

**Shane Gibson,**

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**Budget 2011-2012 Contribution**

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**Member of Parliament**

**Golden Gates**

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Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to once again be in this honorable place, representing the wonderful people of the great constituency of Golden Gates. Firstly I would like to send out get well wishes to Mrs. Dorothy Moss who is not feeling well but I know that if she is able to, she is watching me right now.

I would also like to thank all of those persons who volunteered their time with absolutely no compensation week after week, tirelessly helping me to represent the wonderful constituents of Golden Gates. Even though they, as well as the constituents know of my commitment to Golden Gates residents, I want to reassure them that I will continue to do my best with God's help as I offer myself once again as a candidate in the upcoming General Election in the Golden Gates Constituency.

I promise that I will not be like those persons who find it difficult to face those persons who elected them in 2007 and must run to cover for another constituency as their lousy representation won't allow them to return to their current constituency. I want to also assure the surrounding communities that as soon as the new boundaries are made official, that the new constituents of Golden Gates will immediately feel the presence of my team and I.

My constituents will know that we are not perfect but because we do a lot, then obviously more is expected of us and unlike most of the constituency represented by FNM

MP's, where they are able to use the Government purse to repair some park equipments, in Golden Gates we have to do it ourselves through private donors.

I want to publicly thank all of those individuals, who continue to contribute financially to Golden Gates and make it possible for us to successfully represent Golden Gates through annual events from 2001 to the present, like our Basketball tournaments, Fun run Walk Health fair, back to school assistance program, mother's day give away, Christmas toys give away, annual calendar distribution, marching band, vacant lot clearing, computer lab, introduction to computer class, document preparation assistance and our repairs to basketball rims and poles on some of our parks. In Golden Gates, we represent you year round.

I heard the member from Montagu thank some foreigners who made contributions to several charities her Ministry is associated with and I was surprise that no Government Ministers thanked two persons in particular. They are Sir Duward Knowles and Peter Nygard. The reason I mentioned those two persons is because in both cases without

their contribution, some Regattas, sporting events and various charities would have a difficult time surviving financially in The Bahamas.

Mr. Speaker it would be remiss of me if I did not thank Mr. Peter Nygard for the major contribution he has made to sports including track and field, beach volleyball, boxing and regattas in The Bahamas. I was really surprised that someone from the Government side did not take advantage of the opportunity to thank Peter Nygard, since they are all aware of his contribution. And especially since; regattas are the life line for most family islands where they are held. I am myself aware of Peter Nygard's contribution over the past 15 years to Acklins, Cat Island and Andros regattas. I am also aware of Nygard sponsoring boxing, beach volleyball and giving a fixed amount to all athletes who medal at the world games and Olympics.

Someone recently described this budget as a Halloween budget with trick and treats. Personally I thought that this was the best description I had heard thus far. I have also in the past refer to this Government as a smoke and mirror Government and what we see in this 2011/2012 budget, reaffirms my position on this.

Mr. Speaker, I am standing before you, my colleagues and The Bahamas today, burdened and completely disappointed in the direction I see this country heading at this time. I have been visiting Grand Bahama quite a bit over the past months and my heart really goes out to the residents there, who over the years placed their trust in this FNM Government.

As I met with them and listened to their plight and in some cases their voice of desperation, one of the things that stood out to me was when they said, and I quote, "When you lose faith in a Government that is one thing, but when the Government loses faith in you, then you know that you are in serious trouble". I'll speak to this in more details shortly.

Firstly Mr. Speaker I have come to the realization that this FNM Government has done so much to destroy the credibility of The Bahamas internationally that they are unable to attract any new developers to The Bahamas.

The best we can hope from them is to have them brag about how they were able to stop review and cancel what we left in place, make some changes here and there, terminate most contracts we left in place and reissue them to their privilege supporters, then brag about how they had to complete what we did not finish.

Well Mr. Speaker, if the Right Honorable member for Farm Road and Centreville started something and was then voted out of office, then pray tell me who was suppose to complete it besides the Government who was elected to replace his Government.

Let's look at the Projects creating jobs from the time this FNM Government was elected in 2007. Albany, Christie; Bakers Bay, Christie; Airport, Christie; Stadium, Christie; Straw Market was started by Christie; they terminated the contractor, scaled it down and reissued the contract. Anatol Rodgers School Christie; TG Glover school, Christie; Baha Mar, Christie. We left Ginn, the I Group and Harcourt Investments in place and all they had to do was leave them alone but instead they couldn't just keep their hand off and they probably would have been completed by now.

Information coming to my attention confirms that even though financing for these developments ran into difficulties, they all could have gotten these projects restarted but chooses not to do so because of the disrespectful way this Government treat investors. I've said on numerous occasions and warned this FNM Government from 2003 that the negative attitude that they were displaying towards the international investors was causing the investors not to want to do business with them and the Government is frightening them off. Now the rooster has come home to hatch.

Then Mr. Speaker, we see where this Government came up with a calculated plan over the years, to punish the people and workers of The Bahamas by taxing them until it became unbearable and terminate as many Bahamians as they could in order to create jobs for their cronies just before the upcoming elections. Remember that there is only one consolidated fund, which is used to fully finance and partially subsidize all Government and Quasi Government institutions in cases where they are unable to meet their commitments.

So when the Government terminates almost one hundred employees from ZNS while hiring at Bahamasair when it is not necessary, then one can only be drawn to a single conclusion and that is The Government by design terminates one group of employees to make room to hire another group. (Transporting large sums of cash at Bahamasair/creating avenue for Bahamasair board member to make money, on all sub-committees collecting stipend, traveling to all meetings etc.).

We are seeing it happen in the case with BTC workers, where this Government after having run the finances of The Bahamas into the ground, almost one thousand workers will be sacrificed in order to pay down the overdraft created by this reckless spending spree by this FNM administration. (Almost 400 BTC employees and almost 600 phone card retail agents).

Bahamians have concluded that the proceeds from the sale of BTC were used to pay down the Government overdraft to create room for them to hire Bahamians temporarily leading up to elections.

And in the most cowardly way possible, they contract Cable and Wireless to do their dirty work. Mr. Speaker I don't blame C and W, as they are business people who specialize in making companies profitable through streamlining employees to the bare minimum and in the process if they are able to improve service then they do that as well, but their primary focus and their area of specialty and expertise is downsizing and that is why they were brought into the mix reportedly by the former chairman of BTC.

Every company has their area of expertise; some are successful because of their ability to increase revenue through expanding services, some because of their exemplary customer service, some because of management skills and some because of a combination of the above. C and W specialty happens to be downsizing. This was extremely important to this Government because they strongly believe in putting Bahamians out of work as well, so it created a perfect compliment and therefore their marriage was inevitable. (Restructuring Phone card vendors, reducing outsourced contracts by 20 to 30 percent)

During the 2007 campaign when the PLP warned the Bahamian public that the FNM had plans to downsize the public service as well as BTC, they denied it in the strongest possible way, but lo and behold they (the matter of trust Government) showed us better than they could have told us.

Now I understand that Water and Sewerage and BEC is next on the agenda for downsizing. I want all and sundry to take note that all of the hiring about to take place during the next budget period is for one year, and that is because it is simply an election ploy. Never mind the Prime Minister asking the member from MICAL rhetorically and I quote "could it be because if they were kept on for more than a year, they would have to be made permanent and pensionable"

Well everybody and their cat knows that there are hundreds and possibly thousands of persons in the public service working month to month in some cases for up to twenty years and they are not Permanent and pensionable. Remember what I always say, listen to what is being said, but more importantly, listen to what is not being said in order to get the full picture.

Mr. Speaker when Bahamians say that this Government has lost confidence in Bahamians, they justify this position by highlighting the fact that one of the first things this Government did on assuming office in 2007, was to cancel the National Training and Assessment Agency established by the Christie administration, where Agatha Marcelle had a contract in place to be the CEO.

This happened during this Government first six months in office, and now during their last six months in office they have re-branded the same program and allocated some \$25 Million towards it. Can you imagine if they had left this program in place, how many Bahamians would have been identified and trained to take advantage of the many opportunities which this Government now says that Bahamians are not qualified to do? (Foreigners at LPIA brought in to operate heavy equipment; The Construction Industry should be reserved for Bahamians).

Mr. Speaker, we heard from day one about how the present Minister of Housing complained about the large number of houses they had to repair because of the shoddy workmanship. This Government thought it was so important that they appointed a Minister and a Parliamentary Secretary initially to be in charge of Housing and National Insurance, and then I guess when it seemed as though both of them together could not handle National Insurance and Housing, they were stripped of NIB and left with Housing alone.

I guess this was supposed to bring focus to the housing repair program and new construction to make sure that what happened under their watch between 1992 and 2002 and our watch did not happen again under theirs. None the less, with two Ministers in Housing, and with no problems with cavities or caves in Adastr Gardens, low and behold they built almost a dozen houses which had to be repaired to the tune of between \$40,000.00 (forty thousand dollars) and \$60,000.00 (sixty thousand dollars) each.

It is important to know that these houses were completed and persons had moved into them already so those families had to be relocated temporarily and furniture stored etc.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that this was a perfect opportunity to gain credibility through action rather than through criticizing others. In the case of Adelaide subdivision, there were problems with the land, but in the case of Adastr Gardens I wonder if the two Ministers would describe shoddy workmanship as willful neglect and dereliction of duty.

Now, wouldn't it have been nice if the junior and Senior Minister would come to Parliament and be honest, transparent and accountable by telling us and the country how much money was spent on defective houses built by them from 2007 to date. But alas, not much of the truth resides in them, so it will NEVER happen. Instead, they tell of moneys spent in Adastr Gardens and pretend as though it was all spent on repairs to houses built prior to 2007.

All I have to say to this Mr. Speaker is, if it wasn't for Shane Gibson and the PLP housing program and the hundreds of houses they said we left to be repaired, then no one would know the name Kenneth Russell and Brensil Rolle, as their claim to fame is the repairs they carried out to homes built by the PLP.

Wouldn't it have been nice if the Minister and Junior Minister would just tell this place about the recent long delays in paying contractors because there was no money at times to pay them at Bahamas Mortgage Corporation, perhaps as soon as the Minister feels that jolt of accountability and truth he refers to at the odd moment, he may want to table financials from BMC along with a detailed report of transactions which occurred during his tenure; and wouldn't it have been nice if The Minister or Junior Minister had told us why the completion of the infrastructure for the unoccupied houses in Spring City wasn't synchronized with the completion of the houses there, thus causing almost fifty homes to sit unoccupied for over a year, instead of simply telling us that they are unoccupied until the infrastructure is completed.

Finally it would have been so nice if they would tell us why the only houses being built now are for the most part replacement houses for those compulsory acquired by the Government. But that is asking a bit too much for persons of whom the truth have a difficulty residing.

Mr. Speaker it would also be nice if the Minister of Housing would explain to The Bahamian public why with the hundreds of millions of dollars Bahamas Hot Mix get in contracts from the Government, that they still find it necessary to compete or better yet, why are they allowed to compete with the small contractors for infrastructure work in housing subdivisions, who cannot compete with them for these larger contracts.

I want the Bahamian public to be the judge and tell me, why Bahamas hot mix is given every major and most minor road and infrastructure works in The Bahamas. (Repair roads for Ms Universe, Corridor leading from JFK to Baha Mar, Abaco, Ministry of Housing, Sports Center, every drop of asphalt used by Jose Cartellone, most of Jose Cartellone heavy equipment belongs to Bahamas Hot mix, Government is intentionally charging more at their plant to justify everyone buying from Bahamas Hot Mix).

I spoke with several contractors who said that with this deal going on with Bahamas Hot mix and this Government, that even the crumbs are being snatched up by Bahamas Hot mix.

Then to add insult to injury, what isn't given to Bahamas Hot mix, they brought the Chinese in to give it to them. People are asking every day if there is a direct or indirect correlation between Bahamas Hot mix and campaigning funding, and all I say is, don't get me mix up in that asue as I didn't throw a hand so I expect no draw.

Mr. Speaker I remember when it became known to certain members of the FNM that BTC was renting space from Summerwinds Plaza, they made a big do about it, but I haven't heard a peep from those same persons when the fire victims rented space from the corner motel owned by the member for Golden Isles.

I am constantly asked the question as to how much money was spent with the corner motel by social service, and all I would say is I don't know and I don't care, those people are running a business, you expect the people to stay for free? So not for me, but for those who want to know, it would be nice if someone would explain how you justify spending all that money with the Corner motel. As far as I'm concerned, I have no interest but the people want to know.

Mr. Speaker, we now look at the Public service and how they are being treated at this time along with members of the public.

Firstly, this FNM Government came to office terminating persons through forced retirement and forced redundancies, they then froze their salary, stopped promotions and hiring except for the select privileged, stopped overtime for Customs and Immigration officers (which makes it a huge burden on officers now stationed in the family islands; this is against the labor laws of Bahamas as any employee working in excess of forty hours per week is entitled to over time. They can't be forced to take time off in lieu of payment), stopped all new Government guaranteed loans for persons wanting to go to college, cut subsidies to private schools.

They forced Bahamians to:

-Pay more for electricity

- pay more for vehicle license

-pay more for drivers' license

- pay more to have your electricity reconnected

-pay more customs duty on vehicles

-pay more departure tax

-pay more for real estate transactions if you are not a first time owner

-School fees in the private schools was increased as a result of reduction in subvention from the Government to private schools

-pay more in bank fees

-pay more in mail boat freight charges

-pay more National Insurance

-pay more for the most consumed meat in The Bahamas (chicken)

Bahamians are even paying more for gasoline. (Explain how we can reduce gasoline cost to Bahamians by reducing Government tax as they collect more in stamp duty).

Mr. Speaker I think it is fair to say that this Government can be charged with Foist. (to unjustifiably force upon).

Now they've come back this year and given back to the public service the increments they should never have taken away, agreed to start promoting again, reduced duty on chicken and a few other items, given back subsidy they cut without just cause and found money for all sorts of things just before the upcoming elections (Bahamians want to know, how come the money could be found now all of a sudden, because elections are pending).

Bahamians everywhere should be offended that all of a sudden moneys can be found to do all these things, simply because it's election year. Likewise it is guaranteed that it is the FNM government intention to take all of these back if they were to be returned to office. Well, it's a good thing The PLP will be the Government after the next elections.

Mr. Speaker I said before in this place that this FNM Government is likened to someone who has his foot on your throat and as you are about to take your last breath, he allows you to breath just a little on the condition that you thank him for saving your life.

Mr. Speaker it should be clear to everyone why a Christie type leadership is needed in The Bahamas over a Ingraham type leadership. All one has to do is look at the results of the 2002 and 2007 elections. In 2002 all but one of Ingraham Cabinet lost their seat and in 2007 all but three of Christie Cabinet won their seats. I say no more and leave you to ponder that.

I also find it interesting that The Americans interpreted Mitchell and Christie evading answering their questions as curious and in the case of Christie they thought he wasn't aware of Foreign affairs matters. Well Mr. Speaker, could it be that this was a diplomatic way of telling the US that you were not prepared to be a traitor to The Bahamas and that what they were asking was none of their business?

Mr. Speaker, again I say that in Grand Bahama everyone of those FNM Cabinet Ministers representing Grand Bahama should hang their head in shame for the way they are suffocating (or should I say, have suffocated) the economy there and making life difficult for the two back benchers who are relying on their Cabinet Colleagues to make some things happen.

Maybe it is time we start tying compensation for Cabinet Ministers to results, I mean, think about it, Grant, Laing and Russell riding around in their air condition cars, windows up on their cellular phone ignoring constituents and being paid premium dollars while willfully suffocating residents of Grand Bahama. I say willfully because they all claim to have the answers to the problems facing The Bahamas (the three are Mr. know it all, just listen to them when they speak), so if they are not producing then it is because they choose not to, and if it's because they really don't have the answers then they should be sent packing.

Either way they are bad for Grand Bahama and should be voted out of office if not immediately, then sooner. Now I'm advised that to try and bridge the difference with the people of Grand Bahama, that Some FNM MP's are giving out applications for the recently announced jobs at the FNM Headquarters in order to try intimidate residents of Grand Bahama. Businesses continue to close at an alarming rate in Grand Bahama according to everyone, except Grand Bahama Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that this FNM Government has failed the Bahamian people in most cases. They have been so bad for The Bahamas that most Bahamians get the sense that they have failed in everything, and you know what is said about perception.

We are at a stage now in The Bahamas where we MUST put Bahamians first, and that does not mean nothing for anyone else, it simply means our priorities must be Bahamians first and foremost and everyone else afterwards, or better yet, more must be done for Bahamians while we try to create empowerment at a rate for us to catch up to those with plenty.

I believe one of the reasons Bahamians are being left behind is directly related to the breakdown in social dialogue in this country between The Government, Employers and The Labor leaders. The relationship appears to be a matter of convenience and not a genuine interaction, consultation and feedback.

In conclusion, I want every Bahamian under the sound of my voice and those who will read this communication after it has been published, to think about where you are today, think about where you see The Bahamas heading, think about what you see in the future for your kids based on the path you are on now. Think about what has been the major focus of this Government during their presentations to this place and whenever they speak.

Think about whether you want a hot headed irrational Government or a level headed sober Government. Do you want a Government whose claim to fame and focus is what wasn't done by the previous administration and who can only brag on what they had to complete rather than what they initiate or do you want a Government whose focus is articulating a vision and executing a well thought of plan for present and future generations.

Just as few can argue that there were accomplishments during 1992 to 2002 under an FNM Government and much was accomplished between 2002 and 2007, likewise few can successfully argue that this present Government is successfully creating a Bahamas that we can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker Golden Gates charges this Government with Foist (to unjustifiably force upon).

**End**