



**CONTRIBUTION
BY
THE HON. T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M. P.
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
TO THE 2020/2021 BUDGET
WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE, 2020
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
NASSAU, BAHAMAS.**

(Please Check Against Delivery)

1. FATHER'S DAY

Mr. Speaker, this weekend we set a time aside to honour fathers. Please permit me, to wish all fathers, and father figures in this place and throughout the country Father's Day blessings in advance; and in particular one Horatio David Bannister, a very special father. I pray that all of our fathers will strive to provide love, acceptance and stability in the lives of their children, and be positive mentors in the lives of those in their sphere of influence.

Happy Father's Day.

2. A PERSONAL NOTE

Mr. Speaker, in following my own advice on a personal note I want to say to my daughter Danielle how happy I am that you are home out of the hospital and out of danger.

You have faced more medical challenges in your life than anyone that I know, including surgery as a baby but you have overcome

every single one with resilience and an incredible focus on achieving your goals; and you will overcome this one also because God has a special purpose for your life. He has made you face adversity to make you strong. You are going to make a difference in this countryin this world, and in the lives of countless numbers of people around the world. I truly believe that, and I know that in your own quiet determination you know that you have a very special future of service and dedication; and just as your resilience inspires me as your father to NEVER EVER give in, one day you will inspire millions as you live God's purpose for your life.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish my Godchild Zachary Tyler Bernard Young a belated happy birthday. It must be exciting to finally be a teenager Zachary. Before I move on Mr. Speaker, let me publicly commend my two Parliamentary sons, and I hope that the members for Long Island and Central Grand Bahama will forgive me for fondly referring to

them in that manner. As always, Sir, I proudly watched both of their contributions this week, and, as always Mr. Speaker I was left indelibly impressed by the mastery which they both exhibited as they spoke. I'm so thankful that I have had the opportunity to work closely with both of them, to share with them and to learn from them.

3. CARMICHAEL

Mr. Speaker, everyday . . . every single day I give thanks that the residents of Carmichael chose me to represent them.

I can say without credible contradiction that there is no better community no more peaceful communityno more caring community. . . .no more supportive community anywhere than the Carmichael community; and everyday Sir, I give thanks for the law abiding Carmichael community.

You see, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister issued stay at home Orders, Carmichael complied. People stayed at home.

They obeyed the law. There was peace in the streets of

Carmichael. Mr. Speaker, Carmichael understood the danger that we all faced from the coronavirus pandemic, and chose to stay safe. I'm proud of the discipline that the Carmichael community displayed. I'm proud of our response to this deadly pandemic. I'm honoured that such a mature and responsible community chose me to represent them.

Thank you Carmichael.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has ushered in some difficult times. So many people have been challenged. . . . buying food, paying rent. . . . paying utilities , paying mortgages. It has been tough. In response to the widespread need we have tried to do our best in Carmichael. Our team has walked door to door in Carmichael, and continues to do so as I speak. To date, Sir we have distributed 1,000 care packages. To date we have distributed over 8,000 masks, many of them Bahamian made along with Bahamian made hand sanitizers and food vouchers valued in excess of \$30,000 redeemable at our local community food

store. So, Mr. Speaker, through the entire ordeal, we are supporting and sustaining local businesses.

So far we have covered Emerald Gardens; Cyclops Gardens, Flamingo Gardens, Belair, several streets off Carmichael Road; and portions of Golden Gates #2. We have another 1,000 bags and 8,000 masks along with hand sanitizers and food vouchers that we will distribute throughout Golden Gates #2, Silver Gates, Cowpen Road, St. Vincent Road, and Faith Avenue. So to those Carmichael residents who have not seen our team yet, I have to ask you to be patient, as the rain has held them back, and they also have to practice appropriate social distancing protocols. But we will be coming because we care.

Mr. Speaker, leading up to this budget debate my team did not allow me to be on the street with them. They were concerned that the threat of infection could have prevented me from making this

contribution, but once I finish here tonight, Sir, they have no legitimate reason to stop me and so I ask for

Carmichael constituents to look out for me on your street soon.

Mr. Speaker, the bible says in every thing give thanks; and so before I move on please permit me to give thanks.

First, Sir, thanks to the people of Carmichael for being law abiding. By staying at home during the lockdown you have saved countless lives.

Secondly, Sir, I say thank you to my supportive friends and the caring business people who have donated to our relief efforts in Carmichael. Each of you has made a difference in many many lives.

Thirdly, Sir, I want to thank my team for walking the streets day after day to bring some relief to Carmichael residents. Unlike others, you have done it without fanfare, and without excluding anyone.

Fourth, Sir, I want to thank a very special group of caring Bahamians who provided us with locally made masks. It all started when a true Bahamian patriot called me. Bishop Albert Hepburn from United Christian Cathedral in Flamingo Gardens called to say that his daughters saw me in Parliament and did not like the mask that I was wearing. Mr. Speaker, those ladies made me some beautiful masks. Thanks to all of them for caring, especially Jenny, who I understand was the seamstress. In this regard Mr. Speaker I want to also thank:

1. Jackie Hield from Doubloon Drive, who sent me a beautiful mask;
2. Shana who also sent me some beautiful masks;
3. Kizzy from Belair who made a few hundred masks for us; and
4. Donna Demeritte from Fairview Heights who also made a few hundred masks.

Mr. Speaker, there is real talent in our country. Those ladies who made so many beautiful reusable masks prove it.

Thank you Prime Minister for opening this new industry to our talented Bahamians.

Mr. Speaker, I have so much more to say about our wonderful Carmichael Community, but I realize that there are a number of national issues that I must address, and so I will move on to touch on some of them now.

4. A CARING FNM GOVERNMENT

Mr. Speaker, this caring FNM Government has responded to the pandemic with numerous caring initiatives. My colleagues have spoken in depth about those initiatives that are unmatched in the history of our country.

They are costly, but no price is too high when it comes to providing support for the Bahamian people. Yes, it is many millions of dollars, and yes the social assistance will increase the deficit; but every dollar that is spent in providing support for the Bahamian people is well spent.

Mr. Speaker, this FNM Government is a caring government. We are here to touch and improve the lives of the Bahamian people. We care deeply and we will spend every cent that we can to help the Bahamian people to survive and to recover from the challenges caused by the pandemic.

5. LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES

Mr. Speaker, our social initiatives in this budget show very clearly that this FNM Government has a leader who has a caring and compassionate heart. He was called to lead at a time such

as this.

Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has faced the two greatest calamities in impacting our country in our lifetime. . . . hurricane Dorian and the coronavirus pandemic. This is a Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, whose legacy will be one of decisiveness in a crisis; his legacy will be one of a clearheaded, caring response to the unprecedented challenges that the Bahamian people faced. His legacy will show that his quick, decisive, bold, resolute and tenacious response saved Bahamian lives at a critical juncture when hundreds of thousands of lives were lost around the world.

Thank you Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the bold, resolute decisiveness of the Prime Minister is to be contrasted with the wishy washy responses of the official opposition. Mr. Speaker, on March 24th this proactive Government ordered our borders closed. Five days later. . . . I said 5 days later,

the opposition was calling for the government to open liquor stores! It was a shameful betrayal of the Bahamian people on their part Sir, and the Bahamian people will make them pay for being so irresponsible as to equate liquor stores with food stores and take away restaurants.

Mr. Speaker, we knew that the premature opening of liquor stores would lead to irresponsible conduct by intoxicated individuals who should have been isolated at home, so thankfully this caring FNM government refused to listen to the opposition's irresponsible rhetoric.

They are not ready for prime time, Sir.

They gave us other advice, you know.

As a government we didn't follow their advice in the past, and we won't follow their conflicted, confused advice nowwith one

exception. I asked the Prime Minister for special permission to comply with ONE of their requests just to show how irresponsible, reckless and careless this opposition is. Mr.

Speaker, the opposition's considered advice to us was for the Government to provide women and children with complimentary whistles to fight crime!!

This is what the PLP thinks of our women!! Whistles??

That's the basis of their national policy on crime?

No wonder crime exploded out of hand under their administration.

Mr. Speaker we must NEVER forget February 2017 when murders eclipsed 600 under their administration.

Not to worry, Mr. Speaker, even though Mount Moriah has crime under control now, I decided to humour them by buying a few whistles from my personal funds. So Englerston I have a

yellow whistle for you. Fox Hill, . . . Seabreeze, . . . MICAL,
 West End & Bimini. Mr. Speaker, I even have enough whistles for
 your female staff.

Can you imagine Mr. Speaker, government investment in
 whistles as an integral part of their national policy to alleviate crime?
 Mr. Speaker, they are not ready to lead this country. I remind them,
 Sir, that protecting our precious Bahamian women and children is
 nothing to whistle at.

Mr. Speaker, it's like the free advice that the member for
 Exuma gave us in this place the other day standing right over
 there. He gave it to us for free and that's what the advice was worth .
 . . . nothing.

He said, and I quote

“We suggested you take advantage of the low cost of oil to reduce cost of electricity at least by 25 percent to increase GDP by at least 1 percent. Oil was \$20.00 per barrel then. It dropped to near zero a few weeks later. Yet you did nothing of the sort. Oil is now trading at over \$40.00 per barrel and rising by the day”.

It sounds really smart, but people who know anything about the price of fuel just laughed.

But Mr. Speaker for the edification of Exuma and others who think like him, what he said sounds nice and logical, but it cannot pass the smell test. All you had to do Exuma is come and ask me.

