

MARITIME RELATED STUDIES ON GOVERNMENT PRIORITY LISTINGS

The Hon. Phillip J. Pierre, Minister of Tourism, announced recently that Maritime related studies have been included in the list of priority areas for consideration for financial assistance in education. The Minister made the disclosure at a ceremony to mark the twinning of Rodney Bay Marina and the Port de Plaisance at Marin in Martinique.

The Marine Industries Association of St. Lucia (MIASL) has been seeking the adoption of a maritime priority listing for some time, and welcomes this move. Following a call from the Prime Minister for more St. Lucians to be recruited into the Cruise Industry, the MIASL and Caribbean Marine Association (CMA) President Keats Compton, engaged industry officials in panel discussions on crewing issues at the recently held *Superyacht Symposium*, part of the annual **SEATRADE** Convention in Miami. In response to cost constraints on training programmes, Compton suggested that the industry consider offshore training in marine trades, in much the same way that the offshore medical training programme has evolved in the Caribbean region, to make training more affordable for locals and foreigners alike. In that regard, the MIASL intends to explore ways in which the Jamaica Maritime Institute, which has partners in several Caribbean islands including St. Lucia, and is recognized by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), can accommodate our requirements in its curriculum.

There is a worldwide shortage of skilled crews in both the Cruise and Superyacht industries, according to the Superyacht Society. The Industry is increasingly looking to Asia to fill the gap – the Caribbean may be missing an opportunity here. There is also a growing demand for facilities to support mega and superyachts – those over 80 and 150ft – in existing marinas. Increasingly, these yachts are forced to use docks in commercial ports, which lack the requisite facilities to service them. This presents an opportunity to Port Authorities such as SLASPA, which has already taken the lead in upgrading the facilities for the Cruise sector. The MIASL is able to keep yachting on the SLASPA agenda, as Compton is also a member to the SLASPA Council.

The MIASL is seeking to encourage St. Lucians to consider a maritime career, as this industry has enormous potential for job creation and progression to the highest levels of the profession. Yachting is also a major contributor to the local economy. A 2002 study on sustainable marine based tourism in St. Lucia determined that the total economic impact of the yachting (not cruise) sector was EC\$72.64 million in 2000. The most recent study, part of an OPSR funded Strategic Plan for the Yachting Sector disclosed that the 2004 impact had risen to EC\$139.2 million, an increase of more than 90%.

MIASL expects the priority list to be posted on the Ministry of Education in the near future. Interested parties should visit www.education.gov.lc

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