

June 7th 2019

A summer of construction work

Introduction

As a political entity, the ULP administration is fully committed to providing the resources for our children, as they embark on the journey provided by the Education Revolution, and climb the ladder to intellectual success. As far back as 2001, when the ULP came to power, it met the country's schools and related buildings in a mess.

Young Vincentians will not remember that some of their parents, uncles and aunts, had to endure the indignity of a shift system, where they were forced to attend half day school, simply because the facilities were in a very poor state. For some reason, the NDP regime at the time could not find the resources, to make the repairs to the schools. It was indeed a chaotic situation.

It took the ULP administration and a team of workers led by the indefatigable Senator Julian Francis, to repair a number of schools in the State. Over the period of the long August holidays, they worked to replace doors and windows, toilet sets, and in some cases build extra classrooms for our deserving students. One must remember the criticisms from the Opposition that the ULP administration was building plywood board schools for our students.

16 million dollars in school repairs

Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves has announced that this summer, and going forwards, the ULP administration will spend just over sixteen million dollars in school repairs, here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This applies to primary and secondary schools, and several technical centres. To begin with, there will be repair work done to the Campden Park Technical Institute, the Kingstown Technical Institute, the Barrouallie Technical Institute, and the Georgetown Technical Institute. Great attention will be paid to the various laboratories at these institutions, particular those having to do with science and technical work.

The JP Eustace secondary school will get a serious face-lift as the government has allocated some two million dollars for work on the science laboratory at that school. That project will be conducted by a local company called Bally and Bally. In fact a number of local companies will be involved in this major repair exercise, and people, including carpenters, masons, plumbers and electricians, will get work.

It is important to note that the ULP will repair some 90 schools in the state, at a cost of EC6.5 million dollars. Most of this exercise will include replacing windows and louvers, stop leakages, renovating bathrooms, and replacing doors and locks. Again, a number of local companies will be involved in this exercise and people will get jobs.

Some schools will be treated differently since their repair work will be extensive. So for example schools like the Kingstown Government and the Kingstown Anglican are in this bracket, since temporary facilities will have to be found for the children, while their schools are being repaired. In other words, the government is committed to ensuring that the process of learning will continue, while the schools are being repaired.

Other construction work

Under the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF), three primary schools will get some attention in terms of school repairs. These are the primary schools at Calliaqua, Park Hill and New Grounds. In some cases, the repair work will be extensive, as in the case of the Calliaqua Anglican Primary school.

The ULP administration has reached an agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank for a Schools Improvement Project. Some nine schools will receive attention in this regard. They are, the Grammar School, Girls High School, Thomas Saunders Secondary, St. Clair Dacon Secondary, Sandy Bay Secondary, Bequia Community High School, Kingstown Anglican Primary, Barrouallie Anglican Primary and the Barrouallie Government School.

Then there will be the construction of two pre-schools which will be located in Biabou and Richland Park. This will take the number of government pre-schools in the country to thirteen. It is interesting to note how the Early Childhood Education Programme has taken off in the country, since the government has become involved. A number of private operated pre-schools have been provided with assistance in a number of ways, and they have been able to lift their standards, in the provision of early childhood education for our young kids. This increases their level of their learning readiness, as they prepare for primary education.

Conclusion

It is clear that as citizens, we all have a role to play in preserving the educational facilities in the State. This is a matter that cannot be left to the State alone. All of us, parents, teachers, children, and public administrators, have a responsibility to ensure that our schools are in good order, and that they are not damaged. To be sure, hundreds of thousands of children attending primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the State, will create some pressure for buildings. But if our children

and teachers are careful and responsible, this will reduce the damage to our schools.

The ULP administration is committed to providing the nation's children with the facilities which are necessary to enhance their learning, but as a nation, we have to do a better job, when it comes to the preservation of our school buildings.