

# REMARKS

BY

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PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY

PUBLIC MEETING - NORTH ABACO PLP BRANCH

MARSH HARBOUR, ABACO

19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2013

Member of Parliament for North Abaco and Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Hon. Renardo Curry,

Parliamentary colleagues,

Stalwart Councilors and party officers,

Branch chairman and executives,

Officers and members, ladies and gentlemen a very pleasant and balmy good evening.

I begin by extending my thanks to the branch chairman for this kind invitation on this historic occasion and for the hospitality shown to me since my arrival this morning.

I have had the opportunity to tour several settlements here in the north and to converse with the people to hear their concerns, aspirations and to feel their mood as we move forward one year after the historic bye-election.

We entered a new era of political development and national maturity on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 in North Abaco when you voted for change and elected a new generation political leader. The era of divisiveness and victimization is gone, relegated to the scrap heap of regression and cynicism – a relic of a style of the past that has caused much hurt, suffering, tribalism and prevented Abaco from coming together and realizing its full potential.

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Renardo Curry, your new generation leader, was born, raised and nurtured in North Abaco. With his election, the Prime Minister thought it wise to bring government closer to the people by appointing Mr. Curry to the post of Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister here in Abaco.

Renardo is the official local voice of the central government for the affairs of Abaco and I urge ALL in Abaco to communicate all of your concerns and proposals to him to have them resolved and expedited through the appropriate channels of the central government. He is humble, he will listen to you and he will act on behalf of ALL Abaconians.

My brothers and sisters, it is worth repeating that the PLP came to office during one of worst global recessions on record. The economy was in shambles; government revenue was woefully under performing; government borrowing and spending were reckless and unsustainable; unemployment was at its highest level in a generation and crime and the fear of crime were spiraling out of control.

There is no question that the FNM government under the leadership of the Abaco Dragon, Hubert Ingraham, mismanaged the national economy, was fiscally irresponsible and had no effective plan to fight crime and contain mass social dislocation. They were more concerned with destroying the legacy of the PLP than they were with the people's business – that is, building on the successes of the last PLP government that had established a solid economic foundation, expanded the economy by over \$1 billion, increased government revenue by 51%, attracted tourists and tourism expenditure in record numbers and added over 20,000 jobs to a robust and bustling economy.

So May 7<sup>th</sup> 2012 was déjà vu for the PLP as this was not unfamiliar territory; this was a repeat of May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2002. We faced this mess before, successfully cleaned it up by turning the economy around and by the help of Almighty God, we are determined to do it again.

The recession was protracted and the economic recovery is slow. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently revised the economic growth projections for the world downward – not downgrade The Bahamas as was reported in the media – but revised the entire world. Even the experts at the IMF did not know that the recovery would take as long as it is taking.

For our part, this government has made the tough decisions to control borrowing and spending as it grows the economy. Our fiscal consolidation plan were given high marks as Standard and Poors said that the government was “hitting many of the right notes” with its management of the economy. Further, State Minister for finance Michael Halkitis and senior government officials recently met with the IMF in Washington DC and they too expressed support for and gave the government high marks for its management of the economy thus far.

Our aggressive and consultative approaches to pre-empting and detecting crime are producing positive results regardless of attempts by the naysayers to create public hysteria.

The government's mandate to turn things around is a five-year mandate – not three months, not six months and not a year. We are working from a severe deficit position that was not of our doing. You hired us to clean up the mess left behind by the FNM and for all the gloom and doom preached by the critics of the PLP government, not one critic can say with the support of empirical evidence that the policies of the PLP government have made conditions in the country worse. We all agree that the economic recovery is slower than we would like and that serious crimes are not declining as rapidly as we would like, but all objectively minded people can see that the government is making the right decisions for the long term growth and stability of The Bahamas.

Before I take my seat and with your kind indulgence, I wish to share with you some of the government's initiatives in Abaco that will assist in facilitating the further growth and development of this island.

The road repair and potable water distribution programs for Abaco and the Family Islands are ongoing and will continue.

The government has allocated \$10million in this budget cycle for sports infrastructure throughout the Family Islands as part of our efforts to provide suitable facilities for our young athletes throughout our country. I can assure you that Moore's Island will not be left behind as it has produced some of the best athletic talent in the country.

The Marsh Harbour International Airport will be completed shortly at a further expenditure of \$1.8 Million. The government fully intends to seek a third party to operate this facility as it moves ahead with its empowerment policy of public/private sector partnerships.

The government has committed to constructing the North Abaco sea port and expedite repairs at the Treasure Cay Airport in this budget cycle.

There is progress being made in the beleaguered Wilson City power plant project with the installation of the switchgear and transformers at the Marsh Harbour power sub station.

As fisheries are a major component of your local economy, a new fisheries act is in the consultation stage and promises to strengthen this important industry. This is in addition to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government of the Dominican Republic to address the vexing problem of illegal poaching.

Further, the Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Resources and Local Government has just opened a new agricultural office in Coopers Town, hired a new fisheries officer for North Abaco and plans are underway to post an Administrator in Green Turtle Cay shortly.

As for investment projects and our economic stimulus strategy, the following investment were approved in Abaco since the PLP came to come to office:

- Black fly Bonefish Lodge at Schooner Bay.

- Sand Bar beach Club and Resort at Treasure Cay Beach. This is a boutique Hotel comprising of 40 luxury rooms, Restaurants and small marina.
- Caribe Farms Ltd, a 2000 acres commercial farming project producing corn, soy, and soft spring wheat in Spring City.

In addition to these projects, the government is evaluating several large projects in Sandy Point and the Abaco Cays. The Sandy Point project is on the agenda for early next year.

I have said more than a mouthful so on behalf of the Progressive Liberal Party, I wish to thank you for the confidence you reposed in us on October 15, 2012 and I am convinced that working together with God as our guide, we can achieve greatness for the people of Abaco.

Thank you for your kind invitation, Good Night and God Bless.