



**COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**CONTRIBUTION BUDGET DEBATE 2016/2017**

**BY:**

**SENATOR THE HON. J. KWASI THOMPSON**

**AT**

**SENATE**

**Nassau, Bahamas**

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Total Failure, Fiasco, Disaster, Debacle, Catastrophe , Colossal disappointment, and ultimate betrayal.

Madam President it is with great sadness that we are left with this description of the last four years under this PLP government. When I think of the upcoming general election I am reminded of the words of a popular gospel song “I Believe” and at the end of that song is a melody which says So Long Bye Bye, So Long Bye Bye Goodbye to my pain and my sorrow so long bye bye.

Madam President I believe the country is waiting with great anticipation for the opportunity to say to this PLP Government So long Bye Bye So long bye bye. Good bye to my pain I suffered under your leadership, Goodbye to the sorrow suffered under your management, So long Bye Bye

Madam President

Among all the great assets of good leadership trust is an essential component. All great leaders were highly trusted by the people they lead. You can be a good communicator, have a good vision, the right strategy and have a talented team but if the people do not trust you, you will not accomplish much.

Madam President

People will not trust you just because you have a title or position. Trust is earned, it is built. **People trust you because they believe in your ability to deliver that which you committed to deliver. People trust you because you delivered what you promised and you only promised what you could deliver!**

Madam President the Bahamian people simply do not trust the PLP. Time and time again the public has been misled, bamboozled, hoodwinked, Lead astray and deceived.

Even their celebrated Charter for Governance is a testament of their broken promises.

These are just an example:

1. The 10 point mortgage relief plan in the first 100 days
2. Repositioning of the Bahamas Development bank in the first 100 days to create jobs and expand businesses
3. Doubling the investment in education
4. *Periodic review of discretionary decisions by independent non-partisan means*
5. *creating a Council of Economic Advisers*
6. *working with the Minister of Agriculture to ensure the success of agriculture in East Grand Bahama;\_*

## STILL WAITING ON

7. *building schools in East and West GrandBahama.*
8. *The Industrial Park in Freeport*
9. *agriculture in the recovery of Grand Bahama,*  
*creating a agriculture cooperative in Grand bahama,*
10. *Create a reliable land register after proper*  
*adjudication of all rights and all interests in all land. And*  
*establishing a tribunal for this purpose,*
11. *. Ensure a system of accountability in the*  
*determination of applications for Crown Land is*  
*implemented that will ensure that applications are dealt*  
*with ina transparent manner.*
12. *review and amend as necessary the laws relating to*  
*commonage land so as to allow for greater commercial use*  
*and beneficial enjoyment of land by commoners*

13. My Government, in an effort to help reduce the cost of rental housing, will reform the Rent Control Act and will seek to promote the construction of new rental units at more affordable prices.
14. *Amending the Employment Act, 2001, the Fair Standards Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act;*
15. government will provide a parcel of land on the island of New Providence for the construction of a Labour College
16. *Activate sale of BTC shares to Bahamians*
17. 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 commercial use and beneficial enjoyment of land by commoners

**Lets also Examine Promises Made in Last Years Budget**  
**communication**

- 1. \$20 Million allocated for youth jobs training through the Urban Renewal 2.0 Project**
- 2. National Health Insurance will be implemented in January 2016 at no additional cost to Bahamians.**
- 3. The Bahamas Mortgage Corporation (BMC) to raise \$100 million via a bond issue to finance the construction of 1,000 homes. This is a public private sector partnership in housing development**
- 4. We will, for one, establish a special school for young persons with behavioural issues that militate against their employability.**

- 5. We will also initiate an apprenticeship programme in partnership with the private sector under which employers will be incentivized, through a wage subsidy**

### **Economic Performance**

**Madam President**

**Good Governance requires trust and the people do not trust the PLP. The PLP promised to grow our economy. Their performance on growing our economy has been an abysmal failure. The Governments very own statistics shows at the height of the global recession 2008/2009 the economy shrank by 3%. In 2009/2010 it got better and only shrank by 1% As a result of the FNM initiatives the economy grew in 2010/2011 over 1% and In 2011/2012 it grew by 2% In 2012/2013 when the PLP took over it began to shrink again.**



**But here is the real issue that the PLP hopes you don't notice. During the years the PLP has had full control over the economy it either had no growth or it is shrank every single year. This is the story of the PLP!! DISCUSS NO ECONOMIC GROWTH**

**Madam President**

**Some Economist define recession as two quarters of consecutive periods of negative growth. According to our own figures the Bahamas has had 2 consecutive years of negative growth.**

