



## CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2021/2022 BUDGET DEBATE

HON. BRENSIL D. ROLLE, MP

MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE  
AND NATIONAL INSURANCE

JUNE 10, 2021

MR. SPEAKER,  
I DEEM IT AN HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO STAND BEFORE YOU AS THE MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND NATIONAL INSURANCE, TO PRESENT MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE FOR THE BUDGET FOR THE 2021/2022 FISCAL YEAR.

LET ME BEGIN BY THANKING GOD FOR ALLOWING ME THE PRIVILEGE AND OPPORTUNITY TO BE A MEMBER OF THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE, AND I PAY HOMAGE TO THE GREAT PEOPLE OF GARDEN HILLS CONSTITUENCY AND THANK THEM FOR ELECTING ME TO SERVE ON THEIR BEHALF. I SALUTE THEM, AND TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN FULFILLING MY DUTIES.

I HAVE EXCHANGED THE BATON CLEANLY, AND MR. STEPHEN GREENSLADE HAS ACCEPTED THE BATON IN STRIDES. I WISH HIM WELL AND CONGRATULATE HIM AS THE NEXT MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GARDEN HILLS WHENEVER THE NEXT ELECTION IS CALLED.

I ALSO WISH TO THANK THE MOST HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAS ENTRUSTED ME WITH PORTFOLIO OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND NATIONAL INSURANCE.

AS I AM NOT SEEKING RE-ELECTION, THIS UPCOMING BUDGET PERIOD WILL BE MY LAST SERVING AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT IN THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE.

MANY PERSONS HAVE ASKED ME WHAT AM I GOING TO DO, I SIMPLY SAY I HOPE TO ENJOY THE REST OF MY LIFE WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS. I FEEL THAT I HAVE DONE THE WORK AND ANOTHER SOLDIER MUST COMPLETE THE TASK.

TODAY, IT IS MY DUTY TO GIVE THE FACTS, TO AVOID THE SPINS AND TO DEFEND THE CHARACTER AND PERFORMANCE OF THIS FNM ADMINISTRATION. THROUGH BUDGET CUTS, CATASTROPHIC CALAMITIES AND THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC... THE NUMBERS SHOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN MAKING WAVES IN TERMS OF REVOLUTIONIZING THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD.

SINCE I DO NOT INTEND TO THROW SHADE OR SPEAK ABOUT THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE PLP WHO SAID I HAVE DONE NOTHING AS MINISTER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE. I WILL SURELY PRESENT THE FACTS AND SHOW THE COMPARISON AND LET THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL AND PUBLIC OFFICERS IN PARTICULAR, MAKE THE DECISION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PLP AND FNM MINISTERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
THE GOVERNMENT'S CENTRAL PERSONNEL AGENCY IS THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND NATIONAL INSURANCE. THIS MINISTRY IS THE POLICY ARM OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER RESOURCES THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM. THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE ENSURES THAT MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS ARE IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER. THE OBJECTIVE IS TO STRATEGICALLY POSITION AND PROPERLY MANAGE OFFICERS WITH THE RIGHT APTITUDE, SO THAT THE PUBLIC GAINS MAXIMUM BENEFITS FROM THEIR SERVICE.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THIS HOUSE, PLEASE BE REMINDED THAT MY MINISTRY IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- 1) THE PAYMENT OF PENSIONS AND GRATUITIES TO PERSONS WHO HAVE RETIRED, RESIGNED OR WHOSE CONTRACTS HAVE EXPIRED;
- 2) OFFICE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS IN NEW PROVIDENCE AND GRAND BAHAMA;
- 3) THE PAYMENT OF INSURANCES FOR SPECIFIED GROUPS OF PERSONS;
- 4) THE NATIONAL JOB CREATION AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME;  
AND
- 5) THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD.

IN SHORT, DURING THIS REPORT, YOU WILL HEAR ME SPEAK ABOUT CAPACITY BUILDING, QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY, SUPPLEMENTAL INCOME SUPPORT AND THE STABILIZATION OF COMMUNITIES BY OUR INVESTMENT IN HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE.

MR. SPEAKER,

ONCE UPON A TIME, IT WAS COMMONPLACE FOR THE PLP TO SAY “WE DON’T INVEST IN PEOPLE, BUT IN THINGS”. THAT WAS THE TIME WHEN FORMER PRIME MINISTER INGRAHAM WAS INVESTING HEAVILY IN BUILDING OUR ROAD NETWORK, CONSTRUCTING SCHOOLS AND CLINICS EVERYWHERE AND HE WAS BITTERLY ATTACKED BY THE PLP FOR DOING THIS.

MR. SPEAKER,

THIS PAST YEAR HAS DEFINITELY BEEN ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS FOR OUR COUNTRY AND UNDENIABLY THE WORLD.

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, OUR COUNTRY WAS CONFRONTED BY TWO (2) MAJOR INCIDENTS. FIRST, THE PASSAGE OF HURRICANE DORIAN, A CATEGORY 5 HURRICANE, THE WORST THIS COUNTRY HAS EVER EXPERIENCED, THAT DEVASTATED THE ISLANDS OF ABACO AND GRAND BAHAMA, OUR SECOND AND THIRD LARGEST LOCAL ECONOMIES; AND NOW EVEN TODAY, WE ARE FACING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHICH HAS AFFECTED THE ENTIRE WORLD. THESE INCIDENCES MANDATED US AS A PEOPLE TO BE EVEN MORE PRUDENT WITH NOT ONLY OUR PERSONAL FINANCES, BUT OUR COUNTRY’S FINANCES AS WELL. THE RESPONSE TO THESE CRISIS BY THE DEDICATED, COMMITTED AND HARDWORKING PUBLIC OFFICERS HAS SERVED TO DEMONSTRATE THE STRENGTH AND CHARACTER OF OUR STAFF IN GENERAL AND THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN PARTICULAR.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND THANKS MUST GO OUT TO ALL OF OUR ESSENTIAL WORKERS, INCLUSIVE OF OUR HEALTH CARE WORKERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, SOCIAL WORKERS, NIB STAFF MEMBERS, TOP LEVEL MANAGERS AND FINANCIAL PERSONNEL, WHO NEVER STOPPED WORKING THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU IS AGAIN EXTENDED TO OUR HARDWORKING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, WHO CONTINUE TO BATTLE ON THE FRONTLINES AND I COMMEND UNION PRESIDENT, MS. IMANCHA WILLIAMS AND DR. MELISANDE BASSETT, BOTH STUDENTS OF C.I. GIBSON HIGH SCHOOL, AS THEY BOTH ACTED RESPONSIBLY BY ENCOURAGING THEIR WORKERS TO LEAD THE CHANGE OF QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY DURING THIS PANDEMIC.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY’S PLAN FOR A PHASED RE-OPENING OF THE COUNTRY, STRICT SAFETY MEASURES WERE EMPLOYED, SUCH AS SHIFT SYSTEMS AND NEW WORK-FROM-HOME OPTIONS. SIR, OUR GALLANT PUBLIC OFFICERS ROSE TO THE OCCASION AND NAVIGATED THE SAFE RETURN OF STAFF TO THEIR RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, WITH SERIOUS DEMONSTRATION OF FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY. WITH THIS IN

