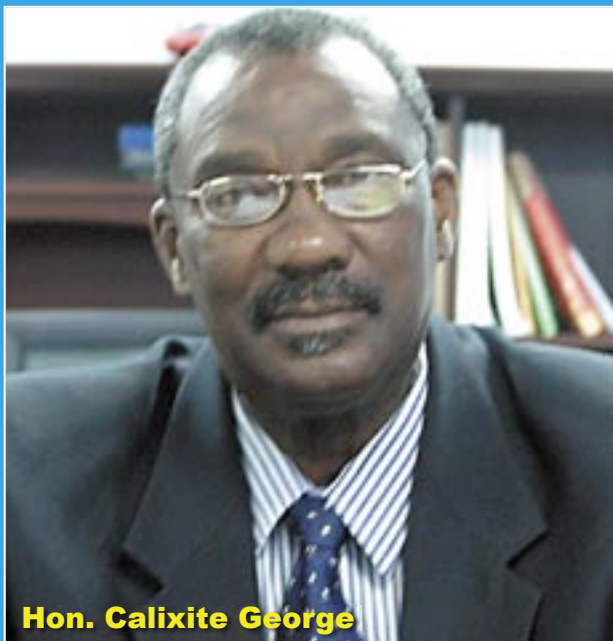


THE FIRE SERVICE INDUSTRIAL ACTION SETTLEMENT



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WITH THE
FSWA**



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**HOME AFFAIRS
MINISTRY
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**A CALL TO
RETURN TO
WORK**

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OECS Tourism Ministers Take: Wide-ranging Decisions at Puerto Rico Meeting

The fourth Meeting of the OECS Council of Tourism Ministers ended in Puerto Rico, Friday October 6th with several decisions geared towards enhancing joint marketing, achieving greater benefits from cruise tourism, improving security for the yachting sector and stepping up the collection and use of Tourism statistics in the OECS.

On the issue of joint marketing, the Ministers agreed that the OECS and the Puerto Rico Tourism Company will convene a meeting of their respective Tourism Directors, during the upcoming World Travel Market in London, to analyse the behaviour of various international source markets and identify those offering the best potential for growth of stay-over business to the Eastern Caribbean. The Ministers also accepted a proposal which would see their Directors of Tourism, their representatives or agents in the German market and the German Chapter of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) meeting at the

ITB in March next year to consult and agree on a programme of joint marketing activities in Germany.

The two-day meeting decided to establish an OECS Working Group on Cruise Tourism whose focus will be primary research and secondary data and information gathering on best practices in expanding the economic and social benefits of cruise tourism to the economies of the OECS and the Eastern Caribbean as a whole. The Ministers agreed that Puerto Rico is an indispensable partner for the OECS in the quest for enhancing the growth and benefits of cruise tourism and, and that in recognition of this, a partnership will be established with the Puerto Rico Tourism Company and other relevant Puerto Rican agencies and authorities, facilitated by the recently opened OECS Office in Puerto Rico, with Consular attributes. They also noted the urgent need to develop a sub-regional, evidence-based approach to effectively advance partnerships-based cruise tourism policy formulation

and strategic action planning.

The meeting discussed the current security concerns in the yachting sector and the likely negative impact of adverse publicity and agreed that it was important to develop and implement a Crisis Communications Plan, involving all stakeholders, to ensure effective damage control and mitigate any negative impact of criminal activity on the performance of yachting arrivals and the image of OECS destinations. The Ministers accepted a recommendation for a 24 hour VHF Safety and Security net in each Member State. They mandated the OECS Secretariat to convene a meeting between law enforcement agencies and yachting industry representatives to agree on a collaborative approach to addressing safety concerns in the sector.

The Ministers accepted an offer from Puerto Rico to assist the Eastern Caribbean region in developing a comprehensive tourism database, drawing especially on Puerto Rico's experience with collection of data on Average Daily

Rates at hotels. They noted the current collaboration by the OECS Secretariat and the Regional Council of Martinique aimed at improving the design and expanding the content of the OECS Tourism Statistical system to include querying and forecasting options, particularly with respect to data on the yachting sector, which is currently not captured by the CTO.

As part of their meeting, the Tourism Ministers traveled to Hato Rey, San Juan on Friday for the opening ceremony of the first OECS Office in Puerto Rico. The Office, provided by the Puerto Rican government, will be used as a base for stimulating tourism, trade and investment promotion. The Secretary of State for Puerto Rico welcomed the opening of the new office as a platform for creating opportunities for joint business collaboration between the OECS and Puerto Rico. OECS Director General Dr. Len Ishmael said it can be held up as a shining example of regionalism to the rest of the world.

