

**December 16<sup>th</sup> 2022**

## **LEADERSHIP, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Introduction**

The debate on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the financial year 2023, took place on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022. The Honourable minister of Finance presented on the Estimates and laid out the total estimated figures for the period and as is the practice initiated the debate by giving an overview of where the government intends to raise the revenue and the anticipated expenses over the same period. The debate on the estimates is a confirmation of the priorities of the government over the next year allowing the ministers to detail the focus of their ministries for 2023. We cannot ignore the significance of the period that we are in, even as we can agree that we have made tremendous strides in our recovery efforts made necessary by the challenges of the last 2 years. Listening to the presentations by the members on the government side, it is clear that our Unity Labour Party administration is proceeding with its agenda of sustainable development through the construction of a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy, that is at once local, regional and global. The parliamentary opposition remains stuck and unable to propose anything forward thinking, preferring instead to look forward to the past, rewriting history claiming their period of stewardship to be more than it was. The ULP continues to execute its policies through projects and programs at a blistering pace of implementation that is causing much confusion among the members of the opposition who continue to scramble to stitch together talking points in an effort to remain relevant, or at the least, keep their base engaged. Unfortunately, incoherent, overused talking points are finding it difficult to stand up against the reality of good governance, growth and development that our country continues to experience under the ULP, led by our experienced and knowledgeable Comrade Ralph.

### **Leadership That Works**

Poll after poll continue to show that Comrade Ralph is preferred at least 2:1 over any other person in political leadership in SVG, and this view is held even by those who support the opposition. It is an irony, that Vincentians who may favor the opposition NDP, were relieved, happy even that Comrade Ralph was in charge during the Covid-19 Pandemic into the period of volcanic eruptions and other disasters. The Comrade leads a government that's transparent and

accountable, continuously ensuring that good governance is a central element on which the policies of the ULP administration continues to function. It is this type of leadership that has prepared the next generation of leaders in the ULP who will continue the great work of the party, to ensure that our party continues to work in the interest of all Vincentians. While the opposition continues to preach doom and gloom, blaming Comrade Ralph for the impacts of the global turmoil; rising fuel prices, rising food prices and the general increase in inflation, Vincentians have benefitted from the policies of the government that were implemented swiftly and efficiently, to protect lives and livelihoods. Not every policy would result in revenue generating activities, such as health, education, climate adaptation and others, but they are no less important, in fact, they are existential and must be pursued vigorously. This is the leadership of our country that protects the elderly, the young and other vulnerable citizens through a well-developed social safety net that is consistently being expanded, deepens the education revolution by building on the gains, decentralizing and improving healthcare delivery, constructing river and sea defenses even as we never default on any debt and ensuring that employees in the state sector are paid on time. The ULP leadership makes all of this look extremely easy, and this sets the bar extremely high as Vincentians expect this level of efficiency every time, on every issue, but while the ULP is extremely efficient in government, it's not perfect which is why our leadership communicates directly with our people to update and inform regularly.

### **Economic Growth and Sustainable Development**

Our government understands perfectly that economic growth must not come at the expense of our patrimony, sovereignty nor the physical environment of our nation. In short, development must be sustainable. The protection of our patrimony and sovereignty is the reason why the government has insisted that our passports are not for sale, the role of citizen is the highest office in the land, and it will not be auctioned off for a few pieces of silver. Those who hinge their political success on such a policy, present it as their golden plan that will solve all the economic challenges our country faces, but this policy is not a sustainable option for development. Since the construction and operationalization of the AIA, there has been a significant increase in public and private sector investment in our country in hotel and tourism, agriculture fisheries and port development to name a few. These investments together will transform SVG's economy by creating good paying jobs and spurring local entrepreneurship in cottage industries as well as the performing arts. Our country's trajectory coming out of the two years of convulsion is one of growth, with .8% growth achieved in 2021 and approximately 6% projected in 2022

with further anticipated growth in 2023. As SVG begins the construction of the modern port in Kingstown and other ongoing construction continues, the result in 18-24 months will be remarkable as we finally begin to see first-hand the fruits of the promised economic take-off. The education revolution has prepared our country to provide the adequately trained workers, both in mainstream academics as well as in the skilled sectors that will be in high demand. We recognize that we need to accelerate further training in other areas, specifically technical vocational areas, and that is being given priority with the creation of the Department of Higher Education with Comrade Ralph as Minister.

Our country's modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy is taking shape before our very eyes, and it is a direct product of exceptional leadership that understands the role of good governance to drive economic growth and sustainable development.