MIND, YOU WOULD RECALL THAT IT WAS AGREED BY CABINET NOT TO CAUSE ANY PUBLIC OFFICER TO LOSE ANY BENEFIT AND NOT ONE PUBLIC OFFICER WAS FURLOUGHED OR TERMINATED DURING THIS PERIOD (22,000 STAFF MEMBERS).

THE GOVERNMENT FOUND A WAY TO, NOT ONLY SAVE PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS, BUT ALSO TO PREVENT SALARY REDUCTIONS DURING THE ENTIRE PANDEMIC. I AM TOLD THAT ONLY ONE OTHER NATION IN THE REGION WAS ABLE TO RETAIN THEIR FULL STAFF COMPLIMENT AT FULL SALARY FOR THE ENTIRE PANDEMIC. THIS IS NO SMALL ACCOMPLISHMENT, AND PUBLIC OFFICERS WERE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR LOCAL ECONOMIES DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.

MR. SPEAKER, THE FNM GOVERNMENT CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT WITH THE CLOSING OF THE HOTELS AND TOTAL SHUTDOWN OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, ONLY THE GOVERNMENT WAS LEFT TO KEEP SOCIETY GOING – HOMES HAD TO BE SAVED, FOOD HAD TO BE FOUND AND SOCIETY HAD TO EITHER FUNCTION OR COLLAPSE. WE CHOSE TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY BY CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE. WE PROVIDED RENTAL ASSISTANCE, FOOD ASSISTANCE, INCOME SUPPORT AND WE KEPT EVERYONE ON THE PAYROLL. WE CARE FOR THE PEOPLE! WE SHOWED WHY IT IS THE “PEOPLE’S TIME” AND WHY OUR ACTIONS SECURED YOUR FUTURE, BECAUSE IT IS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE.

WITH THIS BACKDROP OF SAFETY AND FINANCIAL PRUDENCE, I WILL NOW REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

LIKE THE YOUNG PEOPLE SAY, “FACTS OVER FEELINGS”.

REAL TALKS, MR. SPEAKER,

THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION HANDED OUT HUNDREDS OF CONTRACTS, MERE MONTHS BEFORE ELECTION, SELLING DREAMS AND GIVING TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS TO PERSONS SEEKING MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT. THEY CLAIMED TO ‘BELIEVE IN BAHAMIANS’ BUT ONLY PLAYED AROUND TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE THEY WERE PERFORMING. AFTER WE CAME INTO POWER, THEY SPUN THE NARRATIVE THAT THIS FNM ADMINISTRATION SENT EVERYBODY HOME. AS THE SAYING GOES, “NUMBERS NEVER LIE”. (INLAND REVENUE 3 AND 6 MONTHS CONTRACTS, NO PUBLIC OFFICER WAS FIRED BY ME AS MINISTER).

BETWEEN MAY 2017 AND APRIL 2021, THIS GREAT FNM ADMINISTRATION PROVIDED FUNDING IN MY MINISTRY’S SUCCESSIVE BUDGETS TO THE TUNE OF SEVEN MILLION SIX HUNDRED AND FIVE THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIVE DOLLARS (\$7,605,175.00) (IN THE GLOBAL PROVISIONS – NEW APPOINTMENTS ITEM), TO ENGAGE NEW PUBLIC OFFICERS ACROSS THE MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES.

MR. SPEAKER,

THE SECOND PLANK IN BUILDING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND BROADENING OUR CAPACITY WAS DEMONSTRATED BY OUR COMMITMENT TO CARE FOR PERSONS IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES.

MY MINISTRY HAS MADE A POINT OF REGULARIZING THE EMPLOYMENT OF OVER 600 (SIX HUNDRED) GOVERNMENT WORKERS, WHO WERE WORKING FAITHFULLY FOR YEARS ON TEMPORARY MONTH-TO-MONTH OR ON WEEKLY STATUS. THIS NUMBER DOES NOT REFLECT THE OVER 1,102 (ONE THOUSAND, ONE HUNDRED AND TWO) PERSONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ENROLLED IN THE NATIONAL JOB CREATION AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME WHO ARE ABOUT TO BE REGULARIZED, OR THE MORE THAN 700 (SEVEN HUNDRED) TEMPORARY STAFF AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WHOSE MATTERS ARE BEING PROCESSED AS WE SPEAK. OUR MOST HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER HAS A HEART FOR THE PEOPLE. THESE HARD WORKERS, WHO CHOSE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL UNDER THE PLP'S MIRAGE OF TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT, CAN NOW LOOK FORWARD TO A PUBLIC SERVICE CAREER, A PENSION AND DEBT LEVERAGE FROM BANKING INSTITUTIONS TO OWN A HOME OR START A BUSINESS OF THEIR OWN. WE DID IT, SIMPLY BECAUSE IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. FACTS OVER FEELINGS!! (UNLIKE THE FORMER PLP MINISTER WHO WAS COLD IN HIS APPROACH WHEN HE TOLD WORKERS HE DID NOT HIRE THEM, THEREFORE HE WAS NOT CONFIRMING THEM. THIS WAS WRONG).

IT IS ABOUT BUILDING OUR CAPACITY, STRENGTHENING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE. IT SHOWS AN INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT YOUR FUTURE. IT'S ABOUT YOU, YOUR EXISTENCE AND YOUR SURVIVAL.

THE NATIONAL JOB CREATION & SKILL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME HAS EMPLOYEES WORKING THROUGHOUT OUR FAMILY ISLANDS:

NATIONAL JOB CREATION AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS EMPLOYED BY ISLANDS

(1) NO.	(2) NAME OF ISLAND	(3) NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS EMPLOYED
1	ABACO	81
2	ACKLINS	31
3	CENTRAL ANDROS	17
4	MANGROVE CAY	15
5	NORTH ANDROS	87
6	SOUTH ANDROS	15
7	BERRY ISLAND	6
8	BIMINI	8
9	CAT ISLAND	27
10	CROOKED ISLAND	14
11	CENTRAL ELEUTHERA	25
12	NORTH ELEUTHERA	26
13	SOUTH ELEUTHERA	46

14	EXUMA	18
15	GRAND BAHAMA	139
16	INAGUA	24
17	LONG ISLAND	38
18	MAYAGUANA 17	
19	NEW PROVIDENCE	461
20	SAN SALVADOR	7
	GRAND TOTAL	1,102

THREE HUNDRED (300) WERE APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION TO DATE AND THE PROCESS CONTINUES. EMPLOYEES WITH ABOVE AVERAGE PERFORMANCE WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR PERMANENT / EMPLOYMENT.

