

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE

Alphonso “Alfie” Theodore Roberts: As I Remember Him

My memories of Alfie Roberts date back to the late 1940’s – early 1950’s when we were both playful youngsters living a few houses apart and attending the Anglican School in Kingstown, St. Vincent. Back then he was fondly known as “Fonso”. In those days I feared, yet admired him for his natural physical strength, which his average physique belied. He was not only physically strong, but he was an exceptionally talented athlete. Without any extra training Alfie excelled in every sport in which he participated – cricket, football (soccer), and track and field.

During the early to middle 1950’s in the St. Vincent Boy’s Grammar School, Alfie continued to display his natural athleticism, now coupled with a penchant for good leadership. He displayed leadership qualities in his role as house captain for cricket and football, and as an officer in the Cadet Corps. Although Alfie was a couple forms (academic grades) ahead of me, I always noticed his high academic achievements whenever grades were posted for his class. Throughout these years Alfie came to be admired and respected by his peers and his seniors because of his good character and his all-round excellence in academic and extra-curricular activities. He had also become the Grammar School’s number one cricketer, with his prowess in football not too far behind. His proficiency at cricket earned him a scholarship to attend the prestigious QRC in Trinidad. Before long, at the tender age of 18 he was selected on the West Indies Colts cricket team to tour New Zealand. Alfie acquitted himself well and returned to St. Vincent amidst countless accolades. He had become the consummate batsman and successfully represented St. Vincent on many occasions as a member of the Island’s cricket team. As the youngest member of the team he was regarded as a prodigy. However, the Vincentian public was now relentless in exerting pressure on this talented youngster to always produce an exceptional performance in every game. But whenever Alfie would go into a little slump – say being bowled out for naught (zero) – the fans would begin booing him. This harsh reaction began to affect Alfie’s general performance, and he subsequently and abruptly stopped playing cricket altogether.

In the late 1950’s I had the opportunity to “rub shoulders” with Alfie when we were both rookies on the staff of the St. Vincent Customs & Excise Department. All his colleagues looked up to him and marveled at his knowledge of Customs regulations. Beyond his work hours Alfie was very popular as he mixed well in social activities. He also had developed a proclivity for world affairs and politics. I recall “liming” with him outside the Kingstown library discussing plans for a carnival band, which was to depict Fidel Castro’s revolution in Cuba. Although Alfie dropped out from the execution of the plan, he was vital in providing me with background information required to make it happen. Needless to say, the eventual production won most of the prizes at that year’s carnival celebrations.

Alfie later migrated to Canada, where he pursued studies in Political Science. Shortly after I arrived in Canada I rekindled my friendship with Alfie after he invited me to a Christmas party he had organized for the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association in Montreal in 1967. I was astounded to see so many Vincentians who lived outside of the Island. I also recall visiting Alfie’s home where West Indians frequently gathered for socio-political discussions. For me the most memorable such gathering took place one evening in the presence of Rosie Douglas, Anne Cools and Burns Bonadie, with Alfie leading the discussion. Although the discussion was somewhat “above my head”, the atmosphere in the room could be described as stimulating and electric.

Jazz music was another of Alfie’s passions. Though neither Alfie nor I was competent at playing any musical instrument, we shared a common interest in listening to, and discussing jazz music and jazz musicians. This passion started in St. Vincent and continued throughout our Montreal days.

After I left Montreal for Hamilton, Ontario in 1974 I didn’t see as much of Alfie as before; but we still kept in touch by telephone. Actually the last time I saw him was in St. Vincent many years later when we met there during a vacation. At that time he was actively researching information about St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I promised to supply him with several years’ back-issues of the Vincentian Newspaper, which I had accumulated from copies that my mother had been sending to me in Canada. On my return to Canada I mailed the papers to him in Montreal.

Sadly, a few years later I was distressed to learn of Alfie’s passing. This outstanding individual is dearly missed by Vincentians, West Indians, and all who got to know him.

Fred Prescod
Co-Chair, Education Committee
St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto

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ASSOCIATION BRIEFS

President Resigns

Jason Jones tendered his resignation as president of the Association just four months into his second term. Mr. Jones who served a full term in 2005 and was re-elected in January of this year was chairing a general meeting of the Association on June 2 when he read and announced his letter of resignation to take effect immediately.

