

Sen. Hon. Arni Walters, Minister of State – Labour and Immigration, Ministry of Labour

Dr. Hensley Sobers, Chairman of the TVET Council

Mrs. Paulette Dunn Smith, Representative from NCTVET Jamaica

Mr. Trevor King, Executive Director of TVETC

Miss Kim Tudor, CEO of NISE

Ladies and gentlemen

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” I can certainly say that this concept aptly reflects the work of the TVET Council.

The value that the organisation places on life long learning is evident today from the number of our graduands attending this very special occasion. Six of our staff who we call Champions have achieved the distinction of being the first to successfully complete the NVQ Pilot in Amenity Horticulture – a first for Barbados and a first for Sandy Lane - **(give yourself a round of applause)**.

When the notion of an NVQ in Amenity Horticulture first originated, the then Director of Golf Maintenance, Mr. Jimmy Kid and myself worked furiously to make this idea a reality. We basically took it and ran with it. Luckily, we had support mechanisms that formed the nucleus of the pilot project and brought about the right synergies. We achieved this through the following approaches:

Firstly, Sandy Lane Hotel supported this project financially and structurally by embracing change and providing sound support mechanisms such as equipment and tools;

The company empowered persons such as our own Hanief Gooding, Colin Holligan and myself to use the standards to assess our candidates.

Sandy Lane engaged our attention by incorporating the NVQ programme into our corporate strategy. Our Chairman and Executives at Sandy Lane were so alert that right from the ‘get go’ they arranged for me to visit one of the leading 5-diamond properties in Scotland – Gleneagles Hotel to gain

firsthand knowledge of the NVQ in Amenity Horticulture and how it is executed within a golf course environment. This in itself not only speaks to Sandy Lane's commitment to excellence, but how we value our employees.

Mr. Chairman, if I may be permitted to quote a few of our Sandy Lane Values, which would reflect our commitment.

- Care and Consideration
- Continuous improvement and creativity
- Recognising and rewording excellence
- Team spirit

Secondly, at Sandy Lane, we recognise the importance of placing emphasis on our human resources. This is evident from the calibre of candidates we entered into the programme. To give you a taste of their development, I offer our first graduand Matthew Gilkes! Matthew would tell anyone who would listen that five years ago he was "driving a tractor". Matthew entered the NVQ programme and was the first to complete. Today ladies and gentlemen Matthew is an assistant Manager in charge of a team of twenty-three staff and he uses the Amenity Horticulture standards to maintain the landscaping on our three world class golf courses.

If you were to ask our Country Club Superintendent, Hanief Gooding about our next three candidates Vashti Robinson, Basil Wilkinson and Samuel Scantlebury, he would say that he was so impressed with their performance since their involvement with the NVQ that they were promoted somewhere in the transition stage of the NVQ. Our two other candidates have also shown vast improvement, Winston Smith is the most senior Course Worker among the graduands and he uses his skills and talent to the fullest on the Green Monkey golf course. Clarence Payne is now in training in a specialised area as Spray Technician. According to our Assistant superintendent, Colin Holligan, he affirms that the team has certainly been highly motivated since their involvement in the TVET Council's NVQs.

Thirdly, at Sandy Lane we foster a strong relationship with our partners – in this case the TVET Council (**more that I can say for some marriages**). TVETC has the standards, resources, the tools, and they are a willing partner who not only thought of bringing about change, but an agency concerned with national development. For this, I must commend their Executive

Director, Mr. Trevor King and Mrs. Wendy Springer for thinking outside the box. Sandy Lane wants to thank you for allowing us to partner with you.

Considering the turbulence that seeks to raise its ugly head in these hard economic times, I had to take a step back and ask myself! What does the future hold for Sandy Lane and the NVQ programme?. To answer this question I have to assure you that we are committed. We already have another eight candidates registered in the programme and they are all eager. Moreover, I want to assure you that our New General Manager, Mr. Robert Logan, our Human Resources Director, Mrs. Jacqueline Floro-Forde and our Director of Golf Maintenance, Kevin Bartholomew have crafted a new strategy that seeks to engage all our coaches and champions in every facet of training and development and from my sneak preview, I am happy to state that our vocational programmes are high on the agenda. It speaks to Sandy Lane's commitment not only to excellence but to personal, professional and organisational development.

As I look to our seven candidates sitting here today who exemplify excellence. I must ask you to wear your certification with pride, set plans each day to better your best. I would like you to incorporate the following tools:

- Always think of the impact on others
- Embrace team work
- Do something remarkable
- See excellence as an attitude not a skill

In closing, today this event in our lives is evidence that we all can do things with a thought, a prayer, great organisational support and someone with the willingness to take a chance on us - TVET Council.

I thank you.