

REMARKS

**HON. KENRED DORSETT M.P.
MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING**

**BAHAMIAN CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
AWARDS BANQUET**

DECEMBER 7th, 2013

Salutations

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by thanking you for your kind invitation. I am honored to be here to share in your special occasion. It is always a pleasure for me to witness the recognition of excellence especially when those being honored are Bahamians and especially Bahamian men. I am of the view that we should do more to recognize those who are upholding a high standard in what they do no matter what their vocation is. In these days and times we pay far too much attention to those who would sully the good name of our country through negative acts. When I received the letter of invitation from President Forbes I did not hesitate to inform those in my ministry that I would be attending.

As you all would know construction is a great contributor to the Gross Domestic Product of our country and provides many jobs to Bahamian families. In recent years the industry has experienced a sharp decline due to the global recession. A

report from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean states that between 2007-2010 the construction and manufacturing industry in The Bahamas lost some 8,870 jobs of that number 7,035 were solely from the construction sector. The decline in construction was also cited as a reason for the high unemployment rate among Bahamian men at the time.

Since then the advent of projects like Bahamar and others have seen the industry make a steady comeback. More recently there has been the announcement of the \$90 million Club Med expansion project of its Columbus Isle Property in San Salvador. Earlier this year the government announced the building project in Bimini by Resorts World. Just within the last fortnight the Ministry of Works and Urban Development announced and mobilized many contractors to carry out repairs to homes under the Urban Renewal programme. The programme is set to give over 200 contractors work the first set of contracts were awarded for the repair of 102 homes in November with more to come. The Prime Minister also announced that the government's home development project will begin soon which will further create jobs within the construction sector for Bahamians. These projects are just a taste of what is happening in The Bahamas and what will be happening in the future. The future indeed looks bright.

My ministry has responsibility for the government's home developments and I must tell you that I am elated to be able to begin the construction of affordable homes for the Bahamian people. It has been a struggle to procure funding due to the economic circumstances in which the country finds

itself but we will be moving forward shortly. During the time waiting for funding my ministry has been hard at work ensuring that the Bahamian people receives value for money when construction of the homes begin.

I have stated publicly that I will not tolerate shoddy workmanship from those who will be awarded contracts from the government and I stand by that statement. It is really a hard process to move into your brand new home, which for most Bahamians is a life long investment, only to experience severe structural, plumbing or electrical issues far beyond the norm for a new build. Within the past five years the government has spent approximately \$4 million repairing homes. This represents money that could have been spent on building new homes. In anticipation of the constructing of new homes I have also commissioned new home models that I think those persons who will purchase government built houses would be proud to live in. These new models have provided multi-family and multi-storied home options which is a dramatic change from those models in previous years. I can assure you that there will be a noticeable difference in how the government builds homes.

Though my ministry has been hard at work preparing to build new homes. I am in need of your assistance in ensuring that affordable housing is truly affordable. In today's Bahamas the houses that we construct are out of the reach of many people financially. Due to this fact persons find themselves life long renters or even living in substandard conditions in shanty homes or towns that were once thought to be occupied solely by legal or illegal migrants. We can do better for our people

and I challenge you to help us seek and find ways in which we can build sustainable, attractive and truly affordable housing for our people. It is in all of our best interest to ensure the we can serve as many Bahamians as possible in this regard.

The main reason that I accepted your invitation however, is to commend this organization for what you stand for and what you are endeavoring to do by promoting education, excellence among your members and your work to regulate the industry. I noted with interest your partnership with the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute in order to train contractors within the industry. The value of certification as a contractor and knowing how to successfully run your business is unmeasurable. I hope that you will be able to expand this education initiative somehow to those who work for your various businesses. It is not uncommon for a young man to come onto a construction site and obtain marketable skills but because he does not possess a certificate verifying those skills for all to see he may find himself losing out on jobs. We can no longer settle for being just alright or continue the status quo but we must strive for excellence in what we do. The world we live in is getting smaller and smaller and we must prepare ourselves to be able to compete at the highest levels and that includes your industry.

That brings me to the theme for this occasion which I think is fitting for where we find ourselves as a nation and within your industry. As you would have noticed from my utterances and actions since obtaining the office that I now hold, I am not afraid to try new things. As a member of the new generation of leaders I think that it is the ideal time for us to

“break new ground” as your theme says. However we cannot do so unprepared. This new ground of prosperity, skill and service must be broken with purpose knowing what we want the outcome to be. For me it is for the Bahamian people to receive value for money when the government builds new home developments. For you it must be to deliver a products that needs the least amount of repairs and work that is on par with anywhere around the world.

We all must aim higher to reach higher ground. I offer all of tonight's honourees warmest congratulations and wish the Bahamian Contractor's Association every success in your future endeavors.

Thank you and God Bless.