



KEYNOTE ADDRESS
THE MOST HON. DR. HUBERT A. MINNIS
PRIME MINISTER
NAMING OF THE
IVY L. DUMONT BUILDING
UNIVERSITY DRIVE
MONDAY, 5 JULY 2021

11:00 a.m.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor to be a part of this wonderful occasion, honoring a distinguished Bahamian patriot.

Let me begin by wishing you all an early Happy Independence.

Today's event is a part of our official 48th Anniversary Independence celebrations.

As an educator, public officer, politician, religious and community leader, consummate professional, unionist, and as the first female Minister of Education and Governor-General, Dame Ivy Dumont has been an extraordinary citizen and servant-leader.

To better appreciate the degree of Dame Ivy's contributions, we should recall the era into which she was born and in which she grew up.

Her early years were in the period during and immediately following the Second World War, which included a period of decolonization.

She hails from Long Island, the birthplace of a number of Governors General and extraordinary educators.

There is something special in the spirit of Long Islanders.

The Bahama Islands had no mineral resources or major industries.

We were beginning to become a tourism destination of note.

The struggle for racial equality and Majority Rule was gathering pace and would reach greater fulfillment in 1967 and then with independence in 1973.

It was a period of nation-building, including the development of national institutions and greater access to education for all Bahamians.

There were few black professionals.

Expectations for education among black Bahamians were limited, especially at the tertiary level.

One of the signature accomplishments of Majority Rule and Independence was the attainment of access to education at all levels for Bahamians.

Every Bahamian child has access to education from the primary to the tertiary level.

We have had scores of great educators and thousands of Bahamians who have successfully graduated from the government-operated school system.

We know that we must continue to improve education in The Bahamas.

But let us also acknowledge our success and accomplishments.

We have come far, even though there is still much to be done.

I am proud that under this Administration we significantly expanded access and opportunity for Bahamians to attend the University of The Bahamas and BTVI tuition-free.

May I commend the Minister of Education, and his team, including the Permanent Secretary and Director of Education and all of the staff at the Ministry of Education.

These accomplishments and successes were achieved in large measure because of individuals like Ivy Dumont, who poured her lifeblood and her heart into education.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dame Ivy's natural talents and abilities elevated her quickly throughout the education system as first a student and over the years as an educator.

She culminated her career in education as a Deputy Director of Education.

She was passionate about the critical role of education and training for the advancement of our citizenry.

There are numerous stories of the many young men and women of various generations

she mentored, with kindness, and when needed, a strong and firm hand.

I was sent a quote recently that read: “Practice kindness all day to everybody and you will realize you’re already in heaven now.”

Dame Ivy: Through your kindness and compassion, you helped others to touch the heart of God and to touch your heart!

Because of this, you are in the hearts of thousands of Bahamians.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

While much of Dame Ivy's biography has been recalled today by others, please allow me to highlight a few chapters from her storied journey.

In 1992, under the first Free National Movement Government led by the Rt. Honourable Hubert Ingraham, Dame Ivy was appointed as a senator and as Minister of Health and the Environment.

During her tenure in that ministry, she instituted a number of pioneering achievements in the Ministry of Health.

This included her recognition of the epidemic of non-communicable diseases and its costs in lives, productivity and health care costs.

As early as then she spearheaded a national health drive to encourage Bahamians to adopt healthy lifestyles.

What she spearhead then, is even more critical now, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically demonstrated the risk of comorbidities.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dame Ivy's adept leadership as Minister of Education between 1995 and 1999, and as Minister of Education and Youth until 2001 was a critical period of transformation in Bahamian education.

As Dame Ivy is an educator at heart, she possesses a keen understanding of what was required to advance our education system.

Under her leadership, the first indigenous Language Arts book for primary school students was published and utilized throughout the government-operated school system.

Dame Ivy paved the way for technological advancement in education, overseeing a project to computerize the school system.

Her impact on student development included:

- the Government's Guaranteed Scholarship Loans Programme,

- the expansion of the Teacher Cadet Corp,

- the reintroduction of two-tier high schools,

- the implementation of magnet programs, and the expansion of distance education.

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

While Dame Ivy brought an extraordinary range of intellectual gifts to her various posts, she is a woman of tremendous virtue.

These virtues include: humility, generosity, patience, fairness and resilience.

In naming this building in her honour, we are memorializing her stellar contributions to nation-

building, her example as a citizen, and her generosity of spirit.

When new generations of students ask, “Who is Ivy Dumont”, we have an extraordinary Bahamian story and example to share with them.

She has taught us lessons in character, lessons in citizenship, lessons in compassion, and lessons in Christian witness and service.

Dame Ivy: For this we owe you enduring and loving gratitude.

May I borrow from and slightly paraphrase
Shakespeare's Twelfth Night:

Dame Ivy, in response to your boundless
generosity: "[We] can no other answer make,
but, thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks..."

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Ultimately, a good citizen seeks to do what is
best to advance the common good.

This is the essence of what we see
demonstrated through Dame Ivy's journey from

Rose's Long Island to Mount Fitzwilliam and beyond.

I am told that in her retirement years, Dame Ivy continues to offer her gifts as a Bible teacher and as a speaker at workshops and seminars.

On behalf of the people and Government of The Bahamas, I extend congratulations to Dame Ivy on this most deserving honour.

May God continually bless you and your family.

And May God bless the Commonwealth of
The Bahamas.
