

HON. KENRED DORSETT M. P.  
MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING  
BUDGET COMMUNICATION  
2015/2016

THANK YOU MR. SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER,

I RISE ONCE AGAIN ON BEHALF OF THE RESIDENTS OF SOUTHERN SHORES. PERMIT ME MR. SPEAKER, TO ONCE AGAIN ACKNOWLEDGE THEM FOR AFFORDING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENT THEM IN THIS PLACE. IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO SERVE THEM AND I THANK THEM FOR SUPPORTING ME FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS IN ALL OF THE COMMUNITY ENDEAVOURS THAT I HAVE ADVANCED AND I AM GRATEFUL TO THEM FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

MUCH WORK HAS BEEN DONE IN THE COMMUNITY AND THERE IS MORE TO COME.

MR. SPEAKER, I WANT TO THANK THE URBAN RENEWAL SMALL HOME REPAIR PROGRAMME. A FEW OF MY CONSTITUENTS HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE PROGRAMME AND THERE ARE MANY MORE WHO NEED ASSISTANCE. MR. SPEAKER, I'M NOT ASKING FOR MUCH. IF I GET AS MANY REPAIRS AS KILLARNEY; MR. SPEAKER, SOUTHERN SHORES WILL BE HAPPY. KILLARNEY COMPLAINS ABOUT URBAN RENEWAL BUT GETS MORE UNDER THE PROGRAMME THAN OTHERS. ANYWAY, MR. SPEAKER, I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH URBAN RENEWAL OVER THE SUMMER TO COMPLETE ROOF REPAIRS IN THE CONSTITUENCY TO HELP MY PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THROUGH THE RAINY AND HURRICANE SEASON.

MR. SPEAKER

WHILE TALKING ABOUT SMALL HOME REPAIRS, I WANT TO ALSO COMMEND THIS CARING PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE FOR PROVIDING DUTY RELIEF ON SMALL HOME REPAIR MATERIALS IN DEPRESSED AREAS. THIS WILL HELP MANY BAHAMIANS THROUGHOUT THE BAHAMAS BUT IN PARTICULAR IN DEPRESSED AREAS IN NEW PROVIDENCE. I AM CERTAIN THAT THIS ADDITIONAL RELIEF WILL HELP OUR PEOPLE.

MR. SPEAKER, I ALSO WANT TO ADVISE MY CONSTITUENTS THAT IN A FEW WEEKS WE WILL BE OPENING THE NEW SOUTHERN SHORES LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE. THE STATE OF THE ART INSTITUTE WILL BE USED TO ADVANCE LEADERSHIP TRAINING; JOB PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING; PROGRAMMES FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT A HAND UP AND NOT A HAND OUT. I WANT TO PUBLICLY THANK PASTOR HERVIS BAIN III, WHO IS COORDINATOR FOR THE INSTITUTE, FOR HIS PASSION AND DRIVE IN HELPING TO ADVANCE THE INSTITUTE AND SEE THE ILEAD PROGRAMME COME TO FRUITION.

MR. SPEAKER I REALLY WANT TO THANK THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE FOR ACCEEDING TO YOUR REQUEST TO RAISE THE CONSTITUENCY ALLOWANCE. MR. SPEAKER, ANATOL RODGERS HAS HAD A STELLAR YEAR. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE INCREASE BECAUSE I WILL BE USING

SOME OF THE FUNDS TO DONATE A BUS TO THE SCHOOL TO ASSIST THE MIGHTY TIMBERWOLVES OF ANATOL TO GET TO AND FROM THEIR SPORTING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS.

MR. SPEAKER THIS FISCAL YEAR-2015/2016-WE WILL BE FOCUSING ON ROAD REPAIRS IN THE CONSTITUENCY, MORE PROGRAMMES FOR AT RISK YOUTH, PARK DEVELOPMENT AND MORE JOBS.

MR. SPEAKER

CONGRATULATIONS ARE INDEED IN ORDER FOR PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE, THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE, RT. HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE FOR HIS LATEST BUDGET COMMUNICATION. THE COMMUNICATION WAS INSPIRING, CONCISE, AND INNOVATIVE AND WAS A SOURCE OF HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER DAY FOR US ALL. THIS YEAR'S BUDGET COMMUNICATION WAS CLEARLY ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY AND ENSURING THAT THEY HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO GET AHEAD. IT CONCENTRATED ON THE THREE PILLARS OF BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS: SAFETY, MODERNIZATION AND PROSPEERITY. MR. SPEAKER THIS YEAR'S BUDGET COMMUNICATION WAS SO INNOVATIVE THAT THOSE ON THE SIDE OPPOSITE WERE SHELL SHOCKED AND ONCE AGAIN COULD ONLY REBUTT IT WITH THEIR USUAL 'PIE IN THE SKY' RETORT. HOPEFULLY, THIS YEAR WILL NOT BE A REPEAT OF LAST YEAR WHEN THEY WERE SO SHELL SHOCKED THAT THEY VOTED AGAINST THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF THE COUNTRY. THEY DID NOT SUPPORT FUNDING TO PAY CIVIL SERVANTS, THEY DID NOT SUPPORT FUNDNG FOR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES; BUT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, YOU HEARD THEM ASK FOR FUNDING FOR WORK IN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES. HOW DID THEY EXPECT FOR THINGS TO HAPPEN IN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES WHEN THEY VOTED AGAINST THE BUDGET. ANYWAY, I TRUST THAT THIS YEAR, EVEN IF THEY OBJECT TO ELEMENTS OF THE BUDGET, THEY WILL SHOW POLITICAL MATURITY AND SUPPORT THE ANNUAL BUDGET.

MR SPEAKER

THE THREE PILLARS THAT THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE SPOKE OF ARE NOT NEW TO THIS ADMINISTRATION. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING TOWARD A SAFER MORE PROSPEROUS BAHAMAS THROUGH MODERNIZATION FROM DAY ONE. THE STRONGER BAHAMAS CAMPAIGN IS SIMPLY A MEANS TO ARTICULATE THIS TO OUR PEOPLE IN A WAY SO THAT THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT THEIR GOVERNMENT IS DOING FOR AND ON THEIR BEHALF AND HOW THEY CAN BENEFIT FROM WHAT IS BEING ADVANCED....SIMPLE. WE ARE BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS. THAT IS OUR MISSION. THAT IS OUR OBJECTIVE. THAT IS OUR GOAL. I WOULD THINK THAT ANY BAHAMIAN POLITICAL PARTY WOULD SHARE THOSE OBJECTIVES, WHETHER IT IS THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY OR ANY OTHER PARTY IN GOVERNMENT....OR SO I THOUGHT!

MR. SPEAKER

THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY COMMITTED TO BRINGING CHANGE TO THE BAHAMAS IN OUR CHARTER FOR GOVERNANCE AND THAT IS THE COURSE WHICH THIS ADMINISTRATION IS ON. CHANGE IS WHAT WE PROMISED NIGHT AFTER NIGHT AT RALLIES HELD ACROSS THIS NATION. CHANGE IS WHAT WE SPOKE OF IN THE LIVING ROOMS AND ON THE PORCHES OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN THE VARIOUS CONSTITUENCIES. CHANGE IS WHAT THE PEOPLE WANTED AND CHANGE IS WHAT THIS

PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY ADMINISTRATION IS DELIVERING. EVERYDAY THE MEN AND WOMEN ON THIS SIDE PUT OUR SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL AND BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL, BECAUSE FOR US, THIS IS NOT JUST A JOB BUT A CAUSE, A MOVEMENT AND A PROMISE TO BE KEPT TO OUR FELLOW BAHAMIANS.

MR SPEAKER

THESE CHANGES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THEIR TOTALITY. THEY ARE A MEANS TO ENSURE THAT THE ECONOMY OF THE BAHAMAS IS ONCE AGAIN BUOYANT AND THAT OUR PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND TO PURSUE THEIR ENTREPRENEURIAL DESIRES. WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE, ONE OF THE MANY THINGS THAT WAS BLATANTLY OBVIOUS WAS THAT WE COULD NOT GO ABOUT BUSINESS AS USUAL. WE HAD TO CREATE NEW REVENUE STREAMS. WE HAD TO ENSURE THAT TRAINING WAS AVAILABLE FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. WE HAD TO LOWER THE DEFICIT. WE HAD TO CREATE JOBS FOR THOUSANDS OF BAHAMIANS WHO WERE UNEMPLOYED. WE HAD TO BOLSTER OUR FOOD SECURITY STATUS. WE HAD TO REFORM AND MODERNIZE OUR SYSTEM OF TAXATION. WE HAD TO LOWER THE COST OF ELECTRICITY AND WE HAD TO DO ALL OF THIS KNOWING THAT THE BORROW AND SPEND METHOD OF THE PAST WAS NO LONGER READILY AVAILABLE TO US. WE KNEW ALL OF THAT MR. SPEAKER, AND WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND DETERMINATION, WE HAVE ADVANCED LEGISLATION, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES TO DO THOSE THINGS....ALL PART AND PARCEL OF BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

MR SPEAKER

IN THREE SHORT YEARS, THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS DONE MUCH FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE BAHAMAS AND BAHAMIANS. WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY INTRODUCED VALUE ADDED TAX, A NEW REVENUE GENERATING PROGRAMME, WHICH HAS BROUGHT MUCH NEEDED INCOME INTO THE CONSOLIDATED FUND. THE TARGETS SET BY THE GOVERNMENT IN RELATION TO VAT REVENUE SHOULD BE EXCEEDED SHOULD THE CURRENT COLLECTION TRENDS CONTINUE. MR. SPEAKER THOUGH VAT IS A BIG PART OF OUR TAX REFORM PROGRAMME IT IS NOT THE ONLY COMPONENT. AS THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE WOULD HAVE MENTIONED IN HIS PRESENTATION, AS PART OF OUR TAX REFORM EFFORTS CHANGES ARE BEING MADE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMS. WE HAVE ALSO RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE MODERNIZATION OF THE SYSTEMS UTILIZED BY THE ROAD TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT WHICH WILL BRING THE PROCESSES OF THE DEPARTMENT INTO THE 21ST CENTURY AND CREATE GREATER CHECKS AND BALANCES.

WE ARE BRINGING RELIEF TO HOME OWNERS THROUGH CHANGES BEING IMPLEMENTED TO THE REAL PROPERTY TAX REGIME. MR. SPEAKER, I WANT TO PUBLICLY THANK THIS GOVERNMENT, FOR FINALLY PROVIDING REAL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR PENSIONERS. MANY BAHAMIANS FIND THEMSELVES IN THEIR TWILIGHT YEARS, STRESSED AND WITHOUT A SOLUTION OR THE MEANS TO PAY REAL PROPERTY TAX. THEY BUILT HOMES IN THE 70S AND 80S AND SOME HAVE EVEN PAID OFF THEIR MORTGAGES. HOWEVER, THE VALUE OF THEIR HOMES HAVE INCREASED WITHOUT THEM DOING ANYTHING. THE VALUES HAVE INCREASED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT AT A TIME WHEN THEY HAVE NO INCOME AND HAVE DEPLETED SAVINGS (IF THEY HAVE IT) TO PAY FOR FOOD AND HEALTHCARE, THEY ARE SCRAPPING

TO PAY REAL PROPERTY TAX TO SAVE THEIR ONLY ASSET. THIS IS WRONG MR. SPEAKER. MANY OF THEM HAVE HAD TO CONSIDER ABANDONING THEIR HOMES. THIS RELIEF IS FROM THE HEART MR. SPEAKER. IT IS A GOOD POLICY AND I THANK THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR THIS.

MR SPEAKER

IN THREE SHORT YEARS THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS REDUCED THE GFS DEFICIT FROM THE OVER \$500 MILLION LEFT BEHIND BY THE FORMER FNM ADMINISTRATION TO APPROXIMATELY \$198 MILLION DOLLARS. A DROP OF OVER \$300 MILLION. THIS WAS NOT DONE THROUGH LUCK OR BY CHANCE AS THE SIDE OPPOSITE WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE THIS DEFICIT THROUGH PRUDENT SPENDING, REVENUE GENERATION AND THE REMARKABLE FISCAL MANAGEMENT OF OUR LEADER THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE AND THE MEMBER FOR GOLDEN ISLES. IN THE BUDGET COMMUNICATION A FURTHER REDUCTION IN THE DEFICIT AND A SURPLUS BY THE PERIOD 2017/18 WAS FORECASTED. PRIME MINISTER CHRISTIE STATED, "THE BALANCE ON RECURRENT ACCOUNT WILL MOVE FROM A LONG-STANDING DEFICIT POSITION TO A BALANCED POSITION IN 2016/17." HE WENT ON STATING, "THE GFS DEFICIT WILL BE COMPLETELY ELIMINATED AND A SMALL SURPLUS WILL BE RECORDED IN 2017/18." YOU'LL HEAR THAT...A SURPLUS IN FIVE YEARS. IF THAT IS NOT PROGRESS, I DONT KNOW WHAT IS, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT ALL THAT HAS BEEN FORECASTED IN RELATION TO OUR FISCAL AFFAIRS SINCE COMING TO OFFICE IN 2012 HAS BEEN ACHIEVED OR SURPASSED. AS USUAL, THE SIDE OPPOSITE AND THE NAYSAYERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS CAN BE DONE BY THIS ADMINISTRATION. HOWEVER, MY COLLEAGUES AND I FULLY BELIEVE THAT WE CAN. WE BELIEVE THIS CAN BE DONE BECAUSE WE HAVE DONE IT BEFORE. POINT. BLANK. PERIOD.

WHEN THE BUDGET COMMUNICATION OF 2007/2008 WAS READ ON MAY 30TH, 2007, THE SIDE OPPOSITE HAD BEEN IN OFFICE LESS THAN ONE MONTH. THE FORMER MEMBER FOR NORTH ABACO, THE RT. HON. HUBERT INGRAHAM, SAID IN THIS PLACE, "IN THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE WE SPECIFICALLY COMMIT TO A "BALANCED BUDGET" FISCAL POLICY. I MAKE THIS COMMITMENT ONCE AGAIN AND FROM 2007/08 WE PLACE OURSELVES ON A COURSE THAT TAKES US TOWARDS MEETING THIS COMMITMENT. THUS, THE 2007/08 BUDGET PROJECTS A PLANNED RECURRENT BUDGET SURPLUS, THE FIRST SUCH PLANNED SURPLUS SINCE THE 2000/01 BUDGET." MR. INGRAHAM ALSO SAID, "THE TOTAL FOR RECURRENT EXPENDITURE IN 2007/08 IS \$1,465 MILLION. RECURRENT REVENUE IS \$1,490 MILLION. THIS MEANS THAT THERE IS A PLANNED RECURRENT BUDGET SURPLUS OF \$25 MILLION." I ASK THE SIDE OPPOSITE, HOW EXACTLY DO THEY THINK THEIR FORMER LEADER WAS ABLE TO MAKE SUCH STATEMENTS. I BELIEVE HE EVEN TALKED ABOUT HAVING SO MUCH " FISCAL HEADROOM" WHEN HE DESCRIBED THE ECONOMY HE INHERITED IN MAY 2007. SO ONCE AGAIN MR. SPEAKER, THROUGH YOU I ASK, HOW DO THE SIDE OPPOSITE THINK THEIR FORMER MAXIMUM LEADER WAS ABLE TO MAKE SUCH STATEMENTS? I CAN TELL YOU HOW, IT'S BECAUSE OF THE STELLAR FISCAL MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY ADMINISTRATION, THAT'S HOW. PLAIN AND SIMPLE. THEY INHERITED A WELL OILED MACHINE IN 2007, WHICH ENABLED THEM TO ADVANCE THE PROGRAMMES CENTRAL GRAND BAHAMA SPOKE OF. BUT WE HAVE TO CONTINUE TO REMIND THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE HOW THEY SQUANDERED THAT INHERITANCE IN FIVE SHORT YEARS. WE MUST REMIND THEM OF WHAT THE FNM LEFT US, WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE IN 2012. EVEN KILLARNEY ADMITTED THEY LEFT THE ECONOMY IN A WHEELCHAIR. GOLDEN GATES ALWAYS TALKS ABOUT THE COOKIE JAR. I SAY THE COOKIE JAR WAS

NOT ONLY LICKED CLEAN, THEY ATE THE JAR TOO! WE HAD TO BORROW, \$600 MILLION DOLLARS IN THE FIRST 6 MONTHS OF OUR ADMINISTRATION JUST TO PAY THE BILLS THEY RACKED UP AND PLACED ON THE BACKS OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. SHAME ON THEM MR. SPEAKER, SHAME ON THEM.

