

BUDGET COMMUNICATION

2013-2014

HON. KENRED DORSETT M.P.

**MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND
HOUSING**

JUNE 13TH, 2013

MR. SPEAKER,

I RISE ONCE AGAIN ON BEHALF OF THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SHORES TO MAKE MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2013/14 BUDGET DEBATE. I COUNT IT A PRIVILEGE TO STAND IN THIS PLACE AND SPEAK ON THEIR BEHALF.

BEFORE I BEGIN MR. SPEAKER I MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THE GRACE AND MERCY THAT HE CONTINUES TO SHOW ME DAILY.

MR. SPEAKER, WHEN I SPOKE IN THIS AUGUST CHAMBER DURING THE MID YEAR BUDGET STATEMENT DEBATE SOME FOUR (4) MONTHS AGO, I SPOKE ABOUT THE CONCERN IN MY CONSTITUENCY OF FIRES AND SMOKE EMANATING FROM THE DERELICT VEHICLE SITE ON MARSHALL ROAD. I KNOW THAT THE PRESENCE OF THIS GOVERNMENT OWNED FACILITY IN THAT RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY IS A MAJOR ISSUE FOR MY CONSTITUENTS. AT THE TIME I LAST SPOKE OF THIS, I REITERATED THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION HAD AGREED TO RELOCATE THE DERELICT VEHICLE SITE AS SOON AS APPROPRIATE LAND WAS IDENTIFIED. MR. SPEAKER, I AM THEREFORE PLEASED TO ADVISE THE CONSTITUENTS OF SOUTHERN SHORES, IN PARTICULAR THE RESIDENTS OF MISTY GARDENS, MARSHALL ROAD AND THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF ANATOL RODGERS SCHOOL, THAT AN APPROPRIATE SITE

NEAR THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED BRINGING US ONE STEP CLOSER TO GETTING RID OF THIS VEXING PROBLEM THAT MY CONSTITUENTS HAVE HAD TO ENDURE FOR OVER TWENTY (20) YEARS.

MR. SPEAKER

FRANK WATSON PROMISED RELIEF AND DID NOT DELIVER. MY DECEASED FRIEND CHARLIE MAYNARD PROMISED RELIEF AND DID NOT DELIVER. BUT THIS MEMBER PROMISED THAT IT WOULD BE DONE AND AS THE SAYING GOES, "SO SAID, SO DONE".

MR. SPEAKER

THE IDENTIFIED SITE FOR RELOCATION OF THE DERELICT VEHICLE SITE WILL ENSURE THAT THE OPERATION IS OUT OF THE VIEW OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND IN A COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL AREA, WHERE IT OUGHT TO BE. I WANT TO THANK THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDS & SURVEYS FOR ASSISTING ME OVER THE PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS IN IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE LAND FOR THE RELOCATION. WE WILL NOW BEGIN THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING THE TIMELINES FOR PREPARATION OF THE NEW SITE AND THE RELOCATION.

MR. SPEAKER

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ADVISE THE RESIDENTS OF SOUTHERN SHORES THAT WE WILL CONTINUE OUR PROGRAMME OF CLEARING VACANT LOTS THROUGHOUT THE AREA. CRIME AND THE FEAR OF CRIME IS A SERIOUS CONCERN. I HAVE MANY SINGLE MOTHERS IN MY AREA. WHILE MANY MAY NOT THINK IT IMPORTANT, MY CONSTITUENTS HAVE CALLED FOR THE CLEARING OF VACANT LOTS NEAR RESIDENTIAL HOMES AS THEY HAVE BECOME SITES FOR ILLEGAL DUMPING AND ALLOW CRIMINALS TO LAY IN WAIT FOR UNSUSPECTING RESIDENTS. OUR OPERATION CLEAN SCENE WILL CONTINUE THROUGH THE NEXT TWO MONTHS.

WHAT IS TO COME

SOUTHERN SHORES FIRST ANNUAL MUSIC AND CULINARY FESTIVAL

REDEVELOPMENT OF VENDALL DRIVE PARK

REDEVELOPMENT OF MILLER'S HEIGHTS PARK

NEW PARK IN CARIBBEAN GARDENS

NEW PARK IN ROYAL PALM GARDENS

LAUNCH OF THE SOUTHERN SHORES COMPUTER LAB AND HOME WORK CENTRE

MR SPEAKER

I BEGIN MY CONTRIBUTION BY CONGRATULATING THIS GOVERNMENT, OF WHICH I AM APART, LED BY PRIME MINISTER AND MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE, RT HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE, FOR MAKING THE HARD AND SOMETIMES UNPOPULAR DECISIONS IN THE PAST YEAR THAT HAS NOW ALLOWED US TO BEGIN TO SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE LONG DARK FISCAL TUNNEL LEFT BEHIND BY THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION. OUR MEASURES TO CUT WASTE AND REDUCE SPENDING OVER THE PAST YEAR HAS LED TO THIS GOVERNMENT BEATING THE PROJECTED GFS DEFICIT OF 6.5% BY 40 BASIS POINTS.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS BUDGET, MORE THAN ANYTHING, IS ONE THAT GIVES THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE HOPE IN OUR FUTURE ONCE AGAIN. THIS BUDGET UNLIKE SOME PRESENTED IN RECENT YEARS FOCUSES ON THE BUILDING OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS BUDGET IS PROOF OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO PUTTING THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE FIRST AND SECURING THE FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. AS THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN HIS BUDGET COMMUNICATION TO THIS PLACE, "THIS IS A PIVOTAL BUDGET IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SMALL NATION. IT IS A BUDGET THAT SECURES THE FUTURE FOR ALL BAHAMIANS." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT, "THE ECONOMY HAS CLEARLY TURNED A

CORNER AND WE CAN ANTICIPATE STEADY ONGOING GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN THE PERIOD AHEAD.”

MR SPEAKER

THIS BUDGET IS ALSO PROOF POSITIVE TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE THAT THEIR COLLECTIVE DECISION OF MAY 7TH, 2012 TO FIRE THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION AND RETAIN THE SERVICES OF THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY WAS A GOOD ONE. THIS GOVERNMENT **IS** WORKING. AND DOING SO FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY AND DESPITE WHAT WE FOUND ON COMING TO OFFICE, IT IS MY OPINION THAT WE ARE DOING A GREAT JOB! THE SEEDS HAVE BEEN PLANTED AND IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS TO COME, THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE WILL REAP THE BENEFITS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE AND POSITIVE POLICIES AND INITIATIVES OF THIS GOVERNMENT.

MR. SPEAKER

THE SAME GROUP THAT WAS FIRED BY THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN PART FOR THEIR GROSS MISMANAGEMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S MONEY. THE SAME GROUP THAT LEFT A MOUNTAIN OF DEBT AND A PEOPLE IN DESPAIR CAN NOW FIX THEIR MOUTHS TO ASK WHERE THE MONEY THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION HAD TO BORROW WENT TO. CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT MR SPEAKER? CAN THIS GROUP POSSIBLY BE SERIOUS IN THEIR ENQUIRY IN

LIGHT OF THE DISMAL FISCAL STATE IN WHICH THEY LEFT THIS COUNTRY? LEST WE FORGET MR. SPEAKER, LAST YEAR THIS NEW PLP ADMINISTRATION HAD TO COVER A DEFICIT OF OVER FIVE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS (\$500,000,000) EVEN AFTER THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION BORROWED ALMOST TWO BILLION DOLLARS (\$2,000,000,000) BETWEEN 2007 AND 2012.

MR. SPEAKER, THEY CAN'T BE SERIOUS...SURELY NOT MR. SPEAKER! SURELY THEIR RANTINGS OF "WHERE DID THE MONEY GO" AND THE USE OF EUPHEMISMS SUCH AS "CHRISTIE-NOMICS" IS NOTHING MORE THAN AN ATTEMPT AT POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS. THEY ARE AFTER ALL A SHELL OF THE GROUP THEY ONCE WERE, TRYING TO "CATCH THEMSELVES" FROM THE NUMEROUS DEFEATS AT THE POLLS THAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED SINCE 2010. NOT TO MENTION THE DEFECTION, SORRY **RESIGNATION**, OF THEIR LEADER IN TIME OF CRISIS. MR. SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER

THE QUESTION OF 'WHERE DID THE MONEY GO' SHOULD REALLY BE AIMED AT THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION AND THOSE ON THE SIDE OPPOSITE. EXACTLY WHERE DID ALMOST TWO BILLION DOLLARS (\$2,000,000,000.00) GO? DID THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION CREATE PERMANENT JOBS.....NO.

DID THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION CREATE NEW INDUSTRIES.....NO. DID THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION ATTRACT ANY NEW INVESTORS OR MAJOR PROJECTS TO THE COUNTRY.....NO. SO WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

MR. SPEAKER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE AND MEMBER FOR GOLDEN ISLES IS A STRAIGHT FORWARD PERSON. HE STOOD IN THIS CHAMBER AND IN OTHER VENUES AND STATED SOME OF THE COMMITMENTS AND BILLS LEFT BEHIND BY THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION. HE MENTIONED THAT TWENTY THREE MILLION (\$23,000,000.00) WAS OWED FOR THE FIFTY TWO (52) WEEK PROGRAMME, SIXTY THREE MILLION (\$63,000,000.00) IN UNPAID CHEQUES AND ALMOST ELEVEN MILLION DOLLARS (\$11,000,000.00) TO THE TEACHER'S AND PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS. THIS IS IN ADDITION TO THE FIVE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN DEFICITS THAT WE MET UPON TAKING OFFICE. THIS ADMINISTRATION ALSO MET ALL OF THE SHORT TERM FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT MAXED OUT; THIS INCLUDES CENTRAL BANK ADVANCES AND BANK OVERDRAFTS. MR. SPEAKER WE SHOULD BE THE ONES ASKING THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION 'WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?'

