

VISION 2030: CHARTING A COURSE
OF CHANGE FOR *The Bahamas* TO MOVE
“UPWARD, FORWARD AND ONWARD...
TOGETHER” BY FIGHTING CRIME,
PROMOTING INDUSTRY, CREATING JOBS,
AND SECURING OUR BORDERS.

—
A CHARTER FOR
GOVERNANCE

Believe in The Bahamas



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FOREWORD

The Rt. Hon. Perry G. Christie

In these General Elections, the Progressive Liberal Party has put forth an extraordinary team of candidates. A new generation of leaders and a seasoned team of expert lawmakers have joined with the leadership of the **PLP** to produce this Charter for Governance. This Charter for Governance will allow the Progressive Liberal Party to chart a course of change for *The Bahamas* beginning on the first day of our new government.

We will build a safer *Bahamas*, reducing crime and violence. We will create jobs and strengthen the economy. We will build a brighter future for all.

Today, *The Bahamas* is facing unprecedented levels of crime and violence, reduced standards of living, and increasing social disorder and decay. Bahamians are worse off than they were five years ago.

Almost 40 years have passed since political independence in 1973, and more than 45 years since Majority Rule was achieved in 1967. It was during those eras that many of the institutions with which the country now functions were put in place. However, much has changed. In far too many instances, these institutions function according to the same rationale as when they were first created.

This reality points to the need to re-examine each and every institution in our society to ensure that it continues to be relevant to The Bahamas of 2012 and beyond.

That is a basic commitment of Our Charter for Governance. We recognize that this process means that some institutions will have to be reformed and others virtually reinvented.

The country’s need to change course is widespread; we simply cannot afford to continue with business as usual. However, to ensure that we achieve progress along with change, the vision must be clear.



The changes proposed by the Progressive Liberal Party will be rooted in the core values of believing in *The Bahamas* and of putting people first.

We recognize an urgent need for change. The **PLP** is committed to hitting the ground running with a specific agenda for the First 100 Days.

PERRY G. **CHRISTIE**

“It’s time
to invest
in **Bahamians**”



LOOKING FORWARD: A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Bahamians need immediate help, and our Charter for Governance offers numerous measures for short and medium-term relief.

But we cannot think only five years at a time. A true national development plan reflects a vision for *The Bahamas* of the future.

The **PLP** will build a strong foundation for the future *Bahamas*. We call it Vision 2030. As a part of this initiative, the **PLP** will:

_Deepen the sense of society, civility and a shared sense of purpose in which the notion of One Bahamas will be much more than a slogan. Every PLP candidate has personally pledged to do whatever is possible to help move the country

“upward, forward and onward...together.”

_Rekindle a broader commitment to increasing higher standards throughout society. Competition from around the world is real and must be met with world-class standards of excellence.

_Use the abundant resources God has blessed us more fully and responsibly

This Charter for Governance offers new and innovative solutions for a wide range of challenges facing the nation, and reflects the Progressive Liberal Party’s belief that the next government’s priorities must begin with fighting crime, creating jobs, and securing our borders.

Believe in The Bahamas.
The Rt. Hon. Perry G. Christie
leader

MY PLEDGE

AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

_To place the interest of the Country before any personal interest;
_To do whatever I can to help move the Country “*upward, forward and onward... together*”
- specifically to help build a unity of purpose among all Bahamians;
_To work long and hard to realize the pledge in our charter;
_To be accessible to the people
I have the privilege to represent in Parliament.



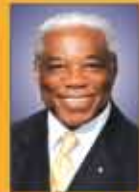
Believe in The Bahamas

PERRY G. CHRISTIE
CENTREVILLE



PHILIP E. DAVIS
CAT IS., RUM CAY & SAN SAL

NEW PROVIDENCE



BERNARD NOTTAGE
BAINS TOWN & GRANTS TOWN



RENWARD WELLS
BAMBOO TOWN



DANIEL JOHNSON
CARRICKHILL



RYAN PINDER
ELIZABETH



GLENYS HANNA MARTIN
ENGLERSTON



FRED MITCHELL
FOX HILL



ANDRE ROLLINS
FORT CHARLOTTE



KENDAL MAJOR
GARDEN HILLS



D. SHANE GIBSON
GOLDEN BATES



MICHAEL HALKITIS
GOLDEN INLES



JEROME GOMEZ
KILLARNEY



JEROME FITZGERALD
MARATHON



FRANK SMITH
MONTAGU



ARNOLD FORBES
MOUNT MONIAH



DION SMITH
NASSAU VILLAGE



KHAALIS ROLLE
PINEWOOD



HOPE STRACHAN
SEAPREEZE



CLEOLA HAMILTON
SOUTH BEACH



KENRED DORSETT
SOUTHERN SHORES



GREGORY BURROWS
ST. ANNES



LESLIE MILLER
TALL PINES



MELANIE GRIFFIN
TAMACRAW

GRAND BAHAMA



JULIAN RUSSELL
CENTRAL GRAND BAHAMA



TANISHA TYNES
EAST GRAND BAHAMA



GREGORY MOSS
MARCO CITY



MICHAEL DARVILLE
PINERIDGE



OBADIAH WILCHCOMBE
WEST GRAND BAHAMA
& BIMINI

FAMILY ISLANDS



ANTHONY MOSS
THE EXUMAS & RAGGED ISLAND



ALEX STORR
LONG ISLAND



V. ALFRED GRAY
MICAL



GARY SAWYER
CENTRAL & SOUTH ABACO



RENARDO CURRY
NORTH ABACO



PERRY GOMEZ
NORTH ANDROS
& BERRY ISLANDS



PICEWELL FORBES
MANGROVE CAY &
SOUTH ANDROS



DAMIAN GOMEZ
CENTRAL & SOUTH ELEUTHERA



CLAY SWEETING
NORTH ELEUTHERA

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Bahamians are in pain and immediate action to counteract this is needed on a number of fronts. During the First 100 Days of a new Progressive Liberal Party government, we will:

— Launch key elements of Project Safe Bahamas and Operation Cease Fire, including the reintroduction of Urban Renewal, to immediately reinvigorate the fight against crime and violence.

— Prioritize a doubling of the nation's investment in the education and training of Bahamians. From preschools all the way up to retraining for Bahamians already in the workforce, we need new investment and innovative reforms.

— Create a Ministry for Grand Bahama, bringing focus to growing that island's economy.

— Institute a mortgage relief plan in conjunction with private sector lenders to help struggling homeowners.

— Set in motion the plan to secure the nation's borders, with steps to hire new personnel, acquire new technology, and initiate new training programmes.

— Reposition The Bahamas Development Bank, so it becomes again a key player in creating jobs and expanding small and medium-sized businesses.

— Re-establish the Ministry of Financial Services and Investments.

— Introduce the Employees Pension Fund Protection Act to keep pension funds out of reach for business owners, and to make directors and officers personally liable for breaches.

— Renew the nation's commitment to National Health Insurance, and support the Public Hospitals Authority in the acquisition of much-needed new cancer-screening technology, ensuring that Bahamian women have access to state-of-the-art mammogram machines at both Princess Margaret in New Providence and Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama.

— Initiate a plan to lower the cost of electricity in The Bahamas.

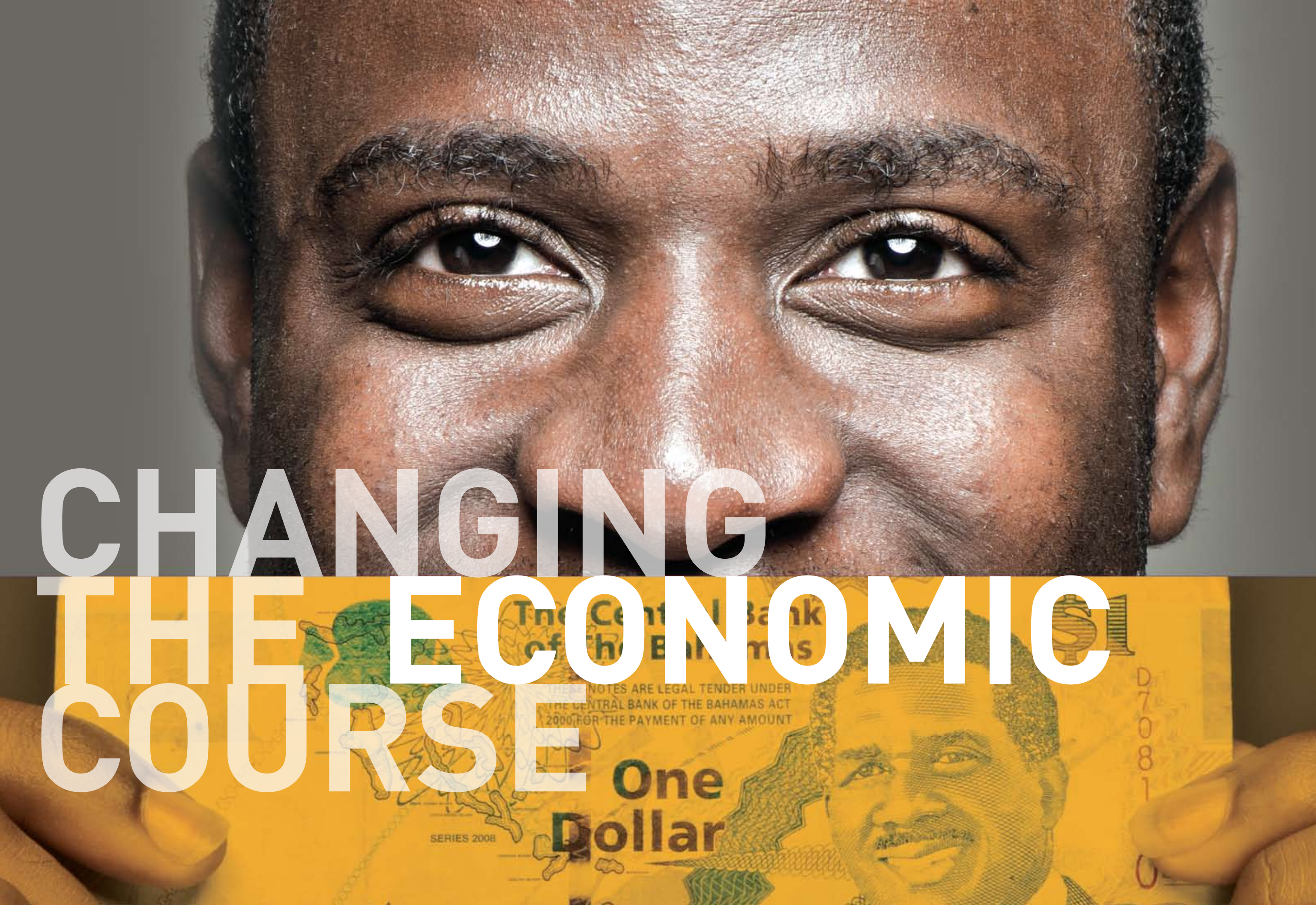
— Bring together representatives from all sectors to launch a 40th Anniversary of Independence National Congress to begin enactment of Vision 2030.

— Provide details for a referendum on a National Lottery and gambling in The Bahamas.

— Reduce the maximum level of stamp tax payable on real estate transactions from 12% to 10%.

— Re-introduce a ceiling on the maximum level of real property taxes payable on a residence.





CHANGING THE ECONOMIC COURSE

CHANGING THE ECONOMIC COURSE

THE NEED TO CHANGE THE ECONOMIC COURSE

The need for *The Bahamas* to change its economic course is rooted in two basic realities:

- _ The standard of living of the majority of Bahamians is in decline.
- _ Overall Government finances are in a dramatically worse state now than when this FNM Government came to power in 2007.

The fact that the standard of living of the majority of Bahamians is in decline is evidenced by independent national and international reports

The United Nations Report informs that per capita income has declined every year since 2007. In fact, the overall decline has been 13.81% in just four years.

The Department of Statistics reports that the number of households earning less than \$5,000 per annum **increased** by 83% between 2007 and 2011.

The decline does not only affect the truly poor. The number of households earnings \$40,000 and over **declined** by 33%.

The Department of Statistics also confirms that unemployment has more than doubled, increasing from 7.9% when the FNM came to office in 2007 to 15.9%. In Grand Bahama the story is even worse: the unemployment rate has climbed from 8.8% in May 2007 to 21.2%. Amazingly, this was despite a 42% increase in the number of people who have become so discouraged that they have simply given up looking for a job.

Of particular concern is the unemployment rate for youths, which now stands at 34%.

Thus, from top to bottom, Bahamians are worse off than they were in 2007.

In fact, the FNM has placed the country in such a difficult state that a reduced standard of living has become the “new normal” as more and more Bahamians suffer from a level of economic hardship that is unprecedented in recent history.

Thousands of families have lost their homes to foreclosure and thousands more live in fear of doing so.

More than 6000 families have been forced to function daily without electricity or in homes where the running water has been disconnected.

_Faced with declining income, more and more Bahamians have resorted to higher and higher levels of consumer debt. As a result, today the average Bahamian spends 10% of his or her income just to pay interest on this consumer debt. Many Bahamians are drowning in the dual blows of declining incomes and higher debts.

THE COURSE OF THIS COUNTRY MUST CHANGE.

On a national level, things are no better.

_For the first time ever, the financial health of *The Bahamas* has been downgraded by an international credit rating agency. In fact, not just one but two agencies downgraded the country not once, but twice.

These are objective measures needed for The Bahamas to change course.

_The FNM government seeks to persuade the Bahamian people that the realities outlined above are entirely due to global economic forces beyond our own government's control. This is not true.



—
All of the international agencies either dispute the FNM's position or provide credible evidence with which to do so. The fact is that the policies of the FNM Government worsened the effects of the global economic recession on [The Bahamas](#) than was actually necessary.

—
The report from the United Nations informs that [The Bahamas](#) currently has the highest unemployment rate of all Caribbean nations that have been measured. The UN Report goes on to state that between 2007 and 2010, [The Bahamas](#) lost 7035 jobs in construction and 1835 jobs in the manufacturing sector. There can be no doubt that the FNM “stop, review and cancel” policy for projects left in place by the **PLP** in 2007 contributed substantially to the massive job losses in construction. Equally there can be no doubt that the FNM policy of increasing taxes and eliminating incentives also contributed significantly to the substantial job losses in manufacturing.

—
The international agencies increasingly stress that the country is on the wrong track. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) advises that unless the country changes course, by 2016 the level of debt to GDP would be approaching 70% and that this would be disastrous for [The Bahamas](#). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also pointed to the urgent imperative to change course in order to reverse the economic depression that has enveloped the country.

—
The realization of the fundamental and inter-related goals of this Charter for Governance will ensure that the country does in fact change course.

—
The goals for change must be clear. Job creation is an essential requirement, but there must be more.

—
Specifically, the goals for a stronger economy include:

Reaching and rescuing those in poverty. Saving

and expanding the middle class. Protecting the future

—
In its management of the economy, the **PLP** will direct the full resources of the state to the pursuit of these clear goals.

REACHING AND RESCUING THOSE IN POVERTY

—
It is simply unacceptable to have nearly 8000 households in [The Bahamas](#) surviving on a household income of less than \$5000 per annum, and for people to be living in derelict vehicles or abandoned buildings.

—
Helping these Bahamians is a moral imperative.

—
The on-going marginalization of the “have-nots” in our society is not in the interest of any Bahamian and is inconsistent with [The Bahamas](#) we seek to build.

—
The **PLP** will not pursue this change by simply spending more money. Meaningful change in this regard requires a multifaceted response that places consistent emphasis on investing in people.

—
Urban Renewal 2.0, education reform and training initiatives, the creation of sustainable jobs, fighting crime, pride and the emphasis on Bahamian culture, are all part of believing in and investing in Bahamians.

—
Understanding that major change is needed in order to lift Bahamians up, and give Bahamians the skills needed to obtain and keep good jobs, the **PLP** commits to doubling the nation's investment in education and human development.

—
The social agenda of the **PLP** will renew an emphasis on individual responsibility, and support both faith-based initiatives and the deepening of family bonds.





**SAVING AND
EXPANDING THE
MIDDLE CLASS**

OPERATION HOME RESTORATION: A MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE PLAN

Across *The Bahamas*, homeowners are struggling as never before: many homes have already been lost to foreclosure and many more Bahamians are sick with worry about their ability to keep their homes.

The **PLP** accepts that before the economy can be restored a plan must be set in place to restore hope to the thousands of families who have lost their single most valued life investment: the roof over their heads.

In October 2008, Hubert Ingraham promised that his government would offer help to homeowners facing foreclosure. He made a promise, but he did not deliver: homeowners have received no support from the FNM government.

The social and economic impact of the FNM's failure to act is too great to be ignored or left to fester.

as result of mortgage foreclosures

- _ far too many families are being destabilized;
- _ there a significant drag on the economy;
- _ millions of dollars in homeowners' savings are being lost;
- _ the country's overall credit standing is under threat.

The Progressive Liberal Party believes that helping distressed homeowners is the right and sensible thing to do. It is an important part of getting the Bahamian economy moving and growing again, while at the same time creating an important social safety net.

Additionally, it must be recognized that the number of foreclosed homes is so large and the economic impact so significant that international agencies now point to it as a matter that must be addressed before it drags the overall standing of the country's finances down any further.

Upon taking office, the **PLP** will launch OPERATION HOME RESTORATION.

REVERSING THE EFFECTS OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE:

A 10-POINT PLAN

[1] Work with the banks and other institutional lenders to agree to a 120-day moratorium on foreclosures. This 120-day moratorium would allow for the appropriate consultation to take place within the financial sector and with the Central Bank and it would also allow for the necessary legislative authority regarding the items below to be put in place.

[2] Obtain the banks' agreement to a write-off of 100% of the unpaid interest and fees for those mortgagors who are facing foreclosure. This should be acceptable to the banks, as they would already have made provisions against these losses. Therefore, writing off the unpaid interest and fees would have no immediate financial impact on the banks. As for the delinquent borrowers, they would benefit from the fact that their outstanding balances would fall substantially. Essentially,



they would be placed in the same position they were in before their loans became delinquent except that that Government would have a lien against the mortgaged property to the extent that the Government's guarantee to pay overdue interest on their behalf is called under point 5 below.

[3] _ Actively encourage a reduction in the interest rate on the mortgages in question to Prime + 1%. This would be substantially below the rate that most borrowers are paying, reflecting the impact of the government guarantee described below.

[4] _ Actively encourage the banks and other institutional lenders to extend the loan repayment period under defaulting mortgages to the maximum allowed by the financial institution.

[5] _ In return for the banks agreeing to the four elements above, the Government, for its part, would guarantee the interest payments of the affected borrowers for 5 years until 2017.

[6] _ To assist borrowers who might be unable to meet interest payments and to help ensure the sustainability of the Government's guarantee, we will create a special fund into which borrowers participating in this initiative will pay a reasonable annual service fee based on their outstanding loan balances. The collective contributions to the fund will assist the Government in covering the interest costs of those participating borrowers who may fall into delinquency.

[7] _ Pass legislation necessary to ensure that homeowners who have accumulated savings in their pension funds can access those funds in order to save their homes from foreclosure.

[8] _ Pass legislation necessary to protect homeowners from foreclosure where they have already paid back more than a certain percentage of their mortgage loans. This will require close consultation with the banks and other interested parties. Once borrowers have reached a certain level of home mortgage debt repayment,

they should have some assurance that they will no longer be in danger of losing their homes. This legislation would also afford the Supreme Court powers that resemble the laws in force in England, enabling a forced sale or foreclosure of homes to be stopped or suspended when the court decides that it is just and equitable in all the circumstances to do so.

[9] _ Pass legislation to give greater protection to borrowers in relation to interest, add-on charges and other bank fees; and to bring under regulation unregulated lenders. This new legislation will also bring under stricter control and supervision the system of salary deduction so appallingly abused by certain financial institutions.

[10] _ Extend the "first homeowners" exemption from stamp duty to persons who lost their first home in foreclosure but are trying to buy a home once again.

[The PLP government will be proactive in seeking to ensure home restoration for as many families as possible. **]**

HELP FOR THOSE OVERWHELMED BY CONSUMER DEBTS

The mortgage foreclosure crisis is closely related to the wider problem of an explosion in consumer debts which has been allowed to deepen throughout the society.

This has become so severe that some 70% of all credit is being used to assist with routine living expenses, and on average Bahamians currently need some 10% of their family income simply to pay interest on consumer debt.



While the level of consumer loans has been helpful to the retail sector and the increase in imports has boosted Government revenues, it is proving to have disastrous consequences for consumers and for the productive sectors of the economy.

_ More and more Bahamians are becoming members of “the working poor”, who, after salary deductions, are not taking home enough cash income to meet basic needs like rent.

These matters must be addressed. The **PLP** will address them.

In doing so, the **PLP** will recognize that:

the combination of mortgage foreclosure crisis **plus** the burdens of consumer loans are creating a serious and declining quality of life for far too many Bahamians.

There are so many homes on the market that professional realtors report that sales prices are now down to 80% of their market values. This devaluation of homes is destroying millions and millions of dollars in personal savings for homeowners.

The **PLP**’s mortgage foreclosure relief plan will thus help to restore the value of all homes and protect family savings through home ownership.

The **PLP** government will engage with consumer lenders and other stakeholders with a view to creating a mutually acceptable plan that would protect consumers against:

- _ interest rates exceeding reasonable levels by virtue of the lender having the benefit of the salary deduction authorization confirmation from the government;
- _ practices which could reasonably be seen as devices to further inflate lending rates;
- _ exorbitant bank fees.

REDUCING THE COST OF ELECTRICITY

The cost of electricity throughout *The Bahamas* is simply too high.

This causes untold hardship to families and it has made the country un-competitive in many business areas.

Reasons for the high cost of **electricity** include:

- _ incredible mismanagement at *The Bahamas* Electricity Corporation. For example, independent consultants have established that the cost of electricity and the unacceptable level of blackouts are being caused in part by a failure to properly maintain equipment, including failure to replace parts due to the non-payment of bills on a timely basis;
- _ the government’s failure to aggressively pursue wider uses of alternative sources of energy, be they solar or wind power, or other increasingly realistic options. This failure has been particularly disastrous because over the past five (5) years there were periods when 25% of all of the country’s foreign earnings had to be used to pay the bill for imported fuels. This is not only a major drain on the overall economy but leaves the country extremely exposed to significant devastation from the increases in the price of oil.



The **PLP** will address these realities through:

NEW STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DEMAND

- _ Incentives will be provided to reduce the demand for energy by measures such as increased uses of solar and wind energy, tank-less heaters, the most energy efficient systems for air conditioning, and other means. This initiative will include:
- _ Retro-fitting of Government buildings for wider use of solar power;
- _ Converting street lights to LED fixtures to greatly improve visibility and reduce costs.
- _ Encouraging businesses to conduct independent energy audits, whose cost would be deductible from the revenues that form the basis on which the business must pay its business license fees for the year the audit is carried out.

