



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA

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Opening of the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament of Saint Lucia

The first session of the 11th Parliament of Saint Lucia was officially opened to Tuesday, July 12th, 2016. The session convened with the meeting of the formal house of assembly. During this meeting the new speaker of the house was duly elected in the person of Hon. Leonne Theodore – John. Upon failure to submit a nominee for deputy speaker by the opposition, the Prime Minister moved to nominate the Hon. Sarah Flood – Beaubrun for the position. The honourable member was unanimously and duly elected as the deputy speaker of the house.

The session proceeded with the meeting of the formal senate. The president of the senate was duly elected in the person of Andy Daniel. Mrs. Mauricia Thomas - Francis an independent senator appointed by the Governor General was elected as the deputy president of the senate. The other independent senator appointed by the Governor General is Mr. Adrian Augier. The session concluded in a joint session for the delivery of the throne speech by the Governor General. Below is the full address delivered by the Governor General.

THRONE SPEECH

By

**Her Excellency Dame Calliopa Pearlette Louisy
GCSL, GCMG, D.ST.J, Ph.D., LLD (HON)
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SAINT LUCIA**

**On the occasion of the Formal Opening of the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament
Of Saint Lucia**

Tuesday, July 12, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Mr. President, Madame Speaker,

Today we assemble in these conspicuous Chambers in the exercise of one of the essential requirements of our democracy. This First Session of the Eleventh Parliament of Saint Lucia is being convened in the aftermath of the June 6th 2016 General Elections when the people of

Saint Lucia reposed their confidence in my Government to manage the affairs of our young nation for the next parliamentary term.

My Government accepts the responsibility with which it has been vested with deep humility but with a profound sense of duty born out of its commitment to the ideals of creating the environment for the construction of a new Saint Lucia for the benefit of all our citizens. It saw the General Election as an opportunity to propose new ideas, a new vision for our country, a new beginning that will build on the achievements which we have had as a nation, that will harness the considerable talents of our citizens and most importantly will empower our population to achieve their dreams, their aspirations and their craving for opportunities to improve their lives.

The First Session of this Parliament provides Government with the opportunity to begin the process of outlining the agenda, to begin to add flesh to the bones and to the broad framework which were outlined during our dialogue with the people of Saint Lucia at encounters throughout the length and breadth of the country and to articulate some of the steps which it will embark upon in the short term as it seeks to bring relief to our citizens, to restore hope to all and achieve our long term objectives.

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

One of the unfortunate features of the democratic traditions which we have embraced as a nation is that there are winners and losers after a General Election. The consequence that the winner takes it all ends in disappointment for some and maybe a sour taste in many mouths. But at the end of the day, the outcome is an expression of the will of the people through the ballot box, and democracy requires that we accept the results in a spirit of conciliation and respect for each other. This is what we are committed to; this is what our Constitution requires, and this is the voice of the people.

If we accept the premise that the results of a General Election reflect the free will of the people, then at the end of the process there are no losers. We are all winners through our participation in this process, because we have demonstrated to the world that we can continue to conduct our business in a manner which demonstrates maturity, civility and mutual self-respect. We can all celebrate with pride, with passion and with love. My Government has received numerous congratulatory messages since the June 06, 2016 elections and they all congratulate the government and **people** of Saint Lucia – all the people. We are all winners!

A Government For All Saint Lucians

Saint Lucia, notwithstanding its size, is a very diverse country. Its diversity is reflected not simply in terms of political persuasion of its citizens, but there are different social strata defined by varying income levels; people live in different communities where the conditions differ; there are youth, middle aged and elderly persons, males, females and many more characteristics. Our citizens also have varying aspirations and different objectives in their lives.

My Government is a government of and for all Saint Lucians, no matter what their orientation or persuasions may be. We recognize that within this diversity also lie our strengths. Harnessing the abilities, talents and creativity of our citizens can provide the key that will unlock the doors to economic and social development which have remained locked, or at best ajar, to most of us for far too long.

Besides, this country belongs to all of us. We all have a right to our stake in it, to enjoy the fruits of our collective efforts, and to an acceptable standard of living for ourselves and for our families. Our only caveat is that those who are the weakest, most vulnerable and most at risk among us are the ones in greatest need and will therefore be treated accordingly.

