

Remarks

Guyana Shines Presentation at St. Margaret's Primary School

May 14, 2012

Ambassador Hardt

Introduction

Good morning. [Introduce diplomatic colleagues and Mrs. Hardt, staff from Embassies and High Commissions].

We are very happy to be here at St. Margaret's Primary School to tell you about a very exciting project that my friends and I are coming together to launch today at your school. We are here because we believe that Guyana is a beautiful country.

[Q: Who here thinks Guyana is a beautiful country? What makes Guyana a beautiful country?]

But we also believe that Guyana could be even more beautiful.

[What do you think could make Guyana even more beautiful?

What things make it hard to see the beauty of the country?]

The Problem: Litter

You are right. Litter is a terrible thing that makes beautiful places less beautiful. [Q: Do you know that Georgetown is known as the Garden City? What do you think of when you think of a garden?] You do not think of garbage as part of a garden, but that is what you see in too many places in Georgetown. All the beautiful plants are being choked off by litter. And what else does litter do? It can make people sick, it can make animals sick, and it can even kill plants and animals.

Litter is bad for our water. It pollutes canals, streams, rivers, and oceans. It can kill fish and other marine life. [Q: Who has seen flooding waters in Guyana? Do you know that litter is one of the biggest causes of flooding?] Why? Because litter blocks the canals and drains and prevents the water from getting out to the sea.

On land, litter can cause car accidents or clog sidewalks and streets. It makes public places like parks and the seawall less attractive. It is also very bad for our health. Litter creates places where mosquitoes and rats

can breed and spread diseases. Animals may get trapped or poisoned with litter in their habitats. And, litter costs the country huge amounts of money to clean up every year. Think of all the people who have to be paid to pick up the trash that other people throw on the ground. That money could be spent on other better things like school books and teachers.

So what I want you to remember is that all of us – human beings -- are the cause of pollution. And it is up to us as people to put an end to it. If we don't throw trash on the ground, it will not mess up the city, kill animals, block the drains, and cause disease. We are here today because we believe that making Guyana beautiful begins with all of you: the children of Guyana. You need to be the ones who care for the beautiful land you will live in. You need to set the example and never throw trash on the ground. You need to tell others not to throw their trash – even parents, friends, or brothers and sisters. Because this is your country, and you will decide if you grow up to live in a beautiful country that shines, or a country where garbage covers up the natural beauty.

So today, we are here to help inspire you and other schools in Guyana to be the leaders in making Guyana shine. I have heard that St. Margaret's School has an excellent environment club and we think that is great that so many students are part of that club.

My friends from other embassies are here today because we want to work with you and with communities throughout Guyana to make Guyana Shine. Today we are launching here at your school a team effort among members of the diplomatic community, Guyanese community organizations, schools, churches, and concerned citizens who want to do their part to make Guyana beautiful. This team effort is called *Guyana Shines*. Every year, people all over the world celebrate Earth Day. [Q: Who knows what Earth Day is?] It is a day for people to celebrate the Earth's natural environment and its beauty. Earth Day is important because it brings together people in every country who are willing to take do something to protect their environment for future generations.

Guyana Shines is just one piece of that, but we hope to inspire others to care more about their environment – and to do something about it.

Through *Guyana Shines*, my diplomatic colleagues and I and our teams are seeking to bring people together in communities all around Guyana, and specifically in Georgetown, to take civic responsibility for their communities. We are going to be working with you side by side, but at the end of the day, it is up to you, your friends, families, and neighbours to make a lasting difference. We want Georgetown to be once again the Garden City, but you are the ones who can make that happen. My Embassy and our diplomatic friends are all very happy to launch *Guyana Shines* today. I will now ask the British High Commissioner to tell us more about how we hope to do this.

British High Commission

Education

To achieve its objectives and really get our message across, *Guyana Shines* will first reach out to specific schools and communities,

including St. Margaret's, to educate them about the harmful effects of littering and encourage citizens to make more environmentally friendly decisions in their everyday lives. This week, we will be speaking to about 14 different schools in the Georgetown area – to bring them the same information we are giving you today.

We are targeting schools because we believe education is the first step to making changes that could positively impact the environment.

Educating young people can transform the attitudes of an entire generation, as well as how they think about the future. Added to that, future generations can impart this knowledge to their children. You can also encourage your parents and teachers to make more environmentally sound choices.

Action

The Guyana Shines committee recognizes that knowledge without action is not enough. The key message of Guyana Shines is that of cleaning up

the city of Georgetown and the entire Guyana, so that every Guyanese citizen can enjoy a high quality life. This will see communities in action with common purpose of keeping their environment clean under the slogan **Dump it in the Bin - Everybody can Chip in!!!** Thus our organizations will support hands-on cleanup projects within the Lodge and Tucville communities in Georgetown. Very soon, you will see these communities with their green gloves and their green bags, picking up garbage. They will have two weeks to beautify their communities and really make them shine.

The Community clean-up project is a very important aspect of Guyana Shines. Community action of this nature ensures that initiatives like these are sustainable and can progress from strength to strength each year to involve more communities across the regions of Guyana. This is the very reason why we have chosen you, young and energetic Guyanese, to carry this message forward of working toward an environmentally friendly community.

Youth Challenge Guyana

What can YOU do?

Through our Guyana Shines initiative, we want to encourage and educate people on realistic, eco-friendly ways to reduce the amount of waste materials that emanate from the home, or school, or community. All of us working together and doing our part could dramatically reduce the garbage across Guyana.

What are some things you can do – starting now – to help your environment and your country? You can recycle, or re-use items. Recycling is a relatively cheap, tried, and proven way in which the amount of garbage that comes from your homes could be reduced. One might want to say that Guyana does not possess the needed infrastructure that would facilitate recycling. However, we can focus on small and impactful changes which communities can adopt. For instance, when going to the market, you can use recyclable bags or

baskets to go shopping so that you do not use plastic bags, which are not biodegradable. Some bottles are recyclable and returnable here in Georgetown, and other plastic containers can be washed and reused in and around the home.

We can also reduce the amount of things we use overall, including products in plastic containers that we buy at the markets and supermarkets. Look for products with less packaging – and don't ask for a bag if you really don't need one. And use eco-friendly or more biodegradable materials whenever possible.

Canadian High Commission

What Can YOU do? (cont'd)

Another way that communities can utilise the waste is through composting, which is a relatively inexpensive. Composting is the natural composition of wastes containing plant and remains of other living

materials to make an earthy, dark crumbly substance that is excellent for adding nutrients to soil. This is something that any home can adopt since Guyana is blessed with large land space.

Finally, as a community, you can encourage your family, friends, and neighbours to dispose of garbage in a proper way, by not throwing it in the waterways and in open spaces. Don't let others get away with littering. Don't just be a bystander and let litter happen. Hold yourself and your fellow citizens accountable. You can show other people by doing, and be a good example. Last of all, you can share some of the things you've learned about the environment with parents and other grown-ups. This will ensure that the beauty of the environment is preserved as well as to prevent diseases and flooding.

Litter is an [environmental issue](#) in many countries around the world. Just as you can be an example within your own community – Guyana can be an example to other nations. Do your part to make Guyana beautiful – let's see how Guyana Shines!