

# Senator Allyson M Gibson Speaking Notes Contribution to 2011-2012 Budget Debate June 23rd 2011

by [Bradley Roberts](#) on Friday, June 24, 2011 at 11:18am  
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Madam President,

The FNM has compromised Bahamian national security, damaged the national psyche, given our children's future away in sweetheart deals to special interests and now on bended knee begs forgiveness by bringing us a package that they bought on credit and that we and our children have to pay for. To the people who increased salaries just before an election and said "remember the money", we say this budget is too little too late. It does not put Bahamians first. The FNM has to go!

The FNM just does not get it. Bahamians expect their government to put Bahamians first in The Bahamas.

Top on the list of Bahamian concerns is crime and the fear of crime. I have just come from Bermuda where they are worried about 8 murders last year. Here we are in The Bahamas on target for yet another record breaking number of murders this year 60 so far in 2011! More than two murders per week. More they say per capita they say than anywhere else in the world!

So many lives lost, so many families devastated, so many communities damaged. It is a national tragedy, and it is a national crisis.

**And today I say to you clearly: this crisis stems from a failure of leadership. A government's first responsibility is to keep its citizens safe, and this Prime Minister and his government have failed. They have failed to lead, they have failed to act, and they have failed to make our priorities their priorities.**

But don't take my word for it – listen to the Prime Minister's own words in Parliament in 2007:

**"I would hold my head down in shame. If at the end of my 5 year term there are 100 plus persons charged with murder who I could not cause to be tried within 2 years."**

He says further,

**Mr. Speaker that in those circumstances " I would be ashamed of myself. I would say to the Bahamian people I am a failure. And my punishment of being voted out of office is minor – I should get more major punishment than that"**

**Yet today the Prime Minister and his government are singing a different tune, hoping Bahamians won't notice how unsafe their streets and homes have become, hoping Bahamians won't hold the FNM responsible for the failed prosecutions, for the absurd obstacles places in the way of achieving justice.**

**We all recognize how complex an issue crime is...so why do I feel so confident in blaming the current crisis on a failure of leadership? Because the FNM has chosen time and again to put politics first; not Bahamians. Every time they have had to make a decision about national crime policy, they have chosen to put their own political interest over the national interest.**

**Let's start with the police force. Wikileaks has confirmed what many Bahamians already believed to be true: the FNM has played politics with the police force. When a nation faces a crisis in rising violent crime, the first and only question to ask about the Commissioner of Police is whether he is the best person for that job.**

**Former Commissioner of Police Reginald Ferguson has not denied the Nassau Guardian article covering the Wikileaks Cable that made it clear that he and the FNM played games with now Commissioner Greenslade and former DCP Dames. COP Greenslade was sent away because Mr. Ferguson did not like him. Experienced officers who were succeeding in their crime fighting remit were terminated from the Police Force because Mr. Ferguson did not like them! The independence of the COP was compromised. The service of experienced police officers was unceremoniously brought to an end. Wikileaks points to politics and pettiness and victimization being the reason for their removal. And what is totally shameful is that systems had been put in place that was beginning to work.**

Terminating the services of police officers, giving them 48 hours to leave after 30+ years of service and moving others for political reasons is not putting Bahamians first. It is not focusing on what Bahamians care about. It is playing politics with crime.

The FNM didn't stop there – that wasn't enough damage for them.

Under Perry Christie's leadership, the Urban Renewal program had won international awards and recognition, and was beginning to make a real difference in our communities. The FNM should have celebrated the program and worked to deepen its impact. But they would not, could not do that – after all, everyone knew that Urban Renewal was a PLP accomplishment. So they weakened and damaged a successful anti-crime program...because of politics! When our police officers attend conferences abroad, their colleagues from other nations are using a Bahamian model that we don't have here in the Bahamas...because of petty politics.

The FNM was not putting Bahamians first when it cancelled Urban Renewal. What happened thereafter? 4 straight years of a record murder rate!