BUT NONETHELESS THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE CAN REST

ASSURED THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION IS ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS AND ABOUT PRUDENT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESSIVE POLICIES.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS BUDGET IS BEING PRESENTED AT AN INTERESTING TIME IN OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. IT IS BEING PRESENTED AT A TIME WHEN OUR NATION IS TURNING FORTY YEARS OLD AND USUALLY AT FORTY, ONE COMES INTO ONE'S OWN AND OUR NATION IS NO DIFFERENT. WE ARE NOW AT THE AGE AS A NATION WHERE WE MUST MAKE SOME FIRM DECISIONS ON THE DIRECTION IN WHICH WE WILL BE GOING. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT IN MY VIEW THIS BUDGET AND THE OTHER INITIATIVES OF THIS ADMINISTRATION ARE STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, ONE OF PROSPERITY FOR OUR PEOPLE AND GROWTH IN OUR ECONOMY. WE ARE LIVING IN AN EXCITING TIME OF MODERNIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION. I AM HUMBLLED TO BE A PART OF THE GOVERNMENT AT THIS IMPORTANT TIME IN OUR HISTORY AS WE ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INSTITUTIONS ESTABLISHED BY OUR FOREFATHERS OF WHICH WE ARE THE INHERITORS, FOR THE USE OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

MR. SPEAKER

IN LIGHT OF THE WORDS OF THE PRIME MINISTER

FORECASTING EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES I WOULD LIKE TO ADVISE BAHAMIANS GENERALLY TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE. IF YOU HAVE NOT FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL, GO AND DO SO. IF YOU NEVER MADE IT TO COLLEGE, START TAKING CLASSES. IF YOU ARE DOING A JOB OR HAVE A TRADE FOR WHICH YOU ARE NOT CERTIFIED, SEEK CERTIFICATION. THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING ITS PART TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF OPPORTUNITY IN THE COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE MUST DO THEIR PART AS WELL. MR. SPEAKER THIS IS WHY INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY AND THE INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND MARINE SCIENCES FOR WHICH PROVISION IS MADE IN THIS BUDGET, ARE SO VITALLY IMPORTANT. PREPARING OUR PEOPLE FOR JOBS AND FOOD SECURITY ARE NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THIS ADMINISTRATION AND I COMMEND THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO PUTTING THE BAHAMAS ON A PATH TO SUCCEED IN AGRICULTURE AND DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMY.

MR. SPEAKER

I ALSO THINK THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR MAKING PROVISION FOR A SCHOOL DEDICATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ENSURING THAT THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS OBTAINS UNIVERSITY STATUS. MR. SPEAKER THESE

ARE ISSUES THAT BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL AISLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO AGREE ON AND I TRUST THAT THOSE OPPOSITE WILL SUPPORT THIS GOVERNMENT IN ITS EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN ONE OF REVELATIONS FOR ME. THESE REVELATIONS HAVE LED ME TO SOME RESOLUTIONS THAT WILL LEAD TO A REVOLUTION IN HOW SOME THINGS ARE DONE BY MY MINISTRY, AS YOU WILL SEE AS I MOVE ALONG IN MY COMMUNICATION.

IN MY LAST COMMUNICATION I DESCRIBED THE MERGING OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT AS "THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE BALANCE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS". THIS IS STILL TRUE TODAY AND HAS BEEN WHAT I HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO DO AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE.

MR. SPEAKER

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THIS NATION IS OUR GREATEST BLESSING. AT THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE'S (CCI) SUMMIT OF CARIBBEAN POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS HELD A FEW WEEKS AGO, I REMINDED SIR RICHARD BRANSON,

HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS AND GLOBAL BUSINESS LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM DO BUSINESS IN THE BAHAMAS, THAT THE BAHAMAS AND ITS PEOPLE ARE, "INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR SHALLOW BLUE SEAS AND OUR WAY OF LIFE." I REITERATED THAT THE ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINS OUR LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS AND IS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

IT IS THIS GOVERNMENT'S RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESERVATION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT WHICH LED IT TO CREATE THE FIRST MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT IN 2006 OF WHICH TODAY'S MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IS AN INHERITOR. IT IS THIS SAME RECOGNITION THAT HAS LED THIS GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS SUCH AS SOLAR PANELS AND LED APPLIANCES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL BAHAMIANS BY THE FACT THAT THEY ARE NOW DUTY FREE. THE PRIME MINISTER AND MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE REVEALED THIS IN HIS COMMUNICATION WHEN HE SAID, "FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS, WE ARE ALIGNING THE TARIFF RATE ON INVERTORS FOR SOLAR PANELS TO ZERO, IN LINE WITH A NEW DUTY FREE TREATMENT FOR PANELS AND THE DUTY ON LED APPLIANCES IS BEING ELIMINATED TO BRING IT IN LINE WITH THE TREATMENT OF LED LIGHT BULBS."

MR. SPEAKER

THIS GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT THE PRESERVATION OF THE BAHAMIAN ENVIRONMENT. THIS IS FURTHER EVIDENCED MR. SPEAKER IN THE ENERGY CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN THAT MY MINISTRY HAS LAUNCHED THROUGH MY MINISTRY'S NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MAGAZINE TITLED ECO BAHAMAS. FOUR MONTHS AGO I COMMITTED TO ITS CREATION; TODAY MR. SPEAKER IT IS DONE! WITHIN THE PAGES OF THIS MAGAZINE ARE ADVERTISEMENTS EDUCATING THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE ON SOME OF THE EASIER WAYS THAT THEY CAN CONSERVE ENERGY AND SAVE MONEY. I ALSO PERSONALLY VOICED THE COMMERCIALS THAT ARE IN PRODUCTION AS I SPEAK WHICH WILL BE AIRED ON THE RADIO AIRWAVES AND ALSO GIVE BAHAMIANS CONSERVATION TIPS. I MUST MENTION MR SPEAKER THAT THIS PUBLICATION WAS PRODUCED BY TALENTED YOUNG BAHAMIANS.

MR. SPEAKER

OUR ENVIRONMENT PERVADES OUR LIVES AND OUR ACTIVITIES. IT IS THE BASIS OF OUR WEALTH, BEING THAT OUR SUN, SAND AND SEA ARE THE FOUNDATION OF OUR NUMBER ONE INDUSTRY, TOURISM. IN THE MONTHS THAT I HAVE HELD THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, I HAVE GAINED AN EVEN GREATER RESPECT

FOR THE ENVIRONS OF OUR COUNTRY, ITS MAGNIFICENT BEAUTY AND THOSE WHO WORK TO PRESERVE IT.

THE BEST COMMISSION

MR. SPEAKER

THE BAHAMAS AS PART OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY IS FOCUSING ON "THE FUTURE WE WANT", THE THEME OF THE GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM I ATTENDED IN NAIROBI, KENYA IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR.

AT THAT MEETING, THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN ADVANCED ITS PROGRAMME OF WORK IN SEVEN AREAS: CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS, ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE, CHEMICALS AND WARFARE, RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND ENVIRONMENT UNDER REVIEW.

THE MINISTERS PRESENT RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF BETTER INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON ENSURING BETTER PROCESS AND SYSTEMS. THIS IS THE CHALLENGE THAT THE BAHAMAS ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY (BEST) COMMISSION FACES.

THE BEST COMMISSION CONTINUES TO BALANCE RESPONSIBLY THE GOALS OF PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE NOT

FRUSTRATING THE INTERESTS OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE BAHAMAS.

AS A PART OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE (CCI) TO PROTECT AT LEAST TWENTY PERCENT (20%) OF NEAR-SHORE MARINE AND COASTAL HABITATS BY 2020, THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING PLEDGED TO HONOUR ITS COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON PROTECTED AREAS, BY PROVIDING ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND (\$125,000.00) TOWARDS ITS TWO MILLION DOLLARS (\$2 MILLION) PLEDGE. I AM INDEED PLEASED TO ADVISE THAT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WAS MADE RECENTLY IN ADVANCING THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE. I WAS PRIVILEGED TO BE ABLE TO SIGN THE LEADER'S DECLARATION RECENTLY ON BEHALF OF THE BAHAMAS IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS WHICH HAS NOW BROUGHT TO A CLOSE A FIVE YEAR PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CARICOM STATES AND TERRITORIES IN THE CARIBBEAN. THE CCI IS A UNIQUE PRIVATE/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP WHICH WE HOPE WILL ADD TO OUR ABILITY TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT.

MR. SPEAKER

WE WILL CONTINUE TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND

BIODIVERSITY AND WE WILL SEEK INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THESE UNDER THE RIO CONVENTION. CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS US ALL – WHETHER YOU SUFFERED PROPERTY DAMAGE OR LOSS DUE TO THE UNUSUAL WEATHER PATTERN WE EXPERIENCED IN NEW PROVIDENCE AT THE END OF LAST MONTH, OR WHETHER YOU WERE INCONVENIENCED BY FLOODED IMPASSABLE ROADS; OR WHETHER AS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT YOU PARTICIPATED IN HAVING TO MAKE THE DECISION TO SHIFT LIMITED RESOURCES TO ASSIST THOSE IN NEED, YOU WERE AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE. THE BEST COMMISSION IS CURRENTLY OUR AGENCY WORKING WITH ALL OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES IN MITIGATING THE CONTRIBUTORS TO, AND MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF, CLIMATE CHANGE AND IN SECURING GRANT FUNDING ASSISTANCE FOR A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE LIKE THE BAHAMAS TO DO SO.

MR. SPEAKER

OUR MARINE ENVIRONMENT IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE. IT UNDERPINS THE ECONOMY OF THIS COUNTRY AND PROVIDES A SETTING FOR QUIET ENJOYMENT BY CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY. WORKING UNDER THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE, WE WILL EXPAND OUR MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL NETWORK. WORKING UNDER THE CONVENTION ON

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD), WE ARE PROMOTING THE CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY, THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF ECOLOGICAL COMPONENTS, AND THE EQUITABLE SHARING OF THE BENEFITS ARISING OUT OF THE UTILIZATION OF GENETIC RESOURCES.

THE BAHAMAS ALSO ADOPTED THE DRAFT BAHAMAS 2020 DECLARATION ON PROTECTED AREAS, TO AID IN MEETING ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS; ACCESS SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL FUNDING; CONTINUE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION; AND AID THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE. MR. SPEAKER, I AM ALSO PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT IN A FEW WEEKS THE BAHAMAS PROTECTED AREA FUND BILL, WHICH IS THE BAHAMIAN FUNDING VEHICLE FOR THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF SUCH RESOURCES WILL BE PRESENTED TO CABINET FOR APPROVAL.

