



THRONE SPEECH

by



**Her Excellency
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GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SAINT LUCIA

**On the occasion of the Formal Opening of the
Third Session of the Ninth Parliament of Saint Lucia**

Monday, April 21, 2008

Madam President and Members of the Senate,
Madam Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

The expression that the business of government is the business of the people, is much more than a mere saying.

In a democracy, it is indeed an expression of fact.

Therefore, on behalf of my Government, I welcome the opportunity of this, the opening of the third session of the ninth parliament of Saint Lucia to give true meaning to this expression, through the provision of an outline of my Government's intended programme of work during the course of this session of Parliament.

Notwithstanding the threat of global recession and the compounding elements of ever increasing oil prices and the crisis in world financial markets, my Government's strategy and programme of action during this Parliamentary session, will address these challenges in a manner that allows our nation to take advantage of the many opportunities that are being created in the globalized world, not the least of which are the avenues for trade in services made available by the recently concluded Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

Since my last address, our country has gone through difficult times. We suffered with him through his illness, and we mourned as a nation the loss of our dearly beloved Prime Minister, Sir John George Melvin Compton.

By the grace of the Almighty, we have overcome this trial with a renewed sense of national purpose and determination to pay tribute to the legacy of our departed leader by transforming the vision of development that was his life's work into a reality of economic prosperity, social equity and justice for all.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, before we can confront the challenges of our era, we must first define the goals that we wish to set for our nation and establish the approach and the policies through which we will realize these national objectives. On the eve of our thirtieth anniversary of independence, this is the perfect time to take stock.

The strides that we have made over the years through the efforts of our leaders and citizens, and the goals we seek to achieve in the future, must be protected from the vanity of selfishness or base ambition. My Government will therefore do all within its power to safeguard the mandate granted to it by the people to ensure that the path of development that is pursued brings benefit to all of our people and does not serve the interests of only a few.

When we boast of two Nobel Laureates, we also pay tribute to our own capacity as a people to aspire to excellence. We acknowledge too our intellectual capability to confront every problem and surmount it through creative solutions.

Indeed, the problems that face us are many and varied and we will need every ounce of ingenuity to successfully come through this time of challenge. Notwithstanding these challenging international economic and financial circumstances we are buoyed by the immense prospects for private sector-led investment and so embrace a strategy that seeks to achieve high rates of economic growth.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, we need to give hope to our youth; we need to provide jobs for the breadwinners of our households so that they can meet their obligations to their families; we need to properly educate the population; we need to provide proper health care for our people and we need always to remember the less fortunate among us, as well as the elderly who established the foundation for the better life that we enjoy today.

We also need to properly manage the environment so that this fair 'Helen of the West' that has been entrusted to our care remains fair so that future generations may also enjoy its beauty. Indeed we also cannot ignore the need to provide our citizens with a sense of security so that they can go on living their lives and giving their

utmost without fear of assault or injury. In short, Madam President, Madam Speaker, we need to build a society in which all can participate and in which all can prosper.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, Ou ja tann di souvan ki twavay Gouvèdman sé zafè jan péyi-a. Sa sé pa pyès pawòl vag, pyès pawòl enniti. Sa sé pilotwi-a menm asou ki nou bati sistenm denmokratik-la nou anbwase-a. Sé pou wézon sala, Gouvèdman ka vini isi-a, an Kay Konsit péyi-a toulézanné pou pwézanaté bay jan péyi-a pwogwam twavay-la yo ka pwoposé antanmé diwan lanné-a ki ka vini-an.

Dépwé dènyé fwa-a mwen té adwésé péyi-a isi-a, an Kay Konsit sala, nou pasé an mòso twistès lanné pasé ki soukwé péyi-a jis an chousli. Mwen ka palé di lanmò pwemyé Pwemyé Minis péyi-a, Sir John Compton. Mé défen Sir John pa kité nou òflen. I pasé ban nou, konm lézéwité'y. an vizyon pou Sent Lisi épi pou lé Sent Lisyen ki kay sa endé nou fè kalité pwogwé-a twavay wèd-nou-an méwité-a. Mé sé nou ki ni pou pwan vizyon sala, épi fè'y twavay ban nou. A lavèy twantyenm lannivèsè endépendans péyi-a, sé mèyè lokasyon pou wéfléchi asou chimen-an nou ja twaèvés-a, osi byen asou lawout-la ki douvan nou-an. Tout sa ki ka pwan kou oliwon latè-a, épi an péyi-a menm, ka moutwé ki bagay pa kay fasil. Mé lawout sé tjè.

