

Aug 20th 2021

FOCUSED GOVERNMENT PROVIDING FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Almost two weeks after the illegal protests called for by the opposition that was responsible for the assault and wounding of Prime Minister Gonsalves, the mood in SVG is one of calm with law-abiding citizens going about their business. The conversation on radio, in bars, on the “blocks’ and on social media is still dominated by that unprecedented event where a violent mob that resorted to disrupting traffic and lighting fires in the street, turned their anger on the country’s sitting Leader and inflicted injury on him that could have caused his death. Some are still in disbelief, questioning whether this is the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines we are building, and the quality of examples being set for the future generation of our country. The robust campaigning is normal, political picong and satire is acceptable, but never ever before have we seen or experienced political violence like this. The clarion call to those protesting by opposition vice president St. Clair Leacock, stating that the ‘peaceful’ has been removed from the protest, signaled the intention to do what they deemed necessary to draw attention to the issues being highlighted. One protester felt it necessary to hurl a missile at comrade Ralph on his way to Parliament, an action that achieved great success, wounding our beloved Comrade, causing his blood to spill on his white shirt. Upon return from Barbados where Comrade had some tests performed on the advice of the doctors at MCMH, he swiftly returned to the business of managing the affairs of the State, the job he was elected to do by the people of this country.

Rebuilding and Resettling in the Red Zone

A priority of the ULP administration is to oversee a smooth and orderly resettlement process of residents from communities in the red zone that have evacuated since the April 9, 2021 eruption of La Soufriere. Many of these residents who still live in emergency shelters have been anxious to return home to their properties and livelihoods, but were unable to do so because the “all-clear” had not been given for them to return. Much work in clearing and cleaning had to be done, as well as the restoring of pipe-borne water and electricity was ongoing in communities above the dry river. Exceptional work by BRAGSA, VINLEC and CWSA has finally seen a restoration of the amenities and significant work in clearing much of the large boulders and debris that prevented the free movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in some communities. The all-clear has now been given for residents to return home from August 23, 2021 and this news was met with excitement and relief by the very patient residents who are ready to return to their loved ones. The government can now focus on its promise to relocate a number of families whose homes have either been destroyed or are in areas that have been deemed unsafe. Comrade Ralph has assured residents that this caring ULP administration will not allow affected residents to “fend” for themselves, but continue in the tradition of assistance that will improve significantly the living circumstances of residents. Work will also begin on the Sandy Bay Secondary School and the Sandy Bay clinic as part of the continued improvement in infrastructure above the dry river.

Securing Citizen’s Health

Just this week, the first tranche of Pfizer vaccines arrived in the country, making it the third vaccine this government is making available

to its citizens. The level of vaccine hesitancy remains a concern, especially among our frontline workers and the government is doing its best to ensure that options in vaccines are available to citizens as continued efforts are made to get as many Vincentians vaccinated. The AstraZeneca, Sputnik V and now Pfizer are readily available here, while some countries in the region are still having difficulty sourcing vaccines for their citizens. This is remarkable and the government continues to encourage all Vincentians to get vaccinated and to those frontline workers that are at greater risk of contracting Covid-19, the encouragement is even stronger. This country has made great strides in acquiring vaccines that are safe, and effective in reducing the spread of Covid-19 and also in significantly reducing critical illness, hospitalisation and death from the virus. Vaccines remains the most effective tool yet in the tool box used in the fight against Covid-19 and the government has ensured that options are available to Vincentians. While the government doesn't intend to make the taking of the Covid-19 vaccine mandatory, it has become necessary in some positions that the taking of the vaccine be required to protect both the employee of the State and the general public from the severe impacts of Covid-19. The misinformation spread by some, designed to create political mischief through the use of fear, should be avoided and citizens should consult the guidance provided by the government in relation to the positions and their requirements.

Conclusion

The focus of the government, even in the aftermath of the violent, illegal protest that took place on August 6, 2021 remains steadfast on the management of the affairs of this country for the benefit of all its citizens and residents. The attempts by the opposition NDP and those sympathetic to its long-lived frustration on the parliamentary opposition benches have had no success in derailing the excellent work of the government. Many other areas could be discussed; the work in agriculture being done to assist farmers to get back up and running on their farms, the work in tourism with the first cruise call made in this country in almost 2 years are examples. The tourism story is most remarkable, as the work by the Ministry to create a bubble that would accommodate the cruise ship, proved quite effective and has been welcomed by the agents so that another ship is due to dock. If their intention was to topple the duly-elected government through the use of chaos and violence, they failed miserably as this ULP government was not shaken, but has remained resolute in its pursuit of a modern, post-colonial, competitive, many-sided economy, that is as once local, regional and global.