It doesn't stop there. School policing was also the victim of the FNM stop review and cancel policy. Do you remember when Prime Minister Perry Christie produced in Parliament some of

the weapons that were being brought into schools? Such was the concern of the caring and compassionate PLP government that the school policing programme was instituted. This programme was instituted **after** consultation with the police. The COP and all stakeholders realized that if we expect our children (our future) to learn, we must provide a safe environment in our schools. Weapons have no place in schools. School policing was also working. This too became the victim of an FNM that doesn't consult and doesn't care about the priorities of our families. Today we have record violence in our schools.

It doesn't stop there. We know that justice must be seen to be done. Dr. Sands said people know how to play the system. Swift Justice another PLP innovation prevented people from playing the system. Swift Justice acknowledged that justice delayed is justice denied for accused and victims.

Can you imagine canceling a programme where all cases, save one, set down came on for trial? For 2 sessions. One case dropped off due to the fact that a key witness had a baby. In one murder matter, a Preliminary Inquiry and Trial were completed in 1 year. The new DPP was in the news on 22nd June talking about how elements of Swift Justice are being re-implemented. When I was the Attorney General COP Farquharson agreed that Prosecutors and Investigating officers should work together on agreed matters from investigation, arrest and through to trial. He agreed that prosecutors should be sent to work with the police to train them on proper preparation of matters for trial.

This was cancelled by the FNM in 2007 when it cancelled Swift Justice. Now in 2011, after 4 years of Bahamians suffering and 4 years of record murder levels they are talking about re-implementing what was in place and working. Swift Justice was working! It was clear that it was working. But again, the FNM put politics first and cancelled Swift Justice. They did not care about victims who could not bring closure to the death or armed robbery or rape of loved ones. They simply do not put the concerns of Bahamians first.

There is more though. The Community Courts that were to work in conjunction with the Urban Renewal Program were also cancelled.

There was a new traffic court even space identified. Failure to pay fines would be noted by Road Traffic Department and no new licence issued so long as the fine remained outstanding. Putting Bahamians first—PLP acted so as to “free up” S&C Magistrates' time so that they could deal with more serious matters. This was agreed by and supported by the appropriate stakeholders. Again, by playing petty politics and not putting Bahamians first, this too became victim of the vindictive and petty FNM's SRC policy.

And what about the rights and concerns of victims? The Citizens Advisory Committee headed by Rev. Patricia Bethell also fell victim to the SRC policy.

I am talking about this in detail because I want to reaffirm that in the 2002-2007 period great strides were taken to address crime and the fear of crime. The role of the Citizens Advisory Committee was to be the voice of victims of crime and other law abiding citizens. For far too long, victims of crime had been shut out from the administration of justice.

Rev. Bethell is an outstanding Bahamian who is not only highly qualified but she is also a counselor and social outreach leader.

Again, not putting Bahamians first this Government brought in a foreign consultant, who like all of the foreign consultants needs Bahamians to show them what to do! The FNM government cannot be trusted. The FNM government does not believe that Bahamians can and ought to build The Bahamas.

This Government does not put Bahamians first-

- non Bahamian victims consultant
- non Bahamian DPP
- non Bahamian Director of Works
- Argentinean road builders

In the Bahamas Bahamians are on the outside looking in. Bahamians out of work while non Bahamians are doing the work that Bahamians can do. Special interests are being taken care of and Bahamians are hurting.

It does not stop there. The FNM cancelled the approved Judicial complex (approved by the Bahamian architect, the Ministry of Works and all other relevant stakeholders). The FNM said that \$70 Million was too much to spend on the Judicial Complex. In this modern first world Judicial Complex, designed by a Bahamian would have been:

- the Court of Appeal
- the Supreme Court (all of the Courts)
- the Industrial Tribunal
- Judges Chambers (for all Judges)
- Prisoner Cells
- Jury Rooms
- Robing Rooms
- Consultation Rooms
- IT
- Security
- Etc.
- 

The Courts would have been in use today in the 1st world Judicial Complex. The Judicial Complex, the Office of the Attorney General and the Police Compound would all have been next to each other in an area devoted to the Administration of Justice. Security would have been enhanced. All Courts would today have been sitting in and operating from the Judicial Complex but for FNM shortsightedness, pettiness and misplaced priorities. Roads and an unnecessary new port area are more important to the FNM than a Judicial Complex!