WHILE I AM ASKING QUESTIONS OF THE SIDE OPPOSITE THROUGH YOU MR. SPEAKER, HOW IS IT THAT THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, WHICH THEY LEAD, HAS NOT CALLED FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND BEGGED LEAVE TO CALL FOR 'PEOPLE AND PAPERS' FOR THE 52 WEEKS PROGRAMME WITH THE SAME ZEAL THEY DID FOR THE URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME. I BELIEVE THE WORDS USED IN THE REPORT WERE, "SEVERLY DEFICIENT" AND "VULNERABLE TO FRAUD". IS NOT THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY JUST AS GREAT WHEN IT IS AN FNM INITIATED PROGRAMME IN QUESTION? THEY WERE SO WILLING TO INVESTIGATE AN UNTABLED DOCUMENT WHEN THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A STRIKE AGAINST THE PLP, YET MUMS THE WORD ON A TABLED DOCUMENT FROM THE AUDITOR GENERAL.....INTERESTING TO SAY THE LEAST.

MR SPEAKER

IN THREE SHORT YEARS MR. SPEAKER, THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS ADVANCED NEW EVENTS AND TOURISM PROGRAMMES SUCH AS THE BAHAMAS JUNKANOO CARNIVAL. WHILE SOME REFERRED TO THIS EVENT AS "JUST ONE BIG PARTY", I SEE IT FOR WHAT IT REALLY WAS. IT WAS AN INVESTMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY OF THE COUNTRY IN HOPES THAT A FESTIVAL OF THIS MAGNITUDE WOULD CREATE JOBS AND CAREERS FOR BAHAMIANS IN THE ARTS. IT WAS ALSO AN INVESTMENT IN OUR TOURISM INDUSTRY, AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE A SIGNATURE ANNUAL EVENT WHICH WILL ATTRACT A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO OUR SHORES FOR A GOOD TIME EVERY YEAR. THIS HAS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY BY MANY COUNTRIES THE WORLD OVER, SO MUCH SO THAT OUR OWN PEOPLE TRAVEL FROM PLACE TO PLACE IN THE REGION AND ELSEWHERE TO ATTEND CARNIVALS AND OTHER MUSIC FESTIVALS. IT ONLY MAKES SENSE THAT THE BAHAMAS SHOULD CAPITALIZE ON THE CARNIVAL BRAND TO SHOWCASE OUR CULTURE, OUR MUSIC AND THE CREATIVE TALENT OF OUR PEOPLE. WE HAVE ALSO JUST RECENTLY SUCCESSFULLY HOSTED THE IAAF RELAYS FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW. THIS COUNTRY, OUR LITTLE BAHAMAS, PLAYED HOST TO THE WORLDS BEST ATHLETES INCLUDING THE MAN KNOWN AS THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE, USAIN BOLT. WHILE THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF STADIUMS AROUND THE WORLD THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE MORE PEOPLE OR HAVE MORE AMENITIES, EVERY ONE WANTS TO EXPERIENCE #BAHAMAZING.

MR SPEAKER

IN THREE SHORT YEARS, WE HAVE MADE MAJOR STRIDES AS REGARD CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT. CLIMATE CHANGE IS A MAJOR ISSUE FACING OUR VERY EXISTENCE. I AM SO PROUD AND PLEASED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE IS A STRONG VOICE AND ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE REGION IN THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. WITH SO MUCH TO LOSE MR. SPEAKER, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES LIKE THE BAHAMAS TO BE GLOBAL ADVOCATES ON THIS ISSUE. ENSURING THAT THE DEVELOPED WORLD RAMP UP THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO ASSIST NEGLIBIBLE POLLUTING VULNERABLE ISLAND NATIONS LIKE US IN OUR

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION EFFORTS. THIS IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, IT IS ABOUT SAVING BAHAMIAN LIVES, AS A RISE IN SEA LEVELS OF ONE METRE WILL DESTROY 80% OF THE BAHAMAS.

WITH RESPECT TO OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE, WE HAVE MOVED FAR BEYOND THE DISTRIBUTION OF LIGHT BULBS, BY DEFENCE FORCE OFFICERS. WE HAVE AMENDED EXISTING LAWS TO CREATE THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE RESIDENTIAL ENERGY SELF GENERATION PROGRAMME AND GRID TIE IN FOR ALTERNATIVE ENERGY USERS TO BE ABLE TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR THEIR ENERGY THEY FEED INTO BEC'S GRID. WE HAVE ELIMINATED TARIFFS ON MANY RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVICES TO PROVIDE GREATER ACCESSIBILITY TO OUR PEOPLE AND WE HAVE CONSTRUCTED THE FIRST GREEN BUILDING TO HOUSE A GOVERNMENT MINISTRY OR CORPORATION, THE NEW HEAD OFFICES OF THE BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION.

MR SPEAKER

THE INNOVATION DOES NOT STOP THERE. THE BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL AND MARINE SCIENCE INSTITUTE (BAMSI), EVEN THOUGH IT HAS EXPERIENCED SOME ISSUES, IS WELL ON ITS WAY, ALREADY PRODUCING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FOR SALE IN THE LOCAL BAHAMIAN MARKET. JUST RECENTLY, BAMSI SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH A LEADING LOCAL SUPERMARKET TO SUPPLY IT WITH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. MR. SPEAKER, ANY ATTEMPT TO REDUCE OUR ANNUAL \$1 BILLION DOLLAR FOOD IMPORT BILL IS AN EFFORT WORTH PURSUING. OUR FOOD SECURITY IS FUNDAMENTAL AND I FULLY SUPPORT THAT PROGRAMME.

MR. SPEAKER, I MUST ALSO MENTION THE HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY. THESE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE ATTENDED THIS INSTITUTION FREE OF CHARGE LEAVE THERE WITH MARKETABLE, INTERNATIONALLY CERTIFIED SKILLS WHICH CAN ASSIST THEM IN FINDING GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND HOPEFULLY JUMP START THEIR INTEREST TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION IN THEIR CHOSEN FIELD.

MR. SPEAKER

THESE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE PUZZLE PIECES THAT ARE COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE THE BIG PICTURE WHICH DEPICTS THE BAHAMAS OF THE FUTURE, A STRONGER BAHAMAS. A BAHAMAS FILLED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE WHO WILL SEIZE THEM. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF VISION, THOSE ON THE SIDE OPPOSITE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO READILY RECOGNIZE VISION SO I THOUGHT IT HELPFUL TO DO AS THE GOOD BOOK SAYS AND "WRITE THE VISION AND MAKE IT PLAIN."

MR. SPEAKER

Stronger Bahamas looks to the future, where we can have a safer, more prosperous, and more modern Bahamas. The government launched Stronger Bahamas to open the lines of communication between the government and the people. How can a program designed to solicit feedback from the Bahamian people be propaganda? This characterization is insulting to the Bahamian people. Our government is asking the people what they want and need for a Stronger Bahamas. How can anyone argue with that?

We did our research. We found that Bahamians only felt engaged in nation building and only heard from government during The election campaigns. Well we have changed that now. The government is communicating directly with Bahamians no matter their political stripe and we are listening to the Bahamian people. I ask again, how can anyone argue with this?

MR. SPEAKER,

I NOW TURN TO THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

MR. SPEAKER

SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS IN THE DEHS FOR THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW ARE LINKED TO THE FUNDING PROVIDED IN THE 2014/15 BUDGET. THE BULK WASTE COLLECTION PROGRAMME BEGAN IN JANUARY 2015 AND COVERED ALL CONSTITUENCIES IN NEW PROVIDENCE. PRIVATE CONTRACTORS WERE ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAMME. THE PROGRAMME HAS SUCCESSFULLY REMOVED THOUSANDS OF TONS OF WASTE. THIS EFFORT NOT ONLY CREATES A MORE AESTHETICALLY PLEASING ENVIRONMENT BUT REMOVES RODENT HARBORAGES AND POTENTIAL MOSQUITO BREEDING SITES. THE DEHS HAS BEEN ALLOCATED THE SAME \$140,000.00 THIS YEAR. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE PROGRAMME CAN CONTINUE AND LESSONS OF EFFICIENCY APPLIED SO THAT THE DEHS CAN ACCOMPLISH EVEN MORE THIS YEAR.

THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE IN THIS AREA AND I PUBLICLY INVITE CIVIC GROUPS AND CORPORATE BAHAMAS WHO MAY HAVE AN INTEREST IN HELPING TO KEEP THE BAHAMAS CLEAN TO CONTACT ME AT MY MINISTRY OR ON FACEBOOK TO DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED. THAT IS THE ESSENCE OF STRONGER BAHAMAS. IT IS ABOUT BUILDING A PARTICPATORY DEMOCRACY. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING THE COUNTRY CLEAN, WE ALL HAVE A DUTY AS CITIZENS TO KEEP OUR ENVIRONS CLEAN, THEREFORE CONTRIBUTING TO A SAFER AND STRONGER BAHAMAS.

AS WOULD BE RECALLED THE DERELICT VEHICLE (DISPOSAL) AMENDMENT BILL WAS DEBATED AND PASSED IN THIS PLACE AND AS A RESULT OF THE NEW PROVISIONS OF THIS LEGISLATION, THE DERELICT VEHICLE REMOVAL PROGRAMME HAS REMOVED IN EXCESS OF TWO THOUSAND (2,000) VEHICLES. THESE ARE VEHICLES THAT WOULD HARBOUR RODENTS AND OTHER PEST NOT TO MENTION CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. THIS PROGRAMME WILL CONTINUE THIS YEAR AND HOPEFULLY MORE VEHICLES WILL BE REMOVED FROM OUR STREETS. WE HAVE PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED THE TASK OF IDENTIFYING DERELICT VEHICLES ON OUR STREET. HOWEVER, MR. SPEAKER, THROUGH YOU, I CALL ON ALL CITIZENS TO CALL THE DEHS IF YOU SEE A DERELICT VEHICLE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD THAT SHOULD BE REMOVED. POST A PICTURE OF IT ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE SO WE KNOW WHERE IT IS AND WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE. I AM INVITING ALL OF YOU TO SHOW THE POWER OF THE CITIZEN BY GETTING INVOLVED AND HELPING US TO CARRYOUT OUR MANDATE.

THE NEW DERELICT VEHICLE SITE WILL BE OPENED ON LAND NEXT TO THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL IN THIS BUDGET YEAR AND THE SITE AT MARSHALL ROAD WILL BE CLOSED. THIS WILL BE WELCOMED

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF MARSHALL ROAD, MISTY GARDENS AND THE STUDENTS OF ANATOL RODGERS. IN ADDITION, THE NEW SITE WILL GIVE US THE ADDITIONAL SPALCE TO ENABLE THE DEHS TO REMOVE AND STORE MORE DERELICT VEHICLES.

MR. SPEAKER

WHILE TALKING ABOUT DERELICT VEHICLES, I WANT TO THANK THIS GOVERNMENT FOR BANNING THE IMPORTATION OF WRECKED VEHICLES. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THESE SAME CARS END UP IN THE BUSHES A ND IN OUR LANDFILLS AND DUMPSITES WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. MR. SPEAKER, FOR THOSE WHO MAYBE MISLEADING THE AUTO INDUSTRY, THIS IS NOT TO PREVENT YOU FROM IMPORTING CARS WITH SOME DAMAGE TO BE FIXED. BUT WHERE THE TITLE OF THE CAR IS CERTIFIED TO BE A WRECK YOU CAN'T BRING IT HERE. WE WILL NO LONGER ENDANGER THE LIVES OF OUR CITIZENS BY ALLOWING THEM TO PURCHASE SUCH CARS. I BELIEVE THIS IS A GOOD POLICY AND IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE GREATER PUBLIC GOOD AND WILL HELP TO BUILD A SAFER BAHAMAS ON OUR STREETS.

MR. SPEAKER

WITH REGARD TO SHANTY TOWNS, THE DEHS HAS REMOVED AND DEMOLISHED STRUCTURES IN FAITH AVENUE. OUR SHANTY TOWN REMOVAL PROJECT BEGAN IN 2013, WITH THE RELEASE OF THE SHANTY TOWN REPORT, WHICH HIGHLIGHTED THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGREDATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS OBSERVED BY INSPECTORS OF THE DEHS, WITHIN SHANTY TOWNS AROUND THE COUNTRY. AS I MENTIONED, THE LATEST SHANTY TOWN TO BE CLEARED WAS LOCATED ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF FAITH AVENUE NORTH. THIS TRACT OF LAND IS FIVE ACRES IN SIZE AND HOUSED HUNDREDS OF UNAUTHORIZED STRUCTURES. THIS LAND IS NOW INTENDED TO BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING UNITS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING FOR BAHAMIAN CITIZENS AND THE RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING TITLE TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING IS ON THIS CHAMBER'S AGENDA.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE MEMBER FOR NORTH ELEUTHERA RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE NORTH ELEUTHERA LANDFILL MANAGEMENT CONTRACT YESTERDAY IN HIS PRESENTATION. I ASSURE THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY THE PEOPLE OF NORTH ELEUTHERA THAT NO CONTRACT WAS TAKEN. THE TERM OF THE CONTRACT THAT THE FNM EXECUTED CAME TO AN END. IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARD PROCESSES FOR SUCH CONTRACTS A PUBLICLY TENDERED PROCESS WAS ADVANCED. THE DEHS RECEIVED SEVERAL BIDS FROM BAHAMIAN COMPANIES, THE MATTER WAS REFERRED TO THE TENDERS BOARD AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TENDERS BOARD WAS SUBMITTED TO CABINET. THE LOWEST BIDDER WAS GIVEN THE CONTRACT. IT WAS A FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS. UNLIKE, WHAT THE FNM DID WHEN THEY CAME TO OFFICE IN 2007. THE CONTRACT THE PLP ISSUED EXPIRED, THE FNM PUT THE MATTER TO TENDER. HOWEVER, I AM TOLD, THE FRIENDS, FAMILY OR LOVERS OF THE FNM DID NOT SUBMIT A BID, SO THEY RE-TENDERED THE WHOLE PROCESS. EVEN WHEN THEY DID THAT, THEIR FRIENDS, FAMILY OR LOVERS SUBMITTED A BID, BUT IT WAS NOT THE LOWEST BID. THE LOWEST BIDDER WAS THE COMPANY THAT WAS AWARDED THE CONTRACT IN A FAIR BID PROCESS UNDER THE PLP. HOWEVER, THAT DID NOT MATTER. THEY DISQUALIFIED THE LOWEST BIDDER ON THE BASIS THAT THE CONTRACTOR DID NOT HAVE THE REQUISITE EQUIPMENT, WHEN IT WAS CLEARLY EVIDENCED THAT THE CONTRACTOR HAD THE EQUIPMENT AND INDEED HAD ALL THE REQUISITE EQUIPMENT WHEN IT MANAGED THE SITE FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO THE BID. THEN THEY HAVE THE NERVE TO COME IN HERE AND TALK ABOUT TRANSPARENCY.



