



CONTRIBUTION

to

The 2021/2022 Budget

Debate by

**Hon. Renward R. Wells, M.P.
Minister of Health**

**House of Assembly
Nassau, The Bahamas
Wednesday, 16th & Thursday 17th June, 2021
at 3:00p.m. and 10:00a.m. respectively**

Introduction

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today in this House in the usual fashion, with thankfulness in my heart, praising HaShem, The Elohim of the Elohim, who has blessed us in the Heavenly place with all spiritual blessing. He is the Lord of Life, the source of all hope, faith, and love. May his name forever and forever be praised.

Mr. Speaker,

He has filled us with faith and hope. As through the eyes of faith and hope coupled with firm action, I can see the evidence of this COVID-19 Pandemic ending. For we know that faith without works is dead. (James 2:17)

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I continually put my complete trust, hope and

confidence in Almighty God – Yahweh Elohim, to see us through these challenging and ever-changing times.

Mr. Speaker,

It is the fuel of love that drives me more than anything, I am filled and buoyed with love for my God and love for my fellow man such that I get up every day to stand steadfast at my job to ensure the optimal level of health and well-being of all persons in The Bahamas. For indeed He has commanded me to not grow weary in well-doing for in due season I will reap a reward if I faint not. (Galatians 6:9).

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Mr. Speaker,

As we deal with matters of the Spirit. I take this opportunity to send my condolence to the

Family of Stephanie Wells, to Cleveland, Baby Ann and Tennyson Wells Jr. on the loss of their dear mother. I offer condolences to the Family of Bishop Benjamin Wenith Davis, to the family of Sir Charles Carter, Senator the late Albury Hanna and the family of Donald Symonette.

Constituency Matters

Mr. Speaker

I rise also on behalf of the good people of Bamboo Town who have sent me to this place for a second stint to serve their interest. To give

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value to their voice and to be the voice of their values.

Mr. Speaker,

Lord willing and I know He is willing, I will be here on that great “getting up morning” when the FNM saints will rise, after the next general election. For the Word declares that “The heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” (Proverbs 21:1). We know, in a democracy, the people are king, but it is the Lord of Providence who determines the outcome. So, **Mr. Speaker**, I am thankful to the Good Lord and I am very thankful for my constituents, who have stood by me through thick and thin and showed their unwavering

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confidence in my ability to represent them in this Honorable place.

Mr. Speaker,

It remains my honour and esteemed privilege to be their representative. I have an everlasting love for them and assure them that their confidence will never be misplaced in this member.

Achievements

Mr. Speaker,

Over the past 4 years since this administration was elected to office, we have been busy with the Bahamian people's business. Busy about building a more resilient and economically prosperous society.

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Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business in the area of food security and food sovereignty. As the Minister of

Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Hon. Michael Pintard advised we are reducing our dependence on imports and increasing food security in this country.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business in energy security. In the summer of 2019, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Desmond Bannister, ensured that there was more than enough generating capacity for the island of New Providence with the installation of new electrical generating

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engines. These new engines at Clifton replaced the old end-of-life generators that were installed in the 1960s.

Mr. Speaker,

We did not know that COVID-19 was coming to our shores at that time. However, adequate electricity generation came right on time so that persons could remain comfortably at home during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and emergency order measures.

Mr. Speaker,

We are also expanding the penetration of renewable energy in the country. Currently, solar power is being installed in Ragged Island. We are also working aggressively to secure LNG to power energy in the country and

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perhaps to secure bunkering to service the cruise ships as we fully establish and expand homeporting in The Bahamas.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business by protecting our heritage – our environment. This administration has prohibited cruise ships from dumping treated or non-treated sewerage, waste oil and garbage in our territorial Bahamian waters.

Mr. Speaker,

Scientists are now required to register to conduct research in The Bahamas. This Administration will continue to exercise its right to protect the genetic material scientists will have access to during their research in our

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waters. This Administration has ensured that The Bahamas can authorize access, control the use and establish fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of genetic scientific finds in the area of medicines and cosmetics.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business in education. The Honourable Jeffrey Lloyd reminded us that today, families can send their little ones from preschool, elementary school, high school, straight to the University of The Bahamas (UB) to obtain a Bachelor's Degree free of charge!

Mr. Speaker,

Family Island students also receive \$500 to assist with accommodations while attending

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UB. Mr. Speaker, BAMSI is free and any other vocational training is also free of charge, at BTVI.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian

people's business in Tourism. This Administration has on record the largest number of tourists visiting The Bahamas. Some 7.2 million tourists visited our shores in 2019, the year Hurricane Dorian slammed into the Bahamas. If it was not for hurricane Dorian we would have experienced even greater growth. Now, no doubt with homeporting, we are making the Bahamas an iconic world-class destination with potential touristic exponential growth.

