



**Hon. Kenred Dorsett**  
**Minister of the Environment and Housing**

**Ministerial Statement To Parliament**

**Oil Spill In Marine Environment**  
**South West New Providence**

**October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

As was recently reported the Government is aware of an oil emission which occurred in waters on the south western end of New Providence, near to Stuarts Cove and Albany.

Initial reports indicate that on Wednesday of last week, Stuart Cove discovered an extraordinary amount of fuel in the canal area of their operations and the dive sites they use off the south-west coast of the island of New Providence. Initial reports also indicate that Albany also reported fuel in the water and coastline of their property. On Thursday past it was reported to the **Port Controller that there** was a smell of oil and an oil slick seen in the Clifton area. Certain members of the National Oil Spill Committee, namely the **Port Department**, were dispatched to investigate the matter whereupon it was reported to the Controller that no oil slick could be seen in the water in the area reported. A further report was made to the Port Controller of oil in the water on Saturday 4th October, whereupon a

further inspection was conducted. It was then reported that a boomed-off area at Clifton Pier was full of oil and spilling out of the boom and that rocks along the coastline and at the marina facility of Stuart Cove was oiled.

The Minister of Transport & Aviation and myself were informed of the on-going incident on Saturday the 4th October, 2014 as there was another reported release in the area. Immediately upon being notified, members of the **National Oil Spill Advisory Committee inclusive** of the BEST Commission, Department of Environmental Health Services, NEMA, the Port Department and the Ministry of Transport & Aviation were dispatched to assess the impact of the oil spill. The assessment revealed that Albany had closed its beach restricting access to it by its guests. It also revealed that fuel had "washed" alongside the coastline of Stuart Cove's operations and entered the canal, where their boats are docked. There was also evidence of oiling along the coast in the vicinity of the dive operation. The Government immediately engaged the services of Coastal Systems International Inc., a United States Environmental Firm to come to the Bahamas as a matter of urgency to:

1. assist in investigating and confirming the source/sources of the oil spill ;
2. assess the impact of the oil spill;
3. address the mitigation of this spill;
4. advise on the preparation of an environmental management plan for the Clifton area; and

5. make remediation recommendations.

**Based on historical reports and inspections of the area, it has been determined that there are releases at low tide, and the immediate plan is to review and enhance the containment and recovery strategies presently employed in Clifton Pier area. This is being done as matter of urgency.**

On the morning of Sunday 5th December the Royal Bahamas Defence Force took members of the **National Oil Spill Committee** along the coastline to inspect the marine environment. I also inspected the outfalls of the BEC Plant, the BEC containment booms in Clifton Bay and Stuart Cove on Sunday morning. The BEC containment booms were not preventing all of the fuel emitted into the marine environment from spreading. It also appeared that fuel was being discharged from one of the outfalls. An inspection of Stuart Cove's facilities, revealed evidence of fuel discharge in their canal, along the coastline and on the bottoms of their vessels.

This morning at 8:00 am, two biological environmental engineers from Coastal Systems International arrived in Nassau. A briefing meeting was held at the Ministry of Works & Urban Development at 8:30 am this morning for all government stakeholders and advisors, including officials from BEC. As we speak, the Government's response team and our environmental consultants are inspecting the relevant properties, including BEC's Clifton Pier Plant.

We expect to receive a report from our consultants as quickly as possible and upon receipt and consideration of the report, the public will be advised of our next steps.

The Clifton area has been plagued with oil spills for decades. This government established an inter-Ministerial Working Group to investigate and address this long standing issue. It will not be business as usual. We are resolved and committed to address this vexing problem. All relevant parties and businesses in the industrial area of Clifton will be engaged in discussion with the Government as we seek to assess and confirm the source or sources of the oil spills as well as the extent of the contamination of the properties in the area, including the Clifton Heritage Park. **There has also been a sub-committee established within the National Oil Spill Committee. That sub-committee, together with our environmental consultants will establish mechanisms in the short term to enhance** containment and recovery strategies as we develop and implement the medium to long term measures which will include (1) an environmental management plan for the Clifton area; (2) a remediation plan for the Clifton area including BEC's Clifton Pier plant, which has also been factored in the current BEC Energy Reform RFP process; (3) a review of existing operational processes and standards for BEC and other industrial stakeholders in the Clifton area; **(4) an environmental sensitivity map of the area;** and (5) where deemed appropriate the implementation of new regulations and standards by BEC and other industrial stakeholders in the Clifton area to be enforced by the Government.

Mr. Speaker, this problem did not arise for the first time since we came to office in May 2012. The owner of Stuart Cove has indicated that he has had to contend with oil spills since 1995. We are all painfully aware that successive administrations have not taken this matter as seriously as they ought to have done. This administration will not bury its head in the proverbial sand. We were elected to fix small and big problems. This is a huge problem which impacts our

marine life, tourism and our environment. The political will to fix it exists in this Government and by the instruction of the Right Honourable Prime Minister and member for Centreville, which has already been given, we move with a sense of urgency to do so.

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