Tourism Minister Optimistic about Solution to US Passport Issue

Saint Lucia's Tourism Minister Philip J. Pierre says he is optimistic that the Caribbean will be able to convince the United States to opt for a diplomatic solution to the problems that can be created by its most recent regulations requiring Americans returning home by air from the Caribbean to have passports in three months time.

Last Friday (September 29), the US Congress approved a further postponement in relation to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which requires US citizens to have passports when traveling to the Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada and Mexico.

The WHTI implementation date of 8th January 2007 has now effectively been postponed to as late as 1 June 2009 for US citizens traveling within the region by land and sea.

An exact date has not been announced, but the US Congress has agreed to relax the January 2007 implementation date allowing for implementation to occur as late as June 2009.

While the postponement defers the passport requirement for travel by land and sea, the provisions of the amendment to the Law allowing the deferral of the implementation date are silent on the important aspect of air travel, which appears to be unaffected by the recent amendment.

But the announcement from Washington evoked loud and immediate response from the Caribbean's tourism sector.

Almost in unison, immediately after the US congress' vote, the Barbados-based Caribbean Tourist Organisation (CTO) and the Puerto Rico-based

Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) said the region would reel from the US Congress vote Monday to amend the WHTI in favour of Mexico, Canada and cruise shipping companies, over airline passengers going to the Caribbean.

The CTO described the American vote as being akin to "a category 6 hurricane" for the region, while the CHA warned affected countries to brace for "a genuine economic and social upheaval, caused by the inevitable shift in travel by US citizens".

The US government amendment delays the implementation of the new passport requirements until June 1, 2009 for land crossings at the Mexican and Canadian borders and for cruise passengers coming to the US from the Caribbean, Mexico, Canada or Bermuda.

But the regulations still required all US citizens travelling by air to these regions to have a passport by January 8, 2007, thus causing the stir in regional tourism circles.

It came as part of the Homeland Security Department's requirement that all US citizens returning to the United States have passports, with the deadline for enforcement being January 8, 2007.

But regional tourism interests have been expressing fear there will possibly be a sting in the tail, specifically a huge drop in American visitors, who, the analysts say, can't bother to get passports to travel by air and would find it much less hassling to take a cruise vacation.

Saint Lucia Tourism Minister, like his regional counterparts, is "greatly concerned" about the potential impact of the latest measure.

Speaking here before leaving for an OECS Tourism Ministers meeting in Puerto Rico, Mr Pierre acknowledged that the regulations, if they remained, "will deal a severe blow to our economic structure, as was the case with bananas."

But he said he also counted on the ability of the Caribbean's Governments to convince the Americans of how bad that could be.

"I have confidence that we can sit at the table with the Americans, speak to them, and they will understand, and this whole matter will be handled and settled diplomatically," he said.

Jamaican hotel magnate Gordon Butch Stewart, Saint Lucian hotelier Allen Chastanet and Saint Lucia's extra-parliamentary opposition Leader Sir John Compton have all suggested the recent American amendment could be a backlash against the region for its support for Venezuela's bid to get a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

But sources close to the Caricom governments that have been taking issue with that premise.

One Caricom diplomat indicated that "support for Venezuela point out that the US had made its mind up and announced steps in that regard long before Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez addressed the UN General Assembly at the end of last month."

Sir John said that Saint Lucia's "interests" lie with America and urged that the Caricom governments "rethink their decision" to support Venezuela.

However, diplomatic sources here say Sir John is inviting the Caribbean to take sides between the US and Venezuela in the current wear of words between Caracas and Washington.



Hon. Philip J. Pierre

Said one such diplomat based in Castries: "The Guatemalans are claiming Belize and the Venezuelans have promised that they will not use their place on the Security Council to press their claims on Guyana and the Caricom states seem happy with that.

"It's therefore a matter of how they can assure and reassure Washington that they are still friends who are getting a deal they can't refuse for a commodity they cannot afford."

"Really, I can't see America opposing that, unless it can offer the Caribbean a better deal," he said.

Praedial Larceny Law to Protect Farmers and Support Diversification

Minister for Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Forestry, Honourable Ignatius Jean, says the impending introduction of new measures to outlaw stealing of farmers' crops is an "indication that the government is anxious to support their efforts to produce and sell honestly in the national thrust to diversify the agricultural sector."

A Bill to institute tough new measures against theft of agriculture produce went through its first reading when the House of Assembly met briefly on Tuesday 3rd October.

The Praedial Larceny Bill, which replaces the current but outdated Praedial Larceny Act, gives the police the power, with reasonable suspicion, to immediately stop and search a person or vehicle suspected of being in possession of or transporting stolen produce. It will also give the police the power to arrest and seize stolen items and after conviction to restore, sell, dispose of and compensate for perishable agricultural produce.

