



NATIONWIDE

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COMMERCE MINISTER:

RICE FLOUR SUGAR-



**“I WILL MOVE HELL AND
HEAVEN TO MAKE SURE
THEIR PRICES REMAIN
STABLE”**

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BANK OF SAINT LUCIA: A VISION FULFILLED

In 1980, the then new St. Lucia Labour Party Government of Prime Minister Allan Louisy established the National Commercial Bank, the second locally owned banking institution in the country. Twenty six years later, NCB has been transformed into the Bank of St. Lucia which has just announced record profits and is therefore fulfilling the vision of its founding fathers of a strong indigenous bank of which Saint Lucians can be proud. The following articles tell the story of how this came to be.

CREATION AND SUBSEQUENT MERGER OF NCB AND SLDB OPENED UP A NEW ERA IN LOCAL BANKING

Launched in 1980 and opened on the first working day of 1981 with a total asset base of \$3.1 Million, the establishment of the National Commercial Bank (NCB) heralded a new era in banking in St. Lucia.

The NCB's first Managing Director of the NCB was Mr Mc Donald Dixon, who is now a senior trade consultant with the Ministry of Commerce, Investment and Consumer Affairs. He presided over the first wave of the bank's history, which has changed substantially over the past ten years.

In its first 25 years, the NCB has grown from strength to strength. In a quarter of a century, it has been regarded as one of the most successful banking institutions in the history of the Eastern Caribbean.

The fortunes of the NCB began to change with the arrival of a new government and a new Finance Minister in 1997.

Prime Minister Dr Kenny Anthony authorized a study of the options and possibilities of making the two institutions operate more efficiently and profitably.

Realizing the need for adjustment to meet the challenges of the day's market trends and demands, the NCB was privatized in 1999. This strategic move resulted in creation of the Bank of Saint Lucia (BOSL)

and increasing the new entity's capital base and its ability to lend more.

Next, the BOSL and the St. Lucia Development Bank (SLDB) – which was also established by the then Labour administration back in 1982 -- were merged in 2001 to create the ECFH Group.

According to the Group's 2005 Financial Report: "The new group became a one-stop banking and financial shop, with the capacity to bundle products and services offering unique financial solutions to customers, complemented by a strong brand presence in the domestic market."

The two banks had combined "to provide a broader range of banking, financial and related services, at a lower cost and with a higher level of efficiency than was previously provided when the NCB and the SLDB operated separately."

Today, the ECFH and BOSL Directors say the decision to create the new Group paid off handsomely. It currently enjoys a 40% share of the local banking market and dominates in several areas of financial and banking services.

In addition, the group offers services regionally and internationally and has carved for itself a niche in the regional banking system.

And the new era continues



Bank of St. Lucia Headquarters on Bridge St, Castries

BOSL REPORTS RECORD PROFITS! STAFF GET THEIR SHARE FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME

Directors and shareholders in the island's biggest banking institution say the decision to merge the National Commercial Bank and the St. Lucia Development Bank to create the new Bank of Saint Lucia and the Eastern Caribbean Financial Holdings (ECFH) Group has paid off handsomely.

Their proof? The Group currently enjoys a 40% share of the local banking market and dominates in several areas of financial and banking services. In addition, it offers services regionally and internationally and has carved for itself a niche in the regional banking system.

But more, the ECFH is still the strongest local bank. It registered record profits over the years and broke all records last year.

Indeed, its 2005 report is a catalogue of success.

Chairman of the ECFH Group Victor Eudoxie and Managing Director Robert Norstrom last week announced record profits for 2005, as well as profit-sharing for the very first time.

They said last year was "the bank's best year yet," recording after-tax profits of \$27.7 Million, representing a 53% increase over the previous year. Total assets grew by 22% and reached \$1.3 Billion in 2005, while deposits grew by 30% to \$1.0 Billion. Total shareholders equity increased by 17% to \$146 Million.

Mr Eudoxie said the ECFH Group is now pursuing "a developmental focus" that will prepare it for "the challenges as well as the opportunities for customers and the Group itself" that will come with the new competitive environment of the CSME.

He also says the group will continue its thrust aimed at "modernizing its systems

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and processes to enable it to compete more effectively, with special attention paid to delivery channels to provide greater convenience to customers."

In addition, Mr Eudoxie notes that "the responsibility of ensuring that delivery channels are world class is well understood and the group will play its part ensuring the successful hosting of the cricket World Cup."

The Chairman said the restructuring of the ownership and asset base of the institution and spreading it across the region "has also prepared the Group for future regional challenges."

He said the ECFH Group "is also already gearing to compete and survive in the new global economic environment, as well as in the new Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)."

