



The Saint Lucia National Trust finds it necessary to address the issues raised by the Honourable Prime Minister during his call to Radio 100.1 Helen FM 'Out Goes In' programme on Wednesday December 11th, 2019. This matter has lingered in the public domain since that time and this attempt to set the record right is in response to calls from our members to do so.

DSH Proposals:

Prime Minister: It has been a very difficult relationship and I have questioned many things that the Trust has done and particularly Mr. Tulsie, in particular when it came to the development in the south, the Trust was using their database and organizing for people to participate in the marches in the South without even getting clarity as to what the projects were going to be and in our system the National Trust is one of the consulting agencies, so it means that all the developments we do with the DCA, the Trust gets the opportunity to participate and voice their concerns and so I have not been happy with how that relationship has transpired over time and I felt that there should be a less acrimonious relationship between the Government and the Trust. We are not asking for something that is difficult.

Firstly, the Trust never organized any marches in the South.

The Trust was indeed invited to comment on the DSH Environmental and Social Impact Assessment on 26 June 2017 and provided its comments on 25 July 2017. However, let us not forget that the DSH project entered into the public domain in July 2016 when a Framework Agreement was circulated on social media. A few press conferences and presentations followed showing conceptual development plans which included converting the Ma Kote Mangrove into a marina, and a causeway connecting the Maria Islands and Sandy Beach. These are the aspects of the project that the Trust was concerned about and following several failed attempts to engage in dialogue through direct contact, we wrote to the Prime Minister on February 17th, 2017 requesting a meeting with him and the developer to present our concerns. Having not received a response we wrote to the developer on 9th March, 2017 requesting a meeting to discuss our concerns. That letter was not acknowledged. Throughout this time the Trust made it clear that it supported developments in the south that would bring economic prosperity to the area, but felt that this outcome could be achieved without the extensive negative environmental impacts the DSH proposal in the public domain would cause. To date the Trust's requests for dialogue have gone unacknowledged. It is therefore unfortunate that the Prime Minister would suggest that the Trust's approach did not include seeking clarity on the proposal. The Prime Minister said on radio that "*We are not asking for something that is difficult*". We agree, but do not see how this could be achieved if requests for dialogue go unanswered.

Objections to the appointment of Jeannine Compton to the Director's position:

The Prime Minister stated three reasons for his objections:

1. Political Disagreements:

Prime Minister: In terms of the obvious statement, Jeannine who I know well, who I supported when she ran for our party, very aggressively. Jeannine chose to resign from our party and she decided to run independent. In addition to that at the last elections, there were certain allegations that Jeannine made towards my Government and so I say too, publically, that the relationship between myself and Jeannine has not been a good one. This is not a person that when we meet in public that we even shake hands and therefore to have someone who has made it clear in public, her opinion about my party, how did that person now come into an already difficult situation and resolve it.

The Prime Minister seems to be saying that he objects to Jeannine's appointment to the Director's position because of political differences. This is in violation of Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Section 1 of the Saint Lucia Constitution. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister decided to invoke political differences as the basis on which to deny a person her fundamental right to work by referencing his political disagreements with Mrs. Compton-Antoine as the basis for the decision.

2. Mrs. Jeannine Compton-Antoine was not the first Choice for the post:

Prime Minister: The Trust came to me and indicated that there were ten applicants for the position and they had short listed them to four persons and the two first people they had selected turned down the position and I will let the Trust speak for themselves because I don't want to be in breach of any confidentiality with them as to why those people did not accept the job.

Even the National Trust, through their process did not recognize Jeannine as the best person. In fact, two other people were selected. She was the third choice on their list.

There were four finalists whose scores were close to each other. They were all suitable for the job and Jeannine's score was a mere 6% lower than the front-runner. Hence, rejecting her appointment on the basis that she placed third is a moot point. We were unable to agree on a compensation package with the first place candidate who, incidentally, also expressed discomfort with the treatment of the Trust and Director by the government. The second place candidate had already accepted another position when approached. We therefore negotiated with Mrs. Compton-Antoine and once an agreement was reached, we approached the Prime Minister, as required by law.

The Trust is an equal-opportunity employer. The first Article in our recruitment policy reads:

The Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) is an equal opportunity employer and shall pursue a recruitment policy free of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or differently challenged capacity.

Political considerations did not enter into our assessment of candidates. Further, the recruitment team included a well-placed private sector representative who noted that he had been involved in many recruitment exercises and that the Trust's approach was the most rigorous he had ever participated in.

Prime Minister: So I have to say my interpretation was that the need to get the approval from the Minister was an afterthought.

The Prime Minister's interpretation is wrong. We know our Act and knew that the Prime Minister's approval is necessary to effect the appointment. A more reasonable interpretation is that it makes sense to conclude the negotiations with a prospective candidate before approaching the Prime Minister, for obvious reasons.