MR. SPEAKER

EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO BETTER MANAGE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND PRACTICES FOR APPROVED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. I ASSURE YOU THAT MY MINISTRY, THROUGH OUR AGENCIES, CONTINUES TO KEEP THE INTEREST OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN THE FOREFRONT AS IT MONITORS THESE DEVELOPMENTS TO ALLOW FOR APPROVED

ACTIVITIES ONLY, AND TO ENSURE THAT PRACTICES ARE FOLLOWED THAT WILL ENSURE THAT THE PATRIMONY OF THIS NATION IS LEFT FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF BAHAMIANS YET TO COME. I WANT TO REASSURE BAHAMIANS THAT WE ARE LOOKING OUT FOR THE PROTECTION OF LAKE CUNNINGHAM, ADJACENT WETLANDS AND ASSOCIATED AQUATIC SPECIES AND THE BAHAMIAN COASTLINE. MY MINISTRY WILL NOT ALLOW DISCHARGE INTO OUR SEAS FROM GOLF COURSES OF WATER CONTAMINATED BY HERBICIDES, NUTRIENTS AND ALGAE WHICH DAMAGES THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT. MR. SPEAKER THAT IS WHY ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS IN THE FORM OF THE FREEPORT BYE-LAWS WILL BE LAID IN THIS HOUSE IN SHORT ORDER. THE MEMBER FOR PINERIDGE SPOKE ABOUT THIS IN HIS CONTRIBUTION. THAT IS ALSO WHY OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE AND MY MINISTRY WILL WORK ASSIDUOUSLY TO DELIVER A LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION AGENCY AND COMPREHENSIVE REGULATIONS TO GOVERN THE PETROLEUM RETAIL SECTOR AND OIL SECTOR.

MR. SPEAKER

WE NEED ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION THAT WILL SET OUT STANDARDS, PROCEDURES, DUTIES, LIMITS, AND OBLIGATIONS

FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS, AND WHICH WILL GOVERN HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND PROTECT BAHAMIAN RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY.

IT IS ENVISIONED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION WILL IMPROVE COORDINATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS IN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING. THIS WILL AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE UTILIZATION AND PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES. MY MINISTRY WILL CONTINUE TO PREPARE INTEGRATED LAND-USE PLANS NATIONWIDE; DEVELOP PROGRAMMES FOR INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONES AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES, PUBLIC & PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS, AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.

THE BEST COMMISSION HAS MUCH TO DO TO FULFILL ITS REMIT; AND THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE MINDED OF WHAT THE PASSION, ZEAL AND PROFESSIONALISM OF THE SMALL BAND OF BEST OFFICERS CAN, AND HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MR. SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL

HEALTH SERVICES.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS) IS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE CLEANLINESS, HYGIENE AND HEALTH OF BAHAMIANS. WASTE MANAGEMENT IS MORE THAN THE COLLECTION, TRANSPORT AND PROCESSING OR DISPOSAL OF MATERIALS PRODUCED BY HUMAN ACTIVITY. IT IS ALSO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PERSONNEL AND THE MONITORING OF ALL OF THE PRACTICES AND PROCESSES IN THE WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. CONSEQUENTLY, THE DEHS WAS REORGANIZED EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY AND TO EFFECT GREATER AND TIMELY SERVICE TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN BOTH ENCOURAGING AND HEARTENING.

THE ENTIRE TECHNICAL DIRECTORATE OF THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN EMPOWERED TO ACT RESPONSIBLY AND INDEPENDENTLY AND TO KEEP THE DIRECTOR INFORMED, FREEING THAT OFFICE UP FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH THE MINISTRY. THE SOLID WASTE DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BENEFITED FROM THE PRESENCE OF FULL TIME BAHAMIAN CONSULTANTS TO IMPLEMENT THE REFORMS BEING ADVANCED BY THE MINISTRY; TO IMPROVE REVENUE COLLECTION EFFORTS WITH RESPECT TO TIPPING FEES; TO CONDUCT AND ADDRESS THE ACCOUNT RECEIVABLES

ASSOCIATED WITH REVENUE INTAKE; TO MANAGE THE HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND PRIVATE CONTRACTORS AT THE LANDFILL; TO OVERSEE THE ENGAGEMENT OF A NEW SECURITY TEAM AND TO CONCEPTUALIZE AND PUT IN PLACE A VARIETY OF IMPROVEMENTS DESIGNED TO CREATE MORE EFFICIENCIES AT THE LANDFILL AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICE OFFERED. THERE IS A NEED FOR THE PUBLIC OFFICIALS AT THE DEHS TO BE PROVIDED SUPPORT AND ACTION IN RESPECT OF THE MINISTRY'S PLANNING AND REFORM EFFORTS IN THE SOLID WASTE DIVISION.

MR. SPEAKER

IN DECEMBER OF 2012, AT MY REQUEST, THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION PROVIDED A RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE WASTE MANAGEMENT PROCESS. THIS ASSESSMENT AIMED AT ESTABLISHING THE SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS AND IDENTIFYING ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE WASTE MANAGEMENT PROCESS IN THE BAHAMAS.

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH IRREGULAR GARBAGE COLLECTION RESULTING FROM A DEFICIENCY OF OPERABLE COLLECTION VEHICLES, A HELP DESK WAS ESTABLISHED AND THE UTILIZATION OF CONTRACTED COLLECTION SERVICES WAS EXPANDED BOTH IN NUMBER OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AND IN SCOPE OF COLLECTION.

I AM KEENLY AWARE OF THE NEED FOR AN EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE AND HAVE THEREFORE REVIEWED A NUMBER OF OPTIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINED PROVISION OF THE SERVICE OF RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE COLLECTION. OVER THE PAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS I HAVE DISSECTED THE DEHS, ANALYZING HOW IT DOES BUSINESS AND THE COST ASSOCIATED WITH EVERY FACET OF THE RESIDENTIAL COLLECTION REGIME. FINANCIAL CONSTRATINTS DID NOT ALLOW THE PURCHASE OF NEW TRUCKS BUT IT DID GIVE US TIME (WHILE CHALLENGED TO KEEP UP) TO HAVE A CLEARER PERSPECTIVE AS TO WHAT IS NEEDED AND WHAT DIRECTION WE SHOULD TAKE. IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS A DETAILED PROPOSAL WIILL BE PRESENTED TO CABINET. I WILL BE MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD, HAVING EXAMINED THE COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT OR PRIVATE SECTOR CARRYING OUT RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE COLLECTION. HOWEVER AS THE FLEET IS STILL SIGNIFICANTLY CHALLENGED ADDITIONAL PRIVATE COLLECTION SERVICES WILL BE ENEGAGED AT MY NEWLY RENEGOTIATED RATES PROVIDING ISLAND WIDE COVERAGE WHILE CABINET CHARTS THE NEW COURSE.

AS PART OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCIES, THE COLLECTIONS DIVISION BEGAN AN ISLAND WIDE MICRO ROUTING STUDY TO IDENTIFY POPULATION DENSITIES,

IDENTIFY MULTI DWELLING UNITS, STORAGE TYPES AND STORAGE CAPACITIES. THE INFORMATION BEING GATHERED WILL BE USED TO RESTRUCTURE COLLECTION ROUTES AND TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO LANDLORDS AND HOUSEHOLDERS WITH RESPECT TO THE PROPER STORAGE CAPACITY. THE INFORMATION BEING GATHERED HAS ALREADY ALLOWED US TO IDENTIFY UNJUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS, COMMERCIAL HOME BASED BUSINESSES AND PROPERTIES WITH INSUFFICIENT STORAGE IN COMPLETED AREAS. SOLUTIONS TO THESE MATTERS FURTHER INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE UNIT. THE MICROROUTING STUDY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A TIME AND MOTION STUDY DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE NEXT FISCAL PERIOD TO ENSURE THAT THE CHANGES MADE TRANSLATE TO SUSTAINED STANDARD ROUTE COLLECTION AND COMPLETION. THE USE OF ADDITIONAL ROUTE COLLECTION MONITORS WILL ALSO PROVIDE GREATER ABILITY TO QUICKLY IDENTIFY AND CORRECT PROBLEMS.

MR. SPEAKER

WASTE MUST BE BOTH COLLECTED AND PROPERLY DISPOSED IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND MANNER THEREFORE THE MINISTRY IS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH A WASTE MANAGEMENT COMPANY TO DECONSTRUCT THE LANDFILL AND DEVELOP A MATERIAL RECYCLING FACILITY ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE VENTURE WOULD ALLOW FOR THE

INFUSION OF THE CAPITAL NEEDED TO PROPERLY HANDLE AND PROCESS THE WASTE STREAM. THE PRIORITIES AS DEFINED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING ARE THE PREVENTION OF FIRES AND THE REDUCTION OF THE WASTE REQUIRING LAND FILLING. THE LONGER TERM PLAN IS TO DECONSTRUCT THE LANDFILL THUS RECLAIMING THE LAND FOR USE AS A UTILITY SCALE SOLAR FIELD, GREEN SPACE OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE USE.

MR. SPEAKER

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, THE DEHS WILL LAUNCH A LIMITED BULK WASTE COLLECTION PROGRAM TO ADDRESS THE COLLECTION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES. THE CLEARANCE OF SITES WITH VAST ACCUMULATIONS WILL BE ADDRESSED WITHIN THE PROGRAM AS SHORT-TERM PROJECTS. TO PREVENT RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THESE ILLEGAL SITES VIDEO SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS WILL BE INSTALLED TO ALLOW IDENTIFICATION AND PROSECUTION OF PERSONS IDENTIFIED INDISCRIMINATELY DUMPING, AS SOON AS FUNDING ALLOWS.