Under the new law, it will also be unlawful for individuals to buy stolen agricultural produce and it will allow the police to pursue and search the premises of persons suspected of concealing or lodging stolen produce.



Hon. Ignatius Jean

Minister Jean says, "With government actively encouraging diversification from bananas, it is important that farmers receive the required support to

ensure their produce is not dishonestly harvested by thieves."

The bill also provides for stiff fines and imprisonment.

Farmers have over many years been producing more and diversifying their crops, but they have also been plagued by increasing incidents of theft, which cause major losses in investment on their farms.

Mr Jean says the Bill "supports government's intentions to have an agricultural policy which will improve and strengthen the sector by protecting the farmers by strengthening the penalties and increasing the possibilities of pursuing and convicting praedial larceners."

Government's policy of support to the agricultural sector has been aggressive. It has implemented massive projects to finance necessary infrastructural and production enhancing developments in the sector, the biggest share of which has been over a hundred million dollars ploughed into the banana industry.

To date, investments in tissue culture, irrigation and road rehabilitation in key banana producing areas have revived the fortunes of many farmers in the industry, who have over the years been able to maintain Saint Lucia's

position as the leading producer in the Windward Islands. (The island produces more than half the total production of the Windwards.)

The Agriculture Minister is also satisfied with the wider range of economic and production enhancing activities taking place generally in the agricultural sector.

Mr Jean said: "The government's record on support for the agricultural sector is indisputable, with some of the biggest investments in the banana industry being made in the last nine years to encourage farmers to maintain maximum possible production levels even in the face of the low prices and the challenges of Globalization."

"It is an achievement we are proud of. We have moved the farmer from a subsistence existence to a situation where the farmer can look forward to a better quality of life," the minister said of those who have successfully managed the transition from total dependence on a single crop.

The Praedial Larceny Bill will go through a second reading when the House of Assembly reconvenes on October 24th 2006 and the minister says it is "another example of the lengths we will go as a Government to encourage the farming community and protect their produce against illegal harvesting."

Statement from the 4th Meeting of the Council of Tourism Ministers of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States on the US Passport Issue Caguas, Puerto Rico October 5-6 2006

The 4th meeting of the Council of Ministers of Tourism from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has expressed disappointment and dismay with the news that January 6th 2007 has been confirmed as the date by which U.S. citizens traveling overseas by air will be required to have a passport to re-enter the United States.

The meeting learnt that the U.S. Congress last week amended the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative to delay the implementation of the new passport requirements until June 1, 2009, for cruise passengers, but U.S. travelers by air must meet

the January 6th deadline.

OECS Tourism Ministers are deeply concerned that the measure will have significant negative implications for land based tourism in Member States as only a small percentage of American travelers have passports.

The Ministers will continue, with their counterparts from Member States of the wider Caribbean Tourism Organisation, in lobbying efforts in the United States. OECS Member States will, in the meantime, also step up efforts to encourage potential American visitors to the region to acquire passports.

PM Approves Increased Rebates for Fishermen

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Honourable Kenny Anthony has approved another increase in the fuel quota for which a rebate is available to local fishermen.

The new increase, which came into force on the first day of this month, was necessitated by the increased horsepower of engines used by fishermen, raised the fuel subsidy quotas for each fisher from the original 3,600 gallons to 4,500 gallons – a 900-gallon increase.

Under the arrangement, which was announced while OECS Fisheries Ministers met here late last month to discuss fishing and maritime cooperation issues, Saint Lucian fishers will receive a rebate of 75 cents on every gallon of gas purchased.

Chief Fisheries Officer in the Department of Fisheries, Mr. Vaughan Charles, says local fishers, who have been increasing their catch through increasing their horsepower, have welcomed the new development.

He pointed out that the initial quo-

ta for the rebate was 2,000 gallons, which was subsequently increased to 3,600 gallons.

"With the current increase to 4,500 gallons," he added, "fishers will be earning rebates consonant with the increase in the capacity of their engines."

But not all of the rebates go directly into the pockets or bank accounts of the fishermen.

Mr Charles explained that part of the arrangement is for "15 cents from each 75 cents got on each gallon to go to the individual fisher's shares in their related fisheries cooperative and 10 cents from every other dollar goes into a distress fund on which the can draw in times of need."

The Chief Fisheries Officer says the increase in the gallon quota for fishermen is "an important development in the sector, as it represents Government's recognition of the fishing industry and its contribution to coastal livelihoods, employment in coastal communities and the overall economic development of the country."

