



REPORT TO THE NATION

BY

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Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister,
Grand Bahama

12 November 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen

Members of the Media

Good Afternoon

I wish to first thank God not just for the privilege to serve but to serve in such a time as this. It has been a humbling experience to lead during and in the aftermath of the most destructive storm in our history and worst pandemic of our lifetime. But it has been said that “The only difference between stumbling blocks and steppingstones is the way you use them”.

I thank the Prime Minister for re-appointing me to the Cabinet with responsibilities for Grand Bahama, Electronic Communications and E-Commerce. These also include the oversight of the Office of the Prime Minister in Grand Bahama, Department of Transformation and Digitization, the Digital Transformation Unit and the newly approved E-Commerce Advisory Board.

Ladies and Gentlemen

2020 continues to be a year of total transformation—much of it by force. The Bahamas is no different from many countries around the world managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments, now more than ever, are balancing the health of their citizenry while keeping economies afloat and maintaining their ability to provide the necessary government services. As the country looks to recover through hurricane catastrophes and this pandemic, innovation is imperative to not just be competitive but to survive. Innovation requires that we travel toward “A Digital Bahamas”.

First, the Government’s approach to our Digital Bahamas is guided by the recently approved Electronic Communication Policy Document in accordance with the Communications Act which outlines our policy objectives for the next 3 years. This document was prepared by URCA in conjunction with DTaD. I invite the public to view this document online at

<https://www.urcabahamas.bs/publications/electronic-communications-sector-policy-2020-2023/>

The policy speaks to creating a modern, digital society that facilitates the growth and expansion of the Bahamian economy.

As we continue to lead our country during these unprecedented times, the Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTaD) recognizes the important role that technology plays in improving the ease of doing business in The Bahamas and our overall competitiveness as a jurisdiction. Our focus is on implementing emerging technology where systems across government agencies speak to each other and provide a seamless user experience for the people that use government services. While we advance and implement new systems, we will also equip Public Servants to meet the new demands as we capitalize on the dynamic and fast-growing technology sector.

Accordingly, The Department of Transformation and Digitization, the Government agency with responsibility for Information and Communications Technology for the whole of Government, is currently structured to deliver six (6) areas of service and support:

- Governance and Planning for the setting of policies and standards, compliance and quality monitoring.
- Business Solutions for business analysis, process reengineering, project management, and application and web development.
- Service Management for customer/end-user support, account administration, incident/service response, and training.
- Technical Support for operation of Data Centres, Disaster Recovery, and Network and Server Management.
- Communications for the provision of cellular phones, fixed lines and video conferencing systems
- And finally, a separate Project Execution Unit within DTaD called the Digital Transformation Unit (DTU) charged with the digital transformation of 200 Government services over a five year period and funded by an IDB Loan.

Since this fiscal year began and since the onset of Covid-19, DTaD has engaged in the following agency projects:

1. Replacing adequate and appropriate equipment lost during Hurricane Dorian.
2. Ensuring business continuity in Government during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing the environment for secure remote work by Public Officers. The Government implemented CISCO WebEx. We have also assisted the courts with online proceedings for hearing matters. The Ministry of Financial Services, Trade and Industry and Immigration held an online symposium with over 350 attendees, multiple presenters and audience participation.
3. Assistance to the Ministry of Health with the development of
 - A virtual COVID Call Centre and a Digital Platform for Contact Tracing. During the first wave, we developed a SharePoint Application. This SharePoint application captured the following;
 - demographic information
 - travel details
 - Covid19 symptoms,
 - suggested recommendations for medical assistance
 - contacting tracing information
 - food assistance option for those persons in mandatory quarantine

Three training cohorts were conducted, and a user manual distributed electronically. The site went live 2nd April 2020 and was decommissioned 3rd June, 2020 after capturing over 500 calls. We Subsequently assisted in the development of other applications for the Contact and Lab investigation Unit to track confirmed cases and their contacts.

