

**GREGORY K. MOSS PLP Candidate, Marco City Constituency
Address at Launching of Grand Bahama Candidates 27th January,
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These are critical times.

We live in a Bahamas where we have been told by the Prime Minister of our country that “Bahamians need not apply” in respect of the sale of BTC, the most significant communications asset which we held as a people. Subsequent to that shocking and insulting statement, Mr. Ingraham sought to justify his comment by stating that if Bahamians had been allowed to purchase BTC they would have “run it into the ground within two years”: that, from the Prime Minister of our country. Talk about not believing in Bahamians.... We live in a Bahamas where we are told by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Symonette, that the problem in Grand Bahama is that our “expectations are too high”. That we should not complain about unemployment because we have the option of sitting on the back of a “garbage truck”. We live in Bahamas where we are told by the Minister of State for Finance that all is well in Grand Bahama -- notwithstanding the obvious suffering that is going on here. He says our response to outrageous power bills should be to set up kitchens in our backyards like in the old days so that we can “cook outside” without having to use electricity.

In Grand Bahama, this government has been serving up contempt and lies. And I can tell you – we’ve had enough.

Here are the three big lies: First, that the global recession is to blame for every last problem we face. It’s just not true. According to OneCaribbean.org, the official website of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, between 2008 and 2011 stop over tourist arrivals in the Caribbean grew on average from 4.4% to 10% driven by “higher arrival numbers” based on “bargains and discounts”.

In other words, many Caribbean nations did the smart thing – by cutting

the cost of a vacation during tough times. In some places, tourism has actually grown during the recession. But what did we do in The Bahamas? The FNM government increased hotel taxes, increased national insurance contributions and increased the cost of importing and licensing cars.

It did nothing to reduce the operating cost for all hoteliers in the Bahamas, only the chosen few, and it certainly did nothing to revitalize the tourism product in Grand Bahama.

Added to that, the Prime Minister has now admitted that he intentionally neglected Grand Bahama over the last five years. And what was his excuse? He had some kind of problem with Hannes Babak, the former Chairman of the Port Authority.

He sat on the sidelines and did nothing for Grand Bahamians because he did not like one man.

We are supposed to forget the fact that people have been out of work during that time, forget the fact that they have lost their homes, that families have fallen apart, that some children could not go to school because they could not afford uniforms and food, that all the hard work which had been undertaken in this country by the PLP over the last 40 years to build a middle class has been smashed for many families ALL BECAUSE HE DID NOT LIKE ONE MAN. We are supposed to forget, but we will not forget. Another big lie: There aren't any jobs. The truth is that there is no shortage of jobs in Freeport's industrial sector. There is only a shortage of jobs for Bahamians. Do they think we've forgotten about their deliberate and unbelievably short-sighted policy of issuing as many work permits as possible (in order to earn the work permit fees) rather than putting Bahamians first in line for all jobs in the Bahamas? We haven't forgotten. The third big lie: There's nothing anyone could have done. That again, is simply untrue. There is a lot that the FNM government could have done if it cared about the people of Grand

Bahama.

There is a lot that could have been done with just a small portion of the \$1.3 billion that the FNM government has borrowed and spent over the last 5 years. There is a lot that the five sitting FNM Members of Parliament could have done since their votes were sufficient to defeat or approve any Bills that came before Parliament.

But they chose to do nothing. They chose to do what their “Papa” told them to do, and to say what their “Papa” told them to say, rather than to fight for the people of Grand Bahama.

They did not do anything for tourism in Grand Bahama. They did not do anything for job growth in Grand Bahama. They did not do anything to reduce the cost of electricity in Grand Bahama. They did not do anything for Grand Bahama. All they did was to provide excuses for their inaction and make Grand Bahamians line up for welfare cheques and, when elections came near, make Grand Bahamians line up to pledge their loyalty to the FNM in order to get temporary jobs for 52 weeks or a few thousand dollars to try their hands at a business. Mr. Laing, you know, and everyone else knows, that you left Marco City because you were going to lose the election in Marco City. You know that the FNM is going to lose every seat in Grand Bahama and you chose to “abandon ship”. If you were confident that you had served the people of Marco City you should have “run on your record” -- not “run away”. You ran away, and that speaks volumes about your failure, and the failure of the FNM, to put Bahamians first. Now your party asks the people of Grand Bahama to “Take 5”. Take 5 what? Take 5 more years of misery? Take 5 more FNM politicians who belong to a party that does not listen and does not care? No. Absolutely not! Grand Bahama is ready for the party that will put Bahamians first. Grand Bahama is ready for the party that believes in Bahamians. Grand Bahama is ready for a bold vision to revitalize the economy. Grand Bahama is ready for the PLP! We’re coming to you with “PROJECT GRAND BAHAMA” – a blueprint for change, a blueprint to turn Grand Bahama into an economic powerhouse. Project Grand Bahama includes:

-- The restoration of the Bahamians first policy of the Government in the issuance of work permits so as to ensure that qualified Bahamians are given first preference for all job vacancies in Grand Bahama. We will put an end to the FNM practice of discriminating against Bahamians for the sake of earning work permit fees; -- The identification of all available jobs for which Bahamians are not presently qualified but which, with education and training, they can become qualified AND the government support to cover the cost of such education and training. -- The reduction of government taxes on tourism in Grand Bahama so as to lower the cost of airlift to Grand Bahama and the cost of hotel rooms in Grand Bahama. -- The re-opening of the road link between East and West Sunrise Highways. The closure of that road has stifled the free flow of traffic for residents and also for our tourists and it has greatly contributed to the stagnation of the International Bazaar. -- A public-private sector partnership to promote local restaurants, nightclubs, music festivals, local craft markets, historically themed beach activities and an "Arawak Cay" like indigenous food centre.

Not only big foreign businesses deserve government assistance. So do Small and Medium sized businesses. So we will now go about the business of rebuilding the shattered middle class in Grand Bahama. -- A new Ministry of Energy and Industry will be the nation's first Ministry to be situated outside the capital. We will also name a Minister for Grand Bahama with direct responsibility, in consultation with other relevant Government Ministries, for the oversight of the various Government agencies and Departments in Grand Bahama.

We will work in coordination with the Grand Bahama Port Authority but we will put an end, once and for all, to the abdication by the Government of The Bahamas of its obligation to govern every island of The Bahamas, including Grand Bahama.

-- We will conduct an extensive review of the cost of electrical power in Grand Bahama to ensure that customers are not being overbilled. The

present cost of electricity in Grand Bahama is alarming in light of the fact that the Grand Bahama Power company is not paying any customs duties on the import of fuel.

-- We will construct a new state of the art Hospital for the Northern Bahamas, and will modernize all medical clinics in Grand Bahama, to give the residents of Grand Bahama access to high-quality healthcare. The Hospital will be constructed using Bahamian contractors and Bahamian labour. We encourage you to review these proposals and more on our website, myplp.com. We are ready to revitalise Grand Bahama. We put people first. We believe in the Bahamas. We are ready to serve. Thank you and God bless the Commonwealth of The Bahamas