The Judicial Complex was cancelled because the FNM plays petty politics—the PLP acted on it so it had to be stopped and cancelled. Again, this Government was not putting Bahamians First. It was acting to advance special interests.

Let's look at the facts—the fact of the matter is architects and quantity surveyors say that the cost of the so called Supreme Court Campus will “far exceed” the cost of one judicial complex. Ansbacher House is being completely renovated, those in there now must be moved someplace else in the meantime and documents must be stored. So as well as the cost of renovations there are other costs. It is anticipated that the cost of renovating the Supreme Court Building (an historic building that has not been well maintained) will be astronomical. Every building in the Campus must have separate IT and security installed. And Bahamians are still waiting for the Agreement for Sale of Ansbacher House to be tabled in this place. Architects and quantity surveyors say that the cost of the Campus will exceed \$70 Million.

The FNM demonstrated further contempt for Bahamians when it said that the Remand Centre at Fox Hill was cancelled because one person was opposed to it. For 4 years Bahamian lives were put in jeopardy while the prison convoy raced from Fox Hill to downtown and back. Racing and carrying people who were not needed for trials at the Courts.

**Look at the Office of the Attorney General. The FNM appointed 4 Attorney Generals in 3 years. Is that taking crime seriously? That game of musical chairs sends a clear message that fighting crime was not the FNM's #1 priority. 4 Attorney Generals in 3 years created confusion at the Office of the Attorney General.**

Bahamians remember the FNM's accusations about the independence of the Judiciary. Last year I pointed out that the Government is in breach of the Judges Remuneration and Pensions Act. The Report mandated by the Act has not been tabled in Parliament and no provision has been made for increases in Judges Salaries in accordance with the Act. The FNM again, not putting Bahamians first. Roads before Judges and the Judicial System. Totally misplaced priorities.

It took 3 years for electronic monitoring to be introduced after the FNM stopped, reviewed and cancelled what was left in place by the PLP. All the work had been done. An examination of the law. Review of various systems. Trips by the police to see the systems in action. A RFP and a proposal for the way forward,— all left in place. All cancelled. Not putting Bahamians 1st.

**Bahamians are sick and tired of hearing the FNM say the PLP planned and didn't act.**

Proper planning is essential in nation building. And we put it in the May 2007 budget to be implemented in the budget year 2007-2008. The FNM took it out of the budget. We would have had 3 years of monitoring people out on bail. A properly working system would have meant less crime. Again, the consequences of failure to act must be laid at the feet of the FNM.

I have spent so much time on the administration of justice because I support those suffering Bahamians who are under siege by crime and the fear of crime and who blame the FNM. If the FNM had not cancelled all these projects, if the FNM put Bahamians first by acting on matters important to Bahamians, our country would not be under siege today. We would not have record crime rate and the record murder rate. We would not have had 4 consecutive years of a record murder rate.

Anyone who broke into the Supreme Court over 6 months ago would have been tried by now. Anyone who threatened a Judge or a witness or a police officer would be immediately tried. The PLP's serious and comprehensive plan of action was working. Bahamians were seeing and

feeling the results. International Agencies were giving The Bahamas awards for our steps in combating crime. The FNM stopped almost every aspect of that comprehensive and award winning action plan. The FNM must take the blame for the result of its ill considered, short sighted, petty political actions.

Bahamians know from our record that we have a serious and comprehensive plan to combat crime and the fear of crime. We will hit the ground running. We will get to work for Bahamians. Bahamians know that the PLP in office will ensure the security of tenure of the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police would never again be put in the position where it could be said that he has to sing for his supper.

Bahamians know that a PLP Minister will never say that we don't worry too much about the murders because it's druggies and other criminals killing each other. Combating crime and the fear of crime is at the top of our list. This is what Bahamians care about. You can trust the PLP to put Bahamians first.