MR. SPEAKER, THE MEMBER FOR MONTAGU RAISED THE ISSUE OF GARBAGE COLLECTION IN NEW PROVIDENCE. CLEARLY THE MEMBER IS SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF GARBAGE COLLECTORS YET HE CHOSE TO TRY TO MUDDY THE WATERS AND GIVE THE PERCEPTION THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE. MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE ISSUED COUNTLESS STATEMENTS ADVISING THE PUBLIC THAT WHEN WE CAME TO OFFICE, THE FNM WERE PAYING PRIVATE CONTRACTORS \$5.00 PER HOUSEHOLD TO COLLECT RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE ONCE PER WEEK. WE EXAMINED OUR OWN COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH GARBAGE COLLECTION AND OUR COSTS WERE LESS THAN \$5.00 PER HOUSEHOLD. THEREFORE, BELIEVING THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE SERVICE MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, MY TEAM NEGOTIATED A NEW RATE OF \$2.50 PER HOUSEHOLD. THAT IS WHAT ALL PRIVATE CONTRACTORS ARE BEING PAID AND THE NUMBER OF HOUSES DIFFER FROM CONSTITUENCY TO CONSTITUENCY.

AS FOR THE CONTRACTORS MR. SPEAKER, IN DECEMBER OF 2013 I ISSUED ANOTHER STATEMENT, IDENTIFYING ALL OF THE GARBAGE COLLECTION CONTRACTORS AND DESCRIBING THE COLLECTION ROUTES. THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON MY MINISTRY'S FACEBOOK PAGE. SO I REJECT ANY ASSERTION BEING MADE BY THE SIDE OPPOSITE THAT WE ARE HIDING ANYTHING. GO ONLINE AND READ IT FOR YOURSELF. BUT I AM HAPPY THAT YOU ARE PLEASED WITH THE CURRENT SERVICE BEING PROVIDED. FOR THE CONSITUENCIES OF PINWOOD, NASSAU VILLAGE, ENGLERSTON, BAIN & GRANTS TOWN AND CERTAIN PARTS OF CENTREVILLE, OUR EXAMINATION OF THE AMOUNT OF WASTE RETRIEVED WEEKLY HAS LED US TO CONCLUDE THAT YOUR WASTE NEEDS TO BE COLLECTED TWICE PER WEEK. WE DO NOT HAVE THE FUNDS IN THE 2015/2016 BUDGET TO DO THIS, HOWEVER, I AM HOPING THAT WE CAN FIND THE FISCAL HEADROOM BY THE MID-TERM BUDGET TO INTRODUCE A REVISED PROGRAMME.

MR. SPEAKER,

I BELIEVE THAT A CLEANER BAHAMAS WILL BE A SAFER BAHAMAS AND THUS INEVITABLY LEAD TO A STRONGER BAHAMAS. FOR THOSE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT STRONGER BAHAMAS IS, TAKE NOTE. WE ARE ENSURING THAT EVERY POLICY, EVERY INITIATIVE IS PART OF THE OVERALL PLAN AND VISION OF A SAFER BAHAMAS; A MODERN BAHAMAS AND A PROSPEROUS BAHAMAS. THAT IS WHAT WE ARE WORKING FOR. THAT IS OUR COMMITMENT.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE DEHS WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE SURVEILLANCE UNIT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO PREVENT THE OUTBREAK OF COMMUNICABLE VECTOR BORNE DISEASES AND TO CONTAIN THEIR SPREAD WHEN DISEASES BREAK OUT. THIS INTEGRATED APPROACH WAS EVIDENT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DENGUE AND CHIKUNGUNYA. THE INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO THE CONTROL OF MOSQUITOES WHICH INCLUDE THE LARVICIDE AND ADULTICIDE REGIME, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT SUCCESSFULLY LIMITED THE NUMBER OF CASES OF CHIKUNGUNYA AND DENGUE IN THE BAHAMAS, IN SPITE OF THE WIDESPREAD EPIDEMICS IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION.

MR. SPEAKER

THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THIS PROGRAMME IS CHALLENGED BY RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS WHICH ARISE FROM THE LACK OF ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION IN BOTH NEW PROVIDENCE AND THE FAMILY

ISLANDS. DURING THE LAST BUDGET CYCLE, SOME RELIEF WAS RECEIVED IN THE FAMILY ISLANDS WITH THE ACQUISITION OF A FEW VEHICLES. GREATER IN ROADS MUST BE MADE IN PROVIDING ESSENTIAL TRANSPORTATION FOR FOGGING AND FOR MONITORING OF POTENTIAL PROBLEM SITES DURING THE UPCOMING BUDGET PERIOD. WITH RESPECT TO TRANSPORTATION, PRIVATE TRUCKS WERE RENTED TO FACILITATE FOGGING IN NEW PROVIDENCE, WHICH WAS HELPFUL CONSIDERING THE DEPLETED FLEET OF VECTOR TRUCKS. UNTIL WE GET NEW VEHICLES, WE WILL CONTINUE TO OUTSOURCE CERTAIN ACTIVITIES TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO ENSURE SUSTAINED FOGGING, TREATMENT OF BREEDING SITES AND CONTROL OF ADULT MOSQUITOES THROUGHOUT NEW PROVIDENCE AND THE FAMILY ISLANDS. IT IS NOT AN IDEAL SITUATION FOR MY DEPARTMENT, BUT IS A MORE COST EFFECTIVE SOLUTION.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE DEHS HAS SERVED NOTIFICATION OF AN EMERGING MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASE, (ZIKA VIRUS) WITHIN THE CARIBBEAN, SO OUR MOSQUITO CONTROL PROGRAMME MUST BE INTENSIFIED AND THE NECESSARY RESOURCES PROVIDED TO AFFECT THIS.

OTHER VECTOR CONTROL PROGRAMMES ARE PROCEEDING AT NORMAL PACE IN THE DOWNTOWN, CABLE BEACH AND MONTAGUE BEACH AREAS. TO ENHANCE EFFORTS IN THE CONTROL OF RODENTS IN THE DOWNTOWN ENVIRONS, A WORK TASK FORCE WAS CREATED SPECIFICALLY AND SOLELY TO ADDRESS COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT TREATMENT. I AM ADVISED, THESE FOCUSED ACTIVITIES HAVE RESULTED IN A DECREASE IN THE RODENT POPULATION IN THE SPECIFIED AREAS. I ALSO WISH TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC THAT ON THE 15TH JUNE, 2015 THE DEHS WILL RESUME DISTRIBUTION OF RAT POISON TO RESIDENTIAL HOUSEHOLDS. DISTRIBUTION WILL TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9:30 AM TO 1:00 PM; MONDAY – FRIDAY AT OUR FARRINGTON ROAD COMPLEX.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE DEHS WILL FOCUS ON ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES IN THE 2015/16 PERIOD. THE INDOOR AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAMME WILL BE EXPANDED IN RESPONSE TO THE INCREASED REQUESTS FOR EVALUATION AND COMPLAINTS BEING RECEIVED BY MY MINISTRY.

LAST YEAR, THE DEHS ACQUIRED RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAMILY ISLAND MINI- TRANSFER STATIONS AND DUMPSITES. THIS YEAR, THE DEHS WILL REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DUMPSITES IN VARIOUS FAMILY ISLANDS BY IMPLEMENTING A TRANSFER STATION TO EFFECTIVELY REMOVE WASTE FROM COMMUNITIES DIRECTLY TO THE DESIGNATED SITES. THOSE COMMUNITY DUMPSITES NO LONGER IN USE WILL BE CLOSED. AS FUNDS TO ADDRESS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ARE LIMITED IN THE 2015/2016 BUDGET THERE WILL BE A PHASED APPROACH.

MR. SPEAKER,

THERE IS ONGOING NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. THE ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM WILL BE EXPANDED TO THE FAMILY ISLANDS SO ALL COMMUNITIES RECEIVE RELEVANT INFORMATION REGARDING WASTE MANAGEMENT, PEST MANAGEMENT, WATER SAFETY, CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES. THE FUNDS ALLOCATED IN THE BUDGET WILL FACILITATE THE EXPANSION OF THE PROGRAM TO ALL MAJOR ISLANDS.

MR. SPEAKER,

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE VEHICLES EMISSIONS REGULATIONS IS ONGOING. MARCH 2014. THIS DRAFT BILL WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE REGULATION OF THE EMISSIONS OR SMOKE THAT EMANATES FROM THE VEHICLES THAT WE DRIVE. I AM SURE THAT WE ALL HAVE DRIVEN EITHER NEXT TO OR BEHIND A CAR THAT HAD SO MUCH SMOKE COMING FROM ITS EXHAUST THAT WE DO OUR BEST TO EITHER PASS THE CAR OR LET IT PASS US SO THAT WE COULD BREATHE EASIER. THESE EMISSIONS ARE NOT ONLY HARMFUL TO HUMAN BEINGS BUT THEY ALSO ADD TO OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT. THE DRAFT LEGISLATION SEEKS TO REGULATE THESE EMISSIONS. I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO ADVANCE A PHASED IMPLEMENTED REGIME DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR.

MAINTAINING OUR EDGE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE & CAPACITY BUILDING

MR. SPEAKER,

A RECENT RELEASE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM INDICATED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS OF RECOVERY OF THE OZONE LAYER ESSENTIALLY AS A RESULT OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY MEMBER PARTIES. THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS IS PROUD TO NOTE THAT THE ACTIVE WORK OF THE NATIONAL OZONE UNIT STATIONED WITHIN THE DEHS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THIS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH THE PHASE OUT OF CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CFCS) AND PHASE DOWN OF HYDRO-CHLOROFLUOROCARBON (HCFC) IN THE BAHAMAS.

IN MARCH OF 2015, THE DEHS HOSTED THE 2015 REGIONAL MEETING OF THE CARIBBEAN OZONE OFFICERS NETWORK MEETING. THE REGIONAL MEETINGS OF THE CARIBBEAN OZONE OFFICERS NETWORK SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF NATIONAL OZONE OFFICERS BY IMPROVING THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL AND THE PHASE OUT OF OZONE DEPLETING SUBSTANCES. AS A FOLLOW UP TO THE REGIONAL MEETING, IN APRIL, THE DEHS ATTENDED THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP OF THE PARTIES TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL ON SUBSTANCES THAT DEplete THE OZONE LAYER. AND IN JULY, THE DEHS WILL ATTEND THE THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP OF THE PARTIES TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL ON SUBSTANCES THAT DEplete THE OZONE LAYER IN PARIS, FRANCE

MR. SPEAKER,

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, THE DEHS COMPLETED THE SAICM PROJECT UNDER THE UNEP QUICK START PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH PAN AMERICAN WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. UNDER THIS PROGRAMME DEHS CREATED A NATIONAL INVENTORY OF CHEMICALS (TYPE, LOCATION AND STORAGE), PRODUCED SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS TO ALLOW FOR ADVANCING PROPER MONITORING AND REGULATION, AND ESTABLISHED A TECHNICAL COLLABORATION MECHANISM. IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS, DEHS HELD A NATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ON CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS HELD IN HELD IN NEW PROVIDENCE, GRAND BAHAMA AND MARSH HARBOUR, ABACO, THE BAHAMAS

RENEW BAHAMAS LIMITED

MR. SPEAKER

SINCE THE LAST TIME WE ENGAGED IN THE BUDGET DEBATE, RENEW BAHAMAS HAS TAKEN OVER MANAGEMENT OF THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL. IT IS WIDELY KNOWN THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS IN THE TIMELY COLLECTION OF GARBAGE AND THE FIRE FIGHTING AND OTHER ISSUES AND COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS AT THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL. IN ORDER TO BRING RESOLUTION TO THE MANY ISSUES NEEDING ATTENTION AT THE LANDFILL THE GOVERNMENT MADE THE DECISION TO ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) AFTER MUCH DELIBERATIONS.

THE MOU BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS AND RENEW BAHAMAS, WHICH HAS A TERM OF FIVE YEARS, CALLED FOR RENEW BAHAMAS TO ASSUME ALL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DAY TO DAY RUNNING OF THE LANDFILL. I AM ADVISED, THIS PROVISION ALONE WILL SAVE THE PEOPLE OF THE BAHAMAS OVER \$6 MILLION PER YEAR. THE MOU ALSO CALLED FOR THE REMEDIATION OF THE LANDFILL, THE ADVANCEMENT OF A RECYCLING REGIME AND REPLACEMENT OF THE WEIGH BRIDGES AT THE SITE.

I AM PROUD TO REPORT, MR. SPEAKER THAT RENEW BAHAMAS HAS LIVED UP TO THE AGREEMENT. ON MAY 28TH, 2015 THE PRIME MINISTER COMMISSIONED THE BRAND NEW \$7 MILLION MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY (MRF) AT THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL. THIS FACILITY HAS USHERED THE BAHAMAS INTO A NEW DAY REGARDING WASTE MANAGEMENT, WE ARE NOW A RECYCLING NATION. WHILE THERE HAD BEEN SOME RECYCLING BEING DONE PRIOR TO THIS, THERE WAS NONE AT THIS SCALE AND NOT AT THE PUBLICLY OWNED LANDFILL. MR. SPEAKER THE MRF AT THE LANDFILL IS A 125,000 SQ. FT FACILITY THAT CAN SORT AND PROCESS UP TO 80 TONS OF MATERIAL PER HOUR. THE COMMISSIONING OF THE MRF BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE WAS INDEED A DAY TO BE MARKED IN THE HISTORY OF THE BAHAMAS. IT REPRESENTED ANOTHER SUCCESS IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS. I CAN ALSO REPORT THAT THE PORTION OF THE SITE WHICH HOUSES THE MRF IS PART OF THE 8 EIGHT ACRES OF LANDFILL THAT HAS BEEN REMEDIATED BY RENEW THUS FAR. THIS MARKS ANOTHER MEASURE TO ADVANCE A MODERN BAHAMAS, THEREFORE BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER

THE CONDITION OF DISREPAIR OF THE WEIGH BRIDGES AT THE LANDFILL AND THE PROPER COLLECTION OF TIPPING FEES WAS ALSO AN ISSUE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE MOU WITH RENEW BAHAMAS HAS TACKLED. SINCE THEY HAVE TAKEN OVER THE SITE, THEY HAVE ACQUIRED AND INSTALLED TWO NEW WEIGH BRIDGES WHICH ARE OWNED BY THE GOVERNMENT. WE CAN NOW OBTAIN ACCURATE WEIGHT READING OF VEHICLES OFFLOADING WASTE AT THE LANDFILL. ALL VEHICLES ARE WEIGHED BEFORE AND AFTER OFFLOADING. TO MANAGE THE BILLING AND COLLECTION OF TIPPING FEES, AFTER A FORMAL BID PROCESS, THE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTED A LEADING LOCAL ACCOUNTING FIRM, BAKER TILLY GOMEZ. THIS ARRANGEMENT HAS NOT JUST BROUGHT EFFICIENCY TO THE PROCESS OF BILLING AND COLLECTION OF TIPPING FEES BUT HAS INCREASED TIPPING FEE REVENUES BY 60 TO 70 PERCENT THUS FAR. THIS IS MONEY GOING INTO THE GOVERNMENT'S COFFERS, HELPING US TO BUILD A MODERN BAHAMAS IN RELATION TO WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NEW PROVIDENCE.

MR. SPEAKER

WHILE THE PRIVATE MANAGEMENT TAKE OVER OF THE LANDFILL WAS NOT WITHOUT PUBLIC COMMENTARY, IT HAS PROVEN TO BE A SOUND DECISION WHICH HAS NOT ONLY SAVED MONEY FOR THE PUBLIC PURSE, IT HAS FACILITATED THE INCREASE IN REVENUE. TIPPING FEE REVENUE HAS INCREASED AND THE GOVERNMENT SHARES IN THE RECYCLATE REVENUE. SO WE SAVED OVER \$6 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, INCREASED TIPPING FEE REVENUE FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND ESTABLISHED A NEW RECYCLATE REVENUE STREAM FOR THE PUBLIC PURSE. THAT IS DEVELOPING A STRONGER BAHAMAS, MR. SPEAKER.