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Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business in Transport. Bahamians can now turn left on the red light which reduces stress, the time for morning and evening commutes and the monies spent on gas waiting

at the red lights.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business with respect to the Post Office. Yes, the post office, **Mr. Speaker**, you don't even hear about the Post Office anymore, other than in this place. Gone are the days of protesting and workers only reporting for half days! For the first time since the 1970's, the General Post has passed the United Nations

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Postal Audit. You see, **Mr. Speaker**, the post office is considered a port of entry, and has to comply with 9-11 regulations for ports of entry. During this process, notably, The Bahamas also obtained its Security Certificate for the General Post Office.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business in economic empowerment. We have provided Bahamians over 100 million dollars in grants and loans to small businesses. Many small businesses have stepped forward to avail themselves of this funding opportunity offered by this Government.

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Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business economically empowering the poor and middle class, the mom and pop stores in the over-the-hill communities with the establishment of the Over-the-hill Economic Empowerment Zone.

Mr. Speaker,

We have been busy with the Bahamian people's business to compensate the frontline nurses, physicians and medical service workers involved in the COVID-19 National Response for the period 19th March – 18th June, 2020. **Mr. Speaker,** this administration approved \$1,040,600 million in honourarium and death

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benefits, in this budget that will be paid out as follows:

- **\$400,000** as death benefits to the Legal representatives of the four (4) health care workers that passed away in the line of duty from COVID-19;
- **\$640,600** to 143 frontline health care workers who stepped forward initially during the first wave of COVID-19 who came forward and said “here am I send

me” when others were somewhat tepid and hesitant.

Mr. Speaker,

For those who later joined the fight, this administration approved an additional \$3 million in honourarium in this 2021/2022

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budget that will be paid out to some 1,690 healthcare workers.

Mr. Speaker,

The Government also paid overtime to nurses who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Mr. Speaker,** this Government approved **\$162,300.13** in overtime to nurses of the Ministry of Health during the period January – August, 2020, which was initially paid in October 2020. When the Ministry

learned of work performed during Hurricane Dorian and other outstanding overtime owing to nurses, subsequent payments were made to nurses in February, 2021.

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Mr. Speaker,

I made the definitive decision in September of last year that overtime in the Ministry of Health was not to accrue, and that overtime was to be paid on a monthly basis. However, the Ministry of Health is still on a paper-based honour system. Even after some overtime monies were paid in October 2020, log sheets were still being submitted for overtime spent during Hurricane Dorian. Although the Government was ready to pay the overtime accrued by employees, the Government still had to wait for the log sheets to be

administratively compiled and presented with accurate costs.

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Mr. Speaker,

I want it to be noted by all and sundry that the Public Hospital Authority does not have this problem in paying overtime to Healthcare workers, since the Public Hospitals Authority has an Accu-Staff Sign-in Electronic Program. Consequently, nurses employed by the PHA were paid their overtime monthly and on time.

Mr. Speaker,

I want it to be known that the time to wait on log sheets has come and gone! The Ministry of Health will be investing in a biometric sign in programme that will make overtime payment more seamless and on time.

Mr. Speaker,

At this stage, let me address a matter brought up by the member for Golden Isles.

Mr. Speaker,

According to the World Health Organization, for all countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal #3 on health and well-being, it is estimated that the world will need an additional 9 million nurses and midwives by the year 2030. Currently, the University of the Bahamas recently graduated some 40 nurses with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. These same nurses are scheduled to sit the Nursing Council examination in November, 2021. Another 30 nurses will be graduating by the end of this

summer session. Behind this group is approximately another 100 nurses. So, **Mr. Speaker**, by the end of this upcoming fiscal year there will be an additional **170** Bahamian nurses in our healthcare system.

Mr. Speaker,

“Where do we get the people - the allied health professionals?” was the question asked by the member of Golden Isles. The answer, **Mr. Speaker**, is in our schools and other allied health programmes! We are creating in our tertiary institutions the full suite of allied health professions, that will produce experts for subsequent years to come, to fully staff our healthcare sector. Golden Isles we must look to our young people to help get our country

through these difficult times and to help this nation's recovery. This Free National Movement Government, **Mr. Speaker** is doing just that!

Mr. Speaker,

Speaking about Recovery is precisely what this budget is all about. It is the economic elixir for what ails our nation. The good book says there is a time and season for everything under heaven, a time for planting and time for reaping, a time for austerity and time for plenty.