Sèl sa nou asiwé sé ki nou pa kay éwisi, si nou tout désidé aji kon bètafé – chak moun kléwé pou lam-yo; chak moun wè pou kò yo.

Bèf douvan sa bwè dlo nèt, mé sé fo yo aksèpté ki yo ni yon wèsponsabilité pou pa sali dlo-a pou sé sa ki ka vini dèyè-a. Gouvèdman kay fè tout sa'y pé pou wè ki tout moun sa jwi bénéfis pwogwé péyi-a; pas sèlman an kopanni ki ka vlé aji kon agloulou gwanfal.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, non enmen mansyonné non Sir Arthur Lewis épi Honnowab Derek Walcott kon dé gwan gwèk Sent Lisyen ki ja pòté li pli gwan lonnè entènasyonnal ki ni bay ti péyi nou-an. Mé sa sé lonnè sala ka moutwé sé ki nou Sent Lisyen ni sa'y fo pou wivé nivo sala. Nou ni kalité sèvèl-la ki'y fo pou trouvé solisyon nèf pou sé pwoblenm-la ki ka bloké pwogwé péyi-a. Konsa, annou mété tèt-nou ansanm pou bay jennès péyi-a lèspwa; pou mennen twavay an péyi-a pou ende manman épi papa potjiwé sa'y fo bay fanmi-yo; pou byen endiké pèp péyi-a. Sé pou nou fè mannèv ansanm pou byen mennajé santé jan péyi-a; pou fè povizyon bay sé moun-lan pami nou-an ki pa sa fè dèt chòy, épi sa ki pa sa endé kò-yo, kon sé gwanmoun-lan ki établi fondasyon-an ki fè ki lavi pli ézé atjwèlman pasé'y té yé an tan pasé.

Nou ni pou fè mannèv pou konsèvé épi potéjé lanviwonman bèl péyi nou-an, pou sé sa ki kay vini apwé nou-an jwi bèlté'y osi. Sé pou nou fè asiwé ki jan péyi-a sa alé vini fè zafè yo san pèwès, san twakasan, san moun anmbwé yo, ében blésé yo, ében tjwé yo, ében anviolé yo, ében kasé kay yo. Anfen, Madanm Pwézidan,

Madam Speaker, nou ni pou bati an sosyété ki ka endé tout moun patisipé an zafè péyi-a, épi fè pwogwé an lavi pèsonnèl-yo

Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government will place great emphasis on the education sector in this coming year and in the years that follow. Education is one avenue that offers a guarantee of upward mobility. However, the level of illiteracy in our population is still too high and we must correct this imbalance. The technological age requires a literacy level that goes beyond just mere reading and writing ability. We need to prepare the young to be part of that new reality. Through education and training we can certainly build a better society.

In this regard, Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government will establish an Education Commission that will initiate a national dialogue on the way forward for education. The agenda of this Commission will embrace all elements of the discourse on education and will focus on the need for our nation to establish a sustainable platform for human resource development that spans the gamut from early childhood education to adult literacy, life-long learning and higher education.

In this regard, the higher education sector has a significant contribution to make, since it is universally acknowledged that it is that sector that drives the economic, cultural and social development

of a nation. It is the sector that is seen as being intimately bound with issues of control and self reliance which help to shape ideas about indigenous development and a nation's orientation to the world. Hence the initiative which is already in motion to transform the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College into a full-fledged university will be accelerated.

The issue of food security will also be given high priority and therefore our efforts in the agricultural sector will focus on increasing production of food in both primary and processed forms to ensure that we can meet our own domestic food requirements.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government will take short-term measures to address the problem of increasing food prices that is now affecting our population and indeed, the entire world. However, the solution to this problem requires systemic responses through coordinated approaches to planning, proper land and water use, forecasting, provision of incentives, standards, quality programmes, research and development in food technology and good marketing strategies.

We also need to take steps to make agriculture and agri-business more attractive to young people. Through agriculture, the rural areas in this country were transformed. By investing in new technologies in agriculture, thereby making it more attractive, we can continue this

process of transformation and so encourage our young people to replace their parents in this noble endeavour. In this way we can ensure the sustainable development of our rural communities.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, we have found in the Republic of China on Taiwan a willing partner in the process of agricultural modernization. During this year, a number of new initiatives will be introduced with the assistance of experts and technology which they have made available to us.