RENEW ANTICIPATES THAT 6-8 CONTAINERS PER DAY, FILLED WITH RECYCLATES WILL BE EXPORTED FROM THE NEW PROVIDENCE MRF. WE HOPE THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL AND INCREASE THE GOVERNMENT'S REVENUE. THIS AGREEMENT HAS ALSO BENEFITED BAHAMIANS DIRECTLY THROUGH THE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT OF MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND MORE JOBS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN SHORT ORDER. THESE ARE GREEN JOBS, MR. SPEAKER, JOBS WHICH HELP THE ENVIRONMENT. APPROXIMATELY 80 JOBS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CREATED AND RENEW WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER TO 130 IN A PHASED APPROACH.

MR. SPEAKER

NOTING THE SUCCESS OF RENEW BAHAMAS WE ARE NOW EXAMINING THE PROSPECT OF IMPLEMENTING SIMILAR AGREEMENTS FOR LANDFILLS IN OUR FAMILY ISLANDS.

MR. SPEAKER, THIS BUDGET YEAR WE WILL SEEK TO CREATE A PROPER SYSTEM FOR THE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF GREEN WASTE AND WE ALSO WILL PROMOTE THE USE OF BAHAMAS WASTE'S MEDICAL WASTE FACILITY BY THE MEDICAL INDUSTRY TO AVOID MEDICAL WASTE GOING INTO LANDFILLS AND OUR DUMPSITES.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING  
THE ENVIRONMENT

MR. SPEAKER, THE EARTH IS OUR HOME. AS MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, I HAVE TO BE SURE THAT OUR ACTIVITIES DO NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. OUR LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM, THE WELL-BEING OF HUMANITY AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ECONOMY, ULTIMATELY DEPEND UPON THE RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF THE NATION'S NATURAL RESOURCES. LIVING SUSTAINABLY IS ABOUT DOING MORE AND BETTER WITH LESS. THE MOST PROMISING STRATEGY FOR ENSURING A HEALTHY FUTURE, MR. SPEAKER, IS THAT WE LIVE WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES; TAKING A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

NATURAL RESOURCES

MR. SPEAKER

I HAVE SPOKEN PUBLICLY IN THIS PLACE AND IN OTHER VENUES ABOUT MY BELIEF THAT THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE SHOULD RECEIVE FAIR COMPENSATION FOR THE HARVESTING OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. THIS PAST YEAR I HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO CREATE A NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT WITHIN MY MINISTRY. MY PHILOSOPHY IS THAT WE MUST KNOW WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO DEVELOP IT IN A SUSTAINABLE FASHION. THIS IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE. THE BAHAMAS IS NOT JUST A COUNTRY OF SUN, SAND AND SEA, THOSE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE NATURAL COMMODITIES WHICH WE CAN TRADE AND BUILD UPON. PRESENTLY THE EFFORTS OF THIS UNIT IS HEADED BY DR. RHIANNA NEELY, A YOUNG , DYNAMIC AND STRONG BAHAMIAN WOMAN WHO HOLDS A PH.D IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE. SHE IS BEING ASSISTED BY MS. LARRISSA FERGUSON WHO HOLDS A MASTER'S DEGREE IN NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT. THESE ARE YOUNG, BRILLIANT BAHAMIANS, MR. SPEAKER. SOON THAT TEAM WILL BE JOINED BY MR. ARTHUR ROLLE, THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF METEROLOGY AND AN EXPERT IN CLIMATE CHANGE, WHO IS HIGHLY RESPECTED IN THE REGION AND THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK. HE WILL BE ENGAGED AS A CONSULTANT AND WORK CLOSELY WITH THE TEAM AND PASS ON INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO THEM.

MR. SPEAKER

MY AIM FOR THIS UNIT IS THAT IT WILL BECOME THE HUB FOR ALL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH DONE WITHIN MY MINISTRY TO OBTAIN AND RETAIN ALL RESEARCH INFORMATION ON THE NATURAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE BORDERS OF THIS COUNTRY AND HOW THEY CAN BE DEVELOPED AND OR TRADED TO THE BENEFIT OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. I ALSO EXPECT THAT THIS UNIT WILL BE ABLE TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE GRANTING OF LICENSES FOR THE HARVESTING OF MINERALS, PLANTS, MARINE LIFE AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES WITHIN OUR COUNTRY. MANY RESEARCHERS COME TO OUR SHORES AND ARE GRANTED PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH WHETHER IT BE IN OUR WATERS OR IN RELATION TO THE PLANT LIFE IN THE BAHAMAS. WE MUST BE ABLE TO USE THIS RESEARCH FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COUNTRY, WE MUST KNOW WHAT WE HAVE AND PROTECT OUR INTERESTS IN OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. MODERNISING OUR LAWS AND BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER

THUS FAR THE LIMITED PERSONNEL WITHIN THIS UNIT HAS ALSO BEEN ABLE TO COORDINATE OUR RELATIONS WITH THE CARBON WAR ROOM AND INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY IN REGARD TO THEIR PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT EFFORTS. THEY ALSO PROVIDED ASSISTANCE WITH MY MINISTRY'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESIDENTIAL ENERGY SELF GENERATION PROGRAMME AND THE RECENT AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE ELECTRICITY ACT.

I AM HOPEFUL THAT IN SHORT ORDER WE CAN ADD MORE STAFF TO THIS UNIT AND FORMALIZE ITS ORGANIZATION WITHIN MY MINISTRY. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE EXPERTISE THAT A UNIT OF THIS NATURE CAN PROVIDE OUR COUNTRY IS GREATLY NEEDED.

THE BEST COMMISSION

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BEST COMMISSION MANAGES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS AND REVIEWS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EIAS) AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLANS (EMPS) FOR INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE BAHAMAS.

AT THE END OF MAY , THE BEST COMMISSION RELOCATED TO THE FIRST FLOOR OF CHARLOTTE HOUSE SO THERE IS GREATER ACCESSIBILITY FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH MY MINISTRY ON THE MATTERS UNDER ITS PURVIEW.

PROJECTS FOR THE BEST COMMISSION: -

DURING THE 2014-15 FISCAL PERIOD, BEST WORKED ON PROJECTS UNDER MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS, WHICH ARE PROJECTS SPONSORED AND/OR CO-FINANCED BY UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MEA SUCH AS UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITIES (GEF).

MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (MEAS)

MR. SPEAKER,

IN JANUARY 2014, A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A CLIMATE RISK RESILIENT COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM WAS LAUNCHED. THIS PROJECT AIMS TO STRENGTHEN CAPACITY FOR THE PHASED ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLIMATE RISK-RESILIENT INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM) PROGRAM IN THE BAHAMAS. THE PROJECT AIMS AT OPTIMIZING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COASTAL ZONE TO NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING RESILIENCE TO COASTAL HAZARDS INCLUDING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH ICZM. AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION INCLUDE AREAS WHERE EXISTING OR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT IS AT HIGH RISK TO NATURAL DISASTERS, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND/OR SEA LEVEL RISE; THOSE REQUIRING COASTAL STABILIZATION TO REDUCE BEACH EROSION, WORKS TO REDUCE COASTAL FLOODING; AREAS IDENTIFIED AS A PRIORITY FOR NATIONAL PUBLIC INVESTMENT THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK; THOSE WITH HIGH ECOSYSTEM SERVICES VALUE (EG. MANGROVES, WETLANDS, CORAL REEFS).

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A RISK-BASED ICZM APPROACH WILL ALSO ASSIST THE COUNTRY IN MEETING THE DEVELOPMENT TARGET OF 20% CONSERVATION OF THE NEAR SHORE ENVIRONMENT BY 2020.

GEF FULL SIZE PROJECT ON MARINE PROTECTED AREAS 4 YEAR PROJECT (2009-2013)

MR. SPEAKER,

MY MINISTRY IS ALSO WORKING TO COMPLETE THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE, A REGIONAL INITIATIVE THAT AIMS TO MEET THE GOALS OF THE ESTABLISHING 20% OF COASTAL AND MARINE HABITATS AS PROTECTED AREAS BY 2020. THIS WILL EXPAND THE PROTECTED AREA OF GLOBALLY SIGNIFICANT MARINE BIODIVERSITY AND INCREASE THE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK ACROSS THE BAHAMIAN ARCHIPELAGO. THE CHALLENGE AIMS TO RAISE

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION. IN 2014, THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT PLEDGED \$2 MILLION DOLLARS TOWARDS THIS PROJECT.

THE GEF FULL SIZE PROJECT WAS GRANTED AN EXTENSION UNTIL AUGUST 2015. IT ALSO AIMS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE FINANCING MECHANISM TO BE PUT IN PLACE AS A RESULT OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE BAHAMAS PROTECTED AREAS FUND (BPAF) TO SUPPORT OUR PROTECTED AREAS IN PERPETUITY.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS PROTECTED AREA FUND (BPAF) ACT WAS UNANIMOUSLY PASSED IN BOTH CHAMBERS. THE BPAF'S OBJECTIVE IS "TO PROVIDE A LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING INTO PERPETUITY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS IN THE BAHAMAS."

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE BPAF HAS BEEN APPOINTED AND A WORKSHOP FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WAS CONDUCTED BY BEST AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY ON MARCH 18-19, 2015 AT THE MANGROVE CAY CONFERENCE ROOM BEACH TOWERS, ATLANTIS, PARADISE ISLAND. THE BPAF BOARD IS CHAIRED BY MS. LOUREY SMITH, A WELL RESPECTED ATTORNEY AND PARTNER AT THE FIRM OF MCKINNEY BANCROFT & HUGHES; WITH THE FOLLOWING PERSONS SITTING AS MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

1. GEORGE MAILLIS
2. LISA BENJAMIN
3. ELEANOR PHILLIPS
4. KAREN PATON
5. CASUARINA LAMBERT-MCKINNEY
6. GAIL LOCKHART-CHARLES
7. MICHAEL ALBURY
8. KEOD SMITH
9. JASON PINDER; AND
10. CHANTEL BETHEL.

MR. SPEAKER, LAST YEAR I SPOKE AT THE OCEAN'S SUMMIT HOSTED BY SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY, IN WASHINGTON D.C.

MR. TED WAITT OF THE WAITT FOUNDATION, A WEALTHY PHILANTHROPIST WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT PROTECTING MARINE ENVIRONMENTS ALSO ATTENDED. AFTER I SPOKE, MR. WAITT CAME UP TO ME AND TOLD ME HOW INSPIRED HE WAS AFTER HEARING MY CONTRIBUTION. KNOWING ABOUT HIS WORK WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND HIS PREVIOUS WORK IN THE BAHAMAS, I ENCOURAGED MR. WAITT TO MATCH THE \$2 MILLION DOLLARS THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT WAS INVESTING TO CAPITALISE BPAF. MR. SPEAKER, LAST MONTH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WAITT FOUNDATION APPROVED MY REQUEST AND ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE. THEY WILL PROVIDE A MATCHING CONTRIBUTION OF \$ 2 MILLION DOLLARS, WHICH CAN BE USED FOR OPERATIONAL COSTS OF BPAF. WITH THE \$5 MILLION ALREADY COMMITTED FROM THE CARIBBEAN BIO-DIVERSITY FUND, THIS BRINGS PLEDGED CONTRIBUTIONS UP TO \$9 MILLION. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE



BOARD OF BPAF TO RAISE MORE FUNDS TO ASSIST WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK.

MAINTAINING AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

MR. SPEAKER,

AT THE END OF THIS YEAR, ME AND OFFICERS WITHIN MY MINISTRY WILL TRAVEL TO PARIS, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND RELATED MEETINGS. SEVERAL OF MY TECHNICAL OFFICERS HOLD POSITIONS ON VARIOUS RECOGNIZED BODIES WITHIN THE UNFCCC AND WILL BE TRAVELLING TO PREPARATORY MEETINGS AND OTHER MEETINGS OF THE UNFCCC THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE BAHAMAS IS PRESENT DURING MEETINGS OF THE UNFCCC, PREPARATORY MEETINGS AND THE COP-21, AS CLIMATE CHANGE IS A GREAT THREAT TO THE BAHAMAS, BAHAMIANS AND OUR WAY OF LIFE.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION DRAFT BILL

MR. SPEAKER

THE RECENT GAS LEAK AT THE RUBIS ROBINSON ROAD STATION IS WIDELY KNOWN. ON SATURDAY, 19TH, JANUARY 2013, THE RETAILER AT RUBIS ROBINSON ROAD SERVICE STATION REPORTED TO AN OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS) THAT THE STATION HAD FUEL OIL LOSSES AT DISPENSER 5 AND 6. OFFICIALS OF THE ENVIRONMENT MONITORING RISK ASSESSMENT DIVISION (EMRAD) OF THE DEHS WENT TO THE SITE FOR AN INSPECTION, ON 21ST JANUARY, 2013, THE FIRST BUSINESS DAY AFTER THE SPILL WAS MADE KNOWN TO EMRAD. DISPENSER 5 AND 6 WERE REPAIRED AND THE LINES PRESSURE TESTED BY QUICK WELDING, A LOCAL BAHAMIAN COMPANY, AND CERTIFIED BY THE VOLATILE SUBSTANCES UNIT OF THE MINISTRY OF WORKS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT. ON 23RD, JANUARY, 2013, BAYCHEM SPILL TECHNOLOGY LIMITED, A LOCAL BAHAMIAN COMPANY AND ENGINEERS AND CONSULTANTS LIMITED (ECL), ANOTHER BAHAMIAN COMPANY WERE ALSO ENGAGED ON THIS MATTER. THEREFORE TWO (2) DAYS AFTER THE SPILL WAS KNOWN TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THE SOURCE OF THE LEAK WAS REPAIRED AND THE GOVERNMENT MOVED IMMEDIATELY TO ENSURE REMEDIATION EFFORTS BEGAN.

MR. SPEAKER, IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT ON THE 8TH MARCH, 2013 DEHS ISSUED LETTERS TO THE RESIDENTS OF MARATHON, ADVISING THEM OF THE INCIDENT AND INFORMING THEM THAT TESTING WOULD BE ADVANCED.

MR. SPEAKER

WHILE THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK FOR THE BLACK AND VEATCH REPORT TO BE RELEASED IS REGRETABLE, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL HAS ALREADY APOLOGISED TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE FOR THAT ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

MR. SPEAKER, IT IS WORTH STRESSING THE FACT THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THE DELAY IN ISSUING THE REPORT TO THE PUBLIC, THE GOVERNMENT ENSURED THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE

REPORT WERE FOLLOWED AND IMPOSED THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS ON RUBIS AFTER CABINET APPROVED THEM. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO ENGAGED THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION (PAHO) FOR ASSISTANCE.

MR. SPEAKER, HOMES IN THE AFFECTED AREA WERE CONNECTED TO 'CITY WATER' OR WATER PROVIDED BY THE WATER AND SEWERAGE CORPORATION ON THE 8TH FEBRUARY, 2013, THUS DISCONNECTING THOSE HOMES FROM WELLS. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS AND THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT IS THE ARRIVAL OF TOXICOLOGIST, DR. RIK VAN DE WEERDT TO CONSULT ON THE ISSUE.

MR. SPEAKER

I HAVE SAID BEFORE AND I SAY AGAIN, THE RESIDENTS OF MARATHON DESERVE OUR COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING. IT IS SAD, THAT THE SIDE OPPOSITE WOULD CHOOSE TO USE A SITUATION SUCH AS THIS FOR CHEAP POLITICAL POINTS.

YOU SEE MR. SPEAKER, WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THE RESIDENTS IN THE AFFECTED AREA, LIKE I HAVE, YOU UNDERSTAND THEIR ANGER AND ANXIETY. WHILE THEY ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE RECENT GAS LEAK, THE ROOT OF THEIR ANGER IS THE FACT THAT IN 1993 THERE WAS A MAJOR LEAK AT THE VERY SAME STATION AND THE THEN GOVERNMENT DID NOTHING. N.O.T.H.I.N.G.

SO WHEN NORTH ELEUTHERA STANDS IN HERE AND TALKS ABOUT A 14 MONTHS DELAY IN RELEASING THE REPORT YOU HAVE TO PUT INTO CONTEXT.... WHAT THE FNM DID IN CONTRAST TO THIS ADMINISTRATION, WHEN FACED WITH THE SAME ISSUE.

