

March 27th 2020

Excerpts from the 2020 Budget Address

Health and Wellness

Introduction

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health remains at the forefront of the minds of our government and the Vincentian public. This year the Government has increased healthcare spending every year that it has been in office. From \$50.6 million in 2001, this Government will spend \$103.7 million in 2020. From 66 doctors, we now employ 113. From 526 nurses, we now have 678. We spent \$6.9 million on medicine, now we spend \$15.4 million. Our commitment to the national healthcare apparatus is tangible.

In 2019, as promised in last year's budget, the Government opened two top-class clinics in Buccament and Chateaubelair. The Government also refurbished and reopened the Levi Latham Health Centre in Mesopotamia. Coupled with the world-class Modern Medical Complex in Georgetown, now in its second year of operations, these facilities represent an unparalleled advance in the quality of our healthcare infrastructure and a welcome decentralization of primary health services.

The MMDC

The Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre continues to expand the Healthcare services offered to Vincentians. In 2019, its accident and emergency division received 10,169 visits, and an additional 3,870 visits from non-emergency patients, like those seeking oncology, ophthalmology, gastroenterology and nephrology services. The Outpatient department saw an additional 3,000 visitors. Staff at the Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre performed 974 surgical procedures, administered 5,869 X-rays, 5,587 ultrasounds, 1,100 EKGs and conducted 125 chemotherapy sessions. The Pharmacy Department in Georgetown filled 10,578 prescriptions.

Visiting medical missions from our generous friends in Taiwan and Palestine provided cardiology and acupuncture services, repaired hernias and performed testicular surgeries to the benefit of over 150 patients. As predicted in the 2019 Budget Speech, all of these numbers represent increases over the 2018 data. The Modern Medical Diagnostic Centre continues to grow and expand its services our people.

The A&E at MMDC now sees about 50% as many patients as that of the MCMH. While the A&E at MMDC is visited roughly 850 times per month, the department at MCMH

receives approximately 1,700 monthly patients. Similarly, MMDC performs, on average, 80 surgeries per month, compared with over 200 at the MCMH.

New Facilities

The recently-opened Levi Latham Health Complex, Buccament Polyclinic and Chateaubelair Smart Hospital have significantly expanded the reach and scope of medical care. The Levi Latham Health Complex was operational for the last eight months of 2019, and saw 1,843 cases at its accident and emergency unit. Levi Latham welcomed 1,073 visits to the 37 sessions held with the District Medical Officer in 2019. Additionally, 344 Children were seen for child health sessions and three children were delivered at the facility. The Hospital at the Health Complex had 309 admissions.

The Buccament Polyclinic was similarly busy. At this new facility, in operation for the last seven months of 2019, there were 4,230 clinic visits that were seen by a doctor. The Polyclinic dealt with 359 casualties, welcomed 143 visits for diabetes and hypertensive care, and saw hundreds more visits for family planning services, pap smears, and pre- and post-natal care. One baby was also born at the Polyclinic.

The Chateaubelair Smart Hospital, in turn, saw 4,745 casualties, admitted 112 for further care, delivered seven babies, and referred 169 patients to the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital in the nine months since its opening. The residents of the North Leeward District now enjoy vastly improved, 24-hour, primary care service.

In sum, these new facilities in Georgetown, Buccament, Mesopotamia and Chateaubelair received well over 30,000 visits in 2019. Prior to 2019, many of those visitors would have taken the long trip to Kingstown to cram themselves into the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. Worse, many of them may have decided to delay or forego medical care altogether.

By taking quality primary healthcare to the people, we are making a healthier Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Budget 2020 continues the Government's focus on improving the quality of our clinics and the medical care offered in all corners of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Following on the heels of last year's \$6.5 million investment in school repairs, Budget 2020 will spend \$7.8 million on refurbishing, equipping and upgrading medical facilities in Barrouallie, Bequia, Buccament, Calliaqua, Cedars, Chateaubelair, Clare Valley, Georgetown, Greiggs, Mayreau, Sandy Bay, Sion Hill, Stubbs and Union Island. An additional \$1 million will be spent to upgrade the outpatient clinic at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. This \$8.8 million is an unprecedented investment in the quality of existing medical facilities, and further evidence of the Government's commitment to the health and wellbeing of all Vincentians.

The Acute Referral Hospital

Last year's budget speech discussed the Government's progress in constructing a 140-bed acute referral hospital at the site of the decommissioned ET Joshua Airport in Arnos Vale. The renowned global architectural firms of Pinearq and Mallol Arquitectos, of Spain and Panama, respectively, were hired to complete the designs for the hospital. Pinearq and Mallol have extensive experience in designing medical facilities throughout Europe and Latin America. To date, structural designs have been submitted, and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing designs are nearing completion. All final designs will be submitted in March 2020. The Government is finalising funding arrangements for the construction of this facility, and expects to begin construction in 2021.

As discussed elsewhere in this Address, the Government is proud of its decision to relocate the residents of the Lewis Punnett Home from their unsatisfactory accommodations in Glen. The \$3 million temporary facility is superior to the former Lewis Punnett Home in every respect. However, it is only a temporary home. Budget 2020 allocates \$400,000 for the demolition and design of a new Lewis Punnett Home at its original location. We look forward to welcoming those residents to a new first class facility in East Saint George in the coming years.