

Highlights from the AFC's Action Plan for Change and Development for Guyana

This is what the AFC will do for you...

The Alliance For Change is pleased to release the **Part Two** of our **Action Plan for Change and Development for Guyana**, which deals with Social Security. Part One - Crime and Security, was released on Sunday July 23, 2006

We will be releasing subsequent sections of our action plan over the next few weeks and publishing a complete document in August. We look forward to continuing to hear suggestions from Guyanese to further strengthen our plan.

Creating a more caring Guyana by...

Strengthening the Social Safety Net

- ◆ An Employment Insurance programme that provides job training and self employment assistance.
- ◆ Social Assistance that provides opportunities for unemployed persons to be trained while receiving benefits
- ◆ Social Assistance for persons caring for disabled dependents
- ◆ Programmes to use the skills and experience of retired professionals
- ◆ Expand NIS programmes and benefits for the elderly and persons with disabilities
- ◆ A "Home Care" programme to support seniors and persons living with disabilities in remaining in their homes.
- ◆ Expansion of maternity benefits
- ◆ Introduction of parental leave for males and females
- ◆ NIS benefits for self-employed parents
- ◆ A national health fund under the auspices of the Ministry of Health.
- ◆ More effective systems for ensuring child support payments are actually paid
- ◆ Guarantee every citizen a home by providing funds for rent and mortgage supplements and incentives to banks to extend mortgage loans at reduced interest rates
- ◆ Retirement villages and subsidized rentals
- ◆ Special arrangements for young professionals and public servants.

Legislation

- ◆ Review the "Amerindian" Act with a view to revising or replacing it so that it is more accurately represents the will of the Indigenous peoples.
- ◆ Provide guidelines to help teachers and other professionals to detect and report signs of domestic and child abuse
- ◆ Allow the removal of children from the custody of their parents or guardians by the Children's Services Unit when they are in dangerous situations
- ◆ Provide regulated foster care for abandoned or neglected children
- ◆ Increase the maximum age for maintenance to 18 and increase the minimum payment amount
- ◆ Amend the Adoption of Children Act to permit single persons and persons living in common-law unions to adopt
- ◆ Mandatory charges by the state in domestic violence cases
- ◆ Regulate homes and facilities for children, the elderly, the mentally and physically disabled, and municipal and private daycares
- ◆ Establish local conflict resolution centres to deal with family disputes
- ◆ A Family Law Act and Family Court to address issues arising out of common law unions, resolution of property disputes, child and spouse maintenance and the custody of children
- ◆ Require that all public buildings provide access to people with disabilities
- ◆ Enact legislation to deal with persons who are HIV positive and knowingly have unprotected sex with others.

Empowering Agencies and Organizations

- ◆ A Government Oversight Agency to ensure that issues affecting vulnerable groups are recognized and addressed at every stage of policy development and implementation in all ministries and government agencies.
- ◆ A social fund to provide funds for community development projects.
- ◆ A youth volunteer service programme that allows young people to travel in-country to work on volunteer community projects whilst acquiring skills and deepening their love for the country.

Education and Employment for the Poor and Vulnerable

- ◆ Train women in non-traditional sectors
- ◆ Distance and open learning education programmes for Indigenous Peoples and people living in the hinterland
- ◆ Access to low interest loans and business training for vulnerable groups
- ◆ Incentives to employers who provide childcare and breastfeeding facilities on the worksite
- ◆ Flexible work schedules for parents of young children.
- ◆ Increased recreational and sporting facilities and activities for youth
- ◆ Civics and Leadership programmes to increase participation in decision-making by vulnerable groups.
- ◆ Cultural education programmes for all students
- ◆ Create and strengthen initiatives such as a national orchestra, a national dance company and prizes for literature and the performing arts.

The Guyana of Tomorrow Voices of our Youth

AFC Essay Competition

Imam Baksh - 1st Place Winner

"It might seem strange that this essay about the Guyana of tomorrow has focused on the seemingly minor and technical issue of our current voting system. Yet that system enables our problems to steer us into folly and nothing positive will happen until we discard it. Guyanese love Guyana and they love each other. If they can be released from a system which forces them to consider their fears and insecurities, rather than their goals and desires, then all those old clichés will shine with the light of reality. We will have racial harmony. We will be one people, one nation, one destiny."

Royston Goring - 2nd Place Winner

"The Power of Change lies with the people. The framers of the Constitution intended the Guyanese people to elect a Government of its choice. The Power of Change lies in the ballots at the upcoming elections. Let us unite under the National Motto, "One People, One Nation, One Destiny" and finally give some meaning to these six words that have been meaningless for so long. Unless the Six Peoples of Guyana come to the realization that strength lies in unity, then our dear country will never be the breadbasket of the Caribbean (Burnham) or the gateway between North and South America. The Guyana of Tomorrow deserves better leaders who will cherish the principles of democracy, ensure that the poor are treated fairly and seek to lessen the developing gap between the rich and poor Guyanese."

Raul Daniel Roopchand - 3rd Place Winner

"Of course, all of the country's problems cannot be blamed on the Government and others. The blame also lies with us Guyanese. We are a people who seem to care little about our country; there is a lack of patriotism and nationalistic pride among the citizenry. It speaks volumes when young Guyanese children can call the names of all 53 states of the US, but can hardly manage with our 10 Administrative Regions...Through the education system, the next generation can be raised with a sense of patriotism and nationalistic pride instilled in them."

Jennifer Vergina Chan - Special Prize for Youngest Entrant Winner

"My friends if we are to have a beautiful, peaceful and developed Guyana of Tomorrow then we need to change the Composition of our Government, have educated leaders, accountability by our leaders and managers, boost our education system, emphasis more on agriculture, encourage foreign investors, and encourage interior development. We can achieve all these if our leaders' love for power is replaced by power of love."