MR. SPEAKER, WHEN YOU READ THE B&V REPORT, YOU READ THE TESTIMONY OF RESIDENTS WHO SPEAK OF A MAJOR GAS LEAK AT THE STATION IN THE 1990S. THEREFORE, THE MEMBERS FOR NORTH ELEUTHERA AND MONTAGUE SHOULD AT LEAST BE RELIEVED TO NOTE THAT THEY CAN CRITICISE US ABOUT HOW WE ACTED AND WHEN WE ACTED, AS THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS WE ACTED....THEY DID NOT.

UNDER THEIR WATCH THEY DID NOTHING. SAMPLES WERE TAKEN FROM THE RESIDENTS' HOMES. THEY FOUND GAS IN THEIR WELLS AND IN THE GROUND. DID THEY DECOMMISSION THE WELLS?...NO! DID THEY REMEDIATE THE PROPERTIES?... NO! DID THEY CONNECT THE RESIDENTS TO WATER AND SEWERAGE AND CAUSE TEXACO TO PAY FOR IT? NO! DID THEY COMMISSION AN INDEPENDENT REPORT? NO! DID THEY UNDERTAKE PUBLIC HEALTH SCREENINGS? NO!

SO MR. SPEAKER, TWO DAYS AFTER BEING INFORMED OF THE GAS LEAK, THIS GOVERNMENT ACTED. 20 YEARS AFTER A GAS LEAK WAS KNOWN TO THEM, IT IS THIS GOVERNMENT WHO IS ALSO ACTING FOR THOSE RESIDENTS IMPACTED THEN. WE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORICAL SPILL UNTIL WE RECEIVED THE B&V REPORT. BUT THEY KNEW! THEY KNEW AND DID ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!

MR. SPEAKER, THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT AFRAID TO TAKE ON THE BIG ISSUES. WE WILL NOT SWEEP THEM UNDER THE CARPET. WE WILL FACE THEM HEAD ON AND IN THE PROCESS ADVANCE A SAFER, MODERN, PROSPEROUS AND STRONGER BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER

ANOTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MISHAP HAPPENED IN OCTOBER 2014, THE BEC CLIFTON POWER PLANT ALSO EXPERIENCED AN OIL LEAK. OBVIOUSLY THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST OCCURENCE OF A LEAK AT CLIFTON. THIS HAS BEEN HAPPENING FROM TIME TO TIME FOR WELL OVER FORTY YEARS.

MR. SPEAKER

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF COASTAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL INC, TO ASSIST US WITH ADVANCING A CONTAINMENT AND REMEDIATION PLAN FOR THE CLIFTON PLANT. I AM ADVISED THAT BEC, AT NO COST TO IT OR THE GOVERNMENT, ENTERED INTO ARRANGEMENTS WITH CRADON ENERGY TO REMOVE WASTE OIL FROM THEIR TANKS AND HOLDING BASINS. THIS WAS A SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION IN THE GROUND AND IS BEING ADDRESSED. MORGAN OIL OF GRAND BAHAMA IS ALSO COMPLETING A COMPREHENSIVE BOOM CONTAINMENT PLAN, WHICH ONCE APPROVED BY THE MINISTRIES OF TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, WORKS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND BEC WILL BE EXECUTED. THIS WILL PROVIDE MUCH NEEDED RELIEF TO CLIFTON HERITAGE PARK; THE BREEF SCULPTURE GARDEN; STUART COVE AND ALBANY. ON A PARALLEL COURSE, THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, THE BEST COMMISSION, COASTAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL, MORGAN OIL AND BEC WILL DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE REMEDIATION PLAN FOR THE PLANT. A PART OF THAT REMEDIATION PLAN WILL INCLUDE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CONTAINMENT WALL TO PREVENT OIL SEEPING INTO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT. MR. SPEAKER, FOR THE FIVE YEARS BETWEEN 2007-2012 THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION DID NOTHING TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE. BUT THAT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING. IF A HELICOPTER RIDE IS NOT INVOLVED, THEY HAVE NO INCENTIVE TO ACT!

MR. SPEAKER

THE PROBLEMS AT BEC, STARTED BEFORE I WAS BORN, BUT THIS NEW GENERATION, SON OF A BEC METER READER, IS WORKING TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE. THE PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS, ARE EQUALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT RESOLVING THIS MATTER AND WE WILL FIX IT!

MR SPEAKER

I DRAW REFERENCE TO THESE SITUATIONS TO UNDERSCORE THE NEED FOR A CENTRALIZED DEPARTMENT TO ADVANCE OUR OWN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS AND PROTOCOLS. PRESENTLY WE LOOK TO OTHER JURISDICTIONS FOR GUIDANCE AS TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF EXPOSURE TO CERTAIN CHEMICALS. WE HAVE THE TALENT RIGHT HERE AND WHERE WE ARE LACKING WE MUST ENSURE THAT WE PROCURE THE EXPERTISE THAT WE NEED TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS AND PROTOCOLS FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR OWN ENVIRONMENT.

MR. SPEAKER

IN EARLY MAY 2015, I RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC A COPY OF THE DRAFT BILL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION FOR COMMENTARY. IT IS

ENVISAGED THAT THIS DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE SUPERVISION OVER A NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES INCLUSIVE OF THE FOLLOWING:

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION STANDARDS

REGULATIONS FOR THE DISCHARGE OF WASTE AT SEA

ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY PROGRAMME

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION, RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION WILL ALSO CONSOLIDATE ALL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND PLANNING MEASURES IN ONE PLACE TO ENSURE TIMELY RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES AND EMERGENCIES.

MR. SPEAKER

PART OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION WILL BE TO FOSTER RELATIONS WITH THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY AS REGARD THE VARIOUS FREEPORT BYE-LAWS. THE REVISED FREEPORT BYE-LAWS WILL BE ADVANCED TOGETHER WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION BILL.

MR. SPEAKER

WE ALSO INTEND FOR THE DOWNSTREAM PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, I.E. OUR GAS STATIONS, TO BE REGULATED UNDER THIS DEPARTMENT. THIS MEANS THAT ALL GAS STATIONS WILL HAVE STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS WHICH MUST BE ADHERED TO IN THE INTEREST OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. HOPEFULLY, INCIDENTS LIKE THE ONE AT RUBIS ROBINSON ROAD AND OTHER STATIONS WILL NOT OCCUR IN THE FUTURE. THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT MET WITH MY PERMANENT SECRETARY THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS THE PREPARATION OF SUCH REGULATIONS.

MR. SPEAKER

I FULLY INTEND TO CONSIDER THE SUGGESTIONS OF THOSE WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO PROVIDE COMMENTARY ON THE DRAFT. I ALSO INTEND TO ADVANCE THIS BILL IN CABINET WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING THIS LEGISLATION TO THIS PLACE FOR DEBATE.

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST MANAGES 32 NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS FOR THE NATION. ITS NATIONAL PARK AND PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT IS SUPPORTED BY SCIENCE, COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.

FUNDING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

IN 2014/15 , THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS SUPPORTED THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM WITH A SUBVENTION OF \$1 MILLION DOLLARS. THIS WAS EXPENDED ON KEY STAFF AND SUPPLEMENTS

FUNDING FOR NATIONAL PARK INFRASTRUCTURE, MAINTENANCE AND EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES. THIS YEAR WE INCREASE THE SUBVENTION FOR THE BNT.

MR. SPEAKER

AMENDMENT TO THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST ACT:

I HAVE MET WITH THE BNT OFFICERS AND ADMINISTRATION AND WILL BE MOVING FORWARD WITH THE REQUESTED AMENDMENTS TO THE ACT WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE OF THE ORGANIZATION INTO THE FUTURE. THE BNT IS ALSO CONTEMPLATING A REVIEW OF THE ENTIRE ACT, TO DETERMINE WHAT OTHER CHANGES (IF ANY) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

NATIONAL PARKS

IN APRIL OF 2015 FIVE NEW NATIONAL PARKS WERE ANNOUNCED ON THE ISLAND OF SAN SALVADOR. THE PUBLIC OUTREACH COORDINATED BY THE BNT WAS SUPPORTED BY A GRANT FROM THE CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND. THE BNT AND MY MINISTRY LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE SAN SALVADOR LIVING JEWELS, TO INTRODUCE MANAGEMENT TO THESE NEW PROTECTED AREAS. MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT AS SEABIRD NESTING CAYS, IGUANA HABITAT, AND MARINE NURSERIES FOR CONCH, CRAWFISH AND GROUPER AND SPECTACULAR MARINE AREAS WITH CORAL REEFS ARE IMPORTANT AS DIVE SITES FOR VISITORS TO SAN SALVADOR.

HARROLD AND WILSON PONDS NATIONAL PARK CONTINUES TO PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR THE BNT. DAMAGE FROM THE INVASIVE CATTAILS HAS DAMAGED THE BOARDWALKS AND EXTENSIVE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE ARE NECESSARY FOR THIS PARK OVER THE NEXT YEAR. VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FOR THE REMOVAL OF THIS INVASIVE SPECIES CONTINUES TO BE HIGH, BUT THE BNT WILL BE DEVELOPING A LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THIS PARK.

THE BNT HAS DEVELOPED A CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR THE RAND NATURE CENTRE IN GRAND BAHAMA. THE PLAN WHEN IMPLEMENTED WILL TRANSFORM THE NATURE CENTRE INTO A TOP DESTINATION FOR TOURISTS ON GRAND BAHAMA, AND ALSO SERVE AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR THOUSANDS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN ON GRAND BAHAMA

THE AUDUBON SHOREBIRD CONSERVATION PROJECT:

MR. SPEAKER

THE BNT CONTINUES TO WORK WITH ITS PARTNERS NATIONAL AUDUBON TO MONITOR SHOREBIRDS IN THE BAHAMAS. AUDUBON SCIENTISTS AND BNT WARDENS CONTINUE TO MONITOR AND BAND PIPING PLOVERS ON ANDROS , THE BERRY ISLANDS AND THIS YEAR THE FIELD SEASON INCLUDED WORKING ON THE ISLAND OF ABACO. THE PROJECT CONTINUES TO WORK WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TO IDENTIFY SHOREBIRDS ON THE ISLAND OF ANDROS.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

MR. SPEAKER

THE BNT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT THROUGH SPECIAL WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS TO VARIED SCHOOL, CHURCH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS CONTINUES TO ENGAGE PEOPLE IN BNT PRESENTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES. FOR THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2015 TO DATE, BNT'S EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH HAS IMPACTED 7,143 PERSONS – 60 EDUCATORS, 3685 STUDENTS AND 3782 ADULTS.

#### BNT DISCOVERY CLUB

BNT'S DISCOVERY CLUB IS BEING IMPLEMENTED AT 60 LOCATIONS AROUND THE BAHAMAS. THIS INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME BENEFITS OVER 1000 YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE AGES OF 6 – 21. THE BNT THROUGH A SPECIAL GRANT FROM THE ATLANTIS FOUNDATION IS IMPLEMENTING THE NAVIGATORS PROGRAMME I- THE THIRD LEVEL OF DISCOVERY CLUB . THE NAVIGATORS LEVEL IS MORE RESEARCH BASED, TARGETING YOUNG PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF FOURTEEN AND TWENTY-FIVE. ACTIVITIES AT THIS LEVEL ARE DESIGNED TO EQUIP THE PARTICIPANTS WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THAT WILL PREPARE THEM FOR COLLEGE LEVEL STUDIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE OR ECO- TOURISM BASED ACTIVITIES. THIS YEAR 15 MEMBERS OF THE NAVIGATOR'S PROGRAMME SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THEIR PADI SCUBA OPEN WATER DIVER COURSE.

THE BNT DISCOVERY CLUB PROGRAMME IS CELEBRATING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR. A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN PLANNED IN CELEBRATION OF THE EVENT.

#### PROJECTS

MR. SPEAKER,

I NOW TURN TO HIGHLIGHT TWO BNT PROJECTS

#### AUDUBON NATURE TOURISM INITIATIVE

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST AND NATIONAL AUDUBON RECENTLY SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED PARTNERSHIP AND TO FACILITATE AN EASIER WORKING RELATIONSHIP. AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THIS WORK OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BE THE JOINT EXECUTION OF THE IDB-FUNDED AUDUBON AND MULTILATERAL INVESTMENT FUND (MIF) \$2.6 MILLION NATURE TOURISM PROJECT. AUDUBON HAS SECURED THIS FUNDING TO ACHIEVE NICHE, HIGH-VALUE SUSTAINABLE BIRDING TOURISM PROGRAMMES IN THE AMERICAS. THIS NOVEL REGIONAL PROGRAM USES BIRD-WATCHING AND WE ARE EXCITED BY THEIR COMMITMENT AND ENTHUSIASM. THE BNT IS BEING SUPPORTED IN THE TRAINING BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND THEIR ENTREPRENEURIAL AND BAHAMAHOST TRAINING COURSES WILL BEGIN IN THE NEXT TRAINING CYCLE. ON ANDROS, THE PROJECT WILL ENGAGE GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THIS SUMMER, IN ORDER TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE JOBS IN COMMUNITIES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES. PROJECT LOCATIONS INCLUDE BELIZE, GUATEMALA, PARAGUAY AND THE BAHAMAS. ANDROS AND INAGUA ARE THE ISLANDS SELECTED IN THE BAHAMAS FOR THIS PROJECT.

THE PROJECT IS WELL UNDERWAY AND THE FIRST ROUND OF TRAINING IS NEARLY COMPLETED. OVER 60 PERSONS ON ANDROS AND INAGUA HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY.

#### REVERSING THE DECLINE PROJECT: FOCUS CORAL REEFS

THE BNT IN COLLABORATION WITH DR. CRAIG DAHLGREN SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL FOR A POSSIBLE 10-YEAR PROJECT ON CORAL REEFS. THE BNT WAS SUCCESSFUL IN RECEIVING \$250,000/YEAR FOR A POSSIBLE 10-YEARS. THE PROJECT IS SET TO BE A NATIONALLY IMPORTANT PROJECT PULLING IN SEVERAL LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS, WITH THE BNT TAKING THE LEAD ROLE. THIS PROJECT FOCUSES ON CORAL REEFS AND CONSISTS OF SEVERAL COMPONENTS INCLUDING RESEARCH AND MONITORING, CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND POLICY.

MR. SPEAKER, THE BNT DOES AMAZING WORK FOR THE BAHAMAS AND BAHAMIANS. THEIR PARKS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE. THE PRESIDENT, MR. LARRY GLINTON HAS TOLD ME THAT HE WANTS ALL PARKS TO BE RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR INVOLVMENT AND USE. WITH THAT IN MIND MR. SPEAKER, I INVITE ALL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND THOSE WHO HEAR ME MY VOICE TO JOIN THE BNT AND GIVE THEM YOUR FULL SUPPORT.

#### THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

MR. SPEAKER,  
DURING THE LAST FISCAL PERIOD, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC) CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING AS IT RELATES TO ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF PROTECTING 20% OF THE NEAR SHORE ENVIRONMENT OF THE BAHAMAS BY THE YEAR 2020. THE FOLLOWING WAS ACCOMPLISHED:

#### MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) CAMPAIGN

IN EARLY 2014 THE CONSERVANCY BEGAN PLANNING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CAMPAIGN TO BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR MPAS AND THE EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM. THE CONSERVANCY DESIGNED AND COMPLETED PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH THAT DOCUMENTED STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TAKING FURTHER ACTION TO PROTECT THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, SUCH AS THE CREATION OF MARINE MANAGED AREAS.

#### MPA WHITE PAPER

IN FEBRUARY OF 2015, TNC PROVIDED THE LOGISTICS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION TO OBTAIN FEEDBACK ON THE PROPOSED MARINE AREAS OUTLINED IN THE WHITE PAPER. THE CONSERVANCY WAS ALSO A PART OF A GROUP OF PARTNERS UNDER THE GEF-FSP MPA PROJECT THAT CIRCULATED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED AREAS TO ALL FAMILY ISLANDS FOR FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC.

