

Mr and Miss NGC Sanfest Teen Talent Competition 2017

Remarks by Lisa Burkett

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October 29, 2017

Good day.

If there is one thing of which we at The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC) are certain, it is that the NGC Sanfest, one of our flagship investments, has a long and healthy future ahead of it. At the age of 47, the festival's vitality continues to strengthen, and we are proud to stand as title sponsors especially now, as the work of the NGC Sanfest takes on a new dimension of importance. Our nation sits at a critical junction of our history, and the NGC Sanfest has a central role to play in the path we take forward.

What do I mean by this? 'Business as usual' is no longer an option for Trinidad and Tobago. For over 42 years, NGC has been extracting value from our nation's natural gas resources and channelling it toward supporting the development of our country. The nature of our business, however, makes us sensitive to external market pressures, so the NGC Group has started pursuing options for diversifying our business to ensure we can adapt to whatever future awaits the global energy sector.

In the same way, it is important for Trinidad and Tobago to give serious thought to diversification of its economic base, focusing on alternative industries that can generate wealth for our country and for our people. If the San Fernando Junior Arts Festival is anything to judge by, we are sitting on a gold mine in the Arts. Beyond simply "celebrating the talent of our

youth”, as the theme of this year’s edition invites us to do, we must seek to develop it as a resource.

For us, the Mr and Miss NGC Sanfest Teen Talent Competition in particular represents an important first step toward bringing the Arts into the mainstream of our economy. The preparation for this competition is not only aimed at refining talent, but it targets the rounded development of participants into professional artistes - artistes who can represent themselves well, who can assume leadership of their respective fields, who can think critically and act responsibly, who can inspire their peers, who can build successful personal brands and promote Brand T&T to the world. It is no accident that some of our nation’s most recognised artistes like Machel Montano, Kes, Liam Teague were Sanfest contestants in their day. The potential of this Festival to launch careers and stimulate economic activity is something I feel is underestimated or underappreciated, and I hope to see that change, starting today. I challenge the young performers today to seize their time on stage to announce themselves to Trinidad and Tobago and, if such is their dream, to use this as a platform to build viable careers in the Arts industry.

I want to also issue a challenge to the teachers, parents and guardians who continue to work hard at shaping our young minds and talent. The NGC Sanfest team members have been diligent in their efforts to build the Arts, but they can only do so much – it falls to you to encourage our youth to explore and and make careers out of their creativity and talent. We live in an age where Entertainment and the Arts are a multibillion dollar industry, and Trinidad and Tobago has an abundance of talent worthy of tapping into that industry and all it has to offer. Many of our local artistes have already given us a foothold in international music and arts –

among them festival honourees Calypso Rose and Torrance Mohammed - let us now seek to carve a deeper niche for ourselves on that global stage. You would agree, the NGC Sanfest is a great place to start.

Ladies and gentlemen, NGC has been a sponsor of the San Fernando Junior Arts Festival since 2003. Since then, with each instalment of NGC Sanfest, the level of artistry on display has risen exponentially, so it is almost *expected* that this year's presentations will be superlative. I therefore look forward with great anticipation to the competition this evening and I wish all contestants a successful performance.

Thank you.