BANK OF SAINT LUCIA AND ECFH DIRECTORS SAY: ISLAND'S BIGGEST BANK OWNED AND RUN BY SAINT LUCIANS

Officials of the country's largest bank have refuted claims by a former Prime Minister that the majority of its shares are in foreign hands. To the contrary, they say the majority of shares are in the hands of Saint Lucian and other shareholder interests.

Former Prime Minister and Minister and Leader of the opposition United Workers Party (UWP) Sir John Compton said to a party conference in Micoud recently:

"The St. Lucia Development Bank, created to provide a safety net for small businesses, farmers and small entrepreneurs, has been swallowed up by the Bank of St. Lucia, which in turn has been swallowed up by Trinidad interests."

He also repeated a claim made much earlier that the National Commercial Bank (NCB) and the St. Lucia Development Bank (SLDB) were both created by the UWP.

However, senior bank officials have rejected both assertions. Persons serving with the bank long enough say history has recorded the NCB and the SLDB as both having been established by a then Labour Party administration in 1980 and 1981, respectively.

Top bank officials also say that contrary to the view being offered by Sir John, the Republic Bank of Trinidad & Tobago only owns 20% of the shares of the island's biggest indigenous banking concern, while the majority shares are owned by the Government of Saint Lucia, the National Insurance

Corporation and ordinary St. Lucians.

Eastern Caribbean Financial Holdings (ECFH) executives clarified during and after a press conference held at the Bank of Saint Lucia last week that, "in addition to the National Insurance Corporation (NIC) holding 100% of the issued and outstanding preference shares, the Government of St. Lucia owns 20% of the ordinary shares and the NIC owns another 12.19%."

Further, one of the senior the officials pointed out, "there are seven St. Lucian shareholders on the Board of Directors of the ECFH Group; and 27.9% of the minority shareholders reside in St. Lucia, the OECS and Barbados."

He did concede that some ordinary shares of the sub-region's premiere financial institution are also held by other countries.

The official pointed to the ECFH's just-released financial statements for 2005, which indicate that their share ownership is as follows: Trinidad and Tobago's Republic Bank (20%), Antigua Commercial Bank (4.74%), St. Vincent and the Grenadines National Insurance (3.33%), National Commercial Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (3.33%), Life of Barbados - Sagacor (2.79%), Fortress Mutual Fund (1.72%) and the St. Kitts, Nevis Anguilla National Bank (1.67%).

Altogether, the bank official pointed out, when the shares of the Government, the NIC and ordinary St. Lucians are added and calculated, over 60% of the shares are in the hands of Saint Lucians.

MINISTER PIERRE DECLARES: NO INCREASES IN RICE, FLOUR AND SUGAR PRICES UNDER HIS WATCH

Minister of Commerce Philip J Pierre has stated categorically that while he holds the portfolio of Commerce, he will do all in his power to ensure that the prices of three basic food items which are now controlled by government – rice, flour and sugar-will remain stable. Speaking in an interview on the National Television Network-NTN- on Tuesday night, Mr. Pierre said that the prices of rice, flour and sugar had remained stable over the last fifteen years because these goods are imported by government. According to him, however, there were many people who wanted to be part of the decision making process in the country who are vehemently opposed to government importing rice, flour and sugar.

“ I can also tell you that the price of rice flour and sugar has increased on the world market- sugar in particular. However because government realises that these three products are products of the working man, that they are staples for the people in the lower economic bracket, Government continues to maintain control over them.”

The Minister added: “ I can tell you, whilst I am Minister for Commerce, all things being equal, I will move Hell and Heaven to make sure that the prices of these goods remain stable because I can tell you that there is a lot of pressure on Government to privatise the distribution of rice, flour and sugar”. But he said if Government had privatised the distribution of those three items, then the prices would have been very high

because people are in business to make a profit and one should not be emotional about this.

In commenting on the view that level of the prices of goods here had risen sharply because of changes in the economic structure of the local supermarket business and that life had consequently become more difficult, Minister Pierre said that while his Ministry was aware that there had been an upward movement in the prices of certain goods he could not give all the reasons for this. He explained that the Ministry of Commerce was presently conducting research on the matter so that it could be in a position to make informed comment on the subject. However there were some obvious reasons for price changes; these related to factors like higher freight and insurance rates and oil prices.



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



Customers at a local supermarket.

MAJOR NEW YACHT RACE FOR SAINT LUCIA

Saint Lucia has attracted another major yachting event. This was disclosed by Minister for Tourism Philip J Pierre, who was the guest of the National Television Network’s Nation Beat Tuesday Evening.

Though its name has not yet been disclosed, the event is expected to further boost the island’s advances in the yachting sector. St. Lucia has, over the last 16 years, hosted the finish of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers-the largest trans - ocean sailing event in the world.