MR. SPEAKER

DURING THIS BUDGET CYCLE, THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING HAS ACQUIRED THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SITES IN THE FAMILY ISLANDS. DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE NEW

FISCAL PERIOD, ALL FAMILY ISLAND OPERATIONS WILL BE REVIEWED TO DEFINE THE MOST FEASIBLE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS FOR EACH ISLAND. THE DEHS WILL ALSO SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS THE WASTE DISPOSAL SITE CLOSURE ON RUSSELL ISLAND, ITS RELOCATION AND BARGING TO THE MAINLAND. THE LANDFILLS AT BIMINI AND SNAKE CAY ABACO WILL BE PRIORITIZED.

FINANCING ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM

MR. SPEAKER

THE ENACTMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY FUND IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AS IT PROVIDES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS. THE LEVY FUND WILL ALSO FUND THE PROVISION OF WASTE RECEPTACLES AT STREET SIDE AND IN PUBLIC SPACES, AND OTHER NECESSARY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY FUND IS A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF THE LOAN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT AND THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. HENCE LEGISLATION WILL BE TABLED IN PARLIAMENT IN SHORT ORDER TO CREATE THE FUND, WHICH WILL ASSIST IN DEFRAYING THE COST OF MANAGING OUR WASTE DISPOSAL SITE THROUGHOUT THE BAHAMAS.

MR SPEAKER

TO ENSURE THAT THE IMPROVEMENTS AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT ARE SUSTAINED, THE TIPPING FEES WILL BE INCREASED. CONCURRENTLY MORE AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS ARE TO BE TAKEN TO COLLECT OUTSTANDING AMOUNTS. IN THIS REGARD STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO OFFSET PAYMENTS TO THE CONTRACTOR FOR THE NEW PROVIDENCE ROADWORKS FOR THE OUTSTANDING FEES PAYABLE TO THE DEHS FOR USE OF THE LANDFILL. THE DEHS HAS ALSO ENTERED INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH A BAHAMIAN COMPANY TO OFFSET ITS OWED TIPPING FEE THROUGH COLLECTION SERVICES.

ANY SOLID WASTE STRATEGY MUST INCLUDE INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES WHICH IMPLEMENT WASTE REDUCTION TECHNIQUES. THE INCENTIVE MAY BE IN THE FORM OF REDUCED TAXES ON CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF GOODS OR REDUCED UTILITY RATES. THE GOVERNMENT IS REVIEWING OPTIONS FOR THE BEST SOLUTION FOR THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL.

VECTOR CONTROL

MR. SPEAKER

KEEPING THE ENVIRONMENT CLEAN IS IMPORTANT FOR ENSURING A HEALTHY BAHAMAS. THE VECTOR CONTROL DIVISION OF THE DEHS CONTINUES TO MONITOR MOSQUITO

INDICES IN ITS EFFORTS TO CONTROL MOSQUITO BORNE DISEASES SUCH AS DENGUE AND MALARIA. THE PROGRAM HAS HAD GREAT SUCCESS DURING THIS BUDGET YEAR AND IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT DURING THE NEXT BUDGET CYCLE THE PROGRAM WILL BE ENHANCED THROUGH THE USE OF ADDITIONAL ULV AND OTHER EQUIPMENT TO ASSIST IN MOSQUITO CONTROL. THE FAMILY ISLAND UNITS WILL BENEFIT FROM THE REPLACEMENT OR ADDITION OF TRUCKS TO FACILITATE REGULAR FOGGING IN THE RAINY SEASON. A MAJOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAM HAS BEEN AFFECTED TO ALLOW FOR THE BEST COVERAGE POSSIBLE. THE INCREASE IN VENDORS HAS RESULTED IN MORE EQUIPMENT AND INSECTICIDE AVAILABILITY WITHIN THE SAME BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK. THE VECTOR CONTROL UNIT, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (BNGIS) CONTINUES TO DEVELOP ITS VECTOR MAPPING PROGRAM WHICH PROVIDES IMPORTANT DATA FOR PLANNING CONTROL MEASURES. AN INTENSIVE RODENT CONTROL PROGRAM WAS INITIATED IN THE LATTER PART OF THIS BUDGET YEAR AND WILL CONTINUE IN THE UPCOMING YEAR. THE INITIAL FOCUS IS ON BAY STREET AND THE DOWNTOWN ENVIRONS, BUT OPERATIONS WILL PROGRESSIVELY MOVE TO INCLUDE POTTER'S CAY, ARAWAK CAY, AND THROUGHOUT NEW PROVIDENCE. THE PROGRAM

INCORPORATES EDUCATION, RODENT PROOFING AND EXTERMINATION.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS IN THIS BUDGET CYCLE APPROVED THE PURCHASE OF SOME TWELVE (12) NEW VEHICLES FOR THE DEHS MAINLY TO ASSIST FAMILY ISLAND OFFICERS TO PROPERLY FOG EVEN THE MOST INACCESSIBLE SPOTS.

SHANTY TOWNS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE PROLIFERATION OF SHANTY TOWNS IS A VEXATIOUS PROBLEM. THEY OPERATE OUTSIDE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPER SANITATION, WITHOUT REGARD TO THE BUILDING CODE AND IN VIOLATION OF SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTRICITY. THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IS TAKING STEPS TO PROACTIVELY ADDRESS ALL OF THESE INFRACTIONS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SURROUNDING THE PROLIFERATION OF SHANTY TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. A SPECIAL PROJECT UNIT (SPU) WAS CREATED WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HOUSING TO ADDRESS THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH SHANTY TOWNS.

THE SPECIAL PROJECT UNIT HEADED BY AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR IN THE DEHS BENEFITED FROM A REPORT ON

SHANTY TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS PREPARED BY BNGIS. EXISTING REPORTS ON IDENTIFIED SHANTY TOWNS IN NASSAU, ABACO, EXUMA AND ELEUTHERA ARE BEING UPDATED AND NEW REPORTS ARE BEING PREPARED IN RESPECT OF SHANTY TOWNS FOR WHICH THE DEHS (DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES) HAS NOT CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION.

MR. SPEAKER, THE PROTOCOL OF OPERATIONS TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEALING WITH THE SHANTY TOWNS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. A COPY OF ALL NOTICES SERVED ON THE OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF SHANTY TOWNS BY DEHS WILL BE COPIED TO THE MINISTRY OF WORKS, THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY, AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

THE MINISTRY OF WORKS WILL SERVE NOTICES IT MAY DEEM APPROPRIATE AND SHANTY TOWN OCCUPIERS AND/OWNERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE AN OCCUPANCY CERTIFICATE, APPROVED BUILDING PLAN/PERMIT FROM THE M.O.W, APPROVED BEC CONNECTION AND APPROVED WATER & SEWERAGE CONNECTION. IF THESE CANNOT BE PRODUCED THE MINISTRY OF WORKS WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTION.

(SPEAK EXTEMPORANEOUSLY)

NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST

MR. SPEAKER,

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IS ASSISTED IN ACHIEVING ITS ENVIRONMENTAL PORTFOLIO OBJECTIVES THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS. REGULAR MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THESE NGOs KEEP ME INFORMED OF ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES THROUGHOUT THE ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS.

INITIATIVES WILL BE EXPLORED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND THE WILSON AND HAROLD PONDS NATIONAL PARK AND BONEFISH NATIONAL PARK ON NEW PROVIDENCE. SATELLITE IMAGERY INDICATES THAT WILSON AND HAROLD PONDS ARE BEING OVERTAKEN BY CATTAILS. IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO REMOVE THIS INVASIVE SPECIES IN ORDER FOR THE PONDS TO RETURN TO THEIR NATURAL STATE. IN BONEFISH NATIONAL PARK, HUMAN ACTIVITY AND THE GREED FOR LAND IS THE PROBLEM. THE GRANTING OF CROWN BY THE FORMER GOVERNMENT TO CHURCHES IN WETLANDS AND ALLOWING THEM TO "FILL IN" THESE AREAS WAS WRONG. WHILE CEASE AND DESIST

ORDERS HAVE BEEN ADVANCED BY THE MINISTRY OF WORKS, THIS SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

MR. SPEAKER

THE FAMILY ISLANDS RECEIVE CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION FROM THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST (BNT). THE BNT HAS INFORMED ME THAT THE FLAMINGOES IN INAGUA ARE CURRENTLY NESTING IN WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE LARGEST NESTING EVER. I PROPOSE TO VISIT THE ISLAND IN EARLY JUNE TO OBSERVE FIRSTHAND THIS INCREDIBLE CYCLE OF NATURE.

THE GOVERNMENT'S SUBVENTION TO THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST IS ONE MILLION ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$1,125,000.00) WHICH HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY CUTS TO VARIOUS OTHER BUDGET ITEMS.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

MR. SPEAKER

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IS ANOTHER NON-PROFIT, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION THAT WORKS WITH THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IN ADDRESSING THE MOST PRESSING CONSERVATION THREATS ON THE LARGEST SCALE. THIS ORGANIZATION IS KEENLY PROACTIVE IN ECOLOGICALLY PROTECTING SENSITIVE LANDS

AND WATER FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE.

WE HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY TO FULFILL THE BAHAMAS' GOALS OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE. THE MINISTRY HAS PARTNERED WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY ON THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY FULL SIZE PROJECT, ENTITLED "BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK." THIS PROJECT IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE BAHAMAS WITH ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE. UNDER THE GEF FULL SIZE PROJECT SOME FUNDING WILL BE PROVIDED TO –

- ESTABLISH A PROTECTED AREAS WEBSITE;
- CREATE A FACEBOOK PAGE THAT DISSEMINATED INFORMATION ABOUT PROTECTED AREAS; AND
- UPDATE THE BAHAMAS ECOLOGICAL GAP ASSESSMENT WHICH IDENTIFIES ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT AREAS THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM.