Mr. Speaker,

Now is not the time for austerity! This is a time for prosperity and plenty. That is what this budget signifies. In fact, this budget is so good

that the member for Exuma has likened it to a

fairy tale - an Alice and Wonderland Story! To him, it is too good to be true, but to us, it is factual - not fiction, not a fairytale. Not to mention that some of the measures undertaken in this budget were recommended by the good member last year as a way to buttress and sure up our economic life. **Mr. Speaker**, the member for Exuma should have stayed with us in the fairy tale. Alas, since he has left, I fear he will not be there on Election Day with the happy ending - the re-election of this Free National Movement Government.

Mr. Speaker,

To spur us on to recovery, the good member advised that we should borrow \$2 billion.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are borrowing the \$2 billion - \$1.3 billion last year as a part of the Resilient Bahamas Plan and another **\$900** million for our newly proposed Accelerated Bahamas Recovery Plan. Did I say plan, yes, **Mr. Speaker**, just like we detailed and executed a plan for our nation in response to COVID-19, we have detailed the nation's recovery plan to accelerate the recovery over this coming fiscal year. Indeed, **Mr. Speaker**, based on our track record, there is no doubt that "We have come to the kingdom for such a time' as this."(Esther 4:14).

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The Ministry of Health

Mr. Speaker,

I will now move to my remit given to me by the Almighty God and Honorable Prime

Minister.

Mr. Speaker,

I take this opportunity to encourage my beloved Bahamians, who are emerging from these difficult twenty (20) months under the devastating damage of Hurricane Dorian and the scourge of COVID-19. Last year brought many challenges to the overall physical, mental, and economic health of many of our citizens.

However, Hebrew 10:39 gives us hope,

Mr. Speaker, it says that as a nation, “we do

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not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.”

Mr. Speaker,

We will recover! The road to recovery is not an easy one. However, with the seven pillared Accelerate Bahamas Recovery Plan that was tabled by the Most Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we chart our steps to rapidly return to a sense of normalcy.

Mr. Speaker,

My Ministry looks forward to participating in the rollout of that plan. Healthcare Improvements & Vaccinations form the third pillar. Accordingly, the Ministry of Health has

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been allocated **\$297,081,014** for the 2021/2022 fiscal year to support our actions:

- **\$223,455,825** for the Public Hospitals Authority;
- **\$45,000,000** for the National Health

Insurance Authority; and

- **\$47,474,124** for the Department of Public Health.

These appropriations will facilitate four areas of our healthcare sector.

- **First**, substantial investment in health infrastructure;

- **Second**, expansion of telemedicine to improve access to healthcare;

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- **Third**, expansion of universal health coverage via National Health Insurance; and

- **Fourth**, enhancement of supports to mitigate COVID-19, including vaccinations.

Mr. Speaker,

We are a government, committed with our

whole heart to the enhancement our healthcare system. The focus is on saving lives, improving health outcomes, and putting much more care into word “healthcare.”

Mr. Speaker,

We realize that in order to further achieve our desired outcomes, we will have to greatly

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improve our health infrastructure throughout the nation. We have taken the decision to renovate some structures and to build new ones. Consequently, renovations will be made to the priority wards and patient care environments to address bed shortages while ensuring compliance with COVID-19 space requirements and infection control practices.

The intended goal of these improvements

aligns with the core value - that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship.

Mr. Speaker,

Our infrastructure plan incorporates as its basic considerations the following:

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- the provision of par-excellent service in environments that prioritizes “our clients,” - the Bahamian people’s, privacy, dignity and confidentiality;
- we will incorporate the latest use of smart and green technology to provide for safe delivery of routine medical services;
- we will incorporate the proliferation of e health services and telemedicine; and · the safe management of ALL infectious diseases,

including COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker,

Buttressed by funding acquired from the World Bank Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (**MIGA**) and the Inter-American Development Bank, the Government will

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transform the face of the healthcare sector to modernize its facilities to reflect Universal Healthcare in the Public Hospital Authority, The Department of Public Health, The National Health Insurance Authority and The Ministry of Health.

Public Hospitals Authority

Mr. Speaker,

We will start with the infrastructural

improvements in the Public Hospital Authority. **Mr. Speaker**, PHA is responsible for and has oversight and management for The Princess Margaret Hospital, the Sandilands Rehabilitation Center, The Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama and the Clinics in Grand Bahama including Sweetings Cay and

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Grand Cay. On the 16th March, of this year, 2021, the Cabinet of The Bahamas authorized the PHA to access loan funding of **\$89,036,855.95** from the World Bank (MIGA) to fund capital projects. These projects are to modernize the infrastructure of the Princess Margaret Hospital, the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre in New Providence and the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama.

Mr. Speaker,

This year and next year, at the Princess Margaret Hospital renovations will take place in the following locations: –

- the Eye Ward;
- Female Medical II;
- the former Physiotherapy Unit;
- the former Female Surgical II;
- Children's Ward;
- Male Medical II; and
- the decommissioned Intensive Care Unit.