Minister Pierre said that when he was in London three weeks ago he was informed by Andrew Bishop that St. Lucia would be attracting a round the world yachting race that would end in St. Lucia in January 2007. He regarded this as a great plus for the yachting industry and at the same time lauded the efforts of the Rodney Bay Marina and its Director, Cuthbert Didier, in help-



Rodney Bay Marina

ing develop the yachting sector sector. Minister Pierre says Government understands the importance of the yachting industry to the island’s economy and that was one reason why marine studies have now been included on the priority list of tertiary level scholarships funded by the Government

Mr. Pierre pointed out that the

yachting industry involves people with considerable wealth given the value of their craft. “ What’s on water there is millions of dollars. These people come with their families and most likely sometimes fly into St. Lucia to meet their yachts or fly from St. Lucia.

Because there are a whole lot of things that have to do with yachting-repairing

the yachts, repairing the fixtures, setting it up for the long journey-a lot of ancillary services are related to yachting.”

The Tourism Minister said that Government has sought to increase the length of stay of yachts-people on the island and continues to promote the industry through new incentives for yachters to build their boats in St. Lucia.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE: THE ONLY WAY FOWARD

WHY IS HEALTH CARE IMPORTANT TO ME?

PM Converses with the Nation



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony

Today I want to focus on health care, more specifically, Universal Health Care. Have you, for example, wondered why I am so preoccupied with the establishment of a system of Universal Health Care in our country? In fact, why is health care important to me?

I can answer these questions from a number of different perspectives but let me start from a personal one. My family and I have been affected by serious, indeed, life-threatening conditions. So much so that in fact for a number of years some members of my family could not be here in Saint Lucia because the necessary health services to care for one of my family members was not available. Recently all of you will remember the situation with my wife, Rose-Marie, who had to travel abroad for surgery to her spine.

I understand the desperate situation that many of you find yourselves. As a fellow Saint Lucian I am moved to resolve this dilemma. Equally, as your leader and Prime Minister, I feel the need to resolve the dilemma. From before you elected me to office I was in discussion with health care workers encouraging them to find the solutions to the health problems facing us. Access to necessary health services has been a priority for me from that time. You may remember that one of the first actions I took on assuming office in 1997 was to remove the fees from Doctor's visits at Health Centres.

I have been constantly agitating for the solutions including unrestricted access to medications and comprehensive care programmes for persons with diabetes and hypertension.

Health is important not just because of its value to each of us personally but because, as economists have clearly shown, appropriate investment in Health gives major returns for the national economy and is a fundamental pillar for national development. Allow me, please, just as a reminder to quote from the SLP manifesto of 1997, "The Contract of Faith".

"We believe that access to efficient quality health is essential not only because it provides a healthy workforce and improves our productive potential but also, and perhaps more importantly because healthy individuals are more likely to realise their full human potential"

The First Step

Four months after I assumed office, the Cabinet formed the Health Sector Reform Committee with the task of defining a way forward that would modernise our health services and establish a system that would be able to find effective solutions to the problems facing us. I wanted a health plan that would ensure that the health services would be driven to continuously develop.

That was the first step. In December 2000, the Cabinet approved the Health Sector Reform Policy entitled "Quality Services for Life". The Cabinet at that time charged the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations to develop a plan to deliver the health reform.

In January 2002, the Cabinet of Ministers appointed the Task Force to examine the feasibility of introducing Unemployment Insurance, Pension Plan for Farmers and Fishers and National Health Insurance. This Task Force was chaired by the Director of the NIC, Ms. Emma Hippolyte. In November 2003 the Cabinet approved the Proposals contained in the NHI Task Force Report. In 2004, the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations commenced the development of the National Health Strategic Plan. European Union funds supported a consultancy in 2005 to further aid in the development of this plan. The Ministry is now ready to launch the National Strategic Plan 2006-2011, – entitled "Quality Health Care for Life".

This entire process has been a thoughtful and consultative one. Many experts and, more importantly, people like you have contributed to the formation of this plan. I need to thank all of you. The contribution of Saint Lucian

people to the Health Sector Reform Plan and the Universal Health Care Plan is what has made these plans real and in touch with the needs of people like you. I need to assure you that your work is not in vain because as leader you have now given me a plan that I can deliver.

Guiding Principles of UHC

The Health Sector Principles of equity, effectiveness and efficiency have resulted in us adopting the strategies of social solidarity and universal access to publicly guaranteed services. This simply translates into providing the right health services at the right time to all people.