We in The Bahamas have one of the highest per capita murder rates in the world and the FNM shrugs it off! One murder is one too many. Record levels of murders add up to a national crisis.

It is shameful to have people in prison for petty offences and people out on bail for 3 murders. But, that's the FNM for you. Not putting first things that Bahamians care about.

We also have to address the rising rate of sexual offences, especially in our schools. I again call for a Register of Sexual Offenders. These people are charged in public. Parents and guardians have a right to know whether someone interacting with their children, in a position of trust, has been convicted of a sexual offence. We must put law abiding Bahamians parents and their children first!

This budget is too little too late.

**It is an election budget which people have called a "bribery budget". The national debt is higher this year than last (another record high). Last year, against our advice, this lacking in compassion and uncaring government slashed the subvention to schools, cut off support for the Ranfurly Homes and other charities, imposed a taxes on Bibles. While hurting Bahamian children, they were lining the pockets of special interests.**

Last year, when the national debt was lower than it is now, this lacking in compassion and uncaring government caused the termination of the services of more than a thousand government workers. These Bahamians were left to struggle with mortgages, school fees, utility bills, etc. What is especially lacking in compassion and uncaring is that too many of those laid off were the sole breadwinners in their families. Our country is small enough to know when someone is the sole breadwinner in a family. If the government had any compassion it would cause the services of those people to be terminated. This government does not get it. It does not put Bahamians first.

The FNM comes in here creating smoke and mirrors, doing what they do best. Let me tell them, today 6000 plus Bahamian households have no electricity. Thousands of households have no water. The government has seen to it that hundreds of Bahamians have no longer have jobs with the government or government agencies. One would expect the government to encourage the private sector not to lay off people.

The government is leading the way in terminations. And the government agreed with C&W that it could lay off Bahamians – calling it restructuring. Bahamians will never forget that their government gave away their children's birthright when it gave away 51% of BTC. And if that wasn't bad enough, it agreed a plan for layoffs and change in pension plan even before it brought the contract and MOU to Parliament. And what is especially sickening to Bahamians is that this government that does not put Bahamians first brought into The Bahamas executives at BTC who we understand are earning almost \$1,000 per day!

The truth is that the FNM's projections about the economy are always wrong! The IMF and the Federal Reserve have warned that the US should prepare for the possibility of a double dip recession. We too should be preparing for this possibility.

Bahamians called listened to Ministers Laing and Vanderpool Wallace's, pipe dreams and smoke and mirrors. Bahamians know and feel that the economy is not recovering or they ask the question, recovering for whom?

On the very same day that Minister Vanderpool Wallace was telling us about how great things are in tourism, we watched the Atlantis ad on US network TV:

1. **4 nights**
2. **Kids stay free**
3. **Full breakfast included**
4. **4th night free**
5. **Companion pass**

**This is a first for Atlantis.**

**Atlantis NEVER discounts like this. Clearly it is trying to fill their rooms. If Atlantis is suffering, imagine the other hotels; imagine tourism sector. Ask retailers on Bay St. they will tell you that the much promised increase in sales that was to come the result of the \$50 Million spent on dredging the harbour has not materialized. Go on line. You can get a 4 day 3 night cruise to The Bahamas for less than \$300. \$300 per night (accommodations, entertainment and all food included) – thanks cheaper than going on a date in the US. These people buy a T Shirt.**

**It's no secret; we need to have more air stopovers. Hotel rooms need to be filled.**

**We need to see the government investing in Bahamians. That's real stimulus.**

How is it that the government can borrow almost \$500 Million for capital works but can't invest in Bahamians? That's misplaced priorities and not putting Bahamians 1st.

\$125 M – roads

\$50 M – harbour  
\$12 M – straw market  
\$300 M – airport

When tourists come to The Bahamas they want to experience The Bahamas. Not Las Vegas in the Bahamas.

