



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

2014-2015 BUDGET COMMUNICATION

JUNE 5TH, 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIEVERY

MR. SPEAKER,

I RISE ONCE AGAIN TO MAKE MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE ANNUAL BUDGET DEBATE OF THIS COUNTRY WHICH WE ALL LOVE.....THE BAHAMAS.

PERMIT ME MR. SPEAKER TO BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SHORES, FOR WITHOUT THEM I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SERVE THEM AND MY COUNTRY IN THIS CAPACITY. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO THE PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN THIS YEAR AND HIGHLIGHT THE PROJECTS TO BE ADVANCED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

MR. SPEAKER,

AT THE LAST BUDGET DEBATE I PUBLICLY ADDRESSED A CONCERN OF MY CONSTITUENTS IN RELATION TO FIRES AND SMOKE EMANATING FROM THE DERELICT VEHICLE SITE ON MARSHALL ROAD. THIS FACILITY IS AN EYESORE FOR RESIDENTS OF THE MISTY GARDENS AND MARSHALL ROAD COMMUNITIES. OFTENTIMES MR. SPEAKER, ACCESS TO MISTY GARDENS IS RESTRICTED OR IMPEDED DUE TO THE TRUCKS LINED UP ALONG MARSHALL ROAD WAITING TO BE ATTENDED

TO BY

THE FACILITY WHICH PROCESSES MATERIAL FOR EXPORT.

AS I HAVE SAID IN THIS PLACE AND ELSEWHERE, MY CONSTITUENTS HAVE HAD TO ENDURE THIS VEXING PROBLEM FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. I HAVE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED THAT THE SITE FOR RELOCATION HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AND THAT THE PROCESS OF COMPLETING THE TIMELINES FOR PREPARATION OF THE NEW SITE AND THE RELOCATION WOULD COMMENCE. I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT WORK HAS BEGUN ON THE PREPARATION OF THE NEW DERELICT VEHICLE SITE AND THAT THE MARSHALL ROAD FACILITY WILL BE MOVED TO THE NEW FACILITY IN THE VICINITY OF THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL DURING THE 2014/2015 FISCAL YEAR. I WANT TO THANK MY CONSTITUENTS FOR BEARING WITH ME AS I ENDEAVOUR TO RID THEM OF THIS PROBLEM ONCE AND FOR ALL. I THANK MY COLLEAGUES FOR SUPPORTING THIS RELOCATION, SUPPORTING ME AND MORE IMPORTANTLY SUPPORTING THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SHORES.

MR. SPEAKER,

WE HAVE BEGUN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE PARKS OF SOUTHERN SHORES. THE PONDS HAVE BEEN CLEARED ON THE MILLER'S HEIGHTS PARK AND THE PERCY MUNNINGS PARK ON VENDALL DRIVE. CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED FOR THE

CONSTRUCTION OF GAZEBOS AS WELL AND WE WILL BEGIN THE PLANTING OF TREES TO BEAUTIFY THE PARK. WE HAVE BEGUN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK IN ROYAL PALM GARDENS AND HAVE CLEARED THE LOTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK IN CARIBBEAN GARDENS. ALL OF THESE PARKS ARE PLANNED TO BE COMPLETED DURING THE 2014-2015 BUDGET YEAR.

I WANT TO PUBLICLY THANK MS. SANDRA WALKER, THE ADMINISTRATOR OF MY CONSTITUENCY OFFICE AND THE HARDWORKING VOLUNTEERS WHO ENSURE THAT THE OFFICE IS NOT ONLY OPEN FULL TIME, BUT THAT THERE IS CONSTANT ACTIVITY.

MR. SPEAKER

THE SOUTHERN SHORES CONSTITUENCY'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME IS UP AND RUNNING . IT IS A PROGRAMME WHICH CATERS TO THOSE WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED IN THE CONSTITUENCY, PROVIDING SKILLS WHICH CAN BE USED TO OBTAIN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT. PERSONS INTERESTED IN UTILIZING THIS FREE SERVICE CAN REGISTER FOR THE PROGRAM HELD AT, THE CONSTITUENCY'S OFFICE EVERY MONDAY. IT LASTS FOR A PERIOD OF THREE WEEKS. THE PROGRAMME IS CONDUCTED BY MRS. PODESTA MOORE OF BAHAMAS URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTRE IN

CONJUNCTION WITH MY SOUTHERN SHORES CONSTITUENCY OFFICE.

MRS. MOORE IS A PROFESSIONAL IN HER FIELD. HER COMPANY'S MISSION IS TO ASSIST WITH THE TRANSFORMATION OF AT RISK YOUTH AND MARGINALIZED YOUNG PERSONS. I THANK HER FOR PARTNERING WITH ME AS I PROMISED TO ADVANCE PROGRAMMES LIKE THIS DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND I CAN SEE THE BENEFIT OF THE PROGRAMME FOR MY PEOPLE.

PERSONS WHO GRADUATE FROM THESE CLASSES ARE TAUGHT: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS, CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS, CLEAR VERBAL COMMUNICATION, RESUME WRITING, JOB RETENTION SKILLS AND HOW TO COMPLETE A JOB APPLICATION AND CONDUCT THEMSELVES DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.

TO DATE, TWELVE PERSONS (12) HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE PROGRAMME. FOUR (4) OF OUR GRADUATES HAVE ALREADY STARTED PUTTING THE SKILLS THAT THEY OBTAINED INTO PRACTICE ON THE JOB. UNFORTUNATELY THE SPACE AVAILABLE IN MY OFFICE IS NOT ENOUGH TO HOLD MORE PERSONS IN ONE SITTING BUT WE HOPE TO ASSIST AS MANY PEOPLE AS WE CAN, UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE CLASSES ARE A NECESSITY.

MR. SPEAKER

ON A DAILY BASIS MY CONSTITUENCY'S OFFICE, AN NO DOUBT THE OFFICE'S OF OTHER MEMBERS, IS USED AS AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY. IN PROVIDING HELP WITH RESUMES, EITHER TYPING, CORRECTING, MAKING COPIES FOR PERSONS IN SOUTHERN SHORES AND INDEED THE WIDER COMMUNITY ALL FREE OF CHARGE.

WE HAVE ALSO ENCOURAGED CONSTITUENTS TO SIGN UP FOR MANY COURSES AND WORKSHOPS. CURRENTLY (2 JUNE, 2014-5TH JUNE 2014) PERSONS ARE ENROLLED IN THE BAHAMAS AGAINST CRIME SECURITY OFFICER'S TRAINING COURSE. THE FACILITATOR IS RETIRED DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE MR. PAUL THOMPSON. I AM TOLD, PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN THIS COURSE ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER BY THE MAJOR SECURITY FIRMS. SO I HOPE THIS WILL LEAD TO FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MY PEOPLE.

SOUTHERN SHORES IS ASSISTING PERSONS IN THE COMMUNITY IN SO MANY WAYS, PEOPLE COME FROM ALL OVER NASSAU, SEEKING HELP.

OUR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMME CONTINUES. STUDENTS COME IN SIX DAYS A WEEK TO DO THEIR PROJECTS, RESEARCH, AND GAIN ASSISTANCE IN THEIR SCHOOL WORK. THEY ARE ALSO TAUGHT ETIQUETTE, AND LIFE LESSONS. THE COMPUTER LAB IS

OPEN TO STUDENTS AND ADULTS. STUDENTS FROM OUR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM ALSO READ TO THE CHILDREN, AT THE CHILDREN EMERGENCY HOSTEL ON SOME SATURDAYS.

EXCELLENCE IS WHAT WE STRIVE FOR AS WE BELIEVE IN THE ADMONITION OF ARISTOTLE, THAT "EXCELLENCE IS NOT AN ACT BUT A HABIT".

STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO BRING IN THEIR REPORT CARDS AND AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, THEY ARE REWARDED BASED ON THEIR GPA.

GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN SOUTHERN SHORES AND AS I STATED BEFORE I COULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMMITTED TO ASSISTING ME IN MY ENDEAVOURS TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SHORES AND TO DEVELOP THE COMMUNITY. I AM GRATEFUL TO THEM ALL FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

MR. SPEAKER

I WISH TO CONGRATULATE THE RT. HON PRIME MINISTER AND MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE FOR THE BUDGET COMMUNICATION HE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT ON WEDNESDAY 28TH MAY 2014. IT SHOULD BE EVIDENT TO ALL, THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK, MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND THROUGH DEDICATION AND A RESPONSIBLE APPROACH TO

GOVERNANCE, MAKING SURE THAT THE FUTURE OF OUR BELOVED BAHAMALAND LOOKS BRIGHT.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS GOVERNMENT MET THIS COUNTRY IN A DIRE FISCAL STATE. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT SOME SEEM NOT TO WANT TO HEAR BUT THE FACTS REMAIN. THE REACTION OF SOME WHEN THIS ADMINISTRATION MENTIONS THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR TERM BEGS THE QUESTION "HOW CAN THE PEOPLE CORRECTLY MEASURE OUR PROGRESS IF THEY DO NOT KNOW WHERE WE STARTED?"

IT MAY BE, IN FACT IT IS MY OPINION, THAT THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING THIS ADMINISTRATION IS DOING IS EITHER FOOLISH OR CORRUPT DO NOT WANT THE PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE PROGRESS THAT WE ARE MAKING. THE PRIME MINISTER AND MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE MADE SURE TO OUTLINE ALL OF THE VARIOUS PROJECTS ONGOING IN THE COUNTRY IN THEIR VARYING STAGES. THIS WAS NOT TO BOAST, IN MY OPINION, BUT IT WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE KNOW WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS WORKING ON AND WHERE THEY CAN LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS GOVERNMENT HAS DRAWN A LINE IN THE PROVERBIAL SAND. WE NOT ONLY NOTE THAT WE CANNOT CONTINUE WITH BUSINESS AS USUAL, WHERE GOVERNMENT SPENDS FAR MORE THAN IT TAKES IN, BUT WE ARE ADVANCING CONCRETE WELL THOUGHT OUT PLANS THROUGH OUR MEDIUM TERM FISCAL CONSOLIDATION PLAN AND OUR INITIATIVES TO BOLSTER THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF OUR ECONOMY, WHICH WILL LEAD TO A BETTER, MORE SECURE FUTURE FOR ALL BAHAMIANS.

MR. SPEAKER

THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE THE DECISIONS WHICH NEEDED TO BE MADE IN ORDER TO POSITION THE BAHAMAS ON THE RIGHT TRACK FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. WE ARE AWARE THAT SOME OF THE DECISIONS THAT WE HAVE MADE MAY BE UNPOPULAR FOR SOME, LIKE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VALUE ADDED TAX, HOWEVER IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT IN ORDER TO ADVANCE OUR NATION AND CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE SERVICES THAT WE NOW DO SOMETHING MUST BE DONE. THIS GENERATION OF BAHAMIANS FIND THEMSELVES AT A POINT IN HISTORY WHERE CHANGE IS NO LONGER A CHOICE BUT AN IMPERATIVE. WE MUST DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO PERSEVERE AND TO ENSURE THAT OUR CHILDREN HAVE SOMETHING TO INHERIT THAT THEY CAN BE PROUD OF.

MR. SPEAKER

THE NAY SAYERS CAN KNIT PICK AS MUCH AS THEY LIKE BUT THEY CANNOT ALTER THE FACTS THOUGH THEY MAY TRY THEIR HARDEST. THE FACT IS THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE STRIDES, WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL AND MARINE SCIENCES INSTITUTE ON THE ISLAND OF ANDROS. WE HAVE PROVIDED A TRAINING CENTRE, NAMELY THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY WHERE PERSONS CAN OBTAIN TRAINING AND PLACEMENT FOR THE JOB MARKET. AT NOVEMBER 2013, THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAD REDUCED. WE HAVE DIALOGUED WITH THE LABOUR UNIONS TO ENSURE THAT INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENTS ARE RESOLVED. WE HAVE JUST HOSTED AN INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENT THAT BROUGHT FIVE HUNDRED ATHLETES TO OUR SHORES AND MANY OTHERS. THE SLEEPING ISLAND OF BIMINI IS NOW WIDE AWAKE WITH JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR BAHAMIANS. WE HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY AND LOWERED THE COST OF ELECTRICITY. THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN MARSH HARBOUR, ABACO IS OPEN AND OPERATIONAL. WE HAVE BEGUN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOMES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING PROGRAMME. WE HAVE BEGUN THE PROCESS OF LANDFILL REMEDIATION. WE HAVE MADE SMALL HOME REPAIRS TO THE HOMES OF BAHAMIANS THROUGH THE

URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF OPENING A SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND AUTISM. THE EXPANSION OF ALBANY WAS ANNOUNCED. WE REGAINED THE MAJORITY SHARES IN BTC FOR THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. BAHAMAR, THE BAHAMIAN RIVIERA, IS SET TO OPEN BY END OF YEAR. EXUMA IS SET TO TAKE OFF. WE HAVE IMPROVED THE GFS DEFICIT AND CUT SPENDING THROUGH PRUDENCE AND WASTE ELIMINATION. WHO CAN SAY THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS AND NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS. THE LIST I GAVE IS BUT A FEW THINGS THAT THIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ON BEHALF OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE AND THE WORK CONTINUES.