Mr. Jones stated that the effective functioning of this organization deserves the fullest attention of anyone in the position of President. He disclosed that during the last year and up to the middle March 2006 he was fortunate to have ample time to deal with the business of the Association. Since then, however, many occurrences in his personal life has divided his time to the point where he concluded that there was insufficient time available to be devoted in the best interest of the Association.

Mr. Jones thanked executive and committee members as well as the general membership for their cooperation during his term and stated that he believed that many of the goals he had set out were achieved.

A number of individuals expressed their gratitude to Jason for the service and leadership he provided to the Association and wished him every good in his future endeavours.

Jason Jones remains a member of the executive as the Immediate Past President.

Ken Farrell Stands In Again

In 1996 the Association was experiencing a problem with electing the customary Executive Committee and agreed instead to appoint a Steering Committee. Ken Farrell was named to be the chairperson of that committee and he led the Association for the remainder of that year.

Today, ten years later, by virtue of his position of Vice President, Ken Farrell has assumed leadership of the Association due to the resignation of Jason Jones as President. By coincidence, Mr. Farrell was the last person to have served as president prior to Jason Jones taking office in January 2005. The Association's constitution empowers the Vice President to assume the role of the President if that person is unable for any reason to fulfill his duties. This therefore makes Ken Farrell the person who has headed the Association more times than any other person in the thirty-six years of the organization's existence.

At the June 25 monthly general meeting a motion was passed to confirm Mr. Farrell to continue to act as president for the remainder of the year.

Ken Farrell is one of the hard workers within the organization and could also be credited with the person serving more years on the executive than any other individual.

We wish Mr. Farrell every good in his capacity as President of the Association and ask God's blessing on the leadership of the Association.

New Additions to the Executive

Mr. Fred Williams and Rev. Chester Searles have been named as Nominated Members to join the Executive. Mr. Williams served on the executive in many capacities in previous years and as President of the Association in 1985. Rev. Searles is also a former executive member having served as Treasurer in the 1990's and as recent as 2003 as a Nominated Member.

THE EXECUTIVE

Here is a list of the executive members just in case you would like to contact any of them:

Acting President – Kenneth Farrell; Tel: 416-762-3283
farrell4180@yahoo.ca;

Executive Secretary - Francelia George; Tel: 647-234-4040
execsec@vincytoronto.com

General Secretary - Petra Hutchinson; Tel: 416-789-2019
gensecretary@vincytoronto.com

Treasurer – June Ellis; Tel: 416-261-5399
juneellis_2@sympatico.ca or Treasurer@vincytoronto.com

Assistant Treasurer – Grafton Bibby; Tel: 416-496-1029
sbibby@sympatico.ca; or AssistTreas@vincytoronto.com

Public Relations Officer – Yolande Lewis; Tel: 416-809-9820
ylewis@sympatico.ca; or pro@vincytoronto.com

Immediate Past President – Jason Jones; Tel: 905-999-1771
jonesjason@rogers.com

Nominated Member –Glendon Carmichael; Tel: 416-321-9029
gcarmichael@sympatico.ca

Nominated Member - Fred Williams; Tel: 416-505-2366
fred.williams@sympatico.ca

Nominated Member - Chester Searles; Tel: 416-439-4736
searlesc@look.ca

Ass'n General Email address: svga@vincytoronto.com

Scholarship Program

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Scholarship Program is this year handing out two (2) bursaries in the amount of \$1,000.00 each to two eligible persons. One of these scholarships is donated by Western Union. Please visit the Association's website www.vincytoronto.com for more details and the application form. For those intending to apply it is important that you pay attention to the deadline date of September 15 for submitting your application. Last year, the inaugural year, Miss Keisha Carrington, a student at the University of Toronto was the successful applicant. **The closing date for receiving applications is September 30, 2006.**

2006 Vincy Unity Picnic

The Annual SVG Unity Picnic is becoming more popular as the attendance this year was higher than anyone could have expected. According to the Park of St. Lawrence Officials an estimated crowd of more than 13,000 flocked on to Brown's Bay Provincial Park. Just after 3:00 p.m. the officials closed the gates to vehicle entrance as all available parking spaces were occupied. The Park officials along with the OPP did not

disappoint those who came late as they allowed the cars to be parked on both sides of the 1000 Islands Parkway.

