



Nassau, Bahamas - The following is the Contribution to Stem Cell Legislation by The Hon. D. Shane Gibson, M.P., J.P., Minister of Labour and National Insurance delivered at House of Assembly on Wednesday, August 7, 2013 at 10:00 am:

I wish to thank the constituents of Golden Gates who have over the years demonstrated tremendous faith in me and who have elected me to this Honourable House of Assembly.

I wish to also thank the leader of our country, Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie for appointing me as the Minister of Labour and National Insurance and a member of his Cabinet.

I wish to also thank the people of this great nation of ours The Bahamas who continue to this day, to have confidence in our Progressive Liberal Party Government, despite all of the frivolous and trivial tactics of the Free National Movement to discredit some Ministers of this PLP led Government, during this most important debate on the regulation of Stem Cell research which is so essential to the overall development of The Bahamas both medically and economically.

I wish to make it clear that I am not perfect; And I am not going to pretend to be perfect. In fact, no one in life is perfect. I also wish to point out that the Free National Movement is not perfect, as was evidenced in the manner in which they were practically chased out of office by the

Bahamian People during the last General Elections.

I would dare say that nor is the PLP perfect. However, there is a clear distinguishing quality between the PLP and the FNM. It is that the PLP is a caring, compassionate and committed Government. You see the PLP is concerned about listening to people from all walks of life, whether they are from Over-The-Hill in the neighboring Bain and Grants Town community, Yellow Elder, Pine Wood Gardens, Abaco in the North, to Inagua in the South, Cable Beach, Paradise Island or Lyford Cay for that matter.

We are a concerned Government that is committed itself from the very first day we took office, EXACTLY, One Year, and Three Months Ago to listening to the haves and the have-nots. We are also a Government of action, that has committed itself to acting in the best interest of THE PEOPLE, regardless of their socio-economic status, where they live, come from, or how much money they make or have in the bank. Unlike some others, we act on behalf of ALL Bahamians.

In my capacity as a Minister and Member of Parliament, I have been blessed with an opportunity to go into the homes and visit with hundreds of Bahamians, black, white, and mixed Bahamians. I have visited the homes of those from humble dwellings, the middle class, upper class and mega-rich. And so have my fellow colleagues in the PLP AND THOSE OPPOSITE IN THE FNM, WHO I DARE SAY PRETEND TO BE PERFECT, and who believe that they are God's chosen party, for The Governance of our country.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament and Bahamians everywhere listening to sound of my voice, I am going to state this quite frankly, I...

D. SHANE GIBSON, HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE, NOR DO I HAVE ANY HIDDEN AGENDAS, like my colleagues opposite in the FNM. Yes I have met with Mr. Peter Nygard as I have met with many other Bahamians, permanent residents and investors and so to have my colleagues opposite in the FNM. But the FNM AIN'T GOING TO TELL YOU THAT... No instead they prefer to point fingers and present secret photos and videos, which prove absolutely nothing, because nothing improper took place. I still don't know what all the hoopla or commotion is all about?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I wish to go on the record right now and invite the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Hubert Minnis if he has evidence that suggests in any way that anything improper took place to carry the tape right now, in fact, this very minute to the Commissioner of Police and have him conduct a thorough investigation... You see, we in this PLP Government have nothing to hide, unlike the FNM which is trying to mislead the Bahamian people WITH BOGUS misinformation, as they are so accustomed to doing.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are that Mr. Peter Nygard, is a well respected, self-made billionaire and philanthropist. Mr. Nygard, has been a resident of the Bahamas for 40 years, and a permanent resident of the Bahamas for over 30 years, who has during the course of his time here in The Bahamas, not only poured money, but his very heart and soul into helping the Bahamian people from all walks of life. Mr. Nygard has contributed millions to assisting Bahamians across the length and breadth of The Bahamas in areas such as Sports including our very own Olympic Golden Knights. Mr. Nygard has been helping Bahamians with furthering their education here at home in The Bahamas as well as those wishing to study abroad. He's assisted persons with jobs, starting their

own businesses as well as in the area of health.

In fact, Mr. Nygard has come to be regarded as a “FRIEND OF THE BAHAMAS, and ALL Bahamians.” I am quite sure Mr. Nygard when he lends his assistance to Bahamians in need of help, he does not ask them whether or not they are PLP’s or FNM’s?...He automatically gives from his heart.