EXPANDED USES OF NATURAL GAS

All power plant operators will be incentivized to follow world trends of moving away from oil and shift, particularly in the short run, to less expensive natural gas.

To help facilitate this, all rules relevant to the importation of natural gas will be updated.

One consequence of this change will be to lay a strong foundation for the possible uses of natural gases beyond the operation of power plants.

INCREASING BEC EFFICIENCY

The level of ineffective management at BEC has gotten so bad that the corporation now has to rent power plants in an effort to keep up with demand. This is extremely expensive.

A dual strategy will be implemented to improve efficiency at BEC:

- _ freeing the Corporation from the present degree of partisan political interference in its day-to-day management; this will start by ending the practice of having two cabinet ministers who share responsibility for **one BEC**.
- _ encouraging private sector electricity generation that can be sold to BEC.

NATIONAL REVIEW PLAN FOR POWER PLANTS

The current practice is for each island and cay in *The Bahamas* to create and maintain an independent power plant.

This is not necessarily the most efficient means of producing power to meet the needs of every community.

Thus, the **PLP** government will conduct a national review plan to evaluate the economic viability of moving power from one island to another from a larger and more efficient power plant.



PROSPECTS OF EXPORTING POWER

Various investors have explored the prospect of creating a substantial power plant on or close to Grand Bahama with a view to exporting power to Florida. The **PLP** government will provide every practical and environmentally responsible support to any viable initiative.

It is anticipated that success in this regard would subsequently reduce electricity rates as a consequence of increased economies of scale.

OPERATION OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) OR COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) PLANTS

For more than a decade, investors have sought approval to operate one or more liquefied natural gas plants. With appropriate regulations and environmental safeguards in place, the **PLP** government will approve the operation of liquefied natural gas and compressed natural gas plants.

EXPANDING OUR ECONOMY

CREATING JOBS PUTTING BAHAMIANS FIRST

To protect and expand the middle class, and to safeguard the country’s future, there is an urgent need to create new jobs.

As a government, the **PLP** will act in full awareness that most jobs must be created in the private sector rather than by the government.

During its last five-year term in office, the **PLP** created and maintained an economic climate which led to 22,000 new jobs. During the new five-year term the goal will be to surpass this number.

While maintaining an emphasis on job creation, the **PLP** will seek to expand Bahamian ownership of the economy.

The **PLP** job creation plan will be proactive and will be anchored in four [4] pillars:

[1]_ effective promotion of *The Bahamas* at home and abroad. Foreign direct investment is important for *The Bahamas* and so is increasing local entrepreneurship;

[2]_ the removal of impediments to business so that Government facilitates the growth of business;

[3]_ increasing opportunities to dramatically expand the role of Bahamians as employers through initiatives like the national initiative in resort development, which is part of our Tourism Plan;

[4]_ the government as a direct investor in carefully defined circumstances.

EXPANDING OUR ECONOMY

EFFECTIVE PROMOTION

In any well-organized business, the role of sales and marketing is structured to be separate and distinct from other roles, such as legal or compliance, precisely because of the need for specialist skill-sets and the enabling cultural environment. The same principle applies for the Government.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Financial Services and Investments will be re-established, properly staffed and adequately resourced to be the de facto sales and marketing department for *The Bahamas* in the areas covered by its mandate.

In the staffing and organization of this Ministry, special note will be made of the growing importance of new markets such as China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa, and the opportunity created by the presence in *The Bahamas* of some private investors with significant interest and initiatives in these markets. In order to leverage these circumstances, public-private sector partnerships will be forged whenever such partnership is deemed to be in the nation's interest. Without limiting the generality of this plan, the new BahaMar initiative and the presence of Hutchinson Whampoa at Grand Bahama would evidently make it prudent to include a major initiative directed at China.

REMOVING IMPEDIMENTS TO BUSINESS

Tragically, since 2007, the current policies of the FNM have created many impediments to the growth of business. Every sector of the economy has suffered as a result.

The increases in taxes and the removal of long-standing incentives have been particularly harsh on the manufacturing sector and the agricultural sector.

The arbitrary and capricious manner in which laws were presented by the FNM has only made matters worse.

A clear example of this is the Subdivision Act where the government was forced to withdraw a Bill from Parliamentary debate after an FNM Minister of the Government had inaccurately assured the public that he had consulted widely on the matter before it was brought to Parliament.

These realities worsened the already depressed economy and are proof of that the FNM use global economic forces as an excuse for the poor state of the Bahamian economy.

Under a **PLP** government, businesses will not suffer the consequences of ad hoc and arbitrary policy provisions.

The **PLP** will govern on the basis that arbitrary policies are a hindrance to national development.

As a part of removing impediments to business, patronage must stop! Serious impediments to business occur when the playing field is not level because public policy is unduly influenced by special interests.



A blatant and shameful example of this is the 40-year monopoly for the control of the main port of *The Bahamas* that the FNM Government granted to a very small group of investors.

The subsequent sale of shares in the company to the Bahamian public at large fails to disguise the flagrant abuse inherent in the government signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which gives a small group of unnamed investors absolute control of the company's management and the lack of provision for those members of the public who invested in the company having any real involvement in the direction of the company.

Under a **PLP** government, there will be transparency in government policy and adequate consultation with stakeholders. To further advance this principle, the **PLP** will establish protocols for each Regulatory Body as well as Government Agencies, including:

[1]_ Mandate/Charter document for each Regulator/Government Agency which includes a Governance structure as well as clear guidelines on their scope, functions and level of discretion;

[2]_ Periodic review of discretionary decisions by independent non-partisan means.

EXPANDING THE ROLE OF BAHAMIANS AS INVESTORS

The scarcity of Bahamian ownership, particularly in the leading industries of tourism and finance has been questioned by non-nationals who contemplate working with Bahamian groups. Thus, the **PLP** will seek to alter policies to foment Bahamian

The **PLP** will operate on the basis that such initiatives are central to deepening all Bahamians' confidence in the concept that self-reliance today is an important element for sustainable development tomorrow, and to showcasing Bahamian talent. In turn, this initiative will also give credibility to greater engagement of Bahamians at management levels of non-Bahamian groups.

Accordingly, the **PLP** will re-establish the principle that some incentives offered by the government will be offered more readily when the corporate entity receiving the incentive is beneficially owned and controlled by citizens of *The Bahamas*. This will be a concrete manifestation of the **PLP's** philosophy of Putting Bahamians First.

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNMENT AS A DIRECT STIMULANT

While the **PLP** accepts that most jobs must be created by and within the private sector, the Party recognizes that there are appropriate circumstances that mean it is in the nation's interest for the government to be a direct investor in job creating activities. The **PLP** stresses that as a matter of policy, such direct participation will:

- _ occur in partnership with private investors to create long term jobs for Bahamians, safeguarding the private sector's leadership in the field;
- _ generally be structured to include or lead to a listing on BISX in order to assist in further deepening capital markets and to provide the government with an exit mechanism once national interest has been effected.



— This principle will be applied throughout the country but especially on:

- Grand Bahama, which must be rescued from the depths of the depression that is preventing it from occupying its traditional and historical role for the country at large;
- The Family Islands, where increased economic activity is also an imperative.
- *An example of these principles will be manifested in the economic initiative which the **PLP** will implement to reinvent the model of Tourism in *The Bahamas*.*

REINVENTING *The Bahamas* DEVELOPMENT BANK

DIVERSIFYING PRODUCTS TO EMPOWER MORE BAHAMIANS

— *The Bahamas* Development Bank has failed in large part because it mainly operates with a single product: lending money.

— This lending places emphasis on the borrower's obligation to provide the bank with what is presumed to be strong collateral and to commit to the fast repayment of all sums borrowed. This policy has resulted in there being insufficient basis upon which to differentiate between *The Bahamas* Development Bank and any commercial bank.

— *The Bahamas* Development Bank must **change course**. In fact, it must be reinvented to be more of a merchant bank or investment bank than its current profile of essentially being a commercial bank.

— This reinvention will force the bank's management to evaluate the risk of each business application from a different perspective, while also obliging the Development Bank to develop a wider array of assistance-focused products.

— This wider array of products will include:

- the provision of capital in any form, from straight equity provided it does not exceed the equity involvement of the current organizer of the business;
- credit enhancements by measures such as guarantees issued to the favour of other current lenders;
- investments in financing instruments that would be subordinated to third party investors.

— A key requirement in this reinvention will be the removal of partisan political considerations in evaluating grants, credit or other aspects of the management process.

— *The experience of the Bank of *The Bahamas* provides evidence that this can be accomplished once the culture within the Bank has changed.*

INVESTMENT INCENTIVES FOR BAHAMIANS

ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP

— Employers will be encouraged to introduce and/or expand plans which allow for employee ownership.

— As an incentive to employees being provided with increased opportunities to acquire equity in a company where the Bahamian is employed, **the stamp duty that would normally be charged for such purchases will be waived.**

— Additionally, for Bahamians employed by multinational companies, the exchange control rules that impact on their capacity to participate in such plans developed by their employer will be reviewed with a view to ensuring that they can take maximum advantage of stock acquisition opportunities.



INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE THE PRODUCTIVE SECTORS

Investments in the equity of companies controlled by Bahamians and registered under Acts such as the Hotels Encouragement Act or the Industries Encouragement Act, or, exclusively, in farming or fishing, will be exempt from stamp duty, just as the companies listed in BISX are.

This measure is specifically directed at making it less expensive to invest in these productive sectors and to add liquidity to such investments.

FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF CAPITAL MARKETS AND A NATIONAL PENSION PLAN

The **PLP** government will foster the growth of capital markets in general and BISX as an important institution in the financial sector.

This will be aided by significant social and economic reforms to pension management:

- _ From the social perspective, new steps must be taken beyond the National Insurance Board's current functioning in order to help more senior citizens to meet their legitimate and reasonable needs. This issue will only become more pronounced as life expectancy increases.
- _ In economic terms, a reformed pension program would be an important catalyst for national development due, among other reasons, to the increased availability of funding for projects and the deepening of capital markets.

Key steps in pension reform will include:

- _ the introduction and implementation of appropriate legislation to provide better oversight to the almost two billion dollars in pensions already in existence. The avoidance of duplicating costs and the oversight responsibility will be vested in an existing agency with relevant expertise.
- _ This oversight will be governed by international best practices and the trustees of these funds will be obliged to exercise the highest standards to protect the rights of pension plan members, which will include, but not be limited to, the production of annual independent audits and the practice of regular reporting.

BUSINESSES TO BENEFIT FROM TRADE AGREEMENTS

The **PLP** will ensure that the Bahamian people are made aware of the terms and full implication of various trade agreements undertaken by *The Bahamian* Government.

This would extend to a deliberate and sustained plan to integrate these agreements into everyday business activity in *The Bahamas*.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR REGULATORS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

Regulators play a critical role in representing *The Bahamas*. The competence and alacrity of their actions play an important role in determining whether institutions in *The Bahamas* choose to remain, grow or leave the nation.

Furthermore, the views of organizations that conduct or previously conducted business in *The Bahamas*, which are readily shared amongst the international community, are pivotal to shaping our reputation as a place for business.

Regulators shall be encouraged to:

- _ support the development and growth of business;
- _ deliver services in line with published guidelines and respond within agreed time frames;
- _ ensure that impediments to the conduct of business are mitigated through transparent and timely application of procedures.

A TAX CEILING TO ENCOURAGE THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRULY LUXURY RESIDENCES

The **PLP** will re-introduce the policy of placing a ceiling on the maximum taxes payable on any single residence.





PROTECTING THE FUTURE

THE COUNTRY IS FAR WORSE OFF THAN IN 2007

The FNM is leaving the country in a worse economic condition than when it came to office in 2007. Not only is this proven by the down-grading of the country's credit standard by two international rating agencies (Moody's and Standard & Poors), but by the candid warning from the International Monetary Fund that:

— the plans of the FNM are “not sufficient to reverse the rising” 4.25 billion dollar national debt and fiscal deficits to average 4.25 percent of GDP over the next four years;

— the borrowings associated with the government's infrastructure program had made the fiscal position more vulnerable, and was set to cause the public debt to GDP ratio to reach 69% by 2016, up from less than 37% when the FNM came to power in 2007.

— The IDB has moved *The Bahamas* to the category of countries with the least “headroom” to withstand further shocks from the global economy.

This course of action is not sustainable. It is reckless. It is mismanagement. A continuation of government borrowing at this alarming rate has serious long-term implications. Even the IMF has made it clear: the country must change course.

— **Despite these realities in the lead up to the General Elections the FNM has continued on to accelerate its spending binge, which can only make the lead situation worse.**

TAX, SPEND, BORROW - THEN SELL! A SUMMARY OF FNM FISCAL POLICY

The root of the country's fiscal problem is the basic economic policy of the FNM, which can be summarized as follows:

“Tax, spend, borrow. Tax more, spend more, borrow more, and then sell something.”

— Since May 2007, the government's net expenditure has exceeded its revenue by almost 1.5 billion dollars.

— This occurred despite:

- the imposition of more and more taxes;
- unexpected and unplanned windfalls from transactions such as the sale of BORCO (twice since 2007) and the launch of BahaMar;
- proceeds from the sale of BATELCO.



DEBT IS GROWING MUCH FASTER THAN THE ECONOMY

From as far back as the lead up to the general elections of 1992, the current Prime Minister went to great lengths to stress how tragic it would be if the country's debt to GDP ratio ever got to 30%. Yet on his watch the ratio climbed to 56.4% in 2010.

SLOWING DOWN THE INCREASE IN THE NATIONAL DEBT

International Credit Rating Agencies have pointed to the critical need for *The Bahamas* to slow the pace with which its national debt is increasing. The **PLP** will do just that.

Two aspects of this debt are particularly troubling and must be focused on as a high priority.

WEAKENING CAPACITY TO KEEP THE BAHAMIAN DOLLAR ON PAR WITH THE U.S. DOLLAR

The fact that the sum owed by *The Bahamas* government to non-Bahamians has virtually tripled since 2007 is a special problem/weakness because it is this specific area of debt increase that weakens the country's ability to keep the Bahamian dollar on par with the U.S. dollar.

FOSTERING GROWTH: SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Over 90% of all enterprises based in *The Bahamas* are small enough to be classified as small and medium-sized enterprises. However, they generate just 5% of the overall economic activity. For years the FNM has provided repeated assurances that it has retained the Inter-American Development Bank to assist with the drafting of the Small and Medium-sized Business Development Bill. For at least two (2) years, the Minister of State for Finance has been providing assurances about his being engaged with stakeholders on the draft Bill. However, nothing happened. In fact,



the FNM has passed a number of laws which will result in higher taxes immediately after the general elections. One such tax increase will be on business with revenues up to \$250,000.00.

The current law calls for business license fees for this type of small business to increase by almost three times the current rate, a change that once again would take place immediately after the general elections. The **PLP** will prevent this from happening.

_ The **PLP** is convinced that the growth of small or medium-sized businesses is important to sustainable national development. In this regard, the re-invented *Bahamas* Development Bank must be a major source of support for the sector.

_ As further support to the sector, the **PLP** will seek to ensure the launch by *The Bahamas* International Stock Exchange (BISX) of a micro-listing facility as to help these enterprises raise finance from within the capital markets. Additionally, once the micro listing facility has been launched by BISX, the Government will find ways and means to help provide liquidity for the stock market.

BETTER USES AND MAINTENANCE OF GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

The country stands to benefit significantly from a greater focus on what is happening with Government-owned buildings. This focus should include:

- _ A rationalization of the considerable number of leases the Government maintains.
- _ Reducing the number of Government buildings that are currently idle, simply being left to the forces of decay. Sadly, some of these are of historical significance.
- _ Upgrading workspaces that do not comply with their intended uses, including for example, the adequacy of electrical outlets to accommodate the expanded use of computers.

_ More effective management of construction. For example, during its full term in office the FNM failed to complete the building on John F. Kennedy Drive which is now to become the new Tourism Centre. Unbelievable, but true.

Accordingly, the **PLP** will bring about:

A comprehensive review of all leases into which the Government has entered with a view to rationalizing these contracts in the nation's interest.

A comprehensive review of abandoned or significantly under-utilized Government buildings. This will be the basis for determining the highest and best use of space in the future, including the possible sale of some buildings to the private sector.

CHANGING COURSE WITH BETTER PLANNING

To slow the pace of growth in the national debt, the **PLP** will:

- _ place far greater emphasis on planning and effective execution of public works projects and wider policy;
- _ govern in such a way as to unite the people of *The Bahamas*.
- _ Proper planning of public works projects is vital to minimizing waste of scarce resources. The entire country has seen the consequence of the FNM's failure to do this with the New Providence Road Improvement Program: millions and millions in excess costs, hundreds and hundreds of employees laid off and dozens and dozens of businesses destroyed.
- _ Proper planning of wider policy is vital to making new initiatives sustainable. For example, the FNM implemented a National Prescription Drug Plan shortly before the last general elections and has left it to non-elected public officials to tell the public that shortly after these general elections every National Insurance contributor will have to pay about 10% more in contributions just to finance the plan.



_ Accordingly, the **PLP** will place greater emphasis on planning, while this renewed emphasis on planning will mean the Department of Statistics is upgraded to the National Bureau of Statistics, which will be located in a suitable site. It will be appropriately staffed and equipped in order to provide timely statistical information.

_ The general plan to slow the pace of growth of the national debt in order to protect the country's future will demand many changes to the way most things are done in the country.

COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS

The magnitude of the need for change to restore the country's financial health requires that *The Bahamas* be governed in a manner that helps to build broad consensus necessary for reform. These reforms will be pre-conditions to reversing the increasing pain and suffering that results from the ongoing decline in the standard of living among the majority of Bahamians.

To advance this essential need for consensus, the **PLP** will create a *Council of Economic Advisers*.

The purpose of this Council will be to advise the Government on major matters, particularly those concerning economic growth and stability.

A review of the country's tax system will be high on the list of matters to be referred to the Council.

REVIEW OF THE TAX SYSTEM

This is critical because the tax system:

- _ is not progressive, i.e. persons who have most do not necessarily contribute most;
- _ is too narrow, i.e. generally only taxing goods but not services;
- _ is becoming increasingly more difficult and expensive to administer;
- _ is not sufficient to meet the financial needs of 21st century governance.

PROTECTING OUR FUTURE: VISION 2030

Central to this plan will be a commitment to building a broader sense of collective purpose among all Bahamians and allies of *The Bahamas*, to utilizing the collective will of all such people and to better use natural resources, such as land, sea and geographic location. This is essential to protecting our future and in this context it is vital that the Government takes initiatives designed to focus national attention and energy on programs and policies conceived and implemented to ensure the fullest fruits are likely to be borne following the current election cycle.

Vision 2030 will relate to every aspect of national life and provide the cornerstone for fostering a sense of common purpose. The emphasis will be on strengthening the social and economic capital of *The Bahamas*.



High on the agenda of Vision 2030 will be policies and programs designed to enhance Bahamians’ guardianship of the physical resources that God has endowed the country with. These policies will focus in a more general sense on the relationship between these resources and sustainable development.

RESCUING GRAND BAHAMA

A COVENANT FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF GRAND BAHAMA

The Progressive Liberal Party firmly believes that the revitalization of Grand Bahama is not only crucial for its residents but is also essential for the future development of *The Bahamas* as a whole. Our second city must, and under a Progressive Liberal Party Government, will, receive focused attention to re-establish its role as the magic city of *The Bahamas*. This focused attention will include but not be limited to the following:

A MINISTRY SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESTORATION OF GRAND BAHAMA

Recognizing the role that Grand Bahama is equipped to play in the turnaround of our economy and the need for a comprehensive approach to transforming the city’s economy, upon assuming office the **PLP** will appoint a Minister responsible for the restoration of Grand Bahama.

As a part of his mandate, the Minister responsible for Grand Bahama will have to ensure that the city receives maximum benefits from all Government initiatives in order to restore its economy.

In further recognition of the peculiar hardship faced by the people of East and West Grand Bahama, the responsibilities of the Minister will specifically include: relocating the residents of Hunters and the surrounding area;

- _ ensuring that the duty-free concessions are extended to East and West Grand Bahama;
- _ working with the Minister of Agriculture to ensure the success of agriculture in East Grand Bahama;
- _ working with the Minister of Education to build schools in East and West Grand Bahama.

ISSUING WORK PERMITS

- _ Significantly raise work permit fees for jobs Bahamians are qualified to perform
- _ Identify Bahamians who can fill job positions when work permits already granted expire

HOTEL INDUSTRY: REVERSING THE DECLINE

- _ Today there are numerous major and smaller hotel properties that are closed, partially closed or operating at levels of occupancy that raise concerns about their ongoing viability.
- _ At Grand Bahama the decline has been particularly tragic, with one hotel after another either gone out of business or operating at minimal levels. These include the Royal Oasis Hotel and Casino (which the FNM Government assured was to re-open in 2007), the Island Palm Hotel, the Royal Islander Hotel, the Reef Village at Our Lucaya, Port Lucaya Hotel, Lighthouse Point Hotel at Our Lucaya, Old Bahama Bay and Xanadu Hotel which is seventy-five (75%) closed.
- _ There is a pressing need to reverse the decline in available rooms because closed properties result in reduced or stagnated growth in room nights, which leads directly to significant job loss.
- _ Independent agencies report that 30 persons find full time employment for every 1000 hotel room nights. Encouraging closed properties to reopen and improvements in occupancy levels at hotels that are operating at marginally viable levels must thus be high priorities.

RESCUING GRAND BAHAMA

GETTING CLOSED HOTELS RE-OPENED

The basic strategy will be for the Government to engage with each property owner on a case-by-case basis to search for a specific solution to each situation. Each search will be based on the premise that property owners would have an interest in improving their return on the investment and that this is also in the nation's interest.

To assist existing properties to get back in operation, the **PLP** will also reduce the hotel tax for existing hotels by 50 percent for five years.

GETTING PARTIALLY COMPLETED RESORTS TO COMPLETION

_ Today there are a number of resort projects which had been started prior to the recent economic collapse and are still surrounded with uncertainty regarding if and when they will be completed.

_ The completion of these developments is particularly important to *The Bahamas* because it is likely to weigh heavily on the prospect of getting totally new projects started.

_ Accordingly, the Progressive Liberal Party will make every effort to encourage the current owners of these projects to find the means to complete the projects. Again, the **PLP** will seek to engage each ownership group on a case-by-case basis.

_ To assist in ensuring the success of new hotels, the **PLP** will reduce hotel tax for new hotels by 50 percent for ten years after opening.