Over 20 buses and 1,200 cars were earlier allowed in.

Picnic tables continue to be a problem since the officials despite their best efforts are unable to predict the attendance. The annual outing started over 25 years ago with a couple of hundred persons from the three sponsor SVG Associations of Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. There was a steady increase in the attendance over the years but in 2003 it exploded to about 3,000, then in 2004 there were over 6,000 and over 7,000 in 2005. The organizers could not have been more pleased with this year's attendance doubling the record set in 2005.

As usual, it was a well behaved crowd and there were games organized for the children. OECS High Commissioner, Ms Lorraine Williams based in Ottawa along with Consul for Economic Affairs, Mr. Clem Ballah who is based at the Toronto Consulate addressed the large gathering.

There were a number of corporate and individual sponsors this year. Western Union Financial Services who sponsored for the two previous years was joined by competing money transfer companies Jamaica National Money Transfer and Senvia.

Please visit www.vincytoronto.com to view some pictures from the event.

2006 Independence Anniversary Celebrations

The Organizing Committee for this year's Independence Anniversary Celebrations has confirmed that a series of events will be held during October 29 to November 5. Please continue to visit our website, www.vincytoronto.com for details as they become available. Should you have any input or suggestions for the committee please contact Audrey at 416-829-6201.

Make a contribution to the Association

You can now donate to any of the following: the Relief Fund, the Scholarship Fund, the Children's Christmas Party, the Christmas Hamper to Families In Need and/or to General Operating Funds by contacting any member of the Executive or the Chair of the Committee you wish to support.

MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING

Please bring along a friend to the next meeting of the Association on Sunday, August 27 at 4:00 p.m. Northwood Community Centre, 15 Clubhouse Court, North York (Keele & Sheppard)

WALK-A-THON

The Annual Walk-a-thon takes place on Sunday, August 13 from 10:00 a.m. starting from the parking lot at Northwood

Community Centre, 15 Clubhouse Court and continuing to Northwood Park where a BBQ will be held for participants. Proceeds from the walk will be shared with the Canadian Diabetes Association.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc.

You are invited to attend a

Gospel Concert

Saturday, August 26, 2006 from 7:00 p.m.

Malvern Methodist Church
2 Morningview Trail, Scarborough
(Morningside north of Sheppard)

Proceeds in aid of St. Benedict's Infant Hospital & Day Nursery in Georgetown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the SVGAT Relief Committee.

Admission: \$15.00

For tickets, please contact:

Fred @ 416-505-2366

Glen @ 416-321-9029

Grafton @ 416-496-1029

2007 CARIBBEAN CRUISE TO AID RELIEF

Toronto, July 15, 2006 - The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT) has announced its first annual cruise fundraiser to the Southern Caribbean, sailing, June 24th, 2007.

Veronica Timm, Chair of the Cruise Planning committee says "Although there are many needy causes to choose from, the Committee selected the Lewis Punnett Home for the Poor as this year's charity beneficiary. This institution provides a home for many poor seniors. They have contributed so much during their working lives to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, their retirement years should be lived with dignity. We hope to make a difference with our fundraising efforts."

The Southern Caribbean 7-day cruise on the luxury cruise ship Carnival Destiny will start in San Juan, Puerto Rico, then sail to St. Thomas, Dominica, Barbados, St. Lucia and Antigua, and return to San Juan. Insight Newsletter asked why Kingstown, St. Vincent was not included as a port of call. "This inaugural year we were unable to get Kingstown on the itinerary. If we're successful and can show the demand, the cruise will sail into Kingstown, SVG in the following year", Timm replies. Passengers will enjoy sumptuous gourmet meals 24 hours a day, superb music from local Caribbean bands, nightly entertainment, and accommodation starting as low as \$914US

(includes all taxes, tip and donation to the fundraiser). \$50US from each passenger's fare will be directed to the Lewis Punnett charity.

The SVGAT is hoping for a good turnout. This is not only an excellent way to meet fellow SVG nationals -young and old- from Europe, the US and across Canada, but also a wonderful opportunity to help those in need in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Insight asked about the celebrity guest, but Timm would not divulge names until the SVGAT has received confirmation from the celebrity(ies). She adds, "We are all very excited about this annual cruise and we hope it will be a successful event."