The price of oil that we see and hear about is the spot price. So yes Exuma, if the spot price of oil today is \$20 per barrel, you can go out today and buy it at the price. There are two conditions. You must pay for it immediately, and you must take delivery immediately. You can't

buy spot oil on lay away. Now BPL's engines use heavy fuel oil and diesel. So they could buy the HFO and diesel close to the \$20.00 price. If Brent crude is \$20.00 per barrel then the delivered cost of diesel will be around \$31.00 per barrel, and HFO will be around \$29.00 per barrel delivered, but first you have to have the money immediately available.

Remember, BPL is the company that the PLP created as a broke entity. When they formed BLP it was hundreds of millions of dollars in debt with decrepit old, unreliable and inefficient engines. So where are they going to find the money to buy fuel at the drop of a hat? So Exuma, I must ask whether you are prepared to lend money to a company that you created broke and left broke when the Bahamian people ushered you out of office?

Ok Mr. Speaker, suppose BPL magically borrows the money to buy fuel at the spot price. The next condition is that when you buy

fuel at that price you have to take delivery immediately. That means that you must be able to store it. BPL has the capacity to store 300,000 barrels of HFO and 200,000 barrels of diesel. So, 1 tank holds 100,000 barrels. That means that at any given time BPL can take delivery of 200,000 barrels of HFO and 100,000 barrels of diesel.

So with Brent crude at a spot price of \$20 per barrel, let's follow Exuma's advice and buy 100,000 barrels of diesel at \$31 per barrel and 200,000 barrels of HFO at \$29.00 per barrel. That would be \$5,800,000 up front for HFO and \$3,100,000 up front for diesel.

So BPL follows Exuma's sage advice and drops \$8,900,000 on the spot for fuel, and takes immediate delivery. That means that they have enough diesel to last for 16 days and enough

HFO to last for 1 month. Then next month they spin the dice again when the price of oil has gone up to \$40.00 per barrel?

So tell me Exuma, how does that reduce the cost of electricity by at least 25% and increase GDP by at least 1% as you claim? 1% of GDP is \$130 million. The only thing that you would achieve by such folly would be to interrupt your cash flow; subject yourself to high interest rates on the \$8,900,000 that you would have had to borrow; and create uncertainty in the stability of your operations.

Mr. Speaker Exuma's recommendation makes absolutely no sense. It is the advice of folly that members opposite are known for. It's why the Bahamas was downgraded so often during their tenure in office. Their advice sounds so good until you analyze it. Then you realize that it's the same old PLP manta that got the country in this mess in the first place. So Exuma thank you for the free advice. It

was freely given, and the Bahamas is better off today because we freely rejected it.

Mr. Speaker, The Deputy Prime Minister announced a focused financing initiative that will provide the type of funding that BPL will need in order to engage in a disciplined hedging initiative to purchase fuel when the price is low and to hedge at low prices for future purchases. Your FNM government is going to do that Sir.

6. OVERVIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to my duties at the Ministry of Public Works.

At the outset, Sir, please note that the work of the Ministry is massive. The time allotted is not sufficient to provide the detailed exposition that it deserves, but we shall seek to touch on as many of the initiatives as possible

i) Our Dedicated Professionals

I begin by, Sir, acknowledging the dedicated and professional administrative and technical staff at the Ministry of Public Works. They are called upon every single day to improve the lives of Bahamians, and many of them do their jobs in such a highly professional manner that we sometimes do not even know of their interventions on our behalf. They work every day to improve the quality of our lives, and as their Minister I shall continue to advocate at every opportunity on their behalf.

In particular, Sir, please permit me to recognize the untiring efforts of Permanent Secretary Mrs. Cora BainColebrooke, who has infused a high level of positivism in the

Ministry. I thank her and our dynamic workaholic Director, Ms.

Melanie Roach for their positive, inclusive and exemplary leadership.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I could not be here making this contribution without the many sacrifices made by Nikki, Bianca and Vaughn. They are loyal and supportive beyond belief.

ii) Renovations and Improvements

Mr. Speaker, November, 2021 will mark 50 years since the Ministry of Works moved into its current location. The offices of the Ministry of Public Works ought to provide a shining beacon for technical professionals. Regrettably, over the years the building has deteriorated considerably, and improvements have taken place on an ad hoc basis. Accordingly, staff have generally been forced to work in very cramped conditions. Efforts are currently underway to improve that state of affairs.

Renovations to Ground Floor East Wing are nearing completion for use by the Buildings Control plan review and filing room staff. The expanded number of inspector workstations and increased file

storage, with additional shelving units, is anticipated to improve overall customer service and staff efficiency. With the anticipated new EPRIS software that will soon be in place, we anticipate more expeditious processing of permit applications as we seek to facilitate more construction starts in shorter periods of time.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet has approved the Ministry's acquisition of the EPRIS system, and signing of the contract is imminent. The system will increase productivity and efficiency in the processing of building permit applications and inspection procedures; and will minimize and ultimately eliminate the current storage of paper files and misplacement thereof.

It will include document programming, computer equipment upgrades, the training and the change management of staff. It will be utilized by the Buildings Control Division and accompanying

government agencies related to building permit application approvals.

The implementation of the EPRIS is anticipated to greatly enhance the efficiency of the building permit process, decrease those all too common frustrating delays, and improve the ease of doing business.

Likewise, renovations to the Third Floor West Wing will provide adequate office and conference room facilities for the technical leadership team in the Department of Public Works, thereby improving planning, design and development functions and responsiveness.

Additionally, renovations to the second floor Human Resources Unit became necessary after the recent fire, and are also nearing completion.

The Cabinet has also approved funds to pay for extensive repairs to the exterior of the building inclusive of the installation of hurricane impact windows and doors, effecting improvements to the roof; concrete, light fixtures; walls and ceiling. The work is well underway and very soon the public will see a new face to the Ministry of Public Works. The building will be one that they will be proud to visit, and one whose image truly represents the exceptionally important work that our staff are engaged in for the Bahamian people.

Mr. Speaker, I want the officers and staff of the Ministry of Public Works to know that they are indeed our most valuable asset. We cherish them, and will continue to ensure that they have the best possible working environment.

iii) Recruitment of Staff

a) Professional Staff

The Ministry of Public Works for many years has been challenged with the inability to recruit and keep young Bahamian technical professionals. Mr. Speaker, when others said that it could not be done, and went abroad to hire technical officers as their first option, our first step was to recruit locally. I am pleased to advise that over the past year we were able to hire twenty-one Bahamian Engineers and Architects and two non-Bahamian professionals.

We welcome them with open arms, and expect that the entire country will benefit from the skills of these many outstanding Bahamian professionals; who are often required to carry workloads that are significantly higher than that of their colleagues in the private sector; and even though we now have space challenges at the Ministry of Public Works I look forward to recruiting more Bahamian

Architects, Engineers and Quantity Surveyors to join the ranks at the Ministry. Opportunities await for those who are desirous of serving their country.

b) Inspectors

Mr. Speaker, more than nine months after the passage of the devastating hurricane Dorian on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama, an extensive reconstruction of the built environment is ongoing. This increase in construction activity requires strict enforcement of the Building Regulations Act and the Bahamas Building Code. It was, therefore, necessary to increase the number of Inspectors on both islands. Permission has been granted for the engagement of thirteen (13) Building Inspectors to cover the ever growing demand for inspections. It is expected that Inspectors

assigned to Abaco and Grand Bahama will be posted with effect from 1 July, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, there is still a need for more Building Inspectors, and I urge qualified Bahamians who are interested in public service to apply to the Ministry to help us.

c) Security Staff

Additionally, Sir, the appointment of twenty-three (23) security assistants and two (2) Senior Security Officers was urgently needed to address the critical shortage in the Security Department due to the attrition of staff as a result of retirements, resignation, deployment, death and transfer of officers. The Ministry will be pleased to welcome these new officers who will enhance security at our administrative offices, Bahamix and the Northern Compound.

Mr. Speaker, I move now to discuss some of the many

initiatives of our various departments, and I begin with:

iv.) Building Control

I have already touched on the hiring of more Inspectors, and the implementation of the innovative EPRIS system, but there is so much more going on in Building Control.

First, we are nearing completion of the official documentation on Energy Efficiency Standards to be published by the International Code Council and adapted for use by the Caricom Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) member countries.

This Regional Energy Efficiency Building Code (REEBC) is being prepared for review and adoption by all CARICOM member countries of which the Bahamas through its local Bahamas Bureau of Standards & Quality (BBSQ) is an active participant.

My Ministry is actively involved in the technical review process.

Secondly, proposed legislation is being reviewed by the OAG for the use, handling and storage of LNG throughout the Bahamas. We anticipate that this legislation will shortly be introduced.

Thirdly, proposed regulations are being reviewed by the OAG for the implementation of a Third Party Inspection Programme. This programme is anticipated to improve the efficiency of inspections throughout the country, but particularly in the Family Islands, where the response time to inspection requests needs improvement.