This approach will facilitate objective reviews as to whether it is prudent to seek completion of projects with a different end use in mind.

REMOVING UNCERTAINTY

The **PLP** is convinced that Grand Bahama's depressed economic climate is due in part to the high level of uncertainty resulting from:

- _ management issues impacting the Grand Bahama Port Authority;
- _ the fact that the taxation provisions of the Hawksbill Creek Agreement expires in 2015 and there is no clarity on the way forward.

A **PLP** government will seek to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between owners of the Port Authority and the Government on behalf of the people of Grand Bahama.

If the owners want to sell, the Government will use all services to effect such a sale. In the interim, we will work together for the benefit of the residents of Freeport.

Within the first 100 days of government, the **PLP** will seek to formally initiate negotiations with the Grand Bahama Port Authority regarding the establishment of a formula to ensure that small businesses that cannot afford to rent facilities within the established business centres in Freeport are able to start up and house their businesses in temporary facilities, such as an Industrial Park.

REDUCING THE COST OF ELECTRICITY

Grand Bahama will benefit from national initiatives that a **PLP** government will immediately implement to lower the cost of electricity throughout *The Bahamas*.

Additionally:

_ The **PLP** will staff the Bureau of Standards as established under the Standards Act 2006 in order to ensure that it discharges its statutory function to "provide for the examination, testing and calibration" of all meters in *The Bahamas* including the electricity meters that are being used by the Grand Bahama Power Company;



— The **PLP** will ensure that the residents of Grand Bahama are not being overcharged on their electricity bills. We will also invite the Grand Bahama Port Authority to conduct a thorough review and to report to the Government of *The Bahamas* on the state of the generation and distribution infrastructure of the Grand Bahama Power Company and the degree to which it might be impacting the cost of electricity in Grand Bahama;

— The **PLP** will review the allegations of over charging that have been made by members of the public in relation to the Grand Bahama Power Company.

REVERSING THE EFFECTS OF FORECLOSURE THROUGH OPERATION HOME RESTORATION

— The **PLP** accepts that economic restoration must begin with the restoration of hope for Bahamian families who have lost their homes. A national housing initiative - Operation Home Restoration: A Plan to Reverse the Effects of Mortgage Foreclosure - will seek to reverse the effects of mortgage foreclosures in *The Bahamas*.

— In the administration of this program, a **PLP** government will have respond appropriately to the degree of loss of homes in Grand Bahama and will reflect this reality in the implementation of the program.

PROVIDING A NEW FOCUS ON THE PROMOTION FOR INDUSTRY IN GRAND BAHAMA

— Effective Promotion of Incentives at Home and Abroad.

— The FMN made a significant mistake in closing the Ministry of Financial Services and Investment and of its functions with the Ministry of Finance. This error reflected a basic misunderstanding as to how growth is engineered. Specifically, the Ministry of Finance has a fundamental mandate to maintain a focus on matters of Controls and Compliance. This requires a different mindset to that required to sell and promote, which was the function of the Ministry of Financial Services. It is unwise to ask the same personnel to fulfil both tasks.

— Thus, the **PLP** will not only re-establish the Ministry of Financial Services and Investment but also ensure that it has more resources to be even more effective.

— Within the Ministry of Financial Services and Investment, a specific budget will be allocated for Grand Bahama since the it already has the infrastructure necessary to catalyse development and provide jobs for other Family Islands.

TOURISM IN GRAND BAHAMA

— Our Administration would move quickly to appoint a Task Force to report on the state of tourism in Grand Bahama, and to recommend a model and plan for the short and long term development of Grand Bahama into a successful tourism mecca.



—
In particular, the **PLP** will:

- _ Promote local entertainment, with incentives and support for restaurants, nightclubs, music festivals, and craft markets;
- _ Upgrade the Grand Bahama Island Promotion Board, to improve promotion of Grand Bahama in international markets;
- _ Reduce departure tax at airports and harbours on the island of Grand Bahama by 50 percent.

— **REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF AGRICULTURE**

—
The Progressive Liberal Party considers that agriculture has an important role to play in the recovery of Grand Bahama, which could be an on-island and a New Providence supplier and also a major exporter of produce. With the trans-shipment facility in Freeport, Grand Bahama can enter the global market as a food supplier.

—
The Bahamas Land Resources Survey indicated that Grand Bahama has 30,000 acres of prime agricultural land with a high production capacity. There are large tracts of crown land on the eastern side of the island. This land, however, has never been provided with the infrastructure that would make farming a successful industry.

—
Grand Bahama has the capacity to produce a range of vegetables and fruit trees. Food production could have a tremendous impact on East Grand Bahama, which is the most under-developed area.

—
The **PLP** will carry out conclusive analysis to determine the feasibility for land clearing, feeder roads construction, irrigation equipment and other inputs such as seeds and fertilizer.

—
To reactivate the Grand Bahama agricultural industry, we will provide technical assistance to present small-scale farmers to create a Farmer's Cooperative which will be designated as an Approved Manufacturer under the provisions of the Industries Encouragement Act for an initial period of ten years.

—
This will:

- _ provide greater opportunities for specialized production on individual farms within the cooperative, so that not all farmers are producing the same products at the same time;
- _ provide greater purchasing power for the members of the Cooperative by providing opportunities for bulk purchases of supplies and group sharing of heavy machinery purchases and upkeep;
- _ provide easier access to capital and financing for members of the Cooperative by allowing applications for financing to be made collectively.

— **A STATE OF THE ART HOSPITAL**

—
Construct a new state-of-the-art hospital using Bahamian contractors and labour.

— **RE-ESTABLISHING ZNS**

—
We will re-establish the national broadcast of Grand Bahama news through the re-establishment of ZNS Northern Service to its former proud heritage as a full-fledged news agency.

— **RE-ESTABLISHING THE GRAND BAHAMA METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE**

—
We will re-establish the Grand Bahama Meteorological Office.

— **DEEPENING BAHAMIAN PRESENCE IN INDUSTRY**

—
The Government will initiate and/or intensify discussions with industry operators in Grand Bahama with a view to a formalized strategy to dramatically reduce the number of non-nationals employed there and to ensure that available positions are filled by Bahamians. To this end, specific emphasis will be placed on the expanded presence on Grand Bahama of *Bahamas* Technical & Vocational Institute (BTVI).



REGULATING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

We will expand the Department of the Environment personnel and resources to regulate and monitor the environmental impact of industrial activities in Grand Bahama more effectively.

MODERN POLICIES FOR INDUSTRY

We will formulate and introduce modern governmental policies adopting best practices for the prevention and remedying of industrial accidents and pollution.

INDUSTRY TRAINING IN GRAND BAHAMA

A **PLP** government will focus specifically on the sustained development of Grand Bahama.

Today there is more opportunity for industry employment in Grand Bahama than anywhere in our archipelago. Yet, there is virtually no opportunity for industry training in Grand Bahama.

In keeping with its plan to attend specifically to promoting industry in Grand Bahama, the **PLP** will establish a campus of *The Bahamas* Technical

and Vocational Institute (BTVI) in Grand Bahama.

Promote local entertainment, with incentives and support for restaurants,

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAMILY ISLANDS

As part of a national development strategy, special attention and priority will be given to implementing measures to greatly improve the social and economic conditions, as well as infrastructure in the Family Islands.

VISION

On-going projects in Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Mariculture will reverse the trend of residents leaving the family islands to find employment. Many residents from our Family Islands will return home to opportunities to build and develop their native island and to help to cultivate our island communities.

In order to implement this vision, the **PLP** will provide support and infrastructure for the development of full circle economies in the Family Islands.

BUILDING FULL CIRCLE ECONOMIES

Economies should be developed in the family islands as full circle economies, where production, processing, packaging and distribution are done at the respective family islands location. This would enable residents of various family islands to participate in all aspects of an economy and industry, rather than just one, such as farming, for example.

DEVELOPMENT OF *The Family* ISLANDS

SPANISH WELLS FISHING INDUSTRY

The residents of Spanish Wells are very talented fishermen, boasting some of the highest per capita income in the country. But, the success of the fishing industry in Spanish Wells is due to it being a full circle economy.

The development of the industry was a result of the following occurring there:

- _ Building of the boats (skiffs)
- _ Selling the engines for the skiffs
- _ Repairing the engines and other mechanical components
- _ Fishing for crawfish and fish
- _ Wholesalers purchasing the fish from the fishermen
- _ Fish being processed at the wholesale facility
- _ Fish being packaged at the wholesale facility
- _ Fish being exported by the wholesale facility

By developing full circle economies, the proceeds from the industry remain within the island, providing a significant multiplier effect. Developing a full circle economy on family islands also provides employment opportunities in all sectors of the industry on the island.

This model should be translated to all family islands in a variety of different industries. Examples of industries that this theory should be applied to include:

- _ Agriculture: from growing to canning and juicing, to exporting and distribution.
- _ Green Energy: from research to assembly and manufacture, to export of alternative energy technologies.

The PLP will ensure that the benefits of its entire plan apply to each and every island in the Commonwealth. Of specific note:

TOURISM

The PLP is committed to ensuring that the intrinsic strengths of each of our islands is promoted and used as the basis of development. In this sense, our National

Initiative in Resort Development will help to develop a Resort Brand that capitalizes on the natural strengths of each area of The Bahamas.

In line with the tourism segment of this Charter for Governance, a PLP Government will be the catalyst for and provide assistance to attract a mix of substantial tourism projects, small Bahamian-owned hotels, accommodation and attractions. The PLP will also encourage environmentally sensitive industrial enterprises, agricultural, fisheries and handicraft production, together with support and ancillary services.

COST OF ELECTRICITY

The PLP will make every effort to lower the cost of electricity. This will include a national evaluation of the economic viability of having a single efficient energy plant to service more than one island.

SALT INDUSTRY

The PLP will take steps to maximize the potential of the salt industry in Long Island and the southern Bahamas.

ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The PLP will ensure that where necessary all government facilities and island infrastructure are upgraded and necessary services are available to all.

HEALTHCARE

Healthcare will be advanced through the construction of mini hospitals on Eleuthera and Exuma.

TECHNOLOGY CENTRES

We will upgrade and establish public libraries or other appropriate facilities to include technology centres in New Providence and the Family Islands.



—
**OUR REGIONS: WE ARE
VAST, BUT WE ARE ONE**

—
THE NORTHERN REGION

—
This area comprises Abaco at the extreme north, Bimini, Berry Islands, and Grand Bahama. This part of our archipelago is blessed with waters for deep-sea fishing and a Mediterranean style climate.

- _ The **PLP** will ensure that in each of these islands there is policy to maintain and advance fishing, tourism and second home development.
- _ To return these islands and in particular Bimini to their prominence as yachting and fishing locations, the **PLP** will put friendly policies in place to welcome yachts to our shores.
- _ To encourage the building of luxury second homes the **PLP** will place a ceiling on real property taxes levied.
- _ Fish processing plants will be located strategically on these islands, e.g one will be located in Moore's Island, which will be made a port of entry.
- _ The **PLP** will build agribusiness centres in Abaco and put policies in place to encourage food processing and export agriculture.
- _ In the Berry Islands special attention will be given to the extensive upgrading of infrastructure and facilities. Specifically, the **PLP** will acquire land to build a school, library and administrative complex.
- _ As an upgrade to the present medical services provided in the Berry Islands, the **PLP** will ensure that there is a resident doctor on the island.
- _ A **PLP** government will commit to establishing a satellite branch of the Bank of *The Bahamas* in the Berry Islands.

**[OUR REGIONS] WE ARE VAST
BUT WE ARE ONE**

THE CENTRAL REGION

This part of our chain comprises Cat Island, Long Island, Exuma, Rum Cay, San Salvador, Eleuthera, Andros and New Providence. The **PLP** will promote the unique geographical and historical features of each of these islands.

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE EXTENSION OFFICERS

- We will appoint resident **agriculture extension officers** to each of these islands.
- These officers will have the responsibility of developing the agricultural sector by:

- conducting farmer training in plant propagation, crop and livestock through workshops;
- assisting farmers in finding solutions to technical problems;
- finding markets for farm products of these islands.

AGRIBUSINESS CENTRES

On each of these islands the packing house will be upgraded to an **agribusiness centre** which will include:

- slaughtering and processing facilities
- an office for the extension officer, meeting facilities.

FISHERIES

Wherever possible fisheries in this area will be extended to include Mariculture.

The **PLP** will create a department comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and the Ministry for Trade. This department will be responsible for identifying opportunities in Mariculture and Fisheries.

Fisheries Extension Officers from this department will be appointed to several islands for the purpose of providing training, assistance as may be required, and for finding markets for fish products.

In particular an officer will be appointed to **Moore's Island** with a view to assisting in the creation of a **full circle Mariculture economy** there.

Production, processing, packaging, and distribution will form the basis for the creation of full circle economies on each of these islands.

FOOD SCIENCES INSTITUTE FOR NORTH ANDROS

The proposed Food Sciences Institute for North Andros will boost the economic development of this area and promote connectivity between the islands' economies, especially in the Central *Bahamas*.



THE SOUTHERN REGION

This region comprises the islands referred to as MICAL. Mayaguana, Inagua, Crooked Island, Acklins and Long Cay. This region also includes the Ragged Island chain.

Many parts of the Southern area of *The Bahamas* boast ecological wonders and represent enormous untapped potential.

The **PLP** will implement projects to promote the re-population and economic development of these islands.

_ The **PLP** will revive the development project at Mayaguana with appropriate modifications.

_ The port of Inagua will be prepared to accommodate cruise ships in order to stimulate the economy and provide touristic value from the existing natural environment and potential for economic and heritage tourism.

The **PLP** will promote:

- _ an inter-island ferry between all of these islands
- _ cascarilla as an industry in this area
- _ research and development of mariculture including sponging in the Southern *Bahamas*.

MARICULTURE

The warmer waters of the Southern *Bahamas* are rich in products that are in high demand in the world markets including sea eggs, seaweed, and sea cucumbers. These products, which are naturally in abundance in our waters, can be harvested to make new and lucrative industries for Bahamians that can create jobs and business opportunities. In fact this industry can play a major role in our national economy.

To launch the Mariculture industry, two **fishery extension officers** will be appointed to MICAL. These officers will have the duties listed below.

AGRICULTURE

An agriculture extension officer, with the duties as listed below, will be assigned to Acklins, Crooked Island and Mayaguana.

REVITALIZING TOURISM

THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY WILL RESTORE THE BAHAMAS AS THE PREMIER TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE REGION.

While tourism remains the premier industry in *The Bahamas* today, it is not providing the robustness and consistent growth which are essential to support the standard of living to which Bahamians have become accustomed.

The challenges are so varied and complex that the Inter-American Development Bank has described the overall situation of *Bahamas* tourism as “troubling.”

REVITALIZING TOURISM

—
In fact, the problems are so serious that the need to change course is truly urgent. Significant measures are required if tourism is to remain a primary industry to:

—
generate the income and foreign exchange earnings to make the economy grow again and to meet the burdensome public debt racked up by the FNM administration;

- _ protect and expand the middle class;
- _ protect our future.

—
The realities include:

REDUCTION IN STOP-OVER VISITORS IN 2011 COMPARED TO 1985

—
A basic economic challenge for *Bahamas* tourism comes from the fact that the number of stop-over visitors was three percent (3%) lower in 2011 than in 2010, which itself was already the lowest since 1985. Increases in the number of cruise passengers cannot mask the gravity of this situation because, on average, it takes up to ten cruise passengers to create the same economic impact as one stop-over visitor.

—
The country must consistently attract an increasing number of stop-over visitors.

—
This increase in stop-over visitors must not be at the expense of continued growth in the number of cruise visitors. Growth must occur in both sectors.

—
The **PLP** must and will reverse the decline in stop over visitors through:

- _ **increasing available rooms**
- _ **improving airlift**
- _ **responding appropriately to changes in the industry**
- _ **revitalizing the product through incentives and initiatives which would encourage massive refurbishment, more interesting activities for tourists, cultural experiences, natural and various creative experiences, attractions, sports and high profile international events.**

INCREASING AVAILABLE ROOMS

[1]_ Numerous major and smaller hotels are currently closed, partially closed or operating at levels of occupancy that raise concerns about ongoing viability.

[2]_ At Grand Bahama the decline has been particularly tragic with one hotel after another either going out of business or operating at minimal levels. This includes the Royal Oasis Hotel and Casino (which the FNM Government had assured would re-open in 2007), the Island Palm Hotel, the Royal Islander Hotel, the Reef Village at Our Lucaya, Port Lucaya Hotel, Lighthouse Point Hotel at Our Lucaya, Old Bahama Bay and Xanadu Hotel, which is 75% closed.

[3]_ There is a pressing need to reverse the decline in available rooms because closed properties lead to reductions in or lack of growth in room nights, which in turn leads directly to significant job losses.

[4]_ Independent agencies report that for every 1000 hotel room nights, 30 people find full-time employment. Therefore, encouraging the reopening of closed properties and improved levels of occupancy at those which are operating at marginally viable levels is a very high priority.

—
The PLP will take steps to systematically reverse the decline in available rooms by:

—
Toward 1 and 2 above, a **PLP** Government will engage each developer on a case-by-case basis to find solutions that work for both sides.

GETTING CLOSED HOTELS RE-OPENED

—
The basic Government strategy will be to engage with each property owner on a case-by-case basis to search for a solution designed especially for each situation. Each search will be based on the premise that property owners would have an interest in improving their return on investment and that this is also in the nation's interest.



GETTING PARTIALLY COMPLETED RESORTS TO COMPLETION

Today there are a number of resort projects that had been started prior to the recent economic collapse and are still surrounded amid uncertainty regarding if and when they will be completed.

The completion of these developments is particularly important to *The Bahamas* because it is likely to make a significant impact on getting new projects started.

Accordingly, the Progressive Liberal will make every effort to encourage the current owners of these projects to find the means to complete them. Again, the **PLP** will seek to engage each ownership group on a case-by-case basis.

This approach will produce objective reviews regarding whether it would wise to complete the projects with a different end use in mind.

A **PLP** government will engage each developer on a case-by-case basis in search of solutions that work for both sides.

WORKING TO ENSURE THE CO-EXISTENCE OF BAHAMAR AND ATLANTIS

The present Prime Minister has stated on the record that Atlantis and BahaMar cannot co-exist. His view is that one is likely to cannibalize the viability of the other.

This must not happen.

With the BahaMar project now under construction it is vital to the future well-being of *The Bahamas* that BahaMar spur incremental growth. The new **PLP** Government will make this a very high priority. In this regard the **PLP** Government will assure each investor group that it is committed to the success of investment in *The Bahamas*.

IMPROVING AIRLIFT

Efficient travel to the Islands of *The Bahamas* is essential to the growth of tourism and commerce throughout the islands. The **PLP**, in collaboration with resort and airline stakeholders (including the national flag carrier and private air carriers both local and foreign), will seek out and service new direct and connecting air routes to and through the various Islands of *The Bahamas*.

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

RESORT DEVELOPMENT

The present administration has failed to show due regard for the fact that over time the concept of a “hotel” has been broadened and today includes “condo-hotel”, “time-share resorts” and “interval ownership properties.” Additionally, there has been significant expansion in the popularity of “vacation homes.” In summary, the development of vacation destinations has increasingly shifted to a more real estate-focused orientation.



Records would show that public policy in *The Bahamas* has not always responded to these changing circumstances in a timely manner.

The **PLP** will institute and support professionals with the expertise to identify changes required in public policy to continually position the country as the premier destination for new concepts in tourism that will stimulate growth in the industry.

TOURISM PROMOTION MUST BE MORE DYNAMIC

In the area of promotion of tourism, the Progressive Liberal Party will concentrate efforts on niche markets that offer new prospects, rather than on primary groups that must be replaced each year. These niche markets will particularly feature:

- _ Films and entertainment
- _ Sports
- _ Health
- _ Religious tourism
- _ Education tourism
- _ Medical
- _ Historical and Heritage Tourism

A NEW APPROACH TO TOURISM PROMOTION

SHARING OUR SECRETS!

The **PLP** will ensure that every Island is branded and promoted in accordance with the type of experience it offers.

We will single out the natural features of each Island of *The Bahamas*, highlighting the historical and geophysical attractions in our international promotions.

MARINAS

We will increase support for marina operators on the basis of the yachting sector's potential for considerable growth.

GOLF: A KEY AMENITY

The **PLP** will provide strong support for the redevelopment of golf courses to leverage the country's competitive advantage in its abundant land that is ideal for this amenity and the favourable development of technological solutions that reduce the amount of water needed to maintain golf courses.

BAY STREET

The **PLP** will work closely with all stakeholders to increase the momentum for progressive change in the Bay Street and the redevelopment initiative in surrounding areas.

NEW MARKETS

The **PLP** will take steps to facilitate entry visas for potential visitor from countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa.

THE CRUISE BUSINESS

Over 70% of visitors to *The Bahamas* arrive by sea. Additionally, on each cruise ship which visits *The Bahamas*, there are hundreds of crew members with the potential to add economic benefit to the islands.

What is more, *The Bahamas* has not sought the most strategic ways to substantially increase the economic impact of cruise visitors.

This must change.

THIS MUST change

The **PLP** will change this through:

NEW CRUISE PORTS

Encouraging the creation of cruise ports at Eleuthera, Exuma, Mayaguana, Inagua and Andros cost-effective access to the other islands of *The Bahamas*.

“COME BACK” PROGRAMME

Introducing a strong “come back” program designed to encourage cruise visitors to return to *The Bahamas* as a stop-over visitors.

DEEPER PARTNERSHIPS WITH CRUISE LINES

Partnering with cruise lines to find innovative ways to bring greater value to communities.

The Government will demonstrate its commitment to these partnerships by granting concessions to tourism businesses:

- _ To create new tour experiences that emphasize education and the local culture of *The Bahamas* and/or a particular island destination. This initiative will respond to the insufficient emphasis on “newness” and “freshness” in the activities being offered to tourists visiting New Providence and Grand Bahama;
- _ To help to foster a renaissance in the handicraft sector;
- _ To assist with the re-awakening of greater entertainment offerings;
- _ To foster the vision that by 2030 the visitors coming to *The Bahamas* because of our arts and attractions will rival the number who came because of our sand and sea.

A NATIONAL RESORT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BAHAMIAN OWNERSHIP

The primary model for hotel development in *The Bahamas* has mainly been through

foreign investment, which served as a catalyst for Bahamians to create enterprises to support hotel services from taxicabs, tour cars, and operating retail stores in foreign owned hotels.

The time has come to seriously and objectively search for ways to change this model.