But yes, in their usual hypocritical manner, a number of my colleagues opposite in the FNM have OUTRIGHTLY denied ever meeting with Mr. Nygard, while they were in Government. They are ashamed that’s why they would not fess up, but yet they want to point fingers at the PLP and try to discredit some PLP Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I was quite surprised to hear the Member of Parliament for Long Island, the Honourable Loretta Butler-Turner say that she has never been to Mr. Nygard’s House. Mr. Speaker, that is not true. You all want facts. Well here are the facts.

Fact Number One... The Member of Parliament for Long Island has in fact been to Mr. Nygard’s house, in her capacity as Minister, just as some of us went in our capacity as Ministers. THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT WE HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE....And nothing improper took place.

Fact Number Two...The former Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, went joy riding with his grand kids on an investor helicopter. An investor he gave permission to, dredge an area of the Exuma sea park, that was never before allowed to be touched.

Fact Number Three... Mr. Speaker, credibility is extremely important, and I want to admonish Bahamians everywhere under the sound of my voice to question how credible the FNM is when deciding whether to accept the utterances of those opposite, who have yet to accept that they have been disgracefully rejected by the people of The Bahamas.

Their past relationships and approvals, will help the Bahamian people understand why they are taking the position they have, at this time.

For example, when you have someone with several personalities and violent behavior, I will not call any names, but we all know who I am referring to, who on a regular basis as we have observed, displayed wild outbursts and constant uneasiness with the appearance of being constipated...

Mr. Speaker, lets also look at the type of people the side opposite courted, invested with personally and continue to associate with, even now when they had the opportunity to assist with the development of our great country.

Derek Turner, Martin Trembly and Bodo August Schnabel.

Mr. Speaker, the word on the street is that some members of the FNM Government was ALLEGEDLY as corrupt as one can get.

Word on the street is a Lyford Cay billionaire gave an FNM Minister \$5 million for the FNM. Word on the street says that the FNM received only \$3 million of the \$5 million. Mr. Speaker I wonder if the Member for Montagu can identify the Billionaire?

Word on the Street is that a Heart Institute which provides cardiac stem cell therapy to patients with coronary artery disease, and is based in Freeport gave the FNM a sizable political donation before the 2012 General Elections. Maybe the Member for Montagu or Killarney can confirm or deny and would either confirm or deny if a former FNM Cabinet Minister recently fled a local restaurant when he spotted one of the Principals of the Okyanos Heart Institute, which specializes in Stem Cell therapy in Freeport entering that same eatery?

QUESTION? Who was the original Lawyer for Okyanos? Answer: the President of the Senate Lynn Holowesko.

Fact Number Four ...Then there is the issue of stem cell applications while the now Leader of the Opposition was Minister responsible for Health... It is alleged that this same Okyanos Heart Institute which specializes in stem cell treatments, was approved under the FNM administration, without any legislation or policy being in place. Mr. Speaker, what kind of thing is this? And yet they have the nerve to point fingers at us.

Mr. Speaker, during the wrapping up of this debate, the Prime Minister will disclose just how once again the Leader of the Opposition along with his Deputy, exercised poor judgment and is causing The Bahamas international embarrassment after granting approval to someone now before the courts in The USA.

Fact Number Five...READ INTO RECORD WHAT OCCURRED DURING THE FNM'S CURRENT LEADER'S TENURE AS MINISTER OF HEALTH.

Fact Number Six... The country was in the poor economic and social state that it was when we met it in on May 7th because of mismanagement by the FNM, and now the PLP is working assiduously to restore economic order and strengthen this economy.

Mr. Speaker, beside the enormous medical benefits which Bahamians and internationals seeking medical assistance in The Bahamas will reap, Stem Cell Research will be an important economic component in diversifying our Tourism product. The Bahamas welcomes this new exciting opportunity which we are fully confident will result in this country becoming one of the premier locations for Stem Cell research and therapy in the world.

Fact Number Seven...The FNM failed to attract one new investment project of note in five years and now they are trying to kill this new opportunity of Stem Cell RESEARCH for Bahamians. They did not believe in The Bahamas or Bahamians then and clearly we can see that nor do they believe in Bahamians now.