Every hotel that gets Hotels Encouragement Act concessions should be mandated to have live Bahamian entertainment.

Freddie Munnings, Al Collie, Club Fluid and others have been put out of business or are struggling because they have not been supported or properly supported by government. The government meets with foreign investors to ensure that their projects succeed. It's time to put Bahamian owners of SMEs and their employees 1st. wouldn't it be wonderful to have clubs where we and tourists could go to experience the creativity of our tremendously talented youth.

In the 1960s and 1970s tourists flocked to The Bahamas to enjoy the live entertainment of Freddie Munnings Sr. Lou Adams, Count Bernadino, Peanuts Taylor, John Chippie Chipman and Becky Chipman and many others. Their modern day counterparts have had their hopes and dreams dashed by a government that does not put Bahamians 1st. Can you imagine the Ministry of Tourism allowing a Native Revue to close? That's not putting Bahamians 1st .

One wonders what they had in mind when they agreed to change the National Investment Policy so that non Bahamians have the right to compete head to head with Bahamians in entertainment and restaurants, areas previously reserved for Bahamians. What was wrong with the previous policy that non Bahamians could get permission only in special circumstances?

And, Bahamians who are trying to become SME owners in the cultural sector are wondering why their hopes and dreams are also being crushed by this government that does not put Bahamians 1st.

We know that art and culture promotes self esteem and pride in self and country. They create a sense of identity.

People travel to Miami, New York and all over the US for film festivals. These events promote and develop all aspects of the film industry. Putting Bahamians 1st would mean spending some of the \$125M Argentina road money on existing and upcoming young Bahamian film makers, costume designers, videographers, editors etc.

Young Bahamian actors, stage designers and set builders and producers want Bahamians put 1st . Some of the \$26 M harbour money could have been spent in supporting them in cultural promotion and development. The spinoff effect on these investments would have been true stimulus.

**Roads are unlikely to produce 1 new tourist.**

The roads have put scores of Bahamians out of business on Market St., Blue Hill Rd., Robinson Rd., Prince Charles Dr., etc.

The FNM prefers to build roads, not people! Mislplace priorities. Not putting Bahamians 1st.

**These roads have created unprecedented stress for Bahamians. Almost every day a new road is dug up in New Providence. Congestion reigns. The roads are causing Bahamian businesses to close and unemployment to increase and homes to be lost. Who is benefitting? Special interests. Special interests own the companies that sell the aggregate necessary for the base of the roads. Special interests own the asphalt on top of the roads.**

**While we are on the road works, the FNM took lack of compassion to a new level over the Labour Day weekend. Access to a shopping plaza in the south of New Providence has been compromised by the road works. The young Bahamians who own the plaza and the Bahamian businesses in the plaza have been suffering due to the road works which left one road rather the two open to the plaza. Over the Labour Day weekend, the second access road was shut off. No one could get into the plaza. Although the roads were closed, no work was done on the roads. No work on the roads and no access to the plaza's businesses that wanted to open. That was not putting Bahamians 1st. That was trying to bring those young Bahamians to their knees.**

Pandering to FNM special interests while crushing the hopes and dreams of Bahamians is not putting Bahamians 1st.

Ecotourism has significant potential for Bahamian SMEs. Fishing lodges, small hotels for bird watching, rare orchid discovery, butterfly watching and other eco activities – all of these are attractive to high end high spending tourists. The problem is that the government is allowing non Bahamians into this sector also. Bahamians have been running small hotels and guest houses for years. Why is the government allowing non Bahamians to participate in this sector also? The competition is not on a level playing field. This is not putting Bahamians 1st.