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Mr. Speaker,

At PMH we will complete Phase Two of the Urgent and Emergency Care project. I am pleased to advise the general public that

construction on the enhanced Emergency Department facilities, initiated as part of the Urgent & Emergency Care Project is near completion. The first phase of this project at Princess Margaret Hospital will enable us to expand the Emergency Department by relocating the outpatient space.

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Having started in November 2019, the first phase will conclude early in the upcoming 2021/22 fiscal year. **These initial works include –**

- an extension to the current Emergency Department for a new entrance
- **they also include** the relocation of Orthopaedic & Wound Care services; **Mr. Speaker,** the Prime Minister and I will soon

formally open these facilities.

- a dedicated Biomedical Services space; and
- a covered ambulance bay.

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Mr. Speaker,

The second phase of these works to the Emergency Department will commence in July of this year, utilizing funding through the MIGA loan facility of **\$6.4M**. This landmark project will address longstanding challenges at the hospital's "front door" for patients in crisis. Renovations will emphasize upgraded treatment rooms and equipment; enhanced security and privacy; and general improvement to the aesthetics of this service.

Mr. Speaker,

Bahamians can realistically expect that the

efficiency, throughput, interconnectivity, and

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overall public and patient experience for life saving and urgent care services will be greatly improved in PMH's Emergency Department.

Mr. Speaker,

We will also acquire new radiology equipment for enhanced clinical care and support the delivery of new modalities of care at PMH.

Mr. Speaker,

With the corresponding improvement to the polyclinics in New Providence, clients seeking non-urgent care at the Princess Margaret Hospital will be redirected to the Department of Public Health facilities.

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Additionally, Mr. Speaker,

At PMH, onsite, we will construct a new Infectious Disease Unit with a state-of-the-art, HVAC system complete with negative air pressure, ultraviolet lights to bathe the air handler coils and MERV 20 filtration filters; in addition to antiviral and antimicrobial construction materials to ensure protection from infectious pathogens at the Princess Margaret Hospital.

Mr. Speaker,

Further, under the ambit of the Public Hospitals Authority, I am pleased to present to you that during this budget period we undertake the construction of a new six (6) story tower at the Princess Margaret Hospital. The new

construction will be a 96,288 square feet multi story Medical/Surgical and Maternal & Child Health Tower near the present Critical Care Block.

Mr. Speaker,

This tower will enhance the service delivery model, increase the service capacity and expand the scope of services provided with limited disruption to service delivery. The tower will also provide easy access and flow of patients on the inpatient wards that accommodate the primary users of the Intensive Care, Neonatal Intensive Care Units and Operating Theatres.

The new tower is expected to house **a new** –

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- Obstetrics (Ante-, Peri-, Post-Natal) & Gynaecology Ward;

- Children's Ward;
 - Surgical Ward;
 - Medical Ward;
 - Private hospital boarding rooms; and
 - Ancillary Services.
- The designs and drawings are underway.
- There will also be provisions for a helipad to transport emergency medical cases.

Mr. Speaker,

This new Medical/Surgical and Maternal and Child Health tower have been designed by Diggiss & Associates, supported by The BECK

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Group, a well-known Healthcare Planner headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

Mr. Speaker,

The tower designed and constructed is climate-resilient, smart and green energy efficient. The new tower will be constructed utilizing a modular design at an estimated capital cost of **\$55M**. This will include the cost of furniture, fixtures, architecturally significant equipment (ASE), information/low voltage system(s) and other IT-related costs.

Mr. Speaker,

We have heard the cries of our patients, the Bahamian people, for better facilities to accommodate, treat and assist our expecting

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mothers to bring their children into this world and with this new edifice, this new 6 story tower, **we in the FMM will have delivered.** I look forward to cutting the ribbon in the

upcoming new term of the FNM.

Mr. Speaker,

Renovations are also planned at the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre specifically for the –

- renovation of the Old Robert Smith Building into a 16-bed Acute Psychiatric Admission Ward; and
- the renovation of the Pearce Ward to reinstate 12 beds within the Geriatric Hospital.

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At Sandilands, **Mr. Speaker,**

We will also construct a new building to accommodate the provision of psychological services currently being delivered in the Tim

McCartney Building.

Mr. Speaker,

We will now move to PHA's infrastructural works in Grand Bahama. As you are aware, **Mr. Speaker**, after Hurricane Dorian slammed into the island of Grand Bahama, the Rand Memorial Hospital was inundated with up to three (3) feet of contaminated water for over seventy-two (72) hours – **three (3) days**.

Mr. Speaker,

Patients had to be evacuated to numerous sites within Freeport, including The New Sunrise Medical Centre. The Radiology and Lab area and all of A&E, **which were not flooded**, continued to operate, while the Diah Psychiatric Ward was reconstituted into

medical and surgical ward spaces for acute admissions.

