

June 19th 2020

**PRYME Program:
Another Example of the ULP Putting Confidence in our Youth**

Introduction

During the debate in the House of Assembly, on the 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the Minister of Finance, Hon. Camillo Gonsalves unveiled a very innovative initiative, “PRYME,” (Promoting Youth Micro Enterprise), intended to foster the entrepreneurial spirit of our youths. While members of the opposition NDP in their presentations spoke positively of PRYME, when the time came to vote on the Bill, there was a loud “NAY!” from the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. The Hon. Godwin Friday, trumpeting their rejection of the Bill. Indeed, not a single member of the Opposition present, broke rank with their leader. Thankfully the Government had enough votes to ensure its passage, thereby securing the promise of PRYME.

This isn't the first time the NDP refused to vote on policies that would positively impact our young, the future of this nation. The record shows they voted against the education revolution, and against the provision of government-secured student loans for disadvantaged students, with the presumptuous claim that the beneficiaries would not honour their obligations to service their loans. They didn't support the expansion of classrooms to make way for universal access to secondary education, rejecting it as “watering down the education system”. There are many other examples where they refused to show faith in our youth, thereby betraying this country's future!

The ULP knows that the energies, skills, talents and great ambitions of our youths are to be harnessed, made manifest through the practical display of our faith in them. PRYME is our latest example of this genuine faith.

The Start the Youth Need

From the very beginning of the ULP's governance, PM Gonsalves has loudly and consistently trumpeted the mantra "let the youths soar like eagles with their wings unclipped." And we have walked the talk blazing a path of providing opportunities for the youth to excel in every positive endeavour. This has been the lived reality of this government as seen through its implementation of many policies that directly benefit youth in the fields of education, housing, agriculture, private sector development and appointments in the public service to name a few. PRYME is tremendous, but no surprise. The ULP will not play with our future!

From an initial EC\$2.7 million dollars, PRYME was increased to over EC\$3 million as part of the Covid-19 stimulus package. Our enterprising young persons are encouraged to apply for grants ranging from \$2500 to \$40,000 to be used as start-up capital for small businesses or as capital injection for existing ones. Even after its launch, NDP members and supporters called it a political gimmick, playing party politics with the future of our youth. Then came the first batch of awardees, where 81 young people received grants totaling over \$300,000, and all excited to get down to business. And so, the Opposition is singing a new "Sanky," "We supported PRYME.

This is not surprising as PRYME is now the talk of the town. Indeed, hundreds of applications are being made every week. So popular is PRYME that the government had to extend it to persons over 40 years old, introducing PRYME+ (Promoting Your Micro Enterprise) thereby embracing the more mature entrepreneurs who are equally excited about this great opportunity.

The vision, care and economic intelligence of this government dictate that in this time of reduced spending due to the global pandemic, our economy needs active stimulation. What better way than to give the youth the opportunity to use their abundant creative entrepreneurial energies for the good of this nation. The most exciting thing about PRYME program is the fact that these are grants, freeing these infant businesses from the burden of repayment. This was too much for the NDP.

They are now mooting a counter PRYME, telling the nation it is indeed better for youths to saddle themselves and their startups with loans from a still-in-dream-works development bank. Ludicrous is too good an adjective to describe this anti-reason falsely called an idea. The absolute absurdity of that suggestion was laid

bare in the NDP's inability to gain any traction from young people! Dr Friday in an interview kept referring to the grant program as offering free money. The NDP thinks that offering SVG's youth opportunities to start and grow their businesses through grants, is something to frown upon. They never felt that way when they were handing off State-owned businesses to wealthy friends at giveaway prices. This is an insult to the intelligence of our young people. They will NOT be denied by the NDP. They will fulfil their promise with the help of PRYME.

Conclusion

The offering of PRYME during the Covid-19 pandemic, is solid testimony of the ULP administration's confidence in the young people of SVG to rise to any challenge this country may face. The government hedged its bets on SVG's youth knowing that they have been and will always be part of the solution. We honestly wish we could say the same about the Opposition NDP! Youth is a great engine in our economic development. It has the vitality, creativity and carries the tremendous promise of our brighter tomorrow.

PRYME is BUT the latest example of how this ULP administration led by PM Gonsalves continue to engage the youth, displaying faith in them by providing opportunities for them to excel in every aspect of our lives including our economic development. The youth is very central to the idea of the SVG the ULP is building day by day and handing over to them. To date, PRYME has attracted more than 1500 applications, and continues to do so at a rate of more than 100 per week! As Dr. Gonsalves has promised, we shall give them every opportunity to make sure they "soar like eagles, with their wings unclipped".