MR. SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO MY MINISTRY. IN MY PRESENTATION, I WILL HIGHLIGHT VARIANCES IN THE ALLOCATIONS UNDER HEADS 45, 65 AND 72; DISCUSS THE STATUS OF THE PROJECTS ADVANCED IN THE 2013-2014 BUDGET AND FORESHADOW THE PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR.

HOUSING

MR. SPEAKER

I TURN TO HEAD 45, THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

MR. SPEAKER,

IN 2013/2014 THERE WAS AN APPROVED BUDGET ESTIMATE OF \$1,826,527.00. IN THE 2014/2015 BUDGET WE HAVE ESTIMATED A BUDGET PROVISION OF \$1,953,695.00, A VARIANCE INCREASE OF \$127,168.00 OVER LAST YEAR'S FIGURES.

AN INCREASE OF \$136,058 HAS BEEN INCLUDED UNDER PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS.

A PROVISION OF \$2,000 FOR TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONS OUTSIDE OF THE BAHAMAS HAS BEEN MADE IN 2014/2015 AS NO PROVISION WAS MADE LAST YEAR.

WE HAVE REDUCED OUR ALLOCATION FOR TELEPHONES, TELEGRAMS, TELEX AND FAX COSTS BY \$2,390.00 AS WE CONTINUE TO REDUCE COSTS WHERE WE CAN.

WE HAVE INCREASED THE PROVISION FOR PRINTING BY \$3,750.00 FROM \$21,250 TO \$25,000, WHICH IS A RESULT OF CONSOLIDATION OF FAMILY ISLAND COSTS UNDER ONE LINE ITEM AND WILL ENSURE THAT AS WE HAVE BEGUN CONSTRUCTION PLANS FOR ALL RELEVANT PERSONS CAN BE PROVIDED.

THE REDUCTION OF VEHICLES AT OUR DISPOSAL HAS

RESULTED IN A REDUCTION IN THE BUDGET COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH LICENSING AND INSPECTION OF VEHICLES FROM \$4,500 TO \$3,000.

ELECTRICITY HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF OUR BUDGET AS WAS EXPLAINED BY THE MEMBER FOR GOLDEN ISLES IN HIS CONTRIBUTION. AND WE HAVE REDUCED THE BUDGETARY PROVISION FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF OUR COMPUTERS AND COPYING MACHINES FROM \$4,750 TO \$3,000.

UNDER CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, IN 2013/2014 THERE WAS A PROVISION OF \$750,000. THIS HAS BEEN INCREASED BY \$450,000.00 TO \$1,200,000.00. THIS WILL BE UTILIZED TO ADVANCE INFRASTRUCTURAL UPGRADES AND REPAIRS IN OUR EXISTING SUBDIVISIONS.

MR. SPEAKER

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING HAS BEEN REORGANIZED FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY. IN THE CROWN AGENTS REPORT, COMMISSIONED BY THE SIDE OPPOSITE, THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING WERE CRITICIZED FOR THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR FUNCTIONS, AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ABSENCE OF EFFICIENT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES.

ACCORDINGLY, THE FOLLOWING UNITS WERE CREATED:

- PROCUREMENT UNIT TO PREPARE REQUESTS FOR

PROPOSALS, REVIEW BIDS AND RECOMMEND BEST BIDS FOR JOBS.

- CONTRACTS UNITS TO PREPARE CONTRACTS FOR SUCCESSFUL BIDDERS FOR HORIZONTAL CONSTRUCTION AND THOSE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VERTICAL CONSTRUCTION UNDER THE GOVERNMENT HOUSING PROGRAMME.

- APPLICATIONS PROCESSING UNIT: WITH THE LAUNCH OF OUR WEB SITE, (WWW.DOHBAHAMAS.COM), PERSONS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY CAN ACCESS THIS SITE, OR VISIT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING TO REGISTER AND COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FOR HOUSING CONSIDERATION ONLINE. THE SITE HAS PROVISION FOR APPLICANTS TO UPLOAD THEIR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AS PART OF THEIR APPLICATIONS. ALL REGISTERED APPLICATIONS FORM A DATABASE. THE APPLICATION PROCESSING UNIT ASSIST APPLICANTS WITH THE COMPLETION OF THEIR APPLICATIONS, MAINTAIN THE DATABASE, MONITOR THE POPULATING OF THE DATABASE, DO ASSESSMENTS TO DETERMINE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APPLICANT TO BE ASSIGNED A HOUSE FOR PURCHASE AND PROVIDE REPORTS WHICH ASSIST IN DETERMINING HOUSING DEMANDS AND THE MODELS OF HOUSES TO BUILD.

THE MORTGAGE SPECIALIST ASSIGNED TO THE UNIT ALSO ASSISTS CUSTOMERS IN UNDERSTANDING WHAT THEY QUALIFY FOR AND ACTS AS A LIAISON WITH APPROVED LENDERS.

- THE LAND DEVELOPMENT UNIT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING A LAND INVENTORY, RECOMMENDING THE PROCUREMENT OF SUITABLE LAND FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND DESIGN OF NEW SUBDIVISIONS, FACILITATE THE PROCUREMENT OF SUBDIVISION APPROVALS, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW HOUSE DESIGNS AND RECOMMENDATION OF ALTERNATIVE FORM OF VERTICAL CONSTRUCTION.

- THE HELP DESK FOR THE ENTIRE MINISTRY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AT THE DEPARTMENT TO TAKE COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS RELATIVE TO HOUSING, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

MR.SPEAKER

SPEAKING OF THE CROWN AGENTS REPORT MR. SPEAKER. I WANT TO REMIND THE PEOPLE OF THE WITCH-HUNT THAT WAS ADVANCED BY THE FORMER ADMINISTRATION ON THE MEMBER FOR GOLDEN GATES. THEY COMMISSIONED THE CROWN AGENTS REPORT IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT THE MEMBER

FOR GOLDEN GATES. INSTEAD, THE REPORT WAS A SCATHING INDICTMENT ON THOSE ON THE SIDE OPPOSITE AS IT HIGHLIGHTED MAJOR STRUCTURAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFICIENCIES THAT WENT WITHOUT NOTE BY THEM FROM 1992-2002 AND SADLY, DESPITE THE COMMISSIONING OF THE REPORT, THEY IGNORED THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THEIR OWN REPORT AND DID NOT IMPLEMENT THE MEASURES RECOMMENDED. THIS WAS PROOF POSITIVE THAT THE REPORT WAS ONLY USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. IT WAS A FAILED AND BOTCHED WITCH-HUNT!

BUT DESPITE THEIR ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT MY COLLEAGUE, IT ONLY CHARGED MY BROTHER FROM GOLDEN GATES WITH BEING OVERLY AGGRESSIVE IN HIS ACTIONS. AND THAT LADIES AND GENTLEMAN IS A CRITICISM TO BE PROUD OF.

MR. SPEAKER,

SINCE MAY 2012, 11 HOUSES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED IN SUNSET CLOSE SUBDIVISION, EQUIPPED WITH LANDSCAPING, INCLUSIVE OF STEPPING STONE WALKWAYS, PEA ROCK DRIVEWAYS, GRASSING OF THE FRONT YARD AND VERGES AND TWO EDIBLE FRUIT TREES. THIS IS ONE OF THE MODELS FOR SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT GOING FORWARD AND THIS AFTERNOON WE WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENING THE SUBDIVISION.

ADDITIONALLY, HOUSES WERE COMPLETED IN THE FOLLOWING SUBDIVISIONS:

17 IN STRACHAN HILLS ESTATES

5 IN FIRETRAIL,

2 IN PRIDE ESTATES PHASE 3,

1 IN EXCELLENCE ESTATES PHASE 2,

2 IN DIGNITY GARDENS PHASE 2,

6 IN PRIDE ESTATES PHASE 1.

MR. SPEAKER,

FORTY FOUR HOUSES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND OCCUPIED AND THERE ARE CURRENTLY 27 HOUSES UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN STRACHAN HILLS AND FIRETRAIL SUBDIVISIONS. THREE OF THESE HOUSES ARE APART OF A PILOT PROJECT AND ARE NEW ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SYSTEM HOUSES WHICH EXCEED THE STANDARD REQUIRED BY THE BAHAMAS BUILDING CODE AND ARE ENERGY EFFICIENT. THESE THREE HOUSES ARE BEING BUILT TO TEST THEIR ACCEPTABILITY AND COULD BECOME THE MODELS AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF HOUSE PRODUCTION GOING FORWARD. THE HOMES WILL BE LANDSCAPED, FENCED, INCLUDE SOLAR WATER HEATERS AND A SMALL PV SOLAR SYSTEM.

MR. SPEAKER,

I HAD EXPECTED TO BE FARTHER ALONG WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING PROGRAMME. THIS IS SURELY NOT THE SORT OF RECORD I WOULD LIKE TO BE REPORTING AT THIS TIME, BUT AS I MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS COMMUNICATIONS, THE HOUSING PROGRAMME WAS SEVERELY HANDICAPPED DUE TO THE UNAVAILABILITY OF FUNDING AND THE NON COMPLIANCE OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SUBDIVISION ACT FOR THE SALE OF LOTS. MANY OF THE SUBDIVISIONS WERE WITHOUT INFRASTRUCTURE AND DID NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED APPROVALS. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT ALL OF OUR CURRENTLY ACTIVE SUBDIVISIONS IN NEW PROVIDENCE AND THE FAMILY ISLANDS ARE NOW COMPLIANT.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM REMINDED OF GHANDI'S STATEMENT "SPEED IS IRRELEVANT IF YOU ARE GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION".

THE FOUNDATION FOR MOVING FORWARD IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION HAS BEEN SET AND THE HOUSING PROGRAMME IS OFF AND RUNNING.

THERE IS A NEW MODUS OPERANDI IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING FOR THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSES TO BAHAMIANS. HAVING REORGANIZED THE DEPARTMENT, IT IS NOW READY FOR THE NEW FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY REGIME TO BE ENACTED.

A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WAS SIGNED WITH THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD TO FUND THE BUILDING OF HOMES IN THE GOVERNMENT HOUSING PROGRAMME. THE FIRST RELEASE OF \$2.5 MILLION WAS RECEIVED WHICH PERMITTED THE CONSTRUCTION OF 24 OF THE AFOREMENTIONED HOUSES UNDER CONSTRUCTION. CERTAIN CONDITIONS OF THE USE OF THESE FUNDS ARE THAT THEY BE USED FOR VERTICAL CONSTRUCTION ONLY AND THE ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE BUILDING INSPECTORS TO ENSURE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOUSES. THESE CONDITIONS ARE BEING MET. WE ARE EXPECTING TO RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL TRANCHE OF \$2.5 MILLION SHORTLY.

MR. SPEAKER

RELATIONS WITH PRIVATE APPROVED LENDERS HAS BEEN REESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE MORTGAGE FINANCING TO THE PURCHASERS OF THE HOUSES UNDER CONSTRUCTION TO ENSURE A CONTINUOUS ROLL OVER OF THE FUNDS AND THE TIMELY REPAYMENT OF THE NIB LOAN. THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING HAS ENGAGED THE SERVICES OF AN EXPERIENCED BANKER TO ASSIST WITH THE FINANCIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF PROSPECTIVE HOME-OWNERS AND TO LIASE WITH THE BANKS.

MR. SPEAKER

MY MINISTRY ALSO EXECUTED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE BAHAMAS REAL ESTATES ASSOCIATION (BREA) TO FORMALIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN BREA AND THE GOVERNMENT TO SOLIDIFY OUR COLLABORATION PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR BAHAMIANS AND TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN ORGANIZING A NATIONAL REAL ESTATE SECTOR CONCLAVE TO ESTABLISH HOUSING POLICIES AND ADDRESS OTHER INDUSTRY CONCERNS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO ORGANIZING THE REAL ESTATE SECTOR CONCLAVE DURING THE 2014/2015 FISCAL PERIOD.

