

**THE NATIONAL GAS COMPANY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED (NGC)**

**Launch of NGC's sponsorship programme**

**for Police Youth Clubs**

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

**2:00 p.m.**

**Police Academy, St. James**

**Remarks by Ms. Cassandra Patrovani Sylvester**

**V.P. Human and Corporate Relations, NGC**

Good afternoon.

I want to begin by thanking you all for being here this afternoon. As Vice President, Human and Corporate Relations of The National Gas Company, it is always a privilege to come face to face with some of our fenceline communities. As someone who has always taken a professional and personal interest in youth development, I'm especially happy when my interaction with our communities involves the kind of bright young people that I see before me today. As such, I want to especially welcome the members of the various Youth Clubs, and their families, who are here today.

Between last year and now, NGC agreed to sponsor a total of five (5) Police Youth Clubs, namely those from Beetham Gardens, Laventille Road, La Brea, Couva, and Penal. Each sponsorship is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding, in which NGC, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and the Youth Clubs themselves agree on how the money is spent, and how that spending will be monitored and accounted for. More importantly, we all have to agree on what results we would like to see.

You may ask what results those might be.

Well, the answer to that requires a bit of explanation.

NGC was created by the state to manage this country's natural gas resources, and to assist the government in developing the energy sector. So our primary goal is to convert the energy reserves in the ground into money that will be spent in ways that benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

But as a national company, and as a good corporate citizen, we also believe that it is our responsibility to assist in social and community development. We do this by sponsoring an extremely wide variety of projects and programmes that support national communities in the areas of education and training, sport, culture, and community development.

At NGC, the term we reserve for this activity is "Corporate Social **Investment**". I'm sure the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word "investment" is financial investment, meaning that you spend a certain amount of money, and, over time, you get a certain amount of money back.

And of course we do quite a lot of that kind of investment, and we have been very successful at it. But today I am talking about an investment in a far more precious resource; that is, the youth of our nation.

This type of investment brings stellar returns; not in terms of dollars and cents, but in terms of the gains experienced by the members of the Youth Groups, their families, and the communities to which they belong

Since they were created, the Police Youth Groups have reached out to young people who are at risk for various reasons. They are run by groups of dedicated officers who are committed to involving young people in productive, worthwhile, and fruitful activities.

Many of these activities mesh perfectly with the prime elements of NGC's social investment policy. In the areas of art and cultural development, many of the Youth Clubs have been involved in Carnival workshops, which expose members to the

rudiments of Mas making and the history of Carnival. Some of you might even have participated in Carnival celebrations this year, using costumes that you made with your own hands.

Some members have participated in dance programmes, where they learned different types of dance. NGC has also supported music literacy programmes, conducted with the the La Brea and Couva Youth Clubs. These were done in collaboration with the NGC Couva Joylanders and the NGC La Brea Nightingales, both community steelbands that fall under the umbrella of NGC's sponsorship. Through these programmes, the participants were introduced to the basics of playing the steel pan, and reading sheet music.

Another area in which the Police Youth Clubs and NGC have a shared interest is sport. The sporting programmes in which we have collaborated include a cricket camp in Couva, held in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, and a football camp in Laventille Road. The La Brea Police Youth Club also holds annually the Eldwin Noel Games.

We believe that our investment in sports and athletics helps to identify fresh athletic talent. More importantly, though, it teaches all participants a love of a healthy, active lifestyle from a very young age. As you know, an early love of sport is a gift that can result in a lifetime of health benefits.

The Police Youth Clubs do not neglect importance of education and academic performance, and neither does NGC. Some clubs have introduced homework assistance and remedial programmes, which provide members with the help and encouragement of qualified tutors.

The strengthening of the members' academic foundation is further enhanced by their exposure to personal development programmes, such as etiquette, conflict management, and life skills programmes.

But the Clubs aren't all about structured work. They are a fun way to interact with others, make friends, and for the members to learn about themselves. There are camps, field trips, and spiritual activities to attend, and community outreach programmes to plan and execute.

Of course, the Clubs could not achieve these goals without the police officers who devote so much of their time and energy toward enhancing the lives of these young people. The officers represent authority figures they can trust, and provide a steadfast support system. They learn that there are people they can rely on when they need a helping hand, or just someone to listen and advise.

We at NGC acknowledge the efforts of the Clubs, and support them by providing training in leadership and management skills. We have also seen the need for greater dialogue and interaction with the parents and other seniors in the community. Last year, for instance, we sponsored a Creative Parenting workshop in Couva.

The evidence is clear that the Police Youth Clubs are working. The young people who are sitting here before me this afternoon are proof of that. In areas where there are active Clubs, there is a tangible improvement in the morale and attitudes of the members and their families. There is a greater sense of hope, and a greater understanding among these young members of the many opportunities that lie ahead of them, should they choose to take up the challenge.

If I may speak to you all personally right now, let me tell you that what may seem to have been a simple decision, to become a member of the Police Youth Club, may well be one of the best you have ever made. You have at your disposal the support and assistance of people who care about you, and who want to see you succeed. My best advice to you is to accept their guidance with an open, willing heart, enjoy your time with them, and encourage your friends to join you in the many adventures that await.

To the officers who contribute their time so generously to the cause, and the supporting community members and parents, I congratulate you on your efforts, which are already showing results, and thank you for your selfless contribution.

On behalf of NGC, I want to reaffirm our commitment to the development and success of the Police Youth Clubs. We are there for you, just as any good neighbour is there for their friends. Thank you for partnering with us, and we look forward to a long, happy, and fruitful relationship.

Good day.