FIRE SERVICE ISSUES SETTLED

St. Lucia's fire and emergency service officers took unofficial industrial action this week when the majority failed to turn up for work from last Saturday claiming sickness as the reason for their absence. The "sick out" affected all the country's fire stations and it was mainly the senior officers of the service who had to fill in the breach. The island's smaller airport, George Charles at Vigie, was also affected and had to be closed down as airlines could not operate without the fire services. The fire service officers were protesting what they have called long overdue issues of overlong shifts and health hazards from the asbestos in the roof of the Castries Fire station. The action by the fire service personnel led the Minister of Home Affairs, Senator Calixte George to call a Press Conference on Tuesday October 10th in which he issued a statement explaining his Department's position on the matter. Then later that afternoon, Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony, acting on a mandate from the Cabinet of Ministers on Monday, met with the representatives of the Fire Welfare Association and arrived at a settlement of the issues leading to an end to the industrial action.

HOME AFFAIRS MINISTRY EXPLAINS ITS POSITION



Hon. Calixte George



Castries Central Fire Station

On Friday at 2.00 p.m. the Fire Services Welfare Association requested a meeting with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security.

A meeting was scheduled at 3:30 p.m. which lasted up to 5:40 p.m., with the Deputy Permanent Secretary. The Chief Fire Officer was in attendance.

The Executive of the Fire Services Welfare Association wanted a status position on two issues: (i) Payment for Excess Working Hours; and (ii) Removal of Asbestos from the roof at Central Fire Station.

At the conclusion of that meeting, the Welfare Association agreed to get a status in writing by Thursday, October 12, 2006 although they were informed by the Deputy Permanent Secretary that she would be able to update the Executive sooner, after discussions on Monday October 9, 2006 with the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service and the Ministry of Planning who are dealing with these two issues, respectively.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary, Home Affairs and Internal Security apprised the Cabinet Secretary of the concerns raised and the latter indicated that the Collective Agreement which speaks to the issue of Excess Working Hours was on the Agenda scheduled for the Cabinet meeting of yesterday Monday 9th October 2006. This information was communicated immediately to the President of the Welfare Association by the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry on Saturday, October 7th 2006.

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security met the Chief Fire Officer and other senior staff of the Fire Services Department on Sunday October 8th, 2006 at the Fire Services Headquarters in Castries. The Minister stressed the need for the senior management of the Service to develop an appropriate management plan for the manning of the existing Fire Service and ensuring that both airports – Hewanorra and Vigie are operational. He also advised that an urgent management meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Public Service be held to develop strategies for resolving the outstanding issues raised by the Association.

A meeting was subsequently held with the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Chief Fire Officer and Chairman and Secretary of the Welfare Association on Sunday October 8th, 2006.

Full clarification was provided to the Executive at that meeting on Sunday, which was held at the Gros Islet Fire Station. The Executive expressed satisfaction with the position of the issues clarified.

It would appear that the Executive of the Fire Services Welfare Association failed to communicate this information to the majority of their members with the result that some Fire Service Officers did not turn up for work yesterday, Monday October 9th as they reported sick. It was concluded therefore that the services provided were affected by a "Sick Out".

Yesterday, Monday a meeting was held with the Permanent Secretary of the Public Service, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and members of the Association and their Executive members. The two issues were clarified again.

At the conclusion of that meeting, as was the case on Sunday, Members in attendance expressed satisfaction with the clarification provided on the two issues.

I must tell you that at yesterday's meeting New Issues were raised by members of the Association. The Permanent Secretary of the Public Service explained fully to the members the issue in terms of where things were at on the Payment for Excess Working Hours.

It seemed clear that members of the Association present were fully appreciative of the information provided. The Executive of the Association emphasized at all meetings, that they do not sanction nor did they direct their members to take any protest action in any form whatsoever. They were aware that the matter on the Excess Working Hours was referred to in a Memorandum sent by the Ministry of the Public Service to Cabinet and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Public Service had also informed the Executive that a separate memo which addressed the issue of Payment for excess working hours was being sent to Cabinet shortly.

It seems clear that sick leave Certificates submitted by Officers, en masse can be considered to be 'industrial action' taken by these officers without the

endorsement of the Welfare Association. It is therefore a 'wild cat' action.

The issue of sick leave certificate appears to be well co-ordinated and calls for a careful examination, as it raises serious concerns which may speak to the integrity of the Medical Fraternity. Consequently, we will be referring this matter to the Ministry of Health for further consideration.

The Government of Saint Lucia will adopt all measures to ensure that our emergency response service and airports continue to function and that the security of the country is not compromised.

In the meantime the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security is co-ordinating efforts with the Chief Fire Officer to ensure that a deployment plan involving all Officers reporting for duty regardless of rank will be developed to provide normal Fire and Emergency Services to the Nation.

