



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC)

NGC's Sponsorship of Police Youth Clubs

Date: July 8th, 2017

Venue: Police Academy

Address by: Ernest Esdelle, Senior Manager, Engineering and Construction Services

SALUTATIONS

- Commissioner of Police, Mr Stephen Williams
- Members of the Executive including Civilian Managers and Senior Superintendents of the Eastern, North Eastern, Central and South Western Divisions of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
- Leaders and members of the Mayaro, Laventille Road, Couva, Penal and La Brea Police Youth Clubs
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

In his poem, *The Odyssey*, Nobel Laureate, Derek Walcott remarked, "What are men? Children who doubt."

Children have so many dreams, hopes, and plans which, to our jaded, adult eyes, seem almost impossible. Perhaps it is because we have to endure the vagaries of daily living, and the fact that we often let doubt weigh us down.

Children, on the other hand, are so enviably free of these constraints. They believe in goodness, honesty and loyalty. They have a tremendous potential for joy.

It is up to us, as adults, to harness this potential, and guide it in the right direction. We also need to recognise that for some children, these dreams are hampered by their circumstances, and if someone doesn't step up and change these circumstances for the better, those dreams will remain in the realm of fantasy.

For these dreams to survive, there must be change.

NGC has always been a change-maker. We are an indispensable cog in the wheel of national development, particularly within the energy sector. Even in volatile economic times such as these, we constantly strive to move forward, re-evaluating and re-defining our strategies as we seek to fulfil our purpose. I am very pleased to be here this afternoon and to deliver remarks on behalf of NGC.

As an instrument of positive change, we choose to focus not just on what we can do on a national scale, but also at the level of communities, neighbourhoods and families. This is why we continue to fulfil our corporate social responsibilities in a manner that is both tangible and personal. We don't just want what we do to matter to the country. We want it to matter to every family we touch. We want it to matter to you.

NGC's involvement with the Police Youth Clubs arose out of the conviction that it is easier to build strong children than to fix broken adults. It is easier to try to positively input the future of these children and the future of the nation by equipping young people with the tools they will need to thrive. In so doing, we hope they in turn will also be contributing to building our nation.

These Clubs have become a familiar and trusted element in neighbourhoods all over the country, especially those in which the youth have fewer advantages and are in greater need of guidance, mentorship, direction and support.

Commendation must be given to the volunteers and Police Officers who manage the clubs, and offer their members wholesome and life-changing activities. These activities are designed to impact Club members on every level:

- Educational, through homework centres and tutoring;
- Physical, through sports such as swimming, hiking and martial arts, and
- Cultural, through instruction in music, steel pan, tassa, dance, Carnival and theatre arts.

The personal contact these children experience with their peers is equally important. They are able to form friendships, and experience the exhilaration that comes from success through collaboration. I also have no doubt that the Clubs offer many children a sense of stability. I believe they supplement the efforts of parents by providing access to trustworthy, knowledgeable and supportive role models.

With this understanding, NGC has chosen yet again to renew its sponsorship of four Police Youth Clubs, namely Couva, La Brea, Penal and Laventille Road, for another two years. We have also committed support to a new club, the Mayaro Police Youth Club, serving Mayaro and Guayaguayare. This addition is especially significant for us, given the role these communities play in the energy sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Police Youth Clubs provide an avenue in which many can showcase their talents through the Club's participation in a number of events, but in the interest of time I will mention just a few.

These include:

- The Couva Police Youth Club accomplishment of getting into the finals of the Prime Ministers Best Village Competition.
- The Laventille Road Club's participation in Junior Panorama, and
- The decision of some members to pursue tertiary education.

Moreover, NGC has not neglected the administrators and their management of the Clubs. These fine men and women of the Police Service have been moved to give something back to the communities by leading these programmes. We have offered capacity building training to these officers and persons from the community, to supply them with the leadership, administrative, financial, managerial and interpersonal skills required of the job.

In fact, we will be collaborating with the administrators to employ new strategies that will increase the impact of the Clubs. The strategies will further the cause of positive change at the individual and community levels.

One of these is the assignment of community liaison officers, to strengthen the ties between the PYCs and the community.

We also intend to develop and apply tracking and measuring systems that will allow us to quantitatively determine the impact of several programmes upon participants. For example, how do the homework centres affect students' grades? How are our artists, dancers, athletes, and musicians, performing in competitions? These indicators are important to us, for we at NGC believe that the change we effect must be visible, tangible, and measurable.

I'm so excited by what we are here to accomplish today, that I don't want to keep you much longer. I simply want to address in turn, our partners in this wonderful journey of change.

I want to thank and acknowledge the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, for its recognition of the importance of community programmes such as these, especially those that impact some of society's most vulnerable members, namely our young people. I know that, being out in the field every day, you must surely see things that we civilians can't even imagine, which have moved you to make such a sacrifice of your time. For this, I thank you, and offer NGC's commitment of continued partnership.

To the members of the Police Youth Clubs, I want to tell you that at this point in your lives, this is where you need to be. You have people available to you, to teach you, listen to you, encourage you, and support you. There are friends to be made, and new skills to be learned. Take advantage of every single moment; because believe me when I say that in years to come you will look back and thank your younger selves for the decision you made to give it your all.

To the parents, let me say, I know how it is. I'm a father myself, and I know what it is like to worry about your children. I know what it is like to hope for their future, to hold them up in prayer, and to speak only the very best into their lives. Thank you for recognizing how much the Clubs have to offer your children, and for your commitment to ensuring their participation.

Finally, I thank the media for their presence. It's important that people out there know of the existence of these Clubs, and the battle they are fighting every day to change some of that bad news we keep hearing about into good. Thank you for your help in this.

So, as this new sponsorship period, 2017 to 2018 begins, I want to restate NGC's enthusiasm about this vital community initiative. We've already made a good head start; so let's continue onward and upward. If change is inevitable, let that change be for the greater good.

Thank you.