Mr. Speaker,

More than seventy-five percent (75%) of the facility sustained significant damages, including the loss of operating rooms, ward spaces, and administrative areas with loss of equipment, supplies, and the inherent introduction of mold and bacteria. Operational services within The Rand were limited to Emergency, Trauma, Radiology and

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Laboratory Departments only.

Mr. Speaker,

This Government decided to authorize the Ministry of Finance to disburse **\$18 million** from the Hurricane Dorian Fund for the

immediate restoration of The Rand Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Speaker,

It was determined that investments would only be made in salvageable areas of The Rand, taking into consideration termite damage and mold growth within the facility.

With that in mind, **Mr. Speaker,** this administration was busy creating jobs with the award of contracts to several local

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companies totalling **\$11.6 million.** These contracts included construction works that led to the re-commissioning of the Rand Memorial Hospital, two months ago, on 23rd April, 2021, by the Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker,

The newly commissioned spaces include -

- the complete renovation of the Front Entry Space;
- the complete renovation of the Pharmacy space and Operations ;
- the complete renovation of the Lula Knowles Pediatrics Ward;
- the renovation and restoration of the existing Operating Theatres;
- the Renovation and Restoration of Inpatient ICU, Medical and Surgical Bed Spaces in the Medical/Surgical and Critical Care blocks;
- the Completion of a Chapel on-site for spiritual healing; and
- the completion of an upgraded Commercial Kitchen/Cafeteria Facility with a dining

area.

Mr. Speaker, further at the Rand there is the
construction of a New Corridor to access

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the Medical/Surgical Ward and Healing
Garden Space, along with the restoration of
other main arteries of the hospital;

Mr. Speaker, further works at the Rand
involve -

- the Construction of a new 40' Container size modular Operating Theatre Pre-Op & Procedure Room incorporated into the footprint of The Rand hospital to meet the current service needs while awaiting the construction of a new replacement facility;
- **And** there is the Construction of a new,

fully commissioned, 2,800 sq. ft.

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Infectious Disease Unit with seven (7) isolation spaces which are to be used in response to the existing COVID-19 Pandemic.

Additionally, **Mr. Speaker,**

We have demolished the Administration and Obstetrics & Maternity Wings at the Rand and shortly, **Mr. Speaker,** there will be upgrades to the existing morgue area with an extension of the corridor to link to the Accident & Emergency services.

Mr. Speaker,

Given this level of investment on the

existing hospital site, honourable members and

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the general public are advised that there will be a structured Re-Development Program of the Rand Memorial Hospital infrastructure. This plan will maximize onsite redevelopment to address health needs of the entire island of Grand Bahama for the next fifteen (15) to twenty (20) years. The redevelopment plan will take into consideration how the **site** will be properly utilized while optimizing projected expenditure and acquiring adjacent land for future re-development.

Mr. Speaker,

As with PMH, it gives me great pleasure to report that this FNM Government will commence the construction of a new four (4)

level, climate-resilient hospital in Grand

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Bahama on the Rand Memorial Hospital site.

Mr. Speaker,

The BECK Group, the architectural and engineering firm has devised these plans as well.

Mr. Speaker,

Going forward, based on preliminary assessments, it is anticipated that the estimated cost to completely rebuild the Rand Memorial Hospital would be approximately **thirty-five million dollars (\$35M)**, including the cost of furniture, fixtures, architecturally significant equipment (ASE) and other IT-related costs.

Mr. Speaker,

Very soon, the construction of the four-

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level tower will allow for inpatient services to be removed from the ground floor level to second, third and fourth story floors. In the event, Pineridge, of another major disaster, **Mr. Speaker**, healthcare services would not have to be displaced as was the case after Hurricane Dorian. The new tower will have a minimum, Pineridge, of a five (5) feet foundation height above grade. This will ensure non-flooding of the facility during the worse of hurricanes. This new tower would provide the opportunity for all services to be available in one facility in Grand Bahama.

Mr. Speaker,

In addition, the new Tower will eliminate the need for PHA to pay the current rental fees

of **\$1,025,916** annually. These fees are paid to house offsite clinical, administrative and support services that are currently needed in the Grand Bahama health sector.

Mr. Speaker,

Using some conventional and new construction methods, it is estimated, that the Princess Margaret and Rand Memorial Hospital towers will be completed and ready for commissioning within twenty-four (24) months.

Mr. Speaker,

All of these renovations and new construction will greatly enhance the bed space throughout our nation's healthcare sector.

