

## PLP Statement On Project Safe Bahamas 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011

It is the responsibility of every citizen in a free, modern democratic state to assist in the development and deepening of democracy. It is also a fact that democracy cannot flourish in the absence of the rule of law.

As a part of its crime-fighting platform, Project Safe Bahamas, the Progressive Liberal Party believes that strong community-based associations could and should play a major role in ensuring their communities are safe. That is why CITIZEN SOLUTIONS as a part of Urban Renewal 2.0 will encourage and support the formation of non-political community-based associations, particularly Crime Watch Associations and Neighborhood Patrols. Such organizations contribute to the rule of law through preventative measures and constant resistance to crime. They also forge partnerships with the various sectors of the community, provide a vital forum for the dissemination of information in the community and establish programmes that foster and promote community spirit, neighborly love and pride.

As a founder of such an association some eight years ago in the eastern district of New Providence, I can attest to the significance of the work they do and the strong strategic partnerships forged with the Police, the Church, the Business Community, the Schools, the Prison, various government and non-governmental agencies and the Members of Parliament for the east – namely, Fred Mitchell, Ryan Pinder, the Hon. Brent Symonette and yours truly.

The Association which has been modeled after the local government concept has a representative from each community on its council. It provides a monthly forum for the exchange of information between the Police and the community, as well as, between parliamentary representatives and the community. Residents are able to report any suspicious activity in and around their neighborhood and also enlist the assistance of parliamentarians and the Police in addressing concerns and

issues that impact security, like poor lighting, overgrown properties, abandoned vehicles and houses.

Successes of the ECA: - Youth Marching Band - Community Festival - Christmas Carol & Tree lighting Ceremony - Partnerships

I call on all residents in communities across the Bahamas to support their community-based associations in taking take control of their streets and their neighborhood blocks and in forming strong social partnerships with their local police and other organizations within the community. Let us show that we are our brothers' and sisters' keeper. Former Commissioner of Police Paul Farquharson said: "I don't think any police force can be successful without the community's support" Former Anglican Bishop Drexel Gomez who once chaired a crime commission said: "You're not going to change the quality of life in The Bahamas until you change communities" and "Until we as a community take on the task of reshaping our community, we won't get very far."

With Citizen Solutions we will, beyond the shadow of a doubt ensure safer communities. A safe and secure country begins with safe communities and there is no better way of ensuring this than by stakeholders of a community taking ownership of their community, working together and with the police to achieve this desired goal.

I thank the press for coming and commend them on the important role they continue to play in getting this and other messages out to a national audience via print and electronic media. You may not realize it but you are an important ally in this fight against crime. I will be happy to entertain any questions you may have at this time.