In recent times, much has been said about the challenges that face us in the Health sector. The responsibility of my Government is to provide an adequate health system for the population. We will not leave this responsibility to others to discharge. Having carefully explored all aspects of the issue, my Government, during this year will implement a strategy for comprehensive health care, and for the construction of appropriate facilities, so that the right to health care, just as the right to food and to education, will be guaranteed. Both the preventative and curative aspects of health care will be given the attention they deserve, and my Government will spare no effort in achieving the goal of a healthy population. This, as well as access to adequate food and education forms part of the Millennium Development Goals agenda agreed to at the United Nations, and to which we have subscribed.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, we must return to the formula that worked in decades past, as we confront the crime situation in our beloved island. The solution is not to build bigger jails, but to address the root causes of misbehavior, bad behavior and crime.

We must return to the youth organizations, the church organizations, and the social and sports clubs that helped build character, tolerance and camaraderie in our society. We need to put support systems in place to redirect the vital energies of our young people to gainful pursuits that give them a sense of worth and value. This is the objective of the youth and social programmes that will be pursued by my Government during this year.

To provide the economic underpinnings for the social and development goals that will be pursued by my Government, a range of policy instruments and programmes for creating jobs, for encouraging entrepreneurial development and private - sector expansion has been formulated. In support of this strategy, my Government will serve as a catalyst, mindful of the need to avoid placing a further financial burden on the population by assuming unnecessary additional debt. New financing mechanisms will be adopted; our efforts in tourism will be sustained; and linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy, including agriculture and small and medium - sized enterprises, will be promoted.

The development plans that my Government intends to pursue, Madam President, Madam Speaker, will be ventilated in public dialogue, through a series of meetings to be held throughout the country during the coming months. Participation by the people is accorded high priority by my Government, and much attention will be paid to engaging the population and seeking their views on the path and direction of national development.

Consistent with this commitment to public dialogue, the work of the National Consultative Council will, during the coming months, give rise to recommendations with regard to the Labour Code, economic empowerment of citizens, a National Minimum Wage and a National Youth Service, among other matters of high national priority.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, while we are encouraged by the prospects for investment and economic growth, the effects of climate change may pose serious problems for our small land mass and population. While we have some idea of how it may impact on our shores and low lying coastal areas, sufficient attention has not been paid to its impact on our water supply.

As an important input into the food, health, tourism and industrial sectors, every effort must be made to safeguard our water supply and to attract new investment into the sector. In this regard, the water utility company WASCO will be privatized during the year with

the majority of the equity interest remaining in national hands. In addition, direct measures will be adopted to protect and preserve our forests and watersheds.

Energy is a similarly critical input and given the recent spiraling increase in oil prices, my Government will give priority to exploring and ultimately utilizing a range of renewable energy sources.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, the conduct of our foreign policy is a means of advancing our national interests in a manner that defines for the world what we stand for as a nation. In this regard, some of the decisions that we may take will not be popular but at all times we must be seen to do everything possible to project ourselves as rational actors on the world stage, acting in defense of our national interests, the promotion of good governance, respect for human rights and democratic principles.

These principles are shields for a small country such as ours, and when we compromise these, we contribute to our own downfall. Our Diplomats and Representatives in our Overseas Missions must always remember this, and represent us to the world as a peace - loving people who wish to live in harmony with our environment, our principles and our God. We must not and will not sacrifice our principles at the altar of power, whether military or economic.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, the legislative agenda that will be pursued during this session, will underpin the development programmes that will be instituted by my Government.

Rules relating to police practice will be introduced in Parliament, and will provide the core framework for police powers and safeguards regarding stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification, interviewing detainees and obtaining evidence. These Rules are intended to strike a balance between police powers and the rights and privileges of the public.

The Evidence Act enacted in 2002 provides for Regulations to be made for the procedure for taking DNA samples for evidence and for the admission of such evidence by the courts. These Regulations however have not been enforced to date and my Government proposes to address this in this Parliamentary Session, bearing in mind that our Forensic Laboratory will be ready to offer DNA processing services during this Session of Parliament.

In order to address the deteriorating crime situation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), regional leaders have taken some key decisions to upgrade and expand the security arrangements that were put in place during Cricket World Cup 2007. To facilitate these crime and security arrangements, draft legislation being prepared at

the CARICOM level will be introduced during this session of Parliament.