While on the Family Islands, I must refer to Bell Island and especially the attempt to intimidate Bahamians Terry Bain and Prescott Smith who have been fighting for the 300 signatories on the Petition to prevent the dredging of that apparently commercial Marina. Bell Island is a clear indication of the FNM's lack of concern for the environment and for future generations of Bahamians:-

- the FNM had previously refused further development on this legally established bird reserve and the legally established National Park (established from the 1950s and 1960s).
- The investor paid \$1M to the National Trust in circumstances that raise questions (as asked by Pierre Dupuch and remain unanswered)
- Permission was then given to dredge a Marina to accommodate 20 more yachts of up to 150 feet and to construct 2 concrete docks of 100+ feet
- Permission was given to excavate an area that I am told is larger than the size of Lake Cunningham

- All of these permissions were given knowing that the Island is a turtle nesting ground, a conch habitat, a stingray habitat and that has rare corals in its immediate environment that could contain the earliest forms of life, will be affected.
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This is not putting Bahamians 1st. If Bahamians fish in the National Park so that they can feed themselves and their families, they will be arrested. The National Park is a “no take zone”. A non Bahamian pays \$1M to the National Trust and gets a helipad in a bird habitat and to dredge an area larger than Lake Cunningham.

In response to the allegation that the PLP between 2002 – 2007 approved Marinas in the National Park, my sources in BEST tell me that NO MARINA was approved in the Exuma National Park by the PLP during the years 2002 – 2007.

We knew that Florida had refused to allow any new marinas for mega yachts. We did not want our environment and especially our National Park to be compromised. We understood the importance of the fly fishing industry. This is why we supported fly fishing guides and fishing lodges. What is happening at Bell Island looks like selling our children’s future for \$1 Million. It certainly is not putting Bahamians 1st.

The FNM has openly demonstrated that it does not put Bahamians 1st in the economic arena.

- When a 100% Bahamian group with financial capacity and ability to access capital tried to buy Cable Bahamas, the FNM told them NO. Cable Bahamas was sold to a non Bahamian entity with limited financial capacity. The FNM fixed it up so that a particular non Bahamian in that group was able to sell and buy back his shares. This FNM government made that non Bahamian a multi millionaire. Cable Bahamas was able to change on more than one occasion its obligations. Cable is still not over the entire Bahamas
- BTC

o A group of Bahamians also tried to buy BTC. They too were told that they could not buy BTC. They were told they are “too greedy” and that they want everything.

o The FNM said that Bahamians can’t run BTC. BTC was BUILT from a Government Dept. to the company that Cable and Wireless was desperate to buy. And there was an article in the Press that C&W is anxious to sell its non UK portfolio. What does this mean for The Bahamas?

- Banks. We need more Bahamian owned banks. But the FNM is not committed to Bahamian ownership in the financial services sector.
- In 2008 we told the FNM that they need to give Bahamian businesses a break from payment of Business Licence fees. We suggested that all businesses that kept a stipulated number of Bahamians employed should be given relief from Business Licence fees. The FNM gave money to the Arawak Port company and borrowed money to pay Argentinean contractors entrepreneurs. They said that they could not afford to

stimulate and support Bahamian businesses as we suggested. As we now see, the incentives that came years later were too little too late.

- In 2008 and every year since we recommended that the FNM cause the Central Bank to reduce the Prime Rate. A reduction then would have been the stimulus needed to give Bahamian homeowners and business owners the breathing room to prevent foreclosures and save many SMEs. We do have reductions now 3 years later. Again, it is too little too late. Hundreds of Bahamians have lost their homes. Homes that could have been saved.
- In 2007 before the FNM revoked the arrangements at BEC that the PLP left in place to give Bahamians relief, we begged them to leave them in place. Bahamians needed relief. Electricity off in homes has adverse health impacts especially on infants and the elderly. They withdrew the relief to Bahamians and subsequently had to reinstate them when faced with the obvious and unbearable hardship that they imposed on hard working Bahamians. Today more than 6000 homes are without electricity. We have load shedding every day. Bahamians are calling on the government to immediately bring relief by putting in place arrangements to pro rate electricity bills. If electricity is off for 25% of the time in the month, Bahamians get a 25% reduction in their electricity bill. Some of that \$125M for roads could have been invested in reliable electricity supply for Bahamians all over The Bahamas. The situation in Abaco is untenable.
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- The recent change in the long standing investment policy to allow non Bahamians to open restaurants and clubs and other “entertainment” businesses came as a shock to Bahamians and non Bahamians. It was seen as a death knell to already struggling Bahamian SMEs. The competition is not on a level playing field. That change in policy upon which Bahamians relied in making their investments was not in the FNM’s Manifesto. That decision was not in the best interest of Bahamian SMEs and was not putting Bahamians 1st. It was a decision expressly made to benefit non Bahamians.