For cruise information please email us at: cruiseinfo@vincytoronto.com or visit the cruise sponsors: www.vincytoronto.com

Lodge Boys Centre

The Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre is a SVG Government institution which falls under the Ministry of National Mobilization. Its mission is to provide a caring environment in which boys 7 to 16 years old of poor and disadvantaged families having familial, educational, social, emotional and/or behavioral difficulties can develop skills that would allow them to become responsible and productive citizens.

We recently uploaded to our website, www.vincytoronto.com the information produced by the ministry about the Centre. Please visit the website to learn more about the Liberty Lodge Boys Centre.

BREADFRUIT - A Part of our Culture

The government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has proclaimed August as Breadfruit Month to help to portray this staple as part of the nations culture and heritage.

To this end, the Education Committee of the Association has decided to put together a series of articles about this plant which forms part of the nation's National Dish. Please visit the website, www.vincytoronto.com to learn more about the breadfruit, try out some interesting recipes and share some of your own secret breadfruit recipes with others.

Our thanks to Mr. Fred Prescod for putting together this information for us. We also acknowledge support from the Ministry of Tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for making available to us the publication, "The Breadfruit Plant of St. Vincent and the Grenadines" First Edition – July 2004 from which some of the recipes have been taken.

ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS TO VINCENTIANS

Our sincere thanks to those companies that have provided assistance to this publication by advertising with us again. Please support them.

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BEREAVEMENT NOTICE

During the past few months a number of members of our community have passed on including former members of the Association. News of these deaths do not always reach the PR Committee or the Executive Members in time to circulate the information as we would like to.

The Executive and Members of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. will like to extend condolences to all members and friends of our community who have lost loved ones.

We wish you God's blessing as you cope with your loss and that those who have departed will find rest in the Lord.

OPINION COLUMN

(We invite members and our readers to share their opinions with other readers in matters of interest to the development of the Association and our community).

Views and opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc.

IMMIGRATION MATTERS:

The Plight of Undocumented Immigrants

Contributed by Sandra Sutherland

Yes, immigration matters and it should matter to all of us and not just the undocumented immigrants. Some of us who are here as permanent residents or citizens obtained that status after our own or our parents' or fore-parents' struggles with sweat and fears, with little or no support **structure or system**, and limited knowledge of available options. The situation has not changed much for today's flow of undocumented immigrants.

Undocumented immigrants have been known to be hard workers toiling away at menial jobs. Some sweat away at jobs in a less than tolerable environment, enduring long hours without sufficient breaks and not even knowing when, if, or how much they will be paid. These are standards which fall below the labour market's norms and which reek of exploitation. Many undocumented immigrants live in fear of being reported to immigration by family, friends, acquaintances and even employers. They are fearful of being caught in the nets of CBSA's agents who have reportedly been on a rampage to "pick up" and detain those not fortunate enough to elude them. Two very concerted fears are that of being returned to their homeland if their applications are rejected and of falling ill and unable to avail themselves of medical care.

I urge you all to be supportive and lend a helping hand to those whom you meet. We can all be a part of someone's support structure. First, identify your own resources and access to resources. Resources can be in the form of knowledge, emotional or financial support. You can offer support by getting involved in lobby groups, reaching out to MP's and the Minister of Immigration, encouraging your church to open its doors as a

sanctuary, offering adequate housing, and by supplying information about their rights and options.

What options are available to undocumented immigrants to gain or achieve permanent resident (PR) status? Few. There are three categories under which they are likely to qualify, namely, humanitarian and compassionate grounds, refugee claim, and "spousal sponsorship". To apply under the humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) category one must satisfy exemption and establishment criteria in addition to the mandatory medical and criminal checks. Some succeed in pursuing a claim for refugee status and can subsequently apply for PR status. The pursuit of a refugee claim requires the claimant to express that he/she has a fear of persecution if returned to his/her country. The "spousal sponsorship" category is known to be the most reliable means of obtaining PR status. The applicant must be the spouse or common-law partner of a permanent resident or Canadian citizen who meets the sponsorship requirements.