MR. SPEAKER

EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE WAITT FOUNDATION AND THE TNC CONDUCTED A RAPID ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SOME OF THE SOUTHERN BAHAMA ISLANDS INCLUDING CROOKED

ISLAND, PLANA CAYS AND ACKLINS. I LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING THAT RESEARCH AND SHARING IT WITH COLLEAGUES. I WANT TO PUBLICLY THANK TED WAITT AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FOR THEIR WORK IN THE BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS MINISTRY IS COMMITTED TO THE EXTENSION OF THE NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM TO INCLUDE MARINE AND COASTAL AREAS. LAST MONTH, I SIGNED A LEADERS DECLARATION IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS THAT PLACES THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT UNDER OBLIGATION TO CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY PROTECT IMPORTANT MARINE RESOURCES IN THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, THIS WILL BE DONE WITHOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 'NO TAKE ZONES', RESPECTING THE TRADITIONAL FISHING AND RECREATIONAL GROUNDS FOR BAHAMIANS. ACCESSION TO THIS DECLARATION SIGNALS THE COMMENCEMENT OF PHASE II OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE. IT IS MY INTENTION TO COMPLETE THIS COMMITMENT AHEAD OF SCHEDULE BY 2014. SUCH AN ACCOMPLISHMENT WILL MAKE US LEADERS IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION, AND BE A FINE TESTAMENT TO THE WORLD THAT WE CHERISH OUR NATURAL RESOURCES IN THIS WONDERFUL PLACE WE CALL HOME.

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING CONTINUES TO COLLABORATE WITH THE NATURE CONSERVANCY ON –

- THE EXECUTION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS ON CORAL REEF RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGES AND MANGROVE RESTORATION; IN THIS REGARD WE ARE WORKING WITH THE TNC AND BREEF TO DRAFT LEGISLATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CORAL REEFS.
- THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT BY THE REMOVAL OF SUNKEN VESSELS;
- THE DEVELOPMENT OF A ROADMAP FOR KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND INITIATIVES TO BE ADDRESSED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE; AND
- THE COORDINATION AND ORGANIZATION OF A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCLAVE LATER THIS YEAR, WHICH WE HOPE TO HOST IN GRAND BAHAMA OR ON THE ISLAND OF ABACO.

FORESTRY

MR. SPEAKER

THE MANDATE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT ALSO INCLUDES RESPONSIBILITY FOR FORESTRY RESERVES.

THE FORESTRY UNIT FACILITATES THE PROVISION OF CRITICAL SERVICES FOR THE LONG TERM CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF BAHAMIAN FORESTS. I AM

PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING, THROUGH THE FORESTRY UNIT, WILL CONTINUE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN THIS FISCAL PERIOD. ADDITIONAL STAFF WILL BE RECRUITED WITHIN THE FORESTRY UNIT TO BUILD CAPACITY. MEANWHILE, WE WILL CONTINUE THE ARRANGEMENT THAT ALLOWS BNT OFFICERS TO SERVE AS FORESTRY OFFICERS IN THE FAMILY ISLANDS.

BASIC FOREST MANAGEMENT TRAINING WHICH BEGAN LAST NOVEMBER WILL CONTINUE IN THIS FISCAL PERIOD, WHERE BNT PARK WARDENS , ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND BEST COMMISSION OFFICERS AND FORESTRY FIELD STAFF ARE BEING TRAINED UNDER A \$440,000.00 TECHNICAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO). LOGGING (THINNING) PILOT PROGRAMME WILL EMANATE THIS TRAINING WHERE A DEMONSTRATION SAWMILL WILL BE ERECTED TO CONVERT PINE TREE THININGS INTO HIGH END FOREST

ADDITIONALLY, IT IS EXPECTED THAT REVENUE WILL BE GENERATED FROM A FIVE YEAR RENEWABLE TIMBER HARVESTING LICENSE AWARDED TO LINDAR INDUSTRIES TO SYSTEMATICALLY THIN OUT TWO AREAS OF CROWN LAND PINE FORESTS IN ABACO. THE PROJECT WILL RESULT IN THE

PRODUCTION OF HIGH END FINISHED TIMBER PRODUCTS FOR SALE TO THE LOCAL AND POSSIBLY EXPORT MARKETS. THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO RECEIVE 10% ROYALTIES ON THE SELLING PRICE OF THE FINISHED PRODUCTS.

ALSO OF NOTE, MR. SPEAKER, IS THE LAUNCH OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) FULL SIZE MULTI FOCAL AREA PROJECT FOR THE BAHAMAS, TITLED "PINE ISLANDS – FOREST/MANGROVES INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION (GRAND BAHAMA, NEW PROVIDENCE, ABACO AND ANDROS). THIS 48 MONTHS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE GEF AND THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT VIA GRANT AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS. ITS OUTCOMES ARE THE CREATION OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO ENHANCE SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT, AND TO ENABLE THE INTEGRATION OF BIODIVERSITY INTO LAND USE PLANNING. THE FORESTRY UNIT OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING IS THE LEAD AGENCY. STAKEHOLDERS ARE: THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL PLANNING, THE BEST COMMISSION, THE BNGIS CENTRE, THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST, THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY, ANCAT, FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, BAIC, AND THE STRAW MARKET AUTHORITY. THE PROJECT WILL PROVIDE PILOT MODELS FOR SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY MANAGEMENT AND LIVELIHOODS ACROSS THE BAHAMAS (EG. SUSTAINABLE PINE FOREST PRODUCTION, NON-

TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS: CASCARILLA BARK AND SUSTAINABLE THATCH PRODUCTION, AGRO-FORESTRY AND STRAW MARKET PRODUCTS).

MR. SPEAKER, THE URBANIZATION OF NEW PROVIDENCE WILL REQUIRE US IN THE UPCOMING-FISCAL YEAR TO CONSIDER THE DISCONTINUATION OF HUNTING IN AREAS, WHICH NOW BORDER RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HUNTING INDUSTRY TO EXPAND DOMESTIC AND ECO TOURISM IN THE FAMILY ISLANDS, PARTICULARLY ANDROS WILL BE A TOP PRIORITY OF MY MINISTRY. AS A REVENUE GENERATING INITIATIVE, UNDER THE PROPOSED WILD BIRD AND PROTECTION REGULATIONS, IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE EACH HUNTER WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY AN ANNUAL LICENCE FEE OF \$200.00. THEREFORE, WHEN APPLICATION IS MADE FOR A GUN LICENCE OR A RENEWAL, AND THE REASON FOR THE USE OF THE GUN IS HUNTING, THE POLICE WILL NOW BE ABLE TO REQUIRE APPLICANTS TO FURNISH A VALID HUNTER'S LICENCE.

THE NASSAU BOTANICAL GARDENS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE NASSAU BOTANICAL GARDENS IS AN OASIS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF THE CITY. OVER THE YEARS

DUE TO STORMS AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES THE GARDENS HAVE LOST SOME OF ITS MAGNIFICENT FEATURES LIKE THE WATERFALLS, PATHWAYS AND ATTRACTIONS LIKE THE SIR MILO BUTLER LOFT AND THE CONCH SHELL ARCH. HOWEVER, PLANS FOR RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NASSAU BOTANICAL GARDENS ARE SET FOR THE UPCOMING BUDGET PERIOD. THE NEED FOR A THOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE AREA TO PREVENT UNWARRANTED DESTRUCTION OF HERITAGE ARTIFACTS WILL BE CONDUCTED BEFORE THE PLANNED RENOVATIONS CAN TAKE PLACE. APPROVAL FOR THIS EXERCISE HAS BEEN OBTAINED. THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST MY MINISTRY IN THE PROPOSED BAHAMAS BOTANICAL CONSERVANCY AND THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST SHARING THE COST OF RESTORING THESE GROUNDS TO A SITE OF WHICH ALL BAHAMIANS CAN BE PROUD AND WHICH WILL CREATE REVENUE STREAMS TO AID IN ITS SUSTAINABILITY. ONGOING PLANS INCLUDE THE PRODUCTION OF INDIGENOUS AND ORNAMENTAL PLANTS FOR SALE AND THE LANDSCAPING OF PUBLIC SPACES (VERGES, GREEN SPACES, PARKS, GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS/OFFICES ETC.); HOSTING OF FUNCTIONS (EVENTS) CONSISTENT WITH TERMS FOR USE AND TOURS OF THE GARDENS. THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IS CONSIDERING PROJECTS THAT INCLUDE AN EXPANSION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS;

CURATION AND DIGITIZATION OF PLANT SPECIMENS AND EXPANSION OF THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL HERBARIUM; AND INFRASTRUCTURAL CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENTS IN ROADWAYS, IRRIGATION, ELECTRICAL, SEWER, TELEPHONES AND CORRESPONDING SERVICES.

MR. SPEAKER, THE PRIME MINISTER AND RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE HAS REQUESTED THAT THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING SEEK SUPPORT FROM THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND NGO TO IDENTIFY AND CREATE A SYSTEM OF BOTANICAL GARDENS WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE FAMILY ISLANDS. THIS SYSTEM WILL INSURE IN PERPETUITY EASY ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES AND NATURAL AREAS FOR RECREATION AND ENJOYMENT BY FAMILY ISLAND RESIDENTS.

MR. SPEAKER THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISION OF A SYSTEM OF URBAN BOTANICAL PARKS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES IS ONE THAT IS EASILY EMBRACED AND WILL BE SUPPORTED BY BAHAMIANS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. URBAN BOTANICAL PARKS HAVE LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED AS MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PHYSICAL AND AESTHETIC QUALITY OF URBAN AREAS. ONE ONLY NEED LOOK AT ANOTHER ISLAND NORTH OF US MANHATTAN, WHICH HAS LOST ALL OF ITS

GREEN SPACE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ICONIC CENTRAL PARK.

THE BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT ARE MANY, HOWEVER, WITH YOUR PERMISSION MR. SPEAKER I WILL DESCRIBE A FEW OF THOSE BENEFITS:

- MANY LOCAL SETTLEMENTS ON THE FAMILY ISLANDS LACK A CITY CENTRE. ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF THIS IS MARSH HARBOUR IN ABACO. AN URBAN BOTANICAL PARK COULD ACT AS A CENTRAL AREA FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, TOURISM INFORMATION AS WELL AS A STAGING AREA FOR NATIONAL EVENTS SUCH AS INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS. URBAN BOTANICAL GARDENS CAN ALSO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPLIMENTARY BUSINESSES TO THE OUTDOOR SPACE SUCH AS ICE CREAM SHOPPES, COFFEE SHOPS, BAKERIES AND OTHER SIMILAR ESTABLISHMENTS.
- THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY LIFE STYLES AND ACCESS TO A SAFE AREA FOR WALKING AND RUNNING WOULD BE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY LIFE. AN EASY EXAMPLE FOR COMPARISON WOULD HAVE BEEN THE BEAUTIFULLY PLANTED AREA THAT RAN IN FRONT OF THE CABLE BEACH HOTELS AS WELL AS THE NEWLY

DEVELOPED AREA CREATED BY BAHAMAR TO REPLACE THE MEDIAN WALKING STRIP.