Finally, on this topic Sir, I have directed Legal Counsel at the Ministry to provide advice on potential amendments to the law to permit easier demolition of dilapidated buildings, and I anticipate reviewing that advice shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to:

v) THE TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION UNIT

This unit has responsibilities for

1. The design and Maintenance of Traffic Signals including technology upgrades in order to enhance/ensure safe movements for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
2. The design of Roadways
3. Access Management, and
4. Road Markings and Sign Installations

I am pleased to report that the following Traffic Signals have been upgraded with new technology equipment in an effort to create a Traffic Management Centre for the entire eighty (80) Traffic Signal Network in New Providence:

1. Shirley Street & Kemp Road Intersection

2. Shirley Street & Parliament Street Intersection

3. Shirley Street & East Street Intersection

4. Shirley Street & Elizabeth Street Intersection

5. Shirley Street & Mount Royal Avenue Intersection

6. Arundel Street & Mount Royal Avenue Intersection

7. Wulff Road & Mackey Street

Once the entire network has been upgraded, and the centre has been completed, traffic signals will be controlled remotely and automatically in accordance with traffic flow.

This Unit is also engaged in a number of other innovative initiatives to improve traffic flow and to relieve congestion on our streets. These include

a) The issuance of a contract to consultant engineers for the Gladstone Road Improvement Project, which will turn Gladstone Road into a four lane highway and greatly relieve congestion into and out of the southwest corridor of the island; b) The installation of Traffic Signs, Reflective Pavement Markers and Road Markings throughout the island; and Mr.

Speaker so many people have taken the time to compliment the Ministry on this initiative;

c) The completion of the evaluation for the Tonique William Darling Highway Extension to JFK Drive so that soon there will be dual lanes in each direct on the highway between the Sir Milo Butler Highway roundabout and the intersection of Tonique William Darling Highway with J.F.K Drive; and

d) The completion of the evaluation for the prequalification of contractors to extend the Sir. Milo Butler Highway to Cowpen Road.

In the upcoming year, Sir, the unit will be focusing on several critical projects including:

- ❖ Upgrading and improving the intersection of Prince Charles Drive & Commonwealth Blvd;
- ❖ Upgrading and improving the intersections of Wulff Road/ Claridge Road & Mackey Street;
- ❖ Upgrading and improving the intersections of the Airport Industrial Park & Windsor Road; and
- ❖ Ensuring that truck load limits are capable of being enforced via the installation of a weight bridge at Arawak Cay.

Mr. Speaker, I move on to the work undertaken by:

vi) THE MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING SECTION

This work is continuous and enhances every ministry and agency.

GENERATORS

Presently the Ministry is responsible for the maintenance of thirty-five (35) generators throughout New Providence. This is done through the use of the Ministry's in-house Generator Workshop staff and the use of private contractors. The Generator Shop is responsible for carrying out basic service on a set timetable. If additional work is required and the team can undertake the repairs, the parts and equipment are purchased and installed. If the situation is beyond the capability of the Generator Workshop staff then a private company is engaged to carry out repairs.

Very few of the generators have maintenance contracts but this will change in 2020 for critical generators at:

- ❖ NEMA;
- ❖ Government House; and
- ❖ The Cabinet Office

Mr. Speaker, New Generators were recently installed at the Simpson Penn School, the Stephen Dilletta School and Ansbacher House Supreme Court Annex II. These generators are all currently under warranty.

In the 2020/21 budget new generators are proposed for:

- ❖ The Office of the Prime Minister - The generator is already on the island, pending paper work to complete delivery to the site and subsequent installation; and
- ❖ MOPW, Abaco Compound: The contractor for the Generator installation, has been mobilized. Preliminary work at the site has been done and all materials are on site.

ELEVATORS

A total of ten (10) elevators at some government facilities and schools are maintained under contract.

Both elevators at the Ansbacher Building – Supreme Court Annex II are currently being replaced. This has been a challenging task with many delays; however I am pleased to report that the installation of elevator number 1 will be completed and commissioned by the end of this month. The replacement of number 2, elevator will commence in July 2020. **ELECTRICAL AND**

AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS

Routine maintenance and repairs to approximately two hundred (200) government buildings and schools, are carried out by the staff of this section. Each unit is now on a set schedule for regular maintenance, and repairs are carried out on an as needed basis. Funds in the Capital Budget are used to purchase materials, spare

parts, tools and equipment in a timely manner to ensure that they are available upon demand.

I am pleased to advise, Sir that Cabinet has now approved the issuance of a contract for a replacement chiller at the Magistrates Court on Nassau Street. It is anticipated that the work will be completed by the end of September, 2020.

VII) DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL PLANNING

The Department of Physical Planning, though challenged by staff shortages, has been working assiduously to fulfill the provision of the Planning and Subdivision Act with regard to orderly and sustainable development, to promote public participation in the planning process and improve efficiency in reviewing applications and proposals ranging from zoning inquiries, business license land use, building permits for residences, offices, shops, to large scale

developments, lot severances and subdivisions throughout the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

To this end, the Department has emphasized timely and efficient processing of planning applications. The Department has responded to pandemic shutdown via the implementation of Zoom Town Planning Committee Meetings and even Zoom client consultation. This has been very fruitful as it allowed for a transition of the Department conducting business almost completely online. Presently, other social media sites are being utilized including our latest endeavour Town Meetings via Facebook Live.

Department of Physical Planning Business Licenses Land Use
Applications Processed On-line

Further to the overall goal of ease of doing business in the Bahamas the online system has been steadily increasing the

efficiency of processing business license land use approvals for New Providence.

In February 2018 the online application process was initiated and with the addition of manpower and working with the inter-agency team of officers, the overall process has become more productive. During this period 5,073 shop and home based land-use applications were successfully processed online. In addition, the Department continued to process 'walkin' business license applications which amount to over 7,200 processed matters.

As a result of the Covid19 crisis the Department was closed to the public; however, the online business license application portal made it possible for the Department staff to continue processing these applications whilst working from home

The Business License Unit of the Department of Physical Planning resumed accepting calls and inquiries from the public on

May 1st, 2020. This facilitated the public being guided through the online application process which resulted in an increase in the amount of applications for the month of May.

617 applications were successfully processed.

(Please see Business License Land Use Application statistical report below)

Business License Land Use Application Stats

Month	Submitted	Assigned	% Assigned	Approved	Rejected	Completed
April-2018	104 144	72%	99	2	101	
April-2019	101 268	38%	98	2	100	
April-2020	165 344	48%	138	14	152	
August-2018	126 86	68%	79	1	80	
August-2019	276	192	70%	178	12	190
December-2018	114	60	53%	59	0	59
December-2019	142					
February-2018	324					
February-2019	393					
February-2020	334					
January-2019	529					
January-2020	336					
July-2018	173					
July-2019	257					
June-2018	145					
June-2019	275					
June-2020	443					
March-2018	309					
March-2019	496					
March-2020	272					
May-2018	153					
May-2019	347					
May-2020	893					
November-2018	146					
November-2019	236					
October-2018	144					
October-2019	226					
September-2018	154					
September-2019	186	142	100%	101		
		38		139		

145	45%	131	2	133	103	67%	101	1	102
139	35%	136	2	138	266	77%	263	1	264
334	100%	240	86	326	<u>652</u>	<u>73%</u>	<u>536</u>	<u>617</u>	<u>81</u>
77	15%	76	0	76	104	71%	102	104	2
336	100%	248	87	335	195	83%	137	57	194
81	47%	80	0	80	108	75%	108	0	108
191	74%	189	0	189	145	64%	101	44	145
82	57%	66	1	67	112	73%	107	4	111
203	74%	201	0	201	143	77%	128	13	141
421	95%	331	82	413					
77	25%	64	0	64					
220	44%	218	0	218					
228	84%	158	68	226					

viii) Bahamix

Mr. Speaker, this caring FNM government cares about the condition of our streets. Unlike members opposite, who plodded along with old, inefficient and costly equipment, we have purchased a new state of the art Astec asphalt plant for Bahamix at a cost of \$3,519,870.00. Bahamix received the plant on May 12th of this year, and a contract for the construction of the foundation was awarded to Mr. Matthew Burrows of Concrete Concepts Contractors & Developers. Bahamix expects to commission the new plant by December of this year, and while it will be a wonderful tool to improve the condition of our roads,

Bahamix has not been resting on their laurels. From July 2019 through today they have been very busy paving and reinstating roads and public parking lots, which include:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Pear Dale | 10. St. Michael Road | 17. Harold Road Reinstatements |
| 2. St. Andrews Drive
(reinstatement) | 11. Fox Hill Road (reinstatement) | 18. Godet Close 3. Tropical Gardens Rd. |
| 4. Reeves Street
(reinstatement)
D.W. Davis Ball
Court/Assembly | 12. Wulff Road (reinstatement) | 19. Coconut Grove Ave. |
| 5. Shady Tree Lane | 13. Sassoon Drive | 20. Holiday Drive |
| 6. Beets Road | 14. Marigold Farm Rd. | 21. Marshall Rd. (Reinstatement) |
| 7. Round About | 15. Nassau St. (Poincianna to
TWD/Games Blvd) | 22. Faith Ave. (Reinstatement) |
| 8. Navy Lion Road | 16. Boat Swain Hill Road | 23. Round About (Baillou/TWD) |
| 9. Beatrice Avenue
Defense Force Base | 24. Fire Trail Rd (Reinstatement) | 25. Retirement Road |
| | 26. Faith Avenue (Fire Trail to
Carmichael Rd) | 27. Boat Swain Road |
| | 28. Steps Street | |
| | 29. East Street | |

ix) BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Mr. Speaker, I am blessed to have relations with six (6) highly professional boards. They are:

- ❖ Town Planning Committee

- ❖ The Straw Market Authority
- ❖ The Bridge Authority
- ❖ The Water & Sewerage Corporation
- ❖ BEC and Bahamas Power & Light
- ❖ Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

Additionally, the following Committees have been established to support the work of the Ministry:

- ❖ The Professional Architects Board
- ❖ The Professional Engineers Board, and
- ❖ The Professional Contractors Board.