It is proposed that a Law Reform and Revision Commission be established and legislation to that effect be introduced in this Parliamentary Session for the purpose of simplifying and modernizing our laws in order to improve access to justice, remove obsolete or unnecessary laws and eliminate defects in the law. The Commission will provide new or more effective methods for administering the law, dispensing justice, and ensuring harmonization of laws with OECS and CARICOM Member States wherever possible.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government has an active legislative agenda relating to information and communications technology. The Electronic Crimes Bill, the Electronic Transactions Bill, the Data Protection and Privacy Bill and the Freedom of Information Bill have been prepared and are currently going through the process of consultation with stake-holders prior to enactment and will be introduced in Parliament this Session.

In order to alleviate the problems being encountered by the Registry of Civil Status as a result of the disparity between baptismal and birth records, and having regard to the influx of applications for birth certificates following the change in policy by the Immigration Department in relation to applications for the CARICOM passport, my

Government proposes to introduce legislation in this Parliamentary Session to institute unified records of birth; to provide for records of civil status - including records of birth, marriage and death - to be kept both in electronic and paper form; and to provide for an Adjudicator to rule on matters of dispute relating to rectifications of entries in the Civil Status Register.

Bills intended to give harmonized legislative effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and other Conventions that were prepared by the OECS Family Law and Domestic Project - in particular, the Child Care and Adoption Bill and the Juvenile Justice Bill - are of high priority for my Government. The Bills are in their consultation stages and it is intended that they will be enacted in this Session of Parliament.

Substantive legislation relating to Intellectual Property has been enacted to comply with the World Trade Organization Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. However, in the case of the legislation relating to patents which now provides for registration in countries other than the United Kingdom, the necessary Regulations still require enactment and are being reviewed by the Registry of Companies as a matter of urgency. This is necessary to encourage local industrial designers to register their

designs on the international level, thereby promoting industrial development at the national level.

The Monetary Council, which is the highest decision making body of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, took a decision in 2005 that financial legislation in the Eastern Caribbean Economic Union (ECCU) would be harmonised. To this end several pieces of legislation have been prepared for the ECCU and are being reviewed for enactment early in this Parliamentary Session. These include the Money Services Bill which seeks to regulate services such as cheque cashing, and currency exchange; the Payment Systems Bill which regulates and codifies procedures relating to a network of competing and complementary services that facilitate transactions involving the exchange of payment in return for goods, services, and real and financial assets; and the Commercial Code (Bills of Exchange) Bill which provides for cheques to be presented for payment by notification of their essential features by electronic means or otherwise.

A number of other Bills are being prepared for enactment in 2008, some of which are part of the CARICOM harmonization initiative in light of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. These include the Competition Bill, the Consumer Protection Bill, the Food Safety Bill and the Prevention of Corruption Bill.

Bills will also be introduced in this session in the area of Environmental Management and Protection.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, tout oliwon latè-a moun ka hélé "Anmwé" afòs pwi manjé ka hosé. Isi an Sent Lisi, Gouvèdman ja koumansé pwan yonn..dé.. demach pou soulajé sitwasyon-an, mé sa sé pa an pwoblenm nou kay sa vini about vitman. Pou konmansé, nou kay ni pou ankouwajé jennès péyi-a pou dévélope lagrikilti épi lendustwi lagrikilti. Pou sa fèt, nou kay ni pou entwodwi tèknoloji nèf, danwé nèf; nou kay ni pou idantifyé lòt laplas nèf. Mé sitou nou kay ni pou manjé sa nou ka podwi. Ewèzman, nou ja koumansé wè pogwé an diwèksyon sala.

Nou tann palé osi, pa tèlman lontan, Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, asou plan ki ka touvé pwopozé pou twètman diféwan maladi an péyi-a. Gouvèdman vlé asiwé pèp péyi-a ki sé li, é pa pèsonn dòt, ki ni wèsponsabilité pou mennajé twètman santé an péyi-a, èk i kay fè tout ki posib pou potjiwé kalité sèvis-la péyi-a ni bizwen-an, swé pou anpéché maladi, ében pou chaché djéwizyon bay sa ki malèwèzman pé tonbé malad.

Gouvèdman kay kontiné twavayé asou mannyè pou wabat kwim an péyi-a. Nou ni lidé ki si nou viwé fè sa nou té ni labitid fè-a an tan pasé, nou kay sa zonglé sitwasyon kwim-la piti a piti. Si nou wésité sé asosiasyon-an nou té ni an tan avan-an – asosiasyon jennès, klub

spò, oganizasyon wilijez – sa pé pitèt endé sitwasyon-an épi koupé asou nivo kwim an péyi-a.