The issues faced by undocumented immigrants will never be resolved. It is a vicious cycle that has been reoccurring since the evolution of immigration in Canada. However, if we offer whatever support or resources we have access to, it will serve as a vital mode of empowering these persons. Let's put the "each one, teach one" concept to work and watch our Vincy and Caribbean community prosper.

Sandra Sutherland is a practicing Immigration Practitioner who also serves as counsel at detention reviews, appeals, and refugee hearings. If you would like her to address a topic in a future issue of Insight or would like to pose your confidential queries directly to her, you may reach her at (416) 431-2829, at her office address or via e-mail at suthernimpar@belnet.ca.

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**2006 Independence Anniversary Dinner & Dance
Saturday, November 4
Renaissance Parquet Banquet Hall, 2800 Hwy 7
West at Jane Street, Concord**

AN APPEAL FROM ST. BENEDICT'S DAY NURSERY

The St. Benedict's Day Nursery and Infant Hospital urgently needs to raise over one million EC dollars to build a new Children's Home. Mountain Top Springs Ltd, bottlers of Mountain Top Spring Water, has become involved in the fund raising activities, and has also undertaken to generate the corporate and individual support necessary for St. Benedict's to continue and expand the services offered children to from all walks of life, with various social, mental and physical challenges.

Mountain Top has initiated the following to date:

- A pledge of 5cents EC for each bottle of 500ml bottle of Mountain Top Natural Spring Water sold
- A collection from customers in all of the banks (amounting to just over 4300.00 EC dollars)
- Design of logo for St. Benedict's Day Nursery and Infant Hospital
- Billboards and press advertisements publicizing the cause
- Press conference to formally launch the fundraising drive
- Formation of a committee of diverse individuals to assist with the fundraising and publicity of same.

As a result of Mountain Top's efforts, considerable interest is being generated, and individuals and groups are becoming involved in the efforts:

- Mavcom will design and host a website www.stbenedictshome.org. This website should be active within the next two weeks.
- A service group in Bequia has committed itself to all fundraising activities
- Multigraphics has donated posters of the logo which will be displayed in strategic locations

The Kingstown Chorale has also made a sizeable financial contribution to the building fund. Mr. Trevor Thompson, an architect has committed his professional resources, and is also seeking assistance from the Rotary Club, and Mr. Simon Bailey, a Quantity Surveyor has pledged his assistance.

As you can imagine, this is a mammoth undertaking, which can only be achieved through the combined generosity of several individuals and organizations.

We will be grateful if you can bring this information to the attention of your membership at your next general meeting or through any means by which you communicate with them.

Your support will help to create the awareness and beneficence necessary for St. Benedict's to continue to provide this invaluable service to the Vincentian community.

We would also appreciate your advice on any other Vincentian organizations in the Diaspora who we may be able to obtain assistance from.

Financial contributions can be made directly to the St. Benedict's Day Nursery and Infant Hospital Building Fund

Account at RBTT Caribbean Bank, South River Road, Kingstown St. Vincent and the Grenadines, account number 0107171283.

Contributions of construction material, professional expertise, labour, equipment etc are also welcome.

Please feel free to contact any of the following for further information:

Kenneth DaSilva - Financial Comptroller, Mountain Top Springs Ltd, Tel 1 784-456 1744, Sr. Nyra-Anne Pajotte - Manager, St. Benedict's Day Nursery and Infant Hospital, Tel 1 784 458 6331, Cleo Jones - PRO Mountain Top Springs Ltd, Tel 1 784 528 7064.

We look forward to your assistance.

Kind Regards

Cleo Jones
PRO - Mountain Top Springs Ltd.

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Help a child in your homeland to a brighter future.
An old saying reminds us that children are the future of every country. Each of us can help to build the future of St. Vincent and the Grenadines by helping the children. As little as Cdn\$1.00/day per month will give at least EC\$50.00 per month. This small amount can help to keep a young child in school and contribute to his or her development in the community. If you are interested in learning how you can go about sponsoring a child in St. Vincent & the Grenadines, how to get such a child and how to ensure that your sponsor money is used for the development of that child, please enquire in confidence by writing to the Association either through regular mail or e-mail. You can also contact any member of the Executive.

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SVGAT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Two (2) bursaries of \$1,000.00 each are available as part of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association Scholarship Program for 2006. Please visit www.vincytoronto.com to get further details and download the application form.