Mr. Speaker, while time will not permit me to discuss the work of each Board/Committee individually, I wish to offer sincere thanks and appreciation, on behalf of the Government and people of our beautiful Bahamaland, for the dedicated service provided by these outstanding citizens who continue to give unheralded service to our country on these boards.

I shall seek to speak briefly to the Bridge Authority, the Straw Market Authority and BEC/BPL.

i) THE BRIDGE AUTHORITY

Mr. Speaker, the 2020 Operating and Capital Budgets of the Authority have made allocations for several initiatives, including:

- ❖ Fender rebuild for Pier #9 of the Eastern Bridge
- ❖ Restoration of the toll plaza canopy
- ❖ Light Poles replacement on the Eastern Bridge
- ❖ Jersey walls to protect Eastern Bridge Piers that land on Potter's Cay, and
- ❖ Bulkhead Landscaping of the Eastern Bridge.

1.2 Actual Unaudited Financial Results for 2019

A. Bridge Toll Income: \$9,023,498 increased by \$30,816.19 or 0.34% compared to the previous year.

B. Leases Income: \$61,600 increased by \$36,500 or 145.42% compared to the previous year.

C. Interest Income: \$701,522 increased by \$79,269 or 12.74% compared to the previous year.

D. Operating Expenses: \$5,945,865 increased by \$7,909.93 or 0.13% compared to the previous year.

- E.** Net Profit: \$3,910,471 increased by \$803,273 or 25.85% compared to the previous year.
- F.** Cash Position at Year's End: \$2,215,614 decreased by \$10,425,844 or 82.47% compared to the previous year.
- G.** Held to Maturity (HTM) Assets: Bahamas Government Registered Stocks (BGRS) stood at \$19,365,371 increased by \$8,002,000 or 70.04% compared to the previous year.
- H.** Long Term Debt: a. \$22 million in bonds payable with varying maturity dates of 2024, 2029 and 2034 decreased by \$7,000,000 compared to the previous year. b. Bond interest cost was \$1,361,493 decreased by \$298,507 or 18.0% compared to the previous year.
- I.** Fixed Assets: Stood at \$30,876,342 decreased by \$881,078 or 2.77% compared to the previous year.

- ❖ The revenue of Bridge Authority from tolls remained quite stable during the year 2019.
- ❖ Income from lease agreement increased by \$36,500 or 145.42% compared to the previous year.

- ❖ Interest Income increased by \$79,269 or 12.74% by additional investment in BGRS.
- ❖ Cash Position at the end of the year decreased by \$10,425,844 or 82.47% due to use of cash to purchase additional BGRS and retirement of the 2019 Bond Tranche.
- ❖ The BGRS holdings increased by \$8,002,000 or 70.04% due to additional purchase of investments.
- ❖ Bonds payable decreased by \$7,000,000 due to retirement of bond principal in the 2019 tranche.
- ❖ Bond Interest cost decreased by \$6,640 or 0.40% due to a reduction in Bonds outstanding.
- ❖ Fixed Assets decreased by \$881,078 or 2.77% due to full amortization of certain assets.

COVID-19 Update

The true impact of the COVID 19 pandemic shutdown remain to be seen.

While TBA was declared an exempt organization, they continue to follow all the guidelines regarding social distancing, sanitizing and

the wearing of personal protective equipment. During weekend lockdowns, the operation was completely closed except of the single lane that is locked-open for the freeflow of traffic.

Impact on Fiscal Matters

Costs to date have been covered largely by the reserves garnered from the earning of the 1st Quarter of 2020. Notwithstanding the significant decline in revenue, the costs to the business remains unchanged and inline with prior periods.

Cash reserves remain reasonably healthy despite the unforeseeable turn of events. Our reserves from 1st Quarter 2020 and the reserves from the prior year should put TBA in good stead for several months to come.

We remain grateful to Chairman Gregory Bonimy and his board at the Bridge Authority for their exemplary vigilance, especially to fiscal protection of revenue.

ii) THE STRAW MARKET AUTHORITY

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that since my last presentation to this Honorable House on the Straw Market, the very serious concern of the non-functional sprinkler system has been

addressed. The horrors of the Straw Market fire and now behind us and the market is now a safe environment in which the vendors may operate.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the Bay Street Straw Market closed to the public and Vendors at 8pm on Saturday, 22nd February, 2020 and was scheduled to re-open at 7am on Saturday, 29th February, 2020. During the closure period, the SMA used this opportunity to clean, repair, paint and renovate Stalls at the Bay Street Market. Please note that since the construction of the Bay Street Market, there has been no wholesale effort to repairs and renovate all Stalls in the Bay Street Market. The SMA is very proud of the efforts all of the managers and staff displayed in taking on this mammoth task.

The SMA suspended the payment of rent to all Vendors at the Bay Street Market during the entire closure period. Additionally, the SMA secured permission for Vendors to occupy the Prince George Wharf. The SMA also permitted Bay Street Market Vendors to temporarily transfer to one of our other Markets. Any Bay Street

Market Vendor who took advantage of the temporary relocation was not charged rent or any fee by the SMA.

The total lost rental income during the closure period was **\$25,620.00** or a decrease of **28.5%**. The cost of the cleaning, repairs, painting, and renovations to Stalls at the Bay Street Market was **\$43,687.69**. Also during the closure period, lights at the Bay Street Market were replaced and repaired, including florescent lights in the corridors, bathrooms and stairwells were either repaired or replaced. All oscillating fans were also properly cleaned.

The rebranding – external painting of the Straw Market remains an on-going project of the Ministry.

Fire Alarm and Fire Sprinkler System and the Electrical issues at the Bay Street Straw Market

The Fire Alarm and Fire Sprinkler System and the Electrical issues at the Bay Street Straw Market have been addressed by the Ministry of Public Works.

For the period 1st January, 2017 to date the SMA has spent **\$15,061.08** on repairs and maintenance to the Cable Beach Straw Market.

Operations at the Paradise Island Straw Market continued without any major challenges.

Covid-19 Global Pandemic

On 20th March, 2020, the SMA advised all Vendors by Notice that in accordance with the Emergency Powers (COVID 19) (No.

1) Order 2020, all Markets would be closed until further notice. Additionally, that the SMA would not charge Vendors the daily rent of \$5.00 (plus VAT) for the period 20th March, 2020 to 30th March, 2020 (inclusive). In the circumstances which have occurred, all SMA Markets have remained closed from 20th March, 2020 to date.

The total loss rental income for the SMA during the Covid-19 Global Pandemic to 31st May, 2020, is **\$165,550.00** or **71.4% decrease**.

As a result of the Covid-19 Global Pandemic, the SMA has revised and updated its 2020 Budget. The Updated Budget is primarily based on the assumption that Vendors will not pay rent to the SMA until January, 2021. Please note that the SMA does not intend to waive the payment of rent if, or when, its Markets re-open. However, practically, we must attempt to address the real possibility that Vendors may not be in a financial position to pay rent.

1st March 2020 to 31st March, 2020		1st April, 2020 to 31st May, 2020		
LOCATION	Expected	Actual	Expected	Actual
	Collection	Collection	Collection	Collection
	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)
Bay Street	\$64,050.00	\$51,240.00	\$115,290.00	\$0.00
Cable Beach	\$9,450.00	\$7,560.00	\$17,010.00	\$0.00
Paradise	\$2,800.00	\$2,240.00	\$5,040.00	\$0.00
Island				
Fort	\$6,475.00	\$5,180.00	\$11,655.00	\$0.00
Fincastle				
TOTAL	\$82,775.00	\$66,220.00	\$148,995.00	\$0.00

I take this opportunity, Sir to thank SMA Chair Kelli Ingraham and her Board for their exemplary service, especially in the cleaning, painting and rebranding of our iconic straw market.

Mr. Speaker,
Let me now turn to:

iii) BPL

The major objectives for the fiscal year were to enhance the safety culture; to improve delivery of customer service and to improve the reliability of service, particularly during the summer months. BPL has remained focused on restructuring its debt to decrease operational expenses with the rate reduction bond offering.

Mr. Speaker,

You will have heard us talk during the course of the year about the conditions we found when we took responsibility for BPL, foremost among them an ageing and severely weakened generation

fleet and a transmission and distribution grid badly in need of investment. We determined that a new direction was necessary. And I can say that a new direction has been established. **BPL'S current Board has created a strategic plan that plots a path to turn BPL around within five years.** That plan has five pillars, as follows:

- I. **Safety** – The safety of customers and employees is of paramount importance.
- II. **Customers** – BPL will focus on providing the best possible service at the lowest possible costs.
- III. **People/Employees** – BPL will develop capacity so that the organization and customers benefit from a welltrained, focused, and productive workforce.
- IV. **Asset Management** – BPL will acquire the right assets for our environment; grow and maintain these assets so that

we can provide reliable electricity and other services to customer at the lowest possible costs.

- V. **Financials** – BPL will manage its finances so that BPL will be able to consistently collect the revenue that it is due, and generate annual returns that will enable the company to continually invest in its people, processes, and assets in order to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible costs to our consumers.

The Board and Executives have completed the first year of that Strategic Plan, which has yielded baseline metrics for such things as safety performance, public and customer perception, asset maintenance and other areas.