#### PROMOTIONS

IN TERMS OF PROMOTIONS, THE NUMBERS SHOW THAT THIS FNM ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF HIGH PERFORMING PUBLIC OFFICERS. FOUR MILLION AND FIFTY EIGHT THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN DOLLARS (\$4,058,816.00) (FROM THE GLOBAL PROVISIONS – PROMOTIONS, RECLASSIFICATIONS, 7(A) INCREMENTS), WAS USED TO FACILITATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UPWARD MOBILITY AND RECLASSIFICATION FOR THOSE HARD WORKING PUBLIC OFFICERS WHO MET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ADVANCEMENT OR PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR FURTHER ADVANCEMENT BY OBTAINING ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS. BETWEEN JUNE 2017 AND DECEMBER 2020, OVER 1,600 (ONE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY EIGHT TO BE SPECIFIC) PROMOTIONS HAVE BEEN PROCESSED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION. THIS NUMBER DOES NOT INCLUDE THE 471 (FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE) PENDING MATTERS INCLUDED IN THE PROMOTION EXERCISE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, OR THE 278 (TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT) PENDING MATTERS IN THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT PROMOTION EXERCISE OR THE PENDING MATTERS FOR THE SERVICE WIDE PROMOTION EXERCISES.

MR. SPEAKER,

WE CARE FOR THE PEOPLE, WE BELIEVE IN CAPACITY BUILDING, WE BELIEVE IN INVESTING IN HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE. WE CARE FOR YOU TODAY AND WE CARE ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN (THE NEXT GENERATION) BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

MR. SPEAKER

TECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITAL ERA HAS BEEN WIDELY EMBRACED BY THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ARM OF THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE & NATIONAL INSURANCE, THE PUBLIC SERVICE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES (PSCHRD).

COVID-19 REQUIRED THE DIRECTOR OF TRAINING TO INNOVATE AND IMPROVE ON NORMAL TRAINING PROCEDURES, IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THEIR DEPARTMENT'S MANDATE. PSCHRD OBTAINED THE CLICKMEETING SOFTWARE JUST WEEKS BEFORE THE COUNTRY WAS SHUT DOWN BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC. THIS SOFTWARE INCREASED ACCESS TO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS, ENABLING THE WORK OF THE TRAINING DIVISION TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE, DIVERSIFIED AND FAR-REACHING IN ITS OFFERING OF WEBINARS AND ONLINE TRAINING SESSIONS. MANY OFFICERS, AT ALL LEVELS, WERE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE SESSIONS WHILE WORKING REMOTELY. THE RESPONSE IS QUITE ENCOURAGING AS OFFICERS ARE EXCITED ABOUT ACCESSING THE COURSES ANYWHERE, ON ANY DEVICE. FOR THE PERIOD MARCH TO AUGUST 2020, WE HAVE OFFERED FIFTY (50) TRAINING COURSES. DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MAY 2021, AN ADDITIONAL TWENTY-ONE (21) VIRTUAL COURSES WERE OFFERED. IN TOTAL, OVER TWO THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SEVEN (2,477) OFFICERS HAVE ACCESSED THESE COURSES.

IN AUGUST 2020, WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE DR. NIKKIAH FORBES, CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN AND DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL HIV/AIDS & INFECTIOUS DISEASES PROGRAMME FACILITATE A WEBINAR ON THE TOPIC COVID-19 AND THE WORKPLACE FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE. THE WEBINAR WAS ALSO LIVE STREAMED VIA THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE'S FACEBOOK PAGE AND CAN STILL BE VIEWED FROM THAT SITE.

AS WE ARE EXPERIENCING OUR 'NEW NORMAL', WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD AND REFINE THESE NEW METHODS OF SERVICE DELIVERY. TO DATE THE EIGHTEEN HUNDRED DOLLAR (\$1,800.00) INVESTMENT IN THIS SOFTWARE HAS MORE THAN EARNED GREAT RETURNS FOR THE OFFICERS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
MY MINISTRY CONTINUES TO WORK ASSIDUOUSLY TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCCESSION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, TO ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT, SELECTION, EVALUATION AND ADVANCEMENT OF DESERVING OFFICERS.

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE, ALL FOUR (4) OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE ASSESSMENT EXERCISES ARE BEING CONDUCTED IN A 90% VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT. THE FIRST OF THESE ASSESSMENTS, THE FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY (FAS) ASSESSMENT EXERCISE, COMMENCED IN APRIL 2021. DUE TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND RESTRICTIONS BECAUSE OF COVID-19, SIXTY-TWO (62) CANDIDATES MET IN PERSON ONLY ONCE A WEEK, IN SMALL GROUPS, FOR LESS THAN HALF A DAY. I PUBLICLY COMMEND THE DIRECTOR OF TRAINING AND HER TEAM FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS GROUND BREAKING VIRTUAL PRESENTATION OF THE FAS ASSESSMENT

EXERCISE. A TRUE EXAMPLE OF PUTTING TECHNOLOGY TO WORK AND ALLOWING OUR MANAGERS TO UTILIZE THEIR SKILLS TO FORGE AHEAD IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT! IT WAS A WATERSHED MOMENT FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
THE THREE (3) OTHER ASSESSMENT EXERCISES BEING CONDUCTED THIS YEAR ARE: THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY ASSESSMENT EXERCISE, ASSESSMENT EXERCISE FOR EXECUTIVE LEVEL SUPERVISORS AND THE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE FOR CLERICAL, SECRETARIAL AND REGISTRY STAFF.

HAVING REGULAR ASSESSMENT EXERCISES BOOSTS THE MORALE FOR HARD-WORKING PUBLIC OFFICERS, AS THEY ALLOW FOR FUTURE CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE, EXECUTIVE AND CLERICAL/REGISTRY CAREER PATHS. MY GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO GIVE PUBLIC OFFICERS EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE THEMSELVES AND BE PRODUCTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE. THE TOTAL COST TO FACILITATE THESE ASSESSMENTS AND REQUIRED PROMOTIONS, WILL BE APPROXIMATELY FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TEN DOLLARS (\$452,110.00). OUR COMMITMENT IS TO INVEST IN OUR HUMAN RESOURCES AND THIS INVESTMENT WILL INCREASE OUR CAPACITY AND STRENGTHEN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AS WE BUILD OUR COMMUNITIES.