The Welfare Association has been informed of the decisions of Cabinet on the main issues raised. On the issues on: (i) The removal of Asbestos from the Fire Services Headquarters and the payment of excess working hours to Fire Officers, Cabinet agreed that the Honourable Prime Minister will handle both issues on behalf of Cabinet. (ii) The Honourable Prime Minister directed that the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security will effect the removal of the Asbestos from the roof and replacement of the roof of the Fire Services Headquarters.

THE SETTLEMENT

Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony on Tuesday evening (October 10, 2006) met with representatives of the Fire Services Welfare Association (FSWA), in a bid to bring an end to industrial action by its members.

The Prime Minister, who was acting on behalf of his Cabinet colleagues, advised the representatives of the FSWA that the Government of Saint Lucia had agreed to a recommendation by the Negotiating Team to pay fire officers \$450 per month, starting September 1, for the excess hours worked by their members. It was also agreed that the system of excess working hours will be eliminated, once the Fire Service is brought up to its full strength in the next two years. However, the rate of payment and the number of excess hours will be gradually reduced concomitantly with the increase in the strength of the Fire Service over the two-year period.

The Prime Minister also advised the representatives of the fire officers that he had instructed the Ministry of Home Affairs to seek quotes from the Private Sector to replace the roof of the building housing the Central Fire Station on Jeremie Street in Castries. He advised, however, that the removal of the roof is



Prime Minister Anthony

a delicate matter, as it must be handled by qualified and experienced person-



Fire Chief Leslie Fontinelle

nel. Further, he said, arrangements will have to be made to relocate Fire Ten-

ders and Fire Officers, as well as Police personnel currently utilising the building. It was agreed at the meeting with the Prime Minister that the Association will work closely with the Minister and the Fire Chief to put into effect a plan of action to facilitate the replacement of the roof.

The Prime Minister expressed his regret that the Association did not bring their grievances directly to the Minister, or to himself, before taking industrial action. The Prime Minister also indicated that it will be necessary to review the arrangements for providing fire personnel to the island's airports, as the country cannot afford the consequences of the disruption of travel by Saint Lucians and visitors to the island.

Prime Minister Anthony urged the association to encourage their members to return to work, even if some doctors had given Fire Officers up to nine or ten days sick leave. Fire Chief Leslie Fontinelle also this morning issued a call, through the media, for the fire officers who are still out to return to work, as the outstanding matters had been addressed by the Prime Minister and settled with the representatives of the Association during last night's meeting.



The recently built Gros Islet (left) and Vieux Fort Fire Stations

LABOUR CODE: A PILLAR OF MODERNISATION

Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Honourable Kenny D. Anthony has called on employers to embrace the proposed Labour Code for Saint Lucia as one more vehicle designed to move the country along its path to modernisation. He stated that there is no room in a modern Saint Lucia for laws which are out of sync with modern society, its norms and values. Dr. Anthony said the code is not a revolutionary document but a collection of existing and new laws and the final document must spring from a shared consensus among employees, Government and the Private sector.

Addressing the forty-fifth annual general meeting of the Saint Lucia Employer Federation, at the Sandals Grande Monday 9th October, the Prime Minister said the Labour Code is coming on the heels of several government initiatives designed to strengthen rela-



Prime Minister Anthony addressing the St. Lucia Employers' Federation



Malcolm A. J Charles, President of the Employers' Federation

tions between the private sector and Government. These include the programmes of the Office of Private Sector Relations (OPSR) and the support granted to the expansion of the tourism sector.

Dr Anthony said the Labour Code will address rights and obligations of all parties in the workplace in a manner which ensures, certainty, a vital factor for a stable business climate.

The Prime Minister added that in spite of its thrust towards modernisation, Saint Lucia lags behind in some areas of labour Laws.

In his address, the Prime Minister pointed to four major challenges for Saint Lucia today. These are the changing nature of the country's workforce, the management of the labour force related to the obligation of the CSME, low levels of productivity, particularly in the public sector and the ageing labour infrastructure.

Public Utilities Minister Welcomes UNICEF Endorsement

Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, Honourable Felix Finisterre, says he is pleased Saint Lucia is making a significant contribution to the Caribbean's achievement of major milestones in reaching various goals of the millennium development project.

now available as well as improvement in the quality of water making it safer for consumption.

According to the UNICEF statement, the Caribbean is on a fast track to meeting its commitment to the Charter, ten (10) years before the 2015 deadline.

The report on safe water and sanitation was presented by UNICEF, a

of the efforts of Saint Lucia and the Caribbean to meet and surpass the expectations of the goals, indicating that Saint Lucia was "committed to making life better for all of its people."