4. DTaD partnered with the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development to ensure that Social Assistance programmes became available online at socialassistance.bahamas.gov.bs/ . Two of these have been launched:

i. Food Emergency (launched)

ii. Food Disaster (launched)

- The Ministry for the first time in our history, has begun to receive applications and give assistance online to avoid face-to-face contact where it is unnecessary and will improve its processing and response time. By the end of the year, we are pleased to say, the Ministry anticipates all services will be available online. The Ministry advises that they also completed a testing pilot with over 900 Bahamians providing rental assistance via digital currency using electronic wallets through various digital wallet providers. For Food assistance 305 confirmed persons have successfully converted to digital representing a monetary amount \$134,587.72 Paid from July to October. 1500 confirmed persons are set to be added to the digital platform in November for Distribution representing \$300,000.00 for November 2020. There will be 600 estimated persons to be converted to digital platform for December's distribution to add to the digital platform representing \$120,000.00 December 2020. Clients received benefits through their electronic wallets which can be accessed on their phones and simply paid without a paper voucher, without a cheque or cash.

5. At the Passport Office we accelerated the development and launch of the renewal of E-Passports online.

It has gotten rave reviews. Many recall the public outcry with long lines during the summer months. We invite you to visit mofa.gov.bs and follow the link to the passport renewals service: "Avoid the line, Save some time". Since 1 December 2019, the Passport Office has successfully executed almost 6000 online ePassports. You no longer have to stand up on long lines and can now apply from the comfort of your home 24/7. I am also advised that the average time for delivery of these passports is about seven (7) days in New Providence or for expedited overseas requests and 10 to 14 days for regular delivery to Overseas requests and to Family Island applicants,

6. We are assisting the Ministry of Works with the Electronic Plan and Review Information System (EPRIS) which when implemented will improve our Ease Of Doing Business ranking for issuing permits.

7.6. We are leading one of the most transformative digital initiatives at the heart of Government, the Cabinet Office. If we want the Government and the country to embark on a digital transformation we must start from the top.

We have commenced the implementation of the Bahamas Electronic Cabinet Management Information System which will revolutionize Cabinet procedures from end-to-end. This system will:

- Innovatively streamline the managerial operations
- Standardize and automate the Cabinet memorandum and Agenda approval process workflow.
- Implement advanced security
- Provide mobile and electronic accessibility for the Prime Minister, Ministers, the Secretary to the Cabinet, Permanent Secretaries and other authorized users that will allow the continuation of work regardless of location.
- Facilitate electronic collaboration between authorized users 24/7.
- Generate Cabinet Conclusions and Extracts at the end of the meeting for faster approval and dissemination

8.7. Assisting the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Public Service and National Insurance, in the Public Financial Management/Performance Monitoring Reform (PFM/PMR) Project as the Government's ICT Lead for the procurement of a new Financial Management Information System and a new Human Resource Management System.

9.8. Assisting the Ministry of Education with the implementation of eNET which is placing all Government schools online.

10.9. Providing technical advice to various other Government agencies including the Office of The Judiciary for E-Courts Pay, the electronic payment processing system for Court Ordered Payment.

11.10. Overseeing the allocation and provision of cellular phones and fixed lines in agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As the Government of The Bahamas transforms how services are delivered, transactions conducted across the Internet through government agencies, and the private sector will inevitably increase. Information technology continues to be an integral part of daily activities and the risks of conducting general business over platforms like the Internet cannot be ignored. As online usage increases, the chances of cybersecurity incidents also increase.

You may remember the recent phishing attempt on the Public Treasury Department that involved the Central Bank of The Bahamas along with challenges at the Registrar General Office and ZNS. These inherent risks necessitated the formulation of an interim group comprising representatives from the Royal Bahamas Police Force, FIU, the Public Treasury Department and the Department of Transformation and Digitization to establish the policies for managing virtual security breaches.

However, it is imperative that we assess our current cybersecurity capabilities, develop a national cybersecurity strategy and establish a National Computer Incident Response Team (BS-CIRT), to serve as a single trusted, central coordination point of contact for cybersecurity, aimed at identifying, defending, responding and managing cyber threats. The CIRTs or CERTs will provide greater protection, detection, response and recovery as it relates to online criminal activity and risks.

To this end, we have entered into a partnership agreement with the International Telecommunications Union (an agency of the United Nations) to conduct an assessment and implement a National CIRT (Cybersecurity Incident Response Team) or CERT (Cybersecurity Emergency Response Team). We are in the process of building the team that will form the CERT and Applications for Cybersecurity posts should be released shortly. The team will protect national and economic security, the ongoing operations of Government, and the ability of critical infrastructures to continue to function. They will monitor incidents at a national level, identify incidents that could affect critical infrastructures, warn critical stakeholders about computer security threats, and respond appropriately to incidents. They will also help Critical Information Infrastructure recover from incidents.