Almost every young Bahamian that I talk to wants to own a business. They feel that they are 4th class citizens in The Bahamas. Not even 2nd class citizens. They see their government selling their future. They feel betrayed.

We have already announced that we will take steps to return BTC to majority Bahamian ownership. We believe that the long standing investment policy that restaurants and entertainment businesses are reserved for Bahamians has served us well and should only be deviated from in circumstances that clearly advance The Bahamas.

The FNM recently had a Town Meeting to talk about the expansion of Saunders Beach. This turned out to be another shameless FNM reimplementing of PLP policy after stop review and cancelling it. I recall the FNM in this place laughing at the Beach Plans that I produced here in this place.

**AG TO PRODUCE THE SAUNDERS BEACH PLAN**

Is this “coincidentally” the same as the plan announced weeks ago by the FNM? Our plan with minor modifications so that it could have an FNM stamp?

I'm spending time on this because we must be concerned that Bahamians are being confined to the center of the Island. Some of the \$50 Million spent on dredging the harbour or the \$125M for the Argentinean roads could have been spent on beach enhancement. Bahamians must have good beach access forever. We are still waiting for the beach accesses that are closed that I have drawn to the FNM's attention to be reopened. Put Bahamians 1st not things.

I am going to give ideas of some stimulus spending that could in the short and long term make a BIG difference and positively impact Bahamians.

1. Reestablish the Ministry of Financial Services and Investments. The voice of the second pillar of our economy should be at the Cabinet Table. The average salary in Financial Services is twice as much as the average salary in tourism. Invest heavily in the services needed to grow the sector and ensure that Bahamians get jobs that they are qualified to do. Work permits should not be given to non Bahamians to do jobs that Bahamians are qualified to perform. Establish a time limit for persons to have renewals of work permits ( like Bermuda and Cayman)
2. Reestablish the programs stop reviewed and cancelled by the FNM at the Registrar General's Dept.

Listen to an Opinion sent recently:

***“The Registry of Records is approximately 6 months or more behind in its recording and indexing of documents brought to them for recording. As a result it is not possible to determine from the index whether conveyances, mortgages or other transactions for a property have been taken place during the period of time involving the backlog. Entries made in the index of the Registry of Records should be cross referenced. On occasion document is not cross reference and at times no index entry exists for a document. We cannot accept responsibility for documents missed, if they are not cross referenced or if they do not appear in the index.*”**

*The Computer at the Registry of Records had a crash in which many documents have been lost and not as yet recovered nor re-entered. As a result it is possible that documents relative to this research project may not be known about or accessed. We cannot accept responsibility for not reporting on documents which are not reported by the Registry.*

*The Index Book at the Supreme Court Registry are in very poor condition. Parts or many pages of most are missing entries or parts of entries and for that reason it is not possible to access all names in the index. We cannot accept responsibility for names missed if they cannot be reasonably accessed from the index.”*

Good opportunities for SMEs exist in this area. Equally businesses can't function where they can't get this critical information.

As Attorney General, I had a consultative committee headed by Debi Williams and Bryan Glinton work with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the DRG so as to get documents, recorded, indexed, scanned and returned within 3 months rather than 3 years (as was common at the time). This consultative team together with IBM and other technical agents set up the system (which

was working before it was SRC'd). The Bahamas owes them a debt of gratitude for accomplishing this Herculean task. Regrettably, the FNM has undone all their good work. The failures in the DRG are especially showcased when we see the number of people terminated or let go at DRG.

