

Michael Darville Freeport, Grand Bahama January 27, 2012

Good evening.

I would like to begin tonight by giving thanks to God for bringing me this far, and pray for his guidance and protection throughout the remainder of this journey.

For those of you who do not know me, I am from humble beginnings. I was born in New Providence and my family of eight grew up in a tough neighborhood. My mother was a maid, a very industrious woman, and with the support of my father, they both struggled to make a better way for all the children.

They taught us the value of education and hard work, and for the past 16 years I have practiced medicine on Grand Bahama; in fact, my office is located in the Pineridge constituency.

I have always been actively involved in programs to help the less fortunate. For sixteen years, I've worked to find shelter for the homeless, assist in the rehabilitation of drug addicts, and many other charitable programs throughout Grand Bahama. When I reached my limits of frustration over what one person could accomplish alone, I decided to enter politics, in the hopes that I could have an impact at the policy as well as the personal level.

I want to thank the people of Pineridge for letting me into your homes and sharing your concerns. Let me assure you from the bottom of my heart: I have listened carefully. I will take your hopes and fears and dreams with me to Parliament.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Pineridge is one of the hardest hit areas in the nation. Just yesterday while on the road I met an unemployed mother of three children, one of whom is autistic. Although she has a Bachelors Degree in Computer Engineering, she has been out of work for the past 4 years - despite looking for work every day. And yesterday I also spoke with another family of four, just evicted from their apartment a week ago, after the father, a carpenter and the only bread winner in the home, was laid off from a construction company. I wish I could say these stories were unusual – but they're all too common in Grand Bahama.

What we need on Grand Bahama are secure jobs, not handouts, and a government that has a plan to turn this economy around and maximize what this island has to offer. Grand Bahama wants to move back to productivity, self worth and social order.

In Pineridge, we need to rehabilitate and house drug addicts, we need a nutrition program, and a big brother/ big sister youth development program.

The PLP's Job Creation & Empowerment Plan will make sure we get people back to work. Finally we will establish a training facility for our young people, preparing them to meet the challenges for what is about to happen in the future.

Grand Bahama, the FNM has been the government for 10 of the last 15 years, and they still won't accept responsibility for any of their failures.

They don't listen, and they don't care.

The candidates of the Progressive Liberal Party have worked together to build a plan to put Grand Bahama back on the road to economic recovery, through meaningful investment and programmes to create good jobs in the tourism, industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy.

The Progressive Liberal Party is committed to build a new state-of-the-art hospital, using Bahamian contractors and Bahamian labor.

And understanding that the expansion of the economy requires reduced energy costs, the Progressive Liberal Party will embark from the first day in office to establish a new Ministry of Energy and Industry to be located on Grand Bahama. The primary mandate will be to reduce the overall cost of electricity per kilowatt hour throughout The Bahamas, and to improve the inefficient failing electrical infrastructure of BEC, while working with the owners of the Grand Bahama Power company to reduce the fuel surcharge by expanding alternative energy sources.

The lease and distribution of crown land for agriculture would become available after training, to establish small Bahamian agro-businesses in East and West Grand Bahama.

Through the Hotel Encouragement Act, the PLP would revive the failing tourism markets by investing in and managing hotel properties on the island of Grand Bahama while providing government support for small Bahamian owned and operated boutique properties in East and West Grand Bahama.

We believe Freeport should be the home to a major international arbitration centre, one which generates numerous well-paying jobs.

Grand Bahama, while you have suffered, your government has wasted precious borrowed resources on poorly managed projects, all filled with huge overruns.

They've long ignored your needs, but now they're back, hoping the big show they're getting ready to put on will make you forget the last five years.

It's not going to work – we can all see that for ourselves. Grand Bahama is ready for change, ready for a new direction.

The PLP is on the move with a new vision and a new generation of leaders. I am humbled by the outpouring of your love and look forward to your ongoing support.

Pineridge, let's work together with the community spirit and once again believe in the Bahamas.

God Bless You, and May God Bless The Bahamas!