Please note that the deadline for submitting applications is September 30, 2006.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO INC.

Saturday, August 26	Gospel Concert	Malvern Methodist Church
Sunday, August 27	Monthly General Meeting	Northwood Community Centre 15 Clubhouse Court, North York
Sunday, Sept. 24	Monthly General Meeting	Northwood Community Centre 15 Clubhouse Court, North York
Sunday, October 29	Independence Thanksgiving Church Service	Rosewood Church of the Nazarene
Saturday, Nov. 4	Annual Independence Banquet	Renaissance Parque Banquet Hall
Sunday, Nov. 5	Town Hall Discussions	TBA
Sunday, Nov. 26	Monthly General Meeting	Northwood Community Centre 15 Clubhouse Court, North York
Saturday, Dec. 16	Children's Christmas Party	TBA
Sunday, Dec. 17	Annual Christmas Sing-a-Long	Northwood Community Centre 15 Clubhouse Court, North York
Friday, Dec. 22	Christmas Hamper Outreach	
Sunday, January 28	Annual General Meeting	Northwood Community Centre 5 Clubhouse Court, North York

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NEWS FROM SVG

(Courtesy of The Vincentian and Searchlight Newspapers)

The 2006 Common Entrance results have been released.

The Common Entrance Examination is for students at Primary Schools wishing to go on to Secondary Schools. This year's Common Entrance Exam was held on Friday, June 2nd. The number of students registered was 2702. Of these, 2678 wrote the examination. The top 5 students in this year's exam earned in excess of 90% of the total marks (the top mark in 2005 was 87%).

There were 77 students who scored 80% or more of the total marks. The comparative figure for 2005 is 32%. The number of successful students this year has increased by 38. This amounts to 1101 students as compared to 1063 last year. Of the 1376 boys who wrote the examination this year, 482 passed, while of the 1302 girls, 619 were successful. This compares with 453 of 1812 boys and 723 of 1572 girls who wrote the exam last year. The boys have clearly narrowed the gap.

Saskia Renton of the St. Mary's Roman Catholic School was the top student, with a total of 92.78%. The three persons who tied for second place with an average of 91.11% are Kalina Browne and Shaquille Thomas also of the St. Mary's Roman Catholic School and Mbeki Swift of the Marriqua Government School.

The first 10 places were taken by the following schools: St. Mary's Roman Catholic (4), Marriqua Government (2), Kingstown Preparatory (1), Georgetown Government (1), Lodge Village Government (1) and Dickson Methodist School (1).

This year's results are an improvement on those of 2005 and 2004.

Finally! - Buccament Bay project begins

After six months of intense discussions and negotiations, the tourism development project at Buccament Bay is finally underway.

The project has been stalled as government negotiated settlement with farmers who had leased the lands there, the majority of whom had breached the lease covenant.

MAM Investments intends to construct 152 cabanas and 120 apartments on 26 acres of beachfront, arable land in the South Leeward community.

David Man, Project Coordinator with MAM Investment told **THE VINCENTIAN** on Monday that, even with the delay, the company needed to complete 50 units in time for the Cricket World Cup next March, nine months away.

He said that, during the two years it would take to complete the project, the company would employ about 500 persons, mainly tradesmen and other construction workers.

On completion, the resort will employ 250 persons full-time, 50 part-time and another 100 seasonally, many of whom will be Vincentians.

Taiwan confirms funding for Argyle Airport

Taiwan has quantified its contribution to the construction the international airport at Argyle.

Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves reported that Taipei has promised aid totaling US\$25 million, US\$15 million of which was a grant and the remainder a soft loan.

Dr. Gonsalves, who is also Minister of Finance and Economic Development, secured the assistance during his most recent visit to the Asian ally this month.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by both governments says "any request for additional assistance with the project will be afforded favourable consideration in further discussions."

In addition to the airport contribution, Taiwan will grant US\$10 million to be drawn down over five years to finance the Youth Empowerment Service (YES) Programme and the construction of several learning resource centres here.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Taiwan will celebrate 25 years of diplomatic relations in August.

