



ADDRESS BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE
HAZEL MANNING
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

AT THE

**FORMAL HANDING - OVER CEREMONY
OF THE
SAN PEDRO GOVERNMENT
EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRE**

**LIGHT POLE # 161, TABAQUITE RIO CLARO ROAD
SAN PEDRO, POOLE**

DATE : FRIDAY 29TH JUNE, 2007

TIME : 10:00 A.M.

I am pleased to be in this agricultural community of San Pedro. San Pedro, Poole, Rio Claro, Santa Rita and Moruga....I have special memories of communities such as these having spent much of my formative years in this part of the country.

San Pedro has traditionally depended on cocoa and coffee production as well as small-scale agriculture including poultry and livestock farming. At this time of the morning, when I am starting my work-day my beginning represents almost the end of a typical workday in a community such as this. This is an attestation to the long hard hours that are put into agricultural production very early in the morning.

Today we have traveled to San Pedro, Poole for the handover of the fifth Early Childhood Care and Education Centre.

In the language of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) the numeral five is symbolic of a child graduating from early childhood education to the Primary School. Today, it is graduation day for us here at San Pedro. This San Pedro ECCE is number five on our list of ECCE centres constructed and about to be handed over by the Education Facilities Company Limited.

To date we have witnessed handing-over ceremonies of ECCE Centres at:

1. La Romaine Government ECCE on April 23rd, 2007
2. St. Augustine South Government ECCE Centre – May 21st, 2007
3. El Socorro South Government ECCE Centre – June 1st, 2007
4. Santa Rosa Government ECCE Centre – June 8th, 2007
5. Today, June 29th it is your turn here at San Pedro Poole with this ultramodern Government Early Childhood Care and Education Centre.

The Education Facilities Company Limited has given us the assurance that fourteen additional ECCE centres will be completed by December. Construction is moving at a brisk pace on similar learning centres at La Puerta, Petit Valley, Santa Cruz, Sangre Grande and Carapichaima. Thirty-three ECCE Centres are in various stages of construction as part of our goal to establish 600 ECCE centres to ensure universal access for all children at the early childhood care and education level.

Ladies and gentlemen, the landscape of San Pedro is being transformed and this San Pedro Government ECCE is another milestone on the road to our achieving the goals of Vision 2020. Vision 2020 speaks to our country's commitment "to nurturing a culture of excellence in education, and in so doing, create a society of innovative, enterprising people who possess imagination, intellect and the skills and competencies to become global leaders."

For children between the ages of three and five in this community, early childhood education is being augmented. You are now the proud beneficiaries of a modern Early Childhood Care centre alongside that of SERVOL and a curriculum that will provide more meaningful activities and experiences. Here we will bring the activities

of home-life, the needs of families into the curriculum and we trust that the teachers and parents provide the necessary support.

Scientific findings have shown that an ECCE programme that is linked to and streamlined with the primary level of education offers extraordinary opportunities to prevent school failure. This brings lasting benefits to individuals and the community. We are here to support the community. Moreover, at the Ministry we view the development of a seamless education system that links early childhood care to primary education as critical in the attainment of quality primary education. It is in this regard that the government has enunciated a policy for achieving universal access to early childhood care and education by the year 2010. All our children must attend an early childhood care and education centre.

Ladies and gentlemen, like the four other Government ECCE centres, this facility here at San Pedro is constructed to meet the standards of high quality design, and as you will see, there is appropriate furniture and equipment. This is in keeping with the teaching, learning and developmental requirements for the cognitive and social development of all our pre-schoolers.

The new designs of the ECCE centres are as a result of architectural briefs provided by the Ministry Of Education and the unique designs of the architect Ms. Cheryl Adams and the team at Reynald and Associates.

I take this opportunity to extend sincerest congratulations to Mrs Kathleen Thomas, Chief Executive Officer and the hard working employees of the executing agency for these ECCE centres - the Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL). Congratulations also to those, who worked on this San Pedro ECCE centre – the Design Consultants – Reynald and Associates; the Contractor – Amalgamated Engineering Services Limited; Civil and structural engineer: Planning and Stantec; as well as the quantity surveyors: Hart and Leonard Limited.

Construction of this centre began in August, 2006 and today we have these pristine facilities for the accommodation of fifty children. Total construction cost for this centre amounted to TT \$2.2 Million.

This San Pedro ECCE centre is constructed on state land and fits into the first among the five models for the construction of an ECCE centre. This model speaks to the construction of an ECCE centre built on State lands furnished and equipped by the Ministry of Education through the EFCL.

Ladies and gentlemen I take this opportunity to remind that the Ministry of Education is committed to forming strong bonds of partnerships with denominational bodies, community groups, non-governmental agencies with a track record of efficiency in early childhood care and education. These partnership relationships can only be fostered through adherence to the *Concordat* and the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* for the governance of ECCE centres.