The **PLP** will launch a new National Resort Development Initiative in which:

- _ public and private sectors will cooperate to create sustainable new resorts, based on the following key principles:
- _ Bahamians will become major investors in the hotel and resort business created by this initiative;
- _ The scale of the initiative will be important to ongoing viability, particularly for gaining and sustaining presence in the international tourism market place;

Over time the hotel brands created by this initiative will become important national assets;

Funds spent on marketing the resorts will be an investment in nationally-owned assets.

OUR BRAND OF EXCELLENCE

The **PLP** will create a body that is specifically designed to foster the ownership and operation of a chain of resorts and tourism-related enterprises throughout *The Bahamas*. Each resort will reflect the characteristics of the particular island community and be designed to:



- _ achieve the quality standard consistent with the overall brand;
- _ reflect high environmental standards while serving as the overall tourism product.

The management team for this new body will be selected to assure the investment community of its overriding professionalism.

Bahamians will be the leaders of this new body. When appropriate, strategic relationships will be formed with global companies to help ensure best practices and global competitiveness.

Collectively, the selection of directors shall serve to help secure and ensure confidence in national and international communities that this initiative is important to national development and enjoys the broadest support.

The Government will commit to contributing land as equity to the development. In each case, the quantity of such land will be sufficient to:

- _ meet the needs of the particular resort;
- _ create the means whereby adjoining parcels could be used to create additional revenue streams of the new entity as its occupancy levels climb. The idea is to increase the attractiveness of the overall investment opportunity.

The Government will also commit to providing direct marketing support, just as it has done for other large private sector developers.

In terms of financing, major sources will be:

- _ equity funding raised from capital markets with the professional assistance of corporate finance houses. This creates organized means to ensure every Bahamian has the potential to participate alongside non-Bahamians;
- _ mortgage funding from commercial lenders;
- _ funding from international partners and international organizations;
- _ the Government will provide the balance of the funds necessary to complete the Development Budget. The private sector will control of the operations and management of the overall entity.

Transparency will be important to all aspects of the formation and launch of this new entity. In this regard, the Government will fund the necessary feasibility studies and due diligence processes to prevent undue advantage to any group of investors.

The new entity would be listed on BISX in order to further assist the development of local capital markets, and promote visible means by which the Government can exit the business with a view to using the funds to stimulate other development initiatives.



CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

“It is important to the development of our national identity and to the deepening of our Bahamian Culture that we ensure the highest level of government support to our artists and artisans.” ~ Perry Christie 2006

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

Culture has been described as “what is left when everything else has been removed”. It could also be defined as the sum total of the defining characteristics of a people over a long period of time. Common examples are language, expressions, history, food, religion and music. Each of these may be partially shared by other groups but are always distinguished by one or more unique feature. Bahamian culture has been influenced by European, American and African Cultures.

Bahamian Culture today is not held in sufficiently high regard or celebrated to the extent that it should be.

VISION 2030

All citizens of *The Bahamas*, through formal and informal education, will fully understand and appreciate

our culture and the heritage of our language, music, expressions, food, religion, and myths.

We will also work with the creative industry to ensure that Bahamian culture becomes a major factor in economic development, working towards the goal that by 2030 the number of visitors who come to *The Bahamas* because of arts and culture will rival those who come primarily because of our beaches and sea.

A NEW DIRECTION

The Progressive Liberal Party will take measures to celebrate all aspects of Bahamian Culture and the people who make meaningful contributions to culture.

To this end the **PLP** will:

- _ Ensure the teaching of Bahamian values and culture is incorporated into all government schools. This will include food, expressions, music, dance and history;
- _ Establish a partnership with the Antiquities, Monuments and Museums Corporation along with the National Art Gallery for the procurement and display of Bahamian art and artefacts;
- _ Create an award of excellence in theatre;
- _ Ensure that all festivals and homecomings (private and public) are registered with the Ministry of Culture and a yearly calendar of events is produced to avoid conflicts between events;
- _ Revisit and redesign the National Centre for the Performing Arts into a fully functional, proper performing arts centre;
- _ Research and identify places, events and dates of cultural and historical significance and appropriately signify and highlight them;
- _ Formalize the recognition of Sir Lynden Pindling as the “Father of the Nation.”

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

AN ARTS COUNCIL

- _ Establish a Bahamian Arts Council for the funding of the arts and cultural events;
- _ One of the mandates of the Arts council will be to locate local and international venues to display and sell authentic/original Bahamian arts and crafts;
- _ The Council will also be in charge of building, promoting and maintaining a website to showcase and sell approved Bahamian art, such as straw work, woodcraft, music and painting.

A MUSIC SECRETARIAT

Establish a music secretariat to work closely with *The Bahamas* Musician Union to build an archival library of Bahamian music and to institute an associated recording studio for the use and promotion of Bahamian musical talent.

JUNKANOO

The next **PLP** government will:

- _ Create a Junkanoo season over a twelve-day period ending with the New Year's Day Parade. This period will offer more organized opportunities to appreciate Junkanoo costumes, music, craftsmanship and performances;
- _ as a means of promoting our culture, ensure the maximum exposure of the Junkanoo experience overseas, including international television broadcasts of Junkanoo;
- _ display award-winning costumes in prominent public places throughout the year.

MAKING CULTURE OUR BUSINESS

The Progressive Liberal Party is aware of the great economic value of culture and that it can help significantly with the recovery of the economy.

To implement this, the **PLP** will:

- _ Ensure that research studies are conducted on cultural events and the arts

that can be turned into revenue-generating industries in order to create sustainable jobs for Bahamians;

- _ Seek to host Carifesta as a means of promoting our culture and providing insight into the cultures of other countries;
- _ Lend support to an annual event that showcases Bahamian music;
- _ Promote the culture of *The Bahamas* inclusive of events, arts and Bahamian products internationally through the Ministry of Tourism;
- _ Ensure that all people receive the necessary information to register, copyright and trademark their works and a simple process is set in place for people to do so;
- _ Ensure that a percentage of every contract or agreement entered into by *The Bahamas* Government with foreign investors is geared toward the authentic arts and crafts of *The Bahamas*;
- _ Introduce, or strengthen where necessary, legislation and regulations to protect and regulate creative arts industries;
- _ Offer incentives and rewards to local businesses which support the arts and crafts of the country;
- _ Put into place all legislation necessary for Bahamians to benefit from e-commerce by enabling them to sell products and accept payment online.

STRAW INDUSTRY

The Progressive Liberal Party will rejuvenate the straw industry by ensuring that markets for the sale of straw items receive effective promotion.

We will also:

- _ In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Tourism, ensure the proper farming of top and sisal;
- _ Facilitate the establishment of a cooperative to create a straw exchange which will purchase for resale all plaits that meet the standard set by the exchange;
- _ Define a policy whereby people in the straw industry can make written recommendations for a family member or employee to take over their stall in the market upon their demise or retirement.



“It's time to put
BAHAMIANS
FIRST”

REVOLUTIONIZING THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

It is a core value of Progressive Liberal Party that the Agricultural sector be an integral part of any sustainable economic development plan. We should therefore maximize our potential to materialize this goal.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

Presently, *The Bahamas* is a food deficit country, which mean that we import more food than we produce locally. Since 2007, our food import bill has exceeded half a billion dollars and continues to climb. At the present rate, by 2017 food imports will reach the billion-dollar mark.

The Progressive Liberal Party is aware that this high import bill has serious implications for our country and our people. This scenario impacts on our foreign exchange reserves, endangers our environment and the safety of our food chain, while also contributing to a decline in our economy by eliminating employment opportunities in the farming community. Furthermore, agribusiness development and diversification of the sector have been stifled.

For the past two decades, there has been virtually no public sector investment in infrastructural upgrade, manpower development and public/private sector partnership of food production in *The Bahamas*. This has resulted in substantial decline of agricultural products in *The Bahamas*; for example, the number of acres under cultivation suffered an almost 25% fall from 50,429 in 1994 to 37,902 acres in 2010 and the number of farmers fell from by more than 28% from 1727 in 1994 to 1242 in 2005.

Despite this, the size of the administrative staff at the Ministry of Agriculture still continues to grow.

The Bahamas must change course in the area of agriculture.

Interestingly, this is not just the view of the Progressive Liberal Party, for recently a FNM member of Parliament publicly vented his frustration with his own Government by asserting that:

“The FNM government does not do nearly enough for the agriculture industry.”

“If agriculture were developed fully in The Bahamas, there would be no unemployment.”

“We (the Bahamians) just need some serious minds and people in the right place who believe we can and will feed ourselves.”

“Now is the time to lay the ground work for a more healthy and secure nation.”

REVOLUTIONIZING THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

VISION 2030: A NEW DIRECTION

“GROW WHAT WE CAN; BUY WHAT WE MUST”

The Progressive Liberal Party will do exactly what the FNM MP has unsuccessfully pleaded with his colleagues to do.

The new agriculture will be grounded on the commitment to “grow what we can; buy what we must”, thus reflecting an **import substitution strategy**.

The benefits of an import substitution policy is that it is two-dimensional: it will both save foreign exchange, while earning foreign exchange. This strategy is consistent with the global food agenda of enhancing food security as it will bring greater focus to the local production of our food while benefiting the overall economy. Furthermore:

_ It will reverse the fact that in 1978 there were over 9,700 persons employed in agriculture. Today there are less than 2,000.

_ It will contribute to a healthier lifestyle that will counteract the food crisis *The Bahamas* has encountered over the past quarter of a century due to changes in our diet because of the lack of locally grown produce in our dietary intake. Our food is no longer fresh and nutritious; we have become a processed, fast food eating people. This changed lifestyle and diet result an excessive amount of disease among many Bahamians.

_ At this juncture of our development, we must reclaim our food heritage: a heritage built on food that is locally grown, tasty, fresh and **nutritious**. Local producers must take back our market, which has been outsourced to North America, Latin America, New Zealand, Australia, and countries in the Far East, such as Thailand.

_ Our government will pay more attention to food being imported into *The Bahamas*. The ultimate objective will be to “**grow what we can; buy what we must**”.

_ Our New Agriculture will result from measures taken to initiate a stakeholder-driven industry, focusing on agribusinesses, small farmers, and producer cooperatives. The Ministry of Agriculture will be reorganized, so as to maximize the skills of all the Ministry’s officers.

BAHAMAS FOOD SCIENCES INSTITUTE: A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

For any agricultural system to become and remain competitive, manpower training as well as research and development are critical components in the enhancement of the sector. It is through training and research that innovation evolves and the basis for development is innovation.

The Bahamas Food Sciences Institute (BFSI) will be established in North Andros at the site of the North Andros High School. The Institute will be a post-secondary/tertiary entity geared to teaching the practical and theoretical elements of food science. Individuals will be able to attain certificates and/or diplomas that enable graduates to enter the work force as trained technicians or entrepreneurs in agribusiness or fisheries.

In Phase 1, BSFI will offer technical courses at the North Andros campus and Phase 2 will call for an additional campus in either Eleuthera or Long Island. It will be a centre of excellence in teaching, research and developing husbandry practices which will make our food production systems competitive. Competitiveness will ensure the sustainability of family island farming and fishing communities’ local economies.

In conjunction with BSFI, a Competitiveness, Technology and Innovation Committee will be created, whose chief responsibilities will be:

_ To connect science and technology to the adoption of new and improved food production practices;

_ To identify and stimulate the development of new agriculture and fishing enterprises and industries;

_ To foster the development of a technology-driven and environmentally friendly food production system.



“this is
MY TIME”

The BSFI will be a key factor in making New Agriculture a reality, with hi-tech farming as a component.

NATIONAL FOOD PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Progressive Liberal Party is committed to the development and implementation of a National Food Production Development Plan. The agricultural and marine resources sector of our economy cannot continue to function as a ship caught adrift in an economic era which is being defined by globalization and trade liberalization propelled by the World Trade Organization (WTO). If we are to succeed in this context, priorities must be determined and guidelines established. Annual output targets will be set for each year and mechanisms will be put in place to measure achievements. This will take place in consultation with stakeholders (agribusiness, small farmers and producer cooperatives).

The **PLP** government will build or rebuild:

AGRIBUSINESS CENTRES

Upgrade all packing houses to Agribusiness Centres and construct new ones in Abaco, East Grand Bahama, Crooked Island and Ackins;

LIVESTOCK SUBSECTOR

Construct slaughtering facilities in Eleuthera and Long Island;

Create a “niche” fresh market for poultry, pork, mutton and lamb as well as further processing;

Assist layer producers in getting back to self-sufficiency in fresh eggs and expand this agribusiness by encouraging producers to move into value-added commodities, such as processed and convenience forms of eggs for commercial, food service and home use.

THE POULTRY INDUSTRIES IN *The Bahamas*

The poultry industry in the Caribbean is valued at over \$600 million and employs over 200,000 persons. However, arbitrary policies that have led to uncertainty on the part of investors have virtually killed this industry in *The Bahamas*.

With proper policy, we can and must fulfil our potential in this area. A **PLP** government will ensure the growth of this industry, which is capable of hiring thousands while putting safe food on our tables.

In the advancement of farming in *The Bahamas*, the **PLP** will:

- _ Facilitate crop production as a hi-tech agribusiness by providing special incentives for greenhouse production biotechnology and propagation techniques like Tissue Culture;
- _ Provide special incentives to agribusinesses engaged in further processing and value-added commodities;
- _ Place greater emphasis on food processing and value-added products at production points in family island farming communities in order to develop sustainable on-island economies;
- _ Add an industrial component to the Cascarilla Bark processing which has been an economic agro-forestry commodity in the South-eastern *Bahamas* that is exported as a raw material;
- _ Ensure a greater market share for the environmental case horticulture subsector by facilitating growth and further development of nursery and landscaping enterprises.

Globally, agriculture is big business and we are no exception! It is a widely known fact that in the modern *Bahamas*, the commitment of an informed government reflected in sound policy would suffice to dramatically change agriculture so that the majority of what is consumed in *The Bahamas* is grown here.

It is also a known fact that over \$500 million per year of our national food expenditure is spent on food imports and this cannot be sustained. Without compromising cost or quality, farming in *The Bahamas* can comfortably employ 10,000 persons and we can one again grow what we need and import only what we must.



MARICULTURE AND MARINE PRODUCTS

Bountiful nature has gifted The Bahamas with many natural assets, including the barrier reef called The Bahama banks. The Bahama banks are the third largest in the world, beaten only by the Great Barrier Reef of Australia and the large archipelago of the Philippines.

The economic return obtained from Nassau grouper, queen conchs, snappers, and jacks is modest compared to its potential. Industrial exploitation of our waters, as opposed to modest commercial activity, has never been attempted.

Mari-culture, i.e. the cultivation of marine products, is not currently practiced in *The Bahamas* to any significant degree. Here we differ from our neighbours The Turks and Caicos Islands, where conch farming is a significant industry or The Cayman Islands, where turtle farming is a significant industry.

The Bahamas's performance in this field can improve.

THE COUNTRY'S POTENTIAL

_ The relatively shallow waters of The Bahama banks cover more than 60,000 square miles and are capable of growing marine produce on an international industrial scale. This is possible because of constantly moving ocean currents that remove waste, supply nutrients and keep the produce relatively warm.

_ These conditions allow for the Bahama banks to contribute significantly to counteracting the world's 60% fish and marine produce deficit, a shortage that continues to increase.

_ While the Caribbean region harvests 206,000 tons of fish, its demand totals 854,000 tons. The Dominican Republic harvests 7000 tons but actually requires 151 tons. The United States of America, the world's largest importer of marine produce,

is physically incapable of supplying its own needs. *The Bahamas* is strategically located and naturally gifted to assist in meeting the needs of our neighbouring countries and the world.

_ Through mariculture and related activities a new and viable industry can emerge.

The produce that is traditionally cultivated or farmed includes sea cucumbers, seaweed, sea urchins, tilapia, cobia, queen conch, shark, lobster, stone crab, shrimp, clams, mussels, oysters, Nassau grouper, jacks, mutton fish, snapper, margaret fish, grunts, bone fish and turbot.

The **PLP** will:

_ Create a division in the Department of Fisheries comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and the Ministry for Trade. This new division will be responsible for identifying export opportunities

and linking current fisheries exporters to importers in other countries;

_ Equip this division to assist in educating fishermen in this expanded industry;

_ Appoint two fisheries extension officers, one to Moore's Island and another to MICAL, to launch the mariculture industry and to expand and coordinate these area's existing the fishing industry.

VISION 2030

The **PLP** will pursue policies and programmes designed to promote mariculture as a significant and sustainable industry by 2030.

A new panorama of economic opportunities. Our waters are our blessings!

MARICULTURE AND MARINE PRODUCTS

FINANCIAL SERVICES

As the second largest industry in *The Bahamas*, the Financial Services Sector, just like Tourism, is not reflecting the degree of robustness and consistent growth required to support the overall standard of living to which Bahamians have become accustomed.

This has become a major problem precisely because the sector has long been a source of significant revenues for the Public Treasury and for providing a substantial number of prestigious and highly paid positions. The situation has become so bad that the global financial centres index of *The Bahamas* has fallen to 72 out of 75 jurisdictions and is in last place among offshore jurisdictions.

The sector has suffered from a variety of forces, including:

The failure of *The Bahamas* to develop the reputation of a financial industry, the viability of which was independent from bank secrecy.

_ To help correct this, a major re-branding initiative must be launched. The mandate to carry out this initiative will be the responsibility of the re-invented Ministry of Financial Services.

The failure of *The Bahamas* to remain on the cutting edge of law reforms that facilitate an increasing range of complex cross border transactions.

_ To help correct this, relations between the Government and the private sector shall be strengthened. This is a particularly urgent task because over the last five years the Minister of State for Finance allowed the degree of such cooperation to be significantly weakened.

The fact that few Bahamians have assumed the role of investors in significant banks and trust companies in the sector helps to foster scepticism among non-nationals who maybe interested in investing in this sector.

_ The **PLP** will commit to changing this situation.

In further support of the Financial Services Sector the **PLP** will:

- _ Re-establish the Ministry of Financial Services and Investments to give dedicated full time leadership for the development and promotion of this industry;
- _ Recognize that this is a truly global industry that demands a real need for competitiveness. A low tax regime is just one of several competitiveness factors that public policy must confront. Others include ensuring the stability and predictability of the business environment, the quality of staffing available, and the support provided by infrastructure;
- _ Reflect its commitment to a vision of a future *Bahamas* where international shipping industry plays a major role and assist with its global marketing of *The Bahamas* as an ideal registry for international shipping;
- _ Better integrate its work with the rest of the economy so that its overall impact on the country is felt positively by more persons;
- _ This will include the development of the Maritime School at the College of *The Bahamas* in order to further expand maritime education;
- _ Strengthen links between the Financial Services Sector and tourism. Specifically, there are many distinguished and influential individuals on a global basis, who also maintain some close association with *The Bahamas*;
- _ The Ministry of Financial Services and The Ministry of Tourism will collaborate on an initiative designed to encourage more and more people to create and/or expand their bases of operation in *The Bahamas*. This initiative is important for broadening and deepening the perception of *The Bahamas* as a place where real business can be conducted as opposed to a place through which business is conducted;
- _ The Ministry of Financial Services will aggressive promote of *The Bahamas* as a superior world-level provider centre for international operators in blue chip insurance products and funds of all types;

This would include promoting *The Bahamas* as a uniquely qualified domain for an international arbitration court, comparable to The Hague as a location for the International Court for Criminal Justice.

Two key aspects of these initiatives will be to associate *The Bahamas* with:

- _ Diversity of industry activities which flourish in the jurisdiction
- _ Specifically deepening carefully selected areas.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

LAND AND THE ENVIRONMENT

LAND

Land is the basis of all wealth

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

- [1] Large plots of land remain undeveloped because of ownership disputes or because the owner(s) cannot be determined. This is particularly the case in our family islands. As a result, the opportunity for entrepreneurship and jobs often goes unrealized. At the same time, there appears to be insufficient accountability in the disposition of Crown Land.
- [2] The cost of land is escalating faster than income. As a result, many are denied the opportunity to purchase land. In addition, the upfront costs associated with the acquisition of land often cause those who could otherwise afford the payment not to qualify.
- [3] Developing land or even building a home require a cumbersome and lengthy process, filled with red tape that adds to the time and cost of acquiring and developing land. This increases the ultimate cost to the consumer.
- [4] Land is often affected by clouds on the deeds, which prevent its sale.

VISION 2030

In 2030, land purchasers will have confidence in a **registered land system** that values the environment and reflects national priorities. This will ensure sustained development and afford security and peace of mind while insuring the growth of our economy in a manner that respects the environmental heritage of *The Bahamas*.

A NEW DIRECTION: LAND REGISTRATION IS A MUST!

Create a reliable land register after proper adjudication of all rights and all interests in all land. The **PLP** will establish a tribunal for this purpose, which in turn will benefit from the views of relevant professionals as well as local people with knowledge of the land in question.

Ensure that matters relating to ownership of land are adjudicated upon swiftly.

Ensure a system of accountability in the determination of applications for Crown Land is implemented that will ensure that applications are dealt with in a transparent manner.

Review the Conveyancing and Law of Real Property Act and other relevant statutes to clarify issues that may put a cloud on land deeds, thereby reducing the opportunity for their sale.

Review the **Quieting Titles Act** to prevent the abuse of its provisions.

Reduce the red tape in acquiring and developing land while balancing the need for planning and controls. The **PLP** will streamline approval procedures, ensure that the relevant government departments are adequately staffed, and that the Town Planning Committee meets at least once a week to prevent a backlog of applications piling up.

LAND AND THE ENVIRONMENT

—
Ensure that the system of stamp duty exemption for first-time homebuyers is administered to make this exemption meaningful. The **PLP** government will allow prospective homebuyers to be pre-approved. This will eliminate the need for prospective homebuyers to deposit large sums with banks in case the application is refused. This will also allow the new homeowner's deeds to be lodged for recording in the Registry of Records immediately.

—
Encourage competition among financial institutions by removing the cap on the amount of a mortgage that can be transferred from one institution to another without paying stamp duty.

—
Continue the development and computerization of the Registrar General's Office that was started in our last term of office.

COMMONAGE LAND

—
We will review and where necessary amend the Laws on Commonage Land to allow for more commercial and beneficial use of the land by commoners.

THE ENVIRONMENT

—
We must safeguard and protect our nation for future generations and this includes the preservation of our environment.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

—
We have become very careless in the fight to safeguard our environment. The present government has approved the dredging of our protected land and sea park and has built the new container port at an ill-advised location. The collection of garbage has not been done on a timely basis and this

has resulted in the proliferation of rodents and other pests. There has also been a rise in diseases carried by mosquitoes and many Bahamians have found themselves in hospital or at least seeking medical treatment for diseases such as Dengue Fever.

VISION 2030

—
The Bahamas has a regulated recycling system, where citizens separate their trash for collection. We will have a national conservation and preservation policy.