Throughout my life, I have been acutely aware of the high level of social inequity and injustice in Saint Lucia. I have attacked inequity and injustice at every opportunity. The Health Plan built on the value of social justice is another strike that I will make against a system that has for decades developed an entrenched discrimination and marginalisation of many vulnerable persons but especially poor people. If you could see into my heart you would understand that I do not want any Saint



Hon. Damian Greaves
Minister for Health, Human Services,
Family Affairs and Gender Relations



Members of the UHC Task Force: Dr. Stephen King, Chief Medical Officer, Ms Emma Hippolyte UHC Chairperson, Mrs. Dawn Byng, UHC Manager and Mrs Jenny Fevrier, Victoria Hospital Administrator

Lucian to be left behind, to be denied health care, to be left to languish. I am distressed by the number of persons needing to raise funds for necessary services by any means necessary.

Making Sure

I need to ensure that in the new system a forty year old, unemployed woman with four children who discovers she has breast cancer can get all the appropriate care without having to worry about how she can raise the money to afford any component of her care including her radiotherapy.

I need to make sure that in a new system every person with diabetes is found and is placed in proper care and receives proper treatment so that that person need not suffer the devastation that that disease can wreak on his heart, his kidneys, his eyes, his limbs, his brain, indeed his life.

I need to ensure that in the new system anyone with an emergency is met with competent emergency service personnel, quickly and is rapidly and professionally transported to well equipped and staffed emergency rooms



Victoria Hospital

principles that are embodied in the code of Human Rights, the basic principles outlined as the foundation of all great religions. Consider these words of Jesus Christ as captured by Matthew,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"

Matthew 22:37-40

These are the principles that form the core of our approach to Health. We fully appreciate that sustainability demands careful planning and design to ensure that the plan is feasible now and into the future. For this reason, I ensured that much time was spent and many experts reviewed these proposals to design the most practical system that can be true to the principles I hold dear. Let me explain the system.

UHC Explained

The Universal Health Care is a plan that gives access to health services at no charge at the point of service. The services are not free because the money will be raised through a special tax and from Government Revenues. These monies will be placed in the UHC fund which will be managed by the NIC. This fund will be completely separate for the other NIC funds. The UHC will have service agreements with hospitals. These agreements will detail the expected services and the necessary money to be paid from the UHC fund to deliver these services.

The hospitals will be paid a budget for the services agreed. The budget is determined by the number of persons identified in the hospital catchment population. The hospital is bound by the service agreements it has made with the UHC to deliver all the services for this population at the standard detailed in the agreement.

Guided by Principles

We have been guided by the basic

Back to NHI?

Despite this progress, all the carefully laid plans, Sir John Compton, Leader of the UWP says, if elected, his party will go back to what he describes as the National Health Service. Actually, I believe he meant the National Health Insurance. According to him "we shall ensure that the National Health Service, began eight years ago by the UWP Government, but abandoned by the SLP, is inaugurated and managed and staffed by competent professionals and not by persons appointed because of politics." I leave the latter part of that statement to your imagination.

Let us compare the UWPs' NHI of the U.W.P and the SLPs' UHC.

What is the Difference between NHI and UHC?

The previously proposed National Health Insurance contained in the National Health Insurance Act, No. 28 of 1996, was designed along the principles of private insurance. It was a contribution system in which salary deductions were to be taken and limited services were to be provided.

The services were divided into two main components—the Basic Hospitalisation Plan and the Basic Non-Hospitalisation Plan. Benefits were to be restricted to a maximum number of interventions per person per year and a financial limit was placed on each intervention.

In the previously proposed NHI only contributors and their immediate families would be entitled to benefits. The NHI was proposed to commence coverage of NIS contributors and Government Employees and their dependents. Other persons namely the self-employed persons, pensioners were to be considered in a later phase. The indigent would remain a responsibility of the Central Government. The unemployed were not going to be included.

Actuarial reviews suggested a 7% salary deduction although the UWP

Government of the day was considering commencing at 3%.

The UHC intends to cover all Saint Lucians from the onset. It will include the elderly, the disabled, the indigent, the unemployed, the self employed, NIS contributors, children and government workers.

The UHC will provide all necessary care to treat the diseases and health conditions affecting Saint Lucians.

The UHC services were detailed before and include hospitalization for all hospital services presently done in Saint Lucia. The UHC will provide medication for all major conditions. The UHC includes all mental health services and substance abuse rehabilitation services.

No One Out, No One Behind

The UHC will include overseas care and special services for certain conditions that cannot be treated in the general services. The UHC is intended to leave no one out; we will leave no one behind. What is necessary for any of us is necessary for all of us.

The UHC will be financed through a tax mechanism and not salary deduction. The taxes proposed are on certain goods sold in St Lucia so that everyone will contribute, but only in proportion to how much they consume.

The UHC is much more than a financing mechanism. It is a health development fund. It is an insurance fund for the health infrastructure. It is a contingency fund. It will also ensure that the quality of health care improves.

So, here you have it. The choices are before you.

