

PLANNING FOR THE YEAR 2025

By

Unity Labour Party

ESTIMATES FOR 2025

On January 02, 2025, the Standing Committee on Finance of the House of Assembly — the Committee of the Whole House — adopted for presentation to the House for final approval on January 09, 2025, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025 (with projections for 2026 and 2027) and the Appropriation Bill for 2025 was also adopted and sent to the House for subsequent consideration and approval.

On January 13, 2025, the Budget Debate will begin when the Minister of Finance introduces the Appropriation Bill; at the conclusion of the Budget Debate later next week, it is anticipated that the Appropriation Bill will be approved, then assented to by the Governor General, and published in the Gazette as the law of the land, through which the government's plans for 2025 will be financed and implemented. The ULP government is thus already busy at work with its legislation agenda on the country's fiscal operations for 2025.

The Summary of the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill before the House shows an overall Budget for 2025 of EC \$1.85 billion, of which EC \$917.64 million is earmarked for recurrent expenditure, for the Sinking Fund Contribution, and EC \$696.34 million for capital expenditure. The Budget is funded by EC \$907.7 million from Current Revenue (Tax and Non-Tax Revenue), Capital Receipts, (Grant, Loans, Capital Revenue, and Other Receipts) of EC \$943.66 million.

Last year, due to Hurricane Beryl, the total Budget was revised upwards from the approved estimates of EC \$1.62 billion to EC \$1.9994 billion. Thus, this year's Budget is more than the approved Budget for 2024 but less than the Revised Estimates of 2024.

The data show that the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at market prices increased from EC \$2.399 billion at the end of 2021 to EC \$ 3.05 billion as at September 30, 2024. Indeed, the size of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as reflected in the GDP measurement increased from EC\$ 2.84 billion at the end of 2023 to EC \$3.05 billion as at September 30, 2025, nine months later. This is remarkable despite the economic damage and loss occasioned by Hurricane Beryl which has been estimated at slightly under EC \$1 billion. It is to be noted that the nominal GDP at market prices

at December 31, 2000, was EC \$780 million — three months before the ULP took office; the nominal GDP today is some four times the sum in 2000!

Please note, too, that the annual GDP measures the aggregate of the value of all the goods and services produced in the economy over the specific time period.

The nine Functional Classification categories of the Recurrent and Capital Estimates for 2025 show that the expenditure items are: General Public Services (EC \$517.69 million); Economic Affairs (EC \$372.66 million); Education (EC \$250.89 million); Health (EC \$197.39 million); Social Protection (EC \$191.44 million); Public Order and Safety (EC \$105.63 million); Environmental Protection (EC \$87.82 million); Housing and Community Amenities (EC \$87.35 million); Recreation and Culture (EC \$40.52 million). It is to be noted that from the **capital budget**, Economic Affairs constitutes the largest expenditure allocation of 35 per cent of the total capital budget; followed by Health (14 per cent); Housing (11.3 per cent); Environmental Protection (11 per cent); Education (8.2 per cent); the other functional classification categories on the capital side range between 2.4 per cent and 5.3 per cent of the total capital budget.

From the above budget numbers, it is clear what the central priorities of the government are.

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF HUGE PROGRESS

Despite the limitations and challenges of a small island developing state and the historical and contemporary burdens of colonialism, monopoly capitalism externally, and the legacies of native genocide, the enslavement of African bodies and the indentureship of Madeirans and Indians, post-independence St. Vincent and the Grenadines has made memorable advances. And it has to be acknowledged that at no period in our country's history have we made the extent of huge, spectacular advances and progress as in the last 24 years under the ULP government. This immense progress has been made in all material areas of life, living, and production.

Yet during this very period our country has suffered from 12 major adverse weather events (hurricanes, storms, landslides, etc.) interspersed by annual periods of drought plus the 21 volcanic eruptions of April 2021, the COVID pandemic of 2020-2021, the collapse of preferential markets for bananas in the UK, the global economic depression of 2008 and its aftershocks up to 2014, and the multitude outbreaks of global conflicts and their knock-on effects.

RELIEF, RECONSTRUCTION, AND RECOVERY

The process of relief, reconstruction, and recovery after Hurricane Beryl continues apace. The progress made has been absolutely remarkable after the massive destruction in parts of SVG (especially the Southern Grenadines) and significant damage elsewhere. Objective observers are amazed at the huge progress which we have made over the last six months since Beryl.

The progress is evident all around us: The very large expenditure in effort and money in the two months clean-up after Beryl; the restoration of electricity, water, and telecoms services; the reopening of most schools on time and in order in the first week of September 2024, and the other schools particularly for students in the Southern Grenadines two or so weeks later; the provision of a more than satisfactory level of services relating to public health, public safety, and security; the restoration of primary, secondary, and tertiary health care with promptitude; the expeditious and business-like repair and reconstruction of nearly 2,500 houses through the state agencies despite a shortage of construction labour and materials for the tasks-at-hand; the reasonably prompt restoration of air services; the provision, free of cost, to persons in the Southern Grenadines for travel by sea, by way of the fast-ferry services and other schooner services; the provision of shelters and touristic accommodation (guest houses and apartments) for evacuees; the generous provision of income support, social protection, and production support for over 15,000 persons in the aggregate throughout SVG; and much more.

The government led by Comrade Ralph has mobilised considerable support from friendly governments, agencies, NGOs, and individuals to assist in the process of relief, recovery, and reconstruction. Still much more is to be done especially in housing, agriculture, fisheries and income support. Budget 2025 contains substantial resources for these purposes; and more resources are being sought.

IRRELEVANCE OF THE NDP

Hurricane Beryl has shown up the increasing irrelevance of the opposition NDP. Their leader, Lorraine Friday, went missing in action for some three weeks shortly after Beryl: He went home to Canada on a holiday. In the Southern Grenadines, Terrence Ollivierre, is also absent. Occasionally, Friday and Ollivierre come up for oxygen from their submerged and irrelevant condition with this or that infantile query or utterance. The people of the Grenadines are increasingly fed up with Friday, Ollivierre, and the rest of the NDP gang. They do not have James Mitchell anymore to bail them out; desperately

they are summoning his ghost to save them from complete irrelevance. What a pitiable lot!

Rank-and-file NDP supporters, too, are asking for an explanation for their party leadership's unceremoniously insulting treatment of Mitchell's daughter, Louise, in the West St. George constituency. NDP supporters in Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau, and Union Island cannot get an answer to the query: "Why throw away Louise, the pearl of the Mitchell family, for whom? Cupid?" What a bargain: A pearl for a -----? What is the Women's Arm of the NDP saying about this? There has been for decades a narrow, self-serving clique of some middle-class political opportunists in the NDP who have been, and are, determined to cleanse the NDP of any influence of Mitchell who, ironically, raised up many of them from political or social obscurity. Louise is a casualty of that group. Yet they still hypocritically use the Mitchell name as electoral fodder among the NDP base who still revere James Mitchell.

MEANWHILE, THE ULP SOARS

Meanwhile, the ULP continues to soar. The love, caring, faith, and fresh hope offered by the ULP and exemplified daily in their works all across SVG, are impressing Vincentians more and more. The people know that SVG, despite its challenges and hiccups, is on the right track with the ULP. As the ULP gets closer to "Six in a Row", the NDP's anger, bile, hatred and malice will grow by leaps and bounds. Let them continue to stew in their irrelevance and shame. They have nothing to offer SVG.

Labour is working and working well. Let us continue to build our SVG; let us not sleep to dream, but dream to change our world for the better. And we know that the ULP is better by far!

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