MR. SPEAKER,  
LEARNING IS A LIFELONG ADVENTURE! TO ENSURE THE STRATEGIC TRAINING OF ADMINISTRATIVE PUBLIC OFFICERS, MY MINISTRY HAS PARTNERED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY THROUGH THE PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME. THIS PROGRAMME IS SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE IN SEPTEMBER 2021 AND IS TO DESIGNED BUILD PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY, IMPROVE DECISION MAKING RESULTS IN GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, STRENGTHEN TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES AND THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF OUR MIDDLE MANAGERS AND TECHNICAL OFFICERS, FURTHER PREPARING THEM FOR UPWARD MOBILITY TO THE SENIOR RANKS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CADRE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE. THE PROGRAMME IS FUNDED BY AND IDB LOAN AND DESIGNED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF THE BAHAMAS, GOVERNMENT AND POLICY INSTITUTE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
IN KEEPING WITH MANDATE #6 GIVEN BY THE MOST HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER: TO ACCELERATE THE ADOPTION OF INNOVATION AND E-GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGIES AND SERVICES, THROUGH DIGITIZATION AND INNOVATION, I REMIND THE MEMBERS OF THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE THAT MY MINISTRY ALONG WITH THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAS EMBARKED ON A MISSION WITH THE HELP OF THE INTER-DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB) TO PROVIDE AN INTEGRATED FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (IFMIS/HRMIS). THIS SYSTEM IS A PART

OF COMPONENT III OF THE PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & PERFORMANCE MONITORING REFORM (PFM/PMR) PROJECT. THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE IS TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY TO ALLOCATE, MANAGE AND MONITOR PUBLIC RESOURCES, WHILE INCREASING EFFICIENCY.

THE AUTOMATED HRMIS WILL BE LAUNCHED LATER IN 2021 AND WILL:

- PROVIDE AN INTEGRATED SOLUTION TO MANAGE THE ENTIRE EMPLOYMENT LIFE CYCLE OF EACH PUBLIC SERVANT WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS
  - BECOME A ONE STOP SERVICE IT ENABLED TOOL
  - FACILITATE THE GOVERNMENT'S KEY HR FUNCTIONS: BUDGETING, PLANNING, MONITORING AND MANAGING
  - PROVIDE INTEROPERABILITY AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE FINANCIAL AND OTHER PRE-DETERMINED GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS
- ADDITIONAL KEY FEATURES OF THIS SYSTEM WILL PROVIDE:
    - THE ABILITY TO PERFORM GLOBAL HR MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING
    - DECENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES BY MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES (MDA'S)
    - USE OF SELF-SERVICE PORTALS FOR EMPLOYEES TO INITIATE FUNCTIONS LIKE REQUESTING LEAVE AND UPDATING PERSONAL INFORMATION

THIS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HRMIS) WILL CHANGE AND THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS.

(PS HR CAREER PATH SIMILAR TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE)

BUILDING CAPACITY/EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT, THAT FUNDING HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD TO RESUME THE HIRING OF STAFF, ALLOW FOR THE PAYMENT TO THOSE PUBLIC SERVANTS WHOSE MATTERS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND TO PAY THE INCREMENTS TO THE HARD WORKING PUBLIC OFFICERS. THE OVERALL PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE INCREASED FROM TWENTY THREE MILLION THIRTY ONE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$23,031,900.00) TO TWENTY EIGHT MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY TWO THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$28,732,600.00), A FIVE MILLION DOLLAR (\$5,000,000.00) INCREASE. THIS MEANS, MR. SPEAKER, WE WILL BE ABLE TO ASSIST WITH OFFERING EMPLOYMENT TO SOME OF THOSE BAHAMIANS WHO ARE NO LONGER EMPLOYED DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. MOREOVER, PUBLIC OFFICERS WILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE THEIR INCREMENTS; THOSE THAT WERE DEFERRED

DURING THIS LAST BUDGET CYCLE AND THOSE TO BE PAID IN THE 2021/2022 FISCAL PERIOD. WE THANK ALL PUBLIC OFFICERS FOR THEIR PATIENCE DURING THESE TRYING TIMES.

MR. SPEAKER,  
I PERSONALLY TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK MR. KINGSLEY FERGUSON, PRESIDENT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE UNION, FOR HIS SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE ARE TRYING TIMES AND WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO DELIVER ON THAT WHICH WE PROMISED.

MR. SPEAKER,  
MEMBERS WOULD BE AWARE THAT MY MINISTRY LAUNCHED THE HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN 2019. IN KEEPING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S MANDATE TO ACCELERATE THE ENGAGEMENT OF DISPLACED WORKERS THROUGH THE STRATEGY OF JOB CREATION THE UPCOMING FISCAL PERIOD, \$1.5 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FOR MY MINISTRY TO ENGAGE YOUNG QUALIFIED APPLICANTS TO JOIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE, HAVE A FULFILLING EXPERIENCE AND INSPIRE THESE BRIGHT YOUNG MINDS TO PERMANENTLY JOIN THE SERVICE. WE ANTICIPATE OFFERING INTERESTED GRADUATES THREE (3) YEAR CONTRACTS IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

- i. PERSONS WITH BACHELOR'S AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES TO BE APPOINTED AS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATES AT A SALARY OF \$30,000 PER ANNUM AND \$20,000 PER ANNUM, RESPECTIVELY.
- ii. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES TO BE APPOINTED AS CLERICAL/TECHNICAL ASSOCIATES AT SALARIES OF \$15,000 PER ANNUM.