Against that background, our perspective of the past fiscal year matures, and we see in BPL a company faced with incredibly **hard decisions, painful decisions**, and we see a leadership team that

made those decisions as appropriate. The tough choices at BPL are being made, and I am confident that what we will reap as a community, and a country, for the investment we make into BPL right now is a new energy regime in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

The first step in the turnaround strategy at BPL is addressing power generation.

GENERATION

Mr. Speaker,

The goal of this Administration is to reduce dependence on fossil fuel by aggressively utilizing renewable sources of energy including solar, by the use of LNG, and distributed battery technology. As we have said, we are improving and modernizing our current energy production and distribution methods.

CPPS Station A

You will recall that on December 15, 2019 the new Station A at our Clifton Pier Power Station came online. Our **total investment in Station A was \$96.8 million**, and the project was funded through loan and insurance proceeds. Station A is the largest single power plant ever built in the history of BEC/BPL, and it was built in record time, less than nine months.

The station features seven Wärtsilä 50DF engines designed to give high output with fuel flexibility, low emissions, efficiency and reliability. Initially, the engines were used to augment the power to the grid to facilitate the maintenance of existing generation in preparation for the demands of summer 2020. As BPL reported, the engines were staggered onto the grid in order to ensure that BPL is not in a position where it must take all the new engines offline at the

same time to perform maintenance. At present, six of the seven engines are online.

Mr. Speaker,

GE TM2500 @ BHPS

On March 5, 2020, we were pleased to celebrate the successful kickoff of the brand new **GE TM2500 aero-derivative gas turbine** at the Blue Hills Power Station (BHPS), marking the addition of more than 33 megawatts (MW) of power to the grid, with new technology tuned to enable BPL to take advantage of developments on the horizon and in the near future.

The GE TM2500 is a trailer-mounted aero-derivative gas turbine capable of producing 37%-plus efficiency, with an output between 33 and 35 MW. The agreement with GE and installation of the unit at

BHPS was all completed in less than 45 days. This accomplishment demonstrates the speed and focus possible with institutional and objective alignment.

Mr. Speaker,

This deployment of brand new, cutting edge technology at the Blue Hills Power Station was a partnership between the Government of The Bahamas, BPL and GE, **at a cost of \$27.3M**. The Prime Minister called the installation of the new machine at BHPS “a critical step in the ongoing transformation of the energy sector.” The fact that the TM2500 can be switched to run on LNG supports his government’s push toward cleaner, more reliable, less expensive energy, and as I have said, the use of LNG is expected to usher in a new energy future for The Bahamas.

Other generation projects executed over the course of the last fiscal year totaled just over **\$1.923 million** and included:

- Major overhaul of units in San Salvador, Bimini, George Town, Hatchet Bay, Great Harbour Cay, South Andros and North Andros
- Replacement of an aged genset in Inagua and the overhaul of the second generator on island
- Installation of engine in Cat Island, replacement of an engine in North Andros
- Installation of parts at the Marsh Harbour Power Station
- Demolition of a damaged power station building in Bimini

Mr. Speaker,

BPL had also planned to complete replacements and upgrades to generation in Harbour Island, Long Island, South Andros and San Salvador. These projects were delayed by the shutdowns caused by the pandemic but are to be executed within the coming months.

Generation: NP Preparedness For Summer 2020

Mr. Speaker,

The commissioning of Station A has resulted in the addition of 132 megawatts into our grid, and the TM2500 added 33 to 35 megawatts, pumping up our generation fleet. Here are the numbers:

 Clifton Pier Power Station = 202¹ megawatts

 Blue Hills Power Station = 96 megawatts

 Aggreko Rental Units = 105 megawatts

¹ Station A = Wärtsilä engines 132MW, Station B = 70MW (DA9=25, DA10=25, DA13=18)

🎬 Total NP Generation: = 403 megawatts

The traditional summer peak is between 240 and 250 megawatts.

The highest peak we have ever recorded in New Providence was in 2017, and it was 248 megawatts. So the simple math is this:

Total New Providence Generation 403MW – Summer Peak

250MW = Redundancy 153MW (N-2)

Mr. Speaker,

When it comes to generation, BPL and this Minnis administration are ready for the summer peak here in New Providence.

However, generation is not the whole story. BPL considers its service in the manner of a chain, generation being the first link in that chain. However, the next link is transmission and distribution, what

we call The Grid. That's your overhead wires, your electrical poles, your transformers and so on.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall from the debate around the Rate Reduction Bond legislation that BPL requires significant investment in T&D. Much of this investment is aimed at preparing the system for exporting power out of Clifton Pier once Station D comes online. We have earmarked more than \$48M of the funds generated by the RRB for major transmission line and substation upgrades, and millions more for other T&D grid works. Of course, because of the delay in closing the RRB, these investments have been delayed. In the interim, BPL has continued to perform maintenance and reinforcement works on the Transmission System. This year, the company completed a major transmission system project to provide supply to the Pointe Hotel on West Bay Street. This involved the

installation of new cables from the Big Pond Substation and will improve the capacity of the network in the West Bay Street and Fort Charlotte area. BPL has also installed a new Substation at the Gladstone and Fire Trail intersection aimed at improving both capacity and reliability of the Transmission infrastructure in this area.

Mr. Speaker,

BPL is doing what it can to prepare as best as possible for summer 2020, and we are confident that we will be able to severely curtail any need for power outages this summer.

RATE REDUCTION BOND

Mr. Speaker,

The inefficiencies of our national electrical utility in the past are coming to an end, and BPL is at last on a path that will lead to self-sufficiency and an end to government subventions.

One of the major planks in the new strategic direction is the decision to go out for the Rate Reduction Bond. Let me say here that the establishment of the Strategic Plan, and the alignment of the Company's activities – from spending to personnel decisions – has positioned BPL to maximize the positive impact to be derived from the Bond.

Mr. Speaker,

The refinancing of the inherited legacy BEC loans totaling \$246 million, and the BPL Interim loan of \$75 million, began in June 2019 with the issuance of the RFP to appoint a Sole Lead Manager/Joint Lead Manager, Citibank, N.A., for the issuance of the long anticipated Rate Reduction Bonds (RRBs).

For the past year BPL and its advisors have worked complete this transaction with much assistance from the Government of The Bahamas. The Bond quantum amount of

\$535 million was recently approved by Cabinet and the Use of Proceeds rubric has been adjusted to reflect this. In addition, Singapore has been approved for listing the bonds and an engagement letter has been executed. The Boards of BPL and the Bahamas Rate Reduction Bond Limited continue to work, along with company executives, to be in a state of readiness once the markets that were impacted by COVID-19 reopen so that the transaction can be brought to a favourable conclusion.

Some points to reiterate about the charge that will secure the bond, which we are calling the National Utility Investment Charge (NUIC): **our goal is for the NUIC to be rate-neutral within six to ten months of its introduction**. What this means in simple terms is that compared to 2018 rates, with a number of assumptions, the increase in cost that will result from the addition of the charge will be

offset by savings derived from fuel savings and increases in efficiency and management of resources.

The positive momentum for the RRB prior to the COVID19 pandemic has not dissipated. The change in circumstance means only that BPL must wait for a more favorable market window opens in order to put the bond to market.

Loan Balance Sheet Shift

In the interim, Mr. Speaker, BPL has received assistance from the Government of The Bahamas to make up short fall in revenues, and to assist with the transferring of \$246M in loans to the balance sheet of the Government of The Bahamas. The balloon payment of the \$246 million dollars was due on June 11, 2020. Given the time constraints, it was impossible now for BPL to secure the bond before the balloon payment came due.

In order to address this, the Government of The Bahamas agreed to transfer the government-guaranteed loan from BPL's balance sheet to the balance sheet of the Government. The creditor agreed to extend the due date from June 11 for 45 days to allow the parties time to complete a new bridge loan. That new bridge loan – which will cover the \$246M outstanding – will be a loan between the creditor and the Government of The Bahamas. The Government will then execute a Side Agreement with BPL requiring BPL to service the new loan, which will remain on the Government's balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker,

It is necessary that the Government of The Bahamas take this drastic step to assist BPL in its turnaround efforts, which will result in righting the ship at BPL, so the national utility can start delivering consistent, reliable power at a lower cost to consumers. The securing

of the RRB is the next step towards that future, and this resolution is necessary to see that happen.

Mr. Speaker, let me emphasize that BPL will remain responsible for repayment of this loan. The Government of The Bahamas is taking this extraordinary step only to allow the company to have the room to operate, in order to deliver on its promise of consistent, reliable power at a lower cost to consumers.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FOR FISCAL 2019/20

Abaco, Post-Dorian

Mr. Speaker,

In the first days of September 2019, Hurricane Dorian struck Abaco as the most powerful Category Five storm on record. The

storm lashed the island for days, and left devastation in its wake. We are still working assiduously to recover from that natural disaster.

With regard to the ongoing Abaco Restoration, BPL has received from the Government to date \$30 million. Total commitments to date stand at \$25.72 million.

BPL's response to Hurricane Dorian was swift, and has been steady. Power was restored to South Abaco by September 27, 2019. In the North, from Coopers Town north to Crown Haven was returned to service November 3, 2019. And supply to the hospital, government offices, airport and water plant in Marsh Harbour – what we refer to as the Critical Services – was restored on November 21, 2019. Since then, it has been a slow and steady slog through both expected difficulties and unexpected obstacles. Up to the end of May 2020, we had restored about 50% of our infrastructure on the island and cays.