**The PLP boosts about the number of jobs they have created. However here are the facts. The global recession hit in 2008 and unemployment began to rise. It hit its highest under the FNM in 2011 at 15.7% In 2012 it decreased to 14.7%. Then comes the PLP who have taken over for a year and**

**unemployment hit levels higher than in the global recession at 16.2% and stands now at 14.8% as at November 2015.**

**Madam President the painful reality is unemployment is worse than when the PLP took over in 2012 from the FNM.**

**These are the facts.**

**NEGATIVE GROWTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

**NUMBERS ARE HURTING THIS COUNTRY**

**DISCUSS!!**

**In addition, the PLP don't want to discuss revenue performance. Revenue as you know is the amount of income the government collects. Let me just read what the Prime said happened for the last two years. In 2014/2015 “ a lower level of recurrent revenue than projected by some 42 million reflecting the somewhat weaker than expected growth” In 2015/2016 the PM said “ recurrent revenue is expected to be**

**down by an estimated 37 million” Despite VAT the government has failed to collect what they said they would for the year. DISCUSS**

## **HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION**

**Madam President, the PLP has botched what could have been the saving grace for the Bahamas in the Housing Industry. It is another shining example of why they cannot be trusted, and we simply cannot believe what the PLP says.**

**Madam President**

**Where is the reform of the Rent Control Act, where are new rental units for low income families, where is the reduction in the cost to construct a home, where are the reforms for the Subdivision Act, where are the new green**

zones and green spaces and the 54 million dollar contracts for work in subdivisions.

. In November 2013 the Minister said this, “we hope over the next calendar year we will be able to complete the built out through the government program of about 200 units”. What happened to the 160 million dollar

Memorandum of Understanding with NIB to start the housing program in 2013. The governments housing program has been a COMPLETE and utter failure and just another opportunity squandered.

Madam President, they cannot be trusted. The Prime Minister no less told us in last year’s budget statement.

**“The Bahamas Mortgage Corporation has approved the issuance of \$100m in bonds, which will jump start the**

**Government's aggressive housing program and add over 1000 new housing units to our inventory. Through private public partnerships, it is hoped that the Government will complete the programme over the next two years. The programme will also create thousands of jobs in the sector for skilled and unskilled labour”**

**If only they would live up to their word! According the Minister for Housing less than 100 homes were actually completed nowhere near the 500 hundred promised.**

**In fact the construction market in the Bahamas was actually worse this year than the year before. They promised a new aggressive construction program but this is what actually happened. The 2015 Department of Statistics building construction Report stated the following**

**In 2015 issued 121 less permits than 2014**

**In 2015 has a decline in total value construction starts than 2014 with a decrease of approximately 5million**

**2015 has less building completions than 2014**

**Not only did you not do what you said you would, you actually performed worse than you did in 2014. Are you kidding me!!**

**Madam President the PLP cannot be trusted and as much as they talk the people simply do not believe them. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT!!**

**I fell in the trap of actually putting hope in something the PLP said last year. I actually got excited when the PM said this in his last year budget statement.**

**“Accordingly, in this Budget we are proposing two new interventions in this area, for which the Budget includes the allocation of \$20MILLION”**

**“We will, for one, establish a special school for young persons with behavioural issues”**

**“We will also initiate an apprenticeship programme in partnership with the private sector under which employers will be incentivized, through a wage subsidy, to employ young persons in positions that will afford them the opportunity to acquire vital, basic job skills.”**

**Does anyone remember actually remember this statement??**

Now in fairness a program which already existed at the Shipyard in Grand Bahama was expanded to include additional young people.

But lets actually look at the facts and see how much of the 20 million was actually spend this year. Out of the 20 million only 1. 2 million (see page138) was actually spent. So you allocated 20 million last year for what you call a top priority and spend 1 million and then come back this year and say we will spend 20 million on youth employment and we are suppose to get excited. You didn't do it last year when you had the money and we are supposed to believe you now!

If young people were such a big priority why didn't you start this program last year when it was promised. But you know whats different this year from last year, ITS AN ELECTION YEAR. DISCUSS



**Madam President**

**All the criticism the FNM received about their 52 week program the PLP has done essentially the same with a few changes. This was what we were calling for, for the past four years.**

**Madam President**

**The PLP cannot be trusted and the people simply do not believe what you say!**

**The Attorney General rightly pointed out the new format in the budget book which is easier to use but a little harder to read. But I was caught by a statement made by the Prime Minister at page 31. He says in bold letters**

**“ In no circumstance should any vote or allocation be over expended without prior authority”**

**More importantly “No money is to be spent except for the purposes intended by the legislature and so indicated in the title of the head and item concerned” DISCUSS**

**But let’s look at in particular the travel head at the Office of the Prime Minister. Madam President Parliament approved \$97,399 for travel outside the country. The Prime Minister over spent that head to the tune of \$455,546.00. Doesn’t this smack a little of hypocrisy. Doesn’t this also warrant a full and frank explanation.**

**Madam President**

**Do you remember the promise about election contracts.**

**Prime minister said these words" As we stated in the Speech from the Throne, we will table legislation to prevent the entering into of government contracts, including contracts of employment or the payment of public monies therewith**

between the date of dissolution of Parliament and the date of general election, unless such contracts or payments are pre-determined by an independent statutory body to be absolutely essential for the maintenance of essential services."

