

Remarks
Ambassador D. Brent Hardt
Guyana Shines Clean-Up Launch
June 4, 2012, 3:30pm
Lodge Gymnasium

Good afternoon. It is great to see the *Guyana Shines* team back together again. Today is a special day -- one that Mrs. Hardt and I have been looking forward to from the time we first began thinking about how to work with people in communities in Guyana to restore the country's natural shine. For today marks the launch of the second part of the *Guyana Shines* initiative – the Community Clean-up challenge!

Just over two weeks ago, my diplomatic colleagues from the Canadian, British, and European Union Missions and I launched the first phase of the program at St. Margaret's Primary School. Over the past few weeks, members of our Embassies and High Commissions have visited 14 schools in the Georgetown area to help educate primary school students about their vital role in overcoming the harmful effects of littering and to encourage them and other citizens to take care of their environment in their everyday lives.

We first focused on schools and young people because we firmly believe that education is the first and most critical step to shaping a future where all citizens of Guyana take responsibility for protecting their environment and preserving it for future generations. We were happy to see that many of the schools we visited already had active environmental clubs led by young people who were deeply committed to raising awareness for the environment and doing something about it. In this regard, we wish to extend a hearty thanks to ECHO (SPELL OUT) for their support of our educational outreach, as well as to the Ministry of Education for facilitating our efforts to organize the many *Guyana Shines* school presentations.

We are delighted with the progress of the first phase so far and especially by the enthusiasm we have seen among the school children of Guyana. But we also know that knowledge without action is not enough to change the status quo. At the end of the day, the goal of *Guyana Shines* is to contribute to building a cleaner Georgetown and a cleaner, more environmentally pristine Guyana. And the best means to achieve this, beyond education, is to foster greater community involvement and

civic pride. So today we are launching the Guyana Shines Community Clean-up challenge. We will be working together with the communities of Lodge and Tucville – two special Guyanese communities – with the common goal of cleaning up the environment in their respective neighbourhoods. They will be together in action – but they will also be competing against each other for the honour of the cleanest community.

So let me briefly review the ground rules of this friendly challenge. The contest officially begins today, June 4, and will continue through June 18. This will give the communities of Lodge and Tucville two weeks to make as much of a difference as they can. The two communities will be evaluated by our team of expert judges, most of whom you see here in the room today, based on the following criteria:

1. The look. How did the community look before? And how does it compare to after? We will take some before and after photos on which to base the scores.

2. How many members of the community helped to pitch-in? On the table here, we have a roster sheet that community leaders can use to ensure that all community resident volunteers involved are accounted for.

3. How will the communities continue to promote awareness on the environment and the harmful effects of littering? Also on the table, we have some blank answer sheets that community leaders can take and fill out – and then return to Dmitri from Youth Challenge Guyana.

4. How will the community keep your own environment clean? We have a second answer sheet on the table that community leaders can fill out and return to Dmitri.

Each of these criteria will have 25 percent weight, adding up to a total of 100 percent. The final results to announce the winner of *Guyana Shines* will be announced at a ceremony at the end of June, where the cleanest community will win a great prize for all their efforts. Of

course, in the end, both communities and the country as a whole will all be winners, because we will all be living in a cleaner, healthier, more sanitary environment.

Shortly after this launch ceremony, we will be heading over to the Lodge and Tucville communities, where volunteers are waiting for us to start the clean-up. Residents and volunteers will be working hard with their green gloves and green bags, picking up garbage around the neighbourhood. The City of Georgetown Mayor's Office has graciously offered to facilitate the pick-up of our biodegradable, green, garbage bags once they are filled and ready to go.

The *Guyana Shines* motto is **Dump it in the Bin - Everybody can Chip in!!!** And literally everyone will be chipping in for our clean-up campaign today – we have invited community leaders and members, students, members of civil society, government officials, the diplomatic community, and others. However, after today, the residents of Tucville and Lodge will have the primary responsibility to beautify their communities and really make them shine. Best of luck to Lodge and Tucville – may the cleanest community win!!

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my thanks for the collaboration and leadership of my diplomatic colleagues and their teams, who have enthusiastically supported the *Guyana Shines* initiative since we first began discussing our shared desire to help beautify Guyana. I would also like to thank the many Guyanese civil society organizations who have so willingly supported the program so far – including schools, faith-based organizations, and a host of NGO's -- and I hope many more will come on board in the months ahead. Only by working together with the national and local government and local government, the private sector, community groups, and the international community and taking responsibility individually and collectively can this challenge be met. Our efforts seek to encourage and mobilize people and communities around Guyana, and specifically in Georgetown, to really clean up the Garden City and make Guyana Shine.

We are all extremely pleased to be a part of such an important initiative and we wish both communities the very best for a bright and shining future.