Up to the end of last week, supplies have been restored or our systems have been reenergized in the following areas. BPL reminds customers that in some of these areas, meters were removed from damaged buildings that must receive the relevant inspections and installation approvals before we are able to safely restore the supply.

Family Island Renewable IPP RFPs

Six potential Independent Power Providers (IPPs) entered the second phase of evaluations of bids for contracts to develop, finance, build, own and operate a solar photovoltaic (solar PV) and energy storage plant or a hybrid power plant on

North & Central Andros, North Eleuthera, South Eleuthera and Inagua.

Phase Two of this process involves deeper dives into the technical and financial elements of the proposals, requests for

clarification from the bidders and bidder interviews. This process, particularly regarding bidder interviews, has had to be modified as the COVID 19 pandemic made it impossible for the initially planned approach of interviews and sites visits to projects operated by the shortlisted companies.

As such, BPL anticipate holding virtual bidder presentations during the week of June 15, 2020.

Once that happens, there will be a period to allow the bidders to provide additional information, then some time for evaluation of the bids, and in the third week of July, we expect to submit a report citing the approved bids (or, recommending proposed bidder). Contract negotiations from then would take place beginning the third week in August, and should all things remain equal, our timeline now calls for awarding of contracts as early as the end of September 2020.

Ragged Island

Mr. Speaker,

The solar PV arrays for the Ragged Island Renewable Microgrid are fully installed, and green electricity has been injected into the grid as part of the commissioning. The energy storage system is on site and awaiting return of normal activities to be put in service. Contractors TUGLIQ (**pronounced 2-glick**) Energy and construction partner SALT Energy are therefore excited to make progress on the commissioning of the renewable hybrid microgrid for Ragged Island as soon as conditions exacerbated by the COVID19 allow.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of The Bahamas continues to support BPL because it supports the strategic plan. That plan is good for the Company and good for the Bahamian people. The Board and the Executive team are executing on this plan, and achieving success. Turning around a company the size and complexity of BPL

will take years, and we have made great strides in year one. We also recognize and know that once BPL is in the position to provide reliable electricity services at the lowest possible costs, especially with cost stability, this will serve as an economic game changer for the country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to profusely thank Chairman Donovan Moxey and his dedicated board at BPL along with CEO Whitney Heastie for accomplishing in one year strategic improvements that the former administration could not accomplish in 5 with the foreign leadership team that they brought into the Bahamas to lead BPL. Yes Cat Island, the FNM cares, and we show it by our actions.

7. CHALLENGES

Mr. Speaker our work is not without challenges. Our staff face them every single day. The challenges test and motivate our officers

to continue to give the highest level of service. I want to touch on a few here:

i) Drainage Maintenance and Storm Water Design

Great attention has been given to the maintenance of the existing drainage network on the Island of New Providence. The Island was divided into eleven (11) work zones, and eleven (11) companies were contracted to carry out routine maintenance on the existing drainage infrastructure (wells, catch pits, box drains and retention ponds, etc.) in their assigned zones.

Additionally, areas on New Providence that were subject to severe flooding were also assessed in order to determine whether the installation of drain wells might be a solution for mitigating flooding in these areas. As a result, over the course of ten (10) months approximately one hundred and twenty (120)

new wells have been drilled, and fifty (50) existing wells have been re-drilled to a maximum depth of 200-feet, in flood prone areas. This has been the result of the engagement of several local well drilling companies by the government.

In an effort to develop a more comprehensive solution to the drainage situation on the island of New Providence, the Drainage Unit has been reviewing a new drainage initiative for the Island of New Providence, with specific focus on flood prone areas, with relatively flat land and with a very high water table. A conceptual design of a proprietary drainage system which has proven successful in similar areas in other countries has been prepared and provision has been made in this budget for specific focus on several communities.

ii) STANDPIPE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

There are approximately two hundred and seventy (270) standpipes in New Providence providing vital potable water for residents. The MOPW has issued a total of eighteen (18) maintenances contracts with each contractor being responsible for fifteen (15) Standpipes. The maintenance includes cleaning the standpipes and surrounding areas. Four (4) contractors have drawn down contracts for repairs of standpipes as the need arises.

One of the challenges, Mr. Speaker, is that we have found that the standpipes were not built with the dimensions of five gallon water bottles in mind. Hence, in a number of communities the empty bottles are angled to fit under the standpipe, but once they are full they have to be upright to not spill water when they are removed. The act of removing them whilst they are upright

has caused many faucets on standpipes to be broken. Accordingly, provision is now being made to improve the design of these standpipes. **iii) ILLEGAL GARAGES**

I wish to thank legal officers Adelma Roach and Sybrena Deveaux for initiating the Prosecution of Illegal Garage Operators. They have resumed the issuance of summonses to illegal garage operators and illegal building construction sites, for the attendance and prosecution through the Magistrate's Courts. Operators are to be reminded that not only are these garages illegal, but they create social and health issues that plague our communities, including the challenge of rodent infestation.

iv) CONTRAVENTION OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS ACT

In the aftermath of hurricane Dorian, it became quite evident that many of the structures that sustained major damage, or which were destroyed, were not built to Code standard. Hence the revision of The Bahamas Building Code and Small Buildings Construction Manual has been prioritized.

I am pleased to advise that a Unit led by Deputy Director Delancy has been established in the Ministry to provide focused attention to the research required for the revision of the Bahamas Building Code (BBC) [2003] 3rd Ed. The Ministry is currently in the process of seeking the most optimum method for improvements to the current BBC. The main options are to update the current BBC or to adopt the International Building Code.

The small buildings construction manual is also being updated, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the University of the Bahamas (UB), to produce more user-friendly “Build Back Better” manuals. These manuals are intended to help facilitate code compliance in small buildings construction.

I shall address this subject more fully on another occasion.

v) The Invasive Casurina

Mr. Speaker, one of the Ministry’s initiatives over the past few weeks has proven to be very topical, and it is my duty to share information on this project.

The Ministry has issued contracts for the removal of a number of large casurina trees in Eastern New Providence. Many residents

have expressed concern that we getting rid of what they believe to be beautiful shady trees.

Mr. Speaker, the casurina tree is an invasive species. Over the years it has taken control of coastlines on many of our islands. This tree is an enemy to the pristine environment that we in the Bahamas cherish.

Let me quote here from the Bahamas Invasive Species Field Guide produced by the department of Marine Resources in 2013:

The Casuarina devastates natural systems. It outcompetes native vegetation and causes erosion of dune systems allowing storm surge to reach further inland. There has been extensive loss of dunes in all national parks where it occurs including the Lucayan National Park, Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park, Clifton Heritage Park, and Andros West Side Park. There has also been extensive loss of dune systems

in areas outside of the national parks, including the shorelines of Andros, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, and New Providence. The Casuarina severely reduces biodiversity wherever it occurs. It outcompetes native vegetation and creates monocultures. This species shades out the native shrubs and grasses, produces allelopathic compounds which retards growth of other species, and produces a thick ground litter which inhibits seedling germination. Allelopathy is the ability to exude chemicals that inhibit growth of other species beneath it. The chemicals called tannins that are leached from the Casuarina needles are carcinogenic and can also kill cattle that forage on them. The root system is shallow but hard and woody, reducing the ability of sea turtles to dig nests on shorelines. Casuarinas have shallow roots and tip over easily in tropical storms and hurricanes. When they tip over, they tear up roads, snap power lines and stop economic activity until they are cleared away.

Additionally, Casuarinas cause beach erosion. As areas lose their beaches, they lose their ability to provide recreational space for locals, attract tourists and support the local economy.

That was seven years ago, Mr. Speaker. In that period the casurina has spread exponentially throughout the Bahamas.

Mr. Speaker, casurinas are salt tolerant; hence in many communities in our country the casurina tree has taken our beaches over eroded them 30 to 40 feet. They compromise our national shoreline hurricane defences and destroy our natural vegetation. The casurina is our enemy, Sir, and this country will have to mount a national effort to stop the casurina spread. By all means, cut them down and use them to make coal or furniture, but they are not the peaceful giants that so many of us think they are.

Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of the Ministry to replace the casurinas that we cut down with shady indigenous Bahamian plants;

action that we anticipate will permit the sand on many of our eroded beaches to replenish itself.

I wish to now table three documents that highlight the casurina challenge that our environmentalists are fighting so fiercely.

- Extract from Bahamas Invasive Species Field Guide
- Weed alert
- Invasive species of the Bahamas – A publication of the National Trust.

8. THE BUDGET

i) Introductory

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to facing the reality of a capital budget allocation of \$151,097,521, which represents a whopping increase of \$57,361,691. That's a 61 percent increase in the capital budget in a single year, Sir.

ii) Stimulus

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Works will utilize a portion of these funds prudently to improve our physical infrastructure in our communities to create stimulus initiatives in the construction industry. We know that money spent on small capital initiatives will move from hand to hand throughout local communities; and will empower small contractors and improve the standard of living of their families.

One of the creative projects that we will focus on as a stimulus this year, Sir, involves the allocation of capital funding to improve family life and the health of all Bahamians.

Colleagues are aware of the signature park that we created in the Silver Gates community in Carmichael. People flock from all over the island to exercise at Silver Gates, enjoying the walking trails, free WI-FI, exercise equipment, and basketball and tennis courts.