Next week I shall share with you the services which will be included in the UHC plan. So, until next week, God bless and have a wonderful Easter holiday. But remember, please, do take care!.

Caricom Foreign Ministers Meet In Grenada

Foreign Ministers of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will review preparations for upcoming Summits and Ministerial meetings with external partners when the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) convenes its Ninth Meeting on 24-25 April in St. George's, Grenada.

The Community will be participating in the CARICOM-Spain Summit set for 11 May in Madrid, Spain, and the European Union (EU)/Latin America and the Caribbean Summit earmarked for 12-13 May in Vienna, Austria. The UK-CARICOM Forum scheduled for 27 April in Bridgetown, Barbados, will bring together CARICOM Foreign Ministers and British Foreign Secre-

tary, Hon Jack Straw.

The COFCOR will review the outcomes of recent Ministerial Meetings including the meeting between CARICOM Foreign Ministers and the United States Secretary of State which was held on 21-22 March in The Bahamas, and the Eleventh Meeting of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) Council of Ministers which was held on the 26-28 March in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

In the context of examining CARICOM's relations with external partners and its participation in the activities of international organisations, the COFCOR will focus on Canada where there has been a recent change of government, and the EU which has recently

issued a policy statement on its relations with the Caribbean.

In terms of CARICOM-UN relations, specific attention will be given to the ongoing UN reform process and to the Community's priorities for the Sixty-First UN General Assembly (UNGA). The COFCOR will also be brought up to date on issues pertaining to the Rio Group, which is currently presided over by Guyana.

The COFCOR will also discuss Haiti in light of its recent national elections, at which Mr. René Preval emerged the President-elect, and which paved the way for the return of the representatives of Haiti to the Councils of CARICOM.

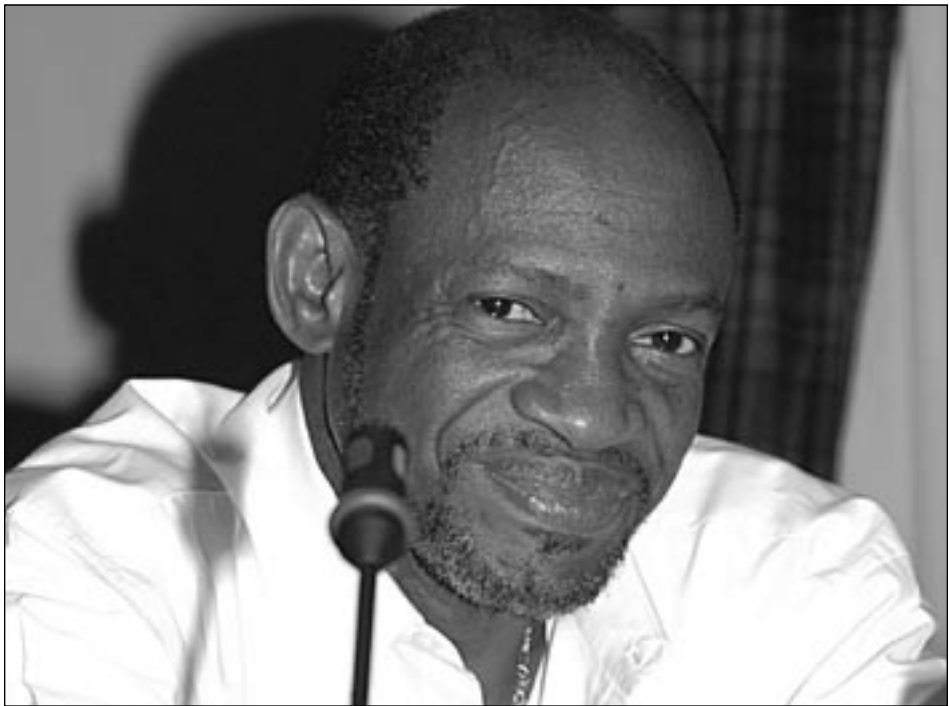


Hon. Senator Petrus Compton
Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation

CARICOM BUREAU EXAMINES CSME



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony



Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas

The state of readiness for Single Market compliance of six Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was the main focus of the Twentieth Meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM which met on Tuesday 18 April in Antigua and Barbuda. St. Lucia's Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny Anthony, who, as the immediate past Chairman of Caricom is a member of the Bureau, attended the meeting.

The Bureau also comprises current

Chairman of the Conference, Hon Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the incoming Chairman, the Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis and CARICOM Secretary-General, H.E. Edwin Carrington.

On 1 January 2006, the CARICOM Single Market came into being with six Member States, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Six other Member States, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and St

Vincent and the Grenadines agreed to participate by 30 June 2006.

