

World Environment Day Message from Dr. Vincent Adams

Executive Director

Environmental Protection Agency

At 24 years old, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), although not in its prime, has come a long way over the past two years in its transformation to a culture of providing high quality customer service to the people of Guyana. With the highest degree of transparency; and investing heavily in our most valuable resource, our human capital, through aggressive recruitment, development of skills, and enhancing customer service. Such employee development includes exposure to local and international training opportunities; and networking and collaboration with international organisations through memberships and participation in technical conferences and workshops. Further, capacity building includes tripling the staff to over 300 employees, and building our own fully furnished laboratory by 2022 – all to accommodate the quadrupling of work load already being actualized by advent of the oil economy.

Other significant accomplishments over the last two years include the overhauling and restructuring of the Agency to accommodate the increased workload. For example, with the help of the World Bank, we have established an Oil and Gas Unit to comprise of 36 highly skilled employees to oversee the industry; and have similarly established other Units to oversee each sector of the economy. Also, we have substantially improved accountability of development projects by bringing over 500 expired permits into compliance, and utilized the back revenues to recruit 20 skilled staff, and increase our fleet of field ready vehicles from two to nine, allowing for greater compliance monitoring and enforcement. In addition, we established a Central Registry to secure custody, accounting, and efficient processing of the voluminous amount of documents supporting the 2,000 projects.

Another major important area of effort is the timely dispositioning of the approximately 15 complaints per day received by Agency. For this reason, we have put in place a Standard Operating Procedure for Complaints Management, including the set-up of a 24-hour hotline with an acknowledgement of the complaint within 24 hours, and an expeditious investigation, resolution and closure of the complaint.

We have also expanded our public awareness programmes covering new media outlets including a television show titled '**The Environment Matters**' and the launch of the first ever **Green Note magazine**; and have moved apace with the development of Guyana by ensuring weekly radio programmes in the outlying regions.

Establishing an EPA office in every region by 2021, and revision of the outdated 1996 Environmental Protection Act which for example, did not consider the petroleum sector are amongst the most urgent priorities of the Agency. Additionally, we will be chartering a new course to address the post 2020 biodiversity agenda, plus the single-use plastics and mercury bans.

Special thanks to our diligent staff, all our partners and other stakeholders, without whom, such meaningful success would not be possible.

Happy World Environment Day and Happy 24th Anniversary to the EPA!