



A member of TCL Group Skiffle Bunch performing at Panorama 2006.

Mayor welcomes Panorama finals at Skinner Park

YVONNE WEBB
Guardian South Bureau

SAN Fernando Mayor Kenneth Ferguson is welcoming the opportunity to host the finals of Panorama 2007 at Skinner Park.

"We are enthused and definitely in favour and once there is confirmation, the City and the people of San Fernando would not let the opportunity go abegging," an enthusiastic Ferguson said in a telephone interview yesterday.

He said it was a great opportunity for San Fernando and its future as a major entertainment centre.

The Government is reportedly considering a proposal for the staging of this major event at Skinner Park, San Fernando, because of question marks over a venue for the hosting of Carnival events next year.

The country said a final farewell to Carnival at Queen's Park Savannah this year, and the facilities should have been torn down to make way for a \$700-million Centre for the Arts.

The Grand Stand and the other facilities at the Savannah are still awaiting demolition causing the usual bacchanal and controversy associated with Carnival to rear its head earlier than usual.

Ferguson said Skinner Park was no stranger to Panorama competitions, but given that it is a final, some modifications would have to be made.

"We are putting together a plan for the modifications to accommodate additional patrons which should not be very major."

Former Pan Trinbago public relations officer Milton "Wire" Austin said he did not understand why the idea to host the Panorama down South was generating so much controversy and negativity.

"Before I demitted office arrangements were made to hold the semi-finals in Port-of-Spain.

"The plan was that we

would go up on Victoria Avenue, enter the Savannah from the western side and the semifinals would take place there.

"I don't think that arrangement has changed. What has changed is the finals for Skinner Park and we are talking about 24 bands—12 conventional (medium) and 12 conventional (large).

"Back in the 1960s and '70s we used to have Panorama in South with 27 bands and we used to accommodate everybody.

"In fact people used to say that pan in South was better than pan in North, so for people to now say that South can't handle a Panorama final is far from the truth," Austin, who is the leader of NLCB Fonclaire, stated.

He said the plus side

is that the Park can accommodate over 30,000 patrons and "the difference with the Savannah is that once you enter you have to pay."

In terms of objections raised by panmen from the East about transportation cost, Austin said "bands from the deep South have been doing it for years.

"In fact I am yet to pay my transportation cost of \$50,000 for 2006 Panorama," he said of his band which was in the finals.

Submitting that he cannot see the complex (Centre for the Arts) being completed in one year's time, Austin said arrangements should be made to host the pan finals twice in 2007 and 2008.

A campaigner for the pan finals to be held in South for years, Austin

said a traffic plan was drafted in anticipation of this event.

The plan, which, he said, was still valid, called for traffic to be blocked on Todd Street and dualing the Rienzi Kirton Highway to allow the bands to travel from the second class ground along this route, up Ciperio Street, entering the Park opposite the Neal and Massy Gate, on to the competition, exiting at the Mother Mary Gate and back to the second class ground to pick up their transport.

He said this arrangement might pose some parking problems, since the second class ground was used as a parking lot for events at the Park.

"But alternative parking arrangements could be made," he suggested.