remarks by

HON. Emma Hippolyte

Minister of Commerce, business development, investment and consumer affairs

at the closing of13th Visit of the

University of vermont (UVM)

at the

rex st. lucian on

Friday, January 15, 2016

Salutation:

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is truly a pleasure to be present this morning at this very important function and as I look into faces seated here in the audience, I can see a mixture of bitter/sweet on your faces. Bitter! that the time spent here on our beautiful island was too short and that you have to leave tomorrow; and sweet! that the mission you set to accomplished was achieved to your every satisfaction.

As you may know, this Mutual Co-operation Agreement between the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs and the University of Vermont (UVM) has existed since it was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2004. This visit by the UVM team marks the thirteenth year that our two institutions have collaborated on mutually beneficial projects. The fact that this relationship has lasted so long is testament to the significance of the mutual value placed by both the Ministry and the University of Vermont, and I am optimistic that this relationship will continue to bear fruit for many years to come.

I must state, that we at the Ministry are very pleased with the collaboration undertaken thus far, as this Agreement which was initially conceptualized to benefit the Consumer Affairs Department in the main, has mushroomed into further collaborations and exchanges with other social partners and agencies operating in areas considered unrelated to consumer protection, but nonetheless involved in national development.

In the Education Sector for example, the UVM from 2005 has collaborated with a number of schools, their most recent collaboration with the Fond St. Jacque Combined School, the Bexon Combined School and the Lady Gordon School. The UVM has in the past also commissioned two (2) Computer Labs; one at the Grace Combined School in Vieux-Fort and the other at Dugard Combined School in Choiseul.

One of the priority areas identified for development by the Government of Saint Lucia is that of renewable energy. The UVM has collaborated also in the area of renewal energy with the commissioning of a Micro-Hydro System and Solar Panel at Latille Waterfall in Micoud; and a Wind Turbine in Praslin.

The staff of the Ministry too, have also benefited tremendously from this exchange as some of our staff have pursued short-term courses in the Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) and Research Techniques and Methods at the University in Vermont; and Lecturer Mr. Jay Ashman and Mr. Thomas Desisto who have conducted training sessions with staff in Consumer Law, Research Techniques and Methods in Saint Lucia; the most recent being conducted only this week by Lecturer Thomas Desisto.

This year, the collaboration with the UVM team and the Ministry has manifested in a qualitative survey to examine the quality of consumer durable goods in Saint Lucia; the findings of which hopefully, may point to necessary remedial measures to be adopted. *(And I hope I am not preempting the survey findings here!*)

I must, at this point, underscore that we at the Ministry attach great significance to this collaborative work because more often than not, such findings do have a contributory effect on the programming of the Ministry.

The Ministry is hopeful that this mutual cooperation programme will strengthen and that the UVM will continue to grace Saint Lucia with these annual visits; and that our staff will be exposed to even more training in the future as we endeavor to build capacity in Investigative Techniques and Research Techniques and Methods.

Let me reassure you that the Government of Saint Lucia is very committed to this Agreement as the benefits that have accrued from this exchange transcend the Consumer Affairs Department as its social and economic impact can be realized in other geographic parts from Vieux Fort in the south to Gros Islet in the north.

In my earlier discussions with Mr. Kevin Stapleton, Lecturer in Community Development and Applied Economics at the UVM, we focused on possible ways of further strengthening this relationship and collaboration and we committed to planning well in advance on some of the areas of mutual interest. Thus, I trust that on your next visit to Saint Lucia, we can look forward to working on new, exciting and focused project undertakings.

I would at this moment like to thank the Director and team from the Ministry for their dedication in fostering this collaboration and the delegation from the University of Vermont for their intervention as we look forward to bigger and better things in the future. I would also like to thank all the schools, social partners and other agencies that collaborated toward making this visit by the UVM team a success.

And so, let me take this opportunity to wish you a safe flight back to Vermont and all the best in your academic pursuits.

I Thank You.