With respect to the three other Member States, The Bahamas is not yet a part of the Single Market arrangement while Montserrat, a British Dependency, awaits the necessary instrument of entrustment from the United Kingdom government in order to participate and Haiti has not completed its accession to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Apart from giving attention to the state of readiness, the Bureau also discussed the Region's progress towards

the establishment of the framework for the Single Economy by 2008.

The Bureau received an update on developments in Haiti following the election of Dr Rene Preval as President on 7 February 2006.

The Bureau also assessed preparations for two imminent summit meetings in Europe. These are the Third CARICOM-Spain Summit set for 10-11 May in Madrid, Spain and the Fourth European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Summit scheduled for 12-13 May in Vienna, Austria.



Prime Minister Patrick Manning



Caricom Secretary General Dr. Edwin Carrington

The Perfect Match: Cricket and Tourism in 2007

ADDRESS BY THE HON. PHILIP J. PIERRE
MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, TOURISM,
INVESTMENT & CONSUMER AFFAIRS
AT THE SAINT LUCIA TOURIST BOARD
UK GALA AWARDS DINNER
THURSDAY 6TH APRIL 2006

Welcome once again to our annual celebration of thanks and appreciation for our friends and partners in the UK who by their dedication and hard work continue to allow St Lucia’s tourism to grow and become the main economic activity for our island. Last year we achieved and surpassed our targets and welcomed over 300,000 stay over visitors to our simply beautiful island.

We continue to improve our tourism product by upgrading and building new hotels, villas and apartments, upgrading our road net work, improving our water supply, ensuring that we meet and surpass international standards in our service delivery and encouraging our people to remain friendly, hospitable and find innovative ways to derive economic benefits from tourism. These are exciting times in St Lucia. Investment in new accommodation and services is valued at over 200 million pounds. The nation is preparing for “The Perfect Match”. Our aim is to host the English Cricket team in the most organised, entertaining and appealing ways possible as they compete in the Cricket World Cup 2007.

The Beausejour cricket ground is being expanded and last month saw the completion of the installation of lights for day/night matches, and on the 9th March, the England A Team and the West Indies ‘A’ played the first day night match in the Caribbean in St Lucia. Fact is we are the only island with a ground that is ready for the perfect match.

In addition to the new investments we have launched a home hospitality programme, where local people will offer cricket fans a home away from home. This home hospitality programme will be monitored by a standards committee and fans will be able to book tickets for matches on central reservation system.

The government is committed to create opportunities to satisfy the increase demand anticipated for World Cup, however we will never abandon our traditional tour operators. We aim for a win – win situation with the World Cup creating further awareness of St Lucia thus improving yield for our traditional tour operators and travel agents.

I am privileged yet humbled to be Minister of Tourism for St Lucia for the last eight years. During that time I have reflected on the challenges and opportunities facing St Lucia’s tourism industry. I am convinced that tourism is the economic sector that can help alleviate human poverty and uplift the quality of life for our people.

If tourism must play that important role we must deal frankly and openly with the challenges of the industry – these include – global competition, sustainability, environmental impacts, product quality and standards and air services. We need the support of our partners in England to help in this noble goal of poverty reduction and job creation through tourism. We have made enormous strides and tourism in St Lucia accounts for over 15% of GDP and the second largest direct job creator.

Competition - Saint Lucia is not alone in this global competitive tourism market. Technology has made competition even greater. Smaller destinations have to compete for exposure with the larger more developed tourism destinations that incidentally are the main source markets. Saint Lucia has established a strong image as a beautiful and romantic destination. The challenge for Saint Lucia is to achieve a wider appeal among new sectors and

markets within the United Kingdom. Last year Saint Lucia launched a new consumer advertising campaign aimed at highlighting the beauty and diversity of our island. This campaign must be able to reach actual and potential visitors in a timely fashion. This comes at a cost and St Lucia while investing more in marketing is constrained by fiscal reality and competing demands for government funding.

Sustainability - The St Lucia Government’s philosophy is that the economic benefits of tourism must accrue to as many people as possible and there is lively debate on the acceptable level of direct taxation on the tourism sector.

We are establishing and expanding the linkages between tourism and other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, handicraft and culture. In this regard we aim to build on the achievements of the Saint Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme. We believe that the issue is not tourism or agriculture but the two must complement each other as both sectors can benefit. Our farming communities must believe that tourism can sustain their livelihood and improve their quality of life.

The Ministry of Tourism is currently undertaking a Community Branding initiative. This initiative proposes to maximise visitor spend by assisting in the development of community based activities that promote the brand St Lucia and encourage visitor loyalty. In the short term the project’s objective is to have selected communities branding in time to have The Perfect Match for Cricket World Cup. The project also has a legacy component that will provide guidelines to communities desirous of branding their communi-



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

ties post 2007 and creating new economic activity for residents.

