

July 15th 2022

SUPPORTING THOSE IMPACTED BY PORT DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The construction of a modern container port in capital city Kingstown will be the next major project undertaken by this Unity Labour Party administration, and will be the second largest capital project only to the Argyle International Airport. This new port will be approximately 16 acres and will have a transformative effect on the economy of this country, and is likely to position us as a viable alternative trans-shipment hub in this region. The vision to construct this modern port to replace the existing infrastructure is all part of the broader vision for this country and the creation of a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy that is at once local, national, regional and global. The fact that the government is at the point where the project has been launched is a remarkable story of resource mobilisation through funding agencies and other partnerships developed through our country's pragmatic foreign policy. The involvement of our funding partners indicates unequivocally the level of confidence they have in the project as conceptualized, and they have shown this by the level of their commitment to the implementation of the project. For example, the Caribbean Development Bank, has provided a loan of US\$110 million to the project and this amount represents the largest single loan ever disbursed by the bank in its 50 years of existence. Likewise, the government of the United Kingdom, our long-standing development partner and diplomatic ally, is providing a US\$36 million-dollar grant towards this project, through its Caribbean Infrastructure Fund (UKCIF), and this represents the largest payout by

this program in the Caribbean. As remarkable as this is, an even more amazing story lies in the manner in which this government has dealt with the individuals in the area who will be affected by the construction of the cargo port. Two sets of individuals: the families and individuals who lived on the waterfront and the fisherfolk and small shop owners based in that area were offered significant support by the government who required that these individuals relocate their homes and/or business operations. The level of support offered is unheard of in the history of this country and possibly anywhere in this region, and is worth discussing so that the country can have an idea of the efforts made by our government to offset and/or minimise any negative impact of the relocation.

Citizens Supported in their Dignified Relocation

Once the site at Rose Place (Bottom Town) was identified and confirmed as the location for the new container port, it was immediately clear that a number of families and individuals who lived on the waterfront would need to relocate. The majority of the residents lived in less than ideal accommodations that were quite informally and improperly constructed and lacked basic amenities, while others found temporary residence in rather odd circumstances. In addressing this situation, this government, the creator of the housing revolution in SVG, set out to provide proper support and assistance to all who would be impacted by the port project. Lands were identified at Lowman's Bay and 43 beautiful homes were constructed, which sparked the development of a new community complete with proper infrastructure and all amenities present. These homes were constructed as either one or two bedroom duplexes and 3 bedroom family homes at a cost of EC\$4.8 million to the government. Our funding partners were quite impressed with the way the government dealt with the relocation process and the residents themselves, most of whom have

already moved into their new homes are extremely pleased and excited with their new accommodations. Those individuals who were living in rather odd circumstances, were also given rental support as they themselves didn't own a structure on the waterfront. Notwithstanding the cost of constructing the houses to the government, the project impacted persons who were relocated to Lowman's Bay got their keys at no cost to them. In all, some 43 households are now relocated thanks to the generosity, and support of this ULP administration lead by Comrade Ralph that has always worked in the interest of working-class Vincentians.

Support for Fisherfolk and Small Business owners

The other component of this amazing story details the compensation offered to vendors, small business owners including fisherfolk who had to be relocated from the site at Rose Place. Since 2020, the government started the process of relocation, and this phase involved compensating approximately 56 vendors who plied their trade along the sea wall outside the Leeward bus terminal but needed to be removed. More recently, the government focused on providing compensation packages for small business owners and fisherfolk whose operations along the bay had to be relocated. For each registered fisherfolk, a generous compensation package of approximately EC\$18,000 to assist with fleet improvement, employee travel, shed relocation and other challenges that will arise as a result of the relocation. Already, about 35 registered fishers have been compensated and the government is working assiduously to complete all payments satisfactorily and conclude the relocation process now that the contractor has taken possession of the construction site. This particular component is being implemented at a cost to the government in excess of EC\$700,000. Additionally, the shops and small businesses at

the site have also been offered generous compensation totaling in excess of EC\$400,000 to ensure the survival of their businesses post relocation. The total figure of compensation for vendors, fisherfolk and small shop owners exceeds EC\$1.2 million and when added to the cost of housing program, the overall cost to the government will be approximately EC\$6 million dollars.

The transformational nature of the port project leads the current public discourse and that's quite understandable; however, the humanitarian side of this project where the government has ensured that all of the social safeguards are in place to mitigate against any negative impact on those impacted is equally remarkable. The ULP continues to get the small details right even as we focus on the successful implementation of those large projects of a transformational nature.