This statement could not be clearer. Not only have we not seen what the Prime minister spoke about lets take a close look at whats really in the prime ministers budget during this election year. It starts at page 126. There is a provision for "contingencies". Contingencies are defined as a future event or circumstance which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty. Last year 29,000 was allocated and 922 was actually spent. But during the election year a slush fund of 2 million is allocated. As if that was not bad enough in the Prime Ministers ministry he allocates another 7

**million for new appointments of monthly employees. Yet**  
**there is no mention of how this will be spent or the**  
**requirements.**

**Madam President the PLP cannot be trusted and the people do not believe what they say.**

**The Mortgage Relief Program which I will not speak long on. Quite frankly it is like beating a dead horse. If it were not so desperately needed it would be funny. But there are hundreds who are on the brink of losing their homes. They are receiving court papers that they do not understand, they are being summoned before the court daily to answer why the bank should not take their home.**

**MORTGAGE CORPORATION SUING PEOPLE IN**  
**FREEPORT**

**Madam President**

**This year major public corruption scandals occurred under this PLP administration. It seemed like almost every week we heard of millions going missing from government agencies and unfortunately we do not hear much about the bringing those persons to justice. The Auditor General report of the Ministry of education overpaying employees, the ministry of social services uncovering fraud and gross negligence to the tune of 4 million dollars. Irregularities in the Urban Renewal Housing Program which have yet to be explained. Fraud in the Post Office. And the Auditor General report revealing that 10 million in revenue at Road Traffic has been lost since 2012.**

**It is my view that the PLP administration has not taken appropriate steps to not just bring those responsible but also to make the changes to our system to change this culture of**

**corruption. We must take concrete steps to make the necessary changes to stop the corruption.**

**I believe in the FNM anticorruption plan. I believe in his plan to:**

**recall system for non-performing MP's;**

**anti-corruption bill to govern an independent anti-corruption unit;**

**an independent director of Public Prosecutions with no oversight by the Attorney General (amendments to existing law);**

**strengthening and proper staffing of Auditor General including the authority to refer cases directly to an Independent Director of Public Prosecution.**

**Madam President**

## **THERE IS HOPE FOR THE BAHAMAS**

**There is hope for our Bahamas and I believe in the new and better Bahamas that will come after the Free National Movement is elected. I believe in THE REBUILDING OF our economy by private enterprise encouraged by grants and rebates,**

**I believe in providing proper sporting facilities within a safe environment**

- I believe in providing quality day care to allow more mothers to be gainfully employed**
- I believe in a Bahamas where the FNM provides upgraded cultural centres—National Museum & Library,.**

**An FNM Administration will:-**

- **Promote economic growth through innovation by utilizing the COB campus**
- **Work towards the modernization of over the hill communities, while ensuring as far as possible the traditional character of these areas**
- **Remove VAT tax from breadbasket items, education, utilities, medicine and health care and prescription drugs.**
- **Provide small business incubators**
- **Devote serious investment to building creative industries,**
- **National Solar Energy Program, allowing net metering. OUR GOAL: EACH HOME TO**



## **BECOME SELF CONTAINED POWER STATION.**

- **Land Reform**
- **Streamline government agencies and eliminate costly regulations which hamper growth, and breeds government inefficiency, waste, corruption and cronyism.**
- **Create a business friendly and enabling environment conducive for the establishment and operation of successful businesses.**
- **Make available land and government crowned lands to Bahamians at concessional rates for the construction of owner occupied homes and the expansion of the domestic investment in our economy.**

- **Encourage foreign direct investment in clear, transparent, and favourable conditions for Bahamians.**
- **Incentivize Bahamian businesses to return to the Family Islands by making crown and government lands to Bahamians at concessional rates to create employment as part of our Return to the Islands initiative; and**
- **Create a more accountable government by enacting a Fiscal Responsibility Act, and bring into force a new Freedom of Information Act so that Bahamians will have easy access to the workings and the decisions of the government.**
- **Enact The Whistle Blower Protection Act.**

- **Enact The Campaign Contribution Regulation Act. (Campaign finance reform).**
- **Strengthen the Prevention of Corruption and Bribery Act and we will stamp out corruption.**