

March 25th 2022

BETTER FACILITIES FOR OUR SPORTSMEN/WOMEN THROUGH CONTINUED INVESTMENTS

Introduction

The current athletic season is turning out to be a very busy one as schools and national athletics clubs engage in their yearly events across Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. On Friday March 11, 2022, the Cumberland playing field was the venue of quite the spectacle as the Troumaca Ontario Secondary School, hosted the All Leeward Secondary School Athletics Meet, that included the other schools on the Leeward side of the island: Bethel Secondary, Buccament Bay Secondary, Central Leeward Secondary and Petit Border Secondary. The meet produced some extremely exciting races with photo finishes as athletes gave their all on the field to give their eventual schools bragging rights as champion of athletics in all of Leeward. As we look back on the well-executed athletics event, we pause for a moment and acknowledge that prior to 2015, hosting an event such as this one would have been impossible since North Leeward had no such facility that could accommodate an activity of this type. This situation holds true for a number of communities across the country where brand new facilities have been constructed and the significant work done on existing facilities. The Comrade Ralph lead Unity Party Lead government has made significant investments in sports and sporting facilities across the country since coming into office in 2001. This significant investment in sporting facilities can be seen from Rose Bank and Rose Hall in North Leeward, to Sandy Bay in North Windward and communities between. The physical improvements in sporting facilities along with the work of the sportsmen/women and their

coaches have together been responsible for improved performances in many sporting disciplines in local as well as regional events

Local Communities and Economies benefit

It would be extremely easy to list from “A-Z” the communities across the country where new multi-purpose facilities that have been constructed or upgraded costing millions of dollars. This while necessary, since the facilities are all there as physical evidence of the government’s commitment to sport development doesn’t preclude the notable mention of some communities such as Rose Hall, Bowman’s Hill (Grand Gate), Green Hill and Choppins, that all now have brand new facilities that can host netball and basketball. What is most exciting is the fact that in the case of Cumberland that was referenced in the introduction and Park Hill, these two beautiful facilities host regional Under-19 cricket games. Just imagine communities in North Leeward and North Central Windward are hosting regional competitions, a marvel by any stretch of the imagination and something to be proud of. It takes vision to depart from the status quo of hosting regional competitions in Arnos Vale and Kingstown, to recognising the potential of areas in rural Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that are capable of hosting such games. The investment in facilities and the subsequent hosting of games in regional cricket games in Cumberland and Park Hill and football in Chile, Georgetown, goes beyond sports and contributes to the economies of those communities. What vision! The empty statement by a candidate for the NDP, that on his return to SVG after being out for 20 years, he saw no improvements in sporting facilities, smacks of the kind of blatant dishonesty associated with the hapless NDP so desperate for power they would do and say anything. In the meantime, the government remains focus on further developing sporting facilities to facilitate the further development of sports in SVG.

The Future Looks Bright

Minister of Finance Hon. Camillo Gonsalves outlined the plans of the government to continue its investment in sports through budget 2022, the following is an excerpt of his budget address:

“Budget 2022 marks the beginning of a multi-year programme of rehabilitation for the Arnos Vale Sporting Complex that will include work to repair spectator seating and install an electronic scoreboard and replay screen. A total of \$1 million is allocated this year, with the procurement and installation of the electronic scoreboard timed to coincide with the opening of additional hotel rooms, which Cricket West Indies has cited as an impediment to our hosting of major matches. Whether or not the availability of hotel rooms is applicable in an era of Pandemic-limited crowds is an open question. But we continue to work towards the maintenance and upgrade of what is one of the region’s most picturesque cricketing facilities.

Last June, World Athletics, the international governing body for the sport of athletics formerly known as the IAAF, certified the track at the Sir Vincent Beache National Stadium in Diamond as fit for high-level track and field events. The newly-certified track is at the heart of our plans to create a first-class athletics and football facility in Diamond. Already, we are excited by the steady stream of young athletes and athletic clubs taking advantage of the track surface for training purposes. Budget 2022 invests an additional \$4.2 million in building out facilities around the track – a process that was delayed by the volcanic eruptions. This year, the stadium site will be enhanced with restrooms, parking, field irrigation, administrative offices, a roof for the existing seating, and state-of-the-art equipment. Enhancement of the grounds and spectator mound will also continue

in 2022. By year's end, the facility will be sufficiently equipped to host regional events. In 2023 we shall construct a dedicated warm-up track adjacent to the main facility, enabling it to host international events.

Within walking distance of the Sir Vincent Beache National Stadium is the Brighton Home for Football, which received a multimillion dollar upgrade this year from the SVG Football Federation. We have recently concluded negotiations with the Football Federation to ensure that the facility will receive improved spectator seating and upgraded amenities in 2022, while remaining accessible to members of the community. To have these two top-class athletic and football facilities within walking distance of each other – where only cow pastures existed before – is an eloquent example of the many positive changes taking place before our eyes, even in the midst of tremendous challenge.”