The Bible says that, "As a man thinketh, so is he..." and I see very well, where the FNM is trying to go with all this negative propoganda geared to sway Bahamians into judging us by the FNM's low standards, when in fact, they did not do their part to improve the country when they were in power. You see they think poorly and are critical of every move we make because they are SO desperate to get back in office and will stoop to ALMOST any inconceivable level to present mistruths about this PLP Government.

Now they have the nerve to speak negatively about an individual like

Mr. Peter Nygård, a man who over the past 40 years contributed over \$10 million to various individuals and organizations in The Bahamas. In some instances individuals are alive today as a result of these contributions.

And yes it is no secret that Mr. Nygard has a special interest in Stem Cell Research... And SO TOO DOES scores of Bahamian families who wish to see their loved once cured; as well medical professionals throughout the length and breadth of The Bahamas, who I also talk to on a regular basis, who are committed to making a positive difference in the medical field here in The Bahamas, and to the overall health and wellness of our country and to people generally around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that before elections last year, the FNM campaigned against the PLP and its leader that we were moving too slow, now they are constantly crying that we are moving too fast. You see we are PROGRESSIVE just as our name states.

On the topic of Stem Cells I wish to encourage my fellow Bahamians everywhere to take some time, if you have not done so already to read up on this innovative scientific research, as you will be amazed by its many benefits in the area of medicine. Yes there has been some controversy regarding Stem Cell Research, but the positives of Stem Cell Research far outweigh the negatives.

This PLP Government has also recently come under heavy attack by the FNM over our Leader's recent decision to lead a delegation to meet with stem cell researchers at the University of Miami. Well, the PLP was and is only doing its due diligence. That very same due diligence the FNM failed to exercise when it out rightly, without any legislation at all being

in place, granted approvals to a stem cell related facility in Freeport when it was in office. And they have the heart to what to criticize our Leader and this PLP Government for doing due diligence.

As to the many benefits of Stem Cell Research which I alluded to earlier, Mr. Speaker, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health, “Stem Cells have the remarkable potential to develop into many different cell types in the body during early life and growth. In addition, in many tissues they serve as a sort of internal repair system, dividing essentially without limit to replenish other cells as long as the person or animal is still alive. When a stem cell divides, each new cell has the potential either to remain a stem cell or become another type of cell with a more specialized function, such as a muscle cell, a red blood cell, or a brain cell...

Until recently, scientists primarily worked with two kinds of stem cells from animals and humans: embryonic stem cells and non-embryonic "somatic" or "adult" stem cells.

Given their unique regenerative abilities, stem cells offer new potentials for treating diseases such as Diabetes, and Heart disease... Also Scientists are already using stem cells in the laboratory to screen new drugs.”

In fact, there are many positive medical benefits to be derived from Stem Cell Research, which has the potential to assist in the successful treatment and cure of over 30 diseases and conditions including Huntington’s Disease, Kidney Failure, Liver Disease, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Alzheimer’s disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Spinal Cord Injury,

Sports Injuries, Stroke, Hearing loss, Pulmonary Fibrosis, Optic Nerve Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, Rejuvenation of the Body, Cosmetic Rejuvenation, AND Facelift with stem cells. And yes Erectile Dysfunction, like many people have been jokingly talking about on the radio talk shows... Along with a host of other illnesses.

Mr. Speaker, it is without question that Stem Cell research will positively impact the field of medicine around the world, PARTICULARLY HERE IN THE BAHAMAS for many years to come both now and in the future. And the Bahamas stands to benefit tremendously from this medical and scientific field of study.

Mr. Speaker I was moved with compassion when I heard one of my colleagues during his contribution to this debate, speak about the great lengths he and his family went through in seeking medical assistance for his son. Thanks to a form of Stem Cell Treatment he noted that his son's health has dramatically improved. Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that for many years now our Bahamian people have been travelling State side for medical treatment. Now with Stem Cell Research, the time has come for Bahamians to receive further enhanced medical treatments right here at home, rather than spending thousands of dollars overseas visiting physicians. They will be getting the same medical attention and professional care right here at home, in The Bahamas, while at the same time contributing to the economy, by keeping thousands of dollars in the country.