FURTHER, MR. SPEAKER, THE NATIONAL JOB CREATION AND SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (NJCSEP) WILL BE CONTINUED TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONNEL TO WORK IN OUR OFFICES, SCHOOLS, CLINICS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS SECURITY GUARDS, HEALTH AIDES, TEACHER'S AIDES AND OTHER SUPPORT STAFF. \$12 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO CONTINUE THE SUPPORT OF THIS INITIATIVE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE IS EVER MINDFUL THAT THERE IS THE CONSTANT NEED TO PURSUE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FROM OUR WORK FORCE. TO ASSIST THE PROCESS AND IN OUR MISSION TO DEVELOP A PRODUCTIVE AND RELIABLE WORKFORCE, THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES WERE IMPLEMENTED:

- A PUBLIC SERVICE POLICY TEAM WAS ESTABLISHED AND MANDATED TO REVIEW/AMEND AND INTRODUCE POLICIES THAT ARE APPLICABLE TO THE CURRENT ERA;
- A FILE TRACKING SYSTEM TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND THE MOVEMENT OF FILES AND ARCHIVING OF DOCUMENTS;

- THE CONTRACT UNIT WAS EXPANDED AND A CONTRACT DATABASE DEVELOPED;
- APPROVAL WAS GRANTED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LABOUR SECTION TO MANAGE ALL SUCH MATTERS.
- THE LABOUR RELATIONS SECTION WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROMOTION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES, WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS GEARED TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS WITH PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR UNIONS, AS WELL AS THE MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS SECTION WILL FOSTER GOOD INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR UNIONS AND EMPLOYEES, THEREBY, PROMOTING A HIGHER LEVEL OF EMPLOYEE AND JOB SATISFACTION.
- THE CONTINUED REVIEW OF CAREER PATHS, INCLUSIVE OF THE GRADING/REGARDING OF POSTS. WE ARE GIVING ATTENTION TO THE SALARY LEVELS, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED FOR THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY
- HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CAREER PATH – A CAREER PATH WILL ALLOW THE PUBLIC SERVICE TO DEVELOP HR SPECIALISTS WHO WILL MANAGE THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HRMIS), ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND INTRODUCE HR PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES TO MAXIMIZE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE. THE HR OFFICERS AND MANAGERS WILL BE TRAINED AND CERTIFIED AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL IN ADDITION TO INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING.
- AN INSURANCE UNIT WAS ESTABLISHED TO AUDIT, MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE GROUP INSURANCE PROCESS.
- VIRTUAL AND HYBRID TRAINING PROGRAMMES WERE INTRODUCED IN 2020
- NINETEEN THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO (19,272) HR MATTERS WERE RECOMMENDED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION DURING THE PERIOD JUNE 2017 TO APRIL 2021.

MR. SPEAKER

ONE FINAL POINT OF CONTENTION THAT I WOULD LIKE TO CLEAR UP IS A HORRIBLY MISLEADING HEADLINE PRINTED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NASSAU GUARDIAN, DATED FRIDAY 28TH MAY 2021, BY TRAVIS CARTWRIGHT-CARROLL. THIS FLAGRANT POLITICAL 'HIT PIECE' TRIES TO DISPARAGE THE EFFORTS OF THE PRIME MINISTER BY ONLY SHOWING THE PUBLIC SERVICE SALARY INCREASES ALLOCATED IN THIS YEAR'S PROPOSED BUDGET WITH NO CONTEXT. I BEGAN MY CONTRIBUTION BY ALLUDING TO THE COST CUTTING

MEASURES, DEFERMENT OF INCREMENT AND SALARY INCREASES ON PROMOTION DURING THE 2020/2021 FISCAL YEAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH CABINET'S RULING. I HAVE ALSO GONE OUT OF MY WAY TO DETAIL EXACTLY HOW THIS GOVERNMENT HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN INVESTING IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC OFFICERS, DESPITE HURRICANES AND A GLOBAL PANDEMIC. WHAT IS MOST LAUGHABLE, IS THAT WHEN THE ARTICLE DOES PROVIDE SPECIFIC CONTEXT, SUCH AS THE EXPANSION OF THE RECRUITMENT OF COLLEGE GRADUATES INITIATIVE, THE CONTEXT IS NOT GIVEN UNTIL THE SECOND HALF OF THE ARTICLE, ON PAGE A9.

IF YOU ARE A PUBLIC OFFICER, KNOW THAT THIS FNM GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER TURNED ITS BACK ON YOU. WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT TO INSTITUTE REAL, LASTING CHANGE, AND TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF FORMER ADMINISTRATIONS PAST. THE HARDWORKING OFFICERS THROUGHOUT MY MINISTRY AND BY EXTENSION THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION HAVE NEVER STOPPED WORKING AND WILL CONTINUE TO WORK HARD, WITH EXCELLENCE, ON YOUR BEHALF BECAUSE WE ARE ABOUT YOU AND IT'S ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NEXT GENERATION BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOU AND IT'S ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NEXT GENERATION AND WE CAN ONLY ACHIEVE THIS BY BUILDING CAPACITY AND INVESTING IN OUR HUMAN CAPITAL RESOURCES.

HAVING STRENGTHEN OUR FOUNDING IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE, I NOW TURN MY ATTENTION TO THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD WHICH IS STRUCTURED ON THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND INCOME REPLACEMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL BENEFITS.

MR. SPEAKER,  
I REPORT TODAY ON THE GREAT WORK OF THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD FOR 2020-2021.

THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE HAVE RELIED ON NIB AS A SAFETY NET SINCE 1974, AND NIB HAS ALWAYS DELIVERED. WE MUST COMMEND THE BOARD FOR THE HARD WORK OF 2019 AND 2020 AND, OF COURSE, THIS CONTINUES IN 2021. NIB TRULY WORKS FOR THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE WHEN WE CANNOT WORK FOR OURSELVES.

WITH THE PASSAGE OF HURRICANE DORIAN AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD HAS BEEN TRIED AND TESTED ACROSS ALL FRONTS. THE MACHINERY AND PERSONNEL THAT IS NIB HAS PROVEN TO BE A ROBUST, DEPENDABLE, RESPONSIVE AND STRONG. INDEED, THE ORGANIZATION HAS DEMONSTRATED THE FORTITUDE TO TRANSFORM CRISES INTO OPPORTUNITIES.

MR. SPEAKER,

NIB PAYS OUT 10 BENEFITS, 4 ASSISTANCES AND 3 GRANTS ANNUALLY, AS PARTIAL INCOME REPLACEMENT TO ENTITLED WORKERS. HOWEVER, THE UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT WAS CRUCIAL OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS WHEN HURRICANE DORIAN AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC DELIVERED A “ONE-TWO PUNCH” TO THE BAHAMAS. THIS RESULTED IN MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT. THESE EVENTS WERE UNPRECEDENTED AND CREATED MUCH CHALLENGES AS NIB MADE EVERY EFFORT TO PAY BENEFITS, ASSISTANCES AND GRANTS DURING A CRITICAL TIME IN OUR COUNTRY’S HISTORY. BUT MR. SPEAKER, WITH EVERY CHALLENGE, IF WE LOOK HARD ENOUGH AND DEEP ENOUGH, WE WILL FIND THE OPPORTUNITIES. NIB DID JUST THAT AND IMPLEMENTED KEY ITEMS OF ITS FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN IN JUST MONTHS.

