

REMEMBRANCE AND CONTINUING GOOD NEWS

ONE YEAR AFTER BERYL

On July 1, 2024, a Category 4 Hurricane by the name of “Beryl” struck SVG. The immediate consequences were: Seven deaths; and damage and loss of approximately EC \$1 billion or nearly one-third of our country’s annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — the measurement for the aggregate value of all the goods and services produced in a country in a given year. One year later we still mourn the deaths of our loved ones; and we continue to rebuild magnificently, in solidarity. On every metric, the relief, recovery, and reconstruction have gone very well; but there is still much work to be in building back better, stronger, and more resilient.

CRITICAL AREAS OF DAMAGE AND LOSS

The worst hit areas by far were in the Southern Grenadines: Canouan, Mayreau, Union Island, and the resort islands of Palm Island, and Petit St. Vincent. In the area of housing (damage and loss in the whole of SVG estimated at EC \$485 million — some 6,000 houses), immense progress has been made: In Canouan, some 95 percent of the houses were damaged or destroyed; almost all have been fixed or rebuilt; in Mayreau, only four of the houses remain to be addressed; in Union Island where almost every house was damaged or destroyed, over 80 percent of the roofs have fixed and, overall, over 65 percent of the houses have been rebuilt. On mainland St. Vincent and Bequia, similar progress has been made, but there are pockets here and there to be fully addressed; for example, at Chester Cottage, seven families (23 persons) are still in a shelter — their houses will be rebuilt on lands which are being purchased nearby for this purpose.

All the utilities (water, electricity, telecommunications) have been restored everywhere at enormous expense. For example, in the Southern Grenadines alone over EC \$20 million has been spent by VINLEC on the restoration of electricity services. Almost every public building damaged or destroyed has been

rebuilt; others are being addressed. In Canouan and Mayreau, beautiful Ferry Terminals and associated facilities have been constructed; and a huge one, inclusive of market facilities, is to be built on Union Island; the start-up date of construction for this is in five weeks or so; we hope to finish it for Independence Day 2025!

All told, the government has spent, thus far, hundreds of millions of dollars on relief, production and income support, recovery, and reconstruction. In the aggregate, over 20,000 persons or about one-fifth of the population have been beneficiaries, directly, of government's spending on addressing the damaging consequences of Beryl. Never in the history of SVG or elsewhere has there been such a rapid and effective response to a major natural disaster. The world is marvelling. Even the hardened souls at the IMF, World Bank, and the Caribbean Development Bank have been hugely impressed; and they have so stated publicly. They all speak of SVG's "robust recovery" in every material particular.

REMEMBRANCE ALL OVER SVG

On July 1, 2025, there was remembrance all over SVG on the first anniversary of Beryl. Our Prime Minister, Comrade Ralph, led a ministerial team including Comrades Camillo, Orando, and Benarva plus other public servants to remembrance events at Canouan, Mayreau, and Union Island. They were accompanied, too, by the "Good Samaritans" Ian Wace and his lady Gioia. Wace, a wealthy home-owner in Canouan, was persuaded by Comrade Ralph to put in massive support of up to US \$25 million. In each of his three speeches on each of the three islands in the Southern Grenadines, Ian Wace praised the leadership of Comrade Ralph in the relief, recovery, and reconstruction; he called it "unbelievable" and "exemplary"; Wace insisted that without Ralph he would not have been so engaged.

Comrade Ralph, in his speeches, thanked all those who worked together in solidarity to bring us safely and well, thus far. At each stop, "thank-you" plaques were given to particularly outstanding individuals: 12 on Canouan; eight on Mayreau, including to three groups; and 19 on Union Island. Comrade Ralph expressed profound gratitude to those from overseas who helped us, including: Ian Wace and Gombolimbo group; the 20 Cubans who helped VINLEC; the 22 Romanians who came with Gombolimbo; and the forty-member team of the Guyana Defence Force. The latter were accorded a special farewell lunch, hosted by the Comrade yesterday, at "Sparrows" in Union Island.

The three events on the three islands in the Southern Grenadines were organised by a team led by the hugely-impressive Chevonne Stewart, a public servant on special assignment to Housing and NEMO in the Southern Grenadines; she is the ULP candidate for the constituency in the next general elections. Incredibly, this is the third “three-island-in-one-day” events organised in the last few months by Comrade-Sister Chevonne; previously she did this for Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day. Chevonne is an incredibly talented, and committed woman to the Southern Grenadines.

GOOD NEWS: CPEA

Meanwhile, the results for the CPEA students arrived to the public last week. They were impressive: 1,470 students or 87.34 percent of the 1,682 who took the final examinations, met the prescribed standards — roughly the same percentage as last year. Sugar Mill Academy had five places in the top-ten performers; the other five were spread over St. Mary’s; Kingstown Preparatory; Lowmans Leeward; Union Methodist; and Sion Hill Government.

Of especial note were the performances of students in 19 schools which obtained 100 percent passes, including the following which were among those especially tortured by Beryl: Canouan Government; Dickson Methodist; Fancy Government; Lowmans Leeward; Lower Bay Primary; Pamellus Burke (Byera); Park Hill Government; Rose Hall Government; and Stubbs Government. A further 20 schools performed above an average of 85 percent, including some others particularly affected by Beryl: Bequia Anglican; Troumaca Government; Richland Park SDA; Argyle Primary; Georgetown Government; Cane End Government; Paget Farm Government; Dorsetshire Hill Government; Mary Hutchinson Primary; Kingstown Government; Diamond Government; Evesham Methodist; and Barrouallie Anglican.

GOOD NEWS: SVGCC GRADUATION

Last week, too, the SVG Community College graduated in excess of 800 students. This is some one-half of the secondary school in-take for 2025. Professor Justin Robinson of SVG and UWI commented that he saw the Education Revolution before his very eyes. It was impressive beyond words!

GOOD NEWS: THE JANUARY – MAY FISCAL, 2025

The fiscal out-turn of the central government finances for the year 2025, thus far, January 1st to May 31st, 2025, shows a very good performance. Compared to the corresponding period January 1st-to-May 31st, 2024, some highlights for 2025, thus far, include:

1. Total Revenue and Grants up by 16.9 percent, at \$373.4 million.
2. Current Revenue up by 11.2 percent, at \$344.99 million.
3. Total Expenditure up by 25.6 percent, at \$482.3 million.
4. Current Expenditure up by 11.7 percent, at \$351.5 million.
5. Capital Expenditure up by 88.4 percent, at \$130.8 million.
6. Current Account Deficit of \$6.5 million, an increase over the \$4.3 million for the same period last year.

GOOD NEWS LOOK-OUT

Look out for Good News with another record in Tuition Scholarships!

Look out, too, for Good News for Emancipation Day 2025!

Look out, also, for Good News on the actual start-up before Independence day 2025, of the construction of several projects financed through the Saudi Fund!

Article for week of July 4, 2025