3. Invest in programs so that Bahamians become bilingual. Primary and High school curricula should all have a mandatory second language.
4. Account annually to Bahamians for the performance in schools. We hear the government saying that the education system is in crisis. BUT this same government stopped accounting to Bahamians on how their children are doing. In the UK an annual report is given on the performance of schools. The government is refusing to account.
5. Invest heavily in ALL Bahamians becoming computer literate. Invest heavily in IT, Science, alternative energy and Bahamians being trained in these areas. Subsidize Bahamians who open businesses in these areas.
6. Establish National Health Insurance. Too many Bahamians are having cook outs to pay medical bills. This is not right. It is not fair. We can't afford NHI but we can afford \$125 for Argentinean roads? This is not putting Bahamians 1st.
7. Invest heavily in Bahamians who develop cultural products and media. Revoke the recent change in the investment policy to allow non Bahamians to compete with Bahamians in entertainment and restaurants. This area is wide open for the creativity of our young people. Bahamian young people should be supported. We do not expect our government to support non Bahamians at the expense of Bahamians.
8. Implement the Downtown Redevelopment Project as designed and approved by the team led by the Hon. George Mackey and the Hon. Norman Solomon. Those who know tell me that the only thing that has changed on the Solomon/Mackey plan is the location of the Arawak Cay Port. 4 years have passed during which SMEs could have been formed and numerous jobs created. 4 years of lost opportunity for Bahamian young people.
9. Reinstate at the national level staff and equip the Domestic Investments Board that the FNM stopped reviewed and cancelled. The DIB was established by the PLP to put Bahamians 1st
10. Appoint a team, equip and fund it, to prevent brain drain. Find Bahamians wherever they are. See whether they can come home to work. Incentivize their return to The Bahamas. Let them (and the world) know, see and feel that The Bahamas is serious about establishing centers of excellence. Facilitate as much as possible young graduates looking for a job or wanting to start a business.
11. In the 21st century we need to modernize our Parliamentary process. We need to ensure that our people understand their Parliament and their right of access to their Parliament.
  - a. The position of Clerk needs to be reclassified to be on the level with that of Permanent Secretary. Other reclassification will of necessity follow.
  - b. Provision needs to be made for digital and immediate access to Parliamentary proceedings.
  - c. Provision needs to be made for Parliamentary Committees to function effectively. This will enable debate to proceed smoothly and members to have all necessary information required to properly represent and serve Bahamians.

After putting people out of work the FNM in this Budget turns around as says "look what I did for you" when speaking about social assistance, unemployment benefit etc.

Unemployed Bahamians appreciate the support given by unemployment benefit. BUT Bahamians would rather have a job than go on the unemployment benefit line. Bahamians will be thankful for the 3000 jobs being created (temporarily). Bahamians also want answers on what will happen to the 40,000 students who have graduated since 2007 and the thousands terminated over the past 4 years?

We can be further along the recovery road than where we are now. A special leader is needed for these times.

A special leader, tried and tested, is needed who Puts Bahamians First.

Perry Christie is that man. Perry Christie is a Christian man of integrity.

He has a heart for the people and a vision for national development. As Senator Halkitis said, the Prime Minister acknowledged the tremendous work done by Perry Christie. The IMF commented that the period 2002 – 2007 set records in terms of economic growth in The Bahamas. The IMF said that unemployment was at an irreducible minimum. The record especially stands out because the Christie led PLP started its term faced with:

- having to pay of \$125 Million in debt that the FNM left under the table;
- Infrastructural improvement to the airport and harbour after the FNM failed to upgrade and maintain these gateways. Airlines were refusing to land on the “dangerous” runway and cruise ships were refusing to dock in a harbour where tractor tyres were being used as bollards
- 3 devastating hurricanes back to back.

Ask yourselves:

- Were you better off in 2007 than now
- Were you happier in 2007 than now
- Did you feel safer in 2007 than now?

**The PLP is ready willing and able to hit the ground running to work for you. You know that you can trust the PLP to work for you. God willing, you will give the PLP the chance to make a difference for you and your children. Together, we lifting our head to the rising sun can show that we ARE the best little country in the world.**