MR. SPEAKER,  
SOME WILL ASK, WHAT HAS NIB DONE? I WOULD SAY A LOT, MR. SPEAKER. NIB PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN KEEPING THE BAHAMAS’ ECONOMY AFLOAT IN DIFFICULT TIMES. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, NIB HAD TO BECOME AGILE AND MAKE SHARP TURNS IN RECORD TIME.

AFTER HURRICANE DORIAN, NIB HAD WEEKS TO IMPLEMENT AND MANAGE THE DORIAN UEB EXTENSION PROGRAM. MONTHS LATER, MORE THAN 20,000 UEB CLAIMS LANDED ON NIB’S DOOR STEPS, AND PROCESSING THEM REQUIRED QUICK ACTION AS BAHAMIANS WERE FACING DESPERATE TIMES. ADDED TO THAT, MR. SPEAKER, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS PLACED ITS CONFIDENCE IN NIB TO MANAGE TWO CRITICAL UEB PROGRAMMES FOR BAHAMIAN WORKERS: UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR SELF-EMPLOYED PERSONS WHICH ENDED IN JUNE 2020; AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT EXTENSION WHICH IS STILL ONGOING. THESE WERE THE IMPETUSES FOR DRIVING AN EARLY EXECUTION TO CRITICAL AREAS OF THE PLAN, IN PARTICULAR, CUSTOMER SERVICE.

MR. SPEAKER,  
NIB HELD TWO CUSTOMER SERVICE SATURDAYS DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2020. WE BOUGHT PERSONS INTO NIB’S HEADQUARTERS ON BAILLOU HILL ROAD ON A WEEKEND DAY TO TRANSACT BUSINESS RELATED TO REGISTRATION, COMPLIANCE, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CLAIMS. AT THE TIME, MR. SPEAKER, WE NEVER DREAMT THAT THE ENTIRE ECONOMY WOULD BE IN LOCKDOWN WEEKS LATER. WE WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE AFTERMATH OF DORIAN.

DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS, NIB WAS DEEMED AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE WHICH MEANT THAT WE HAD TO FIND WAYS TO SERVE THE PUBLIC WHILE KEEPING OUR CUSTOMERS AND STAFF SAFE. MR. SPEAKER, THIS FORCED US TO MOVE TO ONLINE PROCESSING AND FIND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO EXPEDITE THE PAYMENT OF THOUSANDS OF CLAIMS IN RECORD TIME. WE ALSO HAD TO OPEN AN OUT-STATION AT THE THOMAS A. ROBINSON NATIONAL STADIUM TO ENSURE

BAHAMIANS WERE ABLE TO COLLECT THEIR CHEQUES WHILE MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING.

WHILE NAVIGATING THE CRISIS, NIB STREAMLINED ITS UEB APPLICATION AND VERIFICATION PROCESSES TO REDUCE THE TURNAROUND TIME FOR PAYMENTS. WE ALSO COLLABORATED WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES SUCH AS THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT TO EXPEDITE UEB VERIFICATION. NIB IMPLEMENTED DROP BOXES TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS AND ALLOWED PERSONS TO SEND IN APPLICATIONS BY EMAIL.

AND MR. SPEAKER,  
I CAN PROUDLY SAY THAT NIB DID NOT COLLECT ONE SINGLE SHRED OF PAPER FROM ANY APPLICANT TO PROCESS AND MANAGE THE GOVERNMENT'S UNEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES. PERSONS ENROLLED IN THESE PROGRAMMES; APPLIED, COMMUNICATED WITH STAFF, AND VERIFIED THEIR WORK PERIODS ELECTRONICALLY AT PORTALS WHICH WERE DEVELOPED AND DEPLOYED WITHIN WEEKS OF EACH PROGRAMME'S CONCEPTION.

MR. SPEAKER,  
WHEN COVID-19 STRUCK IN MARCH OF 2020, NIB WAS STILL IN THE PILOT PHASE OF IMPLEMENTING ITS EMPLOYER SELF-SERVICE PORTAL. WE QUICKLY MOVED TO A FULL LAUNCH; ONBOARDING HUNDREDS OF EMPLOYERS AND ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTION PAYMENTS ONLINE. EMPLOYERS WERE ALSO GIVEN THE OPTION TO MAKE PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

MR. SPEAKER,  
WHILE WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THE WIDER POPULATION IS BEING VACCINATED, THE BAHAMAS, LIKE OTHER COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, IS EXPERIENCING A THIRD WAVE OF THE COVID-19. AS A RESULT, NIB CONTINUES TO TAKE EVERY PRECAUTION TO ENSURE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS. OUR SUB OFFICES IN THE FAMILY ISLANDS AND NEW PROVIDENCE REMAIN CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC WITH LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES. WE ARE ACCOMMODATING CASH PAYMENTS, CHEQUE COLLECTIONS AND PROCESSING OF SMART CARDS. NIB'S HEADQUARTERS IS OPEN TO ACCEPT PAYMENTS, AND OUR LOCATION AT THE THOMAS A. ROBINSON NATIONAL STADIUM IS OPEN FOR DISTRIBUTION OF SHORT-TERM BENEFIT CHEQUES, BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES, AND NIB SMART CARDS.

MR. SPEAKER,  
WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS TIME TO REMIND PERSONS WHOSE SMART CARDS HAVE EXPIRED THAT THEIR EXPIRED CARDS MAY STILL BE USED AS A FORMAL IDENTIFICATION. NIB HAS CONTACTED THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, UTILITY COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WHICH RELY HEAVILY ON NIB'S SMART CARD FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES, TO ADVISE THAT ALL NIB ISSUED SMART CARDS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE CONSIDERED AS VALID,

IRRESPECTIVE OF THE EXPIRATION DATE (AND WITHOUT THE RENEWAL SECURITY DECAL).

NIB IS CURRENTLY PROCESSING AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR NEW CARDS AND RENEWALS EACH MONTH. THE LARGE NUMBER IS DUE TO THE SUSPENSION OF SMART CARD PROCESSING IN 2020. THIS HAS RESULTED IN A LONGER PROCESSING TIME THAN USUAL. NIB WILL CONTINUE TO PROCESS THE BACKLOG OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AS LONG AS IT IS SAFE TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS. THE PUBLIC WILL BE ADVISED OF ANY FURTHER CHANGES.