Prime Minister: I am not trying to say a Saint Lucian, because they take an opposite position with the State, should never get a job. That is not the issue, if the person is capable. Even the National Trust, through their process did not recognize Jeannine as the best person. In fact, two other people were selected. She was the third choice on their list.

Firstly, we must distinguish between the State and the Prime Minister – they are not one and the same and there is no basis on which to conclude that positions taken by Mrs. Compton-Antoine are not in congruence with those of the State. Further, our recruitment guidelines do not allow us to consider differences of opinion with a political party as a criterion on which to assess the suitability of a candidate for any position. There is no correlation between her placement in the final scoring and her ability to do the job. All the finalists were determined to be suitable for the post. As previously stated, Mrs. Jeannine Compton-Antoine's final score was only 6% lower than the first place candidate. We did ask the Prime Minister for his position on the fourth place candidate after he rejected our recommendation to appoint Mrs. Compton Antoine, and that individual was also rejected.

3. Ability to do the Job:

The Prime Minister made much of this, emphasizing that the Director needed to be more commercially oriented:

Prime Minister: Now these are difficult times and I am not going to take away the responsibility of the Trust but it means that you have somebody who can follow the rule of law, follow the processes, hold their ground in a responsible way and I just don't think Ms. Compton is going to be that person.

I don't think that she has the skill set to be able to develop the Trust commercially and to marry the commercial part with the conservation. Is she a good conservationist? Has she done a great job in the marine area? We had her in the SMMA. She is also, as you know someone we appointed in the use of the whaling institute.

We are at a loss to understand the basis on which the Prime Minister concluded that Mrs. Compton-Antoine is not business-oriented because he was not involved in the recruitment process and we are not aware of any other opportunity he has had to assess her skills in this area. The Trust has a job description and assessment criteria which were carefully followed throughout the recruitment process. Our decisions were not subjective. They were guided by the results of a four-step screening process, including a psychometric evaluation. It was rigorous and considered all the critical requirements for the job.

Jeannine Compton-Antoine's Appointment to position of Corporate Services Manager:

Prime Minister: Now the recent decision of the Trust to be able to now, in my humble opinion, circumvent the spirit of the Act, to go now and say the Prime Minister has not accepted her and we are now going to create a new position called the Corporate Secretary and create her as the Deputy, in order to do that. So now the Trust are now going to have two senior people? A Director and also a Corporate Secretary? An entity that is struggling financially? How are they able to do that?

The Prime Minister's claim that the Trust created a new position for Jeannine is just not true. The Trust's organizational structure, which was approved in 2009 when the 2009-2019 Strategic Plan was approved includes a Director and three Programme Managers. One of the manager positions – Corporate Services Manager - was vacant and Mrs. Compton-Antoine was appointed to, and serves in that capacity. If the Prime Minister is unhappy because Mrs. Jeannine Compton-Antoine now has a job, this raises troubling questions with regards to his motives for rejecting her appointment as Director.

Who Founded the Trust:

Prime Minister: The person that founded the Trust was Julian Hunte.

The Trust was founded by the late Sir John Compton. He appointed a steering committee comprising twelve distinguished Saint Lucians from varied political persuasions, including Mr. Julian Hunte, to lead the process. There is an important lesson to be learned from this as it relates to Sir John's conviction that decisions regarding the Trust should not be based on political considerations. He created a heritage management organisation which is mandated by law to serve in an advisory capacity to government.

The Trust is not managing its assets well:

Prime Minister: I do not believe that the Trust is managing its assets well. I think the Trust has a sufficient amount of assets in which they should not have to depend on any monies from the State and in fact, the Trust, in my humble opinion should have accumulation of monies and therefore, if there is an asset that the Trust wants to buy to convert in to parks, they would be free to do so.

..... my humble opinion there needs to be a Director that is a bit more commercially minded with an idea of how they are going to marry conservation and development. Very difficult thing but that's a unique skill set and so the idea of Pigeon Island and in my humble opinion, Pigeon Island should have been a theatre, an outdoor theatre, very similar to the Tropicana in Cuba, in which there could be evening shows and to look at other sites with an idea of how to marry the development of the assets and clearly tourism is a huge industry and there is an opportunity to make substantial amounts of money on tourism.

I don't think that she has the skill set to be able to develop the Trust commercially and to marry the commercial part with the conservation.

Now the fact is that the Tourist Board has spent \$20 million over those 25 yrs, in terms of developing, putting up and breaking down stages. Couldn't that money be better spent on being able to build a permanent theatre and that allows now on a regular basis for them to be able to have evening shows, dinner shows in which the Trust can make more money.

We are unaware of any assessments the Prime Minister conducted to arrive at these assumptions. These, in his words, are beliefs and opinions. On the other hand, the Trust assessed the candidates quite rigorously and is convinced that its decision is founded on enquiry and evaluations rather than speculation. Let it be known also that the Director of the Trust carries out a mandate from members and the Council and his or her work is always so guided.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction that the Trust has not converted the Pigeon Island National Landmark into an entertainment centre while both the Council and members are concerned that the number of events we hold on the site is compromising its integrity as a historic site and National Landmark. In 2019 we hosted thirty- eight events at Pigeon Island and throughout the year we had grave concerns about the impact of these events on the integrity of the Landmark. The Prime Minister also spoke about the Tourist Board's investments in setting up stages for Jazz and suggested that a permanent stage be built. While the Tourist Board's investment decisions are its own to make, we saw merit in creating a permanent stage. A proposal was presented to the Prime Minister more than a year ago, in advance of the last budget approval, for government budgetary support to design a stage at PINL. We never received a response, and no provision was made in the 2019/20 budget.

Dolphinarium:

Prime Minister: The dolphinarium, my Government has made no decision. When we came into Gov't what we did find, we found that there was an approval for a dolphin park in Canaries, to the extent that the Gov't had acquired Anse Jambette, in order to facilitate that dolphin park and there were also incentives approved for a hotel, in order to have a dolphin park at Rodney Bay and I wrote the Trust, indicated to the Trust that we would like to get their opinion on it. I have not received that response. I spoke to the current Chairman, who indicated they did write back. I don't know if she sent it since but I'd be happy to review what they have done and have said, but my Cabinet has not made a decision but also my Cabinet has not proceeded with the project pending the input of everyone.

Firstly, there is a Cabinet Conclusion (No. 378(a) of 8th July, 2013) under the subject: Sub-committee for the proposed Dolphin Park Project, which states:

"Cabinet agreed in principle to the project to be located in Anse Jambette in Canaries but will determine the issue of the Queen's Chain when a full submission on the request is made to Cabinet."

Given this conclusion, it is difficult to understand how the Prime Minister is able to conclude that:

- There was an approval for a dolphin park in Canaries;
- Government acquired lands to facilitate the project;
- Government approved incentives for the project; and
- There were incentives approved for a hotel in order to have a dolphin park in Rodney Bay

As far as the Trust is aware, a project proposal was never developed and submitted for consideration and therefore there was no project to which the Trust could have responded to.

With regards to our opinion on the proposed dolphinarium at Pigeon Island, we have no letter from the Prime Minister requesting that we state our position on the project. We took it upon ourselves to state our position on the matter by letter dated July 23, 2017 to the Prime Minister, which he indicates he has

not seen. This same letter was also sent to all Parliamentarians and private interests and has since been re-sent to the Office of the Prime Minister. We have no knowledge of the protocols followed in the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the management of the Prime Minister's correspondence, but will continue to re-send documents that the Prime Minister indicates he has not seen.

Castries Prison:

Prime Minister:even when it came to the Prisons, the National Trust came and said and took the Gov't to court. Now remember they took us to court without even attempting to have a conversation with the Government and remember I told you that they are a referral agency in the planning process and so what was the final outcome. The final outcome was there are prisoners that were buried in that location and by law, wherever the Prison is, is where the graveyard needs to be. So the million-dollar question is, why is it that the same Trust, when the Prison was moved from downtown to Bordelais, did not insist at the time that the people, the prisoners buried there were also transferred? All of a sudden we are going to do something and guess what, this is what happens and it has delayed the project by one year.

This does not properly reflect the facts. The following is a summary of what transpired:

On Thursday September 6th, 2018 at about 10.00 am the Trust became aware that demolition works had commenced at the Castries Prison. We reached out to the Development Control Authority who could not shed light on what was happening at the site. We visited the site and found demolition works in progress. We spoke with the workers and based on conversations we concluded that a private individual contracted the works, but there was no evidence that the works were approved by the DCA. We were concerned that a historic building was being demolished without approval and on Friday 8th December we wrote to the DCA requesting that the works be stopped. Works continued over the weekend and we sought and received an injunction from the Courts to stop the demolition works. We later learned that on Friday September 8th, 2018 a private citizen applied to the DCA for permission to demolish the building and the DCA approved the application on the same day. There was no opportunity for discussions on the project, which was approved on the same day the application was made.

Our objection was based on the historic value of the building and not, as the Prime Minister suggests, because there was a small cemetery on the site. In any case, the DCA should have considered this when considering the application and should have consulted with the Trust and other stakeholders on the matter before approving the project so hastily.

Although there were conceptual plans for the project, no detailed development plans were available for that site at the time of the demolition activity. The government agreed that going forward, the detailed plans for the site should be based on an adaptive reuse of existing historical structures. However, more than a year later, we have not seen any detailed plans. We do not know the nature of the delay, but it cannot fairly be said to be as a result of our intervention.

Saint Lucia National Trust
8 January, 2020