#### SCIENTIFIC TRAINING FOR NEW BAHAMIAN RESEARCHERS

IN FEBRUARY OF 2015, THE CONSERVANCY CO-SPONSORED TRAINING FOR 23 YOUNG BAHAMIANS IN THE ATLANTIC AND GULF RAPID REEF ASSESSMENT (AGRRA) METHODS WHICH ARE USED TO MONITOR THE HEALTH STATUS OF CORAL AND FISH COMMUNITIES.

#### SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO ANDROS BARRIER REEF

IN MARCH OF 2015 THE CONSERVANCY SPONSORED A TEAM LED BY DR. CRAIG DAHLGREN TO STUDY

THE ANDROS BARRIER REEF AND SITES WITHIN THE NORTH AND SOUTH MARINE NATIONAL PARKS. THE TEAM OF RESEARCHERS FOCUSED ON DETERMINING THE HEALTH AND STATUS OF THE BARRIER REEF WITH THE AIM OF EVENTUALLY MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTRY REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT AND ZONING OF THE REEF.

GIS SUPPORT  
MR. SPEAKER

THE CONSERVANCY HAS PROVIDED GIS SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TO OTHER NGOS BY DEVELOPING VARIOUS MAPS THAT SHOW PROPOSED MPAS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES  
MR. SPEAKER,

ATTENDANCE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL ENVIRONMENTALIST AS THIS IS WHERE THEY LEARN ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF DONOR FUNDING AND AS IT IS HERE THAT THEY GET AN OPPORTUNITY TO NETWORK AND DISCUSS CONCERNS AND EXCHANGE SOLUTIONS.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY NORTHERN CARIBBEAN PROGRAM WON FIRST PRIZE IN THE CINEFISH FILMS SHORT DOCUMENTARY CATEGORY AT THE 67TH GULF AND CARIBBEAN FISHERIES INSTITUTE CONFERENCE HELD IN CHRIST CHURCH, BARBADOS IN NOVEMBER 2014. THE FILM WAS TITLED "SUPPORTING OUR WAY OF LIFE" AND FOCUSED ON THE ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE OF MANGROVES AS WELL AS COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO RESTORE A DEGRADED MANGROVE AREA WITHIN THE BONEFISH POND NATIONAL PARK ON NEW PROVIDENCE, BAHAMAS. IN 2013 AS PART OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) FULL SIZED PROJECT TNC DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED A MANGROVE RESTORATION PROJECT IN THE BONEFISH POND NATIONAL PARK.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY ATTENDED THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS) CONFERENCE IN SAMOA AT THE INVITATION OF MY MINISTRY.

I WANT TO THANK THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, IN PARTICULAR MRS. ELEANOR PHILLIPS AND MRS. SHENIQUE SMITH FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

THE FORESTRY UNIT

MR. SPEAKER,

FORESTS COVER ONE THIRD OF THE EARTH'S LAND MASS, PERFORMING VITAL FUNCTIONS AROUND THE WORLD. IN THE BAHAMAS, APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE BAHAMAS IS COVERED WITH SOME FORMS OF FOREST (I.E. PINE FOREST, BROADLEAVED – COPPICE FOREST, AND MANGROVES WETLANDS). FORESTS ARE THE MOST BIOLOGICALLY-DIVERSE ECOSYSTEMS ON LAND, HOME TO MORE THAN 80% OF THE TERRESTRIAL SPECIES OF ANIMALS, PLANTS AND INSECTS. THEY ALSO PROVIDE SHELTER, JOBS AND SECURITY FOR FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES.

WORLDWIDE, AROUND 1.6 BILLION PEOPLE – INCLUDING MORE THAN 2,000 INDIGENOUS CULTURES – DEPEND ON FORESTS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD. IN THE BAHAMAS, ALTHOUGH IT IS HARD TO PUT AN



EXACT FIGURE, UNSCIENTIFICALLY, THE FORESTRY UNIT ESTIMATES A RANGE OF 50 – 60% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION DEPENDS DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY ON OUR FORESTS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD. PERSONS, PARTICULARLY ON THE FAMILY ISLANDS, DEPEND DIRECTLY/OR INDIRECTLY ON OUR FORESTS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOODS (E.G. USING BUSH MEDICINES, THROUGH CHARCOAL MANUFACTURING, THROUGH HUNTING, FOR HANDICRAFTS (IN THE STRAW MARKET AND WOOD CARVING INDUSTRY), THROUGH ECO-TOURISM, IN THE AGRO-FORESTRY INDUSTRY, ETC). LOTS OF PEOPLE, MR. SPEAKER, DEPEND ON OUR FORESTS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD.

FORESTS ARE ON THE FRONT LINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE. THEY PLAY A KEY ROLE IN OUR BATTLE IN ADAPTING TO AND MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE. THESE ECOSYSTEMS, RICH WITH BIODIVERSITY, ARE INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE TO CHANGES IN WEATHER, TEMPERATURE AND RAINFALL PATTERNS. IT IS ESSENTIAL, THEREFORE, THAT WE WORK TO PRESERVE AND SUSTAINABLY MANAGE OUR FORESTS.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE FORESTRY UNIT IS MANDATED TO DEVELOP THE FOREST RESOURCES OF THE BAHAMAS TO THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL BY APPLYING SOUND, SCIENTIFIC, AND SUSTAINED YIELD FOREST MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS. A NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AND FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR NATIONAL FORESTS WILL BE PREPARED WITH GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING BAHAMIAN FORESTS.

THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

MR. SPEAKER,

THE FORESTRY UNIT STANDS POISED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) FOR ASSISTANCE WITH THREE PROJECTS. THE THREE (3) OPTIONS FOR THE FORESTRY UNIT ARE: CLIMATE CHANGE (DEVELOPING A CARBON MONITORING SYSTEM); IMPROVING ECOSYSTEMS AND FUNCTIONS; AND THE PROPOSED MIDSCALE PROJECT (ABACO), BUILDING ON FAO DATA ON PINE FOREST-HEALTH OF ECOSYSTEM AND WATER RESOURCES DUE TO ILLEGAL DUMPING.

MAINTAINING A REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

MR. SPEAKER,

DURING THE 2014/15 BUDGET PERIOD, THE FORESTRY UNIT'S REPRESENTATIVE AT THE GEF CARIBBEAN EXPANDED CONSTITUENCY MEETING – MAY 5-7TH, 2015- IN GRAND BAHAMA PARTICIPATED IN PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION FOR THE GEF 6, AND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF APPROPRIATE SIZED PROJECTS FOR GEF FUNDING (PIF).

RESOURCE IMPROVEMENTS

DIGITIZED MAPS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES OF THE FORESTRY UNIT WERE IMPROVED BY A \$10,000 GRANT FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY TO INITIATE THE PREPARATION OF DIGITIZED BASE MAPS DEPICTING AREAS OF CROWN LAND ON ABACO, ANDROS, GRAND BAHAMA, AND NEW PROVIDENCE.

MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED MAPS WILL BE GENERATED, INCLUDING THE COMPREHENSIVE BAHAMAS

LAND RESOURCE STUDY MAPS, WHICH PROVIDE PERTINENT BASELINE DATA ON VEGETATION, SOIL, WATER, AND LAND CAPABILITY OF THE BAHAMAS. THIS WILL ALSO BE AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

#### DATA MANAGEMENT TRAINING

THE BAHAMAS WAS APPROVED GRANT FUNDING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10, 000 TO HOST A DATA MANAGEMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THIS TRAINING WILL HELP THE FORESTRY UNIT TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE BY BUILDING CAPACITY IN DATA COLLECTION, DEFINING BOUNDARIES, AND SAMPLE PLOT ESTABLISHMENT. THE TRAINING IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 27-31. 2015.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN THIS PERIOD, THE FORESTRY UNIT COMPLETED THE PINE FOREST MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK. THE FORESTRY HANDBOOK 2014, ENTITLED PINE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE BAHAMAS HAS BEEN GIVEN FINAL APPROVAL BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

THE HANDBOOK SERVES AS A GUIDE TO BASIC FOREST MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS, AND FOREST RELATED ACTIVITIES. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THIS RESOURCE BOOK WILL BE USED TO FACILITATE THE SCIENTIFIC BASED MANAGEMENT OF THE IMPENDING NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE.

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS AGENCIES JOINED WITH THE FORESTRY UNIT IN MARCH TO CELEBRATE FORESTRY AWARENESS WEEK AND WORLD FORESTRY DAY ON 21 MARCH 2015. DURING FORESTRY AWARENESS WEEK THE UNIT SOUGHT TO BUILD AWARENESS OF FORESTRY AND FORESTRY RELATED INITIATIVES, AND ACTIVITIES WORLDWIDE. THE FORESTRY UNIT HOSTED SEVERAL ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS, INCLUDING A SYMPOSIUM AT THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS. THERE WERE ALSO TV & RADIO APPEARANCES, SCHOOL VISITS AND TREE PLANTINGS AT SCHOOLS. A FIRST WAS THE NATIONAL SELFIE-COMPETITION AND A WELL ATTENDED DOCUMENTARY SCREENING AT THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST ON THE HISTORY OF FORESTRY LOGGING IN THE BAHAMAS. MISS DESTINY COOPER OF THE GREAT GARVIN TYNES SCHOOL WON THE SELFIE-COMPETITION.

#### THE FORESTRY REGULATIONS 2014

MR. SPEAKER,

IN THE LAST FISCAL PERIOD, THE FORESTRY REGULATIONS 2014 WAS GAZETTED AND BECAME LAW. THESE REGULATIONS WILL PROVIDE THE TOOLS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE FORESTRY ACT 2010, AND WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN REDUCING AND PREVENTING THE THREATS OF DEFORESTATION, ILLEGAL DUMPING AND HARVESTING, SQUATTING, AND BIO-DIVERSITY LOSSES IN THE IMPENDING NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE. ALL OF THESE EFFORTS ARE PART AND PARCEL OF DEVELOPING A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

#### THE BAHAMAS PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC BEACHES AUTHORITY

THE BAHAMAS PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC BEACHES AUTHORITY BILL, 2014 HAS PASSED THROUGH BOTH CHAMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. THE NEW ACT ESTABLISHED A NEW AUTHORITY WHICH HAS OVERSIGHT OF ALL PUBLIC PARKS AND BEACHES IN THE BAHAMAS, AND IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS

ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO CREATE AND PROPERLY MANAGE GREEN SPACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TO ENSURE THAT THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO BEACHES. WE BELIEVE MR. SPEAKER THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS AUTHORITY WILL REVOLUTIONIZE HOW PARKS AND BEACHES ARE MANAGED IN THE BAHAMAS AND WILL BRING NEEDED FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION TO NOT ONLY THE MANAGEMENT BUT THE PRESERVATION AND PROPER USE OF THESE GREEN SPACES.

MR SPEAKER

THE PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC BEACHES AUTHORITY IS WELL ON ITS WAY TO BEGINNING THE WORK MANDATED BY THE ACT. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS WELL AS SOME OF THE KEY EMPLOYEES. THESE ARE THE PERSONS WHO ARE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE INFANCY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUTHORITY. WE HAVE ALSO IDENTIFIED OFFICE SPACE WHERE THE AUTHORITY IS TO BE HOUSED AND ARE CURRENTLY WORKING TO ENSURE THAT THE AUTHORITY WILL BE UP AND RUNNING IN THE SHORTEST PERIOD OF TIME POSSIBLE.

THE BAHAMAS PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC BEACHES WILL ALSO HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS WAS ALLOCATED A BUDGET OF \$75,000.00 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015, WHICH HAS BARELY SUFFICED TO COVER RECURRENT EXPENDITURE, UTILITIES, MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES.

THE MINISTRY IS CONTINUING TO EXPLORE PLANS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT, REMODELING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE BOTANICAL GARDENS, WHICH WILL SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVENTS AND THE GENERATION OF SIGNIFICANT REVENUE. SIGNIFICANT SUMS ARE REQUIRED TO TRANSFORM THE BOTANIC GARDENS INTO THE ATTRACTION IT CAN BE. THE NEWLY CREATED PUBLIC BEACHES AND PUBLIC PARKS AUTHORITY IS CHARGED WITH THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD AND BEYOND.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN THE LAST FISCAL PERIOD, MINOR REFURBISHMENTS WERE UNDERTAKEN. THE PONDS/WATERFALLS WERE REFURBISHED AND THE ASPHALT DRIVEWAY RE-PAVED. THE EASTERN END OF THE GARDENS WAS CLEARED OF DEBRIS, VEGETATIVE MATERIAL AND TREES AND SITE NOW BEING USED FOR THE HOSTING OF LARGE FUNCTIONS THAT ATTRACT HORDES OF PEOPLE AND AS A MEANS OF PROTECTING THE GARDENS' ECOLOGY.

MR. SPEAKER

THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF OUR GREEN SPACES, PARKS AND BEACHES WILL CREATE A CLEANER BAHAMAS. THIS WILL IN TURN CREATE A SAFER BAHAMAS, AND THUS A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION

MR. SPEAKER,

AFTER ALMOST FIFTY YEARS, THE LAWS GOVERNING PETROLEUM EXPLORATION ARE ABOUT TO BE

CHANGED. THIS YEAR I PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT A SUITE OF BILLS THAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY OIL EXPLORATION IS CONDUCTED IN THE BAHAMAS.

THE FIVE NEW PIECES OF LEGISLATION WILL REPLACE THE TWO THAT HAVE BEEN IN EXISTENCE FROM THE 1970s WHICH HAVE NOT KEPT PACE WITH CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY.

MR. SPEAKER,

I HAVE PRESENTED A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK OF THE PETROLEUM SUITE TO THIS CHAMBER JUST RECENTLY, THEREFORE, I WILL SIMPLY REMIND MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC OF THE PROPOSED FISCAL REGIME.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE NEW FISCAL REGIME FOR THE UPSTREAM PETROLEUM INDUSTRY IN THE COUNTRY ENSURES THAT THE GOVERNMENT, ON BEHALF OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE, RECEIVES A REASONABLE MONETARY SHARE OF THE INDUSTRY. IT WILL PROVIDE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RECEIVE 12.5% TO 75% OF PROFITS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE RECEIVING ROYALTIES AND A SHARE OF THE PROFIT FROM ANY PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS PRODUCED AND AS PROFITS INCREASE, THE GOVERNMENT'S SHARE WILL ALSO INCREASE.

MR. SPEAKER,

THIS NEW REGIME IS ONE WHICH IS FAIR AND IS A PROCESS WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN REGARDS TO OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES BEING HARVESTED IN THE COUNTRY, SUCH AS ARAGONITE.

MR. SPEAKER

THE PETROLEUM & SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND BILLS AND THEIR ACCOMPANYING REGULATIONS ARE SIGNS THAT OUR NATION IS PROGRESSING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. WE ARE MOVING TOWARD A NEW AND STRONGER BAHAMAS WHERE OUR PEOPLE RECEIVE FAIR BENEFITS FROM THE USE AND EXPLOITATION OF THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MR. SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO RENEWABLE ENERGY.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS LONG REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF OUR NATION'S NATURAL RESOURCES. A RENEWABLE ENERGY UNIT HAS BEEN FORMED IN THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING AND WILL BE FUNDED FROM THE GENERAL ALLOCATIONS UNDER HEAD 72. THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING HAS WITHIN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, ADVANCED SEVERAL INITIATIVES FOCUSED SPECIFICALLY AT RESOURCE PRESERVATION WHILE REDUCING OUR DEPENDENCY ON FOSSIL FUELS.

MR. SPEAKER,

WE ARE MOVING TOWARD A MODERN BAHAMAS. WE ARE BUILDING A STRONGER BAHAMAS, ONE WITH A RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE.

MR. SPEAKER, WE ARE ADVANCING INITIATIVES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE BAHAMAS' ENERGY SECURITY, CREATE JOBS AND PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPANSION OF THE POWER SECTOR.

