

The ULP, moving the 2018 work plan into top gear

by

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Introduction

Vincentians will have noticed that the ULP administration has ramped up its socio-economic development workload, with the official opening of several government projects, and the announcement of plans for some new enterprises. All this is happening at a time when the world economy is still affecting the countries in the Caribbean, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in a negative way.

And so the ULP administration has had to ramp up its strategies to deal with the effects of a hostile external economic environment. The success of this can be seen in the fact that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is perhaps one of the few countries in the Caribbean, who has not sought the services of the International Monetary Fund, the IMF. Countries who encounter economic challenges, seek the services of the IMF, to get out of their financial difficulties. The country of Barbados is a case in point. The new Barbados government has had to introduce a number of tax measures aimed at raising much needed revenue. Before that, the Barbados government was forced to reduce the size of the public service, and workers were sent home. It is safe to say that things don't look so good for the average worker in Barbados.

Here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the fiscal policies and leadership provided by the ULP administration has resulted in the country keeping an even keel during the current economic crisis and turbulent times. And now the ULP is ramping up its activities, to bring more economic benefits to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Projects

The Central Leeward corridor is set to benefit from some serious construction work in the tourism sector, as the PACE group out of Canada, intensifies its activities to construct the Black Sands Resort, a complex with 40 villas, and a two hundred room hotel, in the Mt. Wynne Peters-Hope area. Construction work is well on the way, and a number of persons from the constituencies of Central Leeward, South Leeward, and North Leeward, are being employed.

When Black Sands is completed, it will employ over 300 persons in the hospitality sector. Additionally, specialists like masons, carpenters, electricians and plumbers, will be in demand, and persons with these skills will find jobs with the

resort. Farmers too will find Black Sand as a market for their produce, especially vegetables and fresh fruit.

Now the government has announced that it has been given approval for a loan of US\$50 million from the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan, for the construction of a hotel in the Mt. Wynne area. If everything goes to plan, the government will break ground towards the end of 2018, for the construction of a 100 room hotel, which will employ some 200 persons. In reality, some EC\$310 million dollars will be spent on construction in the Central Leeward area, and there will be a lot of activity, and jobs for people. Voters in the Central Leeward area, will love the ULP for this!!

Diagnostic centre

Next week the ULP administration will officially open the diagnostic centre in Georgetown. This is a new era in the provision of health care in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. A range of new services will now be available to the citizens of this country, especially those living in the north and central areas.

Already the NDP has started a destructive campaign against the new hospital, claiming that it is located in an area that will be affected by the La Soufriere volcano. Well if we follow this doctrine, all the people in North Leeward and North Windward, as well as North Central Windward, would move their residency towards the south of the island. What foolishness!!

The opening ceremony will attract address from Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, the driving force behind the project, and the Minister of Health, Luke Browne. The diagnostic centre opens up opportunity for our nurses and doctors to practice new skills. Once operational, the centre will ease the pressure on the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. For example, residents north of the village of Biabou, can go to Georgetown for medical services, rather than the MCMH. Essential medical services such as dialysis, which is very important for kidney patients, will be offered at the diagnostic centre.

Conclusion

This week the ULP administration improved the capacity of the services of the Coast Guard, through the provision of a third "safe-boat", compliments the government of the United States. The men and women of the Coast Guard have been doing a tremendous job, securing our coastline, and offering rescue and medical evacuation services to the people of the Grenadines. The stories behind these rescue missions are still to be told.

This week also, the ULP government official opened a Green House Park in the Montreal area, as part of a drive to supply affordable and wholesome fresh fruit and vegetables regularly, to domestic, regional and international markets. The

facility was funded by the European Union as part of the BAM initiative, at a cost of 1.5 million Euros.

Sometime in the month of July, the ULP administration will sign an agreement with the Rain Forest Seafood company of Jamaica, with respect to a US\$3.5 million dollar investment in the fisheries sector. This is exciting news for our fisher folk and jobs and revenue are in store.

Soon the government will be announcing more concrete plans for projects like the new city at Arnos Vale, the acute referral centre, the geothermal project, and the expansion to Port Kingstown.