Environmental Impacts - Exit surveys tell us that visitors are attracted to Saint Lucia primarily because of the country’s natural beauty. The environment is critical to the product we offer. We are ensuring that environmental management practices are in place for our sites, attractions and other operations in order to minimize environmental degradation. Our natural resources must be preserved for use by future generations and government is ensuring that they are available for use by locals and visitors in an orderly manner.

Product Quality and Standards - Visitor experience is the single most important consideration for any tourism destination. Saint Lucia’s Tourism Strategy (2005-2010) identifies developing a tourism product that is responsive to the needs of the market and generating high visitor satisfaction as a key strategic goal. Continuous product improvements are therefore necessary if Saint Lucia is to

maintain a competitive advantage. Saint Lucia is committed to Tourism standards. All service providers must be convinced of the immediate benefits of implementing standards. We are in the process of implementation of codes of standards for service providers to ensure that our industry is globally acceptable but competitive.

Air Services - Air service is a critical component of the tourism product. The success of any tourism destination lies not only in the ability to market itself, but its ability to get visitors to the destination.

Saint Lucia, like many other Caribbean destinations, is faced with increasing demands for airline subsidies and new route network financial support, be it in the form of seat guarantees, risk share arrangements or even disguised as marketing support. The added pressure on Government is that the significant financial contribution to these airlines is futile unless it is also augmented with corresponding destination marketing spend. Airlines need to see themselves also as partners. Government understands their concerns but together we must work to find ways of providing air service without financially overburdening or holding the destination to ransom.

Conclusion - The Government of Saint Lucia remains committed to the tourism industry. We need the support of our tourism partners in the UK to enable us to meet the challenges that may inhibit our goal of poverty reduction and economic prosperity. I am convinced that we are on the right track. I remain steadfast to my belief that it is only when every resident on the island can directly or indirectly receive or anticipate some economic benefit then the industry would have been truly successful.

I thank you for helping to make St Lucia’s tourism grow and prosper. Personally I have enjoyed the support of all of you and particularly the staff in our London office, our PR agency, the Chairman and members of SLTB. Working with you for St Lucia is indeed an honour.

I thank you and look forward to seeing you in St Lucia for The Perfect Match. I thank you.

NCC Offers Anger Management Workshop for Students

The National Crime Commission in collaboration with St. Lucia Junior Pride this week organized two workshops on anger management.

The workshops were held on April 18-19, for secondary school students in the north at the Dame Pearlette Primary School, Union, and the other was on April 20-21, at the Ministry of Education District Office in Vieux-Fort, for secondary school students in the south.

The workshops were conducted by Mr. Neville Graham, a Barbados-born expert in behaviour modification who

lives and works in Florida, USA and they also included local resource persons in related fields.

CEO of the National Crime Commission, Mr. Linwal James says these workshops with the St. Lucia Junior Pride are timely. “We hope students will explore the roots of their own anger and learn appropriate strategies of dealing with their personal anger”, Mr. James noted. “Also, the NCC hopes as well that the skills they learn can be used to help others in diffusing situations before they get out of control.”

RELOCATION OF ANSE LA RAYE BUS STAND

The Public is hereby informed that effective April 24th 2006 the following changes will be taking place on the Castries to Anse la Raye bus stand.

- 1.Route 3C will be temporarily relocated to lower Victoria Street, that is, next to Just Dreads.
- 2.Route 3B (Castries to Jacmel) will remain at their present location.

This change is to facilitate construction works within the vicinity of the present bus stand.

The Ministry wishes to apologize for any inconvenience caused.

National Heroes Monument Coming

The Government of Saint Lucia is expected to unveil a National Heroes Monument within the next fifteen (15) months.

The National Heroes Monument is part of a wider plan to establish a National Heroes Day in order to recognize persons who have made valuable and continue to make unique contributions to the development of Saint Lucia.

The Ministry of Social Transformation, Culture and Local Government signed an agreement with Saint Lucian artist Mr. Ricky George to design and produce a National Heroes Monument on Tuesday, April 18th, 2006. The design for the monument was reached through a national competition where Mr. George emerged the winner.

The monument will be located in a National Heroes Park the options being the George V Park in Castries and Prevost Park on the Morne. A committee has been commissioned to explore and select the better option. The cost of the statue is US\$156,900.00. The initial cost paid to Mr. George is US\$37,000.00, the contribution of the Government of Saint Lucia.

A National Heroes Park Steering Committee has been set up and it is anticipated that the Committee will raise the balance of funds through a national campaign.

SENIORS PACK NATIONAL STADIUM



The value of the National Stadium at Vieux fort was once more demonstrated on Easter Monday when the facility was packed to capacity by persons attending the Senior Games. The games, inaugurated just about three years ago, reported to be the biggest ever. The stadium was filled with Inter Secondary Schools Athletics Meet. This year the community of Mon Repos again emerged the champion district. The photographs on the left show a full section of the stadium.