A NEW DIRECTION

—
The next **PLP** government will:

- _ Make the privately conducted "Operation Love Your Country" programme into a national annual competition for the best kept yard and surroundings;
- _ Conduct research to determine the potential environmental impact of all development projects and collaborate with investors on the elimination of major environmental concerns and the continued monitoring of such issues;
- _ Hold public town meetings to present environmental impact assessments for purposed developments;
- _ Emphasize the importance of the protection of our environment and the conservation of our natural resources, oceans and undeveloped land;
- _ The disposal of waste will be closely monitored and conducted on a timely basis. We will also review our options for a more aggressive recycling programme;
- _ The spraying of chemicals for rodents and other pests will be done on a regular basis;
- _ Restructure the Forestry Division of the Department of Agriculture for a focus of forestry development on the islands of Abaco, Grand Bahama, New Providence and Exuma;
- _ Maintain and establish new "green space" zones;
- _ Seek to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels by encouraging the use of alternative energy sources.

—
A concerted effort led by the government of *The Bahamas* must be made to keep the country clean and to ensure that we leave *The Bahamas* in a state that is fit to be passed on to future Bahamians.

TRANSPORTATION

Since it was created in 1953, the **PLP** has believed that the continued growth of the nation is intimately linked to progress in infrastructure with emphasis on transportation in all its forms. This issue is extremely important in an archipelago nation where the proper organization of this network would represent a win-win economic and social situation.

VISION 2030

With a philosophy of efficiency, uniformity, quality and regularity, the **PLP** envisages a central transportation hub located on New Providence and divided, for efficiency, into regional blocks. This will be of extreme importance given the emphasis to be placed on economic development especially in the family islands. The vision encompasses land, sea and air, intra-island, inter-island, and international transport.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

It is generally admitted that the network of transportation in all areas and at all levels in *The Bahamas* leaves much to be desired. This includes land, air, and sea links, both locally and internationally.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ON NEW PROVIDENCE

Without sufficient consultation, the present administration made an insensitive decision to implement traffic reversal despite repeated pleas to reconsider this decision.

The **PLP** government will attack and solve the problems of transport immediately upon taking office and will introduce its Effective Traffic Management Plan.

This plan will consist of three major components:

- _ Effective Traffic Management
- _ Effective Traffic Enforcement
- _ Effective Traffic Prosecution

To ensure the smooth operation of this programme the **PLP** will create an integrated traffic control centre composed of representatives from the key branches of traffic control:

- _ The Road Traffic Department (Administrative branch)
- _ The Ministry of Public Works (Technical branch)
- _ The Royal *Bahamas* Police Force (Primary enforcement branch)

To further its objective, the **PLP** will introduce or develop:

- _ Public-private partnerships for unified public transportation
- _ Campaigns to increase awareness of traffic rules and regulations
- _ Proper regularization for taxi, liveried transport and tour operators, which ensures Bahamian ownership of this operation
- _ Modern traffic lights including portable generators/batteries and alternative energy sources that ensure uninterrupted power at major intersections
- _ Amendments to the Road Traffic Act.

TAXI AND LIMOUSINE SERVICES

- _ People presently leasing taxicabs will be granted a license plate.
- _ The owner of a taxi plate may make a written recommendation for the passing on of the plate upon his/her retirement or demise.
- _ In order to maintain public service licenses, all rules of the service including dress code and maintenance of vehicles must be upheld.
- _ In order to ensure that the services of taxicab and limousine operators are not excluded from any property, all laws relating to the transport industry and in particular the ownership and operation of taxi and limousine services will be strictly enforced.



AIR AND SEA TRANSPORTATION

The **PLP** will promote a concept of inter-island transportation that includes integration of air, land, and sea transport systems.

ROLE OF BAHAMASAIR

The national carrier will service designated routes in *The Bahamas* while seeking to expand its transnational flight operations to service new tourist routes.

ROLE OF PRIVATE CARRIERS

Private carriers will work in conjunction with *Bahamasair* to provide service between all the airports in *The Bahamas*. Where expedient, arrangements will be formalized with private carriers to service Family Island routes. Also, where necessary, government subsidies will supplement the private carriers servicing the islands designated in the category of hardship routes.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Diplomacy should be practiced in a manner that helps *The Bahamas* achieve its goals and objectives as a nation.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

We acknowledge that *The Bahamas* has an open economy and shares trade in goods and services with countries around the world. We also believe that our people should be able to take advantage of every opportunity available to them through existing international treaties, agreements and international organizations.

In today’s world, governments and countries must maintain good relations with their neighbours and the global community as large and we are no exception. In our last term the **PLP** repositioned our international and regional partnerships. We are mindful that our primary international partners are the United States, the European Union and CARICOM. However, in the **PLP** we are prepared to forge new partnerships and relationships with other countries in the interest of diversifying our economy and widening the horizons of our people.

VISION 2030

The Bahamas will be a major player on the international stage. We will use diplomacy as an asset to advance the economy and people of the country.

A NEW DIRECTION

- The next Progressive Liberal Party government will:
- _ Increase the embassies and consulates abroad and strengthen efforts toward visa free travel for Bahamians around the world;
 - _ Ensure that *The Bahamas* becomes more active and proactive in trade negotiations regionally and internationally to protect the interests of the country and its citizens;
 - _ Enhance consular services for Bahamians working, studying, residing, and traveling overseas to ensure that the rights and privileges of Bahamians abroad are respected within the bounds of international law and where assistance is needed and/or requested and that a timely response is given;
 - _ Actively seek greater participation and involvement in the affairs of the United Nations General Assembly and explore the securing of a non- permanent seat on the UN Security Council;
 - _ Encourage and promote the national interests of *The Bahamas* through the strategic recruitment and placement of qualified Bahamians in the international communities and international organizations;



- _ Introduce Foreign Service orders and establish a Foreign Service Commission for the professional development of *The Bahamas* Foreign Service;
- _ Introduce a sustained recruitment and training programme in Foreign Service to attract the brightest and best the nation has to offer through the establishment of a School of Politics and International Affairs at the University of *The Bahamas*;
- _ Establish a balance between the appointment of political and career Ambassadors and Heads of Missions to ensure the professional development and promotion availability of career Foreign Service Officers;
- _ Create a Council on Foreign Relations headed by a representative at ambassadorial level to:
 - Ensure that the work in the area of foreign trade supports and complements efforts to enhance and promote the tourism and financial services sectors of the Bahamian economy;
 - Work to ensure regional leadership through Caricom and hemispheric leadership through the Organization of American States. In particular, we will work to enhance our relationship with our immediate neighbours.
- _ Ensure that where appropriate broad-based public discussions take place before any foreign affairs or foreign trade decisions are made;
- _ Ensure that there is widespread public education on foreign trade agreements and treaties entered into by *The Bahamas* in order that Bahamians may benefit from them.

PROMOTING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Modernizing social services & improving protection

These guidelines aim to “wipe every tear from every eye” by providing support and assistance for the most vulnerable members of society: children, the elderly, persons with disability, the poor, and families requiring social and financial support.

VISION 2030

To see a country where all citizens are economically empowered to provide for themselves and their families and have equal opportunity to access services that will enhance the basic quality of life for all.

The FNM Government has failed to provide solutions for the social ills this country faces. While they boast about multimillion dollar increases in social assistance, their policies have created a dependency on welfare and contributed to widespread social neglect. The poor find it difficult to access services and staffing levels have been allowed to fall to an unacceptable level, which in turn impacts directly on efficiency and timely service delivery.

A NEW DIRECTION: PUTTING CARE AND COMPASSION INTO SERVICE

The **PLP** will...

ESTABLISH A MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER AFFAIRS

- _ As the major player in driving the social development agenda, Social Services will be re-established as a Ministry and expanded to address issues affecting both males and females.
- _ Re-structure the Department of Social Services to incorporate more levels of responsibility, but with a strong ethos of accountability and professionalism.
- _ Ensure adequate staffing and training for social workers.
- _ Establish a Social Development Policy Statement.

IMPROVE PROTECTION

- _ Ensure on-going opportunities for public education on social legislation and programmes.
- _ Ensure the full implementation of the Child Protection Act, 2007.
- _ Ensure adequate staffing and training for social workers.

PROMOTING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MODERNIZE SOCIAL SERVICES

- _ Implement new technologies to attain a higher level of efficiency and access to services, as well as to eliminate duplication.
- _ Ensure adequate staffing and training for social workers in all areas including those concerned with witness protection programmes, human trafficking, domestic and spousal protection orders, community service orders and death penalty evaluation.

CREATE A BETTER SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

- _ Establish an Employee/Client Relations Committee to liaise and implement programmes for building relationships between the employees, clients and the Department.
- _ Improve working conditions for staff and clients.
- _ Implement the Career Path for Social Workers.
- _ Continue the programme to regularize workers on the Unemployment Assistance Programme.
- _ Establish a grant programme with the College of *The Bahamas* to attract persons to the Social Work profession.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

- _ Build strong partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the Church and other community organizations to provide many of the services that our citizens need. Funding to well-established NGOs needs to be audited and increased where necessary and new NGOs incorporated as partners.

FOSTER UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE/WELFARE

- _ Bring renewed focus to and strengthen all programmes in the fight against child abuse.
- _ Continue the programme of universal childcare with the further expansion of care centres and preschools for toddlers, providing a choice for parents to enrol their toddler in a nursery and preschool facility based in their communities. The centres will operate for extended and flexible hours tailored to parents' work schedules.

FOCUS ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS

- _ Guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities with the tabling and passing of the Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Bill during the first legislative year of our return to office.
- _ Sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and establish a Commission to monitor our adherence to the Convention and submit annual situational analysis on the quality of life of disabled people.
- _ Renovate the former Cheshire Home which will be used to house *The Bahamas* Children with Disabilities Centre. The Centre will provide a variety of services, including a home for children with severe disabilities, a unit for respite care for parental caregivers and a day-care centre for children with disabilities. Opportunities to establish other appropriately scaled respite centres throughout *The Bahamas* will also be explored.
- _ Collaborate with the Ministry of Education in providing more classroom opportunities and afterschool programmes for children with disabilities.
- _ Increase grants for organizations providing services for persons with disabilities to allow for a higher level of care and support.

REALIGN URBAN RENEWAL

- _ Establish an Urban Renewal Unit to resume the pivotal role of Social Services in the provision of assistance and programmes as part of Urban Renewal 2.0.
- _ Revitalize Community Development.
- _ Contract with the Bahamian people to create wholesome communities with the full participation of self-governing Community Boards.
- _ Expand community development centres outside the Urban Renewal areas which will provide a variety of programmes including parenting and family life programmes, drug awareness and teen programmes with a strong focus on anger management and dispute resolution.
- _ Support church and community-based organizations in the establishment of centres through tax incentives, concessions and direct financial assistance.



INCREASE FAMILY ISLAND SERVICES

- _ Introduce a cadre of Senior Family Island Officers responsible for overseeing and ensuring the provision of services that meet the particular needs of the various Family Island communities and settlements.
- _ Ensure proper funding for the posting of social workers and the extension of programmes and services throughout the Family Islands.

EXPAND REHABILITATIVE WELFARE SERVICES

- _ Work diligently to save our youths by removing the shackles of youth criminal records.
- _ Introduce a Restorative Justice Program for young people who can benefit from a community-oriented rehabilitative process.
- _ Encourage the commitment of community and faith-based partnerships to strengthen their involvement in working with at-risk young people.
- _ Move quickly to improve and expand facilities at juvenile detention centres in order to meet the needs of residents and staff and especially the new requirement to house young people up to age 18 years as mandated by the Child Protection Act, 2007.
- _ Expand and strengthen the probation services to support and facilitate a new emphasis on community-based treatments.
- _ Re-appoint a Clinical Psychologist to provide psychological services and relevant programmes for residents and staff of these special programmes.

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

- _ Establish a community centre for older persons to be administered by the National Council for Older Persons.
- _ Continue housing programme for older persons.
- _ Work in conjunction with Urban Renewal and Community Development to provide appropriate activities and training for older persons, e.g., computer training, literacy and reading projects.

ESTABLISH A DEPARTMENT OF GENDER AFFAIRS

- _ Create a Department of Gender Affairs in order to bring more focused attention to

gender issues. The time has come for equality and development that not only looks at the advancement of women and girls in isolation, but also considers the development of men and boys.

_ Our social demographics continue to point to increasing challenges in family relationships, violence against women, continuing concerns with teenage pregnancy, high levels of dysfunctional behaviour and under-achievement of young boys. The Department will examine the cultural and historical forces that continue to affect and shape the social development of women and men in both the formal and informal sectors of community life.

_ Work with the College of *The Bahamas* and other relevant agencies to conduct research, publish reports and prepare documents for publication dealing with gender issues.

_ Department personnel will work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on gender matters related to the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the United Nations, the Commonwealth and any other international and regional groups.

HOUSING

“There is nothing more important than a government that is able to design the framework to provide people the basic necessities. Housing is one such necessity.”
Perry G. Christie [2004]

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

During our last term in office, the **PLP** placed more families in their own homes than any other government had done in ten years.

However, the present public policy approach to housing is not broad enough to meet the widening needs of a society struggling under the weight of an overall declining standard of living due in no small part to the gross mismanagement of our economy by the present administration.

“There is nothing more important than a government that is able to design the framework to provide people the basic necessities. Housing is one such necessity.” Perry G. Christie [2004]

VISION 2030

To create an environment in which all Bahamians will be able to obtain adequate housing and their own piece of the rock on which to build a dwelling home.

A NEW DIRECTION

To reach and rescue those in need and to save and expand the middle class, the **PLP** will implement:

OPERATION HOME RESTORATION: A PLAN TO REVERSE THE EFFECTS OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE

Operation Home Restoration – our plan to reverse the effects of mortgage foreclosure is outlined in our economic section. This programme will assist families struggling from losing their home to foreclosure.

This assistance will encompass to the provision of financial counselling based on the premise that accepting individual responsibility is an important part of responsible home ownership.

Additionally we reiterate that those who have lost their homes to foreclosure will receive the benefit of stamp duty exemption on the purchase of another house.

Furthermore, in an effort to make housing more affordable for more people, the **PLP** will:

- _ Encourage the development of new rental units by major reform of The Rent Control Act;
- _ Increase the quantity of developed land available for affordable housing by the use of The Acquisitions of Land Act for the purchase of vacant and abandoned land in historically populated areas, where infrastructure already exists;
- _ Reduce the cost of housing construction by a thorough review of the building code and related regulations to provide a better balance between costs and safety;

- _ Review all of the procedures in the process for:
 - securing a permit to build a house;
 - inspections involved in the building process;
 - steps for receipt of an occupancy permit.
- _ Developers report significant inefficiencies in these processes which entail burdensome costs for people building homes and the situation has been made worse by the recent passing of new burdens and requirements under The Subdivisions Act. As a part of this overall review, The Subdivisions Act shall be reformed.
- _ Work with the private sector to provide crown land for the development of new communities with affordable houses and green spaces. This would facilitate new home designs and more efficient construction of houses and spaces.

LABOUR

A core value of the **PLP** from its inception has been the need to respect the role of labour in the development process.

- The new **PLP** Government will affirm that core value at all times. In doing so, the **PLP** will:
- _ correct the shortcomings that prevent the Industrial Relations Court from Industrial Relations Court functioning with the proposed degree of effectiveness;
 - _ appropriately amend the Employment Act, 2001, the Fair Standards Act and, the Health and Safety at Work Act;
 - _ clarify the law regarding break periods and holiday pay for shift workers;
 - _ strengthen the laws and practices related to the management of pension funds. Specifically, this will extend to the introduction of the Employees Pension Fund Protection Act which will ensure that employee pension funds are out of the reach of business owners, even to the extent of “borrowings” and Directors being made personally liable for breaches.
 - _ Appropriate concessions will be extended to business which establishes an approved employee Pension plan and there will be provision for strict regulations;
 - _ Carefully review the Minimum Wage Act with a view to increasing the minimum wage to a level that would allow every working man and woman to meet the basic necessities of life.

BRINGING QUALIFIED BAHAMIANS HOME

Encourage Bahamians living abroad to return to *The Bahamas*, assuring them equitable treatment regarding the privileges afforded to expatriates coming to work in *The Bahamas*.

When seeking to contract for consulting services with organizations outside of *The Bahamas*, maintain a policy of preference for organizations where citizens or prior citizens maintain links to *The Bahamas*.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING

The **PLP** government will, along with Unions of *The Bahamas* take measures to ensure the opportunity for training and retraining in the labour force in ways which are consistent with a recovering economy.

LAND FOR A LABOUR COLLEGE

The **PLP** government will provide a parcel of land on the island of New Providence for the construction of a Labour College.

A PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL

The Government will establish a Productivity Council made up of representatives from the Fovernment, employee unions, and employer organizations.

- The purpose the council will be:
- _ to develop procedures for productivity measurements, management, improvement and reward in all sectors of the economy;
 - _ to create a higher public awareness of the national imperative to dramatically improve productivity.

CASUAL/‘ON-CALL’ WORKERS

The **PLP** government will require that any increase in salary and wages benefit all employees including casual and ‘on call’ workers.

THE NATIONAL PENSION PLAN

The **PLP** government will continue the work done to establish a National Pension Plan assuring improvements in financial security for the elderly and senior citizens in the nation. The Plan would be transferable from one place of employment to another.

RANDOL FAWKES/LABOUR DAY

In recognition of the fundamental origin, contribution, and the history and meaning of Labour Day, the **PLP** will name the 1st Friday of June of each year ‘Randol Fawkes Labour Day’.

PUBLIC SERVICE

The efficient running of government offices is essential if public policy is to be effectively implemented. The **PLP** believes that public officers at all levels must place greater emphasis on service.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

While some Public officers are making an effort under difficult circumstances to give good service, there is room for improvement.

Senior public officers, the chief administrators of government ministries and advisers to cabinet ministers, should perform their public function in a manner which is both professional and apolitical. People’s opinions and beliefs should not influence the judgement and function of serving Public officers at any level;

Broken service is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Where the service of a Public officer has been broken for varying reasons, this results in inadequate pension for time actually served;



—
The removal of the in-service training award and scholarship system within the public service needs to be reviewed;
—

There are insufficient incentives to motivate public officers to develop a ‘sense of being’ which would lead them to regard public service as a “career” as opposed to “just a place to work”;
—

Many government offices are in a near dilapidated condition and are not conducive to efficient production and in some cases, may even pose health hazards.

VISION 2030

—
The **PLP** administration will foster and encourage a service-oriented environment with an atmosphere of efficiency and courtesy.

—
The **PLP** will seek to bring public service in line with 21st century operations that will be technologically advanced and competitive; where upward mobility is strictly merit-based. Furthermore, talent will be enhanced by continuing education. At the end of a career in public service, once the required period of service has been completed, a satisfactory pension will be provided with a secure comfortable retirement package with the satisfaction of having given one’s best to serve the Nation.

A NEW DIRECTION

CASUAL AND ‘ON-CALL WORKERS

—
Casual and on-call workers of good and long standing will be regularized in accordance with General Orders so that they may receive the benefits of pension and job security.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

—
Establish an Information Technology Department for all Government ministries, which will be central to the running of all Government operations.

—
The Bahamas, and particularly the northern *Bahamas*, is one of the world’s leading sources of aragonite, which a necessary component in the making of computer chips. *The Bahamas* is therefore poised to be a leader in the development of computer technology. Accordingly, the **PLP** government will move speedily to develop an IT policy. The key elements of this new policy will include:

- _ Creating a Global hotspot i.e. Attracting technology innovators to *The Bahamas*
- _ Full digitizing of the public sector
- _ Adequate training in the public sector as a means of increasing efficiency.

OFFICE OF OMBUDSMEN

—
Create the Office of Ombudsmen that will be responsible for quality assurance issues relating to Public service and Government corporations;

BRIDGING BROKEN SERVICE

—
Review the circumstances of public officers whose period of service has been broken with a view to bridging the service to assure retirement packages for officers and the pension due to them in regard to the period of service given;



IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Renew the focus on training within the Public Service to ensure a higher level of training and discipline within the service;

SCHOLARSHIPS AND IN-SERVICE AWARDS

Review with a view to resolving the issues of scholarships and in-service awards for public officers;

RELATIONS WITH UNIONS

Encourage good relations between representative unions and the various Public Service offices;

Resolve all outstanding labour disputes within the Public Service as rapidly as possible through conciliation with all interested unions or other representative groupings, including the current disputes relative to customs officers, immigration officers and air traffic controllers.

NETWORKING OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

Upgrade and install an accounting system networked with the accounting departments of all ministries and public corporations and the Ministry of Finance’s accounting system. This would ensure a closer control of expenditures;

RECRUITING THE BRIGHTEST AND THE BEST FOR THE SERVICE

Headhunt talented Bahamians both locally and abroad for careers in the Public Service. Qualified Bahamians returning to *The Bahamas* from abroad for positions in the public service shall during transition period be given equivalent advantages, incentives and considerations traditionally reserved for expatriates entering the Public Service;

IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT OFFICE ACCOMMODATIONS

Systematically review government office accommodations to determine suitability and correct or otherwise relocate them. A vitally important example of this is the Department of Statistics where accommodations are woefully inadequate;

As far as possible, utilize government-owned land for the construction of new complexes to be used for government offices;

A NATIONAL CONGRESS

Convene a National Congress of delegates to discuss, among other things, how best to move the country forward on matters relating to the public service.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The **PLP** has always believed in and worked progressively towards the realization of a stable, reliable network of public utilities as an integral part of national social and economic development.



SURVEYING THE PRESENT

It is no exaggeration to state that the network of public utilities is in disarray, taking one step forward and two backwards!

There has been loss of control of an essential centerpiece of national development and sovereignty by the sale of BTC to a foreign entity.

BEC continues to struggle on with no seeming end in sight to power outages, load shedding, patchwork and ad hoc handling of crises related to supplies, account receivables and adequate and functional equipment.

There is an absence of aggressive research in innovative ways of assuring continuous supplies of power by tapping readily available Bahamian potential sources:

- _ Hydroelectric power
- _ Aeolian (wind) power in the southern Bahamas
- _ Home generation
- _ Organic waste (Methane)

URCA’s powers are exaggerated.

Like BEC, Water and Sewerage moves from one crisis to another, resulting in water shortages, sectional low water pressures, constant and repeat disruption by digging up public thoroughfares to lay conduits, all of which cause significant disruption to the smooth-flowing convenience to the citizenry and economy of the nation.

There remains an absence of a national overall plan for the coordinated development of public utilities.

VISION 2030

Our goal is to develop a national public utilities plan with the concept of a smooth, efficient and convenient system that is cost effective, Bahamian controlled, constantly updated by aggressive on-going research, cost-effective and profitable to the nation and its stakeholders.