I wish to advise that by the end of July the Southern Recreation Grounds will have been completely transformed into the country's second significant signature park. It is only fitting, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister's initiative will have enhanced and improved the park in the heart of Bains and

Grants Town. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed the people's time.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Works has prepared scopes of works to develop and enhance parks throughout our country. I have seen the difference in family utilization of the Mermaid Park in Carmichael since we installed a new walking track there, and I anticipate similar increase utilization of the Belair/Phil Smith Park after we installed lighting there just last week.

The effect of encouraging family health enhancing activities will be facilitated throughout the Bahamas in the upcoming months. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has selected an initial 146 parks throughout the

island of New Providence for enhancement. Work will begin early in July.

Additionally, Sir, as I speak, technical officers of the Ministry of Public Works are now travelling throughout the country to develop scopes of work for parks in the family of Bahamian islands. This effort was delayed due to the worldwide pandemic which led to travel prohibitions; however, in short order I anticipate that similar enhancement of recreational facilities will occur throughout the country.

I want to encourage families to utilize these facilities and abandon our sedentary Netflix, X-Box and PlayStation focused lives to enhance healthy lifestyles among our children.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members may anticipate that shortly after this recreational stimulus has been initiated throughout the country,

the Ministry of Public Works will embark on another, similar stimulus initiative.

iii) The Deplorable State of Our Bridges

Mr. Speaker, one challenge that the Ministry is taking on during this budget period is the transformation and upgrading of bridges throughout our country.

In the family islands bridges are critical for transportation from one portion of most islands to other portions of the same island or to nearby islands.

Regrettably, for many years we have shamefully failed to properly maintain or replace these bridges. However, Mr. Speaker, your transformative FNM government cares about the family islands, and has taken action to promote the safety of all bridge users in our country.

Mr. Speaker, what is shameful is that the last substantial bridge built in the Bahamas was in 1997, and that was in New Providence. Even more shameful, members opposite refused to follow the advice of their own Engineers when they decided to build a causeway instead of a bridge in Grand Bahama, and a causeway instead of a bridge in Abaco. We saw the folly of their negligence when hurricane Dorian topped the Grand Bahama causeway just last year, and the causeway in Abaco was completely destroyed. The photographic evidence that was provided during this debate by Minister Lewis is telling.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently 16 bridges and causeways in the family islands that need repair or replacement. Sir, your Government has completed construction of one of those bridges; completed repairs to another; commenced construction of three others; and engaged engineering consultants to provide the planning process for

the construction of an additional two bridges. We are workers not talkers like members opposite. And yes Cat Island the FNM cares and we show it by our actions.

Mr. Speaker, I will now give an account of what we are doing to restore our bridges:

❖ **The Glass Window Bridge: Eleuthera**

The replacement of the bridge structure is long overdue, and in December, 2019 the Ministry of Public Works engaged consultant engineers to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study followed by detailed engineering design for a new bridge along a new alignment. The works studies are to take into account future demand; financial viability; climate impacts, including projected climate change and other environmental and socio-

economic issues relevant to the site. The Glass Window site is unique and it is important that the selected option for a replacement structure takes advantage of the character of the location for the benefit of the Bahamian people and also visiting tourists. The replacement of the existing bridge crossing provides an opportunity to create a potentially world famous feature that could attract additional tourism benefits. The contract with the consultant Engineers is for \$2,040,840.00.

The time period for the consultancy is as follows:-

Phase 1 – Feasibility Study (4 months)

Phase 2 – Detailed Design (4 months)

Phase 3 – Tender Bid Process (3 months)

Phase 4 – Contract Administration (24 months)

It is anticipated that early in 2021 a contract will be awarded for the construction of the new bridge, which will take 3 years to complete,

which means that Prime Minister will open it two years into the second Minnis administration. So yes Cat Island the FNM cares about the people of Eleuthera and we show it by our actions.

❖ **Newton's Cay Bridge – Long Island**

The construction of the bridge has been completed by native Long Island Engineer Stephen Knowles, and will provide access for Long Islanders and visitors to beautiful Newton's Cay. The Newton Cay Bridge is the first bridge that was built by the Minnis administration. It was finished less than 3 years into this administration, and is one bridge more than the former administration built during their

entire 5 years in office.

❖ **Spanish Wells/Russell Island Bridge**

In July, 2019 Cabinet approved \$3,283,102.40 for the erection of a new bridge. The effects of hurricane Dorian on the contractor in Grand Bahama, and the subsequent coronavirus pandemic lockdown delayed the erection of the new bridge. The old bridge was fragile for many years, but members opposite NOTHING; and so it was no surprise that driving a concrete truck over it would have caused it to collapse. The contractor was delayed by the national lockdown and he is now moving ahead, and we anticipate speedy completion of the erection of the new bridge by August, and when completed will make two more bridges than the former administration built during their entire five years in office. Yes Cat Island the FNM cares about Spanish Wells and we show it by our actions.

❖ **Staniard Creek Bridge**

The bridge in my home settlement was built so long ago that the Ministry has no record of its construction, which was probably in the early 1960's. It is in critically severe condition, and we are replacing it with a new bridge as a matter of urgency. The modern new iconic bridge will span the 300 foot creek. We expect it to be finished by the end of the year as a special Christmas gift to residents. The construction of this third bridge by the Minnis

administration will be three more bridges than the former administration built during their entire 5 years in office. The total cost is \$9,692,929.44. Yes Cat Island the FNM cares about Staniard Creek, and we show it by our actions. ❖ **London Creek**

Culverts

The contract work is for the construction of a 148 foot long by 42 foot wide concrete culvert at London Creek site in

Andros. The culverts will improve the water flow in the area and will allow the natural regeneration of the ecosystem. The internal height of the culverts is between 4 to 8 feet which will allow for the natural flushing of the creek. The cost of the works is \$2,126,916.51, and when it is completed in two months it will be the fourth bridge structure built by the Minnis administration in less than four years. So, yes Cat Island the FNM cares about Andros and we show it by our actions.

❖ **Little Abaco Bridge**

It is regretted that members opposite decided to ignore advice from their Engineers, and built a low lying culvert instead of a real bridge to connect Little Abaco to Great Abaco. They wasted millions of dollars. During the passage of Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, that culvert structure suffered severe damage from storm surge and the structure and road were left sunken

under water. A temporary road causeway has been constructed to the north of the site to enable road traffic access across the waterway. The new bridge is to be the full width of the waterway, with a 12 feet vertical clearance at Mean High Water allowing boats to navigate beneath the bridge. The bridge will be a single span with no piers in the waterway so there will be no structures to be damaged by storm surge. The abutments will be sheet piled with rock revetment protection. So if there is another hurricane Abaconians will not be left separated and stranded on two different sides of the water. The completion of this bridge this year will be a Christmas present to Abaco, and will be the fifth bridge built by the Minnis administration in less than four years. So yes Cat Island we are correcting your errors of judgment because the FNM cares about Abaco, and we show it by our actions.

In May 2020, The Ministry of Public Works signed a Contract for the construction of a real bridge to connect little Abaco for a total amount of \$5,340,217.00. The contract period is 6 months.

❖ **Fresh Creek & Stafford Creek Bridges**

Mr. Speaker, my good friend, the member for Central and South Andros has been screaming for the replacement of the Fresh Creek Bridge, which was built in 1968. His party was in power for 5 years, but did not heed his plea. They took no action to build a new bridge for the people of Fresh Creek, despite the reports on the deterioration of this bridge. They continue to take the people of Andros for granted, even though its three major bridges are in poor condition and can only accommodate single lane traffic with weight restrictions.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, this FNM government cares. We value the safety of all Bahamians. In March of this year we have engaged engineering consultants to prepare feasibility studies; detailed designs; tender bid process; and contract administration process for the Fresh Creek Bridge, and for the Stafford Creek Bridge. Both of those bridges were built in 1968, and both need to be replaced. The engineering consultancies are being completed at a cost in excess of \$2 million, and we anticipate that when construction will begin in the next budget year. Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that these will be the first two bridges that will be opened during the second Minnis administration, proving once again that talk is cheap, but Minnis builds bridges. So yes Cat Island the FNM cares about Fresh Creek. The FNM cares about Stafford Creek; and we show it by our actions.

❖ Exuma

Mr. Speaker, as funding permits this year we will seek to initiate engineering studies for the culverts and bridge in Exuma, something members opposite did not do in the 15 consecutive years that they have represented Exuma prior to the election of this caring FNM government.

iii) ONGOING & COMPLETED PROJECTS

Mr. Speaker, I wish to touch on a few projects that have been completed or are substantially complete.

❖ Abaco Cleanup

Let me begin by discussing the cleanup operations in Abaco after the devastation of hurricane Dorian.

Mr. Speaker, this was undeniably the most challenging cleanup effort in the history of our country. There was so much devastation everywhere one looked. The Ministry received

financial proposals from companies all over the world, but the Ministry was firm that these jobs would be assigned to Bahamian contractors. At our request, Cabinet allocated \$24 million for the cleanup effort. This enabled the Ministry to put a huge number of Bahamian Contractors to work in Grand Bahama and in Abaco, with the result that notorious shantytowns such as the Mudd, the Pea, and Sandbanks are no more. The land is now fenced and is available for such development and uses as the Bahamian people deem appropriate.

Our Bahamian contractors have shown us their outstanding ability to respond to the needs of our country, no matter how challenging they may be. I thank them all.

❖ **Fishing Hole Road Causeway**

I mentioned this causeway earlier in my contribution. It is not ideal, but it is what we have now. This project involves the

construction of a 900 ft raised Reinforced concrete causeway in Grand Bahama. The project started in January 2016 and has now been completed despite the delays were caused when Hurricane Dorian topped it and caused some damage. The total cost of construction amounted to \$9.2 million.



