Company Selection For Airport Project By Year End - Pickering

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Hon. Dr. Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister of Natural Resources and Labour.
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The National Democratic Party (NDP) Government will move to select a company before December to carry out the Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport runway extension project. This new information came from Hon. Dr. Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister of Natural Resources and Labour while speaking to residents in his district.

The airport, which is one of the NDP's signatory projects, is headed by Dr. Pickering's Ministry.

Minister Pickering reminded persons that the project has cost higher than government can afford.

"Bids are in for selection by end of year. The top contenders are The ICA Group, JD Driver and Sir McAlpine Group. The British Government will have to give approval," he said recently.

Prior to the comments by Dr. Pickering, Premier and Finance Minister, Hon. Dr. Orlando Smith on July 16 said though they have not yet determined the source of financing for the project, a special committee has been set up to determine how the project is to move forward. He told reporters they are also yet to determine how it will be handled, whether solely by government or a public/private partnership endeavour.

"The airport project is moving on. We have had submissions by the bodies who were interested in bidding. We have looked at it from the point of view of concessions and building and financing. So we are looking at it from various points of view. This matter now is being looked at by a committee involving the Ministry of Finance, the Airport Development Authority."

He added, "As a matter of fact, right now they are looking at that matter to consider which direction we will be going finally and then look towards the financing. For example, if it is

going to be built totally by the Government of the BVI, then we have to look at how to be financed, how to do the projections for the businesses so that we will able determine whether it is affordable of course, and then of course the British Government will have to agree with the financing of it."

In June at the swearing in of legislators, Premier Smith had indicated that the project will take priority for the Government this year.

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"The airport, Madame Speaker, will be a priority project for 2015. That airport is necessary to support the major sectors of the economy - tourism, commerce and financial sector...That airport must and will receive the attention that it deserves during this year," Premier Smith said.

Premier Smith has stated that the project is critical if they are to sustain the market share of the overnight visitors. He said it is also essential for their own travels, especially in emergency situations.

He has also denounced any scaremongering to the effect that the project will be privatised.

"This government has always been fully open and transparent about it. We are looking at all options for the financing of the airport and that includes public private partnerships, which is standard in so many places, including Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom, and recently, the airport in Jamaica," Premier Smith said previously.