MR. SPEAKER,  
IN JANUARY 2021, NIB MADE A CALL TO ALL PERSONS RECEIVING THE LONG-TERM PENSION BENEFITS AND ASSISTANCES TO VERIFY BEFORE MARCH 31, 2021. THE HEALTH SAFETY MEASURES NIB HAS IN PLACE TO PROTECT OUR SENIOR CITIZENS, HAS FORCED SUSPENSION OF FACE-TO-FACE PENSION VERIFICATION UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. NIB WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FORMS BY EMAIL AND DROP BOX, AND VERIFICATION VIA THE REGISTRANT SELF SERVICE PORTAL. THE VERIFICATION EXERCISE THAT WAS LAUNCHED IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR, ENCOURAGED THOSE WHO HAD NOT VERIFIED TO DO SO TO CONTINUE THEIR ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE THEIR BENEFITS. TO ASSIST BENEFICIARIES WHO MAY NOT BE TECH SAVVY WITH THE PROCESS, THE PENSION BENEFIT AND ASSISTANCE FORMS WERE MADE AVAILABLE AT SELECT SHELL SERVICE STATIONS, SUPER VALUE GROCERY STORES AND GOVERNMENT CLINICS THROUGHOUT NEW PROVIDENCE. THE NIB FACEBOOK PAGE PROVIDES A COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL LOCATIONS. WITH THESE MEASURES IN PLACE, WE ARE HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THE PROCESS WENT SMOOTHLY AND THERE ARE NO BACKLOGS OF PERSONS WHO HAVE NOT VERIFIED.

MR. SPEAKER,

NIB COMPLETED SEVERAL JUST-IN-TIME UPGRADES TO ITS COMPUTER SYSTEM. ONE THAT WAS CRITICAL TO CUSTOMER SERVICE IS THE NEW CONTACT CENTER WHICH WAS IMPLEMENTED IN LATE 2019. THIS APPLICATION ALLOWED US TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CALLS IN THE CALL CENTER BY A LARGE MARGIN. IT ALSO GAVE NIB THE OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP ITS CALL CENTER FULLY STAFFED WHILE ITS EMPLOYEES WORKED FROM HOME. WE EXPECT THAT IN 2021, THE CALL CENTER WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO OUR CUSTOMERS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI). OUR GOAL IS TO ESTABLISH 90% CALL HANDLING PRODUCTIVITY.

FURTHER ON CUSTOMER SERVICE, MR. SPEAKER, THE CABINET HAS APPROVED UPGRADE TO NIB'S SMART CARD TO INCLUDE A PAYMENT ELEMENT WHICH WILL ALLOW NIB TO PAY DIRECTLY TO THE CARD INSTEAD OF CUTTING CHEQUES AND DISBURSING FUNDS IN CASH DISTRICTS. MR. SPEAKER, IMAGINE HOW THIS COULD IMPACT THE LIVES OF BAHAMIANS WHO NEED THEIR FUNDS

AND ARE NOT WITHIN REACH OF NIB IN A CRISIS. WE SEE THIS AS A REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT BECAUSE WE ARE MINDFUL OF THE DIFFICULTIES NIB ENCOUNTERED TRYING TO PAYOUT BENEFITS IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE DORIAN. THE DEVASTATION AND MASS RELOCATION AS A RESULT WAS UNPRECEDENTED.

MR. SPEAKER, FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 25, 2019 TO MAY 18, 2021 NIB HAS MADE UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENTS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMMES:

1. NIB UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR DORIAN SURVIVORS AND THE GOVERNMENT-FUNDED DORIAN EXTENSION PROGRAMME - \$15.6 MILLION PAID OUT TO 4,392 CLAIMANTS.
2. GOVERNMENT-FUNDED UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FOR SELF EMPLOYED PERSONS - \$16.0 MILLION PAID TO 7,261 CLAIMANTS.
3. GOVERNMENT-FUNDED UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION PROGRAMME - \$134.6 MILLION PAID TO 34,069 CLAIMANTS.
4. NIB UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT - \$97.4 MILLION PAID TO 39,652 CLAIMANTS.

IN TOTAL \$263.6 MILLION IN UEB DISBURSEMENTS WAS PAID OUT BY NIB AND THE GOVERNMENT. OF THE FOUR PROGRAMMES, THE GOVERNMENT-FUNDED UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THOSE WORKERS WHO ARE STILL UNEMPLOYED BECAUSE OF THE AFTERMATH OF DORIAN AND THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS. THIS PROGRAMME WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL SEPTEMBER, 2021.

MR. SPEAKER,  
\$263.6 MILLION IS AN ASTRONOMICAL SUM OF MONEY TO EXPEND FOR A PROGRAMMES AND BENEFIT PAYMENTS IN ONE YEAR. WHILE, I AM SURE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE WILL SPEAK TO THE GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATION, I WOULD LIKE TO ADVISE THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE THAT AN INCREASE OF ALMOST \$100 MILLION IN BENEFIT PAYMENTS IS A MAJOR UNDERTAKING FOR NIB. AND IT DEMONSTRATES THAT NIB HAS KEPT ITS PROMISE TO EVERY BAHAMIAN WHO PAYS INTO THE FUND. I REPEAT THIS PROMISE: YOUR BENEFITS AND ASSISTANCES WILL BE AVAILABLE WHEN NEEDED. TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE, MR. SPEAKER, THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE MUST MEET THEIR OBLIGATION TO NIB. EMPLOYERS MUST ENSURE THAT THEY COLLECT EMPLOYEES' CONTRIBUTIONS; REPORT THESE CONTRIBUTIONS TO NIB; AND MAKE PAYMENTS FOR THESE CONTRIBUTIONS TO NIB WITHIN THE SPECIFIED REPORTING PERIOD.

AS MENTIONED BEFORE, DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, THE GOVERNMENT PAID MILLIONS IN ASSISTANCES TO SELF-EMPLOYED PERSONS, MANY OF WHOM WERE DELINQUENT IN THEIR NIB CONTRIBUTIONS PAYMENTS. IT IS FAIR THAT WE NOW ASK THESE PEOPLE TO PAY THEIR NIB. AND WE ENCOURAGE

EMPLOYEES TO KNOW THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AND ENSURE THAT THE CONTRIBUTION PAYMENTS THAT ARE BEING DEDUCTED FROM THEIR SALARIES ARE BEING REPORTED TO NIB.

MR. SPEAKER,  
WE CONTINUE TO DO ALL WE CAN TO PROVIDE THE TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO FACE UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES. WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021 A CLAIMS OFFICERS TRAINING WAS HELD AND 15 NEW PERSONS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE COURSE. TODAY, THEY ARE NOW INTEGRATED TO ASSIST WITH IMPROVING CLAIMS PROCESSING TIME AND IN TURN, SERVICE DELIVERY.