In the last few years, the Government of Saint Lucia has invested heavily in a robust programme of expansion and modernization of the water sector aimed at addressing long-standing acute water shortages in many parts of the island.

To date, a 20-inch pipeline project to the north of the island has been completed, with an additional 14-inch network being installed to move water from the John Compton Dam at Roseau to the thousands of homes in the northern part of the island where the shortage is most critical.

Additionally, a programme to improve the quality of pipes serving the south of the island along the Vieux-Fort/Soufriere highway was completed last year, making a significant difference to the service to households and businesses along the Vieux-Fort/Soufriere highway.

According to Mr Finisterre, "the government has been very focussed on transforming this sector. Water is a basic resource that must be afforded everybody in Saint Lucia and so it is a priority for the Government to ensure that investment in the water sector is given a top place in the developmental mandate of the government.

The Minister went on to say that "it has not been easy to modernize that sector."



Hon. Felix Finisterre

He explained: "The infrastructural work alone has been painful. The problem is that, we are building from scratch. Everywhere, we have done a major upgrade we having been doing more than just laying pipes. We are mapping and expanding at the same time. Once this is done, we will have a water sector which shows that the welfare of people have been placed at the centre of its development.

The Government's water sector reform projects are being financed through the World Bank.



Some of the new 20 inch pipes being used in the water sector modernization programme

Recently, UNICEF identified three regions, including the Caribbean, where major programmes to improve the water sector had been undertaken, resulting in an expansion of the number of places where portable water is

United Nations agency promoting the welfare of the world's children. UNICEF is monitoring interventions by countries which benefit children.

The Public Utilities Minister has welcomed the UNICEF endorsement

More Young Entrepreneurs Trained in St. Lucia

A batch of young entrepreneurs in St Lucia completed the first phase of training recently and are expected to complete further training by the middle of October.

The fourth Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) programme, sponsored by the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) and hosted by the James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund (BELfund), was held in St Lucia recently with the highest number of participants attending the programme to date.

A total of 15 prospective entrepreneurs from various communities around the island participated in the week-long Personal Development Programme (PDP), which was held from September 11 - 15, 2006.

The PDP, which was conducted at the Training Room of the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF), was done under the able tutelage of Consultant Trainer attached to the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) in George-

town Guyana, Ms. Marva Bancroft.

The Personal Development Programme, which is of 30 hours duration, was developed to assist entrepreneurs to acquire the knowledge and skills which will aid in their personal growth and development. It also provided participants with the opportunity to address the challenges which confront them in the day to day activities in their businesses and family lives.

This was immediately followed by the Small Business Management Training, which is of 90 hours duration.

The Small Business Management training which will be covered over a three (3) week period commenced on Wednesday September 20, 2006 and will conclude on Tuesday October 10, 2006.

This aspect of the programme is designed to sharpen and strengthen the business management skills of the soon to be entrepreneurs, aimed at increasing their chances of succeeding in their businesses.

At the end of the entire programme,



BELFund beneficiaries pose at the end of the first phase of their entrepreneurial training

participants are expected to produce a Business Plan for their enterprise to be submitted to the BELfund for approval, a topic which is covered in the training.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) is a project of the Government of Saint Lucia and the Com-

monwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC).

The YEDF is being administered by the James Belgrave Micro Enterprise Development Fund (BELfund), with collaboration from the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC).

Commonwealth Assists St. Lucian Youth

Over one hundred young women and men in St Lucia who are at risk and socially challenged, will benefit from a Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) sponsored innovative pilot programme to stimulate their interest in entrepreneurial activity.

The CYPCC has been approached by the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs, Industry and Tourism of St Lucia to provide support to develop a youth empowerment programme to target social exclusion among young people.

The Youth at Risk and Entrepreneurship Pilot Programme is part of a collaborative effort with the CYP, the Ministry of Commerce, Consumer Affairs, Industry and Tourism, the BELFund, the Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU), the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) and other such national institutions collaborating with CYP on entrepreneurial development for young people.

It dovetails with CYP's youth enterprise development programme that has been successfully operating in several countries. Youth Enterprise Development Programme Manager, Ms. Dwynette Eversley, revealed that CYP has evaluated many youth businesses developed under the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative.

"The unanimous feedback by young people is that they are happy for the opportunity to provide for themselves in a way they best determine. That, I think, is the crux of our success that we want to also make available to at-risk youth, who traditionally feel they are not consulted about important social and economic issues."

The first phase of the project is a Training of Trainers Workshop to run from October 16 to 20, 2006. About 35 young people will be trained as community advocates and empowerment agents. The innovative feature of the pilot is that these persons are themselves at risk and victims of social exclusion, with its relat-

ed economic, social and political impacts and pressures.