THERE IS A GLOBAL IMPETUS FOR THE MOVEMENT TO RENEWABLE ENERGY. IN SEPTEMBER OF 2014 IN NEW YORK, THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) ANNOUNCED A NEW INITIATIVE TO ACCELERATE THE TRANSITION TO MORE EFFICIENT APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT TO REDUCE GLOBAL ENERGY DEMAND, MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO ENERGY.

IN THE BAHAMAS WE HAVE JOINED THE WORLDWIDE SHIFT TO ENERGY APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT – INCLUDING LIGHTING, AIR CONDITIONERS, REFRIGERATORS, ELECTRIC MOTOR VEHICLES, CEILING FANS AND DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS.

WE HAVE ALSO EMBRACED AVAILABLE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

MR SPEAKER

WE HAVE ADVANCED A NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY, WHEREBY WE COMMITTED TO A MINIMUM OF 30 PERCENT OF OUR GENERATING CAPACITY BEING BY WAY OF RENEWABLES, BY THE YEAR 2033. I STRESS THE MINIMUM MR. SPEAKER, BECAUSE IT IS MY PERSONAL BELIEF THAT OUR GOALS SHOULD BE MORE AMBITIOUS. I WILL SPEAK MORE ABOUT THIS IN THE FUTURE, AS THIS FALL I WILL BEGIN ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT ENERGY SECURITY.

MR. SPEAKER,

A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE CARBON WAR ROOM (CWR) AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS ON 6 NOVEMBER 2014. THE CARBON WAR ROOM (CWR) IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION BASED IN WASHINGTON D.C. WHOSE MISSION IS TO “ACCELERATE THE ADOPTION OF BUSINESS SOLUTIONS THAT REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS AT GIGATON SCALE AND ADVANCE THE LOW CARBON ECONOMY”. THE MOU OUTLINED SEVEN OBJECTIVES AS PART OF THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE BAHAMAS AND THE CWR UNDER THE TEN ISLAND CHALLENGE (TIC). UNDER THIS MOU, THE CARBON WAR ROOM COMMITTED TO ASSISTING THE BAHAMAS WITH: AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY AUDIT AND A SOLAR PV INSTALLATION VIABILITY ASSESSMENT AT THE ANATOL RODGERS SCHOOL.

DEVELOPING A SOLAR FARM PROGRAMME OF UP TO 20MW ACROSS A NUMBER OF ISLANDS.

SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPING AND EXECUTING A RFP PROCESS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOLAR PV FARM AT THE BAMSİ COMPLEX ON ANDROS.

SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPING AND EXECUTING AN RFP PROCESS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COUNTRY WIDE LED STREET LIGHTING RETROFIT PROJECT.

SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT IN EXPLORING AND POTENTIALLY DEVELOPING A ‘PAY AS YOU GO’

METERING AND BILLING SYSTEM FOR BEC, WHICH SHOULD DRAMATICALLY REDUCE OUR ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLES ISSUES AT BEC AND HELP CONSUMERS BETTER MANAGE THEIR ENERGY CONSUMPTION.

MR. SPEAKER,

TWO OF THOSE OBJECTIVES ARE CURRENTLY BEING FAST TRACKED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN 2015. ONE OF THOSE IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A 2.6 MW SOLAR FARM FOR THE NEW BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL & MARINE SCIENCES INSTITUTE (BAMSI) ON NORTH ANDROS ISLAND.

WE ARE IN THE FINAL STAGES OF PREPARATION FOR THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR THE 2.6MW SOLAR PV PROJECT AT THE BAMSI COMPLEX IN NORTH ANDROS. I WANT TO PUBLICLY ENCOURAGE BAHAMIAN ENERGY SERVICE COMPANIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BID PROCESS, WHENEVER IT IS ADVANCED.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE ENERGY EFFICIENCIES CONSIDERED IN THE MOU IS PAY-AS-YOU-GO METERING. THIS PILOT IS JUST IN THE INITIAL DISCUSSION STAGE. THE CARBON WAR ROOM WILL WORK WITH MY MINISTRY TO SELECT A SET OF PUBLIC HOUSING FOR PILOTING NEW METERS THAT WORK ON DEBIT CARDS ( SIMILAR TO CALLING CARDS WITH PRE PAID MINUTES) FOR A DETERMINED AMOUNT PER KWH. OTHER ISLAND COUNTRIES HAVE FOUND GREAT SUCCESS WITH BOTH ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLES MANAGEMENT WITH PAY AS YOU GO METERING.

THE FAMILY ISLANDS SOLAR FARMS PROJECT

ANOTHER OF THE FAST TRACKED PROJECTS IS THE PILOT SOLAR FARMS PROJECT, OF UP TO 20 MW FOR THE FOLLOWING FAMILY ISLANDS: ELUETHERA, ANDROS, CAT ISLAND, ACKLINS, BIMINI, INAGUA, CROOKED ISLAND, EXUMA AND LONG ISLAND. MY MINISTRY HAS HELD SEVERAL INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AIMED AT ADVANCING THESE PROJECTS AND IS PREPARING TO FINALIZE THE 20MW FAMILY ISLANDS SOLAR FARMS PROJECT REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ).

LED STREET LIGHTING

MR. SPEAKER,

IN ADDITION, WE ARE IN THE INITIAL PHASES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF TWO OTHER OBJECTIVES OF THE MOU.

WE WILL BEGIN WORK WITH BEC ON THE REPLACEMENT OF STREET LIGHTING CAMPAIGN, WHICH WILL RESULT IN THE REPLACEMENT OF ALL NON-LED STREET LIGHTING IN NEW PROVIDENCE WITH NEW LED LIGHT BULBS. CURRENTLY, I AM ADVISED, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS MAKES A \$1,000,000 CONTRIBUTION PER MONTH TO THE COST OF ENERGY CONSUMED BY STREET LIGHTING.

APPROXIMATELY 4% OF INSTALLED PUBLIC LIGHTING IS LED BASED. BEC NOW HAS LED SOLAR LIGHTS AT ITS CAMPUS AND NEW LED STREET LIGHTS ON THE NEW STRETCH OF HIGHWAY TO THE NASSAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE CWR AND BEC TO CHANGE OUT THE REMAINING ~ 35,000 STREET LIGHTS IN NEW PROVIDENCE TO ENERGY EFFICIENT STREET LIGHTS FOR SIGNIFICANT COST AND CARBON EMISSIONS SAVINGS.

ENERGY EFFICIENCIES AT THE ANATOL RODGERS HIGH SCHOOL

MR. SPEAKER,

MY MINISTRY WILL ALSO IMPLEMENT AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY/ RENEWABLE ENERGY PILOT AT THE ANATOL RODGERS SCHOOL. THIS WILL RESULT IN THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE SCHOOL WITH ENERGY EFFICIENT LIGHT BULBS AND APPLIANCES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOLAR PARK ON THE GROUNDS. IN THIS FISCAL YEAR, THE CARBON WAR ROOM HOPES TO ADVANCE THE EXPANSION OF THIS PROJECT TO AT LEAST THREE OTHER GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS. MR. SPEAKER, A RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE ENSURES A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM IN BEC

MR. SPEAKER,

THE ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL, 2014 AND THE ELECTRICITY (RENEWABLE ENERGY) REGULATIONS 2014 WHICH MAKE GRID TIE CONNECTION AND NET BILLING A LEGAL REALITY WERE PROMULGATED IN THIS FISCAL PERIOD.

THESE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO REVAMP THE ENERGY SECTOR WILL AID THE BAHAMAS IN FURTHER DEVELOPING ITS ECONOMY, IMPROVING LIFE FOR ITS CITIZENS AND LESSENING ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT.

THE LEGISLATION PROVIDES THE LEGAL AUTHORITY REQUIRED FOR INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCTION IN THE BAHAMAS. THE NEW LAW ALSO PROVIDES THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERCONNECTING COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS AND REQUIRES HOMEOWNERS AND COMMERCIAL ENTITIES WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATORS TO REGISTER THEIR SYSTEMS AND APPLY FOR INTERCONNECTION. THIS IS KNOWN AS THE RESIDENTIAL ENERGY SELF GENERATION PROGRAMME (RESG). THE REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR ALL PERSONS AND BUSINESS UTILIZING RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEM BEGAN ON MAY 11TH, 2015 WITH A VIEW TO BEGINNING THE RESG PRGGRAMME IN SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR. I ENCOURAGE EVERYONE ACROSS THE BAHAMAS USING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES FOR POWER GENERATION TO REGISTER BY CONTACTING THE BAHAMAS ELECTRICITY COPORATION FOR A REGISTRATION FORM. I HAVE A 6.3 KW SYSTEM ON MY HOME, MR. SPEAKER. I HAVE REGISTERED. I WANT OTHERS TO DO THE SAME. THIS IS INDEED PROGRESS.

MR. SPEAKER

WITH RESPECT TO GRAND BAHAMA, THE GOVERNMENT IS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GRAND BAHAMA POWER COMPANY ABOUT ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE RESG PROGRAMME. THEY HAVE ALREADY APPROVED OUR IDB PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS TO BE CONNECTED TO THE GRID IN GRAND BAHAMA. THE DISCUSSIONS ARE PROGRESSING WELL AND I AM HOPEFUL THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE SOON THAT THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY AND POWER COMPANY WILL ADVANCE A SIMILAR PROGRAMME TO ENSURE THAT GRAND BAHAMIANS CAN ALSO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A NET BILLING INITIATIVE. WE WILL NOT ALLOW GRAND BAHAMA TO BE LEFT OUT MR. SPEAKER!

MR. SPEAKER

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTLINED PROJECTS WILL YIELD TREMENDOUS BENEFITS FOR THE BAHAMAS, WITH RESPECT TO COST REDUCTION, CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCTION AND THE PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. THESE PROJECTS MAY ALSO BE SUBMITTED, IN PART, AS OUR INTENDED NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNFCCC. WE ALL MUST DO OUR PART TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE BAHAMAS CAN TAKE THE LEAD IN THE REGION AS WE EXPAND OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR.

MR. SPEAKER,

MY MINISTRY REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE LONG-TERM VISION OF THE BAHAMAS ENERGY SECTOR TO PRODUCE A MODERN, DIVERSIFIED AND EFFICIENT ENERGY SECTOR, PROVIDING BAHAMIANS WITH AFFORDABLE ENERGY SUPPLIES AND LONG TERM ENERGY SECURITY TOWARDS ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY. A PROSPEROUS BAHAMAS, MR. SPEAKER....A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (BSDI) ACT 2014 WAS ENACTED TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAHAMAS. THE OFFICIAL COORDINATING AGENCY FOR THE BSDI IS THE BNGIS CENTRE, NOW ESTABLISHED AS A DEPARTMENT.

IN ADDITION TO THE TECHNICAL WORK NORMALLY EXPECTED OF THE CENTRE, SEVERAL INITIATIVES ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO EFFECT THE PROVISIONS OF THE RECENTLY ENACTED BSDI ACT 2014. THE BNGIS CENTRE IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING A BSDI AND GIS USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT. THIS IS NECESSARY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC ROAD PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (SDI) SYSTEM AND PROGRAM FOR THE BAHAMAS. 80 AGENCIES, INCLUDING NGO'S, ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT AS AGENCY-WIDE FEEDBACK IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF BSDI. THE RESULTS OR FINDINGS OF THE USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT (UNA) WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE GEOSPATIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL AND FOR FURTHER ACTION.

AS THE GOVERNMENT'S TECHNICAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (UNGGIM) INITIATIVE AND THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FOR THE AMERICAS, BNGIS CONTINUES TO PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN UN-GGIM ACTIVITIES. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE BAHAMAS TO ATTEND THESE MEETINGS AS IT IS THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION TO ENACT SDI LEGISLATION. WE ARE A LEADER IN THE REGION, MR. SPEAKER. THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR HIS ADVANCEMENT OF SPATIAL DATA PLANNING FROM 2002 TO DATE.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

MR. SPEAKER



THE 2015/2016 BUDGET REFLECTS THAT THE SAME FUNDING AVAILABLE TO US LAST BUDGET YEAR WILL BE GIVEN THIS YEAR.

OVER THE LAST YEAR, SCORES OF HOMES IN OUR SUBDIVISIONS HAVE BEEN REPAIRED, MANY OF OUR PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS HAVE ALSO BEEN REPAIRED AND WE ARE UNDERTAKING A COMPREHENSIVE RETROFIT OF THE WINDSOR LANE, PUBLIC RENTAL UNIT, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE 'BIG YARD'. THE WORKS BEGAN DURING THE CURRENT YEAR AND WILL CONTINUE INTO THE NEXT BUDGET CYCLE. ONE OF THE THINGS WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE MR. SPEAKER, IS TO INSTALL A PUMP SYSTEM TO ENSURE THAT AT A MINIMUM THE UNITS WILL BE ABLE TO USE PUMPED WATER FOR THE FLUSHING OF TOILETS ETC. THIS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE DESIGN OF THE UNITS ARE AS SUCH THAT WHEN THE WATER IS CUT OFF IN ONE UNIT, IT CREATES MAJOR PLUMBING ISSUES FOR OTHER UNITS IN THE SAME BUILDING. MR. SPEAKER, WE ARE ALSO EXPANDING THE PARKING AT THE BIG YARD AND WILL BE DEVELOPING A SMALL RECREATIONAL PARK AND GREEN SPACE FOR THE RESIDENTS. I HOPE THESE IMPROVEMENTS TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER REPAIRS BEING CONDUCTED WILL IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE WHO RESIDE THERE. IT IS ALSO MY HOPE, ONCE THIS PILOT PROVES TO BE SUCCESSFUL THAT WE ADVANCE SIMILAR INITIATIVES IN ALL OF THE OTHER PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS.

MR. SPEAKER

IN THE MID-TERM BUDGET I SPOKE TO THE THREE SYSTEMS HOUSES THAT WERE BUILT IN STRACHAN'S HILL SUBDIVISION. THEY ARE NOW COMPLETE AND I AM ADVISED 2 OF THE THREE OWNERS HAVE ALREADY MOVED IN. ONE OF THE PROSPECTIVE ASSIGNEES WAS REJECTED BY THE BANKS SO WE ARE WAITING ON THE ATTORNEYS TO COMPLETE THE PAPERWORK FOR THE NEW ASSIGNEE. MR. SPEAKER, WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS EXERCISE FOR ME, IS THE STORY OF MS. INGRAHAM ONE OF THE NEW HOMEOWNERS. MS. INGRAHAM IS A PUBLIC SERVANT WHO WAS WAITING ON A HOME ASSIGNMENT FOR A LONG, LONG TIME I AM TOLD. SHE IS NEARING THE AGE OF RETIREMENT AND THEREFORE THE WINDOW FOR BEING ABLE TO QUALIFY FOR A LOAN WAS CLOSING ON HER. SHE PRE-QUALIFIED FOR A STANDARD 2 BEDROOM 1 BATHROOM HOUSE AND WAS ASSIGNED TO HAVE A HOME BUILT FOR HER OFF LILY OF THE VALLEY CORNER. PROBLEMS IN THE DOCUMENTARY TITLE CAUSED A DELAY IN HER PURSUING THAT ASSIGNMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN HER BEING A PART OF OUR PILOT PROGRAMME.

MR. SPEAKER

MS. INGRAHAM, WHO ONLY QUALIFIED FOR A 2 BEDROOM 1 BATH MODEL, SEVERAL WEEKS AGO WAS ABLE TO GET HER KEYS AND MOVE IN TO HER 3 BEDROOM 2 BATHROOM ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME, WITH LANDSCAPING AND A 2KW SOLAR GRID TIE SYSTEM ON HER ROOF. MR. SPEAKER, WE HAVE FOUND ALTERNATIVE CONSTRUCTION SYSTEMS, WHICH NOW ALLOW US TO TAKE PERSONS LIKE MS. INGRAHAM WHO QUALIFY FOR A STANDARD 2 BEDROOM/1 BATHROOM UNIT TO PURCHASE A 3 BEDROOM 2 BATHROOM UNIT FOR THE SAME PRICE. MR. SPEAKER, FOR MS. INGRAHAM THE DREAM OF HOMEOWNERSHIP HAS BEEN REALIZED; BUT THE DREAM IS MUCH SWEETER FOR HER BECAUSE SHE HAS A BIGGER HOUSE THAT SHE NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD AND SHOULD HAVE

LOWER ELECTRICITY BILLS WITH THE SOLAR GRID-TIE SYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN INSTALLED ON HER ROOF. THAT IS PROGRESS MR. SPEAKER.