IN THE UPCOMING YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING HAS SET A VERY AGGRESSIVE HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD THAT INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

1. STRACHAN HILLS SUBDIVISION COMPLETION - 23 UNITS AT \$1,515,250.00
2. FIRE TRAIL SUBDIVISION COMPLETION - 59 UNITS AT \$4,371,702.00
3. ROMER & REEVES STREETS - 10 UNITS AT \$930,574.25
4. SUNSET SUBDIVISION EXTENSION - 8 UNITS AT - \$ 544,450.85
5. DIGNITY GARDENS CRESCENT - 10 UNITS AT

\$1,813,319.21

6. BAHAMIA WEST II (GRAND BAHAMA) 10 UNITS AT -
\$900,000.00

THE COMPLETION OF THESE UNITS SHOULD ADD 110 HOUSES TO THE HOUSING STOCK, AND THE LIVES OF ALL OF THE FAMILIES WHO WERE GIVEN THESE HOUSES WILL BE IMPROVED.

MR. SPEAKER

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER IN HIS CONTRIBUTION STRESSED THE IMPORTANT ROLE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WILL PLAY IN FACILITATING NEW PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN A WAY THAT MINIMIZES THE COSTS AND RISKS TO GOVERNMENT.

HE FORESHADOWED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL ADVANCE ITS NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME THROUGH AN AGGRESSIVE PUBLIC-PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT.

MR. SPEAKER

FURTHER TO THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE PRIME MINISTER, I WISH TO ANNOUNCE THAT MY MINISTRY IS FINALIZING NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF APPROXIMATELY

- 340 HOMES IN CARMICHAEL VILLAGE SUBDIVISION
- 56 HOMES IN ARDASTRA GARDENS EXTENSION SUBDIVISION

- 1200 HOMES WITH A PRIVATE DEVELOPER IN WEST NEW PROVIDENCE
- 8-10 HOMES IN SUNSET CLOSE EXTENSION
- 10 HOMES IN MARSHALL ROAD
- 400 LIVING UNITS IN BIMINI
- 24 HOMES IN SAN SALVADOR AND
- 100 HOMES IN FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA.

ALL UNDER A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP RUBRIC.

WE HAVE ALSO ENGAGED THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE HOUSING AGENDA AND I LOOK FORWARD TO CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNIONS WHO ARE IN DIALOGUE WITH MY MINISTRY.

MR. SPEAKER

I INVITE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS AND MORTGAGE PROVIDERS TO MEET WITH MY TEAM. A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME IS OCCURRING. THE GOVERNMENT IS PARTNERING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. I THANK THE LOCAL BANKS AND THE BAHAMAS REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS, WHO HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THIS EFFORT.

MR. SPEAKER

THE INCREASE IN THE CAPITAL BUDGET OF THE DEPARTMENT

OF HOUSING WILL ENABLE US TO CARRYOUT NECESSARY REPAIRS TO SOME OF THE PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS FOR WHICH I AM RESPONSIBLE. MR. SPEAKER, SOME OF THESE UNITS ARE IN A TERRIBLE STATE OF DISREPAIR. DURING THIS FISCAL YEAR WE WERE ABLE TO CARRYOUT SOME REPAIRS TO:

- Hospital Lane
- Windsor Lane
- Sutton Street
- Yellow Elder
- East Street
- Brougham Street
- Peter Street
- Penny Bank Lane
- Moore Avenue
- McCollough Corner
- Wildrose Apartments

HOWEVER, THERE IS MUCH, MUCH MORE WORK TO BE DONE.

MR. SPEAKER

SYSTEMATICALLY, AS FUNDING IS PROVIDED I HOPE TO CHANGE THE CONDITION OF THESE UNITS AND IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF LIVING FOR OUR TENANTS.

I ALSO WANT OCCUPANTS OF THE PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS TO KNOW THAT THEY WILL BE PRIORITIZED WITH RESPECT TO

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEW HOMES, WHERE THEY QUALIFY. THE RENTAL UNITS WERE CONCEIVED TO BE A TRANSITION TO HOMEOWNERSHIP. WE MUST HONOUR OUR FOREBEARS, THE FORMER MINISTERS OF HOUSING BY ENSURING THAT THE TRUE MISCHIEF OF THESE PROGRAMMES ARE PURSUED.

MR. SPEAKER

THE PEOPLE SAY TALK IS CHEAP. MONEY BUY LAND. WELL, I AM HERE TO SAY THAT WHILE THE SIDE OPPOSITE CONTINUES TO TALK AND CLAIM THAT WE ON THIS SIDE HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE LAW, I CONTINUE TO UNCOVER INSTANCES WHERE THEY HAVE ABUSED THE LAW IN HOUSING. I HAVE ALREADY TOLD THIS PARLIAMENT HOW THE SIDE OPPOSITE PASSED THE PLANNING AND SUBDIVISION ACT IN 2010 AND THEN COMPLETELY IGNORED IT. ILLEGALLY SIGNING AGREEMENTS FOR SALE AND CONVEYANCES. THEN THEY HAVE THE GAUL, THE UNMITIGATED, UNBRIDLED GAUL TO CRITICIZE US ABOUT, TRANSPARENCY, RESPECT FOR THE LAW AND ETHICS. THEY BELIEVE THIS A GAME EY?

WELL MR. SPEAKER, I ALSO WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT UNDER SECTION 22 OF THE HOUSING ACT, THE MINISTER OF HOUSING IS REQUIRED TO PREPARE EXPENDITURE REPORTS AND TABLE THEM IN PARLIAMENT EVERY YEAR.

WHEN I CAME TO OFFICE, I ASKED MY MINISTRY TO PROVIDE ME WITH THE REPORTS. TO MY SURPRISE, THERE WERE NONE! NO REPORTS. THEY UNDERTAKE A WHOLE CROWN AGENTS REPORT BUT FAILED TO CARRYOUT THE LAW THEMSELVES. THEY ARE CORRUPT MR. SPEAKER. HYPOCRTICAL. BUT ALAS, MR. SPEAKER, THEY ARE GONE AND WITH GOD'S HELP, THE HARD WORK OF THIS ADMINISTRATION AND THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE, THEY WILL NEVER RETURN TO OFFICE. IN THE INTERIM, MR. SPEAKER, WE HAVE ENGAGED ACCOUNTANTS AT THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION AND THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING TO PREPARE AUDITS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW. THE LACK OF COMPLIANCE BY THE SIDE OPPOSITE, HAS RESULTED IN A LOT OF DELAYS IN THIS PROCESS AS ACCOUNTANTS HAVE HAD TO CONDUCT FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS OF THE BOOKS TO FIND DATA AND INFORMATION TO ENABLE THEM, TO COMPLETE THEIR TASKS.

BUT MR. SPEAKER, THIS GOVERNMENT LED BY PERRY GLADSTONE CHRISTIE, WILL COMPLETE THE TASK AT HAND AND DO SO RESPONSIBLY AND IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW.

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION

MR. SPEAKER

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION, ESTABLISHED BY AN

ACT OF PARLIAMENT IN AUGUST 1983, AS AN APPROVED LENDER, IS AUTHORIZED TO MAKE GOVERNMENT INSURED LOANS UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE HOUSING ACT, 1967. THE CORPORATION MAY ALSO MAKE OTHER(PRIVATE) MORTGAGE LOANS TO INDIVIDUALS SEEKING TO CONSTRUCT, PURCHASE, REPAIR AND/OR ENLARGE THEIR OWN HOME, OR PERSONS PURCHASING VACANT LAND TO CONSTRUCT A DWELLING HOME.

LENDING ACTIVITY

THE CORPORATION REGULARLY REVIEWS APPLICATIONS THAT ARE PRESENTED FOR MORTGAGE LOANS. WHILE A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN FOR GOVERNMENT INITIATED PROJECTS IN THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT INITIATED SUBDIVISIONS IN NEW PROVIDENCE, GRAND BAHAMA AND OTHER FAMILY ISLANDS, AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF MORTGAGE LOAN REQUESTS FOR PRIVATE INITIATED PROJECTS ARE BEING PRESENTED.

THE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR LOANS FROM BAHAMIANS WHO ARE DEBT BURDENED OR REQUIRE A CO-APPLICANT TO JOIN IN THE APPLICATION TO ASSIST IN QUALIFYING FOR THE LOAN. MORE STRINGENT MEASURES ARE BEING APPLIED TO VERIFY THE ELIGIBILITY

AND INCOMES OF APPLICANTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE PRESENTING WITH SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND 2ND JOBS. FURTHER, IN ADDITION TO CONVENTIONAL SALARY DEDUCTION FOR SERVICING LOAN PAYMENTS, THE ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND E-BANKING IS BEING UTILIZED TO OBTAIN IRREVOCABLE PAYMENTS VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSFERS AND DIRECT DEPOSIT. THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION IS CURRENTLY ESTABLISHING ON-LINE BANKING WHERE PERSONS WILL BE ABLE TO TRANSFER THEIR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS DIRECTLY INTO BMC'S BANK ACCOUNT FROM THEIR BANK ACCOUNT. WITH REGARDS TO FUTURE GROWTH, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MOBILE BANKING WILL BE ESTABLISHED.

MR. SPEAKER,

AT TWO PERCENT (2%) ABOVE PRIME, THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO OFFER ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE MORTGAGE LOAN RATES IN THE INDUSTRY AT 6.75% TO A MAXIMUM LOAN AMOUNT OF \$237,500.00. ADDITIONALLY, THE INCLUSION OF THE CORPORATION'S GROUP LIFE AND HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE AT VERY COMPETITIVE RATES PROVIDES A "ONE STOP SHOP" CONCEPT.

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE ACTIVITY

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION CONTINUES ITS

PRUDENT FISCAL MANAGEMENT WITH THE VIEW TO IMPROVING BMC'S FINANCIAL POSITION. WHILE THIS TASK CAN BE CHALLENGING AT TIMES, THE CORPORATION REMAINS RESOLVED IN ITS EFFORTS. THERE HAVE BEEN NOTED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE OVERALL FINANCIAL POSITION AND IN THE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF FISCAL AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN RECENT YEARS.

THE BOND SINKING FUND DEFICIT

MR. SPEAKER,

THERE ARE SOME MAJOR ACCOUNTS/FINANCE CHALLENGES FACING THE CORPORATION AT THIS TIME.

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION'S BOND SINKING FUND 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 \$122M WILL BE DUE IN PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST PAYMENTS(APPENDIX 1). 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.

MONTHLY OBLIGATIONS ON PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST PAYMENTS

THE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO MEET ITS OBLIGATIONS OF MONTHLY PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST PAYMENTS TO ITS BONDHOLDERS BY ENSURING THAT THIS IS A PRIORITY.

OUTSTANDING AUDITS

MR. SPEAKER,
EXTERNAL AUDITORS, BENEBY & CO., HAVE COMPLETED ITS WORK AND PRESENTED DRAFT REPORTS FOR IN-HOUSE WORKING ON THE BMC EXTERNAL AUDITS FOR THE YEARS 2009 – 2012. IT IS ENVISIONED THAT THE CORPORATION SHOULD BECOME FULLY COMPLIANT BY SEPTEMBER, 2014 WITH THE 2013 REPORT.

MORTGAGE LOAN ARREARS ACTIVITY

MR. SPEAKER,
RECOGNIZING THAT MANY PERSONS ARE CONTINUALLY DEALING WITH FINANCIAL CHALLENGES, THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION EMPLOYS MANY METHODS TO VERIFY THE CUSTOMER'S FINANCIAL SITUATION. CONVERSELY, MANY PERSONS MAY HAVE THE FINANCIAL MEANS TO MAKE TIMELY

MORTGAGE LOAN PAYMENTS BUT SIMPLY DO NOT MAKE IT A PRIORITY. FOR SOME, MR. SPEAKER, THERE IS A BELIEF THAT SINCE IT IS GOVERNMENT, THEY DON'T HAVE TO PAY.

THE ARREARS TEAM AT BMC CONTINUES TO EMPLOY METHODS SUCH AS IN-HOUSE FINANCIAL COUNSELING, CONTACTS VIA MAIL, HOME VISITS AND TELEPHONE CALLS, AND LOAN RESTRUCTURING WHERE POSSIBLE, TO ASSIST. THE USE OF PRINTED AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA WITH REGARDS TO THE BMC DELINQUENCY HAS ALSO BEEN EMPLOYED.

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION REMAINS COMMITTED AND POSITIVE IN ITS ENDEAVOR TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF OUTSTANDING ARREARS.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION IS COMMITTED TO ITS 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 THE CORPORATION'S PRIVATE MORTGAGE LENDING PROGRAM.

CARRY OUT PUBLIC SERVICE INITIATIVES BY EDUCATING THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON SOUND PERSONAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT.

GIVEN THE CHALLENGES INDICATED WITH REGARDS TO DELINQUENCY, THE BMC HAS TAKEN A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO BOOST COLLECTION EFFORTS BY THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWSPAPER ADS AND APPEARANCES ON LOCAL RADIO TALK AND TELEVISION SHOWS TO APPEAL TO CUSTOMERS TO CONTACT BMC CONCERNING THEIR DELINQUENCY.