In regards to healthcare bed space, **Mr. Speaker**, The Bahamas is eternally grateful to The Samaritan's Purse for providing an Emergency Field Hospital at the Princess Margaret Hospital to meet the need during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar assistance was given, by Samaritan's Purse, during the restoration efforts in Grand Bahama near the Rand Memorial Hospital after Hurricane Dorian. Again we say thank you, to Samaritan's Purse for their Christian Charity to our nation.

Mr. Speaker,

We continue to be forward-leaning in our thinking. The next phase of hospital redevelopment will seek to exploit revenue

opportunities. These opportunities will offset any investment in physical improvements to the facility by incorporating approximately 20- 25% of all bed space as private rooms.

The Public Hospital Authority intends to attract a ready market to service the operational costs and the repayment of the loan. This investment increase revenue opportunities in these service areas of healthcare delivery.

Mr. Speaker,

With such modernized facilities, it is imperative to move to a more efficient business model. Consequently, the PHA will be moving more toward offering market prices for medical services to those classes of patients with the ability to pay. This is especially important

when patients request private care through an insurer or via a self-pay mechanism.

Mr. Speaker,

Once this arrangement is in place, there will be no need to petition for updated pricing. Prices will simply be benchmarked and updated. Revenues are also expected to be enhanced with –

- improved technology;
- a streamlined registration process;
- service delivery;
- billing and collection; and
- coordinated facilitation of trained and certified medical coders in our public health system.

Department of Public Health

We now move to the infrastructural works at the Department of Public Health.

Mr. Speaker,

Healthcare delivery service is split into three areas - Primary Healthcare, Secondary Healthcare and Tertiary Healthcare (Critical care and emergency care).

Mr. Speaker,

The goal of the Department of Public Health, since 2017 has been to renovate, redesign; and expand primary healthcare facilities and services in New Providence and the Family Islands. The improved infrastructure would provide for improved safe

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delivery of Primary Health Care Services at the Community Level.

Mr. Speaker,

To achieve this goal, attention was given to the renovation and redesign of the four (4) Poly Clinics, namely –in New Providence

- Elizabeth Estates;
- Flamingo Gardens Clinic;
- Fleming Street Clinics; and
- South Beach Health Centre.

In 2019, the Cabinet authorized the renovation, redesign and expansion of the Ann’s Town, Elizabeth Estates Clinics and South Beach Health Centre. Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that over **one million dollars (\$1M)** of

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renovations has been done on the South Beach Healthcare Center to outfit it to receive and deliver services to those suspected of

contracting COVID-19. Since the South Beach Health Centre is currently being used as the COVID-19 Centre, the expansion of this facility to a 24-hour primary and urgent care centre has been deferred for the time being. In the height of the first wave, we were able to complete the renovations.

Mr. Speaker,

We remain focused. Renovations continue at the Ann's Town and Elizabeth Estates Clinics. The construction of the Ann's Town Clinic provides for the expansion of the Gerontology Clinic for Senior Citizens that

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have complex aging and mental health issues. The Clinic will also decentralize the Adolescents Mental Health Services from the

hospital to the community level.

Mr. Speaker,

Residents receiving regular Maternal and Child Health Services, at Ann's Town, will also have access to basic primary healthcare services, inclusive of the refilling of medication, dressings, and follow-up of non urgent health care needs.

Mr. Speaker,

We have heard the cry of our pregnant mothers and the need to have more maternity friendly facilities. Therefore, it gives me great

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pleasure to advise all mothers that the health team is producing a report that will catalyse the construction of a Maternal and Child Health Centre in the area of the National Insurance

building on Blue Hill Road.

Mr. Speaker,

This means the services from the Blue Hill Road Clinic, Adolescent Health Centre, Coconut Grove Districts and the Antenatal Services at the Fleming Street Clinic will all merge into this facility. In the coming weeks and months more information will be released to the public outlining the future use of these buildings for other services and population health initiatives. **(speak to this).**

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Additionally, **Mr. Speaker,**

The renovation, redesign and expansion of the Elizabeth Estates clinic are underway. The clinic will be equipped with portable x-ray and other points of care equipment for the improved

management of persons presenting with urgent care needs.

Funding has also been placed in the budget to address the renovation of the Flamingo Gardens and Fleming Street Clinics.

Mr. Speaker,

This Government has always been of the people, for the people and by the people. With this being the “People’s Time” infrastructural development in healthcare will not stop in New

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Providence and Grand Bahama. This Government will also upgrade clinics in the Family Islands.

The Government has sourced a **\$60M** IDB loan that will assist to construct and/or retrofit nine (9) primary care clinics in seven (7)

islands. The physical works will fulfil four (4) attributes:

- Resiliency to disaster and climate change risks are mostly related to storms.
- Design to care for and contain the spread of infectious diseases.
- the capacity for Telemedicine services; and
- the sustainability and energy-efficient design to comply with the EDGE

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(Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) “green building” certification.