Application Phase Best Chance To Get ICC CWC 2007 Tickets

In just over two weeks, cricket fans worldwide will begin the exciting process of applying for tickets to watch and enjoy next year's ICC Cricket World Cup in the Caribbean.

For three months, starting from May 1 and ending July 31, Phase 1 – Application of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 Public Ticketing programme will be rolled out online and, from May 2, at Ticket Centres in the nine Host Venues.

One of the primary aims of the ICC CWC 2007 Ticketing Unit – in conjunction with the Local Organising Committees (LOCs) – is to make this exercise as smooth and straightforward as possible.

ICC CWC 2007 Commercial Manager Stephen Price assured that “everyone will have a fair chance of applying for and being allocated tickets” and urged fans to ensure they have the best possible chance of attending the sport's most prestigious tournament by participating in the Application phase.

“In Phase 1 – the Application phase – fans have three months in which to apply for tickets. There are prices for every pocket and we anticipate great demand, both within the region and overseas, and it is possible that a very large percentage of the overall ticket pool could be allocated by the end of this, the first of three phases of Public Ticketing,” he noted.

Another reason which makes it doubly important for fans to seize advantage of the May-July stage of Public Ticketing is that it will be the only time at which they can apply for ‘Follow A Path’ or ‘Venue Combination’ packages.

“Anyone who does not submit an application for any of the package options during Phase 1 will have missed their chance to do so because we will not be offering these in Phases 2 and 3 of the Public Ticketing programme,” explained Price.

Presenting a step-by-step outline of the Application process, the ICC CWC Commercial Manager said that when a fan completes and submits a Ticket Application Form, either online or at a Ticket Centre, payment will be required in full for all tickets being sought. Ticket Centres will accept payment by cash, credit card or debit card while only Visa or MasterCard credit cards can be used for online applications. There can be a maximum of two applications per household.

“After the Application phase closes at the end of July, the Ticket Allocation process will be done in August. If a match is oversubscribed – that is if the demand exceeds the number of tickets available, then all ticket requests for that game will go to a ballot for tickets to be allocated randomly,” revealed Price.

“However, if a match is undersubscribed, all applicants requesting tick-

ets for that match will receive tickets. Thereafter, all applicants will be notified of which matches they have or have not been allocated tickets for. By early September, applicants will be fully refunded for any unallocated tickets.”

Phase 2 of Public Ticketing will run from September 1, 2006, to November 30, 2006. This stage will be conducted on a “first come, first served” basis with the remaining tickets again being available via the ICC CWC 2007 website and Ticket Centres.

The third and final phase of Ticketing runs from January 9, 2007, up to the morning of the Final on April 28, 2007 – again on the “first come, first served” principle – with actual seats being sold from the website, Ticket Centres or from Venue Box Offices in the Host Venues.

Prior to this, between December 1, 2006, and January 9, 2007, ticket sales will be closed while seat locations are assigned to all ticket purchasers and tickets are printed and prepared for distribution.

NOTE: Spokespersons from ICC CWC WI 2007 Inc. are available for interviews on Ticketing. All interview requests should be directed to the Media Relations Officer (see details below).

For further information contact Gayle Alleyne, Media Relations Officer, T: + 1 876 929-901, F: + 1 876 929-1178, M: + 1 876 999-0327, E: gayle.alleyne@cricketworldcup.com.



THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. April 22nd to Fri. April 28th, 2006

NTN – PROVIDING INFORMATION YOU NEED

Cultural icon Rameau Poleon plays the violin and speaks to the GIS about his life - Sat. April 22nd, 11:00 a.m.

Rebroadcast: “Feedback” The Minister for Education puts Universal Secondary Education into perspective - Sun. April 23rd, 10:30 a.m.

Residents of Skates Town benefit from a PRF project that has brought qualitative changes to their lives – Mon. April 24th, 8:30 p.m.

KiddiCrew.com (The latest one hour special) - Tuesday April 25th – 7:30 p.m.

Government Officials of the OECS tour an Exhibition Centre designed to showcase the artistic talent of citizens within the sub-region - Tues. April 25th, 8:30 p.m.

Know your constitutional rights when the GIS presents “ON A POINT OF LAW” - (Wednesdays & Fridays at 8 p.m. & Sundays at 11:00 a.m.)

Rebroadcast: NATION BEAT with Hon. Philip J Pierre – It's a programme you can't afford to miss! - Thurs. April 27th – 8:30 p.m.

Ahead of predictably another active Hurricane Season NTN revisits safety measures in building construction – Fri. April 28th – 7:30 p.m.

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

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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>