A NEW DIRECTION

The PLP government will:

BAHAMAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION (BTC)

Review and take all necessary steps with a view to renegotiating the contract with Cable & Wireless Corporation.

Develop BTC into a regional corporation with Bahamian ownership and widespread a view to competition, expansion, profit generation.

Activate sale of shares to Bahamians.

BAHAMAS ELECTRICITY CORPORATION (BEC)

Encourage aggressive research in electricity generation from all the potential sources available in The Bahamas: sun, air, wind, and water. This can be done parallel to enticing Bahamian specialists in these various sectors who are living abroad to return to The Bahamas.

Develop a national plan for coordinated utilities specifically in electricity, communications, water and sewerage, and waste disposal.

Develop a recycling mentality in water and sewerage with a view to establishing a Bahamian-owned composting system together with recycling



of all wastes. This would not only create new Bahamian-owned enterprises but would also assure an ecologically safer environment. Through on-the-job education, workers would be encouraged to become shareholders in all these enterprises.

WATER AND SEWERAGE CORPORATION (WSC)

Development of a national water policy in conjunction with all national stakeholders.

Restructuring of the corporation with a focus on assuring customer satisfaction through first class service.

Fully resource an Environmental Protection Department within the Ministry of the Environment to assure the regulating of the sewerage sector.

By 2017 assure the on-site treatment of waste water prior to its recycling.

Reduce Water and Sewerage’s reliance on the central government for funding except for entities unable to pay for water supply.

Assure sufficient and efficient funding by a public-private venture as regards to tenders, requests and proposals and that are published in local newspapers. These tenders would be awarded with an automatic target of transparent Bahamian majority participation.

Implement legal and regulatory reform to assure the proper extraction of ground and potable water.

Ensure all Bahamian communities have access to piped potable water by 2017.

UTILITIES REGULATION AND COMPETITION AUTHORITY (URCA)

Review the regulations established by URCA to ensure they conform to the national constitution and reflect Bahamian culture, way of life and values.

Revisit the powers of URCA and make sure that all permanent positions are always held by Bahamian citizens.

URBAN RENEWAL 2.0

THE URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

The **PLP**’s creed and guidelines since it was founded have been the bettering of the lives of all Bahamians and particularly the most disadvantaged. The vision for the Urban Renewal Programme is to provide information and knowledge of all services and take prompt and affirmative action where necessary to ensure that all citizens of The Commonwealth of *The Bahamas* live in a safe and peaceful environment where all the basic necessities of life are accessible and attainable.

UNDERSTANDING URBAN RENEWAL

In May 2002, the Progressive Liberal Party sought to address the social ills affecting society at large, particularly in inner city communities. Accordingly, we immediately directed the initiation of an urban renewal scheme in the Farm Road constituency. Given the overwhelming success of the programme, orders were given to duplicate it in other areas.



—
The Urban Renewal Programme resulted in a renewed sense of loyalty and community spirit as all community members became stakeholders and social standards soared. The communities experienced reduction in crime and unemployment, and the physical and social environment transformed.

—
The Urban Renewal Programme captured international attention as one of the most aggressive social initiatives introduced in a country that reaped tremendous success. It won top awards including:

- _ Motorola Community Policing Award of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police.
- _ Community Policing Award in 2003, 2004 and 2005, awarded by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

—
Many doubted whether it was possible to take young people facing challenges in their lives who had never played a musical instrument before and form bands that have become forces to be reckoned with. The Marching Bands initiative has been able to take the energies and talents of these young people and turn them into showcases of musical extravaganza. This only scratched the surface of possibilities to be created for youth through music and volunteerism.

—
In 2007, the programme was stopped, reviewed, and cancelled. Following pressure from the general public a watered-down version of the programme was introduced that has had little or no impact. Social decay and disorder have skyrocketed and crime and fear of crime have gripped the country.

RE-ESTABLISHING THE URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

—
The Progressive Liberal Party will revitalize the programme. We will:

—
Immediately restore and revitalize Urban Renewal to the position of being the most aggressive tool to address social ills and decay.

—
Establish an Urban Renewal Commission to facilitate agency collaboration and coordination to bring services to the community.

—
Provide clearly defined goals and objectives.

—
Provide terms of reference governing inter-agency cooperation and collaboration in different areas and constituencies.

—
Identify community Leaders to participate with the Urban Renewal Commission from each community.

—
Community leaders will be given seed money to raise funds for the economic and social improvement of their communities.

—
Introduce and Reintroduce Urban Renewal Programmes and Initiatives including:

- _ Public Forums and Campaigns
- _ Young People's Programmes
- _ Senior Citizens Programmes
- _ General Programmes
- _ Crime Prevention/Detection Programmes

EXPANDING THE URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

—
In the on-going expansion of the programme, the Progressive Liberal Party will also:

—
Establish community development cells that particularly target young people in communities. This project would bring in experts in various methods of creative enterprises: community farms (agricultural, fish, mariculture), waste conversion, recycling, etc.

—
Integrate the young people of the communities into the vocational institutes according to talent, aptitude and interests.

—
Create a job bank in each community with a central networking operation connecting all members to the Department of Labour.



—
Create a Citizens Watch in each community.

—
Create a Department of Urban Renewal/Local Government with its staff, budget and tutor programme.

—
Provide matching financial funding up to \$20,000.00 for community development projects.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

—
The present system of local government in the Family of Islands can be significantly improved upon.

—
To bring about necessary improvements for people serving in Local Government, the **PLP** Government will:

- _ Ensure that District Councils work together with the relevant government departments and with the island administrator as a means of guaranteeing adherence to all rules, regulations, procedures and policies.
- _ Through our new workshops devise a working document specifying entry-level qualifications and a complementary salary scale for persons hired by the council.
- _ Apply relevant provisions of General Orders to define working conditions, particularly regarding leave, absence and remuneration.
- _ Create uniformity in salary and benefits in among all Family Island districts.

INTEGRATING URBAN RENEWAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

—
The Progressive Liberal party will:

- _ Implement a degree of local government in New Providence through the community leadership programme of Urban Renewal.
- _ Urban Renewal objectives will be implemented through the local government framework in the Family Islands.

A NATIONAL VISION FOR EDUCATION

—
“...Opening free high school education to the masses, introducing a massive college-education scholarship program abroad and implementing effective Bahamianisation at home together fashioned a new middle-class of striving and upwardly mobile citizens...”

Sir Lynden O. Pindling, June 23, 1998

—
It was through education that the Progressive Liberal Party built a Bahamian middle class; it is through education that we must restore and expand it.

A NATIONAL VISION FOR EDUCATION

It is imperative that we chart a New Direction in Education.

A SURVEY OF THE PRESENT

Thousands of Bahamians are unemployed while non-Bahamians are brought into *The Bahamas* to carry out jobs on the premise that Bahamians are not skilled in relevant trades.

Too many students are leaving 12th grade without having obtained key academic, social or vocational skills and with nothing more than a certificate of attendance.

The emigration rate of tertiary-educated Bahamians is high and steadily increasing.

In examining the root causes for these factors, we are forced to accept that:

- _ There is an increasing number of children in *The Bahamas* who are not registered to begin school at age five;
- _ Preschool and early education do not receive the emphasis required for building a strong academic foundation;
- _ There is insufficient promotion of excellence and work ethic at a national level;
- _ There is insufficient recognition and encouragement of special needs students;
- _ There appear to be too many children attending school under conditions that are not conducive to learning;
- _ There is insufficient demand and opportunity for minimum professional certification and re-certification of teachers at all levels;
- _ The school curriculum does not adequately addresses individuals' varying needs and the changing needs for growth and development of *The Bahamas* in the global market;
- _ The level of truancy is unacceptable;
- _ We must ensure that Bahamians in large numbers are afforded the opportunity for professional and intellectual development in an increasingly competitive global environment, *The Bahamas* needs, deserves and ought to have a University.

VISION 2030

Our goal is to create an educational system that is technologically sound and competitive and develops the strength of each child, whether academic or otherwise, towards the maximum contribution that he/she is able to make to the national development of *The Bahamas*.

A NEW DIRECTION

The **PLP** accepts that:

- _ Education is a shared responsibility of parents, families, schools, churches, communities and government.
- _ Education should offer every Bahamian the best possible conditions to ensure his or her healthy emotional, social, physical and cognitive development and to help each person become a productive and happy citizen who will contribute to the sustainable development of *The Bahamas*.
- _ Upon taking office, a Progressive Liberal Party Government will immediately pursue an agenda to make education more relevant and ensure that teachers and students are equipped to perform at their best.

DOUBLING INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The **PLP** accepts that in order to honour its commitment to restore and expand the middle class, it must create a more responsive and relevant educational system.

The **PLP** will carry out a cost benefit analysis of the national budgetary investment in the educational system to ensure that the best use is being made of the country's investment.

Additionally, the **PLP** is committed to doubling the investment (not the budget) in education over a five-year period in order to ensure the maximum development of the education potential in our country.

Education must become more responsive to the ability of each child and more relevant to our national pursuits.



— The **PLP** will offer business license rebates to those companies that provide Bahamian students with scholarships to further their tertiary level education.

NECESSARY NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Education cannot be business as usual.

REACHING EVERYONE; TEACHING EVERYONE

— Education is the key to empowerment. This cannot and must not be understated. Our educational system must afford our children every opportunity to identify and prepare for a career choice best suited to their interests and strengths and which will allow them to be self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

— In *The Bahamas* today, there is an urgent demand for highly skilled people in many areas of employment. In order for Bahamian youth to be competitive in this job market, it is necessary that appropriate emphasis be placed on training in technology and skills development as a part of the national educational programme.

— It is accepted that training in each of these areas is necessary to bolster economic growth and the development of our culture and our people.

— Presently, our education system offers limited and insufficient focus on applied academic skills, whereby trade and ‘hands-on’ technology and the talents and ability of a large number of our students are ignored.

— This is a particularly poor state of affairs given that:

— Construction is our third industry and contributes 10% to our GDP and the country is missing the opportunity to expose students to and prepare them for this sector;

— The field of applied technology provides tremendous opportunity for innovation that we must prepare our youth to capitalize on.

— Addressing this reality, the **PLP** will introduce into the secondary school system a system of Applied Academics Certifications. Specifically, after Grade 9 with parental consent, students will be permitted to choose, as elective courses, classes that will lay the foundations for a career in trade/technology.

— Examples of Applied Academic courses include:
Basic construction, computer repair and networking, carpet installation, cabinetry, land surveying, roofing (metal, wood and concrete), architecture, drafting, road building, heavy equipment operation, swimming pool construction and maintenance, fountain construction and maintenance, fencing, steel building fabrication, welding (steel fabrication), aluminium rail and gate fabrication, wrought iron



rail and gate fabrication, aluminium welding, glass and mirror installation and repair, wall texturing (drywall installation, drop ceiling, texturing) tiling, painting, extermination technician, air conditioning installation and servicing (commercial and home), landscaping, automotive repair, diesel engine repair, boat engine or heavy equipment repair, heavy equipment operator, electrical repair and installation, heating and cooling engineering, sculpturing, pottery, multimedia technician, photography, locksmith, linesman, security officer, sign making and repair,

tailoring, upholstery and furniture repair, fashion design, barbering, straw art and design, interior design, floral design, arts & craft, watch and jewellery repair, computer repair and networking, fitness instructor, food & beverage skills (stewarding, waiter, banqueting), bar-tending, customer service.

— The **PLP** will ensure that BTVI offers advanced courses in all electives offered at secondary level for students wishing to pursue additional training in trade or technology.

— We must capture, foster and direct, the talents of every child.

[1]_ A BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN AREAS OF TRADE

In conjunction with the implementation of this system of education, *The Bahamas* Technical and Vocational Institute will be restructured to also offer a more advanced program of studies with a view to being re-established by the **PLP** as an accredited institute offering studies leading to a bachelor’s degree in areas of technology as well as certificate courses.

[2]_ CREATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF *The Bahamas*

The **PLP** will establish the University of *The Bahamas*. We believe that creating the University of *The Bahamas* signals two important developments. First, it signals confidence that the quality of education the College offers is indeed at university level. This is an example of building on a strength. Second, and equally important, it signals additional demands to be placed on the National University, demands for more research and innovation and for greater active participation in national development.

[3]_ REACHING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

The **PLP** will:

- Seek to integrate technology in all aspects of learning;
- Implement a minimum standard of professional certification and re-certification for all teachers;
- Ensure that in all schools a percentage of teachers’ ‘professional days’ is used for training workshops and proper utilization between grade levels and subject areas;
- Devise a fair means of recognizing teachers that are exceptional and effective in raising the performance of their students;

- Move towards a formal association with national consortia for measuring student achievement at different ages;
- Take measures to ensure that students advance to the next grade based on competence rather than social promotion;
- Establish a national award programme that will honour all high school students who attain the stipulated level of proficiency.

[4]_ A HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM

The **PLP** accepts that:

- There are many adults whose educational training was prematurely ended before high school completion for a myriad of reasons;
- Many adults with incomplete educational training would be more capable of making a meaningful contribution to society if given an opportunity to attain a qualification equivalent to a high school diploma.

The **PLP** will:

- Establish a programme in which adults can receive certification equivalent to a high school diploma in core areas of study;
- Work with private and public tertiary centres in digitizing education programmes to give adult learners, the physically challenged and working professionals the opportunity to continue their education at home and at their own pace.
- In addition to its new initiatives, the **PLP** will work on:



[5]_ EXPANDING PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

The Bahamas can and must improve its standing in global educational training;

Every Bahamian child must be provided with the necessary training to be as competitive as his ability would allow in any sphere of activity;

To this end, an early start and a solid foundation are increasingly vital elements. The PLP therefore pledges to:

Expand and make public preschool education more available throughout the Commonwealth;

Encourage a minimum standard of qualification and training for professionals who provide preschool education in the private sector and implement training programmes to assist in the meeting of this standard where necessary.

[6]_ RE-TOOLING THE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

A Progressive Liberal Party Government will launch a practical after-school programme that will allow for reinforcement of academic skills and will also address the need for well-organized social programs within our public schools, such as, for example, the *Lessons for Life After-school Enrichment Program* that was created to develop self-motivated, responsible and respectful students by providing access to additional academic support and exciting after-school electives.

The programme will be staffed by trained teachers, skilled individuals and volunteers from the community. Students in grades 1-12 will be able to enrol in academic and extra-curricular activities to meet this objective. The foundation established through this program will allow for the development of a holistic learning experience. Moreover, this program will provide students with the academic and social skills needed to experience success during the regular school day, build self-esteem, self-worth and become productive citizens in general.

- This comprehensive after-school programme will address the following:
- _ Reinforcement of curriculum based skills needed to be successful on the GLAT, BJC, and BGCSE;
 - _ Basic mathematics, reading and writing
 - _ Personal education
 - _ Environmental studies
 - _ Extra-curricular activities such as public speaking, photography, arts and craft, theatre/drama, modelling and etiquette, cultural dance, sports, back yard gardening/ agriculture, road use and safety, martial arts, music, etc.

[7]_ CREATE A SOCIAL RESPONSE

The PLP will:

Implement programs for early detection of and assistance to children with special needs;

Strengthen the literacy programme particularly at the lower primary sections.

Implement a rigorous reading program in the public school system in New Providence and the Family Islands;

Make dispute resolution courses and courses on orderly conduct and behaviour mandatory for orientation years in junior and senior high schools;

Ensure that if it becomes necessary to expel a child from school, that child should be registered in an alternative institution for continued education;

Establish an institute of alternative learning for girls who must be removed from the regular schools for disciplinary reasons.



— Introduce a nutritious school breakfast and lunch programme in which children can purchase healthy meals for a minimum cost and, in appropriate cases, receive them at no cost. Link school food to the local food industry by providing local produce, especially fruit and meat, in the school programme.

— This is also a means of counteracting childhood obesity.

— Expand the bonded scholarship programme for students at the college level in areas that are important to national development. These scholarships shall be linked to the demonstrable need of the country.

[8] BUILDING PRIDE THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION

— Formalize studies/programmes with teaching resources that include forecasts and lesson plans that build character, national pride and allegiance, including the study of governance in *The Bahamas*.

— Commission comprehensive textbook(s) on the history of the social, political and economic development of *The Bahamas* to 1973 to be taught in all government schools.

— Education created the middle class; education is vital to saving it. The **PLP** once more seeks to ensure a society in which every

Bahamian is afforded the inherent dignity to make a meaningful contribution.

HEALTH

— The **PLP** remains committed to a healthcare system which focuses on prevention through healthy lifestyles, early diagnosis and intervention, cutting-edge treatment and rehabilitation that is affordable to all Bahamians.

HEALTH

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

The implementation of the National Health Insurance Act of 2006 has yet to be realized and this inaction causes continued inconvenience and suffering for many Bahamian people since,

Timely access to public health care is limited, except in emergency situations;

More than fifty percent (50%) of our population lacks health insurance. Of those that do have insurance, many are under-insured;

Senior citizens are generally prohibited from obtaining health insurance because of age and cost;

Many persons are uninsured because of pre-existing health conditions.

The health system in general and the flagship Princess Margaret Hospital, in particular, continue to suffer and lag behind comparable major regional institutions. This is mainly seen in the inadequate computerization of all areas, insufficiently up-to-date equipment and lack of laboratory research, including pharmacology of indigenous medications.

Far too many Government funds for health services are allocated to bill payments, leaving insufficient resources for medicines and equipment. This has to change.

The absence of a regional hospital, even “cottage” type hospitals, for the eastern and south-eastern part of the archipelago continues to illustrate the inequality of access to national health service for the people of the Family Islands.

The absence of a proper paediatric hospital again demonstrates an inefficient perspective on modern health with regards to the next generation of Bahamians.

The absence of an adequate medical air transport system remains a serious lack in the efficiency of the healthcare system.

The brain drain of Bahamian-trained nurses and other technicians into the overseas market remains a serious concern and is a partial cause of the delay in rendering of service especially in the Emergency area.

Accommodations for consultants in comparison to other senior staffers in the system are increasingly inadequate.

There is insufficient evidence of sustained effort to develop a medical tourism section in collaboration with the private medical community.

VISION 2030

Within its first calendar year, the Progressive Liberal Party administration foresees setting about the implementation of the National Health Insurance Act (2006) thus assuring all Bahamians have access to healthcare, regardless of their social, economic or political status. It will also continue to upgrade the physical plants and build smaller ones in strategic regions of the nation, thus assuring equality of access to all.

A NEW DIRECTION

The **PLP** will:

Bring into operation the National Health Insurance Act of 2006.

In acceptance that many chronic diseases suffered by our population are lifestyle related, the **PLP** will encourage healthy lifestyles by the widest possible campaign:



—
In collaboration with the Church, civil society, employers and trade unions a new partnership will be created to highlight and establish more community-based fitness associations. The NHI will play a critical role in supporting this initiative

—
In line with our agenda for the protection of the environment and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, we will legislate to ensure that all enclosed public places are smoke-free.

—
Strengthen our capacity to address collectively the control and prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

—
Reform the healthcare infrastructure by streamlining and computerizing records and inventory to ensure adequate supply of critical drugs and easy retrieval of patient records across the health care system.

—
Continue the expansion of the role played by community clinics in overall healthcare delivery. In this regard we will further develop and identify strategic clinics, which can provide diagnostics, day surgeries and other out patient services closer to where people live and work.

—
Introduce extended clinic hours inclusive of weekends and upgrade facilities to enable certain emergencies to be dealt with.

—
Strengthen the role of community health aides to ensure the effectiveness programme.

—
Community based healthcare will have a lead role in our plans to reduce the level of infant mortality by mandating prenatal and postnatal care programmes.

—
Equip the Princess Margaret Hospital and the Rand Memorial Hospital with diagnostic and therapeutic instrumentation. Where necessary, a joint venture with private medical practitioners will be envisaged.

—
Create a state of the art hospital on the island of Grand Bahama as part of the Ministry of Health.

—
Upgrade and expand the services of the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre including making provisions for private accommodations.

—
Create small regional hospitals on the islands of Eleuthera and Exuma.

—
Establish an appropriate medical air transport system.

—
Increase the remuneration of Registered Nurses.

—
Encourage a medical tourism industry within the private sector.

—
Appoint a Health Ombudsman to monitor the delivery of services, investigate complaints and to strengthen accountability.

—
Working with stakeholders, implement a plan for the development of Human Resources at all levels in the area of health.

SPORTS

Whether at a recreational or professional level, sports provide a positive outlet for our people. Sports promote discipline, precision of skills, teamwork, coordination, enjoyment and help people to stay fit. The Progressive Liberal Party recognizes our nation's rich legacy in sports, the potential of our youth and the importance of preserving and expanding our athletes in the country.

SPORTS

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

The Bahamas is blessed to have world-renowned athletes among its citizens. However, there are still some people, especially in the Family Islands, that do not have access to fully equipped sporting facilities. There is also a lack of nationally recognized community tournaments or gaming activities.

VISION 2030

Every Bahamian should have access to a properly equipped sports facility. There must also be a national sports event at which athletes from all of the islands of *The Bahamas* can showcase their skills.

A NEW DIRECTION

Every major Family Island will have adequate sporting facilities and equipment in all of the nationally recognized “core sports” so that every Bahamian athlete will have an opportunity to develop their talents to their full potential.

In conjunction with the national sporting federations, national training programmes will be established and funded to ensure that sporting talent throughout *The Bahamas* is identified, trained, and assisted as early as possible.

Every settlement in *The Bahamas* will have access to working parks and green spaces to allow for recreational sport and peaceful outdoor leisure.

The Bahamas Games will be reintroduced to the country with an Amateur Athletic Union format. This will allow for a concentration on and promotion of our young people in their various age groups, while at the same time encouraging and assisting our senior athletes to demonstrate and improve their athletic skills.

In conjunction with the national sporting federations, the national sports policy will be reviewed to ensure its continued relevancy.

The development of a national sporting facility programme will be established to reflect the fact that our nation is an archipelago. While our national stadium will be located on New Providence, we recognize that the entire *Bahamas* should be included in our overall sports development plan. Particular locations throughout the Family Islands will be selected to develop national sporting venues for national and international events.

An inventory of available accommodations and facilities throughout *The Bahamas* will be taken to maximize domestic and international sporting tourism opportunities.

A national sporting calendar will be established each year to avoid wherever possible any overlapping of important sports events and to maximize the proper use of available sporting facilities.

A **PLP** Government will establish a recreational sports department to signal the separation of national team sport from recreational sport; while at the same time promoting the benefits of fitness, wellness and unity that can be derived from recreational sports.

Immediately after taking office, we will prioritize a budget for the construction of synthetic track and field events facilities for North Andros, Central Eleuthera, Moores Island, Central Abaco, Long Island and Exuma.