I take this opportunity to especially recognize the work of one of our key partners in the provision of ECCE Services, not only in this area, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I speak of the efforts of SERVOL. Over 20 years ago, this organization pioneered the provision of ECCE Services here, in San Pedro and has been supported by the owners/operators of the Little Scholars Early Childhood Centre and the Children's Academy of Learning ECCE Centre who have also provided the much needed ECCE Services in this community. There are reports of trying times in the provision of these services, yet you persevered.

I salute you all, for your efforts and urge you to continue to provide the service you have always provided in this community. My Ministry is poised at this time, to provide you with technical support and expert advice. The doors of this San Pedro Government ECCE Centre are open to you, as this Centre is also expected to serve as a Research and Development Centre in support of the provision of ECCE Services in your community.

Members of the San Pedro Community will also be invited to form Support Teams, so that together, we can provide the quality ECCE Services that is the right of every child in Trinidad and Tobago.

This early childhood centre will be staffed by a team of competent persons including:

1. A qualified Administrator / Teacher – Ms. Usha Mohammed
2. Two ECCE teachers
3. Two ECCE teacher assistants
4. One Auxiliary Assistant

I take this opportunity to advise that for the development of continuing high quality Early Childhood Care and Education, the Ministry of Education has developed:-

- A White Paper on standards to regulate and monitor the ECCE sector;
- A new draft national ECCE curriculum guide. This Curriculum Guide is currently being distributed to All ECCE Centres in Trinidad and Tobago (Government and Government assisted ECCE Centres, as well as to the owners of private ECCE centres).
- A policy on governance to effectively manage the ECCE sector through Boards of Management which can either be Support Teams, cluster Boards or Parent Teacher Associations;
- An expanded role for the National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education which serves as an advisory body;
- A restructured Early Childhood Care and Education Unit within the Ministry, fully operational with the creation of new positions to suit its changing role.
- The development of a National Reading Policy;
- The establishment of a Caribbean Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) to improve Reading among pupils from Infant level to

Standard II. The programme is currently established in sixty one schools throughout the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as part of our school construction programme the Ministry of Education has replaced seventeen primary schools, constructed eighteen secondary schools and commenced works to upgrade and expand one hundred secondary schools by 2010.

During the five-year period 2002 to 2006, this Government has incurred expenditure of \$613,206,888 in the construction of seventy schools detailed as follows:

Eighteen ECCE Centres	-	\$ 21,700,000
Thirty Primary Schools	-	\$ 174,889,219
Twenty Two Secondary Schools	-	\$ 416,617,669

These new schools are designed with state of the art facilities to enable teachers and students to access new technology as we improve on teaching and learning strategies that will put us in line with developed nations in a global context.

With a good foundation in ECCE, children will be able to develop their skills and talents that they can some day be able to use effectively for the development of San Pedro and other areas within the county of Victoria.

Pre-schoolers will now have a better opportunity to access quality ECCE within this community. At this centre, those who enroll will be provided the opportunity to develop better skills and to align themselves with appropriate behaviours in the ambiance of a well structured ECCE environment. I encourage the parents and guardians of the children of this community to participate in the activities of this Centre and to support their children.

Parents, you will be provided with opportunities to interact with the ECCE staff on a one to one basis and at Parent Teachers' meetings. All children will be provided with nutritious meals.

As we continue to build capacity in all of our schools, programmes are being developed to enhance the skills and capabilities of administrators of our ECCE centres. We are already upgrading our ECCE model, through new architectural designs in tandem with curriculum needs and that of inclusive education for children who are challenged one way or the other. Our ECCE programme is geared towards boosting a child's self-confidence, development of values, such as fairness, equity, tolerance and respect for others. This type of education will go a long way in ensuring that our young people are better equipped to face life's challenges.

The Ministry of Education is cognisance of the roles played by denominational bodies, SERVOL, Non-Governmental Organisations and other pioneers in the field of ECCE and especially here at San Pedro. Indeed there are challenges faced in the reform process. But to say as Susan Polis Schutz, in **One World, One Heart**

“We must talk until there are no more words.
We must explain until everything is understood.
We must be honest until nothing is hidden.
We must listen until everything has been said.
We must question so that they know why.
We must be fair so that everyone’s basic needs are met.”

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to receive the keys to this fifth Early Childhood Care and Education Centre here at San Pedro and invite you to join with the Ministry of Education in helping to foster the holistic development of the nations’ children which in the long run will bear fruits of which we will all be proud.

I thank you and may God richly bless all those who teach and learn in this San Pedro Government Early Childhood Care and Education Centre.

2007 June 28.