Also, Mr. Speaker, far too often it has been said that as a developed nation, The Bahamas has relied too heavily on our two economic industries tourism and banking, and that there is a clear need for the diversification of our economy. Well now a new revolutionary, scientific

opportunity in the form of Stem Cell Research has presented itself to The Bahamas. And, this bill being debated here today will assist with the regulation of this area here in the Bahamas.

Additionally, for years medical professionals and experts around the country have **STRONGLY ADVOCATED** for the introduction of Medical Tourism. With the further introduction and regulation of Stem Cell Research here in the Bahamas, this nation would be regarded as a major Medical Tourism Center as some of our Caribbean neighbors, welcoming thousands, if not millions of visitors annually from around the world, which can in turn generate millions of dollars for The Bahamas.

Mr. Speaker, Cuba has for more than 40 years, been a popular medical tourism destination particularly amongst Latin American and European travelers. Statistics indicate that nearly 20,000 health tourists visited Cuba in 2006. The remarkable reputation of Cuba's medical practitioners, affordable prices and the beautiful beach resorts where patients can recuperate were among the main reasons cited for the popularity of medical tourism in Cuba.

Studies indicate that Brazil is also a major medical tourism provider with a health system, boasting an estimated 16,000 medical facilities, comprised of clinics, hospitals and local health centers that are staffed by more than 200,000 qualified physicians. Brazil has reportedly become world-famous for its cosmetic and plastic surgery procedures. It is reported that "the well-to-do have been visiting Brazil for procedures for years in order to maintain their youthful appearance..."

Mr. Speaker can you imagine people from all around the world flocking

to The Bahamas to receive medical treatments here; and afterwards being afforded an opportunity to recuperate here after their surgery is completed under the care and guidance of our locally and internationally, well trained Bahamian doctors and nurses, while enjoying our Bahamian hospitality, People, Culture, Sun, Sand and Sea which millions of Leisure tourists already come here annually for, as a form of recreation?

Mr. Speaker, Can you imagine the economic impact, as well as direct and indirect spin offs this could have on The Bahamas? It is without a doubt that Stem Cell Research has the potential to generate scores if not hundreds of jobs for Bahamians. Yes jobs, for our Bahamian sons and daughters, who each year graduate from our school system and afterward, enter the job market in desperate search of employment opportunities. Yes, jobs for the very same Bahamians whose homes my colleagues and I have also visited, and will continue to visit as a matter of fact.

Mr. Speaker, I dare say that nothing the FNM has contributed to this debate will improve the health and welfare of one single Bahamian; create one job...grow this country's ailing economy or help Grand Bahama recover from the economic shambles which the FNM left it in.

It is quite evident that the FNM is bankrupt of new innovative, progressive ideas and Bahamians quite frankly should not listen to them. Why should they? The side opposite is failing to speak to 'the bread and butter issues' that affect ordinary Bahamians on a daily basis. This bill is part of our economic recovery and our plan to modernize this country. The FNM is not part of this progressive and positive plan so they must be part of the problem confronting this country. The problem of

stagnation; the problem of holding this country back and the problem of dumping down the national debate by spewing ignorance in the public domain for the sole purpose of confusing instead of educating Bahamians – for purely and solely selfish gains.

Does the FNM have any potential investors lined up to create jobs in The Bahamas? No! Do they have one viable alternative to the PLP's propositions? NO! The FNM was not able to attract any new investment of note during their 5 years in office and now they are maligning another significant investment with no alternatives... As an opposition, the FNM is useless to the average Bahamian. The FNM has no alternative vision to move the country forward.

You may disagree with stem cell, but what is your alternative vision? Why are you relevant to the Bahamian people? What do you bring to the table? Peddling sleaze, untruths and innuendos to confuse the public are not policies and do not comprise a vision.

Mr. Speaker this caring PLP Government is all about creating a better way of life for our people through new economic opportunities, improving our overall medical facilities and fostering health and wellness, enhancing the training and educational development of Bahamians, and improving our overall infrastructure. As such we are pursuing those programs and initiatives, Stem Cell Research being one of them which will ultimately benefit Bahamians, and consequently lead to a more productive Bahamas for us all.