Misyé Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker

Mwens ki twa mwa ki pasé, Paleman péyi-a té vini ansanm pou ouvè an sèsyon nèf, silon lizaj sistenm gouvèdman péyi-a. Jou sala, anons té fèt ki ilèksyon té kay tjenn an péyi-a nenpòt lè, pou envité pèp-la chwézi gouvèdman-an i té kay vlé kondwi péyi-a an sé tan-an ki ka vini-an. Kon di, kon fèt. Li 6 jwen pasé, pèp péyi-a – ni sa ki voté, ni sa ki pa té entéwésé – fè chwa-yo. Jòdi-a nou asanblé pou ouvè pwèmyé sèsyon yonzyenm Paleman péyi-a anba an gouvèdman nèf. Gouvèdman nèf sala ka aksèpté go wèsponsabilité sala avèk anchay imilité. Mé I ka aksèpté osi ki wèsponsabilité sala ka èkzijé ki i twavay pou potjiwé bay tout Sent Lisyen, pou endé yo avansé kò-yo, pou améliowé kondisyon épi kalité lavi-yo. Pli ta nou kay palé asou sèten sé démach-la Gouvèdman-an kay antanmé an diwan pwèmyé sèsyon Paleman sala.

Sé donmaj ki, silon sistenm denmokratik péyi-a. apwé an ilèksyon, i ka ni pèdan épi ganyan, épi sé ganyan-an ni dwa pwan tout. Mé si nou kwè vwéman pawòl-la ki di ki “Lapawoli di pèp sé lapawoli di Dyé”, la pa ni pèdan. Nou tout sé ganyan, paski nou moutwé moun tout oliwon latè=a, ki nou Sent Lisyen, sa kontiné fè zafè-nou apwé an ilèksyon avèk sivilité, avèk wèspé pou yonnalòt. Konsa nou tout sa sélébwé épi pasyon ék jénéwòsité opwé yonnalòt.

Sè vwé ki Sent Lisi sé an ti péyi, mé la ni anchay diféwans, anchay divèsité pami nou, lézabitan. La ni sa ki ka sipòté diféwan pati politik; sa ki ni mwayen épi sa ki ka wè mizé. Nou ka viv an diféwan konminoté anba diféwan kondisyon; la ni jennès, gwan moun, vyé moun; la ni nonm, la ni fanm. Nou tout pa ni menm lidé, menm katjil, menm wèv. Mé Gouvèdman péyi-a siposé sé an gouvèdman pou tout sitwayen. I ni wèsponsabilité-a pou ouvè chimen bay tout moun, sitou sé sa ki ni pli bizwen a.

Making Government More Efficient

Mr. President, Madame Speaker,

When my Government announced the structure of the Cabinet three weeks ago, we signalled the commencement of an approach which sought to take advantage of the synergies within and between government departments, with emphasis on improving efficiency and enhancing the capacity to deliver services to the public. We are convinced that it is necessary to encourage a culture which facilitates collaboration, co-ordination and teamwork within the public service.

We believe in a results - oriented approach to public sector management which seeks to deliver public services in as efficient and as cost effective a manner as possible. Individual departments cannot function in silos as happens sometimes, oblivious of what is taking place around them. Hence we instituted a structure where clusters of departments were aligned and configured, with the objective of bringing back clarity and focus to government.

The ultimate goals are to improve the delivery of public services now and in the future, to serve our citizens better, enable more measurable outcomes, thus facilitating improved evaluation of our institutions and programmes, and also provide more concrete and reliable indicators against which our performance as a government may be judged. We may not have immediate cost savings but the new direction will create greater synergies and efficiency and these efficiency gains will ultimately result in savings. There is so much to be done and so little resources with which to undertake them. Some tough decisions have to be made.

Two of these clusters are highlighted for illustration. Consultations with Saint Lucians leading up to the elections revealed that their number one concern was access to sustainable employment. Economic growth is a pre-requisite for sustainable job creation. Therefore, the first cluster of departments is built around the twin objectives of **Economic Growth and Job Creation**. Departments within the sectors of Commerce, Industry, Investment, Enterprise Development, Tourism, Trade and Agriculture are the principal drivers which will propel our economy towards growth and sustainable job creation.

A second cluster addresses social development, and is built around issues and departments addressing Equity, Social Justice, Empowerment, Youth Development, Sports and Culture. The aim is to bring focus, avoid duplication, and ensure that programs are working towards the same objectives. Our goal is to create a new public sector ethos which my Government sees as a pre-requisite to implementing its agenda for change.

A New Governance

Mr President, Madame Speaker,

On every occasion when a new government assumes office, there is much discussion of a new approach to governance, only for us to return to the same old ways of doing things soon thereafter. My Government, when it formed Her Majesty's Opposition in Parliament, articulated the need for a new governance structure, a new apparatus; a governance paradigm that empowers citizens and puts them at the centre of our development and decision making processes.