Mr. Speaker,

EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) is a green building certification system that enables design teams and project owners to assess the most cost-effective ways

to incorporate energy and water-saving options into their buildings. EDGE is comprised of a web-based software application, a universal standard, and a certification system.

If you earn a minimum prediction of 20% less energy, water and embodied energy in materials, then your project can, and does meet the EDGE standard. EDGE-designed buildings are currently saving 75,722 MWh/year of

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energy (megawatt-hours of energy per year). They are saving 1,802,700 m³(cubic meters) of water, and 320,554 GJ (gigajoules) of energy, in embodied energy around the world.

Mr. Speaker,

New clinics that will meet the EDGE certification will be built in the following sites:

- Black Point, Exuma;
- Mangrove Cay, Andros;
- Fresh Creek Andros; (Oh, my Andros, Oh, my Andros);
- Rock Sound, Eleuthera; and
- Smith's Bay Clinic, Cat Island.

The renovations and/or expansion of clinics are also expected to occur in the following

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locations:

- The Abaco Primary Health Care Centre;
- The Miriam Green Clinic South Andros;
- The Bimini Clinic; and
- The Deadman's Cay, Long Island clinic.

All this construction work has a ticketed cost of just under **\$20M** (\$19,554,031.28).

Mr. Speaker,

It is noteworthy to share with you a summary of the programme, that is part of this \$20 million construction to support the health sector to contain and control coronavirus and any other potential infectious disease in future in the healthcare workspace.

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Mr. Speaker,

The prototype project is designed to reduce morbidity and mortality in the country due to COVID-19 or future pathogens. How will this be achieved? **Mr. Speaker,** the **\$20M** will also ensure the seventeen (17) clinics in this program receive air-conditioning works to install negative pressure units outfitted with UltraViolet light capacity in the return air

system and Merv-20 ventilation filters in the air handlers. Builders, architectural and construction works are all included. **Clinics that will be recipients of these works are as follows:**

- **Elizabeth Estates Clinic;**
- **Flamingo Gardens Clinic;**
- **Fleming Street Clinic;**
- **South Beach Health Centre;**
- **Exuma Primary Health Care Centre (George Town);**
- **Abaco Primary Health Care Centre (Marsh Harbour);**
- **Cooper's Town Community Clinic**

(North Abaco);

· **Mariam Green Community Clinic**

(South Andros);

· **Nicholl's Town Community Clinic;**

· **Spanish Wells Community Clinic;**

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· **Harbour Island Community Clinic;**

· **Lower Bogue Community Clinic**

(North mainland);

· **Governors Harbour Community**

Clinic (Central);

· **Wemyss Bight Community Clinic**

(South);

· **Inagua Community Clinic;**

- **Bimini Community Clinic; and**
- **Cockburn Town Community Clinic.**

Additionally, **Mr. Speaker,**

Twenty-four (24) ports and seaports will also receive upgrades in infrastructure to

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accommodate isolation units for health emergencies as well. These initiatives will serve to ensure worker safety and patient safety!

Mr. Speaker,

It gets better. An additional **\$20M** in IDB funding will support the following initiatives.

First, with \$8M we will improve the delivery of care model by reorganising and

standardising the provision of primary and hospital care services provided by the NHIA, DPH and PHA; and by implementing a person and community-centered model of care.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the construction details that I have already

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provided, we will enhance the capacity for us to provide primary care by upgrading medical equipment, throughout the country (defibrillators, portable X-ray machines, ultrasound, electrocardiogram, and equipment for laboratory tests, dental services, and preventive care); and procuring six ambulances for those facilities in our Family of Islands. Long Island, home too of my ancestors, the promise made for your ambulance, will be kept.

Thirdly, with \$10M, we will modernise the health information system, **the IT system in the country**. This modernisation will address the integration of existing and new applications and equipment, such as laboratory, pharmacy, and diagnostic imaging applications into the

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new Electronic Health Record (HER) system and allow for the Health Information Exchange among and in 54 clinics of the DPH. We will have one medical record system for all healthcare services in the country. There is only one country currently that has one medical EHR system for all of its citizens, that nation is the State of Israel. The second, Mr. Speaker, will be the Bahamas!

Yes, **Mr. Speaker**, We are rebounding!

Yes, we are bouncing back!

Mr. Speaker,

We return to the infrastructural works in the clinics in the Family Islands.

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On 27th April, 2021, as part of the IDB project, the Ministry of Health hosted a virtual public consultation with the residents of Deadman's Cay Long Island to discuss the renovation, redesign and expansion of the David Simms Memorial Health Centre in Deadmans Cay. This is the first of the consultations that will take place with all Family Island communities that will have a new or renovated clinic during this fiscal year. The consultation is required as a part of the IDB funding program.