The **PLP** will:

Re-establish a Finance and Compliance Department in the Ministry for Sports. This department will assist the government and sporting interests in maximizing the use of funds and keeping the proper records required for the management and execution of sports in *The Bahamas*. This department will also assist federations in the preparation of annual financial reports to bring clarity and protect the integrity of sports and funding throughout *The Bahamas*. The budgetary provision for our national regattas programme will be increased, recognizing the pivotal role regattas play in the national sporting agenda.

“New jobs...
for Bahamians”



—
Funds will be made available for the execution of a youth sporting Jamboree to include competitions in all of our core sports and necessary non-core recognized sports to ensure that national federations and local island interest have the opportunity to assist and be exposed to our national sporting talent at all stages of development.

—
Sporting programmes will be included in the re-established Urban Renewal Programme.

—
Through these programmes community sports clubs will be established and young people will have an opportunity for participation in sports.

—
Ensure the creation of incentives for businesses that support sports in the country.

—
Ensure that a national “Learn to Swim” Programme is established.

—
Create a programme to develop sports specialists for the purpose of training and succession.

—
The **PLP** Government will provide funding to programmes for disabled people to ensure the participation of the teams in regional and international competitions.

—
Ensure scholarships for Family Island students with potential in all areas of sports to attend schools in New Providence that offer training in their areas of potential.

—
**FOCUS ON YOUNG
PEOPLE**

—
RESTORATION

—
It is now commonly accepted that the disintegration of our social fabric has resulted in the loss of many of our young people, particularly our young men. —
Endless discussions point to the family unit for answers as we search to understand the challenges and changes in our communities.

In spite of all of the changes, one constant seems to be that, generally, young people from environments where there is love, support and encouragement still go on to do well. In *The Bahamas* of yesteryear, love, support and encouragement were provided by immediate families, extended families and by members of the community-at-large.

—
What is sadly obvious in some of our communities today is the influence of social risk factors that prevent many young people from receiving consistent support and encouragement from a caring adult. The number of young people in this category has greatly increased over the years and the consequence of this lack of support and encouragement has been that children are at high risk of low self-esteem and prone to socially deviant behaviour.

—
The Progressive Liberal Party will:

—
Reinstate the Urban Renewal Programme to provide help and hope to people in circumstances where it may be non-existent.

—
Implement an initiative between the Government and the Church in which young people at risk would be identified by the Department of Social Services and every effort made to ensure that they are helped and placed on the right track through the intervention of neighbourhood churches.

—
RESTORING THE SPIRIT THROUGH SPORTS

—
Every major Family Island will have adequate sporting facilities and equipment in all of the nationally recognized “core sports” so that every Bahamian athlete will have an opportunity to develop their talent to their full potential.

**FOCUS ON YOUNG
PEOPLE**

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In conjunction with the national sporting federations, national training programmes will be established and funded, to ensure that sporting talent throughout *The Bahamas* is identified, trained, and assisted as early as possible.

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Every settlement in *The Bahamas* will have access to working parks and green spaces to allow for recreational sport and peaceful outdoor leisure.

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The Bahamas Games will be re-introduced in the country in an Amateur Athletic Union format. This will allow for a concentration on and promotion of our young people in their various age groups, while at the same time encouraging and assisting our senior athletes to demonstrate and improve their athletic skills.

—
PREPARATION

—
The job market in *The Bahamas* today is to a large extent, technology driven.

—
In order for Bahamian youth to be competitive, a new direction in education is required.

—
This is fully outlined in our Education Plan, in which we shall “Reach everyone. Teach everyone”.

—
Other highlights of our Education Plan include:

—
The history of *The Bahamas* to 1973 will be included on primary and secondary school curriculums to ensure that every student in *The Bahamas* understands the socio-historical development of which he/she is a product.

—
The school curriculum will be adjusted for the teaching of the administration of government in *The Bahamas*.

—
The **PLP** will establish the Food Sciences Institute on the island of Andros for the teaching, training and researching in areas of Agriculture and Fisheries.

—
The Progressive Liberal Party will re-establish the bonded scholarship for students

to attend college/universities abroad to study subjects that are important to national development.

—
A more purposeful role will be taken to ensure the relevance and success of the Junior Achievement Programme.

—
NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

To instil and build holistic appreciation of and for *The Bahamas*, the **PLP** will _ appoint a council to oversee the implementation of a national youth service.

—
Yes!

—
**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SCHEME
AGES 18 – 35**

—
The Progressive Liberal Party recognizes and celebrates the multiple talents and creativity of Bahamian young people. We accept that Bahamians will continue to be the primary builders of *The Bahamas*. Our young people can be assured that under a **PLP** government their creative genius will be encouraged and supported.

—
Accordingly, the Progressive Liberal Party will institute a Youth Empowerment Scheme through the Department of Young People. This programme will provide services to young people (18-35) who would like to become entrepreneurs, and will offer assistance from concept to implementation and maintenance. Its aim is to assist young people in establishing and maintaining viable businesses.

The Programme will provide:

- _ Entrepreneurial Training
- _ Business Counselling
- _ Accounting Assistance
- _ Marketing Strategy Assistance
- _ The Art Competition in Business
- _ Mentorship (established, successful business persons will be asked to volunteer)
- _ Technical Assistance
- _ Referrals for Financing





CHANGING THE COURSE CRIME OF NATIONAL SECURITY

PROJECT SAFE *Bahamas* A VISION AND A GOAL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

The Progressive Liberal Party (**PLP**) is committed to introducing a sustainable national crime agenda to reduce and control crime throughout our country.

The inability of the present political administration to introduce a comprehensive and sustainable national plan to bring hardened criminals to justice within a reasonable time has resulted in increased blatant daytime armed robberies and murders. The fear of crime has gripped our society to its very core to the extent that Bahamians do not venture far from their homes unless it is absolutely necessary.

Since 2007, *The Bahamas* has witnessed unprecedented increases in major crime categories such as: murder, armed robbery, rape, unlawful sexual intercourse, burglary, housebreaking, shop breaking, and stolen vehicles.

A NATIONAL CRIME AGENDA

The **PLP** assures the Bahamian people that we will immediately introduce a National Crime Management Agenda for the effective management and control of crime. The **PLP** will wage an unrelenting war on crime and the social issues which give rise to crime.

The Crime Management Agenda of the **PLP** will incorporate four major modules:

- _ Effective Crime **Prevention**
- _ Effective Crime **Detection**
- _ Effective Crime **Prosecution**
- _ Effective **Rehabilitation**

ENGAGING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Due to the level and extent that crime has been allowed to flourish, the **PLP** accepts that a holistic approach that engages all stakeholders must be adopted in the fight against crime. This must involve government, its law enforcement agencies, the church, the schools, the business community and society at large. In essence, the entire society must know and play its role.

OUR PREVENTION AGENDA

INDEPENDENCE OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

To effectively fight crime the Police Commissioner must operate in an independent and secure manner.

In 2009, ignoring the opposition from the **PLP** and Constitutional Scholars, the FNM administration passed legislation to remove the security of tenure of the Police Commissioner by placing him on a contract. The Police Commissioner is a constitutionally protected office and the Commissioner must be able to operate without fear or favour. The Police Commissioner must therefore be given security of tenure.

The new **PLP** Government will immediately:

Repeal all provisions from the Police Act which are either: unconstitutional, attempt to politicize the Police Force, and/or impede the impartiality of the security of tenure of the Commissioner or Deputy Police Commissioner.

SECURITY

RESTRUCTURING THE ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE FORCE

Under the new **PLP** Government, there will be:

A review of policy regarding Devolution that will aim to ensure that there is maximum use of existing human and other resources to effectively address growing crime concerns.

A comprehensive self-audit of all sections, departments, divisions and associations within the Royal *Bahamas* Police Force to determine their strengths and weaknesses. The primary objective of the audit will be to increase police visibility within communities, police response time to reported crime and the detection of crime.

HEADS OF NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (HONLEA)

The **PLP** will revitalize HONLEA to ensure sustained collaboration and information exchange between law enforcement agencies to counter local and international crime.

The primary objective of HONLEA is to ensure continuous collaboration between all law enforcement institutions. A further objective is to make certain that all the resources of Government are focused on addressing various crime challenges.

The HONLEA body will include:

- _ The Commissioner of the Royal *Bahamas* Police Force
- _ The Commodore of the Royal *Bahamas* Defence Force
- _ The Comptroller of *Bahamas* Customs Department
- _ The Director of *Bahamas* Immigration Department
- _ The Superintendent of Her Majesty's Prison

The need for this collaboration in the fight against crime is essential.

Established during the last **PLP** administration, HONLEA proved to be effective in the fight against crime before it was dismantled by the senseless Stop, Review and Cancel programme of the present administration.

THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (NIA)

The **PLP** is committed to the formation of a National Intelligence Agency comprising all law enforcement departments to address all categories of major breaches/ crimes in our jurisdiction.



URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

The **PLP** will reintroduce the urban

Renewal programme in its true and full form:

The Urban Renewal Programme was effective because of the relationship it fostered between the Police and the community; moreover, because the police was in the community, there was a constant presence of law enforcement authority.

Under a renewed and invigorated Urban Renewal Programme, crime will be reduced in our communities through:

- _ District Constable Patrol Initiative
- _ Domestic Violence Counselling
- _ Crime Prevention Programmes
- _ Intelligence-gathering Initiatives
- _ Traffic Incidents Response
- _ Licensed Premises Teams
- _ Business Watch Association
- _ School Suspension/Expulsion Programme

SCHOOL-BASED POLICING (SBP)

The escalation of violence in public and private school systems of *The Bahamas* has become alarming and unacceptable. The level and extent of such violence gives rise to very serious concerns. The former **PLP** administration introduced School Based Policing (SBP) to counter school violence.

SBP was a joint initiative between the Ministries of Education and National Security to reinforce police presence in schools in addition to the current system of school security officers. The purpose of SBP was to establish a protocol for the prevention and investigation of all school-related occurrences of violence, drug use/sale, truancy, etc.

Comprehensive thought and research were given to SBP to make our schools safe environments. The SBP strategy incorporated such elements as:

Opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to maintain a school environment in which conflict and differences could be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.

Intervention and support for those who are at risk of, or already engaged in, violent or anti-social behaviour, contrary to Ministry of Education standards and in violation of the laws of *The Bahamas*.

A proactive approach in identifying and preventing, where possible, random or planned acts of violence in schools.

An effective response to incidents when they occur, which respects the rights of victims and witnesses, as well as those of the alleged perpetrators in accordance with the laws of the country.

SBP worked. As long as SBP remained in existence, school violence declined.

However, the FNM administration stopped and cancelled this initiative without scrutinizing the merits of the Programme.

Since then violence in schools and violence involving school children have resulted in very serious crimes on school campuses though a watered-down version of this programme that has been reintroduced in our schools.

The new **PLP** administration will immediately reintroduce School-Based Policing in its full and original form as a proven effective means to curb school violence.

TOURISM BASED POLICING (TBP)

The recent spate of armed robberies and the continuous serious assaults against visitors to *The Bahamas* is totally unacceptable. The blatant daytime armed robbery of visitors at tourist attraction sites is an obvious example.

To counter such crimes, the former **PLP** administration introduced the Beach Warden System in the 1970s and the Tourism-Based Policing Initiative around 2004 to work in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism, the Tourism

Development Board and other relevant public and private institutions to guarantee visitor safety and security.

TBP worked very well in bringing a renewed focus on visitor safety. However, the current administration dismantled TBP with no regard for its significance and effectiveness. Since then, violence against visitors has increased. In response, the FNM has sought to reintroduce TBP but the current initiative lacks the focus and requisite resources and structure to make it an effective initiative.

The **PLP** will re-invigorate TBP and restore it to its prominence to ensure visitor safety.

The **PLP** is convinced that this will result in an immediate reduction in crimes against visitors as the purpose is two fold:

To ensure that in all cases where visitors are victims of crime, the matter is pursued vigorously;

To act as deterrents to perpetrators who prey on tourists for this same reason.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The **PLP** will introduce a formal system of restorative justice where in appropriate cases, through Community Policing and in conjunction with the Urban Renewal Programme, compensation and restoration may be used as an effective means of resolving minor crimes with the concurrence of the complainant.



PROTECTING BUSINESSES

There are businesses that have become repeat targets of armed robberies and constant break-ins. In recent years, the number of persons and employees who have been attacked, maimed, paralyzed and killed at business sites has grown. This must be reversed.

The **PLP** will ensure:

Free training programmes in crime prevention for all business owners and employees who register for them.

A move to enable business owners to introduce practices to minimize exposure to crime, particularly such crimes as armed robberies and break-ins through the formation of formal Business Watch Associations. This will be done in partnership with *The Bahamas* Chamber of Commerce.

That the Royal *Bahamas* Police Force devise sustained intelligence-driven strategies in conjunction with business owners and associations to prevent businesses from becoming the target of crime.

EFFECTIVE CRIME DETECTION

Crime detection must be aggressive and proactive.

OUR DETECTION AGENDA

The **PLP**'s Crime Detection Agenda will enable:

Government investment in training the Royal *Bahamas* Police Force, Royal *Bahamas* Defence Force, *Bahamas* Customs, *Bahamas* Immigration, Her Majesty's Prison Services and all other related agencies in acquiring new and improved skills and strategies to combat crime.

Government Investment in new technology for detecting and responding to criminal activities.

Construction of a National Forensic Laboratory with complete capacity to engage in all forms of forensic analysis.

Government Investment in the training of all Law Enforcement officers.

Government engagement in utilizing the skills of both former and retired police officers to exchange wisdom and knowledge regarding best practices and cold case file investigation.

EFFECTIVE CRIME PROSECUTION BACKLOG OF CASES

One of the major concerns regarding the Criminal Justice System and crime is the substantial backlog of cases. The ineffective management of criminal case files whereby witness statements, exhibits, expert reports and other vital pieces of evidence are not available is one of the main reasons which contribute to the backlog of cases.

OUR PROSECUTION AGENDA

To address the above concerns and many other challenges, the **PLP** will:

Reintroduce the "Swift Justice" Initiative concentrating on effective case file management. Swift Justice was effective in the timely prosecution of cases. Under Swift Justice, cases that were scheduled to be heard were in a state of readiness at the trial date. This significantly reduced the number of persons who were released on bail for serious crime.

Ensure trials in certain major crime categories within 18 months from the date of arraignment as the most effective means to counter release on bail.



—
Implement a proper system which strikes a balance between and concentrate upon ensuring that current cases are made ready and go to trial and ‘Cold’ backlog cases are put in a state of readiness and prosecuted expeditiously.

—
Establish automation and connectivity of all stakeholders in the Criminal Justice System to enhance efficiency and optimum results.

—
Revitalize and strengthen the Witness Protection Programme

—
Review, amend and introduce legislation to incorporate rehabilitative elements in collaboration with Social Services and other Government and non-government agencies to create programmes to council rape and incest victims, domestic abuse and drug addicted patients.

—
Introduce where necessary and enhance existing specialized courts.

— THE PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL FIREARMS

—
Currently, most murders, three-quarters of all armed robberies, and more than two-thirds of all non-fatal violent injuries are committed with the use of a firearm.

—
There has been a paradigm shift in the type of firearm being used in the commission of offenses. There has been a move from the conventional handgun to high-powered weapons such as assault rifles.

—
To counter this proliferation and the violence perpetrated with firearms, the **PLP** Crime Management Agenda will introduce a National Firearm Control Strategy.

— A NATIONAL FIREARM CONTROL STRATEGY FIREARMS AND FIREARM VIOLENCE PREVENTION

—
Establish a Proper Firearms Department and Database

—
Channel requisite resources to enhance intelligence gathering capabilities

—
Review and Introduce where necessary improved border protection initiatives

—
Ensure on-going and widespread public education on conflict resolution via non-violent means

— FIREARMS DETECTION

—
Enhance interrelations with all local law enforcement agencies

—
Facilitate greater collaboration with other countries where necessary

—
Provide requisite resources/tools for more thorough firearms investigation

—
Provide incentives to citizens and agencies for firearms and related information

— LEGAL FIREARM USAGE

—
The Government has issued over 20,000 firearm licenses to Bahamians and residents for recreational hunting. These licenses were issued without any safety training requirement. As a firearm is a dangerous instrument, a **PLP** Government would enact legislation to require basic and continuing safety training for all holders of firearm licenses.

The **PLP** will make sustained and deliberate efforts to reduce the proliferation of illegal weapons in *The Bahamas*.

Given the presence and use of high-powered military grade weapons on our streets by criminals, a **PLP** Government will construct a state-of-the-art Firearms Training Facility to ensure that our Law Enforcement personnel have the most advanced training available.

THE DEATH PENALTY

According to Article 16(1) of the Constitution:

“No person shall be deprived intentionally of his life save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been convicted”.

The use of the death penalty has been in a state of flux for some time given the various rulings of the appellate courts. Specifically, the Privy Council in a landmark ruling has stated that its use is unconstitutional save for “worst of the worst” offenders. This finding by the Privy Council is a significant impediment to the use of the death penalty. Contributing to this state of affairs has been the inability of the FNM Government to give serious and immediate attention to this matter which has impacted national security and is now threatening our economic survival.

Within the first 100 days in office, a new **PLP** Government will:

Introduce a dedicated team of attorneys within the Office of the Attorney General to review all existing murder cases that are completed with the object of ensuring that all avenues of appeal are exhausted without delay. Cases that are complete and warrant the death penalty shall be disposed of expeditiously;

Review existing murder cases to determine those which are heinous in nature and warrant the death penalty. These cases will be fast-tracked to the Supreme Court to ensure that our laws are no longer reduced to bluffs.

GAMBLING

The ‘numbers racket’ is nothing new in *The Bahamas*. The major change however is that it has moved from the traditional ‘papers for lottery’ to virtual ‘web shop’ casinos. It has been given an aura of legality-by online play on various “Gaming or Lotto” sites, which allow participants to engage in the illegal racket from the comfort of their own home (or office).

Additionally, more and more people and entities have established these illegal enterprises to the extent that it has become difficult to discern the legitimate businesses from those that are not operating within the ambit of the law.

Due to the extent to which a large percentage of the population engages in the industry whether directly or indirectly, within the first 100 days in office, a new **PLP** Government will:

Hold a referendum of the general Bahamian population to determine whether it is the desire of Bahamians to legalize the numbers business. A new **PLP** Government will be guided by the results.



FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

Fire safety and prevention remains a major concern to a **PLP** Government.

Each year, innocent lives are lost in fires and many families are left homeless and businesses destroyed. Further, the risk of fires in homes and commercial buildings are high as many homes and buildings are not designed nor retrofitted to meet minimum fire safety/prevention standards. To add to this state of affairs, *The Bahamas* periodically experiences a major devastating fire which tests our resources and highlight deficiencies dealing with fire services.

To this end, the **PLP** will:

Review the viability of severing the Fire Services from the Royal *Bahamas* Police Force, thus, making it a separate and distinct entity

Continue with its plan of replenishing and upgrading fire service trucks and essential equipment

Develop and ensure strict maintenance compliance of fire hydrants in all residential and commercial districts

Develop and introduce a comprehensive and strategic fire safety plan to ensure that New Providence, Grand Bahama, all major Family Islands and inhabited areas of our archipelago receive adequate and continuous attention and resources to minimize the risk of devastating fires.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

The state of Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP) at Fox Hill is unacceptable. This is a fault we cannot continue to overlook.

The increase in crime in our society and the number of offenders at HMP has resulted in severe overcrowding and unsanitary conditions.

The ratio of officers to inmates is not ideal, and the health and working conditions are a concern to both inmates and officers assigned to watch them.

There are a number of areas where internal and external security of the Prison must be addressed and rectified.

Given the number of persons incarcerated at HMP and the security risk of transfer to and from the prison, and having due regard for the health of inmates at the prison, a clinic is required at the facility.

There is need for clear salary and rank structure and a merit based recognition for prison officers.

A major challenge remains the escorting of prisoners to and from Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP) in the morning and afternoon to remand hearings and trial appearances.

To address these and other growing concerns, the next **PLP** government will:



—

SHORT TERM INTERVENTIONS

—

Partner with the Church and civic and private sector groups to assist young ex-offenders, in transforming themselves into productive citizens upon release from prison.

—

Increase the personnel and other resources of the Prison Services to ensure that the staff to prisoner ratio reaches safe and acceptable levels. We will also accelerate the opportunities available for prison officers to receive training internationally.

—

Implement policies to ensure that the escorts of inmates for trials are structured to minimize disruption and danger to other roads users.

—

Ensure that a poly-clinic is built at the compound of Her Majesty’s Prison.

—

Establish a merit based recognition programme for prison officers.

—

Undertake a comprehensive strategic review of HMP which shall include:

- _ Prison Budget
- _ Human Resource and Staffing
- _ Allocation of Resources
- _ Salary Structure of Officers
- _ Rank Structure
- _ Physical Infrastructure
- _ Inmate Rehabilitation

—

REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS

—

Most people sent to prisons will subsequently be released into society. This places the onus on the state to concentrate on rehabilitative measures as soon as possible with the objective of reducing the changes of the person re-offending.

—

Under our present laws, ex-offenders find it difficult to find meaningful employment, travel, pursue opportunities for educational advancement and or engage in many necessary and productive activities.

This issue is particularly harsh on young and one-time offenders. Under the current law, a person convicted of a criminal offense is effectively excluded from many basic activities for a minimum period of seven years. This period is maintained regardless of the facts of the case or the sentence given to the ex-offender.

—

In 1991 the Progressive Liberal Party passed the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act which from the date of its passage has enabled thousands of ex-offenders to fully engage in society. Although effective and progressive, this Act needs to be further amended to assist young and first-time offenders.

—

The New **PLP** Government will immediately:

—

Amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to allow for the creation Rehabilitation of Offenders Committee. This Committee will be responsible for hearing applications by young and first-time offenders for the removal of Criminal Records after: the prescribed minimum period; the successful completion of a Rehabilitation Course; and, after the Committee is satisfied that the applicant has been rehabilitated. This programme would give deserving ex-offenders an accelerated path towards fully integrating into society.

—

LONG TERM INTERVENTIONS

—

Consider plans for the construction of a new prison compound at a different site.

—

Strengthen and expand existing programs of rehabilitation.

—

In conjunction with social partners, formally establish halfway houses to facilitate the smooth transition of ex-offenders into society.



ROYAL *Bahamas* DEFENCE FORCE

The Royal *Bahamas* Defence Force (RBDF) plays the leading and key role as the first line of our border Defence. The geographical makeup of our archipelago demands that we ensure that the RBDF is always adequately equipped and kept at the forefront of modern technology. There is heavy reliance on the Force to counter:

- _ Illegal migration
- _ Alien smuggling
- _ Drug trafficking
- _ Other forms of criminal activity
- _ Other forms of maritime operations and duties

Bearing in mind that the budget of the RBDF and the costs associated with the acquisition of essential equipment for its use is significant, it is important that we ensure maximum utilization of resources and continuous training in the proper use of such resources. We must also make certain that equipment to be acquired for the use by the RBDF can achieve its desired purpose.