We remain committed to these ideals, and during this Eleventh Parliament, will do everything possible to realise such objectives. We believe however that a new governance paradigm should begin in Parliament itself, in the way that Parliamentarians relate with and treat each other and in how parliamentary business is conducted.

My Government is committed to putting in place the appropriate parliamentary sub-committees to review legislation before presentation to Parliament. This will provide greater opportunity for dialogue and for consensus on both sides of the House in working together for the good of Saint Lucia. We will function on the basis of mutual respect and with due regard to the conventions of Parliament and our Constitution.

There are agreed courtesies that are extended to persons who have served or are serving in certain offices. We will observe and extend those courtesies. This Government undertakes to facilitate the office of Leader of the Opposition in playing its rightful role in our democracy. We believe that all Parliamentarians on all sides of the House should be given diplomatic passports and my Government will take the necessary steps to make this happen.

A new approach to governance requires the co-operation of both sides of the House and my Government anticipates the full support of Her Majesty's Opposition in cultivating this new approach.

Reform of the Constitution

Mr President, Madame Speaker,

Saint Lucia's post - independence Constitution has served us well. This document was however drawn up within a particular context and an existing set of circumstances at the time. Our country, the world and the environment in which we live have changed dramatically since, and my Government believes that it is appropriate, and indeed urgent, that we review this Constitution.

Millions of dollars were spent on a Constitution Reform Commission which undertook some excellent work and produced a Report containing its recommendations. This Report was debated in these Chambers but there was no clear indication of what the next steps would be, if any. The general public is left with the impression that this Report has been discarded.

My Government has listened to the voices of the people and during this session of Parliament will re-open the Report of the Constitution Reform Commission for public discussion with the objective of arriving at consensus on recommendations for the reform of our Constitution.

A Legislative Agenda

My Government is deeply concerned about the state of the justice system generally, and is considering some short term options for addressing the many problems, including temporary location of institutions that administer justice.

Notwithstanding, my Government is proposing a very active legislative agenda for the new session of Parliament. An undertaking was given earlier in this address that my Government will pursue a more consultative and inclusive approach to the framing of legislation. This may lengthen the process but we believe it will be to the benefit of all concerned.

In addition to the steps to reform our Constitution, my Government proposes during this term to introduce legislation that will strengthen Local Government (Constituency Councils) and empower communities in managing their affairs. We will introduce legislation to facilitate our law enforcement agencies in discharging their duties to protect us; review the amendments to the Tourism Incentives Act which was tabled during the last Parliament; review the Labour Act; and review the legislative framework to enforce fiscal discipline and prudent management of our financial resources, among others.

Delivering Our Commitments

Before assuming office, my Government made a number of commitments to Saint Lucians. The conditions under which large sections of our population live are unacceptable. Something has to be done in the short term to bring some relief to our citizens while we work on realising the longer - term development objectives which we have established for Saint Lucia.

My Government has commenced steps towards our objective of first reducing the rate of the Value Added Tax – the VAT - in the short term, with a view to eventually eliminating it altogether. Discussions have been initiated with regional and international institutions that will help us conduct a true assessment of the state of the finances of Saint Lucia. It will be recalled that Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the current fiscal year were tabled and passed in Parliament by the out-going administration without presentation of the policy considerations that informed those Estimates.

My Government finds it necessary therefore to undertake a comprehensive review of those Estimates in order to determine their realism and how they affect the priority issues in Health, Education, Justice, National Security, Social Safety Nets and other areas, which we believe must be tackled in the short and medium term in order to bring economic and social stability first of all, and ultimately return our country to a path of sustainable economic growth. My Government will then present revised Estimates informed by the new policy priorities for the remainder of the fiscal year. But the real manifestation of the new policies to be implemented by my Government will begin to take effect in the next fiscal year 2017 / 2018. We wish to express our appreciation to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund who are assisting us in undertaking this exercise. It is expected that my Government will be in a position to announce the new rate of VAT before the end of October 2016.

The increase in the school transportation subsidy and school feeding programme will take effect with the commencement of the new school year in September, while legislation to facilitate the introduction of the amnesty on hospital bills and the reduction in vehicular licence fees will be tabled at the next sitting of Parliament in August. The moratorium on the payment of taxes on residential property will be implemented in the next fiscal year.

While the measures just outlined are intended to bring some short term relief to our citizens, fixing the structural problems which we face, and creating a more efficient system for the attraction of foreign investment, will inevitably take longer. The specific investment projects geared towards creating sustainable jobs will be announced when my Government makes a presentation to Parliament on the economy.

