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Editor
The Freeport News
Cedar Street
P. O. Box F-4007
Freeport, Grand Bahama,
BAHAMAS

Dear Sir,

Re: Social, Economic Growth and Development for Grand Bahama Plans for 2013

I read with interest the press release by the Honorable Doctor Michael Darville, Minister of Grand Bahama, in the 3rd January edition of your newspaper titled, "Social, Economic Growth and Development for Grand Bahama Plans for 2013" and published since in all the major newspapers.

I noted that his Ministry, in collaboration with the Port Authority (GBPA) and the Grand Bahama Chamber of Commerce, is to make planned promotional trips to Panama and Brazil in this New Year, and in April will be hosting a Caribbean Trade

Show in conjunction with CARICOM that will bring together “thousands of potential investors, artisans and crafts people on the Caribbean islands”.

While I commend Dr. Darville and his Ministry’s efforts in this regard, I continue to be perplexed as to why the Government is not requiring the Grand Bahama Development Company (GBDevCo) and the GBPA to establish the Professional Marketing Organization (P.M.O) that was statutorily covenanted to be established by them in the Freeport, Grand Bahama Act, 1993 in an efficient, diligent and timely manner.

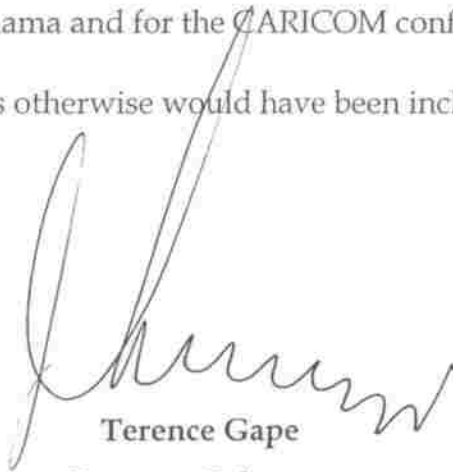
As noted in my Call to Action Article dated 9th October 2012 (available at website below), if the P.M.O had been established 20 years ago, the island would not be suffering the way it is now and we would have had continued and motivated growth for these past 20 years especially to include the period from 2002 to 2008 when the world experienced an explosive real estate investment boom totally missed by Grand Bahama and the Port Area (except for the Ginn West End Project).

It is interesting to note that under the 1993 Act there were 21 specific covenants by GBPA and GBDevCo and indeed almost every one of these covenants have now been fulfilled, or at least almost fulfilled. Indeed the Arts & Crafts centre was only built in the last three years, but the most important and the most productive covenant (being the P.M.O) was never instituted and I’m surprised that again this is not being demanded to be done even now at this late stage and especially even now when Freeport is at its lowest point ever.

It is apparent that having received this extended exemption from Real Property Tax, which the Government granted as an incentive for the renewed promotion and development of the Port Area and in consideration of the covenants made (to include the building of the Supreme Court Building the and St. George's and Jack Hayward High Schools) GBPA and GBDevCo have otherwise "pocketed" the taxes saved (estimated at least \$5 million annually for a total to date of \$100 million) and the estimated \$2 million per year which the P.M.O. would have cost and have failed not only to market or promote the Port Area or indeed to promote the fact of the considerable tax savings to Investors in residential property in Freeport as opposed to the rest of the Bahamas so that Freeport has not obtained the advantage that such exemption should have delivered but has consistently lagged significantly behind Abaco, Harbour Island and Nassau/Paradise Island in sales and development for the whole 20 year period and to now.

My point is that while these one-off promotional trips such as to Brazil and Panama are helpful in establishing contacts, a P.M.O would have the tools and expertise to "work" those contacts and to establish such contacts throughout the world in its ever-changing markets: The need for the P.M.O was acknowledged by the Government, the Port and GBDevCo in each of the Hawksbill Creek Agreement Acts beginning in 1955 and again specifically in 1993 as a part of the mandate of GBPA to market and develop the Port Area "for the benefit of the Bahamas".

At the very least I expect that Dr. Darville's Ministry will be certain that the costs for the trips to Brazil and Panama and for the CARICOM conference will be paid for by the Port and/or GBDevCo (as otherwise would have been included in the P.M.O budget).



Terence Gape
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P.S. My projected annual budget for the P.M.O of 2M per year does not seem to have been too wide of the mark when one considers it has been recently disclosed that GBPA requested of the Power Company to contribute \$500,000 per year for the promotion of Industrial Development in the Port Area which the Power Company has apparently been paying since 1996.

Call to Action available at:

http://bahamaslandsinfo.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12838:economic-crisis-in-freeport-a-call-to-action&catid=76:letters-to-the-editor&Itemid=174