Mr. Speaker,

I want the member for Long Island and the people of Simms not to worry, because Long Island, we got you, and we will not be leaving

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you out! **Mr. Speaker**, funding has been placed in this budget to provide for the expansion and redesign of the clinic space to ensure the provision of high, safe, quality healthcare services in Simms, Long Island as well.

Mr. Speaker,

COVID-19 and the effects of Hurricane Dorian did not permit some of our planned projects to commence as anticipated on the island of Abaco. Just as the song says, Mr. Speaker, “Lean on me, when you are not strong, and I’ll be your friend, I’ll help you carry on.” The Non-Governmental Organization Direct

Relief and its partners permitted this administration to lean heavily on their

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shoulders. Direct Relief and its partners brought to birth several projects to repair, redesign and restore health facilities on the island of Abaco at no cost to the Government.

Among the projects executed are as follows:-

- a six (6) unit staff accommodation complex located on the grounds of the Abaco Primary Health Care Centre that will be completed and occupied by the end of July 2021. Two (2) new generators have also been purchased for that facility. **Mr. Speaker,** every healthcare facility in Abaco now has a stand-by generator;
- Direct Relief, in collaboration with the University of Miami, is constructing a five

(5) unit building near the existing staff accommodations in Marsh Harbour; and Clinic and staff accommodations are also being constructed on Guana and Man-O War Cays. Construction to be completed by year's end.

Mr. Speaker,

They say a friend is worth more than riches. This administration has seen this statement prove true over and over again. The NGOs (non-governmental organizations) Americares and Clinic-in-a-Can teamed up with Government to provide a modular clinic for Hard Bargain, Moore's Island. The Government has provided the land **and** to meet building Code requirements the Government is

responsible for the construction of the foundation and the utility service tie-ins to the tune of \$120,000. This project will be completed by the end of August 2021.

Mr. Speaker,

I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to the non governmental organizations who have stuck with The Bahamas through thick and thin so that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Mr. Speaker,

Despite our setbacks, renovations and repairs are taking place at the Doctors and Nurses Residences in Cooper's Town, Abaco. The Department of Public Health will continue

to pursue repairs in Abaco clinics at Cooper's Town, Fox Town, and Green Turtle Cay.

Mr. Speaker,

Turning attention now to the south eastern and central Bahamas, it is anticipated that the Two (2) state-of-the-art facilities currently under renovation, and equipped with telemedicine capabilities, with portable x-ray and point of care laboratory equipment will be completed in Acklins by the end of September, this year, 2021.

Mr. Speaker,

This time around, Crooked Island is poised to experience the redesign and expansion of the Landrail Point Clinic in this budget. It is

expected, **Mr. Speaker,** that this would

strengthen the management of acute, non-acute and infectious diseases, with negative air pressure rooms again, on the island.

Mr. Speaker,

Additionally, activities to reactivate the repairs and expansion of the Abraham's Bay Clinic, Mayaguana will begin, next month in July 2021. **Mr. Speaker,** to Mayaguanians, we will soon be sending you a doctor to be with you in Pirates' Well.

Further, Mr. Speaker,

During this fiscal year, funding will be provided in a phased approach for the ongoing renovation and repairs of the staff

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accommodations at the Inagua Health Care Centre and those works are to be completed by

the end of the fiscal period 2022.

Mr. Speaker,

You know we told Black Point they were going to have a newly constructed clinic under the IDB project. Well, I do not want to you believe we currying favour for Black Point, but you know I love that place.

Mr. Speaker,

I would just ask the Black Point community to bear with us as we identify the property for their new clinic in Black point that has already been earmarked for construction in this 2021/2022 budget. In the meantime, we will be

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relocating the present clinic to a more suitable building that is compliant with existing and proper health standards.

Mr. Speaker,

These clinics will keep you busy! Along with COVID-19, they have been keeping me extremely busy. Right now, assessments are being carried out at the Exuma Primary Health Care Centre to execute urgent repairs to the air conditioning and plumbing. Plans are in place to treat this state-of-the-art centre's HVAC system for rust and to modify the design to prevent further corrosion of the air conditioning due to the salt air and lack of negative air pressure room, ultraviolet light and medical grade ventilation air filters.

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Mr. Speaker,

My Ministry assures the staff of the Exuma Primary Health Care Centre and the people of Exuma, that steps are being taken to ensure

preventative maintenance of this facility sustained, with sustained maintenance contracts. In addition, Human Resources to provide specialists in diagnostic services is also being realized for Exuma to complement the growing share of the population Exuma now occupies as a result of the growing Tourism sector on the island.

Mr. Speaker,

I am not done yet, there is more. Notably, the clinic in Ragged Island is being executed by the Ministry of Works. The Ministry of Health.