This project is augmented by another project to deliver “A Framework for Bahamas National Cybersecurity Strategy and Policy” being conducted in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank. The latter project also included penetration testing for the identification of cyber risks and gaps, and a plan for remediation. We are already seeing positive results and making security upgrades as a result of this program.

All of these projects are being done in addition to the routine work of the provisioning of desktop and laptop equipment, copiers and other communications equipment.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Digital Transformation Unit within DTaD is working towards implementing 200 additional government online services on a single-use platform where persons can interact with a large cross section of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the most efficient way possible. Yes, we literally want to put the entire Government at your fingertips. This means less time travelling to government offices and less time on lines. This means doing business with the Government from the comfort of your home or smart phone.

The ultimate goal of the integrated system is to make it faster and less expensive for citizens and residents, and those wishing to do business with The Bahamas to access Government services as well as to improve Government revenue.

Achieving this goal requires significant work across multiple agencies. The work will not happen overnight but as the past year has demonstrated, the world can change overnight.

This investment in technology will allow for greater access to services throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. To this end, the Digital Transformation Unit has built and is currently executing a twelve (12)-week pilot project, and testing the processing of the first four new online services on a single platform. To be clear, the interoperability platform allows agencies to digitally communicate and allows the users information to be verified across the platform without the public having to move from agency to agency picking up documents to carry to another agency. The initial services being tested are:

- Certified Copy of Birth Certificate Application
- Certified Copy of Death Certificate Application
- Copy of Marriage Certificate Application
- Driver's License Renewal

We have also built and are currently testing additional online applications to be added. For example,

1. Vehicle Registration Renewal and several other Road Traffic applications
2. Birth Registration
3. Death Registration
4. Post Office Box Rental
5. Money Order
6. Police Certificate

We expect these to be available to the public in January. We will continue to add additional services after their testing phase is completed.

Wave 1 of the Pilot will be conducted with members of the Public Service only. This phase will allow our technical team to conduct end-to-end testing of the system across multiple agencies to ensure a seamless and secure user experience. Once fully tested, the DTU will officially launch the e-services portal to the general public. Key features of the online experience for applicants will include the ability to:

- Apply for specific government services 24 hours a day, 7 days per week
- Pay for all services online using a debit or credit card
- Receive email notifications when documents are ready for collection or when the service has been completed.

Even as testing continues, the DTU is meeting with the relevant Government heads to determine the current systems and procedures in place at various government MDAs.

Testing and training in the Family Islands will also be key to ensuring the benefits of the new system extends to all citizens and residents of the country.

In a partnership with Cable Bahamas Ltd, a technical support team resident in Grand Bahama will manage a 24-hour help desk to assist users during the pilot phase. We are pleased that this has provided additional employment opportunities in Grand Bahama. This is one example of Public Private Partnerships in which we expect to engage as there will be opportunities for developers, graphic artists, business analysts, testers etc as we progress. Also, DTU is preparing draft overarching legislation that will drive the digitization of Government services.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, the eCommerce Advisory Board provided for in Part IV Section 22 (1) of the Electronic and Communications and Transactions Act, 2003, was populated for the first time since the Act came into force. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to provide “advice to the Minister on matters connected with the discharge of his functions and the development of e-commerce and the information and communications technology sector generally or any matter that the Board, of its own initiative, considers appropriate”.

They are already making a positive contribution.

We wish to announce the launch of a Technology Innovations Grants (TIG) program designed by the eCommerce Advisory Board that will support services specifically provided directly to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to improve their management and the modernization of their technologies and other digital applications and services. While this is a national program it is a continuation of the GB Tech Grant started in Grand Bahama and will have a heavy Grand Bahama focus. These TIGs are not just for start-up enterprises, but also for existing companies wishing to develop and employ new or innovative technology for their business. The grant funding is \$2,500.00.

Undergirding all of this is the presentation of a “Policy Statement on Electronic Commerce and the Bahamian Digital Agenda”. The Board is now designing ways to implement this policy document.

Digital Neighbourhood Programme

Many children are unable to return to school in the classroom because of social distancing and as a result the Ministry of Education has established a virtual learning platform for students to be able to continue their studies and to give them the ability to complete their schoolwork. Remote work and learning have been widely introduced into daily life and more people throughout the country will now require access to crucial online services and resource.