MR. SPEAKER,

THERE IS A GENERAL PUBLIC PERCEPTION THAT BMC SOLELY PROVIDES FINANCING FOR PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED A GOVERNMENT INITIATED HOME OR SERVICE LOT, THUS, MANY PERSONS ARE NOT AWARE OF THE PRIVATE MORTGAGE LENDING SERVICES THAT THE BMC HAS TO OFFER. IN FULFILLING THE CORPORATION'S MANDATE TO "STIMULATE, ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE THE OWNERSHIP OF HOMES BY INDIVIDUALS" BMC HAS EMBARKED ON INFORMING THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF ITS SERVICES IN THIS REGARD. THIS EFFORT WILL CONTINUE PRUDENTLY VIA RADIO AND TELEVISION ADS, MORTGAGE FAIRS, PUBLIC APPEARANCES, OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF BMC INTERACTIVE WEBSITE AND THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS.

AS A PUBLICLY OWNED CORPORATION, BMC TAKES ITS COMMITMENT TO SERVICE SERIOUSLY. 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.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, EXECUTIVES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION REMAIN COMMITTED IN ITS EFFORT TO BECOME A STELLAR MORTGAGE LENDING INSTITUTION. THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO CARRY OUT ITS MANDATE TO STIMULATE, ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOME OWNERSHIP WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS. I WANT TO PUBLICLY THANK SENATOR THE HONOURABLE ALEX STORR, THE CHAIRMAN OF BMC, THE DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF BMC FOR THEIR COMMITMENT AND HARD WORK.

MR. SPEAKER,

I NOW TURN TO HEAD 65-THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT HEALTH SERVICES

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MR. SPEAKER,

IN THE 2014/2015 BUDGET ESTIMATES, THERE IS AN OVERALL REDUCTION OF PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS IN THE AMOUNT OF

\$2,926,362.00. I ASSURE YOU NOBODY HAS BEEN FIRED MR. SPEAKER. THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAS UNDERTAKEN AN AUDIT OF THE PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS ITEM, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE REDUCTION. HOWEVER, I REPEAT NO ONE HAS LOST THEIR JOB.

HAZARDOUS ALLOWANCES HAS BEEN INCREASED BY \$113,879.00 FROM LAST YEAR'S FIGURE OF \$1,409,616.00 TO \$1,548,995.00. THIS INCREASE IS DUE TO HAZARDOUS ALLOWANCES OWED TO STAFF.

OUR PROVISION FOR TRAVEL IN THE BAHAMAS HAS ALSO BEEN INCREASED BY \$69,000.00. THIS IS IMPORTANT, AS MEMBERS OF MY TEAM NEED THE RESOURCES TO TRAVEL TO INSPECT AND REGULATE GOVERNMENT DUMPSITES THROUGHOUT THE BAHAMAS AND WHEN THERE ARE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND INCIDENTS, MY TEAM NEEDS THE MONIES TO ENABLE THEM TO TRAVEL.

IN BLOCK 20, WE HAVE INCREASED LOCAL TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS AND FREIGHT & EXPRESS FROM \$13,500 LAST YEAR TO \$36,700. THIS WILL ENABLE US TO....

IN BLOCK 30, WE HAVE REDUCED THE PROVISION OF GASOLINE FROM \$900,000 TO \$600,000. WE HAVE INCREASED RENT FOR

LIVING ACCOMMODATION FROM \$40,800 TO \$135,600; OFFICE RENT FROM \$95,000 TO \$312,500; AND TELEPHONE, TELEGRAMS, TELEX, FAX FROM \$97,500 TO \$173,884. INCREASES ARE DUE TO REOVAL OF FÀMILY ISLAND LINE ITEM PROVISION ÀND ALLOCATING RESOURCES OVER OTHER LINE ITEMS.

PRINTING AND PHOTOCOPYING HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM \$12,600 TO \$20,400.

MR. SPEAKER,

DURING THE 2013-2014 BUDGET PERIOD, THE DEHS WAS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAMILY ISLAND DUMP SITES AND DISPOSAL FACILITIES. INSUFFICIENT FUNDS WERE ALLOCATED FOR THE NECESSARY MAINTENANCE LAST YEAR.

IN THE 2014 - 2015 BUDGET PERIOD, THE DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING WHICH WILL ENABLE IT TO CLOSE SOME DUMP SITES AND CREATE CENTRAL DISPOSAL SITES IN CERTAIN FAMILY ISLANDS. THE CENTRAL SITES WILL FACILITATE MONTHLY OR QUARTERLY MAINTENANCE AND ELIMINATE ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH AESTHETICS, VECTOR BREEDING AND DISPOSAL OF WASTE IN LOW LYING OR WETLAND AREAS. THIS HAS RESULTED IN ITEM 541990 BEING BEING INCREASED FROM \$512,600 TO \$1,502,900.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SITE IN NEW PROVIDENCE WILL OPERATE UNDER PRIVATE MANAGEMENT WITH EFFECT FROM 1 JULY 2014. THIS VENTURE WILL PROVIDE A MATERIALS RECOVERY FACILITY FOR RECYCLING INITIATIVES AND REMEDIATION OF THE SITE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE RECYCLING INITIATIVE WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL REVENUE STREAM TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS. REMEDIATION WORKS, ALONG WITH ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT, WILL DRASTICALLY REDUCE, OR ELIMINATE, THE INCIDENCE OF FIRES AT THE DISPOSAL SITE AND THE AMOUNT OF WASTE REQUIRING LANDFILLING. THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SITE WILL ALLOW FOR LAND RECLAMATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE USE.

MR. SPEAKER

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SOUGHT TO IMPROVE WASTE COLLECTION DURING THE LAST FISCAL YEAR BY INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE WASTE HAULERS, CREATING A HELP DESK AND REORGANIZING COLLECTION ROUTES. IN PREVIOUS YEARS ONLY MINIMAL FUNDING WAS PROVIDED IN THE BUDGET AND CONTINGENCY FUNDING WAS PROVIDED DURING THE YEAR. THIS YEAR, DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM \$4,000,000 TO \$11,000,000 REFLECTING AN INCREASE OF

\$7,000,000, WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO PAY FOR SUCH SERVICES ON TIME.

MR. SPEAKER

WE INTRODUCED NEW REVENUE STREAMS LAST YEAR. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY FEE HAS GENERATED APPROXIMATELY \$11,000,000 DURING THE 2013/2014 BUDGET YEAR, WHICH HAS ASSISTED IN DEFRAYING COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH UNEXPECTED LANDFILL FIRES, LANDFILL MANAGERMENTS COSTS AND GARBAGE COLLECTION.

OUR PROVISION FOR WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM \$5,000 TO \$50,000.

- OZONE WORKSHOP TO BE HOSTED IN NASSAU
- SAN SALVADOR WORKSHOP

OUR PROVISION FOR TUITION, TRAINING & IN-SERVICE AWARDS HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM \$25,000 TO \$50,000.

JOHN GIBSON-DEGREE IN ENTOMOLOGY

LICENSING AND INSPECTION IF VEHICLES HAS ALSO INCREASED FROM \$37,565 TO \$66,065.

MR.SPEAKER,

DURING THE 2014-2015 BUDGET PERIOD, THE DEHS WILL EXPAND THE COLLECTION OF BULK AND WHITE WASTE (DISCARDED REFRIGERATORS, STOVES, AIR CONDITION UNITS, WASHING MACHINES, DRYERS FURNITURE, AND TELEVISIONS ETC). THIS LINE ITEM WILL BE INCREASED FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000. AS WOULD BE RECALLED AN SIMILAR EXERCISE WAS CARRIED OUT EARLIER THIS YEAR WHICH YIELDED OVER ONE MILLIONS TONS OF WASTE FROM THE STREETS AND VACANT PROPERTIES OF NEW PROVIDENCE. WE ARE NOW AIMING TO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES MORE OFTEN.

MR. SPEAKER,

DURING THE 2014-2015 BUDGET PERIOD, CONSULTATIONS ON THE DRAFT EMISSION REGULATIONS WILL BE FINALIZED TO ADDRESS CONCERNS OF AIR POLLUTION FROM VEHICLES. THE DRAFT LEGISLATION WAS RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION. I HAVE ALSO HELD SEVERAL FRUITFUL MEETINGS WITH INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS ON THE SUBJECT. WE ALL AGREE THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT VEHICLE EMISSIONS.

THE DEPARTMENT WILL ALSO EXPAND ITS INDOOR AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND WILL CONTINUE ITS ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO OIL SPILLS.

MR. SPEAKER, WE HOPE THAT NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES WILL ARISE AS NEW WEIGH BRIDGES WILL BE INSTALLED AT THE NEW PROVIDENCE LANDFILL, GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHECKS AND BALANCES WILL BE EMPLOYED IN RELATION TO THE COLLECTION OF TIPPING FEES AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER INCREASING TIPPING FEES DURING THIS BUDGET YEAR, AS OUR TIPPING FEE OF \$10 PER TON IS ONE OF THE LOWEST IN THE REGION.

LEGISLATION AND EDUCATION

MR. SPEAKER,
DURING THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, THE DERELICT VEHICLE REGULATIONS WERE FINALIZED. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE AMENDMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT TO INCREASE FINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INFRACTIONS WILL BE CONCLUDED DURING THE 2014-2015 BUDGET CYCLE. THE DEPARTMENT WILL SEEK TO ACQUIRE DEDICATED LEGAL SERVICES TO FACILITATE SUSTAINED AND REGULAR PROSECUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL OFFENCES. WE ALSO HOPE THAT THIS WILL RESULT IN NEW REVENUE. WE ALSO INTEND TO REVIEW FINES FOR LITTERING DURING THE 2014/2015 BUDGET YEAR.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE DEPARTMENT WILL EXPAND ITS EDUCATION PROGRAMME WITH EMPHASIS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- WASTE MANAGEMENT –BY IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION
- MOSQUITO CONTROL – BY EXPANSION OF ITS “FIGHT THE BITE” MOSQUITO CONTROL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DENGUE FEVER, MALARIA AND CHIKUNGUNYA
- RODENT CONTROL
- INDOOR AIR QUALITY

THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY ITEMS 511100 AND 522400 HAVE BEEN INCREASED.

VECTOR CONTROL

THE VECTOR CONTROL DIVISION OF THE DEHS, DESPITE THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED, CONTINUES TO MONITOR MOSQUITO INDICES IN ITS EFFORT TO CONTROL MOSQUITO BORNE DISEASES SUCH AS THE EMERGING THREAT OF CHIKUNGUNYA, DENGUE AND MALARIA. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE PROGRAMME WILL BE AIDED BY THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL ULV MACHINES AND REPLACEMENT AND ADDITIONAL TRUCKS TO ASSIST WITH SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL ACTIVITIES. THE DEHS IS INVESTIGATING ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF MOSQUITO CONTROL AND WILL BE

ADDING VARIOUS NEW TECHNOLOGIES. THAT IS WHY THE LINE ITEM FOR VECTOR CONTROL HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM \$700,000 TO \$823,700.

MR. SPEAKER,

THERE IS A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE IN THE DEHS AND THE UPCOMING YEAR WILL PROVE TO BE AN EXCITING AND PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR MY TEAM.

MR. SPEAKER

I NOW TURN TO HEAD 72 AND THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING.

THE ENVIRONMENT

MR. SPEAKER,

AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, I HAVE THE GENERAL DIRECTION AND CONTROL OF THE AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR ADVISING THE GOVERNMENT ON HOW THE ENVIRONMENT IS TO BE PROTECTED AND ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF OUR NATION IS OUR GREATEST BLESSING. I HAVE GROWN TO APPRECIATE THE RICHNESS OF THE BAHAMIAN ENVIRONMENT MORE NOW THAN BEFORE. THE

ENVIRONMENT ENABLES AND UNDERPINS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THIS IS WHY, MR. SPEAKER, ADVICE FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING ON THE SAFE AND WISE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND OVERSIGHT OF ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER I AM FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY, GROW BUSINESS AND CREATE NEW JOBS

MR. SPEAKER

NOTWITHSTANDING THE COMMENTS MADE BY THE MEMBER FOR EAST GRAND BAHAMA, WHERE HE FALSELY ACCUSED THE PRIME MINISTER OF DESTROYING THE SEABED OF BIMINI AND ITS ENVIRONMENT, I WANT THE RECORD TO REFLECT THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION ALLOWS SCIENCE TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT WE PROCEED WITH A PROJECT.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (BEST) COMMISSION FOR WHICH I HAVE RESPONSIBILITY, ADVISES AND MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS TO VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTRIES ON THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENTS ON OUR ENVIRONMENT AND THE SUITABILITY OF MITIGATION MEASURES IN PLACE BY DEVELOPERS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.