Youth at risk are among a growing cohort of young people who were singled out for special mention in a World Bank Report in 2003. The Report identified the growing trend of young women and men who are victims of social exclusion and the emerging pressing implications for them to be strategically re-integrated into societies to ensure the economic and social stability in the Caribbean community.

This pilot is in line with CYP's strategic support to member-states in the area of Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods. CYPCC expects to gauge important lessons about empowering and mobilising young people as agents of change in their communities and about the impact on employment generation among young people once the concept of business-ownership and credit has been de-mystified.

The training of trainers will be carried out in Achievement Motivation, Life skills Orientation and Business Identification. Through the latter activity, participants will be able to identify marketable business ventures that can be undertaken in their community. The trained youth will be a position to: (i) Access existing entrepreneurship schemes in St Lucia and receive follow-on training and financial support to be established as young entrepreneurs; and (ii) Orient and mobilize other youth at risk in the community for entrepreneurial activity.

Commenting on the significance of this project, CYPCC's Regional Director, Mr Henry Charles, said: "This project is part of CYPCC's contribution towards ensuring that the Caribbean societies do not disintegrate into laboratories of hopelessness, despair and social instability but are instead transformed into cradles of creativity, social cohesion, economic prosperity and sustainable development."

Plans for hosting this activity will be finalized during an official visit to St Lucia by Mr. Charles beginning Monday (October 9).

During his visit Mr Charles will also be participating in and presenting a paper

entitled 'Redefining the OECS Youth Development Agenda – Empowerment for Sustainable Development' at a Conference on Youth Crime and Violence hosted by the St. Lucia-based Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

YOUTH AT RISK FOR DIABETES, TOO!

The Universal Health Care – UHC – Diabetes Pilot Project is ongoing. It is envisaged that that this free national screening for diabetes and hypertension would create greater awareness especially for early detection among St. Lucians. UHC is concerned that health personnel are now reporting that Type 2 diabetes among St. Lucia youth. Part of this awareness is to erase the notion that diabetes is an old person's disease.

When you're young, you feel like nothing can affect you! Having non-stop fun is the name of the game: you feel invincible, like you will live forever! There's nothing wrong in thinking that way except that carefree and worry-free lifestyle also comes with responsibility...for your health, for example. Diabetes begins in the pancreas, an organ in the body with special cells called beta cells which produce a substance called insulin. People with diabetes have a problem with the production of insulin.

Doctors and nurses in St. Lucia are finding more and more children with type 2 diabetes, a disease usually diagnosed in adults aged 40 years or older (Type 1 diabetes is what kids and young adults suffer from). Youth who develop type 2 diabetes are typically overweight or obese, they don't exercise enough and have a family history of the disease. No one really knows why some people have diabetes.

The most important thing to remember is that while there is no cure yet for diabetes, youth need to learn to take care of themselves by eating more balanced meals that include different foods and

exercise regularly through sports and fitness programmes. The screening of students has started and will take place at all enrichment learning centres, primary and secondary schools.

Finding out early whether you have diabetes or not will help you make better choices in treatment...but also in eating right! Lots of young persons are attracted to junk food with a lot of carbohydrates. We know that all carbohydrates do affect your blood glucose levels about the same way. For example, a potato and sweet biscuits may have the same number of carbohydrates but a potato has more vitamins than a biscuit, so it's a better food choice.

So you're young and have diabetes. Now what? You learn to "juggle". This means, learn to juggle your food, medicine, and physical activities to achieve good blood glucose control. This will help you feel better every day, and avoid long-term complications associated with diabetes. In fact, the young persons who have been diagnosed with diabetes in St. Lucia, go to school, play sports, and have not given up partying or going out and doing the normal things other young persons do just because they have diabetes. In fact, unless they tell you and you see them injecting themselves with insulin you wouldn't know they are diabetic. However, they have learnt when to take time off to check their blood sugar levels and be careful with junk food.

Parents, help UHC in this screening by signing the letter of consent that your children will bring to you. It will help them not hurt them if they are screened early.

A 1.5 MILLION DOLLAR ARCADE ON STREAM FOR SOUTHERN VENDORS

After several months of lobbying for a home to sell their goods, the dream of the craft vendors of Vieux Fort has finally begun to be realized. On Wednesday, October 4th 2006 many gathered for the Sod Turning ceremony that marked the commencement of the construction of a \$1.5 million dollar arcade on government lands.

Expressing elation over the project Prime Minister and Parliamentary Representative for Vieux-Fort South, Honourable Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, said the vendors were being provided with a facility that would help to improve their economic status. He further described the multi-million dollar investment as yet another avenue to reach the marginalized.