MR. SPEAKER,  
AS RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE LARGE SCALE UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, THERE WAS A 69% DECREASE IN NEW INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT REGISTERED CLAIMS COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR. MEDICAL CARE PAYMENTS TO PROVIDERS SHOWED A 64% DECREASE AND A 36% REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF MEDICAL CARE REQUESTS ADDRESSED BY THE CASE MANAGEMENT TEAM. HOWEVER, WE HAVE OBSERVED THAT OVER THE LAST QUARTER OF 2020 THE NUMBER OF NEW ACCIDENT CLAIM REGISTRATIONS GRADUALLY INCREASED. THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FACT THAT DURING THIS PERIOD MANY EMPLOYEES RETURNED TO THE WORK ENVIRONMENT.

MR. SPEAKER,  
IT IS NOTE WORTHY THAT DURING THE PANDEMIC AND STILL TODAY NIB HAS MET ALL OF ITS OBLIGATIONS TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE IN BENEFIT PAYMENTS AND THE NATIONAL DRUG PLAN. WE ARE PROUD THAT WE HAVE BEEN GOOD CUSTODIAN OF THIS FUND AND WE HAVE WORKED HARD TO MEET THIS GOAL. THIS IS NOT ONLY OUR VIEW, MR. SPEAKER, I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THAT NIB RECEIVED AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR THIS WORK IN LATE 2020. THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION (ISSA) AWARDED NIB A CERTIFICATE OF MERIT FOR ITS ENTRY – “SHOCKS AND EXTREME EVENTS: COVID-19” IN ISSA’S GOOD PRACTICE AWARD FOR THE AMERICAS 2020 COMPETITION WHICH FEATURED NIB’S INITIATIVES AND ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19.

I WOULD BE REMISED IF I DID NOT MENTION THE ROLE OUR FORMER DIRECTOR PLAYED TO QUICKLY TRANSFORM THE MANY CHALLENGES FACED AND CREATED OPPORTUNITIES WHICH ENSURED THE CONTINUATION OF MUCH NEEDED BENEFITS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

AS WE LOOK BACK OVER 2020, WE ARE HUMBLLED AT THE TREMENDOUS WORK THAT OUR TEAM AT NIB CARRIED OUT TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS. WE ALSO KNOW THAT OUR SUCCESS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF OUR PARTNERS WHO FOUND CREATIVE

WAYS TO MAKE OURS PROCESSES EASIER. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR WHO SIMPLIFIED THE VERIFICATION FOR UNEMPLOYMENT PROCESS; ISLAND PAY AND SUNCASH WHO PROVIDED INNOVATIVE, SAFE AND TIMELY PAYMENT OPTION(S) TO PERSONS RECEIVING THE UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT; MINISTRY OF FINANCE FOR BEING OUR PARTNER ON THE GOVERNMENT UEB PROGRAMMES; MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE FOR PROVIDING A VIRTUAL PLATFORM TO REACH RESIDENTS OF GRAND BAHAMA AND ADDRESS ONGOING CUSTOMER ISSUES; AND ALL OF THE VENDORS WHO ASSISTED NIB'S IT STAFF WITH MEETING THE TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES.

MR. SPEAKER,  
IN NOVEMBER 2020, THE COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT EMBARKED ON A NEW COUNTRYWIDE INITIATIVE ENTITLED THE "GO AFTER LISTING" OR GOAL PROJECT WHERE A LARGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS AND SELF EMPLOYED PERSONS WHO WERE IN ARREARS WERE IDENTIFIED. THE GOAL OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO ENSURE THAT ALL OF THESE REGISTERED ENTITIES WERE CONTACTED AND ADVISED TO BRING THEIR ACCOUNTS UP TO DATE VIA EITHER CASH PAYMENTS OR INSTALLMENT AGREEMENTS, OR THROUGH THE CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS FOR BUSINESSES THAT WERE NO LONGER ACTIVE. AT THE END OF THE PROJECT SOME 10,000 EMPLOYERS AND SELF EMPLOYED PERSONS WERE CONTACTED WITH OVER 5,000 BRINGING THEIR ACCOUNTS UP TO DATE VIA PAYMENTS, INSTALLMENT AGREEMENTS, AND CLOSURES. A TOTAL OF \$3,116,609.97 WAS COLLECTED IN PAYMENTS. THE PROJECT CONCLUDED IN FEBRUARY 2021, AND THE DEPARTMENT IS LOOKING TO RELAUNCH THE PROJECT OR AN EXPANDED VERSION OF IT LATER IN 2021.

MR. SPEAKER,  
NIB CURRENTLY HAS NO MAJOR BUILDING PROJECTS. FOCUS IS BEING PLACED ON PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE OF NIB BUILDINGS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO OVERSEE SEVERAL RENOVATION PROJECTS OF VARIOUS SCOPES AND COSTS. IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR, THE NATIONAL SECURITY BUILDING WAS RENAMED THE ORVILLE A. TURNQUEST BUILDING. ON JULY 5 2021, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND CULTURE WILL BE NAMED THE DAME IVY DUMONT BUILDING IN RECOGNITION OF THE FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO BOTH EDUCATION AND YOUTH. LATER THIS YEAR, THE BIMINI ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX IS SCHEDULED TO OFFICIALLY OPEN.

MR. SPEAKER,  
WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THE FUND ALLOWED FOR THE ABILITY TO MEET FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THROUGH TEAM WORK AND PERSEVERANCE, WE ADDRESSED THE CHALLENGES FACED AND STRESS-TESTED NIB SUCCESSFULLY. WE ANTICIPATE THE FINDINGS OF THE 11TH ACTUARIAL REVIEW THAT UNDERWAY WILL PROVIDE INSIGHTFUL

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AS WE CHART OUR WAY FORWARD.

MR. SPEAKER,

I CONCLUDE MY CONTRIBUTION TO THIS DEBATE BY CONVEYING MY THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO EVERY SINGLE MEMBER OF MY TEAM AT THE MINISTRY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD.

IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUE WHERE WE LEFT OFF AS A RESULT OF HURRICANE DORIAN AND COVID-19. THESE MISFORTUNES HAVE CAUSED A NEW NORM WHICH WAS FORCED UPON US AND WE MUST THEREFORE CONTINUE TO LOOK AT WAYS TO HELP MITIGATE RISKS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. THE WAY WE CONDUCT BUSINESS AND INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER IN THE WORKPLACE HAVE CHANGED AND MAY WE AS A NATION EMBRACE EACH OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE OUR COUNTRY AND TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES THAT MAY CONFRONT US DURING 2021.

GOD BLESS OUR PEOPLE AND MAY GOD BLESS THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS.