



**Protection of our People's
Heritage and Patrimony**

THRONE SPEECH

By

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of the**

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Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: I am filled with a sense of pride and hope that our country continues to show maturity, having completed a peaceful period of general elections and change in government. We have demonstrated to the world our respect for the democratic will of the people. Now that the general elections are over, it is time to put political differences aside and commence the process of building our country together. After all, Saint Lucia is the one physical space that we can jointly claim to be as ours; let us protect it and nurture it for ourselves and future generations.

Members of the Saint Lucia Senate and elected members of the House of Assembly, my government's priorities for this new session of parliament are to put structures in place and to secure the necessary resources-human, financial and physical- to allow the real work of transforming Saint Lucia by the start of the next session of parliament in 2022. There are, however, some initiatives that just cannot wait and need to be attended to immediately. St Jude Hospital remains a vexing issue for the people of the south and the wider Saint Lucian society. For this reason, St Jude Hospital will be a high priority of my government, together with providing early relief to those who have suffered disproportionately during this Covid-19 pandemic and reducing significantly the in-country spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: I want to reassure the Saint Lucian public that my government will continue ongoing projects which are viable. However, projects like the Hewanorra International Airport Rehabilitation Project will be subjected to reassessment for scope, cost, and viability to avoid unnecessary financial burdens on the state. In trying to secure some fiscal space, my government will commence the process of debt restructuring with the assistance of institutions like the Caribbean Development Bank and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank so that some assistance can be provided to those in need of financial support, as a result of the negative economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: We will review agreements signed in the last term to ensure that the provisions are in the best interest of the people and laws of Saint Lucia. This includes the DSH Agreement. To the young people looking for new opportunities, I want to tell you that my government's commitment to The Youth Economy remains unconditional and will be securing the necessary funding and other resources to getting started within this session of parliament. There has already been encouraging interest and support from international agencies, wishing to assist my government in getting the Youth Economy off the ground. I am pleased to share, that young budding entrepreneurs can look forward to a new and exciting future in the world of business.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: The main legislative agenda of my government will be deferred to the next session of parliament. In the spirit of change, my government intends to uphold the Constitution of Saint Lucia both in words and deeds. And so, out of respect for the people and the Constitution of Saint Lucia, which seeks to provide order and good governance in the management of our country's affairs, the intended structures of the parliament will be observed. Provision has, therefore, been made to ensure that the position of a Deputy Speaker for the House of Assembly is occupied.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: My government, in recognition of the widespread unprecedented reports of alleged corruption during the term of the last administration, will appoint a special prosecutor to investigate allegations of corruption in government. This appointment is expected to be completed soon.

My government will strengthen the integrity commission to return our country to a system that respects our democratic norms and the rights of our people, my government will Reactivate the bipartisan parliamentary committee to review Justice Suzy D' Auvergne constitutional report and the

parliamentary recommendations with a view to adopt final recommendations for implementation.

Strengthen the Integrity Commission so that it can undertake more meaningful action against public officials and politicians who engage in acts of corruption.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: In providing early financial relief to families, the Ministry of Finance has already commenced the process of assessment and payment of facilities fees in time for the reopening of schools in September. In the later part of the fiscal year 2021/2022, my government will be keeping to its promise by paying CXC examination fees for students sitting Mathematics and English. This is my government's early signal of its long-term commitment to making education free.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: As I alluded to earlier, many citizens have been without work during this Covid-19 pandemic and will require urgent income support to maintain their dignity as providers for themselves and their families. My government will, very soon, come to the assistance of those individuals.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: If I may return to the vexing issue of St Jude hospital, residents of the south have suffered for too long from the substandard health care facility of St Jude Hospital. The people of the south deserve better and will get better.

My government will, therefore, immediately commission a task force to assess the state of affairs of the St Jude Hospital project.

This task force is also expected to make recommendations as to the best option available, given the various structures on the construction site, in securing the early satisfactory completion and commission of that hospital.