Unfortunately, many households in certain communities lack access to the internet to facilitate virtual learning and online educational activities.

The Digital Neighborhood Program is presently being coordinated in partnership with the licensed telecoms operators in the country, the Ministry of Education, the Department of Transformation and Digitization, and the Department of Social services.

Program Overview

The programme will seek to bring free Wi-Fi and internet access into certain communities and neighborhoods and other open spaces throughout the country to allow underserved communities of The Bahamas an opportunity to access the Internet to allow school children the opportunity to conduct their schoolwork and other social projects online. We will be saying more about this program in the coming weeks.

OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

I also wish to highlight and commend other Government initiatives which also move us toward a Digital Bahamas.

- The Disaster and Reconstruction Authority launched its completely online application for the Small Home Repair where over three thousand (3000) persons have registered and are receiving assistance. This service can be accessed at <https://drabahamas.org/>

- The National Food Distribution Task force allowed online applications for persons in need of Food assistance. This service can be accessed at <https://feedbahamas.com/>

The Government's recent passage of the Digital Assets and Digital Asset Service Providers Bill in the House of Assembly creates regulation for a new industry in the Bahamas dealing with Cryptocurrency and other digital assets. This now allows the Bahamas to market itself to this industry which brings new opportunities to Bahamians.

The Central Banks new and innovative Digital Currency promises to set the Bahamas apart being one of the first countries to establish a national digital currency.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Members of the Media

I am excited and positive about "A Digital Bahamas" and I invite you along as we "Connect Government to the People".

GRAND BAHAMA

I now turn to Grand Bahama.

A little over a year ago post-Hurricane Dorian, and now during the Covid-19 crisis Grand Bahama remains fully in Rebuilding Mode. We are rebuilding physical buildings, rebuilding businesses, rebuilding roads, but most importantly we are **REBUILDING PEOPLE AND REBUILDING LIVES.**

I would be remiss if I did not take every opportunity to applaud the doctors, nurses, police, and other front line responders in our community, in particular the Grand Bahama COVID-19 Task Force headed by Dr. Greg Bartlette. I thank you for the hard work and continued dedication.

I must also commend the efforts of residents of Grand Bahama for your discipline and responsibility, but it is also important to acknowledge that we are still fighting

the pandemic and must all collectively do our part to keep the numbers down. We must not let our guards down.

One of the major ways the government set out to offer assistance to combat the challenges presented by COVID-19 was the creation of the National Food Distribution Task Force, and subsequently the Grand Bahama Food Distribution Program/ Feed Grand Bahama. This initiative was launched in the vision of the Prime Minister to ensure that we provide food security for as many as possible in light of employment challenges presented by COVID-19. The Grand Bahama Steering Committee consists of the Grand Bahama Port Authority, Grand Bahama Chamber of Commerce, Grand Bahama Christian Council and the Office of the Prime Minister Grand Bahama to coordinate the distribution of food on the island to those in need. Cates & Co a reputable Grand Bahama based accounting firm is the management company of record for all monetary contributions to the Grand Bahama Food Bank.

In total 35,981 food vouchers were distributed across Grand Bahama during the first phase of the program which recently concluded on October 31st. This number represents some 6,690

homes receiving assistance. The Household count of 6,690 is based on an average of 4 persons per household which totals 26,760 persons who benefitted from this program.

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD ASSISTANCE

The effects of Hurricane Dorian as well as COVID-19 placed a number of workers on reduced hours or unemployed. The National Insurance Board has played a critical role in the lives of numerous Grand Bahamians who have been affected.

Assistance associated with Hurricane Dorian unemployment alone amounted to some \$3.9 million in Grand Bahama. The government's special Unemployment Assistance provided some \$2.3 million in assistance in Grand Bahama. To date, some \$20.5 million has been paid out through NIB in Grand Bahama to assist residents affected by Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department of Social Services also continues to work feverishly through the COVID-19 pandemic

SPECIAL GB RECOVERY ZONE CONCESSIONS

In an effort to provide continued relief and empowerment to the communities of Grand Bahama and Abaco, the government made the decision to extend concessions such as VAT exemptions through the end of 2020 to assist residents as they work to rebuild their lives and to assist business owners particularly in the construction field, enabling them to capitalize on construction needs on the island.

RAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL REBUILD

Following the passage of Hurricane Dorian, several government structures suffered damage and are now in the process of being restored. One of the most crucial structures that required a major rebuilding effort was the Rand Memorial Hospital.

Construction workers have been working tirelessly to complete rebuilding of the hospital. The Prime Minister has announced that 21 million has been allocated for the Rand Memorial Hospital.

The hospital will begin to have some normalcy by late November early December. The kitchen cafeteria building has been substantially completed with furniture and is being utilized while the cafeteria is 90% completed. Medical Surgical Ward 3/ the COVID-19 Isolation Unit is also completed and will be occupied this week. Each room can occupy up to two patients, is fully furnished with beds, tables and equipped with oxygen outlets in the event a patient is in need. This will have a total of 7 more beds for Covid-19 patients.

There has been much development to the main hospital section building. The main corridors, pharmacy, foyer, and pediatrics area will be ready for occupancy within the next two weeks. The main hospital's entrance will include a new

portico which is now ready for paving. Arriving patients will have access to be dropped off directly at the front door from the protection of inclement weather.

Highlights of the newly rebuilt hospital:

- New Isolation Center
- New Pharmacy
- New Pediatric Ward
- New ICU
- New Surgical Ward
- New Medical Ward

Approximately 150 Bahamian workers are involved in the reconstruction of the Rand Memorial Hospital. While this will not be a new hospital it most certainly will be a new Rand Memorial Hospital.

We are REBUILDING in the East,

The McCleans Town Administrative Complex and Community Dock in East Grand Bahama, which housed the Royal Bahama Police Force, as well as ferry service offices supporting inter-island travel between Grand Bahama and Abaco is near completion of the rebuilding process. The Office of the Prime Minister, Grand Bahama, has been provided with the funding to completely rebuild the administrative complex, in conjunction with the Ministry of Works and Disaster and Reconstruction.

The Ministry of Works has also embarked on the Grand Bahama Road Repairs and Carriage way Rehabilitation Project to REBUILD OUR ROADS.

Waugh Construction Bahamas Ltd. was engaged to carry out work and continued to do so during the COVID-19 Emergency Lockdown order. Their road patching team progressed steadily and expeditiously throughout the West Grand Bahama District that includes both Central Grand Bahama and West Grand Bahama & Bimini constituencies.

Reconstruction of approximately 8 miles of road in East and Central Grand Bahama facilitated by Waugh Construction, supervised by the Ministry of Works is expected to commence shortly. The works will be in hot-mix asphalt at a cost of \$6.1 million.

FREEPORT POST OFFICE PROJECT

Missako Investments has been awarded a \$2.8 million contract and has commenced work to carry out major renovations including a complete roof repair, installation of hurricane impact windows, doors, and other major works. This project is expected to be completed within nine (9) months and has created approximately 50 jobs in the community.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BUILDING RENOVATION PROJECT

We are currently carrying out a major restoration of The Agriculture building housing the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and also offered a base of operation for the Grand Bahama Bee-Keepers Cooperative which was launched out of the Youth Apiary Program.

The project scope includes:

- installation of a new roof.
- Rebuilding of the the front porch roof entry, refurbish interior of Agriculture unit, inclusive of rest room.
- Building of the interior of the Apiary including offices,
- Construction of 4 vendor booths at the rear of the building. -
- Installation of a new air conditioning unit

HISTORIC SCHOOL REPAIR AND RENOVATION PROJECT

This past summer, we also completed one of the largest rebuilding and restoration projects to schools in Grand Bahama. \$4.5 million in contracts were awarded for major reconstruction to 15 schools in Grand Bahama. This includes Primary and High Schools across the island. While repairs are facilitated each summer, the 2020 repair project is extremely important as we sought to conduct major reconstruction work to address damage caused by Hurricane Dorian. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Disaster Preparedness Management and Reconstruction as well as the Office of the Prime Minister jointly coordinated this project that provided more than 150 construction jobs in Grand Bahama.

Holmes Rock Junior High School is expected to be completed in February 2021.

Through the Small Home Repair program, We are RESTORING HUNDREDS OF HOMES! The Disaster Reconstruction Authority has approved over 2500 Grand Bahamians to receive assistance to repair their homes. Of that 2500 approved, that corresponds to 2954 who were registered. Some \$7,750,000.00 has been expended by the DRA on home repairs in Grand Bahama alone. This work continued through the Covid-19 lockdowns continuing much needed assistance.

Further, cleanup efforts on the island have been significant.

Grand Bahama Airport

The government is continuing discussions with Hutchison Ports along with the Grand Bahama Port Authority with the view to coming to an agreement on the best way forward in rebuilding a world-class airport. In the interim, a temporary structure is indeed open and fully functional, operating regular daily international and domestic flights. However, in addition to the existing facility work continues to proceed on the expansion of the temporary facility. This new facility is 8,500 SQFT adding to the existing 8,200sqft facility.

Once completed there will be 350 seats total; new combined customs and immigration arrival hall. The airport will be able to accommodate some 350-400 passengers. The project is currently more than 85% completed.

The airport will require a long term sustainable rebuilding plan. It has been destroyed by hurricanes several times. The airport has been rebuilt 3 times in the last 7 years which signifies that a greater plan must be put into place. However even as we work toward the final product, we are indeed accessible.

HOLISTICA PROJECT

March 2nd 2020, we welcomed Holistica Developments, Royal and ITM Group. Holistica has signed a Heads of Agreement and an agreement for sale for the Grand Lucayan with the government for a massive development spanning 2 properties. Holistica remains committed to the project although it will be delayed due to Covid -19 and Hurricane Dorian. We are currently reviewing their post-Covid-19 development plans and hope to fully turn over the hotel property before the end of the year.

CARNIVAL PROJECT

In February 2019, Carnival announced its plans for the construction of a massive Port in East Grand Bahama, and proudly noted that once it is completed, Grand Bahama will be home to Carnival's largest cruise port to date,

It is expected that the project will lead to 1,000 jobs during construction and between 500 and 1,000 jobs post-construction.

The Carnival project is in the permitting stage and we await Carnivals post- Covid plans.

TECH HUB PLANS

To this end the government in October executed a Memorandum of Understanding with Cisco Systems, .

1- The MOU amongst other matters states that Cisco will assist The Government of The Bahamas to develop a strategy for an Innovation Center. We expect this Innovation Center to be in partnership with the University of the Bahamas Northern Campus.

2- Cisco will also facilitate best practices and technical guidance in order to assist The Government of The Bahamas on building an ICT Hub as well as to jointly work on marketing events, both domestic and international, and campaigns to position the ICT Hub of The Government of the Bahamas.

3- Through the existing Networking Academy Program, Cisco will assist in training 100 software developers to build in country talent based on Cisco standards which are recognized around the globe. Also, those participants can access Ciscos Talent Bridge platform in order to identify possible job openings on Cisco and some of its partners. CISCO and BTVI have already began the training for this program and applications will be available in December for the launch date in January.

We also will continue the BTVI ICT Skills Development Program, which is a 3-year program designed to train students leaving the 9th grade, up until the time they are in 12th grade with the view that they would graduate with tech-related certifications - already in a position to launch their own businesses or have a head-start for further studies. Cohort I started in Summer 2018, Cohort II began in Summer 2019. The program was offered at both BTVI Grand Bahama and Nassau campuses.

The required curriculum of certifications relate to CompTIA/Microsoft/Cisco. Additionally during the duration of the program, information technology networking, cyber security essentials, Linux administration, programming in Python, JavaScript. Html and Java will be offered. IoE/Iot fundamentals involving connectivity, data & analytics concepts will be emphasized. Students will be prepared for various levels of technology-related positions, which will lead to sitting certifications.

To date there have been some 300 students successfully trained in this program with an additional 100 that will be added this year.

REEF Committee

The government has also entered into discussions with the Revitalization and Expansion of the Economy of Freeport (REEF) Committee. This committee was established by The Grand Bahama Port Authority and other stakeholders in effort

to engage with its licensees, business owners and all who have a vested interest in the development of Freeport with a view to help facilitate its action plan inclusive of short-term goals to help businesses recover and grow immediately as well as long-term goals for the wider development of the City of Freeport.

We fully expect that these discussions will address the ease of doing business concerns for investors, environmental issues, including derelict buildings and a joint investment marketing strategy.

Grand Bahama continues to make steady strides post Dorian and now as we face COVID-19.