Furthermore, we must ensure that there is no duplication of efforts and that there is continued collaboration between all law enforcement partners. In this regard, the work of the Heads of National Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) cannot be over-emphasized.

The need to make adequate provisions for the welfare of the officers of the Force who continue to serve with distinction is also of paramount importance. _ Training and retraining as well as ensuring that their personal and financial needs are met with timely increases in pay will be addressed.

Accordingly, a **PLP** Government will:

Goals, Deployment & Equipment

Undertake maintenance and replacement of the existing fleet of vessels of the RBDF

Engage HONLEA to consider the establishment of bases at strategic locations in our jurisdiction to ensure deterrence and rapid response to all criminal and illegal activities

Establish an Air Wing for law enforcement agencies within the RBDF to maximize expertise and use of resources

Integrate helicopter surveillance for search and rescue as well as other critical operations

Acquire and make use of modern technology within the RBDF for intelligence gathering purposes for illegal activities interdiction

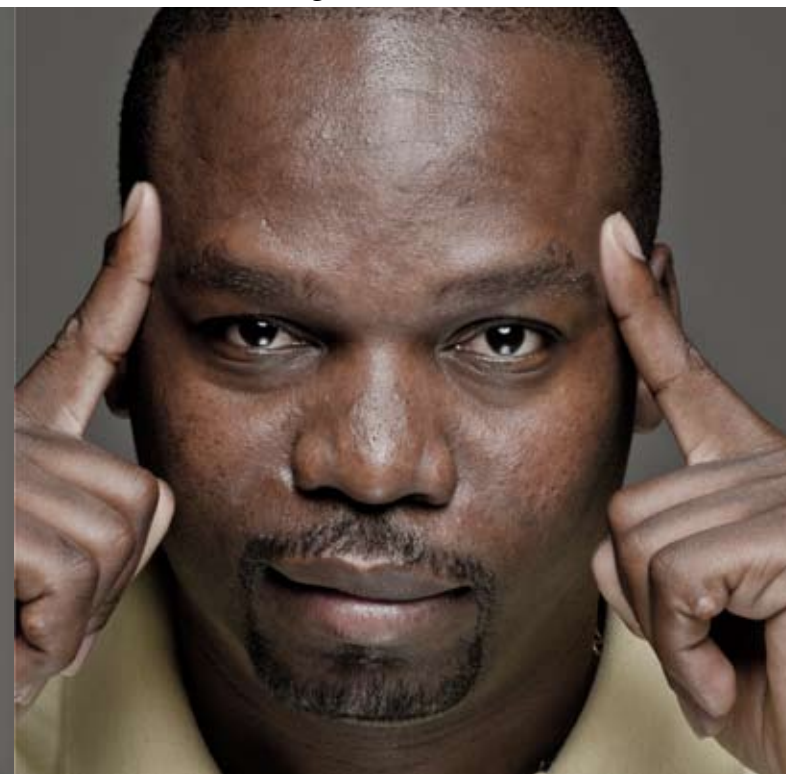
Review the deployment of the Force to ensure that maximum use is being made of these highly trained personnel (e.g. Overseas Missions, deployment at Detention Centre) Human Resources, Training & Welfare

Establish Basic Officer and Staff Officer Training Courses in *The Bahamas*

Continue to appropriately supplement the human resource of the RBDF and provide local, regional and international training and retraining for professional development

Seek to improve technical pay for staff as well as provide incentives to retain the services of officers

Explore the establishment of a cemetery for military personnel and high ranking officials of government



THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The inability of the system to have indictable cases heard within a reasonable time or even within years has resulted in the denial of justice for victims as well as perpetrators and society as a whole and has also allowed a disproportionate number of frightening individuals to be free to put fear in communities.

There is now an enormous backlog of serious criminal cases that needs to be seriously and systematically addressed. The matter of the backlog is urgent and it has caused the courts to release on bail into society a disproportionate number or persons charged with murder who, by the very nature of the punishment to which they are subject if convicted, present a monumental threat to the safety and security of the country.

The more than 100 people free in the land but subject to be sentenced to the ultimate fate, death, can create an explosive situation.

In order to ameliorate the state of affairs and make the most effective use of the courts' time and resources and the system itself, a **PLP** government will ensure that:

- _ Restorative justice is established as part of the updated edition of the Urban Renewal Programme and Community Policing;
- _ More frequent and ready use of the plea bargaining initiative;
- _ A focused increase the number of Judges and Magistrates;
- _ Adequate and regular sittings of courts on the Family Islands;
- _ Provision of essential and new human and other resources for the judiciary such as clerks to justices;
- _ The establishment of a financial section to have the courts' finances independently managed within the court system to handle the courts' finances after the allocation has been approved in the budget;
- _ A new Supreme Court complex will be commenced in our next term.

APPOINTMENT OF A FINANCIAL REGISTRAR

In order to further ensure the independence of the judiciary the **PLP** shall create the office of Financial Registrar, which will have responsibility for the expenditure of the funds allotted to the judiciary from the national budget. The Financial Registrar will report directly to the Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of *The Bahamas*.

IMMIGRATION

The department of immigration must concern itself with the movement of people across the borders of *The Bahamas* in such a manner as to:

Ensure the security of the Commonwealth of *The Bahamas*

Facilitate economic growth and development in *The Bahamas*

Promote policies that seek to bring about harmonious, sound development and integration among all persons acting lawfully within our borders

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Have due regard to existing multilateral and bi-lateral conventions and agreements entered into by the various administrations of Government

A **PLP** Government accepts the mandate to deliver all services of the Immigration Department.

ENSURING OUR SECURITY

The **PLP** recognizes that:

The subject of illegal immigrants in a country whose “native” population is barely over one third of a million people is a daunting problem. There is no question that illegal immigration is perceived as and is a very real threat to national security.

The Bahamas does not have an integrated, coordinated law enforcement response to illegal migration and alien smuggling.

To counter these and other challenges to our security, a **PLP** Government will:

Develop a written long term integrated and coordinated law enforcement policy to respond to illegal migration and alien smuggling.

Provide additional resources for increased border patrols (air and sea) by the Royal *Bahamas* Defence Force as an effective means of prevention and interdiction.

Provide regional and international exposure and training to officers within *The Bahamas* Immigration Service and other law enforcement departments in relation to best immigration practices, the use of modern technology and current immigration patterns and trends.

Introduce a national means of identifying our Bahamian citizens from birth/infancy through adulthood.

Facilitate the full implementation of the Border Management System, including the Electronic Identification Card and E-Passport.

Review and make necessary changes to the management and human resources structure of the Immigration Department to ensure improved cross-training of all officers involved in border protection.

Ensure that all immigration personnel are exposed to adequate training to efficiently perform their duties.

FACILITATE ECONOMIC GROWTH

The **PLP** welcomes and appreciates the sound and economic contribution made by foreign nationals to *The Bahamas*.

We also recognize the opportunities for training Bahamians, which are inherent in the presence of multi-national corporations in *The Bahamas*.

We shall therefore implement and enforce a policy whereby work permits will be given to non-Bahamian workers in cases where no Bahamian has the requisite skill to fill the position. These permits will be issued for a specified period during which time a Bahamian shall be trained to fill the position.

Furthermore, multinational corporations will be encouraged through policy to provide global exposure and training to qualified Bahamians.

In the interest of global commerce, and where necessary generally, the **PLP** will commit to the review and response to a short term work permit within three (3) days and an annual work permit within two (2) weeks from completed documentation.



A **PLP** Government will embark on bi-lateral discussions with the Haitian Government concerning lawful Haitian labour in *The Bahamas* while at the same time agreeing on a process for the repatriation of illegal Haitian Nationals.

RESIDENT SPOUSAL PERMIT

A **PLP** administration will treat applicants for spousal permits in a dignified, respectful manner while ensuring that the system is not abused.

Resident Spousal Permits will be speedily processed and issued for a period of seven (7) years from the date of the marriage, with the right to apply for

Permanent Residence after five (5) years (if the marriage subsists), giving the administration two (2) years for due diligence and approval without interrupting the status of the permit holder.

BAHAMIAN CITIZENSHIP

The **PLP** believes fervently in a policy of putting Bahamians first. We shall in appropriate cases welcome and share this God-given right with others.

A **PLP** administration will assist persons who become citizens in *The Bahamas* to integrate smoothly into our culture and community.

MULTILATERAL AND BI-LATERAL CONVENTIONS AND AGREEMENTS

A **PLP** administration will revisit all Conventions and Agreements relating to immigration ensuring that their intent is in line with the National Immigration Policy.

DISASTER RELIEF AND PREPAREDNESS

In face of disaster we will be our brothers’ keepers.

SURVEYING THE PRESENT

The Bahamas is an archipelago. We are also located in a part of the world that is prone to hurricanes six months of the year, from June to November. In recent times some of our Family Islands have received extensive damage from the wrath of dangerous storms, the most recent being Cat Island. The Progressive Liberal Party acknowledges the importance of being prepared for these types of occurrences and of providing relief for those affected by them as quickly as possible.

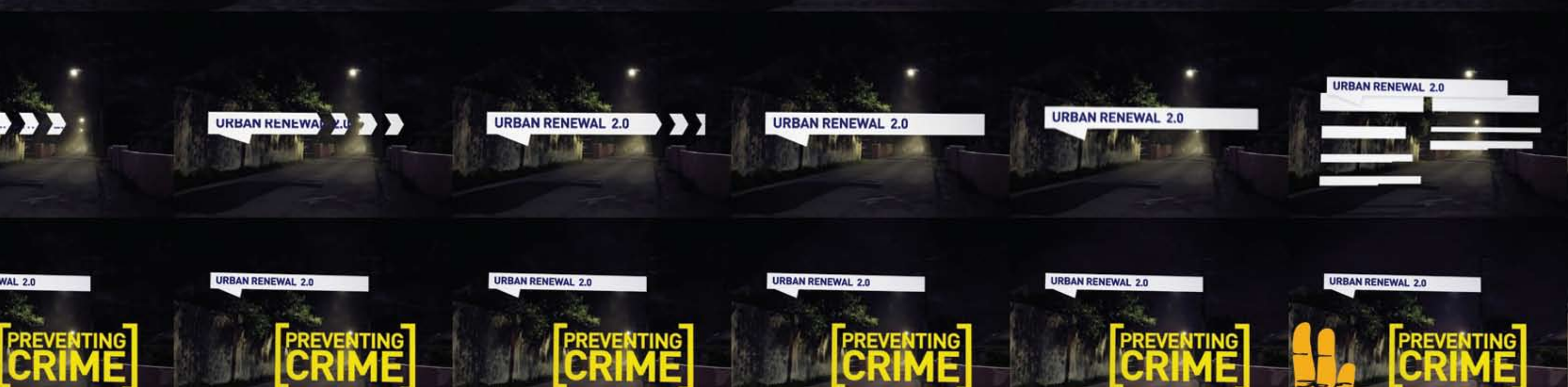
VISION 2030

Our aim is to be in a position to respond in a timely manner to the needs of our citizens in the event of a natural disaster. We envisage that there would be minimal dislocation of households and no loss of life following a natural disaster and that we would be able to promptly undertake the rebuilding of people’s lives and the physical infrastructure impacted by any natural disaster.

A NEW DIRECTION

The next **PLP** government will:

Funds confiscated by the government will be diverted to the Disaster Relief Fund to assure that we are fully prepared to assist in the wake of a disaster.



— People and/or agencies responsible for the disbursement of relief funds and supplies are held accountable to carrying out this responsibility in a fair and reasonable manner.

— Tariff incentives are provided for the importation of hurricane-related items such as storm shutters, generators, hurricane straps and similar hurricane mitigation and protective items.

— An improved communication network will be implemented, including radio, television and telephone systems, in order to communicate with all areas of *The Bahamas* and to ensure rapid response capability in times of disasters. In addition, this will ensure that every island is aware of all watches and warnings issued by the meteorological office in the event of a hurricane or other type storm.

— Comprehensive training of volunteers and those employed in the essential services will be provided to ensure that they are well prepared for all elements of disaster.

— NEMA, in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Works, will certify the soundness and structural integrity of all public buildings used as hurricane and disaster shelters.

— All buildings certified as hurricane shelters will be given incentives by the government to make sure that every community in the country has available hurricane shelters.

— All hurricane shelters will be marked and registered with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

MAJOR PLP ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2002 – 2007

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

THE ECONOMY

- 22,000 jobs created in all sectors of the economy.
- Our economy grew by 3.4% in 2005 and was projected to grow by 4% beyond 2006/2007
- Entertained the attraction of approx. \$17 billion dollars in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- Over \$2.5 billion of that investment became tangible. The value of the projects upon completion would exceed \$4.5 billion.
- Over \$400 million dollars in contracts awarded to Bahamians as a direct result from FDI.
- Government revenue grew from \$875 million to \$1.36 billion or 55%.
- Under the **PLP** government, \$1.5 billion was added to the Bahamian economy.
- **PLP** government did not raise taxes during its term in office between 2002 and 2007.
- Established a Venture Capital Fund with \$3 million to assist entrepreneurs.
- Allocated \$25 million at *The Bahamas* Development Bank to assist entrepreneurs.
- Unemployment dropped to an irreducible minimum of 7.6%.
- Functioning Hotel Corp which negotiated several FDI projects but most notably negotiated the joint venture between the Government and the I-Group in Mayaguana which would have meant that the Bahamian people would have had the most creative interest in a FDI project ever.

MAJOR PLP ACCOMPLISHMENTS [2002 – 2007]

- _ Sought to buy back land from certain Investments to create affordable Bahamian communities around major Investments.
- _ Created the Venture Capital Fund for Bahamian entrepreneurs needing a start up seed for their businesses.
- _ Additionally added \$25 million dollars to *The Bahamas* Development Bank to offer Bahamian entrepreneurs loans at a far lower interest rate than commercial banks.
- _ Enacted an exemption in stamp duty for first time homeowners up to \$250,000.00 (The FNM upon returning to Government in 2007 cancelled this, then after seeing the wisdom, as it led to more people buying homes, reinstated and then increased the value of the exemption).
- _ Created the Domestic Investment Board, which was essentially an Umbrella agency for Bahamian Investors – a one-stop shop providing assistance in application and funding for Bahamians wishing to invest in their Country. The slogan became: “Cutting the red tape and rolling out the red carpet for Bahamians!”

MAJOR INVESTMENTS LAUNCHED UNDER THE 2002 – 2007 PLP ADMINISTRATION:

- _ The \$1.2 billion Heads of Agreement signed between the Government, the Hotel Corporation and Baha Mar Development Ltd. for the revitalization of Cable Beach.
- _ The \$1 billion Phase III Atlantis expansion.
- _ The \$500 million Passerine at Abaco development at Great Guana Cay.
- _ The \$76 million Gold Rock Creek film studio in East Grand Bahama.
- _ The \$35 million development in Pittstown, Crooked Island.
- _ The \$243 million resort development on Crab Cay and Little Crab Cay, Exuma.
- _ The \$90 million Heads of Agreement to create a resort in Rum Cay.
- _ The \$140 million Winding Bay Club at Cherokee Sound, Abaco.
- _ The \$300 million re-development of the Cotton Bay Club on South Eleuthera.
- _ The \$75 million investment in Central Eleuthera on Windermere Island.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FUNDED BY NATIONAL INSURANCE

- _ The building of more than 1300 homes and 500 fully serviced lots.

- _ Built more houses in three and a half years than the F.N.M. built in 10 years. FNM constructed just over 700 homes in 10 years.
- _ Put over 6000 people in new homes.
- _ Created jobs for more than 400 contractors.
- _ Created jobs for more than 2000 construction workers.
- _ Built first Government Housing Subdivision in Exuma.
- _ Led the way in successful repairs and reconstruction of thousands of homes on Abaco, Eleuthera, Cat Island, Acklins, New Providence, Grand Bahama, Bimini and Grand Cay after hurricanes Frances, Jeanne and Wilma.
- _ Started construction of a Children / Adolescent Centre.
- _ Started construction of a Clinic on Inagua.
- _ Started construction of a Clinic on Grand Cay.
- _ Started construction of *Bahamas* Mortgage Corporation’s state of the art complex next to Ministry of Works building on J.F.K. Drive.
- _ Oversaw compensation review and salary increases at National Insurance Board.
- _ Repaired all Government rental units.
- _ Built two new Government rental complexes. (Only ones built in last 20 years) .

AIRPORTS AND HARBOURS

Addressed unacceptable neglect of infrastructure key to our economy:

- _ Nassau International Airport (later renamed Lynden Pindling International Airport by the **PLP** Govt) .
- _ Phase 1: refurbishment of runway 1432 to the tune of \$75 million.
- _ Phase 2: identified management company and negotiated final agreements to (a) manage LPIA and (b) undertake Project Management of the redevelopment of LPIA in construction of new terminals (as now unfolding); Largest single project ever undertaken by *The Bahamas* Government.
- _ Prince George Dock rehabilitated by the purchase and installation of fenders (replacing giant tractor tires) and commissioning of engineering works for installation of bollards at Prince George Dock and resurfacing of the Dock along with other enhancement and security measures including ensuring *The Bahamas* was ISPS Code compliant (IMO mandate).



AVIATION ACHIEVEMENTS

- _ Formally commenced process in ICAO for the control of *Bahamas* airspace.
- _ Installed emergency solar lights in over 20 airports nationwide.
- _ Began process of an orderly, rational and structured airport development model by creating a master plan for Abaco which was to serve as template nationally with other airports to immediately follow (Exuma was next) and in particular the 5 busiest airports.
- _ Liberalized domestic routes within *The Bahamas*, which meant that smaller Bahamian airlines could service the routes.
- _ Promptly settled long-standing dispute with *Bahamas* Air Traffic Controller's.
- _ Procured universal compliance with ICAO mandate requiring 100 % screening at 23 Ports of entry nationwide necessitating major infrastructural works at LPIA and the acquisition of state of the art screening equipment and training of new screeners at LPIA and engagement and training of airport security officers nationwide.

TOURISM

- _ In Tourism in 2004 we hit the 5 million mark in arrivals for the first time in history.
- _ *The Bahamas* hit the 2 billion mark in tourism revenue for the first time in 2004 and sustained it in 2005 & 2006; Central Bank Quarterly Financial Digest.
- _ We attracted 2 A-rated movies, both of which topped the box office, *Pirates of The Caribbean*, and a James Bond film, *Casino Royale* in 2006.
- _ The Film Studio in Grand Bahama had become an internationally recognized choice to make first-rate movies and holds one of the World's largest water tanks for water and beach-themed movies.
- _ Jet Blue (Nov. 2004), Spirit (2005), and Virgin (July 2005) Atlantic commenced service to *The Bahamas* increasing airlift. Airlift was also dramatically increased to the Family Islands.
- _ As an advancement for International Gamers, the **PLP** introduced Sports betting and poolside betting for the first time.
- _ Our Foreign Offices were fully staffed and functioning. In North America only

Plantation, Florida and the office in Canada remain open. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Orlando to name a few, have been closed by the new FNM Government.

- _ Before the Christie **PLP** Administration, Sales and Marketing in our foreign officers were overseen generally by non-Bahamians. This policy changed and our foreign offices were fully Bahamianized.
- _ The office in Canada, which is now highly successful in its attraction of tourism and investments to *The Bahamas*, was re-opened; before this it was closed.
- _ Tourism was re-branded so that its logo included the Family Islands.
- _ The Progressive Liberal Party spent more money on tourism advertising than the present Government is spending.

CULTURE

April 2005 procured the land on the Western tip of New Providence for the formation of the Clifton Heritage Park which is managed and preserved by the Clifton Heritage Authority.

- _ Established the Junkanoo Corporation of *The Bahamas* (2004).
- _ Established the Junkanoo Corporation of New Providence (2004).
- _ Introduced new safety and security measures at Parades by providing portable bleacher seating which qualified for special liability insurance for participants and spectators at the Parade for up to \$5 million dollars;
- _ 2005 Bid and awarded hosting of CARIFESTA 2007 (FNM Government reneged twice).

NEGOTIATED WITH THE CHINESE THE GIFT OF A NATIONAL STADIUM AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES:

- _ Agriculture and Fisheries received greater attention: implemented Standards Bureau to ensure that imported and exported goods met international standards.
- _ Amended Fisheries Act so that boaters from the U.S. fishing in our waters were restricted to leave the country with less catch. The FNM has now reversed this.
- _ Created two more restricted Sea Parks: one in Exuma and the other in the Abacos.
- _ Refurbished Fish Houses and Agricultural Stations throughout the Islands.
- _ Purchased waxing houses and ripening machines for farmers.



“Your Vote...
YOUR VOICE”

- _ Reclaimed land from Bahamians who had been awarded land for farming but were using it for other purposes.
- _ Cleared hundreds of acres of land for farming on Andros, Long Island, Crooked Island, Exuma, and Abaco.
- _ Revitalized closed packing houses, which meant farmers could sell their produce to Government
- _ Extended small loans to fishermen and farmers.
- _ Made the Grouper and Conch seasonal as catch.

MISCELLANEOUS

- _ Some \$12 million dollars in funding was secured from the EU for dock and road improvements in several Family Islands.
- _ Aggressive Measures to ensure price control on breadbasket items were implemented. More storeowners were prosecuted under the Christie **PLP** admin in 5 years than in 15 under the FNM, and some \$250,000 of fines were collected.
- _ The Rent Control Act was amended, ensuring Land Lords no longer took advantage of their tenants and that they adhered to new building standards, outlawing, among other things, out-door toilets.

DISABILITY

- _ Appointment of a Consultant for Disability Affairs to promote programs for persons with disabilities.
- _ The establishment and expansion of dedicated accommodations for the Disability Affairs Division with a resource centre, including adaptive. equipment for persons with disabilities on 8th Terrace, Centreville.
- _ The establishment of the radio program, “Spotlight On Disability”.
- _ The establishment of a support group for females with disabilities.
- _ The purchase of the former Cheshire Home, Dolphin Drive, for the establishment of a facility to provide care for children with severe disabilities, respite care and additional day care for children with disabilities.
- _ The expansion of the daily operational hours at *The Bahamas* Association for the Physically Disabled and the increase of the number of days open from four to five.
- _ The introduction of disability assistance for children under the age of 16 years certified disabled who are not eligible for Invalidity Assistance or Disability Benefit from the National Insurance Board.
- _ Established an apartment for persons with disabilities in the Government Complex on East Street South (north of Robinson Road).