PM Gonsalves meets with PAAB

Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves recently met with representatives of the People's Action Alliance of Bequia (PAAB), an interest group on the island who calls itself defenders of the sale of Crown Lands. Dr. Gonsalves has stated unequivocally that his ULP Administration will be pressing with the sale of Crown Lands on the Grenadine Isle of Bequia for the purpose of Tourism development projects and to finance the International Airport at Argyle.

In August last year during the launching of the International Airport project, Prime Minister Gonsalves disclosed that government has vested all Crown Lands into the Trust of National Properties Limited who will sell or lease them. Dr. Gonsalves noted that lands will be sold not only on Bequia, but also on mainland St. Vincent, which includes 69 acres in the Peter's Hope, Mount Wynne area.

According to the Prime Minister, the sale of Crown Lands by the Government was inevitable as a necessary factor to develop the country's tourism sector and to finance the upcoming international airport. He assured the members of PAAB that over 143 acres Crown Lands in Bequia will be sold in lots to nationals, including residents of Bequia, at EC \$14 per square foot while non-residents will be charged EC \$18 per square foot.

However, the PAAB is calling on the Prime Minister to present a development plan in respect of the sale of Crown Lands on Bequia. The group is advocating a direct foreign and tourism investment in projects where the lands are concerned.

The PAAB is also concerned about the price at which portions of lands allocated are to be sold and the government's overall intentions regarding the development of Bequia.

Dr. Gonsalves pledged that he and his government are committed to see Bequia develop as a model community but wants to see a balanced development.

He assured the group that government will be working together in a committee to execute the sale of the Crown Lands.

OECS – 25 Years Strong

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) marked an historic point in its existence, Wednesday, June 21, when it raised the first ever OECS flag (pictured at right) before OECS Heads of Government, regional and international officials, and members of the public, on the compound of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), in St. Kitts/Nevis.

The flag raising is among a number of high profile events being

held this year to mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Basseterre, which established the OECS on June 18, 1981.

The OECS is a nine member grouping comprising Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands are associate members of the OECS.

The OECS High Commission located in Ottawa staged a gala event on July 29 during which it recognized eight (8) nationals of the OECS resident in Canada for their contributions to the wider Canadian Community. Among those recognized was our own Grace Toney-Stephens. The others who received Awards of Excellence are Ms Frances Delsol of the Commonwealth of Dominica; Mr. Desmond Ottley from St. Kitts & Nevis; Ms Margaret Daniel and Mr. Keith Charles of St. Lucia; Mrs. Margaret Strachan of Grenada; Mrs. Valeria Fraser of St. Vincent and the Grenadines now living in Winnipeg; and Mr. Neville Boyce of Montserrat.

Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts & Nevis and currently the chairman of Caricom was the Guest Speaker and he also made the presentations to the awardees.

High Commissioner, Her Excellency Lorraine Williams used the opportunity to recognize the valuable contribution her staff is making to advance the causes of the Commission.

Dr. Len Ishmael, OECS Director General and Dr. Lowell Lewis, Chief Minister of Montreal were among other dignitaries in attendance.

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Church Needs Help

The Methodist Church in Kingstown, St. Vincent, built in 1841 is in dire need of repairs and needs your help. The roof needs to be changed and one of the balconies is closed off from public use as a safety measure. It is estimated that approximately EC\$1,000,000.00 is required to finance the repairs. Your contributions could be mailed to: Kingstown Methodist Church, P.O. Box 26, Grenville Street, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Windward Islands and more information could be had from Rev. Victor H. Job, Superintendent, Minister & President, South Caribbean District Methodist Church in the Caribbean & the Americas (MCCA) – 784-457-1989.

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The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association (SVGA) of Toronto is a non-profit community based Association. We are committed to providing assistance and support to groups, institutions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ontario and wherever the Association deems fit. To provide an anti bias forum for Cultural, Educational, Social and Recreational enrichment and to maintain a network of communication through information and referral.



Objectives

- To maintain a high level of volunteerism through recruitment, training and effective utilization of skills.
- To provide a forum to promote leadership and advocacy for the enrichment of Culture and Education.
- To provide an anti bias environment for the discussion of matters of general interest to its members.
- To plan, implement and participate in fundraising activities to meet urgent human needs.
- To promote social and recreational events to enrich the lives of Children, Youth, Adults and Seniors.
- To maintain a network of communication through information and referral.

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