MR. SPEAKER,

BEST IS NOT A PERMITTING AGENCY. IT REVIEWS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS(EIAS) AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLANS (EMPS) FOR INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BEST COMMISSION IS KNOWN NATIONALLY FOR ADVISING THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED FOR THE COMMISSION'S REVIEW; EXPLAINING AND PUBLICIZING THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT IN THE AREAS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; AND CONDUCTING SITE VISITS FOR PROJECTS UNDER REVIEW. AS WE HAVE HEARD MUCH ABOUT EIAS AND EMPS OF LATE, MR. SPEAKER, PERMIT ME TO EXPOUND ON THESE FOR A MINUTE.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) SUBMITTED FOR VARIOUS PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IS BOTH A STATEMENT OF PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF A PROJECT AS WELL AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL TO MINIMIZE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (EMP) IS AN INTEGRAL

PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS. EMPS FOLLOW THROUGH ON THE RESULTS OF THE EIA, DESCRIBES MITIGATION AND CONTINGENCY RESPONSE MEASURES AND PROCEDURES, AND THE MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS FOR THE PROJECT. MY MINISTRY AND THE BEST COMMISSION PLACES STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE PREPARATION OF EMPS THAT WILL OUTLINE HOW CONDITIONS AND TARGETS TO MITIGATE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS IDENTIFIED IN THE EIA WILL BE MET AND MONITORED DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION.

THEREFORE, MR. SPEAKER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT AN EMP MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN EXAMINING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS IDENTIFIED IN AN EIA.

DURING 2013 - 2014 THE COMMISSION RECEIVED A NUMBER OF EIAs FOR PROPOSED NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BAHAMAS. THE COMMISSION CONTINUALLY AUDITS AND MONITORS ACTIVITIES FOR VARIOUS ONGOING PROJECTS TO ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL ADHERENCE WITH THE PROJECT'S EMP, AS WELL AS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

MR. SPEAKER

MY MINISTRY COORDINATES THE NATIONAL EFFORT TO

PROTECT, CONSERVE AND RESPONSIBLY MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF THE BAHAMAS. MY MINISTRY IS ALSO BUSY EXPANDING EFFORTS TO ACCESS FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND BILATERAL DONOR AGENCIES WITH RESPECT TO SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT EFFICIENCIES.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN ADDITION TO SECURING FUNDING FROM MULTILATERAL AGENCIES, ADVISING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ON IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT ON INVESTMENT PROJECTS AND MONITORING THE ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, MY MINISTRY OFTEN THROUGH THE BEST COMMISSION OVERSEES THE PROJECTS THAT ARE FUNDED BY DONOR AGENCIES. THESE MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (MEAS) ARE SPONSORED AND/OR CO-FINANCED BY UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITIES (GEF).

MR. SPEAKER,

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE OF MY MINISTRY IS SHOWN IN THE INTEGRATED WATERSHED AND COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT PROJECTS (EXUMA AND ANDROS) UNDERTAKEN IN THE LAST FISCAL PERIOD.

WE HAVE MORE MARINAS THAN ANY OTHER CARIBBEAN ISLAND. WHILE NEW MARINAS IN THE BAHAMAS ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE RECEPTION FACILITIES FOR WASTEWATER TO SECONDARY LEVEL, OLDER MARINAS LIKE THOSE IN THE EXUMA CAYS DO NOT HAVE PROPER FACILITIES LIKE THOSE IN ELIZABETH HARBOUR IN GEORGE TOWN, WHICH ATTRACTS UPWARDS OF 500-600 BOATS A DAY DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS. THE PROJECT WILL IMPLEMENT A NEW TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RETROFITTING OLD MARINAS WITH PROPER SEWAGE TREATMENT OPTIONS. WHEN COMPLETED, THE BAHAMAS WILL HAVE DEMONSTRATED A COST-EFFECTIVE, RETROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY RECREATIONAL VESSELS USING OLDER MARINA AND HARBOURS. IT WILL ALSO HAVE PROVIDED GUIDANCE FOR PROACTIVE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR FUTURE RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS. AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT, THE WATER QUALITY WITHIN ELIZABETH HARBOUR WILL HAVE BEEN IMPROVED AND DAMAGE TO BIOLOGICAL HABITATS MITIGATED AND REDUCED.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS ALSO RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE LAND AND SEA USE PLANNING FOR WATER RECHARGE PROTECTION IN ANDROS. THIS PROJECT FOCUSED ON GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION, ON

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF ANDROS' ECOSYSTEM AND SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT AND LONG TERM CONSERVATION OF WATER RESOURCES NECESSARY TO THE WELFARE OF THE ENTIRE BAHAMAS. THIS PROJECT WILL RESULT IN A MARINE AND TERRESTRIAL SURVEY, ECONOMIC VALUATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY AND THE INSTALLATION OF COMPOSTING TOILETS AT NORTH ANDROS HIGH SCHOOL AS A SMALL SCALE WATER CONSERVATION/LEAK REDUCTION DEMONSTRATION. THESE PROJECTS SERVE AS MODELS FOR REPLICATING BEST PRACTICES NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS IS THE ONLY COUNTRY GRANTED THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN TWO NOVEL APPLICATIONS OF THE IWCAM APPROACH. AS EVIDENCE OF ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP, THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO MANAGEMENT CONTROL OF THE EXUMA PROJECT FACILITIES BY THE ELIZABETH HARBOUR MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE. THE BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO RECEIVE THE ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT PLAN, ECONOMIC EVALUATION REPORT, AND THE LAND AND SEA USE PLAN FOR THE ISLAND OF ANDROS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS WILL CONCLUDE GEF-IWCAM-1.

THE BAHAMAS HAS DECIDED TO BECOME A PART OF IWCAM-2 WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING DESIGNED BY THE GEF.

MR. SPEAKER,

WHILE THESE PROJECTS WILL CONTINUE, NEW ONES ARE PLANNED FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEGISLATIVE AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING (ABS) CAPACITY OF GENETIC RESOURCES AND BIOPROSPECTING IN THE BAHAMAS IS LONG OVERDUE. THE PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR ABS FITS RIGHT IN WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL PRIORITIES, WHICH INCLUDE AN EXAMINATION OF THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE RELEVANT GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS. AT A WORKSHOP HELD IN JANUARY 2014, THE PROJECT PROPOSAL WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AND NGO COMMUNITIES, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTION FOCAL POINTS. THIS PROJECT WILL BE COORDINATED WITH OTHER ONGOING GEF FUNDED PROJECTS IN THE BAHAMAS PORTFOLIO LIKE THE FORTHCOMING GEF FUNDED AND UNEP IMPLEMENTED PROJECT ENTITLED "RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION".

MR. SPEAKER,
MY MINISTRY CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT MULTI LATERAL AGREEMENTS FOCUSING ON RESPONDING TO INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION, CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND LAND DEGRADATION. WHEN I ATTENDED THE 19TH FORUM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN MEXICO EARLIER THIS YEAR, I URGED THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) AND THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC), TO APPRECIATE THE VULNERABILITIES OF CARIBBEAN STATES. I TOLD THE GATHERING THAT "APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE BAHAMAS IS WITHIN ONE METER OF MEAN SEA LEVEL. THEREFORE, THE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE IS REAL FOR THE BAHAMAS. ACTION MUST BE TAKEN NOW AS IT NOT ONLY AFFECTS OUR WAY OF LIFE BUT WILL IMPACT LIVES IN OUR COUNTRY." I ISSUED A CALL TO GREATER ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPED WORLD AND REMINDED THAT "THE DEVELOPED WORLD MUST PROVIDE THE FINANCIAL MECHANISMS TO ASSIST THE BAHAMAS WITH ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION EFFORTS. OUR VULNERABILITY SHOULD DETERMINE OUR ABILITY TO ACCESS INTERNATIONAL FUNDING, NOT OUR PER CAPITA INCOME!"

HAVING SAID THAT THEN AND THERE MR. SPEAKER, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHY THIS PROJECT, THE FEASIBILITY STUDIES FOR A CLIMATE RISK RESILIENT COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (IDB) IS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE BAHAMAS. WE CAN OPTIMIZE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COASTAL ZONE TO NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUILD RESILIENCE TO COASTAL HAZARDS INCLUDING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME. 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.

THE BAHAMAS SUPPORTS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTIONS ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WETLANDS.

WHEN MY MINISTRY IS REPRESENTED AT VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES IT ALSO ENSURES A BAHAMIAN PRESENCE AT THE CRITICAL MEETINGS WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE THAT AFFECT THE REGION. IN ESSENCE, MR. SPEAKER, THE BAHAMAS' PARTICIPATION IN THESE MEETINGS IS IMPORTANT AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL. THE BAHAMAS IS NOT ONLY IN ATTENDANCE AT THESE MEETINGS. WE ARE FULL PARTICIPANTS AT THESE

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS. THE BAHAMAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS, IN THE WORK OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES AND IN THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESPOND TO ITS THREATS. IN THE UNFCCC SYSTEM AS IT RELATES TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, THE BAHAMAS MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE CORE BUDGET OF THE UNFCCC AND ALSO TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL.

CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS IS A SIGNATORY AND ACTUALLY ONE OF THE FOUNDING COUNTRIES OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE. THIS AGREEMENT BINDS THE BAHAMAS AND OTHER SIGNATORIES TO THE CONSERVING OF AT LEAST 20% OF THE NEAR SHORE MARINE LIFE BY THE CREATION OF PROTECTED AREAS BY THE YEAR 2020. WE ARE COMMITTED TO MEETING OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THE AGREEMENT AND HAVE BEEN WORKING TOWARD MEETING THE GOALS SET BY THE AGREEMENT. AT THE LAST MEETING HELD IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS I SIGNED ON TO THE LEADERS DECLARATION ON BEHALF OF THE BAHAMAS. THIS AGREEMENT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED THE SECOND PHASE OF THE INITIATIVE WITH THE

BAHAMAS HAVING THREE PRIORITY AREAS. ONE OF THOSE PRIORITIES WAS THE CREATION OF LEGISLATION FOR THE BAHAMAS PROTECTED AREAS FUND WHICH WAS PASSED IN THIS PLACE AND THE UPPER CHAMBER.

MR. SPEAKER, YOU WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT IN THE BUDGET ITEM 912133-CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE TRUST UNDER CAPITAL HEAD 21-MINISTRY OF FINANCE-THEY HAVE MADE PROVISION FOR A \$2 MILLION DOLLAR CONTRIBUTION TO THE BPAF IN THE UPCOMING FISACL YEAR.

INDEED MR. SPEAKER IT IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR THAT BAHAMAS AS I AM TOLD, WE ARE THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE REGION TO ESTABLISH A LOCAL FUND AS PER THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CCI.

MR.SPEAKER, BY THE DIRECTION OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE MY MINISTRY HAS TAKEN A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND HAS BEEN VERY ENGAGED IN THE REGION AND WITHIN CCI. AS A RESULT, THE BAHAMAS WAS ALSO APPOINTED AS CO-CHAIR TO THE COUNCIL OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE.THEREFORE, THE BAHAMAS HAS NOW BEEN GIVEN A REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM, FROM WHICH WE ARE ALSO ABLE TO TELL OUR STORY AND GARNER SUPPORT FOR OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY

AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS.

MR. SPEAKER

BECAUSE OF OUR EFFORTS IN ESTABLISHING MARINE PROTECTED AREAS THE BAHAMAS WAS NAMED TO THE WORLD'S 10 BEST ETHICAL DESTINATIONS LIST FOR 2014 BY ETHICAL TRAVELER. THIS IS A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOUNDED BY JEFF GREENWALD. IN RELEASING IT'S 2014 LIST THE ORGANIZATION STATED OF THE BAHAMAS, "EFFORTS TO ESTABLISHED NEW MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND THE MASSIVE EXPANSION OF THE NUMBER OF PROTECTED ACRES IN THE ANDROS WEST SIDE NATIONAL PARK..." TWO OTHER CARIBBEAN NATIONS WERE NAMED TO THIS LIST OF TEN COUNTRIES, BARBADOS AND DOMINICA.

MR. SPEAKER

THE BAHAMAS BANNED SHARK FISHING AND IS A SHARK SANCTUARY. JUST THIS DECEMBER THE BAHAMAS WAS NAMED CHAIR OF THE UNITED NATIONS SHARK COALITION. THE POSITION WAS ACCEPTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ELLISION RAHMING, BAHAMAS AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON OUR BEHALF. THE FOCUS OF THE COALITION IS TO ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT'S TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE INSTITUTED BANS ON THE FISHING OF SHARKS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT

SHARK ECO TOURISM GENERATED MORE THAN \$300 MILLION WORLD-WIDE AND IS SLATED FOR GROWTH OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES TO MORE THAN DOUBLE THAT AMOUNT.

