

October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021

## **CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESSES AT THIS TIME OF INDEPENDENCE**

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### **Introduction**

On Wednesday October 27, 2021), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would celebrate 42 years as an independent nation. As a relatively young nation, we have made considerable strides over the period since gaining independence, with successive administrations doing their part to achieve national development. It however is an indisputable fact that no other administration has done more in a similar timeframe to advance the development of this country as the current ULP administration. Since coming into office in 2001, the ULP has undertaken a number of transformative projects that are having the desired effects in improving the living, working and social conditions of citizens and residents. From “big ticket” national projects to small community-oriented activities, the ULP has ensured that the policies and programs implemented provide benefits to all Vincentians. In celebrating our independence this year, there are a number of successes we have achieved as a country that have come through the vision of our leaders and the determination and perseverance our people. SVG has made great strides in the last 20 years and we can truly be proud of the journey thus far, confident that we have laid a solid foundation in preparation for future generations. This journey has not been an easy one, as unpatriotic forces have fought the progress of SVG at every point, preferring to sacrifice national development on the altar

of political expediency. History would show that on every developmental issue proposed and implemented by this ULP administration, the opposition New Democratic Party opposed and fought vehemently, even while sporadically, paying lip service, pretending support of some kind. The shortsightedness of the NDP that produced the jaundiced reasoning “if this project succeeds, then Ralph Gonsalves would look good” caused them to constantly adopt the position, “once NDP wins, it doesn’t matter if SVG loses”.

### **Victory in the Face of Obstructionism**

It is no exaggeration that the progressive agenda of the ULP administration has and continues to be met with obstructionist opposition from the NDP in an attempt to derail the forward march of this country. The efforts by this government to remove the chains and shackles of poverty and underdevelopment that plagued this nation for 17 years received very little if any support, parliamentary or otherwise, from the NDP. In the meantime, while they firmly planted their position on the wrong side of history, Vincentians saw the introduction of a number of initiatives, the success of which have been key to their improved living standards.

All can remember the response of the NDP to the three-pronged approach to housing that has led to the significant increase in homeownership by Vincentians especially those in the public sector. The introduction of 100% mortgages to public workers, the low- and middle-income housing program and the distribution of title to state-owned lands to those who occupied them, served as a springboard to housing construction and ownership. The NDP, through its leadership, argued that the 100% mortgage would bankrupt the lending institution, that the low-income houses were matchboxes and as such never supported those programs. Today many Vincentians can

celebrate owing the success associated with homeownership and reflect on where this country has come in relation to the quality of the housing stock over the last 20 years.

The motion on the education revolution tabled in Parliament received no support from the opposition NDP, but the government forged ahead with this very forward-thinking policy. The NDP insisted that such a move should not be contemplated before 2030 and that attempts by the government to increase spaces in schools amounted to a watering down of the education system. They also refuse to support the disadvantaged student loan program where the government secured loans for students to attend university. Today, many parents will celebrate the success of their children at CPEA as well as the placement of their children in a secondary school even though they didn't pass the exit exam. Hundreds of families celebrate the results at O'level, and A'level, university scholarships and other forms of financial assistance, as well as the graduation of their relatives and love ones from universities around the world.

The Argyle International Airport and the Rabacca bridge are two projects that were not only unsupported, but severely ridiculed by the opposition NDP and their spokespersons. The AIA was to be a peanut patch, a golf course, was to never be completed, never see planes landing and similarly the Rabacca bridge was not possible and would be washed away by the first heavy rainfall. Today both projects stand tall as reminders that once we are willing to dream big, we can achieve with hard work and determination. The Rabacca bridge has opened up a world of opportunities to communities to its north and the AIA is easily our country's gateway to the world. Vincentians continue to marvel at these two engineering wonders and celebrate at every opportunity their construction and the potential they carry for overall national development. These major products are not the results of colonialism, instead they came from the native creativity, handwork and dedication of a people exposed to native genocide and

chattel slavery. Our fore-parents would be immensely proud, and on this occasion of the 42nd anniversary of independence, we can celebrate with pride.

## **Conclusion**

As we look forward to the celebration of this country's 42nd anniversary of independence, we have so many successes to celebrate which were achieved over the last 20 years through excellent creative leadership, hard work and dedication. While we mentioned only a few we can also discuss our amazing work at the United Nations, serving as Vice President and President of ECOSOC and being elected on the Security Council, (the smallest nation ever to achieve this), as major international accomplishments. The celebration of our independence this year must include the celebration of the many successes we have achieved as a nation and a firm resolution from each individual to do his/her part to ensure our country's continued success.

Happy Independence, SVG!