Installation of Culverts at Stink Pond, Abaco

I'm so pleased to say that this environmentally friendly project in North Abaco is substantially complete. It involves the installation of 500 ft. of 3ft. dia culvert pipes across the Queens Highway to permit the natural cross flow of the pond. It involved the repair of a collapsed section of highway and will help to alleviate flooding. The work was completed at a total cost of \$1.127m.

❖ Construction of road to Columbus Monument, Long Island

This involved the construction of 1.2 miles of pea rock and sand seal road to the famous Columbus monument with new parking areas and concrete decking and steps to improve access. The project cost \$1.35m. It was started in January 2019 and will be completed by end of June 2020. Mr. Speaker, I urge every Bahamian to visit and enjoy this beautiful serene sight.



Repair & Reconstruction Earnest Dean Highway, Abaco

This project involved repairs to 6 miles of the Earnest Dean Highway from The Marsh Harbour round about heading south to Sandy Point. The section of road is in poor condition with undulation. The Project started in April 2019 with a budget of \$4.55 million, and is nearing completion.

❖ Crooked Island Seawall and Carriageway works

The contract for 14 miles for road repairs and seawall construction at a cost of \$12.8 million started after Hurricane Joaquin. The project is substantially complete with some additional works pending.

❖ Interior Roads and Civil Infrastructure BAMSI

The roads are nearing completion, and the remaining infrastructure works are ongoing including waterline, sewer,



data communication, fire services and electricity to be completed.

Stabilization of the Coast Road, Elbow Cay, Abaco This project will protect the shorelines of Elbow Cay for decades to come. It involves, construction of 900 ft rock armour coastal slope; and 850 ft. concrete retaining wall a new asphalt road 800ft long and restoration of the adjoining shoreline. The cost is \$3.8 million for the project, which was started in January 2020 with completion slated for this month.

❖ **Great Harbour Cay - runway, apron & lighting upgrades**

With the construction of the contract for the new Terminal Building, the airport runway, taxi way, apron and car parks need to be upgraded to meet ICAO standards. The Civil works cost



\$3.4 million and started in June 2019. The completion date is set for August 2020 pending approval of additional funding for extra earthworks required.

Cat Island Airport Fencing Works

This project involves the installation of Perimeter Fencing and clearing of the runway strips at the New Bight Airport to meet ICAO standards. The project cost \$782 thousand.

It was started in May 2020 due to delays caused by Hurricane Dorian. Completion is scheduled for September 2020. So Mr. Speaker, this FNM government cares about Cat Island, and we show it by our actions.



❖ **Demolition of the Clarence Bain Building**

This project is scheduled to be completed in September of this year, and will provide land area for an exciting development by the University of the Bahamas.

Mr. Speaker, I now move on to:

iv PROPOSED NEW INITIATIVES

Eleuthera Road Repairs and Carriageway rehabilitation project This initiative involves the reconstruction of 15 miles of roads in various sections of the QHW across the island in hot mix asphalt. The project cost is \$11.1.

❖ **Exuma Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation project**

This is another road project being part of the Family Island Programme. It involves 10 miles of road rehabilitation from the Airport to the Town centre including isolated repairs in other sections

❖
of the island. The project budget is \$8.04 million with a duration of 12 months.

❖ **Long Island Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation Project**

Rehabilitation and repairs to approximately 5 miles of roads in central and north Long Island from the Airport to Seymours and various sections in the south. The cost of the project is \$4.3 million and the contractor is Bethell's Trucking and Heavy Equipment Ltd.

❖ **South Andros Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation Project**

Reconstruction of 13 miles of roads in south Andros along the main road in hot mix asphalt. The project cost is \$8.4

million and the contractor is Bill Simmons construction and Heavy Equipment Co. The duration is 12 months.

❖ **Grand Bahama Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation. Project**

Reconstruction of approximately 8 miles of road in East, Central and West Grand Bahama. The works will be in hot mix asphalt at a cost of \$6.1 million.

❖ **Black Point Exuma, Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation**

Much needed repairs and reconstruction of over 3 miles of roads in pea rock and sand seal in Black point at a cost \$1.5 million.

❖ **Rehabilitation and repairs to the Runway at Bimini International Airport, South Bimini**

Total reconstruction of the 6500 ft. runway with addition of a new turn pad in hot mix asphalt. The cost of the project is \$5.6 million.

❖ **Spanish Wells Roads – Spanish Wells Eleuthera** Repairs to roads in Spanish Wells and Russell Island, estimated to cost \$720 thousand. In pea rock and sand seal.

❖ **Long Island International Airport @ Deadman's Cay – Airside works**

The civil works is part of the overall project for a new airport which will involve extending the runway to 6500ft, and raising it substantially to prevent flooding at Deadman's Cay Long Island. The civil works cost is estimated at \$10 million and will be spread over several budget periods. Long Islanders have seen many of the drawings. We have been delayed by the pandemic lockdowns, but will proceed with the design and initial construction supervision aspects during this budget period.

❖ **Village Road Development**

Tenders are being issued for the paving and full development of Village Road, inclusive of widening of access points. It is anticipated that this project will begin shortly.

❖ **Thomas A. Robinson Stadium**

The stadium is in need of extensive repairs. To this extent an engineering consultancy has been issued for the sum of \$826,341.20. Once completed, repairs estimated to cost in the region of \$12 million will be commenced.

❖ **Rock Sound Mailboat & Fisherman's Dock**

Presently the dock is in poor condition with deterioration to the concrete walls, collapsed retaining wall structure and full destruction of the existing bulkhead. Furthermore the current site is restricted in size and unsuitable to accommodate Roll On/Roll Off vessels. Hence, the dock is in urgent need of repair as the port is a part of the delivery lifeline of the area. Likewise, the fisherman's boat dock is in a poor condition as the timber framing was destroyed by the passage of various hurricanes over the years. Additionally, the concrete approach side walls and slab surface has deteriorated and require repairs.

The construction works to be undertaken can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ Demolition and removal of existing deteriorated warehouse building.

- ❖ Installation of 429 linear feet of sheet piles to the mailboat dock
- ❖ Reclamation of 80 foot wide by 100 foot long of seabed.
- ❖ Construction of reinforced concrete slab area to the main dock area with ro/ro ramp.
- ❖ Dredging of the seabed to the area in the front of dock wall.
- ❖ Installation of bollards, cleats, fendering systems and solar lights in the dock area.
- ❖ Construction of a new 12 foot wide by 220 foot long timber dock.
- ❖ Concrete repairs to the concrete approach side walls and slab surface to the timber dock
- ❖ Construction of timber gazebo shed and fish cleaning station.
- ❖ The length of the contract is 40 weeks.

In May Cabinet approved the award of a contract in the sum of Two Million Eight Hundred and Thirty Four Thousand Four Hundred and Ninety Dollars Sixty Seven Cents (\$2,834,490.67) to construct the new dock in Rock Sound Eleuthera. The project is due to commence next month.

❖ **Repair of South Mangrove Cay Mailboat Dock**

This project is the repair of the main public government dock in the settlement of Lisbon Creek on Mangrove Cay, Andros. The concrete dock is in poor condition with the proposed scheme as detailed below: -

1. Removal of existing dock slab and replace with a new 8" thick reinforced concrete dock slab over the entire facility.
2. Concrete repairs to the concrete bulkhead.
3. Dredging of the seabed to the area in the vicinity of the dock and the approach channel.
4. Provide marine bollards, cleats and fenders to the dock
5. Construction of boat ramp for small boats
6. Construction of seawall to the west of the site due to serious erosion of the road.
7. Construction and repair of seawall at Burnt Rock due to serious erosion of the road.

Tender Documents were issued to three selected tenders on the 20th May 2020. The return of the bidding documents is 16th June 2020.

❖ **South Eleuthera Gymnasium**

The Ministry of Public Works is planning to construct an all-purpose gymnasium and hurricane shelter in South Eleuthera. The current location of the structure that was started by the community is not ideal, as it will have to be raised 5 to 7 feet to be storm resilient.

Our Eleuthera based Engineer will work closely with M.P. Hank Johnson to select the most appropriate site so that we may move ahead expeditiously.

❖ Inagua School

The Minister of Education announced this initiative yesterday.

The design of the school is almost complete, and our engineers will soon be in Inagua to complete the geotech and other studies.

❖ Ragged Island

Exceptional progress is being made on the new state of the art school and teachers residences in Ragged Island, and we expect that early next year Prime Minister Minnis will be able to open the brand new school, a feat that his predecessor did not accomplish during his 5 year terms.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I take this opportunity to thank the Most Hon. Prime Minister for providing me with this opportunity to serve.

Mr. Speaker we have a caring Prime Minister, and the manner that he takes care of his constituency is shown by his works, and is a sharp contrast to the neglect that we see in Cat Island and San Salvador.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with the Prime Minister as we continue to develop the infrastructure of our beautiful Bahamaland.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other capital projects ongoing and planned by this administration; however I have run out of time, and accordingly will have to touch on some of them on another occasion. However, we have sought to account for our stewardship at the Ministry of Public Works.

We have shown through our productivity that we care deeply about the well-being of the Bahamian people, and by God's Grace this Minnis led FNM administration will continue to effectively develop

and maintain our national infrastructure in the most timely and efficient manner possible.

Mr. Speaker, Carmichael supports this Budget.