MR. SPEAKER,

WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE CONTRIBUTION OF NONGOVERNMENT AGENCIES IS INVALUABLE AS WE BUILD UP IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE OUR ENVIRONMENT TEAM.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

MR. SPEAKER,

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC) CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IN ACHIEVING THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE

AT THE INTERNATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED CONGRESS. TNC'S PRESENTED THE CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE INITIATIVE, THE BAHAMAS CASE STUDY.

MR. SPEAKER,

MY MINISTRY ADVANCED AND HOSTED THE FIRST NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CONCLAVE IN JANUARY OF 2014 THAT WAS ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL MAJOR

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES, NGOS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE TNC WAS A MAJOR SPONSOR OF THAT EVENT AND I PUBLICLY THANK THEM FOR THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT.

THE MINISTRY WILL USE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONCLAVE TO DEVELOP A ROADMAP OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES AND WE ANTICIPATE THAT MPA EXPANSION WILL BE PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN THE ROADMAP. THE CONSERVANCY HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE PARTNER WITH THE MINISTRY, CO-SPONSORING THE MPA ENFORCEMENT WORKSHOP, PROVIDING GIS SUPPORT BY DEVELOPING VARIOUS MAPS THAT SHOW PROPOSED MPAS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR EXPANSION AND BY PROVIDED GIS SUPPORT FOR THE UPDATING OF THE BAHAMAS ECOLOGICAL GAP ANALYSIS, DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A MANGROVE RESTORATION PROJECT IN THE BONEFISH POND NATIONAL PARK, AND EXPANDING ITS CORAL NURSERY PROJECT

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

MR. SPEAKER,

TNC BRINGS TO THE CENTRE STAGE OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY OUR ENDEAVOURS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.

IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS AT THE 66TH GULF AND CARIBBEAN

FISHERIES INSTITUTE (GCFI) CONFERENCE, RESEARCH IN THE BAHAMAS WAS FEATURED IN A PAPER, 'ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF CORAL (ACROPORA SP.) NURSERIES THROUGHOUT THE BAHAMAS, AND ENHANCING MANAGEMENT OF THE BAHAMAS SPINY LOBSTER FISHERY FOR THE FUTURE.'

MR. SPEAKER,

EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT WHEN FISHERS WITNESS FIRST-HAND THE HEALTH AND BOUNTY OF A MARINE PROTECTED AREA, THEY BECOME ADVOCATES FOR A SIMILAR PROTECTED AREA WHERE THEY FISH AND LEARNT THE ROLE THAT MPAS CAN PLAY IN RESTORING AND BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES BY FISHERMEN AND OTHER RESOURCE USERS.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE MINISTRY LOOKS FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE TNC IN THE 2014/15 FISCAL PERIOD ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MPA CAMPAIGN, OPERATIONS AND CAPITALIZATION OF THE BPAF.

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST

MR.SPEAKER,

ANOTHER NGO UNDER THE PORTFOLIO OF THE MINISTRY OF

THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING IS THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST. THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST'S CORE MANDATE IS NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT SUPPORTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND POLICY AND ADVOCACY.

THE BNT COMPLETED THE FINAL STEPS IN THE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE ANDROS WEST SIDE NATIONAL PARK, SUPPORTING THE BAHAMAS 2020 DECLARATION.

TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE BNT COORDINATED SEVERAL RAPID ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS IN 2013/14, TO JUSTIFY THE PROTECTION OF KEY HABITATS IN OUR PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM. THESE INCLUDED: THE LUCAYAN NATIONAL PARK IN ABACO, THE MARLS AND CROSS HARBOUR, EAST GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND, AND JOULTER CAYS. BNT OFFICERS ASSISTED WITH FIELD ASSESSMENT DURING THE RAPID ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND HELD PUBLIC MEETINGS TO CONSULT THE WIDER COMMUNITIES. I VISITED THE JOULTERS CAY AREA TO GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT THE AREA IS FOR CONSERVATION IN THE BAHAMAS.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN MARCH 2014, THE BNT OFFICIALLY OPENED THE 7.5 ACRE PRIMEVAL FOREST NATIONAL PARK LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF FRANK WATSON HIGHWAY. ESTABLISHED IN 2002, THIS PARK

PROTECTS A SECTION OF OLD GROWTH FOREST THAT HAS REMAINED UNDISTURBED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. THE PARK HAS A SYSTEM OF TRAILS WITH SIGNAGE, A VISITORS CENTRE AND COMPOSTING TOILETS FOR THIS UNIQUE AND SPECIAL NATIONAL PARK. ~~IT~~ PROVIDES A WINDOW INTO THE GEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE BAHAMAS AND IS AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT THE UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS OF THE BAHAMAS.

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST (BNT) CELEBRATED THIS WORLD-WIDE EVENT ON SATURDAY THE 26 APRIL WITH A PUBLIC-SUPPORTED PARK RESTORATION PROJECT AT HAROLD AND WILSON PONDS. THE RESTORATION PROJECT AT THE PARK INCLUDED THE CUTTING AND REMOVAL OF THE INVASIVE CATTAILS AND CASUARINA TREES IN VARIOUS AREAS AROUND THE PARK. ADDITIONALLY, ALL TRASH AND DEBRIS FROM THE PARK WAS COLLECTED AND REMOVED.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN APRIL THE SECOND PHASE OF THE LEON LEVY NATIVE PLAN PRESERVE IN ELEUTHERA WAS OPENED. THE 25 ACRE PRESERVE HAS INCORPORATED A LATH HOUSE FOR PROPAGATION OF NATIVE TREES AND FRESHWATER WETLANDS SUPPORTING A VARIETY OF BIRD LIFE ON ELEUTHERA. THE PRESERVE IS FUNDED BY THE LEVY FOUNDATION, WHICH HAS AN INVESTMENT OF OVER 3 MILLION DOLLARS IN NATURAL

RESOURCE PRESERVATION.

MR. SPEAKER,

AN EFFORT TO PROTECT THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) CRITICALLY ENDANGERED BARTSCH'S IGUANA FROM THE THREAT OF INVASIVE ALIEN VERTEBRATES ON BOOBY CAY LED TO AN ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT TOWARDS DESIGNATING BOOBY CAY AS A NATIONAL PARK. NO FERAL GOATS WERE FOUND, BUT BLACK RATS WERE DETECTED. SADLY, THE POPULATION OF THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED BARTSCH'S IGUANA APPEARS TO BE DECLINING, HIGHLIGHTING THE URGENCY OF PROTECTING AND RESTORING BOOBY CAY. LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS ARE WORKING TO REDUCE THREATS BY INVASIVE SPECIES TO THE ENDEMIC PLANTS AND ANIMALS FOUND ON BOOBY CAY.

RED LIST WORKSHOP

THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) PRODUCES A RED LIST TO CATALOGUE AND HIGHLIGHT THOSE PLANTS AND ANIMALS THAT ARE FACING A HIGH RISK OF GLOBAL EXTINCTION. AT THE IUCN RED LISTING WORKSHOP IN MARCH OF 2014 A DIALOGUE BEGAN ABOUT PRODUCING A NATIONAL RED LIST FOR THE BAHAMAS. THE WORKSHOP FAMILIARIZED PARTICIPANTS IN THE RED LISTING PROCESSES,

INCLUDING UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A RED LIST AND HOW A NATIONAL RED LIST DIFFERS FROM THE GLOBAL LISTS.

MR. SPEAKER,

A NATIONAL RED LIST WILL IDENTIFY CONSERVATION PRIORITIES FOR THE BNT ESPECIALLY AS IT RELATES TO NATIONAL PARKS. THE NATIONAL RED LIST IS THE BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT THAT CAN INFORM POLICY AND CONSERVATION DECISIONS.

MR. SPEAKER,

AN IMPORTANT EVENT THIS YEAR WAS THE NATURAL HISTORY CONFERENCE (BNHC) MARCH HELD BY THE BNT. THE GOAL OF THE CONFERENCE WAS TO INSPIRE NEW AVENUES OF RESEARCH AND COOPERATION ACROSS DISCIPLINES, WHILE HIGHLIGHTING THE BENEFITS OF RESEARCH TO THE ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, AND HUMAN SOCIETY OF THE BAHAMAS. THE HON. PRIME MINISTER PERRY G. CHRISTIE, OPENED THE EVENT.

THE FORESTRY UNIT

MR. SPEAKER,

WHEN I CONSIDER THE FORESTRY UNIT OF MY MINISTRY I

THINK OF THE PHRASE, "SMALL GRANTS BIG OUTPUTS".

FORESTS OCCUPY A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF OUR LAND SPACE SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE DEVELOP OUR FORESTRY RESOURCES TO THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL BY APPLYING SOUND, SCIENTIFIC, AND SUSTAINED MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES. GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING OUR FORESTS WILL BE CONTAINED IN A NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AND A FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN. THE MINISTRY HOPES TO DEVELOP SMALL SCALE FOREST-BASED INDUSTRIES TO REDUCE WOOD IMPORTS, SUSTAINABLY EXTRACT ROSIN FOR EXPORT, CREATE A LIGHT TIMBER HARVESTING INDUSTRY AND USE CERTAIN FORESTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUNTING RESERVES THUS EXPANDING THE ECO-TOURISTIC PRODUCT.

MR. SPEAKER THE ASSESSMENT OF OUR PINE FOREST RESOURCES HAS BEGUN AND IS BEING CONDUCTED BY THE FAO IN COLLABORATION WITH MY MINISTRY. A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT HAS REVEALED THAT A TOTAL HARVESTABLE ACREAGE OF PINE FOREST ON NORTH ANDROS OF SOME 45,285 ACRES. FROM THIS TOTAL AREA, THE VOLUME OF HARVESTABLE TREES AMOUNT 1,863,750 m³, AND IS VALUED AT \$37,890,000.00. THE POTENTIAL THINNING VOLUME, PEGGED AT 561,456 m³, AND VALUED AT \$11,414,400.00.

ONCE THE NATIONAL FOREST IS DECLARED, A SUSTAINABLE

MANAGEMENT PLAN WILL BE ADVANCED. BUT IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT ANDROS AND ABACO IN PARTICULAR CAN PROVIDE CONSIDERABLE REVENUE TO THE GOVERNMENT FROM ROYALTY AND LICENCE FEES.

MR. SPEAKER,

FORESTRY IS ANOTHER ASPECT OF ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT THAT IS FUNDED LARGELY FROM EXTERNAL DONOR AGENCIES.

UNDER THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION (FAO) TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (TCP)/, TRAINING OF STAFF IN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT CONTINUED. A THREE-DAY GIS WORKSHOP WAS HELD IN— FEBRUARY AT THE BNGIS CENTRE AND INVENTORY ASSESSMENT TRAINING TOOK PLACE IN TREASURE CAY, ABACO LATER THAT MONTH. THE FORESTS OF THE BAHAMAS HAD NOT BEEN INVENTORIED SINCE 1986. STAFF FROM THE FORESTRY UNIT AND THE BAHAMAS TRUST (BNT) CARRIED OUT A FOREST INVENTORY IN NORTH ANDROS' PINE FOREST AND IN ABACO IN THE BUCKAROON BAY (A CONCESSION AREA FOR LINDAR INDUSTRIES). THE FORESTRY UNIT CONFIRMED THAT THE TREASURE CAY AREA HAS PRIME FOREST IN TERMS OF QUALITY SITE AND STANDING VOLUMES. THE INVENTORY RESULTS WILL ASSIST WITH PRESCRIBING BEST FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR THE AREA AND YIELD SIGNIFICANT DATA ON THE STATE AND POTENTIAL OF

THE PINE FOREST.

THE OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING OF THIS TIMBER HARVESTING LICENSE ISSUED TO LINDAR INDUSTRIES WORKS IN TANDEM WITH THE FAO TCP PROJECT. THIS PROJECT PROVIDES A MUCH NEEDED BOOST TO REVITALIZING THE FORESTRY AND TIMBER INDUSTRY IN THE BAHAMAS AND IS PROGRESSING WELL. THE MINISTRY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

MR. SPEAKER,

WE JOIN IN THE GLOBAL THRUST FOR CONSERVING UNIQUE FOREST BIODIVERSITY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CREATING INCOME FOR LOCAL POPULATIONS AND REDUCING GREEN HOUSE EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION. PROJECTS THAT DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS, INCLUDING AGROFORESTRY AND NON TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS, REDUCE PRESSURE ON FOREST RESOURCES WHILE PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GENERATION OF INCOME IN REMOTE COASTAL COMMUNITIES HARD HIT BY THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND LOSS OF TOURISM REVENUES.