However, my Government is pleased that the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) has agreed to partner with Saint Lucia in the provision of training that will result in approximately 1000 Saint Lucians finding employment in the cruise industry annually for the next five years. This initiative signals the commencement of a massive effort to address the unacceptably high level of youth unemployment which is approaching 50 per cent. In addition, we have submitted some major economic and social programmes to friendly Governments and Agencies for funding, and we are highly encouraged by their initial responses. We are further encouraged by the surge of interest from a number of investors who are eager to commit resources to projects in Saint Lucia. This reflects the renewed confidence in our country.

My Government has already given a commitment that priority will be given to the southern part of Saint Lucia in the initiation of new development programmes. The imbalance which exists in the level of development in different parts of Saint Lucia is a source of some of our social problems. My Government, through its "Constituencies Without Borders" initiative, will treat the entire southern part of Saint Lucia as a special development area to begin to attract the resources necessary so that the enormous potential which exists in that part of our country can be harnessed for the benefit of the residents of this area and the wider nation. Every day that this process is delayed represents a loss incurred by our country.

As we consider the South, there is the vexed issue of St. Jude Hospital which remains a concern to those needing healthcare as well as a bottleneck for the youth of our country who are desirous of pursuing their development in the field of sports. Many deadlines have been set in the past for the opening of the new St. Jude Hospital, only for the time to pass by with no sign of an opening. My Government will not make another announcement today. But when that announcement is made, we will deliver. We give the assurance that the Ministries

of Health and Economic Development are putting all their efforts towards making this happen within the shortest possible time.

A new school year will commence soon. The Minister for Education will be making a statement on arrangements for the opening of school and other issues in education in due course. More detailed statements will also be made on Health, Agriculture, and other portfolios.

Misyé Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker

Chak fwa an gouvèdman nèf antwé, ou ka tan palé di la kay ni an apwòch nèf an mannyè yo kay gouvènè péyi-a. Mé, sé pwèskè toujou an ka di “Tou bon, tou nouvo”. Yonn, dé mwa pli ta, anyen di fèt. Mé kou sala Gouvèdman kay fè asiwé ki i mété an plas sèten démach ki kay bay pli moun pli chans épi pli lokasyon pou patisipé an disisyon asou mannyè bagay kay maché an péyi-a.

Nou ni lantansyon koumansé an Paleman-an menm, pou ankouwajé pli bon konpwann pami manm Paleman asou toulédé fasad Kay Konsit-la, pou avansé pli vitman dévlòpman péyi-a. Annou gadé yonn ében dé sé démach-la Gouvèdman ka konsidiwé-a.

Magwé an Bidjé té touvé pwézanté an Paleman-an avan ilèksyon, la pa té janmen ni òpòtinité-a pou diskité mannyè-a sé pwojé-a té kay touvé finansé. Sé fo kalité diskisyon sala pwan kou. Nou ka wimèsyé Bank Santral OECS-la, Bank Dévlòpman Kawaiben-an, Bank Mondyal-la, épi Fon Monètè Entenasyon-al-la (IMF-la) pou lasistans-la yo pwomèt la an matyè sala.

Chèk tan ki pasé, an Wapò asou mannyè péyi-a pé wéfomé Konstitusyon-an ki ka gouvènè’y-lan té touvé pwézanté an Paleman pou diskisyon. Mé jik an jou kon jodi, pa yon mo asou ki diwèksyon nou ka pwan asou sijé sala. Nou kay wésité’y; nou kay envité piblik-la diskité sé wékonmandasyon-an, avan nou viwé pwézanté’y an Paleman-an pou an disisyon final. Pou li moman, bò fin mwa Oktob-la, la kay ni an bèsmen asou taks VAT-la, mé épi lantansyon-an pou tiwé’y konplètman pli ta.

A pati di Sèptanm la kay ni an hosman an lajan nou kay mété pou pwogwan twanspò épi nouwiti manmay lékòl (sa nou ka kwiyé an anglé ”school-feeding programme”-lan); la ka ni an bèsmen toutswit asou sa nou kay péyé pou lisans machin.

I ja pasé lè pou Lopital Sent Jude ouvè. Malad péyi-a méwité pli mèsyé; I ja lè pou jennès péyi-a wéklamé Stad Spòtif-la ki nou té potjiwé bay yo-a. Gouvèdman kay pousé kò é lam pou wè sa fèt pli vit ki posib.

Dépi tan fè tan, dépi jab menm té ti manmay, péyi-a ka tan palé di plan pou dévloché sé vil èk sé vilaj-la an sud péyi-a. I ja pasé lè pou dèliwvé asou tout sé pwomès sala, pou bay sé lézabitan-an an wèt péyi sala, lèspwa, asiwans èk jèwté.