MR. SPEAKER

IN FIRETRAIL SUBDIVISION 3 HOMES ARE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND HAVE NOT BEEN COMPLETED AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING WILL BE ISSUING SEVERAL BUILDING CONTRACTS THIS SUMMER FOR THE BUILD OUT OF THE REMAINING VACANT LOTS THAT ARE OWNED BY THE MINISTER OF HOUSING.. WE HAD FORECASTED THE CONSTRUCTION OF 8 UNITS IN THE MID-YEAR BUDGET, HOWEVER, DUE TO SEVERE CAVITIES FOUND ON 4 OF THE LOTS, WE NOT ONLY HAD TO ADDRESS A NEW ENGINEERING SCOPE FOR THESE LOTS, BUT WE HAVE ALSO DECIDED TO USE ALTERNATIVE CONSTRUCTION METHODS TO ENSURE THAT THE PRICES OF THE UNITS CAN REMAIN IN LINE WITH OUR STANDARD PRICES.

IN SUNSET CLOSE EXTENSION SUBDIVISION, PLANS HAVE BEEN REVISED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF UNITS FROM 8 TO 10. THE PROPERTY IS STILL OWNED BY THE TREASURER AND WE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THE MINISTER OF HOUSING AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO ENABLE US TO COMPLETE THAT SUBDIVISION AND COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION. IN THE MEANTIME, ALL HOMES IN SUNSET CLOSE HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED AND WE ARE COMPLETING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY PARK.

IN DIGNITY GARDENS CRESCENT, CONTRACTS WILL BE ISSUED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 9 UNITS OVER THE SUMMER AS ALL INFRASTRUCTURE IS IN PLACE.

IN RELATION TO CARMICHAEL VILLAGE SUBDIVISION-THE REVISED SUBDIVISION PLANS HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE MINISTRY OF WORKS AND THROUGH A PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP, 303 NEW HOMES WILL BE CONSTRUCTED. LAND WORKS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN AND CONSTRUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN LATER THIS YEAR.

MR.SPEAKER

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING CONTINUES TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING THAT OUTPACES ITS SUPPLY. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE SOME HOUSES FOR OCCUPATION AND PLANS ARE UNDERWAY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MANY MORE HOMES.

MR. SPEAKER

RECENTLY, I RELEASED THROUGH THE STRONGER BAHAMAS INITIATIVE THE NUMBER OF HOMES BUILT AND FACILITATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS SINCE MAY 2012. THE NUMBER RELEASED WAS 270. FOR SOME REASON THIS NUMBER CAUSED CONTROVERSY IN THE COUNTRY AND WAS CHALLENGED BY MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY NO LONGER SITTING IN THIS PLACE OR THE SENATE. HOWEVER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION (BMC), SEN. HON. ALEX STORR, APTLY RESPONDED.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW, THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION IS A PUBLICLY OWNED ENTITY. IT WAS ESTABLISHED BY AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT IN 1983, THUS ANY

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION IS CONSIDERED PUBLIC. SECTION 5 OF THE ACT GIVES BMC TO AUTHORITY TO ADVANCE LOANS.

SHORTLY AFTER ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR BMC AND UNDERSTANDING THE PRODUCTS THAT THEY OFFER AND OUR INABILITY DUE TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS TO CONSTRUCT HOMES THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING IN SUBDIVISIONS WHERE WE DID NOT HAVE INFRASTRUCTURE, I INSTRUCTED BMC TO PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON PRIVATE LENDING, WHICH IT HAS THE LEGAL AUTHORITY TO DO, ON THE SAME LOAN TERMS AS THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME. SINCE MAY 2012, BMC PRIVATE LOAN PORTFOLIO HAS GROWN. THEY PLACED APPROXIMATELY \$24.5 MILLION WORTH OF LOANS UNDER REPAYMENT DURING THE PERIOD IN QUESTION AND AN ADDITIONAL \$3 MILLION REPRESENT UNDRAWN LOANS.

THESE HOMES AND BUILDINGS FACILITATED WITH GOVERNMENT FUNDING COUPLED WITH THE HOMES THAT HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED AND COMPLETED THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING FROM MAY 2012 TO NOW IS HOW THE NUMBER OF 270 IS ARRIVED AT.

IN ADDITION, THE MANAGEMENT OF BMC HAS ADVISED THAT THE PRIVATE INITIATED MORTGAGE PORTFOLIO PERFORMS FAR BETTER THAN MORTGAGES ISSUED FOR THE GOVERNMENT HOUSING PROGRAMME. SO BMC HAS MY FULL SUPPORT TO ADVANCE THE PRIVATE INITIATED LOAN PORTFOLIO, WITH PRUDENCE AND DILIGENCE.

MR. SPEAKER

WE CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE WORK BEING DONE BY THE STAFF AT BMC TO ASSIST LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME BAHAMIANS TO OBTAIN HOME OWNERSHIP. THEY HAVE PLAYED A VITAL PART SINCE THE BEGINNING AND SHOULD BE DULY ACKNOWLEDGED. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT BMC ALSO JUST RECENTLY APPROVED THE ISSUANCE OF \$100 MILLION IN BONDS WHICH WILL FURTHER ELEVATE THE ROLE OF BMC IN THE GOVERNMENT'S HOME PROGRAMME. THIS FACILITY WILL ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO ADVANCE HOUSING PROJECTS ON LAND VESTED IN THE MINISTER OF HOUSING THAT DOES NOT HAVE INFRASTRUCTURE BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE ISSUANCE OF THE BONDS WILL BE ADVANCED IN A MANNER THAT WILL NOT COMPROMISE THE CORPORATION'S FINANCIAL POSITION.

MR. SPEAKER

THOUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING DID NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO CONSTRUCT AS MANY HOMES AS I WOULD LIKE. WE WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE THE BUILD OUT OF OVER TWENTY HOMES IN THE STRACHAN'S HILL SUBDIVISION. WE WERE ALSO ABLE TO COMPLETE THE HOMES IN SUNSET CLOSE AND OFFICIALLY OPEN THE SUBDIVISION. AS INDICATED, PLANS ARE WELL UNDERWAY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ADDITIONAL 10 HOMES IN SUNSET CLOSE EXTENSION TO COMPLETE ITS BUILD OUT.

MR. SPEAKER

WITH THE SUCCESSFUL RESULTS OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN OTHER AREAS OF GOVERNMENT, MY MINISTRY WILL BE ENTERING JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF

HUNDREDS OF NEW HOMES. THESE HOUSES WILL BE LOCATED IN THE PROPOSED CARMICHAEL VILLAGE, WHICH WILL BE A BRAND NEW COMMUNITY. WE WILL ALSO ENGAGE A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE BUILD OUT COMPLETION OF OVER 60 HOMES IN ADASTRA GARDENS SUBDIVISION AND WE ARE ALSO WORKING TO FINALISE ARRANGMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF 20 LOTS IN CLARIDGE ESTATES IN THE EAST; AND 20 LOTS IN STANLEY ACRES IN THE SOUTH.

MR. SPEAKER

MANY HAVE ENQUIRED ABOUT THE OCCUPANCY OF THE HOMES IN STRACHAN'S HILL AND OTHERS IN NEW PROVIDENCE. WHILE LEFT UP TO ME, ALL OF THESE HOMES WOULD HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED A LONG TIME AGO. IT DOES NOT WORK THAT WAY. SOME HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED AND OTHERS HAVE NOT. PERSONS WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR GOVERNMENT HOMES THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING MUST QUALIFY FOR A MORTGAGE WITH AN APPROVED LENDER. ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE CAN PAY THE DOWN PAYMENT, MANY OF THEM FOR VARIOUS REASONS ARE BEING REJECTED BY APPROVED LENDERS INCLUDING BMC. NINETY PERCENT OF THE PERSONS ASSIGNED HOMES WHO WERE BEING PROCESSED BY RBC FINCO WERE REJECTED.

ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS A YOUNG LADY WHO APPLIED FOR A HOME WHOSE PARENTS WERE WILLING TO GUARANTEE THE LOAN. HOWEVER BECAUSE OF THE AGE OF THE PARENTS, THE YOUNG WOMAN WAS NOT ABLE TO QUALIFY ON HER OWN. ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THAT OF A MAN WHO APPLIED WITH HIS WIFE BUT NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT HE HAD AN EXISTING MORTGAGE WITH HIS EX-WIFE. THERE ARE ALSO PERSONS WHO APPLY, PAY THE DEPOSIT BUT LATER ARE FOUND TO HAVE JUDGEMENTS AGAINST THEM FOR VARIOUS SUMS OF MONEY. THIS IS WHAT MY TEAM AND I FACE ON A DAILY BASIS.

I HAVE PROMISED THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE THAT I WILL STICK TO BEST PRACTICES AND ENSURE THAT MORTGAGES ARE IN PLACE BEFORE PERSONS ARE ALLOWED TO OCCUPY THESE HOMES BUILT BY THE PUBLIC PURSE. HOWEVER IT IS EVIDENT THAT WE MUST FIND A WAY TO ASSIST THOSE PERSONS WHO CAN PAY THE DOWN-PAYMENT AND THE MONTHLY SUM THROUGH SALARY DEDUCTION; BUT CANNOT OBTAIN MORTGAGES. THEREFORE, ONCE WE ARE ABLE TO SECURE THE FUNDING FROM THE BOND PLACEMENT, WE HOPE TO USE A PORTION OF THE FUNDS TO ADVANCE THE PILOT RENT-TO-OWN PROGRAMME IN NEW PROVIDENCE AND THE FAMILY ISLANDS.

FAMILY ISLANDS

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING IS PROCEEDING WITH HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN GRAND BAHAMA, BEGINNING WITH A DEVELOPMENT IN BAHAMIA WEST II. CONTRACTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 39 UNITS WILL BE ISSUED THIS SUMMER. I WANT TO THANK THE MINISTRY OF GRAND BAHAMA AND THE MINISTER IN PARTICULAR FOR HIS SUPPORT. AS THE COORDINATING MINISTRY ON THAT ISLAND, HIS MINISTRY WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

MR. SPEAKER

SUBJECT TO US BEING ABLE TO IDENTIFY SUFFICIENT PERSONS TO QUALIFY FOR A LOAN, WE WILL ALSO ADVANCE TWO PRIVATE PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP HOUSING PROJECTS IN GRAND BAHAMA. ONE WILL INVOLVE THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY AND LOTS IN HERITAGE AND THE OTHER IN THE ESTATES AT SUNRISE SUBDIVISION. WE ARE ALSO ASSESSING DEMAND IN THE WEST END COMMUNITY TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT IS ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE TO PURSUE THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR LAND IN THAT COMMUNITY. THIS IS AN AREA I WOULD LIKE TO PILOT OUR RENT TO OWN PROGRAMME IN GRAND BAHAMA, MR. SPEAKER.

THESE PROJECTS WILL BE CONTINGENT UPON IDENTIFYING PERSONS WHO QUALIFY FOR A LOAN AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS TO CARRYOUT THE WORKS OR PROVIDE THE FINANCING. IT IS HOPED THAT BONDS WILL BE USED FOR THESE PROJECTS.

MR. SPEAKER

ON THE ISLAND OF SAN SALVADOR, THE 15 LOTS HAVE BEEN CLEARED IN OUR SUBDIVISION AND A CONTRACT TO COMPLETE THE INFRASTRUCTURE HAS BEEN ISSUED, THE CONTRACTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 15 HOMES WILL BE ISSUED THIS SUMMER.

MR. SPEAKER, ON THE ISLAND OF ABACO, 16 CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS WILL BE ISSUED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMES IN SRING CITY.

CONCLUSION

MR SPEAKER

I AM A PLP. I AM A PROUD PLP. I AM A 1953 PLP, WHO FIRMLY BELIEVES IN THE 1953 PLATFORM AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THIS GREAT INSTITUTION. I AM HUMBLLED TO BE A PART OF ITS 60 PLUS YEAR HISTORY. I AM PRIVILEGED TO KNOW THAT MY NAME WILL FOREVER BE LINKED TO NATION BUILDERS, LIKE MILO BUTLER, CLARENCE BAIN, A.D. HANNA, HENRY MILTON TAYLOR, LYNDEN PINDLING, GEORGE MACKEY, PERRY CHRISTIE, LOFTUS ROKER AND CLEMENT MAYNARD, TO NAME A FEW. MY PARTY IS NOT PERFECT, BUT IT CONTINUES TO PROVIDE STELLAR SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE BAHAMAS. HOWEVER, JUST AS SIR LYNDEN REMINDED US AT OUR 41ST GENERAL CONVENTION ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1967 I REMIND EACH OF US WITH HIS WORDS

“TODAY WE DECLARE A REBIRTH OF OUR PARTY AND OUR PARTY’S VISION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY. WE MUST TAKE THE WORST AND MAKE THEM BETTER. WE MUST TAKE THE LOWEST AND TAKE THEM HIGHER. WE MUST TAKE THE SADDEST AND MAKE THEM HAPPIER. WE MUST TAKE THE SICKEST AND MAKE THEM HEALTHIER. AND WE MUST TAKE THE POOREST AND MAKE THEM RICHER”.

TODAY, I AM SO EXCITED TO BE A PLP AND A PART OF THIS ADMINISTRATION. I AM ENCOURAGED. IN THAT SPIRIT OF PRIDE, I DRAW COLLEAGUES ATTENTION TO A FEW SIMPLE WORDS PENNED BY TIMOTHY GIBSON:

MR. SPEAKER, I CONCLUDE BY STATING EMPHATICALLY THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS MARCHING FORWARD AND ON THE RIGHT TRACK. WE ARE WORKING EVERY DAY TOWARDS A BRIGHTER AND STRONGER BAHAMAS FOR US ALL. EVERY LAW MADE, EVERY POLICY ADVANCED AND EVERY INITIATIVE

INTRODUCED IS FOR THIS PURPOSE. WE CANNOT, GIVEN THE INCREDIBLE MANDATE FOR CHANGE GRANTED TO US BY THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE TO CARRY ON BUSINESS AS USUAL. WE CANNOT LET NAYSAYERS AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE OUR VIEWS AND OBJECTIVES PARALYZE US FROM ATTEMPTING TO MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR OUR PEOPLE AND LEAVE A GOODLY INHERITANCE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. FOR OUR PEOPLE WE MUST BE PIONEERS, NOT JUST MANAGERS OF WHAT WAS HANDED TO US. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO BE INNOVATIVE. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO TRY AND FAIL IN OUR ATTEMPTS. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO DO FOR THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE ABOVE ALL OTHERS.

MR. SPEAKER

A STRONGER BAHAMAS IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT BUT ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. OUR COUNTRY CANNOT BECOME STRONGER WITHOUT THERE BEING A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE. WHILE WE IN THIS PLACE WORK TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF SAFETY AND PROSPERITY, THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY MUST BE PREPARED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES BEING MADE AVAILABLE AND TO DO THEIR PART IN MAKING OUR COUNTRY SAFE ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD AT A TIME IF NEED BE. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER, MR. SPEAKER.

MR. SPEAKER

SOUTHERN SHORES SUPPORTS THIS BUDGET, SOUTHERN SHORES SUPPORTS THIS ADMINISTRATION AND MORE IMPORTANTLY SOUTHERN SHORES SUPPORTS ANY INITIATIVE THAT WILL LEAD TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE AND A STRONGER BAHAMAS.

THANK YOU MR. SPEAKER.