- WELL PLANNED AND PLANTED URBAN BOTANICAL PARKS CAN BECOME WILDLIFE OASIS IN DEVELOPED AREAS. THESE AREAS BECOME NOT ONLY IMPORTANT FOR LOCAL BIRDS BUT ESSENTIAL AREAS FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS WHO NEED FOOD, WATER AND TREE COVER AS THEY MAKE THEIR ANNUAL MIGRATIONS. THE PARKS THEN BECOME AREAS THAT SUPPORT URBAN BIRDING PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS AND WILL BECOME KEY AREAS FOR YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMMES.
- URBAN BOTANICAL PARKS CAN STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORPORATE AND NGO PARTNERSHIPS. COMMUNITY PARKS CAN PROVIDE STAGING PLACES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS TO ACCOMPLISH EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH, ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS.
- THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE URBAN BOTANICAL AREAS ARE IDEAL FOR PROVIDING SUMMER EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH IN COMMUNITIES. THE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN

RECEIVE TRAINING IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS LEARNING BASIC CONSTRUCTION SKILLS. ADDITIONALLY THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARKS WILL GIVE THEM OWNERSHIP AND DISCOURAGE VANDALISM AND INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES IN THESE COMMUNITY PARKS.

- URBAN BOTANICAL AREAS PROVIDE A STAGING PLACE FOR A NUMBER OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. EDUCATORS CAN USE THE AREAS TO ORGANIZE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON PLANTS, INSECTS AND BIRDS.
- THESE PARKS WITH PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE CAN ALSO BECOME STAGING AREAS FOR COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL CONCERTS AND THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES.

A SYSTEM OF SMALL URBAN PARKS THAT PROMOTE NATIVE TREES THAT INCORPORATE GOOD URBAN DESIGN CAN BE IMPORTANT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PRIDE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS. MR. SPEAKER, I THANK THE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE FOR HIS VISION AND I INVITE MEMBERS IN THIS PLACE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO REPRESENT FAMILY ISLAND CONSTITUENCIES TO MAKE

REPRESENTATION TO ME OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AND PROVIDE YOU THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ON WHERE YOU THINK AN URBAN BOTANICAL GARDEN SHOULD BE PLACED IN YOUR CONSTITUENCY.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MR. SPEAKER,

MOMENTUM IS GROWING FOR THE ENDORSEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AS A POLITICAL PRIORITY THROUGH EXPLICIT COMMITMENTS TO ACTIONS. THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING BELIEVES THAT SUSTAINABLE ENERGY IS KEY TO OUR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT WITH MINIMUM LONG TERM EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. OUR NATIONAL AGENDA SHOULD INCLUDE INCREASING THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY, IMPROVING ENERGY CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCIES, AND ADDRESSING IN A MEANINGFUL WAY, THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ENERGY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT MATTERS.

IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIES OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY, THERE IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. A SHIFT TOWARD MORE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY BY THE BAHAMAS HELPS US GLOBALLY TO STAY WITHIN THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOAL OF 2°C GLOBAL TEMPERATURE RISE.

MR. SPEAKER,

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY IS AN AMBITIOUS GOAL. JUST AS THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS STARTED A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT FOOD SECURITY, WE MUST ALSO HAVE A DISCUSSION ABOUT THIS COUNTRY'S ENERGY SECURITY.

MR. SPEAKER

SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES WILL DRAMATICALLY REDUCE GREEN HOUSE GAS EMISSION, HELP TO INSULATE US AGAINST FUEL PRICE VOLATILITY AND BENEFIT ALL. MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGY AND THERE ARE MANY CITIZENS EAGER TO EXPERIMENT IN THIS FIELD.

HOWEVER, THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING WILL NOT EXPERIMENT WITH THE ENERGY NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY. THE GOVERNMENT MUST FIRST SET CLEAR TARGETS AND STRATEGIES, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A SET OF NATIONAL POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT ENABLE CHANGE WHICH THE MARKET ALONE CANNOT DELIVER. ENABLING CONDITIONS MUST BE DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND ACCELERATE SCALING UP OF PROVEN SOLUTIONS. THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING KNOWS, THAT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THESE ENDEAVORS BUILD ON NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND

LOCAL PARTICIPATION. PUBLIC FUNDS ARE INSUFFICIENT TO IMPLEMENT TRANSFORMATIVE ENERGY PROGRAMMES AND HENCE OUR MODEL WILL INCLUDE PRIVATE CAPITAL AND PRIVATE PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS.

TO ASSIST IN THIS THRUST, CABINET APPOINTED A NATIONAL ENERGY TASK FORCE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL STAKEHOLDER AGENCIES. THE ENERGY TASK FORCE IS TO ADVISE HOW THE BAHAMAS CAN BEST MEET ITS ENERGY NEEDS. SPECIFICALLY, THE NETF IS TO ADVISE ON THE DEVELOPMENT, CONSERVATION, GENERATION AND EFFICIENT USE OF CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY THAT CAN ASSIST IN FULFILLING THE NATION'S ENERGY NEEDS. THE TASK FORCE EXAMINED ALL PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR RENEWAL ENERGY GENERATION. THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE IS BEING MODIFIED AND I AM ADVISED WILL BE SUBMITTED TO ME IN A FEW DAYS. I LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING THE REPORT AND PRESENTING IT TO CABINET FOR CONSIDERATION.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IS COMPLETING AN INTER AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FOR A SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT INSTALLATION PROJECT. ONE HUNDRED SOLAR

WATER HEATERS, AND 32 PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR SYSTEMS WILL BE INSTALLED IN HOMES THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BAHAMAS. THE HOMES WILL BE MONITORED, THE SYSTEMS MAINTAINED AND DATA COLLECTED TO GAIN INFORMATION TO GOVERN AND REGULATE A NEW AND VIBRANT INDUSTRY. WE HOPE THAT THE USERS OF THIS PRODUCT WILL REALIZE ENERGY COST SAVINGS, AND WILL ALSO PRODUCE NUMEROUS ENTREPRENEURS, AND ULTIMATELY JOBS FOR INSTALLERS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS AND MAINTENANCE OF THESE SYSTEMS.

CLINTON CLIMATE INITIATIVE

IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR, A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE CLINTON CLIMATE INITIATIVE (CCI) WHICH IS A PART OF THE CLINTON FOUNDATION, HEADED BY FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON. HE TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE, HILLARY HEADS THIS INITIATIVE.

IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FORECASTING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTERCONNECTION POLICY IN THE BAHAMAS THAT WOULD BOTH ALLOW FOR AND MAKE ECONOMIC THE WIDESPREAD INSTALLATION OF RESIDENTIAL, GRID-CONNECTION, DISTRIBUTED SOLAR PV SYSTEMS. THE FOUNDATION WILL SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE AND ENSURE ITS

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH INCLUDING PROVIDING SOURCES OF FINANCING TO SUPPORT THE POLICY.

OIL EXPLORATION

MR. SPEAKER,

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION IS ANOTHER AREA WHERE WE HAVE TO BALANCE DEVELOPMENT WITH PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. CURRENTLY, PETROLEUM EXPLORATION LICENSES WERE ISSUED TO TWO COMPANIES, BAHAMAS OFFSHORE PETROLEUM LIMITED (FOUR (4) LICENSES) AND ISLAND OFFSHORE PETROLEUM LIMITED (ONE LICENSE). THESE ARE HOLDING COMPANIES OF BAHAMAS PETROLEUM COMPANY. THESE COMPANIES HAVE CONDUCTED AND EVALUATED 2D AND 3D SEISMIC TESTS, AND HAVE IDENTIFIED AREAS OF INTEREST FOR THE DRILLING OF AN EXPLORATORY WELL. AS THEIR LICENSE PERIOD HAS EXPIRED, BPC HAS APPLIED FOR RENEWAL OF THE LICENSES. THE TERMS FOR THE RENEWAL PERIOD ARE STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNMENT.

OVER THE NEXT SIX (6) MONTHS MY MINISTRY AND THE AGO WILL FOCUS ON THREE TRANSFORMATIVE LEGISLATIVE REGIMES:

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND PROTECTION AGENCY AND REGULATIONS FOR THE OIL, ENERGY AND PETROLEUM SECTORS
2. A NEW FINANCIAL AND REGULATORY REGIME FOR ARAGONITE, SALT AND SANDMINING.
3. A NEW FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR OIL EXPLORATION.

GOVERNMENT HAS ENGAGED A CONSULTANT TO ADVISE US ON THE PROPOSED NEW REGULATORY REGIME FOR THE PETROLEUM SECTOR INCLUDING A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL REGIME.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

MR. SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO THE OTHER HALF OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING.

MR. SPEAKER

IN MY SHORT TIME IN OFFICE THE REVELATIONS THAT I SPOKE OF EARLIER AS PERTAINS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING PROGRAMME HAVE LED ME TO INSIST THAT THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE OBTAIN VALUE FOR MONEY. AS WE ALL KNOW THE HOMES THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTS ARE NOT FREE. THEY ARE IN FACT PURCHASED WITH A LOAN THAT THE

HOMEOWNERS ARE OBLIGATED TO SATISFY. NOT ONLY DO THOSE THAT PURCHASE THESE HOMES DESERVE VALUE FOR MONEY BUT SO DO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE GENERALLY BECAUSE IT IS THE PEOPLE'S MONEY BEING USED TO FINANCE THE VARIOUS HOUSING PROJECTS.

MR. SPEAKER

IT IS IMPERATIVE AS THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING THAT I DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO MODERNIZE AND CORRECT THE PROCESSES OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME THROUGH CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION. I HAVE FOUND IN SOME CASES THAT USING OBSOLETE PROCESSES IS JUST AS INEFFECTIVE AND EXPENSIVE AS DOING SHODDY WORK. I HAVE ENDEAVOURED WHEREVER POSSIBLE, TO MODERNIZE AND TO BRING IN LINE WITH PRIVATE SECTOR PRACTICES WHAT IS BEING DONE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING. MY GOAL MR. SPEAKER ALONG WITH PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY IS TO ENSURE THAT THIS PROGRAMME IS SUSTAINED AND AVAILABLE FOR USE OF GENERATIONS TO COME.

MR. SPEAKER

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS HAVE LIMITED MY ATTEMPT FOR ANY NEW CONSTRUCTION SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, MOST OF THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN SPENT REPAIRING HOUSES, COMPLETING UNFINISHED HOUSES FROM THE LAST

ADMINISTRATION, INSTALLING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THOSE SUBDIVISIONS WHERE HOUSES WERE BUILT WITHOUT THE NECESSARY SERVICES, GETTING SUBDIVISION APPROVAL TO SELL LOTS IN ORDER TO OPERATE WITHIN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SUBDIVISION ACT AND RESTORING SOME SANITY TO THE HOUSING SECTION OF MY MINISTRY BY REORGANIZING THE SECTIONS FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY TO CARRY OUT OUR MANDATE.

MR. SPEAKER

IN THE PAST YEAR, I HAVE GAINED VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO THE OPERATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND IN UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO ITS DYSFUNCTION. THE WEAKNESSES IN THE DEPARTMENT'S PROCESSES ARE BEING ADDRESSED WITH THE REDESIGN OF THE STRUCTURE AND WORK FLOW IN THE DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE MODERN, PRIVATE SECTOR PROTOCOLS BEING IMPLEMENTED TO REFORM THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING PROGRAMME.

MR. SPEAKER,

MY REVELATIONS AS CONCERNS THIS DEPARTMENT HAVE ALSO LED ME INCLUDE THE PROVISION OF PRIVATE INSPECTORS OF HOUSES SO THAT WHEN WE RESUME BUILDING, CONTRACTORS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE TO HIGH STANDARDS, WITH THE END

PRODUCT BEING A BETTER ONE, THE HOME OWNER IS SATISFIED AND THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT HAVE TO DIRECT SCARCE RESOURCES ON REMEDIATION AND REPAIRS. I HAVE ALSO MANDATED THAT CONTRACTORS ARE TO RECEIVE PROJECTS ON A MERITORIOUS BASIS. IF YOU BUILD WELL YOU WILL RECEIVE MORE WORK, IF NOT YOUR SERVICES WILL NOT BE USED, PURE AND SIMPLE, THIS IN MY VIEW WILL PROVIDE VALUE FOR MONEY. WHAT SENSE DOES IT MAKE TO CONTINUALLY THROW GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD WORK? IF THE WALLS SEPARATED FROM THE CEILING OR THE FLOORS CAVED IN OR THE WINDOWS LEAK OR EVEN IN SOME CASES ALL OF THE ABOVE IN THE LAST HOUSE THAT YOU BUILT WHY IN HEAVENS NAME SHOULD YOU RECEIVE MORE PROJECTS?

MR. SPEAKER

SINCE I SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW PROVIDENCE HOUSING COMMISSION FROM 2002 TO 2007, ATTEMPTS TO GET A RELIABLE FIGURE OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WITH APPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT HOUSING WAS NEVER FORTHCOMING. THE DEPARTMENT DURING THE LAST ADMINISTRATION ATTEMPTED TO CREATE A DATABASE TO FACILITATE THIS DEMAND BUT IT IS STILL A FUTILE EXERCISE TO RETRIEVE THIS INFORMATION IN THE FORM OF A REPORT. IN APRIL OF THIS YEAR MY MINISTRY LAUNCHED A WEBSITE (WWW.DOHBAHAMAS.COM) AND INVITED ALL PERSONS WITH

HOUSING NEEDS, WHO HAVE OR HAVE NOT APPLIED TO PURCHASE A HOME BEFORE, TO VISIT THE SITE AND SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS ONLINE. THE DATA GENERATED FROM THIS SITE WILL GREATLY ASSIST US IN PLANNING THE HOUSING PROGRAMME. IT WILL ENSURE THAT WE ARE NOT BUILDING HOMES JUST FOR BUILDING SAKE OR FOR POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS BUT TO FULFILL A NEED. THIS IN MY VIEW PROVIDES VALUE FOR MONEY. THIS DATABASE WILL ENSURE THAT FOCUS WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE HOUSING NEEDS IN THE VARIOUS FAMILY ISLANDS; WE WILL BE ABLE TO DETERMINE THE DEMAND PARTICULAR MODELS OF HOUSES AND WHICH APPLICANTS CAN BE REFERRED TO PRIVATE DEVELOPERS TO PROVIDE THEIR HOUSING NEEDS OR INVITE THESE PERSONS TO PURCHASE SERVICE LOTS TO CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN BUILDINGS. THIS WILL CUT DOWN THE WAIT TIME FOR AVAILABLE INVENTORY FOR APPLICANTS AND WILL ALSO GIVE THEM SEVERAL OPTIONS IN OBTAINING A HOME.

MR. SPEAKER

THE PORTFOLIO FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IN THIS ADMINISTRATION REQUIRES FOCUSED ATTENTION WITH STAFF UNDER ONE ROOF. THEREFORE, THE DECISION WAS MADE TO SECURE ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION IN CHARLOTTE HOUSE TO MERGE ALL ADMINISTRATIVE, SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL STAFF PREVIOUSLY SERVING IN THE

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING, RESPECTIVELY. ACCORDINGLY, MOST OF THE SPACE HAS BEEN RETROFITTED TO OUR SPECIFICATION AND WILL BE OCCUPIED BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR.

THE HOUSING PROGRAMME

MR. SPEAKER

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING WILL FOLLOW A VERY AGGRESSIVE HOUSING PROGRAMME OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WITH THE INTENTION OF PROVIDING, THROUGH THE SALE OF LOTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES, OVER THIRTEEN HUNDRED (1300) HOMES FOR BAHAMIANS.

CREATIVE MEANS OF PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAMME HAD TO BE INVESTIGATED. THE COMBINATION OF RECEIVING A LOAN FROM THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD AND ALLOWING PRIVATE BANKING TO SHARE IN THE PROCESS OF FINANCING WILL BE FULLY UTILIZED. THE FIRST PHASE OF CONSTRUCTION WILL INVOLVE THE BUILD OUT OF THE SUBDIVISIONS THAT HAVE COMPLETE INFRASTRUCTURE, SUBDIVISION APPROVAL AND STILL HAVE VACANT LOTS ON WHICH WE CAN BUILD.

THE SECOND PHASE WOULD BE THOSE AREAS ADJACENT TO EXISTING SUBDIVISIONS THAT WOULD REQUIRE MINIMAL

INVESTMENT TO INSTALL THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HOUSE CONSTRUCTION.

THESE MEASURES MR. SPEAKER, IN MY VIEW, WILL PROVIDE VALUE FOR MONEY TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE.

MR. SPEAKER

THE ACCELERATED ADVANCEMENT OF THE RESORT WORLD PROJECT IN BIMINI HAS MEANT THAT FOCUSED ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE PLACED ON THE IMPACT THIS PROJECT WILL HAVE ON THIS COMMUNITY, NOT LEAST OF WHICH IS THE DEMAND FOR HOUSING THAT WILL ARISE AS THE RESULT OF THE INFLUX OF EMPLOYEES FOR THIS PROJECT. WE HAVE INITIALLY PLANNED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A 61 LOT SUBDIVISION ON SOUTH BIMINI. BUT WE ARE ALSO EXPLORING THE USE OF ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT LAND IN SOUTH AND NORTH BIMINI. SIMILARLY IN NORTH ANDROS WE WILL BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND BAIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TOWNSHIP TO COMPLIMENT THE INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND MARINE SCIENCES.

MR. SPEAKER

OTHER SHORT RANGE PLANS INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF 24 LOTS ON SAN SALVADOR IN COCKBURN TOWN.

LONG RANGE PLANS INCLUDE 250 HOMES ON GRAND BAHAMA.

ON NEW PROVIDENCE, WE PLAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 350 LOT CARMICHAEL VILLAGE SUBDIVISIONS. THE FIRST PHASE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL HAVE 175 LOTS. WE ARE ALSO EXPLORING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW PROVIDENCE, MURPHY TOWN ABACO, GREEN TURTLE CAY ABACO, SALINA POINT ACKLINS, ELEUTHERA AND EXUMA.

NEW HOUSING DESIGNS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE PUBLIC WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE EMBARKED ON IMPROVING THE DESIGN OF OUR EXISTING UNITS AND PROVIDING NEW DESIGNS WHICH INCLUDE SOME TOWN HOUSE CONCEPTS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LIMITED LAND SPACE THAT IS AVAILABLE TO US.

DURING THIS FISCAL PERIOD, THE DEPARTMENT HAS ACQUIRED THE SERVICES OF AN ARCHITECT FROM THE MINISTRY OF WORKS WHO HAS BEEN LOOKING AGGRESSIVELY AT NEW HOUSING DESIGNS, SOME OF WHICH WILL CATER TO THE LOW INCOME WAGE EARNERS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY

MEETING THE CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL HOUSES THE DEPARTMENT BUILDS.

AS THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, WE MUST BE CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPACT THAT THE FOOT PRINT OF OUR SUBDIVISIONS HAVE ON OUR ENVIRONMENT AND FIND WAYS TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT. WITH LIMITED RESOURCES WE MUST BE INNOVATIVE, THINK SMART, BUILD WELL AND SET A STANDARD AND PROVIDE HOMES OF WHICH ALL BAHAMIANS CAN BE PROUD.

MR. SPEAKER,

ANOTHER NEW INITIATIVE THAT GOT FULLY UNDERWAY THIS YEAR IS THAT OF THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN WHICH HOSTED AN EXECUTIVE EDUCATION WORKSHOP IN MAY OF 2013 IN NASSAU AND ANOTHER IN GEORGE TOWN, EXUMA. THESE WORKSHOPS ARE THE FIRST IN A SERIES TO BE HELD UNDER THE PROJECT "A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR EXUMA" AND FORM A PART OF A LARGER PROJECT OF RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH UNDER A 3 YEAR AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST AND THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN.

MR. SPEAKER

IT IS OUR INTENT TO INCREASE THE STOCK OF PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS BEFORE THE END OF THIS TERM, BUT IN ASSESSING

OUR CURRENT STOCK, WE REALIZED THAT THESE UNITS NEED TO BE REFURBISHED TO ACCEPTABLE LIVING STANDARDS SO GOING FORWARD WE WILL FOCUS ON RENOVATING AND REFURBISHING THESE BUILDINGS. THE PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS WILL BE USED AS A MEANS TO PROMOTE TENANTS TO HOME OWNERS. THE CURRENT RENT STRUCTURE, THOUGH MINIMAL, WILL NOT BE INCREASED AS THE TENANTS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO USE THE SAVINGS AS DEPOSIT TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF THEIR HOUSE. THIS WAS THE ORIGINAL POLICY WHICH IS BEING REESTABLISHED.

NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD LOAN

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THE APPROVAL OF A \$60 MILLION LOAN FROM THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD, WITH A FIRST TRANCHE OF \$10 MILLION, WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE NECESSARY IMPETUS TO JUMP START THE HOUSING PROGRAM. A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WAS SIGNED THIS PAST THURSDAY BETWEEN THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD, THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION. AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THESE FUNDS WILL BE USED FOR VERTICAL CONSTRUCTION IN STRACHAN'S HILL

ESTATES, FIRE TRAIL 1, ARDASTRA ESTATES EXTENSION, PRIDE 1, DIGNITY 1, 2 AND CRESCENT AND SUNSET CLOSE SUBDIVISIONS IN NEW PROVIDENCE AND BAHAMIA WEST REPLAT IN FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA. THESE AREAS HAVE AVAILABLE LOTS WITH INFRASTRUCTURE FULLY INSTALLED AND THE REQUISITE SUBDIVISION APPROVALS. WITH THIS LOAN WE WILL BE ABLE TO CONSTRUCT ABOUT 125 HOUSES WITHIN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.

THE PROJECT WILL BE CAREFULLY MANAGED BY A MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF PERSONS FROM RELEVANT PUBLIC SECTOR BODIES, NAMELY THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION, THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD.

A FUND ADMINISTRATOR WILL BE APPOINTED TO PROVIDE EXPENDITURE OVERSIGHT, REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT. A PROJECT MANAGER WILL BE APPOINTED TO OVERSEE THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM TO ENSURE BUDGET AND TIMELINES ARE HONOURED AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IS MAINTAINED. A FINANCIAL ADVISOR WILL ALSO BE ENGAGED TO ADVISE MY MINISTRY, BMC AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE ON THE SECURITIZATION OF BMC'S MORTGAGE PORTFOLIO AND THE ISSUANCE OF MORTGAGED BACK BONDS.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE REQUISITE CHECKS AND BALANCES ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT THESE PUBLIC FUNDS WILL BE WELL SPENT.

THE MOU WAS SIGNED LAST WEEK AND IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE WILL BE APPOINTED.

BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION

MR SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION (BMC).

UPON TAKING OFFICE I MANDATED THAT THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE THE CORPORATION FINANCIALLY HEALTHIER. IN THE PAST YEAR THE CORPORATION HAS WORKED TOWARDS THIS END BY CONSISTENTLY CONTACTING DELINQUENT CLIENTS TO COME INTO THE OFFICE AND CUTTING COSTS WHILE MAINTAINING EFFICIENCY.

THE DELINQUENCY COLLECTIONS EFFORTS AT BMC HAS RESULTED IN A MODERATE REDUCTION TO 36.42% AS AT APRIL 2013 IN CLIENT DELINQUENCY. I COMMEND THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF AT THE CORPORATION AND STRONGLY ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONTINUE IN THEIR EFFORTS.

MR SPEAKER

THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS EXPRESSED OVER AND REPEATEDLY OUR COMMITMENT TO ASSISTING THOSE PERSONS UNABLE TO MEET THEIR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS TO BE ABLE TO KEEP THEIR HOMES AND WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO THAT. UNDER THE MORTGAGE RELIEF PROGRAMME, THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION WILL BE REVIEWING ALL DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS. IN CASES WHERE IT IS DETERMINED THAT THE MORTGAGOR HAS ALWAYS MADE PAYMENTS, BUT DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES HAS FALLEN BEHIND ON PAYMENTS, THE CORPORATION WILL RENEGOTIATE THE LOANS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. HOWEVER I AM ADVISED THAT IT IS BEING DISCOVERED THAT THERE ARE PERSONS WITH THE MEANS TO MAKE PAYMENTS BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON ARE NOT DOING SO. I ASK THAT PERSONS WHO **ARE ABLE** TO MAKE PAYMENT ON THEIR ACCOUNTS TO DO SO AT BMC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MR. SPEAKER

AS IT PERTAINS TO THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION'S SINKING FUND, IT WAS ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE THE TIMELY PAYMENT OF INTEREST AND PRINCIPAL MATURITIES ON BONDS

ISSUED BY BMC. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE CORPORATION ENSURE THAT FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE, PARTICULARLY AS DURING THE FOUR-YEAR PERIOD 2023 TO 2026, IN EXCESS OF \$122 MILLION WILL BE DUE IN PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST PAYMENTS. GENERATING AND REPLENISHING FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE CONTINUES TO BE A PRIORITY FOR THE BMC AND OTHER AVENUES WILL BE EXPLORED WITH REGARDS TO FOCUSING ON THIS ITEM.

FORECLOSURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

MR. SPEAKER,

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SEVERAL BAHAMIAN BANKS WHO HAVE ADVISED THAT THEIR FORECLOSED HOMES CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE BY THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION AT A FRACTION OF THE VALUE OF THE PROPERTIES. THIS PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION TO ACQUIRE PROPERTIES AT A REASONABLE COST, INVEST MINIMALLY IN THE RETROFIT OF SUCH PROPERTIES AND MAKE THE SAME AVAILABLE FOR QUALIFIED APPLICANTS FOR BMC, A SHORTER TIME FRAME FOR THE CONVERSION OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS INTO MORTGAGES AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE APPLICANTS WITH AN INVESTMENT THAT IN SOME INSTANCES WILL GIVE

THEM EQUITY IN THEIR HOME IMMEDIATELY, NOT TO MENTION CONVERTING ABANDONED HOMES INTO OCCUPIED DWELLINGS FOR QUALIFIED BAHAMIANS. CABINET HAS APPROVED THE APPOINTMENT OF A FORECLOSURE REVIEW COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A DRAFT POLICY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO THIS PROPOSED INITIATIVE.

MR. SPEAKER

IN ORDER TO GENERATE REVENUE THE CORPORATION HAS ALSO EMBARKED ON A THREE-FOLD PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN TO:

- APPEAL TO ITS CURRENT CUSTOMERS THAT ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY MEETING OR ARE DELINQUENT IN THEIR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS TO CONTACT BMC.
- INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF BMC'S PRIVATE MORTGAGE LENDING PROGRAMME. WHICH HAS AN INTEREST RATE OF 2% ABOVE THE PRIME RATE OR 6.75% AND CAN LEND UP TO \$237,500.00.
- CARRY OUT PUBLIC SERVICE INITIATIVES BY EDUCATING THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON SOUND PERSONAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT. THERE ARE INCREASING INSTANCES TO PROVIDE INTERACTIVE LECTURES TO SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES AND TO RECRUITS OF THE UNIFORMED BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT, PROMOTING SOUND

MANAGEMENT OF THEIR PERSONAL FINANCES. RECENTLY, BMC HAS BEGUN TALKS WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO EMBARK ON A LECTURE SERIES WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR ITS SENIOR STUDENTS.

MR. SPEAKER,

I HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A SPECIAL AND AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY. THE FUTURE OF THE BAHAMAS IS IN MY HANDS. I RECENTLY VISITED ONE OF OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE REGION AND LEARNT THAT PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY. AND SUCH IS THE BELIEF OF ITS GOVERNMENT THAT IT HAS AMENDED ITS CONSTITUTION TO INCLUDE THIS. NO BUSINESS ACTIVITY, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, WHETHER BY NATIONALS OR FOREIGNERS CAN TAKE PLACE WITHOUT THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. WHILE THIS IS NOT OUR PRACTICEYET.....WE MUST START TO SEE OUR ENVIRONMENT IN THIS WAY –AS A PRECIOUS GIFT, AS A RESOURCE AND AS OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT.

MR SPEAKER

IN CONCLUSION, I HAVE SOUGHT IN MY SHORT TIME IN OFFICE THUS FAR TO MODERNIZE AND IN SOME CASES

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE ESPECIALLY AS PERTAINS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING PROGRAM. AND WHILE I HAVE HEARD SUCH THINGS AS "MINISTERS COME AND GO" AND TECHNOCRATS RUN MINISTRIES" I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THOSE AT MY MINISTRY, OTHER GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND MY CABINET COLLEAGUES FOR SUPPORTING ME IN MY ENDEAVOUR TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE AND PROVIDING THEM WITH VALUE FOR MONEY.

I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE ALL BAHAMIANS THAT FOR AS LONG AS I AM HERE, WHICH I EXPECT TO BE A LONG TIME, I WILL CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. I WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF THIS COUNTRY IN MIND.

TO MY COLLEAGUES IN THIS PLACE AND IN GOVERNMENT, I SAY TO YOU THAT WE ARE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IT HAS BEEN A ROUGH YEAR BUT WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOUR. AS LONG AS WE STAY THE COURSE AND REMEMBER THAT WE ARE HERE TO SERVE THOSE THAT SENT US TO THIS PLACE. WE WILL HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CONTINUE TO PUT OUR SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL AND MAKE THE BAHAMAS THE GREATEST LITTLE COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

THANK YOU MR. SPEAKER I SUPPORT THE BUDGET.