THAT IS WHY I AM HAPPY TO INFORM THAT THIS YEAR THE

MINISTRY MOVED CLOSER TO IMPLEMENTING THE GEF FULL-SIZED PROJECT ON LAND DEGRADATION. THIS PROJECT ENTITLED: PINE ISLANDS –FOREST/MANGROVE INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION (GRAND BAHAMA, NEW PROVIDENCE, ABACO AND ANDROS) IS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT WITH FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES FOR LAND DEGRADATION AND BIODIVERSITY. IT WILL ADOPT A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO THE CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, AND FURTHER CONTRIBUTE TO THE LINKAGES BETWEEN ECOSYSTEMS AND HUMAN WELL BEING.

THESE GOALS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE HIGHEST OF PRIORITIES BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FUND (GEF) SECRETARIAT, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS. THE FORESTRY UNIT, THE BEST COMMISSION, THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL PLANNING, THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEYS, THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL GIS CENTRE, THE BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION, BAHAMAS STRAW MARKET AUTHORITY, LINDAR INDUSTRIES, THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY, THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST, FRIENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ANDROS CONSERVANCY & TRUST ARE ALL PARTNERS IN THIS PROJECT.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE PROJECT AGREEMENT HAS BEEN SIGNED AND BETWEEN

THE BAHAMAS AND A CONSULTANT IDENTIFIED FOR THE PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT PHASE. THIS PROJECT WILL INTEGRATE SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND INCORPORATE THE VALUE OF ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES INTO THE LAND USE PLANNING PROCESS.

THE GAZETTING OF TARGETED CONSERVATION FORESTS WILL STEM HABITAT LOSS AND DEGRADATION THEREBY SAFEGUARDING HABITAT FOR FOREST PLANTS AND ANIMAL SPECIES OF GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE, INCLUDING MIGRATORY SPECIES; INCREASE THE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS OF FORESTS OF HIGH PRIORITY CONSERVATION VALUE AND RESTORATION OF HIGH VALUE MANGROVE ECOSYSTEMS. ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST AND LAND MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES WILL RESULT IN ENHANCED RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE, CONSERVATION OF CARBON STOCKS AND REDUCTION OF EMISSIONS FOR FOREST DEFORESTATION AND DEGRADATION.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE FORESTRY UNIT CONTRIBUTED TO ANOTHER PROJECT FUNDED BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) "MITIGATING THE THREATS OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES IN THE INSULAR CARIBBEAN" (MTIASIC). THE PURPOSE OF THIS

REGIONAL PROJECT IS THE PREVENTION, ERADICATION OR MANAGEMENT OF SPECIFIC INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES OF PRECEDENCE, THROUGH LOCAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS. THE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES IS THE NATIONAL EXECUTING AGENCY FOR THE PROJECT IN THE BAHAMAS.

TWO SURVEYS WERE DESIGNED BY THE FORESTRY UNIT TO DISCOVER WHICH MANAGEMENT OPTION THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDERS WOULD SUPPORT FOR CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF CASUARINA TREES AROUND BAHAMIAN COASTAL AREAS. THE FORESTRY UNIT DID A COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF THE OPTIONS AND PRESENTED ITS FINDINGS IN TRINIDAD AT THE END OF MARCH 2014.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM PROUD TO REPORT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES RECOMMENDED THAT THE FINDINGS OF THIS PROJECT BE WRITTEN UP AS A SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE FOR PEER REVIEW AND PUBLISHED IN A SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE THOSE WHO THINK THAT WE ARE DIVERTING RESOURCES AWAY FROM OTHER SOCIAL NEEDS. I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND ALL THAT NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS KEEP AND PROTECTS OUR PLANET AND ENABLES STABILITY. WIDESPREAD DEFORESTATION IS THE CAUSE OF

FLOODING AND DESERTIFICATION AND IS CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE. WE OUGHT NOT TO BE A PROPONENT OF REVERSING CLIMATE CHANGE WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CONTRIBUTING TO IT.

MR. SPEAKER,

I HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT A NUMBER OF EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS. THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT CONTINUALLY STRIVES TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE PROJECT AND TO HAVE THEM INTEGRATED INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. HOWEVER CERTAIN PRACTICES GO BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THESE PROJECTS. THAT IS WHY WE CONTINUE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH UPDATING THE FORESTRY LEGISLATION.

THE AMENDMENT TO THE FORESTRY ACT, 2010 WAS PASSED IN BOTH THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE. THE FORESTRY REGULATIONS WILL BE GAZETTED ONCE THE BILL BECOMES LAW. THE AMENDMENT SEEKS TO REVITALIZE FORESTRY IN THE BAHAMAS AND DECLARE AND PROTECT THE NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE. COMPLIANCE WITH THESE REGULATIONS WILL ASSIST THE BAHAMAS IN REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND ENSURE THAT THIS SMALL NATION DOES ITS PART TO MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE BY PRESERVING FOREST RESOURCES.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC BEACHES AUTHORITY BILL, 2014, WE HAVE HAD THE FIRST READING IN THIS PLACE AND WE TRUST THAT THE BILL WILL BE PASSED THIS SUMMER AS IT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE MINISTRY'S PLAN TO CREATE AND PROPERLY MANAGE GREEN SPACES FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF BAHAMIANS AND VISITORS ALIKE.

CAPACITY BUILDING IN FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

MR. SPEAKER,

I HAVE ALREADY EXPLAINED TO THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE HOW THE BAHAMAS FUNDS THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. WE ARE A PART OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT COMMUNITY AND DISASTERS IN ONE PART OF THE GLOBE DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL NEGLIGENCE OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD IMPACTS US ALL. LIKE THE OTHER LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, THE BAHAMAS KNOWS THAT PRODUCTIVE HUMAN CAPACITY REMAINS A CHALLENGE. WE SEEK TO OVERCOME THIS BY SENDING OUR STAFF TO INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND CONVENTIONS, FUNDED BY INDUSTRIALIZED AND MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES.

IN THE ENVIRONMENT SIDE OF MY MINISTRY, THIS MEANS THAT

WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY THAT PRESENTS ITSELF FOR EXPOSING OUR FLEDGING SCIENTISTS TO NEW INITIATIVES AND NEW MODALITIES IN ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT.

IN THE FORESTRY UNIT, WITH ONLY 2 OFFICERS IN NEW PROVIDENCE, PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL WORKSHOPS ALLOW FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE/INFORMATION SHARING. ATTENDANCE AT THE MITIGATING THE THREATS OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES IN THE INSULAR CARIBBEAN", WORKSHOP WAS INTEGRAL TO BUILDING CAPACITY IN INVASIVE SPECIES DETECTION, RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT, FORGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH REGIONAL EXPERTS AND FULFILLING THE MANDATE OF THE FORESTRY UNIT TO PROTECT AGAINST THREATS TO FORESTS. PARTICIPATION IN THIS UNDERSCORED FOR THE FORESTRY UNIT THE ROLE OF COST BENEFIT ANALYSES IN MAKING CRITICAL FINANCIAL DECISIONS. THEY CAN NOW BETTER ASSESS THE MONETARY SOCIAL COSTS AND BENEFITS OF VARIOUS CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS OVER A GIVEN TIME PERIOD.

LATER THIS MONTH, THE FORESTRY UNIT WILL ATTEND THE PINE ROCKLAND CONFERENCE 2014 HOSTED BY THE PINE ROCKLAND WORKING GROUP (PRWG) IN MIAMI, FLORIDA. OUR OFFICERS WILL BE EXPOSED TO SCIENTISTS, EDUCATORS,

PLANNERS, MANAGERS, POLICY MAKERS, NATURALISTS AND STUDENTS INVOLVED IN PLANNING, CONSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION OF PINE ROCKLAND ECOSYSTEM IN SOUTH FLORIDA AND TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS.

MR. SPEAKER,

ALL OF THE TRAINING WORKSHOPS UNDER THE FAO TCP TRAINING PROGRAMME HAVE GREATLY BENEFITED THE STAFF OF THE FORESTRY UNIT. THESE WORKSHOPS ARE HELPING TO CREATE A HIGHLY TRAINED AND COMPETENT FORESTRY UNIT WHO CAN WORK INDEPENDENTLY AND COLLECT TECHNICAL HIGH QUALITY FIELD DATA. THIS YEAR STAFF WAS TRAINED IN FORESTRY FIELD DATA INVENTORY COLLECTION TECHNIQUES, THEY WERE ALSO EDUCATED ON POTENTIAL FOREST PESTS THAT MAY DAMAGE PINE RESOURCES AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF GIS WAS ENHANCED. THESE ARE ALL NEW SKILLS THAT NO ONE IN THE UNIT PREVIOUSLY POSSESSED AND A HIGH DEGREE OF PROFICIENCY IN EACH AREA WAS NOTED.

THE NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT

MR. SPEAKER,

THE ENERGY UNIT IN MY MINISTRY IS NOW A PART OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT IN MY MINISTRY, WHICH HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EXAMINING AND

DRAFTING FOR GOVERNMENT'S CONSIDERATION A NEW FISCAL AND REGULATORY REGIME FOR THE RESPONSIBLE USE AND EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES SUCH AS SAND, ARAGONITE, AGGREGATE, OIL, GAS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY. THE NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT REMAINS A SMALL BUT VIBRANT SECTOR OF THE MINISTRY.

OIL EXPLORATION

THE TWO COMPANIES THAT WERE APPROVED FOR PETROLEUM EXPLORATION LICENSES WITHIN THE BAHAMAS IN 2007, BAHAMAS OFFSHORE PETROLEUM LIMITED (BOP) AND ISLAND OFFSHORE PETROLEUM LTD (IOP) HAVE CONDUCTED AND EVALUATED 2D AND 3D SEISMIC TESTS, AND HAVE DETERMINED WHERE THEY WISH TO DRILL THE FIRST WELL. THESE SUBSIDIARIES OF BAHAMAS PETROLEUM COMPANY LTD (BPC) HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR A RENEWAL OF THEIR LICENCES.

THE MINISTRY IS REVIEWING AN APPLICATION FROM N.P.T. OIL CORPORATION LIMITED, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED IN 2008, WHO IS INTERESTED IN EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN AN AREA SITUATED NORTH OF GRAND BAHAMAS AS WELL AS APPLICATIONS FROM PRIVATEER PETROLEUM AND COLUMBUS PILLOW LTD.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM HAPPY TO INFORM THAT ALL PETROLEUM OPERATIONS WHEN THEY TAKE PLACE, WILL COME UNDER A NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK. MUCH WORK HAS TAKEN PLACE ON THIS IN CONCERT WITH THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE CURRENT LEGISLATION WILL BE AMENDED AND NEW REGULATIONS PROMULGATED FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT BOTH DURING THE EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION PHASE. WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR ADVISORS, WE WILL BE FINALIZING THE NEW FISCAL AND REGULATORY REGIME IN SHORT ORDER.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MR SPEAKER;

ELECTRICITY GENERATION IN THE BAHAMAS IS BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON THERMAL PLANTS POWERED BY PETROLEUM FOSSIL FUELS. THE VOLATILITY IN THE COST OF OIL, COUPLED WITH THE INCREASED NATIONAL DEMAND FOR ENERGY HAS GENERATED A HUGE FINANCIAL BURDEN FOR THE BAHAMAS AND HAS BEEN IMPACTING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, RESTRICTING ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND INCREASING INFLATION.

MR. SPEAKER,

WORLDWIDE ENERGY CONSUMPTION INCREASES WITH POPULATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING BELIEVES THAT THERE IS POTENTIAL TO INCORPORATE RENEWABLE ENERGY (RE) AS WELL AS ENERGY EFFICIENCY (EE) PROGRAMS INTO THE NATIONAL ENERGY MIX. THIS WOULD LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS INCLUDING A DROP IN THE IMPORT OF FOSSIL FUELS, GENERATING IMPORTANT SAVINGS, ENERGY SECURITY FOR THE BAHAMAS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY IT WOULD ALSO LEAD TO A DECREASE IN CARBON EMISSIONS.

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING IS CURRENTLY REVIEWING RENEWABLE ENERGY PROPOSALS THAT CAN PRODUCE LOWER COST AND MORE ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY SOURCES OF ENERGY. IN COLLABORATION, WITH THE MINISTRY OF WORKS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES, THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND OTHERS WE HAVE COMPLETED THE DRAFTING OF THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY, WHICH WE HOPE TO LAY ON THE TABLE OF THIS PLACE AND PUBLICIZE IN SHORT ORDER.

