



**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis  
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance**

**Opening of Long Island Passport Office**

**Clarence Town, Long Island**

**Friday, 19 March 2021**

**12:00 NOON**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good Afternoon.

It's a pleasure to be back in Long Island.

From Cape Santa Maria to Gordons, Long Island is a wonder to behold.

Since 1740, when the Simms relocated to this island gem island, situated in the Central Bahamas, Long Islanders have earned the reputation of being self-reliant, resilient, industrious, hardworking and fiercely independent.

Your farmers have experienced devastation or great damage in the aftermath of many hurricanes and storms.

Yet, they keep coming back.

Many people throughout The Bahamas tell me that they will only buy Long Island mutton, no matter whether they are making steam mutton, curry or some other mutton dish.

Your fishers are among the best, fishing the rich and abundant water that wash your shores.

Your sailors and boaters have won many national championships.

This communities of Long Island with over 3,000 residents according to the 2010 census, is blessed with a colourful history, a rich and spirited culture and a vibrant local economy.

My mission and the mission of my government is to build and strengthen family island communities, investing in vital services and infrastructure.

We are fostering dynamic environments for you: to take greater advantage of economic and commercial opportunities; to improve the quality of lives in these communities and to incentivize family islanders remaining in their island homes home, while enticing others back to our Family Islands.

That is why my government is committed to equity and fairness in the availability of various public services throughout the Commonwealth.

The residents of Long Island should not be unduly disadvantaged because you live outside one of the urban centers of our country.

This includes access to a broad variety of government services. And, that is why we are here today.

We all know the great importance of having a passport as a means of identification and as a means to travel.

Indeed, a passport remains one of the most important documents that is required as proof of citizenship and personal identification.

As outlined in our 2017 Manifesto and in keeping with my government's stated policy of bringing services closer to the

people who require them, I am pleased to be here for the Long Island Passport Office.

The opening of the Passport Office here in Clarence Town is a clear statement of the Government's policy of decentralization of services.

Long Island is 165 miles away from Nassau.

It is burdensome to require a resident of Long Island to spend his or her hard earned money on airline tickets, accommodations, transportation, food and incidentals in Nassau, just to collect a passport.

We should be rewarding your self-reliance, your industry and your vibrant sense of independence, not penalizing you because you live here and are hard at work developing this island jewel.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today is a wonderful day for the residents of Long Island, as you join fellow citizens in New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco, Exuma and Inagua in being able to directly access passport services right here in Clarence Town.

You will be able to enroll for new passports, renew expired passports and have your biometric fingerprinting done here.

Turnaround time for receipt of your passports is between five to seven days.

I congratulate the officers at the Passport Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their pacesetting role in deploying digital and electronic applications to allow citizens to access critical services.

Since being launched in February, 2017, 138,356 Bahamians have been enrolled in the system:

- Over 10,000 minors have been enrolled;
- Over 100 minors have been enrolled since the online portal opened in December, 2020;
- In the five weeks since opening the Exuma Office, more than 228 applicants have been enrolled and 88 Exumians issued with passports;

And, in just a week since the opening of the Inagua Passport Office, some 26 Inaguans have been enrolled.

Meanwhile, the Main Passport Office will continue to deploy its mobile team to areas that have smaller populations and are not served by local offices.

Some 167 residents of Cat Island were recently enrolled via the mobile team.

Because we are an island-chain, the decentralization of services and the development of our Family Islands remains an essential part of national economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

With the COVID-19 vaccines and the end of the emergency phase of the pandemic, I want the Bahamian people to get ready.

I need you to take a vaccine when it is available to you.

The vaccines are safe. They are effective.

Millions of people have received vaccines around the world.

We must also continue to wear masks and to follow the health guidelines because the pandemic is not over.

But me let me assure you, The Bahamas is getting ready to come roaring back.

The world is getting ready to come to The Bahamas.



In the not too distant future, the residents of Long Island and visitors will enjoy a modern, comfortable, state-of-the-art international airport.

We need to get ourselves ready as a country.

Before I close, I want to let the people of Eleuthera know that we will be there soon to open their Passport Office.

I want to thank everyone involved in making today a reality, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Darren Henfield and his staff and the staff of the Passport Office.

Long Island:

Let me tell you this: Your Member of Parliament, the Hon. Adrian Gibson delivers for you!

He has done more in four years than some have done in many more years. You have in him, a dedicated servant!

Once again, I'm very happy to be here and to tell you there is much more to come for Long Island.

May Almighty God continue to bless the wonderful people of Long Island and the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

It now gives me great pride and delight to declare the Long Island Passport Office officially open.

Thank you and good afternoon.

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