The people who inspired this development are the vendors," he said. "This property is for them, it was meant for them to use." Sounding a word of caution about the way business ought to be carried out, the Parliamentary Representative told the vendors, "We have to change the way we do business if we are to survive, we cannot do business the old way as before. We have to make changes and part of the process of managing this place would be to train these vendors into the new business ethic, new business approaches, the new business models so that this place would truly become special and successful," said Dr. Anthony.

The project is being funded by the National Development Corporation –NDC and speaks volume of the Corporation's efforts at helping to spur on and nurture local investment. In July the NDC announced a \$250,000 grant fund to assist artistes and entertainers in earning a livelihood from



NDC Chairman Michael Chastenet

their talents. In September it announced a similar grant facility to benefit micro entrepreneurs.

Chairman of the Corporation Mr. Michael Chastenet, commented that the facility is poised to enhance the tourism industry, the life blood of the St. Lucian economy. "The next step remains in your hands to develop the indigenous products to attract your customers. This government has provided the setting, the ambiance and the location for the industry," he said. Mr. Chastenet told the future tenants, "success can only be derived by aggressively moving forward to make this arcade a reality."



Parliamentary Representative for Vieux Fort South, PM Anthony (centre) and NDC Managing Director, Wayne Vitalis (right) and other guests

The arcade which is expected to be completed within the next 18 months is said to be strategically located. Its close proximity to hotels and the Hewanorra International Airport is hoped to make accessibility easier, especially for travellers wanting to purchase souvenirs.

Among the other officials attending Wednesday's sod turning were Mr. Louis Lewis Permanent Secretary in the Minister of Tourism, Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Development Corporation Mr. Isaac Mathurin and Mr. Kingsley Powlette, Chairman of the Southern Tourism Development Corporation.

Nominations Invited for 2007 National Awards

The Government of Saint Lucia is inviting nominations for National Awards for 2007.

The National Awards are bestowed under Order of Saint Lucia, established on December 13, 1986, to honour deserving persons for public service. Awards are also given to persons who have given distinguished and outstanding service of national importance to Saint Lucia.

The awards are issued the following categories: The Grand Cross, The Saint Lucia Cross, The Medal of Honour, The Medal of Merit, The Les Pitons Medal, The National Service Cross and the National Service Medal.

The Grand Cross is awarded only to persons who have held the office of Governor General.

The National Service Cross can only be issued on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Public service Commission and is only intended for gazetted officers of the protective services – the Police, Prison and Fire Services.

The Nation Service Medal can only be recommended by the officers in charge of the Police Force, the Fire Service and the Prison Service.

Members of the public can therefore only make nominations for four grades: the Saint Lucia Cross, the Medal of Honour, the Medal of Merit and The Les Pitons Medal.

The Saint Lucia Cross is to be awarded to persons who have rendered distinguished

and outstanding service of national importance to this country.

The Medal of Honour is to be awarded in any of two classes (Gold or Silver) to persons rendering eminent service of national importance or performing an outstanding brave or humane act to a national of Saint Lucia or of another country.

The Medal of Merit (Gold or Silver) is to be awarded to persons contributing long and meritorious service in the Arts, Science, Literature and other fields.

The Les Pitons Medal (Gold, Silver or bronze) is to be awarded for long and meritorious service to saint Lucia, tending to promote loyal public service, national welfare or inculcating and strengthening community spirit.

Nominations forms are available from the Office of the prime Minister, the Government Information service (GIS), the central Library and the General Post Office (GPO) and applications should be forwarded to the secretary of the national Awards Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister.

Nominations should indicate details about the nominee, why he or she is being nominated and a summary of the achievements of the nominee and Nomination Forms must reach the National Awards Committee on or before December 1st 2006.

Persons selected for National Awards will be announced on the occasion of the observance of the island's 28th Anniversary of Independence on February 22, 2007.

POST OFFICE NOTICE

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIAT (1974) LIMITED 1956 — 2006

The Public is informed that an issue of stamps commemorating the 50th Anniversary of LIAT (1974) Limited — 1956 — 2006, will be released for sale at all postal outlets.

The issue comprises a set of two (2) stamps as follows: 30c - depicting the AVRO aircraft in flight; 75c - featuring the BAC 11 aircraft, at the airport:

First Day Covers: First Day Covers are available at a cost of \$4.05 each.

First Day of Issue Postmark: All letters posted on Monday 16 October, 2006 will receive the First Day of issue Postmark.

The stamps will remain on sale for a period of six months or until stock is exhausted, whichever is the sooner.

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Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).
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For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at www.stlucia.gov.lc and then click on the NTN icon.

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