MY MINISTRY CONTINUES TO SUPPORT AND ADVANCE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS, BIODIESEL PROJECTS, WASTE TO ENERGY PROJECTS, WIND ENERGY PROJECTS, WAVE ENERGY PROJECTS,

AND ENCOURAGING THE USE OF ENERGY EFFICIENT LIGHT BULBS, APPLIANCES, AND THE USE OF ELECTRIC AND HYBRID VEHICLES BY BAHAMIANS.

THE NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY WILL PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK, BY WHICH WE WILL UNLEASH THE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR MR. SPEAKER AND WILL SET THE STAGE FOR THE INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL SELF GENERATING PROGRAMME, WHICH THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR CENTREVILLE, IN HIS STATEMENT ON ENERGY REFORM, IN SEPTEMBER OF LAST YEAR FORESHADOWED WOULD BE ADVANCED THIS YEAR.

MR. SPEAKER,

WE HAVE ALREADY ELIMINATED ALL THE CUSTOMS DUTIES ON THE IMPORTATION OF SOLAR PANELS AND INVERTERS. NOW IN THIS BUDGET WE HAVE REDUCED THE DUTY ON HYBRID TRUCKS FROM 60% TO 25%.

THIS YEAR WE EXPECT TO COMPLETE A SOLAR ENERGY PILOT PROJECT ALONG WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE INTER AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB) AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF). THIS PILOT PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO COLLECT DATA ON RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES. DATA IS BEING COLLECTED FROM USERS OF

THE ONE HUNDRED SOLAR WATER HEATERS THAT HAVE BEEN INSTALLED. MOST OF THE 33 PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR SYSTEMS HAVE ALSO BEEN INSTALLED IN HOMES THROUGH THE ENTIRE BAHAMAS. DATA IS STILL BEING COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BUT PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS ARE THAT THESE INSTALLATIONS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN REDUCING PARTICIPANT'S ELECTRICITY BILLS. HOMES IN STRACHAN'S WILL HAVE SOLAR WATER HEATERS AND PV SOLAR PANELS. OUR NEW SUBDIVISIONS WILL ALL USE ENERGY EFFICIENT STREET LIGHTING AND SOLAR POWER.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN THE LAST FISCAL PERIOD, THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING, WITH APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, HAS APPLIED FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY (IRENA), WHICH PROMOTES THE WIDESPREAD ADOPTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF ALL FORMS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY WORLDWIDE.

THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING HAS ALSO AGREED TO BE A PART OF RICHARD BRANSON AND THE CARBON WAR ROOM'S 10 ISLAND CHALLENGE. THE CHALLENGE WAS INITIATED IN RECOGNITION OF THE HUGE RISKS TO ISLANDS VULNERABLE TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE HUGE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF THEIR HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON

FOSSIL FUELS.

THIS DECISION RESULTED IN DISCUSSIONS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSISTANCE FROM THE CARBON WAR ROOM IN THE FORM OF ENERGY PROJECTS, BEGINNING WITH CONVERTING THE ANATOL RODGERS HIGH SCHOOL FROM A FOSSIL FUEL ENERGY BASE FACILITY TO A RENEWABLE ENERGY BASE FACILITY.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS ARE ON THE DRAWING BOARD AS SEVERAL ISLANDS WILL BE SELECTED TO HAVE RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES IMPLEMENTED.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM EXCITED ABOUT A GEF PROJECT INTRODUCING ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN LOW COST RESIDENTIAL HOUSING. THE PROJECT AIMS TO REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN LOW COST RESIDENTIAL HOUSES THROUGH (i) THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS PROGRAMME ALONG WITH UPDATED BUILDING CODES AND (ii) MINIMUM TECHNICAL QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR THE APPLIANCES THAT ARE TO BE USED IN HOUSEHOLDS AND HOTELS.

THIS PROJECT WILL LEAD TO A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK THAT WILL GOVERN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW LOW COST

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING AND PROMOTE THE UPTAKE OF ENERGY EFFICIENT APPLIANCES IN HOUSEHOLDS AND HOTELS THAT WILL REDUCE THE CONSUMPTION OF FOSSIL FUEL BASED ENERGY CONSUMPTION BY HOUSEHOLDS. ITS SUSTAINABILITY WILL BE ENSURED THROUGH THE INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICY AND NEW BUILDING CODES THAT WILL BE INCORPORATED IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLAN (THAT MY MINISTRY IS PREPARING) AND APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION. LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUPPORT WILL ALSO BE ARRANGED TO ENABLE HOUSEHOLDS TO MAKE THE REQUIRED UPFRONT INVESTMENTS.

THE PROJECT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING. THE PROJECT WILL ALSO INVOLVE THE NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY COMMITTEE (NEPC); BEC; GBPC; THE BAHAMAS MORTGAGE CORPORATION (BMC); THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE; THE BANK OF THE BAHAMAS; THE MINISTRIES OF WORKS & URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT; THE ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS, THE WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION; THE HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION; HOME-OWNER ASSOCIATIONS; BVTI; CTB AND THE IADB. ALL WILL BE REPRESENTED IN VARIOUS WORKING GROUPS UNDER THE

PROJECT AND CONTRIBUTE TO ITS OUTCOMES.

BAHAMAS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (BNGIS) CENTRE HAS BEEN A DRIVING FORCE FOR THE INFUSION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) IN THE BAHAMAS. GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGY IS USED GLOBALLY TO INFLUENCE POLICY DECISIONS ON LEGISLATION, AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

THIS YEAR, THE BAHAMAS SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (BSDI) BILL WAS PASSED. IT PROVIDES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BNGIS CENTRE AS A DEPARTMENT, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GEOSPATIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BSDI SYSTEM AND PROGRAM FOR THE BAHAMAS. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BNGIS AS A DEPARTMENT HAS BEGUN. A SITE FOR BNGIS HAS BEEN LOCATED AND A LAYOUT IS BEING PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF WORKS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS PREVENTED BNGIS FROM IMPLEMENTING SEVERAL PROJECTS. NONETHELESS, MR. SPEAKER, BNGIS HAS BEEN BUSY THIS YEAR. IT CONTINUED TO PROVIDE GEOSPATIAL/GIS TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO:

- THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN MATTERS RELATED TO:
 - (i) THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON LAWS OF THE SEA (UNCLOS);
 - (ii) THE DELIMITATION OF MEDIAN LINE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE BAHAMAS AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; AND
 - (iii) THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON LAWS OF THE SEA (UNCLOS) AND THE BAHAMAS CLAIM TO THE OUTER LIMITS OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF;
- THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR) NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE BAHAMAS;
- THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC MONITORING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL;AND
- THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER ON ANDROS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE.

INTERNATIONALLY, BNGIS HAS ASSISTED THE BAHAMAS MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND IT ATTENDED THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND HIGH LEVEL REGIONAL TALKS ON MATTERS RELATED TO GEOSPATIAL

TECHNOLOGIES AND SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES. BNGIS ALSO USED ITS PARTICIPATION IN THESE FORA AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPLORING AREAS OF COLLABORATION AND POTENTIAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/FUNDING.

MR. SPEAKER,

TECHNICAL STAFF AT THE BNGIS CENTRE CONTINUE TO ACHIEVE MANAGEMENT TRAINING OBJECTIVES. AS SUCH THE TECHNICAL STAFF HAS ACHIEVED GIS PROFESSIONAL (GISP) CERTIFICATION WHICH ENSURES BREADTH OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE RELATED TO GIS PRACTICES. THE TECHNICAL STAFF IS CURRENTLY PURSUING ESRI CERTIFICATION WHICH WILL QUALIFY IT AS CERTIFIED ESRI TRAINERS. BOTH CERTIFICATIONS ARE ENABLED WITH ARCGIS TOOLS & TECHNIQUES AND USE OF ESRI TECHNOLOGY.

MR. SPEAKER,

2014-15 WILL BE A BUSY YEAR FOR BNGIS AS IT IMPLEMENTS THE BSDI BILL AND BNGISC MANDATE. IN ADDITION, IT HAS A NUMBER OF PROJECTS THAT CAN BE ADVANCED AS SOON AS FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE BOTANIC GARDENS WILL BECOME THE PREMIERE AND

PREFERRED SITE FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS IN THE BAHAMAS. OVER THE PAST YEAR, RESTORATION ACTIVITIES HAVE IMPROVED THE ABILITY OF THIS VENUE TO HOST OUTDOOR FUNCTIONS. THE DRIVEWAY LIGHTING HAS BEEN REPAIRED AND THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM HAS BEEN UPGRADED. NEW SIGNAGE HAS BEEN ERECTED AT THE ENTRANCE . MUCH NEEDED LANDSCAPING EQUIPMENT HAS BEEN PROCURED AND THE ENTRANCE HAS BEEN BEAUTIFIED WITH TREES AND FOLIAGE.

SMALL AREAS HAVE BEEN RESTORED WHILE WE AWAIT FUNDS FOR THE OVERALL REDEVELOPMENT. THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM IN CONSULTATION WITH MY MINISTRY HAS SOUGHT FUNDING FROM THE IDB FOR RESTORATION AND RE-DEVELOPMENT.

IN THE INTERIM, MR. SPEAKER, A BAND OF WARRIORS FROM THE SOLID WASTE DIVISION OF THE DEHS HAS BEEN DEPLOYED TO THE BOTANICAL GARDENS. THEY ARE DOING A GREAT JOB, IN HELPING TO REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS, CLEAR UNDERBRUSH, RESTORE PUMPS AND BRING THE GARDENS BACK TO LIFE.

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS HAS HISTORICALLY GENERATED LESS THAN \$20,000 PER YEAR IN GATE RECEIPTS. THIS UPCOMING

FISCAL YEAR, THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE MINISTRY OF SPORTS AND CULTURE, WE ARE LAUNCHING 10 SIGNATURE EVENTS, WHICH WE HOPE WILL GENERATE NEW REVENUE FOR THE GARDENS, HEIGHTEN PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE FACILITY, ATTRACT LOCALS AND TOURISTS ALIKE TO THE FACILITY. WE WILL ALSO BE WORKING WITH LOCAL PROMOTERS AND ENTERTAINMENT PROMOTION COMPANIES FOR THE CONTINUED ORGANISATION OF OUTDOOR MUSIC, CULTURAL, CULINARY AND ART AND CRAFT FESTIVALS.

WE WILL BEGIN THIS YEAR WITH RAKE AND SCRAPE TILL THE MORNING COME, IN THE MONTH OF OCTOBER.

OTHER PROPOSED EVENTS INCLUDE:

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS WILL BE READY TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF CARNIVAL 2015.

MR. SPEAKER,

AS THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT I AM ALWAYS COGNIZANT OF HOW OUR DEVELOPMENT RELIES ON A CLEAN PRISTINE ENVIRONMENT, AND HOW OUR CITIZENS DESERVE A HEALTHY AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT. THE ENVIRONMENT UNDERPINS EVERY ACTIVITY IN THIS NATION.

CONCLUSION

MR. SPEAKER

I CONCLUDE BY LETTING THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE KNOW THAT THERE IS MORE RIGHT THAN WRONG IN THIS COUNTRY. THERE IS MORE POSITIVITY THAN NEGATIVITY, NO MATTER WHAT YOU READ. THE BAHAMAS IS STILL THE ENVY AND DREAM OF MANY.

TIMES HAVE BEEN HARD FOR A LOT OF OUR PEOPLE MR. SPEAKER, BUT WE ARE A RESILIENT AND CREATIVE PEOPLE. WE NEED TO UTILIZE THESE TRAITS AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITIES. WE HAVE COME TO A PLACE IN HISTORY WHERE THE FUTURE DEMANDS THAT WE CONSIDER ITS NEEDS TODAY. OUR FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY DEMANDS THAT WE CONSIDER ITS NEEDS AND ACT ACCORDINGLY. THIS GOVERNMENT IS DOING JUST THAT MR. SPEAKER, WE ARE MOVING FORWARD WITH THIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY FOREMOST IN OUR MINDS.

THIS CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE MUCH PROGRESS SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE NO ONE CAN DENY THAT AS MUCH AS THEY MAY LIKE TO. WE MOST CONTINUE TO LET OUR PEOPLE KNOW OF THE GOOD WE ARE DOING ON THEIR BEHALF. WE MUST CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD ONE STEP AT A TIME IN LOVE AND SERVICE AS WE PLEDGE. AND WE MUST CONTINUE

TO STRIVE TO CONTINUE TO BE, THE BEST LITTLE COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

MR SPEAKER

AS I GO ABOUT FULFILLING THE GOVERNMENT'S MADATE IN THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING, I WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE MY BEST SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS NATION. IT IS AN HONOUR TO SERVE THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. AND WITH THE HELP OF GOD, I WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE RESPONSIBLY AND EFFECTIVELY.