Too much time and money have been wasted on this project. I wish to re-emphasize my government's commitment to end the wastage and the pain and distress of the people of the south, by having St Jude Hospital completed in the shortest possible time.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: Immediate attention will also be given to improving the Respiratory Unit at Victoria Hospital, as part of my government's improvements to the country's Covid-19 physical infrastructure. These improvements should go a long way in allaying the fears and lessening the resistance of citizens to Covid testing because of the unacceptable conditions at the Respiratory Unit.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: Given the urgent need to return to some level of normalcy, in the face of our country's Covid-19 challenges, my government's health agenda remains of paramount importance. To enable the effective management of the current Covid-19 challenges, my government will make a structural change to the Covid-19 Command Center to allow it to be headed by a health expert instead of a government minister.

My government's main strategy in the battle against Covid-19 is to increase vaccine uptake to avoid our health system becoming overwhelmed by high levels of infected people requiring hospitalization. My government, together with health practitioners and officials, will formulate plans to ramp up efforts to encourage an increase in the number of citizens taking the vaccine. We have already received thousands of Pfizer vaccines from the United States through CARPHA, to complement those efforts.

My government remains concerned about the many businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and will establish a Business Recovery Unit within the Ministry of Commerce to lend support, through a series of fiscal and non-fiscal measures, to those businesses in their process of recovery.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: Despite the challenges of Covid-19, Tourism will, for now, remain Saint Lucia's main economic driver.

My government will, therefore, be faced with the challenge of protecting the health of our citizens and the livelihoods dependent on this sector. In addressing this challenge, the recovery and growth of the Tourism sector will be supported, while ensuring that the health of our citizens is not placed at unnecessary risk.

I am pleased to report that my government has secured an increase in airlift to Saint Lucia, with the return of scheduled Virgin Atlantic flights from the UK in December 2021.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: As it relates to the issue of crime, my government remains concerned about the high incidence of crime, especially gruesome ones, an indication of a very angry and frustrated society. We must become more intolerant of infractions of the law at all levels, and our leaders must be good examples to the rest of society. We must as a society find more civil ways of resolving conflict and disagreements. Those overseeing the observance of our laws must do so with impartiality and without fear or intimidation. You will have noticed that in my Prime Minister's configuration of ministries the absence of a Minister for National Security. Given the highly important role of the police, the Prime Minister's office will be the oversight authority for policing.

My government intends to provide greater operational independence to our Police Service and the Commissioner of Police. The police should be allowed to do their work without being encumbered by political decisions of politicians. In addition, to providing the police with the necessary resources to be effective in their work, my government will address the underlying social structures which give rise to crime and deviant behavior.

My government will protect our heritage and patrimony and what defines us with uniqueness as a people and nation and therefore every effort will be made to protect our patrimony for all generations. To this end, we must develop the institutions that have been designed to protect our heritage and patrimony.

My government has already begun the process of:

Reinstating the annual subvention to the Saint Lucia National Trust.

Public access to our beaches and queen chain will also be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Saint Lucia and visitors.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: My government seeks a new path for Saint Lucia; a path where all Saint Lucians have a sense of ownership in the development of their beloved country. I am of the view that ownership can only come from participation, not exclusion. We all have a part to play in the development of our country, regardless of our stations in life. No nation can be at peace with itself if only a few have access to work, food, clothing, decent housing, education, and affordable quality health care. For these reasons, we must keep fighting for the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society so that together we can find peace in the soul of our nation. Let us make the 26th of July 2021, the start of a new beginning, where the Saint Lucian consciousness of fairness, inclusion, and empathy stays alive and becomes a model for other countries seeking peace and happiness.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker: In closing, I want to thank His excellency Sir Neville Cenac on behalf of the government and people of Saint Lucia for having served as our Governor General. I personally wish him the best of health during his retirement. I thank you.