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# Big businesses snub pan festival

By TERRY JOSEPH

LOCAL corporate sponsors have been almost universally reluctant to put any money into next month's World Steelband Music-Festival.

Apart from Caribbean Communications Network (CCN), National Broadcasting Network (NBN), Radio 97 and the Cascadia Hotel, local private sector corporations, State enterprises and independent big businesses are yet to respond positively to repeated requests for financial assistance.

At a news conference yesterday at the Cascadia, stirring appeals were made by Festival chairman Patrick Arnold, advertising account executive Mark White and Culture Minister Dr Daphne Phillips to business interests who may have been tardy rather than dismissive of the event.

The Minister noted a verbal commitment from the Tourism and Industrial Development Company (Tidco).

Phillips also announced that the Government has increased its original subvention by \$1 million bringing its total input to date to \$2.5 million.

That figure, however, is still a far cry from the Festival's \$5.5 million budget, which Arnold later described as "having been revised downward to this modest sum".

The 13-day festival opens on October 9. The contest will pit the skills of 12 steel orchestras from around the world against a similar number from Trinidad and Tobago for a US\$25,000 first prize and the prestige of being titled the best steelband in the world.

Phillips assured that the Government was committed to the success of the event.

"That commitment was undeniably shown," she said, "firstly by the establishment of a Cabinet-appointed committee to shape, plan and execute this millennium event and, secondly, by the addi-

tional allocation in the 2000/2001 Budget.

"It is my information that Tidco has already contributed and we now look to the private sector to support this venture, as well as the general public to purchase tickets for the various events. This is your pan, this is our national instrument and, as the calypsonian puts it, 'Pan is we'," Phillips said.

Arnold noted that businessmen in Europe and North America seemed to have more interest in pan than their local counterparts, offering significant assistance to bands from those territories.

For the 800 pannists booked to arrive over the next three weeks, accommodation alone will cost some \$1.5 million. The festival committee expects to raise only \$400,000 from gate-receipts. Along with the arriving performers, an equal number of supporters are booked to fly in to cheer their favourite bands.