Sé démach sala, Gouvèdman ka òfè pou li moman kon soulajman, mé, an sé mwa-a ki ka vini-an i kay pwézanté projé twavay-li an pli gwan dépay.

Managing The Fallout From IMPACS

One of the most immediate problems which my Government must contend with is addressing the situation which faces our country and our Police Force in particular, arising from the IMPACS report. The present circumstances which jeopardise our ability to secure assistance for our under-resourced and hardworking police officers are untenable and cannot be allowed

to persist. My Government proposes to confront this situation in the first instance by appointing a tribunal which will review the coroner's inquest process and outline a roadmap to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

Challenges

The world that we live in is a very dynamic one and new challenges are evident daily. Fortunately, my Government expected that there would be these challenges, as nothing comes easily in these difficult times. But challenges also present opportunities, and our future or our fate is often decided by whether we are able to identify these opportunities and how we react to them.

We have already witnessed the recent vote by citizens of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (BREXIT). The full extent of the effects of this vote will only become evident when we become aware of what the new relationship between the UK and the European Union will be. But clearly it has already started to have an impact on us with the slide in the value of the pound sterling making it more expensive for British tourists to visit the Caribbean, and also impacting negatively on remittances that flow to the Caribbean by reducing the level of pension for those returning nationals who have come back to Saint Lucia after spending most of their working lives in the UK.

But there is another lesson which we must learn from this vote in the UK, and that is: Governments must listen to their citizens. If this had happened the outcome could have been very different. My Government will be a government that listens.

My Government will not be deterred by challenges. However, it is deeply regretted that an incoming Government, on taking office finds itself with arrangements entered into by its predecessor on the eve of an election; arrangements which may be interpreted as serving not only to compromise the confidence which the people are entitled to be able to place in the integrity of the Cabinet, but indeed the confidence entitled to be enjoyed in the discharge of matters dealing with the country's foreign relations. The financial burdens imposed by these arrangements on the taxpayers of Saint Lucia are being assessed and the need for appropriate legislative measures to protect our citizens from such arrangements in the future will be explored.

My Government has been encouraged by the overwhelming show of support and expressions of goodwill from friendly governments, international and regional agencies as well as our local institutions and citizens generally. My Government extends its deep appreciation and pledges to work with all in pursuit of our mutual interests and objectives.

Misyé Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker

Sent Lisi sé an ti péyi, mé nou sa toujou touvé mannyè pou débwiyé kò-nou lè bagay pa bèl. Sé konfyans sala nou ni an nou menm-la, lanmityé-a épi jénéwòsité-a nou ni pou vwazen nou-an ki ka endé nou mété dispit, wivòt, asou koté pou lapéti péyi-a. Jòdi-a nou doubout adan an kat chimen. Nou ni an go disisyon pou pwan. Viwé koté nou sòti-a, épi dé bwa-nou kasé, twennen an go chay halékasé dèyè nou; ében mawé wen-nou, hosé zépòl-nou, tjenbé lanmen yonnalòt épi pousé douvan. Sa ki ja pasé, ja pasé. Nou pa oblijé obliyé'y paski nou pé fè menm lèwè-a ankò. Mé annou sèvi'y kon lison pou endé nou avansé épi mennen péyi-a – tout moun an péyi-a – douvan. Sé divwa-nou; sé wèsponsabilité-nou; sé léwitaj – la nou kay kité bay manmay péyi-a; léwitaj yish-nou; sé kontwibusyon-nou bay sivilizasyon latè-a; mé sitou sé sa Gwan Mèt-la ka èkzije di nou.

Conclusion - A Brighter Future

Mr. President, Madame Speaker,

Saint Lucia is a small nation which has consistently defied the odds when put to the test. We have always been at our best in times of adversity and no matter how bad things have been in the past, we have always emerged triumphantly in the end. It is this self-belief, this confidence, this love for our neighbours which we have always been able to call upon in the most difficult of times that we must invoke at this critical period in our history.

We have the capacity to shape our development prospects, our destiny, and realise the dream of a brighter future for all. The possibilities ahead are enormous. Let us come together to take advantage of these opportunities and catapult our country to the brighter tomorrow that we all crave for.

My Government wishes to extend its gratitude to all. We wish to thank in particular our public officers. It is not an easy task to implement the new policies and the changes which inevitably come about when governments change. We recognise the efforts of all our public servants and look forward to building the new Saint Lucia with their support.

Mr President, Madame Speaker,

It gives me great pleasure to declare open the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament of Saint Lucia.

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Honourable. ALLEN MICHAEL CHASTANET
Prime Minister & Minister for Finance, Economic Growth,
Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service