

March 24th 2023

TWENTY-TWO PROJECTS IN CELEBRATION OF 22 YEARS OF EXCELLENT GOVERNANCE IN SVG

Introduction

On March 28, 2023, the Unity Labour Party will celebrate 22 years of excellent governance of the affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This is a very significant milestone, as it is the longest, uninterrupted period of governance by a political party in this country pre or post-independence. Our great party that was founded on October 6th, 1994, had won the popular vote in the 1998 General Elections by a 55%-45% margin over the governing NDP, but narrowly lost the elections by an 8-7 margin. Encouraged by the strong showing, the comrades remained militant and by 2001, our ULP was able to win an overwhelming mandate of 12-3 as the people rejected the tired NDP and showed great confidence in the visionary team lead by Comrade Ralph. The ULP was ready to govern from day one and set about the business of implementing the policies and programs that the Vincentian voters had so enthusiastically supported during the campaigns and voted for on elections day. Twenty-two years later as we celebrate this milestone in governance, we look at twenty-two policy initiatives that were implemented by our government and helped to improve the lives of the citizens of SVG and transform this nation into one that is heading in the right direction. Every Vincentian has been impacted directly by one or more of these initiatives and can therefore testify to the positive changes their lives have experienced as a result.

Twenty-Two Transformative Policy Initiatives

We have chosen the following 22 policy initiatives but there are others that would not be included not because they aren't significant but because of the limited space allocated for this article. Let's begin the brief overview of the 22 initiatives chosen to mark this 22nd anniversary.

1. The education revolution: this policy is one of the most wide-ranging of the ULP administration and has touched every family in SVG. There are multiple components of this policy that makes it as broad as it is: the building of early childhood centres, the introduction of compulsory primary education, universal access to secondary education, the expansion of the A' Level College to a Community College that offers associate degrees and Bachelors, the increase of national scholarships from 2, to 72, negation of scholarships to Taiwan, Turkey, Wales, and Morocco, Azerbaijan and expanding existing scholarships, and the increase in the number of tuition scholarships from under 50 to more than 500. Much more can be said but we move on

2. Housing revolution: this is also multi-faceted with the construction of approximately 1000 low, middle and no-income houses constructed, the introduction of the Possessory Title Act, the selling of state lands to ordinary Vincentians at subsidized prizes, the 100% mortgage program introduced by the then NCB.
3. Home help for the elderly: this program provides government-funded assistance to the shut-in elderly through the availability of an aid who visits the home of the client and offers homecare services.
4. Bridge construction: over the period 2001-2022 several natural disasters have destroyed bridges that had to be rebuilt and made climate resilient. More recent the government has built bridges in London and Overland and the very memorable bridge at Rabacca connecting the Northeast to the rest of the island.
5. The development of a solar park on Union Island that can power that island for 24 hours.
6. The transformation of the healthcare sector through the construction of the Modern Medical Complex in Georgetown, the building of policlinics and the upgrade of health facilities across the country.
7. On the job training through the implementation of the YES, SET and ONSITE programs.
8. Construction of the \$30m fisheries complex in Owia and the upgrade of the Kingstown fish market and fisheries on Bequia.
9. The construction of satellite warehouses on mainland and in the Grenadines that allow for more efficient response to clean up in natural disasters.
10. The installing of sea and river defenses across the country to protect against flooding and rising sea levels.
11. The construction of Learning Resource Centres across the country that provide accommodation for community activities and social functions.
12. The construction of sporting facilities across the country and upgrading of other facilities, including fencing and lighting to accommodate night games.
13. Support for entrepreneurship and business start-up through the PRYME program.
14. The regular increase in the public assistance program from \$50 in 2001 to \$275-\$300 currently
15. The regular increase in salaries for government workers, of more than 60% as well as increasing the minimum wage on 3 occasions over the period of governance.
16. Reduction in the personal and corporate tax from 40% to 28%, while increasing the tax threshold from \$12000 per year to \$22000 per year, giving workers greater disposable income.
17. Improving the standing of SVG, regionally and internationally and causing this country to be elected the Chair of the 5th committee on the UNGA, the Vice President and then President of ECOSOC, the Pro Tempore President of CELAC and the Smallest country to ever be elected as a non-permanent of the UN Security Council,

18. Constructing a modern library that's conducive to learning through research replacing the previously unfit location that our students were forced to occupy.
19. Securing debt-forgiveness of approximately \$200m incurred from the failed Ottley Hall Marina project, removing a significant debt burden off the backs of Vincentians.
20. Support for farmers by way of free or subsidized fertilizer and seeds; the fleet expansion program funded by the government in partnership with private sector entities, that will assist fisherfolk improve the efficiency of their trade.
21. The development and upgrade of recreational sites across the country that offer proper bathroom and other facilities and the naming of the Chatoyer National Park at Rabacca in honor of the country's first National Hero.
22. Airport development that includes the construction of the jetport in Canouan and the construction of the Argyle International Airport, the largest capital project ever to be undertaken in the history of this country.

This list is by no means exhaustive as many other projects, completed or ongoing could be added to this list. This Sunday as we celebrate with our government, we have much to be thankful for as we look back on how far we have come and how these projects have impacted our lives.