Nou kay pasé lwa nèf ki kay fè'y pli fasil pou idantifyé, awété, épi mennen lodyans moun ki ka kasé lwa péyi-a. Nou kay fè'y pli ézé pou tann kès-yo, épi pou kondanné sa lalwa touvé koupab.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, pwogwam Gouvèdman pou sèsyon sala twò chajé pou nou sa détayé tout bagay an pwézyantasyon sala jòdi-a. Mé an sé mwa=a ki ka vini-an, Gouvèdman kay vini oti jan péyi-a tanzantan pou konsilté épi yo, épi pou envité diskisyon asou sé diféwan pwojé-a i kay antanmé-a. Nou ka konté asou kopéwasyon'w épi endik ou.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, I have outlined some of the issues which my Government will accord priority over the next year. These are not, by any means, all the areas identified for intervention as my Government continues to promote the modernization of our country.

Inevitably, factors that are beyond our control impact heavily on our ability to achieve our goals. These factors which include terrorism, financial crises, and natural disasters, can all affect our progress and our prospects for development.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, to a large extent, our own efforts and behavior in our homes, our schools, our churches and our communities, will go a long way in determining our destiny. The respect that we show each other on the playing field, at the workplace, at the supermarkets and on the minibuses will go a long way in building the bridges of brotherhood and unity so necessary to our success as a nation.

As a responsible nation, we must build a culture of saving and prudent spending so that we can provide the engine of growth for our development and avoid over-dependence on external benefactors or investment. We must support our financial institutions, especially our credit unions that have graduated from being “sou-sous” to becoming strong financial intermediaries in our communities, so that in time of need they can assist us.

We must encourage our young people to start saving at an early age, so that they will grow up with the right attitude to money management.

During this year Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government will make good on its promise to re-establish a Development Bank that will cater, in particular, to the needs of our farmers, fishers, students, and small and medium - sized entrepreneurs.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, my Government is committed to the principles of good governance and at all times seeks to embrace transparency and accountability and especially, financial accountability in Government.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the election campaign, my Government, upon assumption of office, did not rush to judgment with regard to alleged occurrences of financial impropriety.

However, information coming to light has made it impossible for my Government to ignore the need for certain matters that suggest the possibility of financial maladministration, to be ventilated in a forum that allows for full public scrutiny and transparency.

Accordingly, Madam President, Madam Speaker, it is the intention of my Government, in the coming months, to establish a Commission of Inquiry to subject these various matters to a full review.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, mannyè nou konpòté kò nou an kay-nou, an lékòl-nou, an légliz-nou, épi an konmin-nou kay désidé ki diwèksyon péyi-nou kay pwan. Si nou moutwé yonnalòt wèspé koté nou ka twavay, koté nou ka fwé kanté pou fè biznis ében pou amizé kò-nou, ében adan sé machin-lan nou ka wwayajé mouté désann-lan, nou kay sa bati kalité sosyété-a nou bizwen-an pou éwisi kon yon nasyon wèspansab.

Dyé pwòmet ki I kay endé tout sa ki kwiyé asou'y pou konfò ében potèksyon. Souvan, diwan lanné-a ki pasé-a, nou té kwiyé asou'y kon yon pèp pou mété lanmen, pou bay pochen-nou djéwizyon, pou ban nou lapé, lafòs èk kouyay, kont mové tan, kont pèsikousyon. I pa té dézapwenté nou. Annou kontiné mété lafwa nou an Li pou ban nou lapé, lajwa épi lanmou pou yonnalòt.

Pou wimèsyé'y pou tout bénédiksyon'y, annou éséyé twavayé byen; annou wèsté onnèt; annou padonné yonnalòt; annou endé yonnalòt; annou gadé pou yonnalòt. Annou mété tout fòs-nou pou twavayé pou lajistis, pou légalité épi sitou pou bon konpwann pami nou.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, our God has promised to assist all those who call upon His name, and if we submit ourselves in prayer before Him, as we did last year, I have no doubt that He will continue to be our bulwark and our comfort. May our belief, trust and faith in God, provide us with that shield that will protect us from the calamities that visit all nations and peoples who live a life bereft of brotherly love and characterized by selfishness.

Let us strive to excel, to be honest, truthful, loving, kind, merciful and forgiving and, of course, hard working. Let us be our brothers' keepers and truly seek to build a new and prosperous society in this Millennium; a society that is founded on the abiding principles of justice, tolerance and equity which underpin our Constitution.

Madam President, Madam Speaker, the opportunity and pleasure is now mine to formally declare open the Third Session of the Ninth Parliament of Saint Lucia.